

# WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE



by

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## **ABOUT THIS EDITION**

Though this eBook edition is designed primarily for digital readers and computers, it works well for print too. Page size dimensions are 5.5" x 8.5", or half a regular size sheet, and can be printed for personal, non-commercial use: two pages to one side of a sheet by adjusting your printer settings.

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

"What is Knowledge" is a series of 10 discourses that Swami Krishnananda gave in the Ashram's Academy during April-May 1983.

During these courses Swamiji would take up various subjects of a philosophical, spiritual and sometimes historical nature. A number of the books on this website consist of the courses that were given to students in the Academy

In this series, Swamiji explains what real knowledge is, its importance especially to seekers of Truth, and how to attain that understanding which liberates the soul.

## Chapter 1

### THE KNOWLEDGE SITUATION

The different classes which you will be attending in the Academy are supposed to represent the different needs of your psychological personality, which mostly receive scant attention from us on account of an overemphasis laid on certain needs only, due to the pressure of circumstances. For instance, when we are intensely hungry physically, we are likely to be clamouring for food and thinking only that aspect of our needs in a pre-eminent manner, notwithstanding the fact that it is not our only need.

And, many a time, we are prone to commit a dual mistake in this attitude of our life. Firstly, there is a proclivity in our mind due to which we are likely to channelize our attention wholly and exclusively in the direction of a particular necessity or pressure felt, as if that is the only thing that we need and there is nothing else that we want. Now, this overemphasis on only a particular need of our life, to the exclusion of other needs, may have a dual background. There may be a partial consciousness in our mind of the presence of other needs also, even at the time of this excessive pressure felt in a given direction, but there can also be occasions when we may not be even aware that there are necessities in life other than the one under whose pressure we are operating now. Intense passions, whether they are sensory or psychological, are examples of the condition when we totally forget the other aspects of our needs, and lay total emphasis on only one need. This is a specialty of an over-mastering desire of any kind.

Most of us who are well-educated persons may not be regarded as these specimens of individuals who can be so easily overcome by a single pressure, to the total ignorance of the presence of all other values of life. Education precisely means only this much: the capacity of the mind to recognise all the values of life connected with one's existence, and not to overemphasise any particular value, which many a time

gets identified with a desire. A person who cannot think in this all-comprehensive manner even in respect of his own existence cannot be considered to be an educated person, much less a cultured person. That would be the specimen of an animal walking with two legs.

And, if education is to be understood as merely the obtaining of a paper certificate with somebody's stamp, then whatever be our outlook of life and the depth of our understanding, we will find that we are not safe in this world – because the troubles of life are not to be faced with certificates. The world is made up of such stuff that we cannot easily understand what it is made of. No piece of paper with us, whatever stamp may be on it, will be of any use to us when the world stares at us with tooth and claw.

All this difficulty, even after being well-educated in the ordinary accepted sense of the term, arises because of what I mentioned in the beginning: an overemphasis on certain values of life. We have today a peculiar trend of thinking called job-oriented education. People are after that, and they are after nothing else. There is no denying that jobs are very important. One has to find an occupation in life. We have to do some work and earn our bread – accepted. This is a very important need. But is it the only need of our life? And can we brook total ignorance of the voices of the other values of life merely because a particular voice is loudly crying before us, drowning out the others? Do we mean to say that a well-placed person economically, and in a job so-called, is a safe person in the world? Is his need in life answered properly by the occupation of a position we call a job? If education means only the manufacturing of an instrument by which we can securely ground ourselves economically and physically in life, that would be the death of education.

It is not that we are going to be secure in this world and be scot free merely because we have bread and jam to eat up to the brim. There are troubles which can threaten us and shake the very ground under our feet, in spite of all the

commodities that we may be hoarding in our house which make us physically secure. The tragedy of modern life may be said to consist mainly in an overemphasis laid on certain pressures exerted by the sense organs and even by the mind and the ego of the personality. We are often politically oriented, socially oriented, economically oriented, family oriented, sex oriented and pleasure oriented. All these are not unknown to us in our daily life.

But oftentimes, all these aspects do not come in a heap or a crowd. They come one at a time, two at a time, three at a time – not all at a time. We have not been able to face all of them at the same time; one or two come and speak to us in their own language. Often, the language which they use is so vehement that we are likely to accede to their request even to the detriment of the needs of other values of life. We can commit burglary, assault people – if only our stomach is to be filled with food. This tragedy of outlook can arise due to a hundred percent emphasis laid on one need only: the maintenance of the body, maybe the maintenance of a family.

But one does not know that life is not constituted merely of these necessities. We are neither political units entirely, nor persons involved in society wholly, nor physical bodies one hundred percent, nor anything exclusively, for the matter of that, though it is true that we are all these things also, at the same time. We are sons and daughters of some people; we may be bosses or subordinates, we may be rich or poor, we may be happy or unhappy under given conditions – but we are none of these entirely. We may be something in ourselves other than being a daughter or son of somebody, other than being associated with circumstances which we call political, social or economic. If these associations are cut off, we may be still somebody. Do we mean to say that we will be nobody if we have nothing with us? If we are nobody in the political field, nobody in society, we have no family, perhaps we have not even food to eat – have we reduced ourselves to a nothing, or are we something even then? We

will feel that we are not a zero, that we are not going to be a nothing or a nobody even if everything is going to be taken away from us vitally, externally.

But, people find very little time to think along these lines because the greatest poverty is not the poverty of physical possessions, but what we may call the poverty of thinking. We are poor in thinking itself, not merely in our economic or physical needs. The poverty of thinking is the real poverty of man, which is the poverty even to understand what is good for one's own self. Do we mean to say that all of us are quite clear as to what is necessary for us in our life? From time to time, from moment to moment, we shift our centres of understanding as to our needs – again, according to the pressure of circumstances. We seem to be puppets of certain pressures, and this would not be a credit to us if we are to consider ourselves to be free individuals.

How can we regard ourselves as free in any way if we are to work under a pressure – whether it is egoistic, sensory, psychological, political, social, or economic? If something is pulling us, pressing us and striking us to the ground, and we are yielding to the pressure and acting according to its dictates, do we call it freedom? Have we ever considered the possibility that we act under pressures of various types, and this goes by the name of freedom? Really, if we go deep into the matter, even the little act of taking our daily meal by choice cannot be considered as an act of freedom. We are not eating a particular diet because we have chosen independently by act of free will. We are pressurised by the peculiar operation of the alimentary canal, the physiological organs, the condition of our liver and so on, which compel us to eat only this food and not that, so even here we have no freedom. This is only to give one obvious physical example; and there are many other examples to show that we are puppets, really speaking, though we may wrongly appear to ourselves to be free individuals.

It is difficult to understand what we are really seeking. The understanding in this regard is difficult to acquire because clear, impartial, all-comprehensive understanding cannot operate except as an expression of real freedom of what we really are. The expression of what we really are – not what we appear to be – is what we call freedom. But most of us are appearances rather than realities. We work in a particular manner because we are something politically, something socially, something in relation to something, something physically, and something under a given psychological condition. We are always something under some condition, and because we are tentatively something in that condition, we have to behave in a particular manner. That manner in which we behave under a given condition due to a tentative pressure, whether it is external or internal, cannot be regarded as an act of real freedom, because freedom is what we exercise from the bottom of the truth of our being. Unless we know what we really are, we cannot know what freedom is. Merely shouting slogans of freedom cannot make us free, because these slogans are again an outcome of the herd instinct. If many people say something, we also believe it is so. We are always under the pressure of something or the other, from morning to evening, and we never have the leisure to think independent of these conditions which are hanging on us.

We are grief-stricken. Sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly, we have a sorrow in our minds. We are not really happy people, and we try to appear as if we are happy by drinking, by eating, by a diversion, by going to a picture house, by dancing in a club or by running from place to place in high-speed vehicles. For the time being, we have forgotten that the devil is behind us. If we run fast, the devil is unable to catch us. But it shall catch us, one day or the other.

And what is this devil? It is that which we are unable to understand, that which escapes our attention, that mystery of life which we are unable to probe into. That is the devil

that is trying to catch us. And we are trying to run away from it by various gadgets, physical as well as psychological, that we manufacture. We have a blanket to cover ourselves with when it is very cold, we have an electric fan when it is very hot, we have some food to eat when we are hungry, and we have various other entertainments when we are bored with our existence. This is a type of escapist life that we are living – a running away from a problem, and not a solution of a problem.

These difficulties are natural to humanity as a whole. It is not my problem or your problem or anybody's problem; it is perhaps inseparable from the species of humanity. Particularly in our studies, we have to confine ourselves to the factors which go with human nature. We are human beings, and there is no great point in our going into the details of what we would be if we were not human beings. We have to take reality as it is itself. As human beings, we have certain limitations and we have certain privileges. We have a privilege and a facility – an advantage especially endowed upon us as human beings – when compared with the other species like the animals, the plants, or inanimate matter. But we have certain weaknesses also, and we know very well what the human weaknesses are. We cannot face the forces of nature. We cannot face even an animal; it has strength greater than ours. But we have certain other facilities by which we can get over these problems created by the weaknesses of human nature.

A correct understanding of ourself is essential before we try to understand what is outside us. With the so-called scientific outlook prevalent these days, we are likely to again lay overemphasis on external nature rather than the experimenter or the observer, the scientist himself. Is the scientist less important than that which he is observing? And do we not believe that his capacity to observe contributes as much to the conclusions he arrives at as the nature of the object that he is observing? But this is easily missed. We

again lay too much emphasis on the reality of externals as if they are all the reality, not knowing that the character of reality that the world presents before us is certainly conditioned by the way in which we are able to receive this knowledge.

The role which the subject of knowledge plays in the act of knowing anything is not in any way unimportant. The knowledge of the world – or the knowledge of anything, for the matter of that – is not entirely dependent on the object of knowledge. The object of knowledge is important, no doubt, but it is not the only important thing, because we are also a participant in this process of knowing the world. All problems are a problem of knowledge, finally. The difference in ideologies and difficulties arisen on account of difference of opinion among people – philosophically, or socially, or otherwise – arise on account of a problem in the knowledge process itself.

People do not know things in a uniform manner. I see the world, you see the world, a cat sees the world, a dog sees the world, a politician sees the world, a religious man sees the world, a child sees the world, a genius sees the world. Do we mean to say that everybody sees the world in the same way though the world, perhaps, stands as it is, as it was, as it will be, to everyone? The world does not become different to a cat than it is to us, but it means something to us while it may mean something else to another subjective location of knowledge.

Philosophical study – or, for the matter of that, any kind of study – is based on the knowledge situation. This is a very important thing to remember. We should not be under the impression that knowledge is secondary and possession of things is very important. We go with the wind of this misconception that the possession of the material values of life is the only important thing, and knowledge is only an appendage, an accessory, a tool or an instrument assisting us in the possession of material values. This is not so; it is a total

misconception. Even our idea of the peculiar or particular necessities of our life is conditioned by the way in which we know things. Why is it that you want this, and I want another thing? How is it that the needs of people differ, and even the needs of the same person differ from time to time? That is because of an adjustment that is automatically made inside the structure of the individual, the percipient, the knower – what may philosophically be called the knowledge situation.

Now, in the particular series of classes that I am expected to take for your edification, this theme comes into high relief. What is knowledge? While other instructors, teachers in the academy, will touch upon other aspects of life which may be equally important and interesting to you, I shall confine myself to a particular type of analysis and study which you will find useful in your daily life – and useful in every way, as far as I can gather, God-willing.

What I tried to mention in these few words is that we have perhaps now come to a stage of our life where we have to think very seriously about things. We cannot merely take life as a kind of game where it is immaterial whether we lose or gain. It is not just a cricket, football or tennis game that we are playing when we are living in this world. There is a greater seriousness about it, and this seriousness has not always been felt by people. Children that we are in the knowledge of the things of the world, we play like children only, and we are satisfied mostly with toys, which the world is ready to give us. The child may like different kinds of toys on different days; it doesn't want the same thing every day. And the world has plenty of toys. It has been feeding people with these things, and the reaction of the human psyche to these provisions of the world is human history. We are now in one period of human history. The history of mankind, particularly, may be said to be the series of reactions humanity has set up in relation to the processes of nature with which mankind is intimately connected.

Natural history and human history go together. The evolutionary process of nature, and of our own personal life, is not like two different parallel rails in a railway line, not touching each other. We may wrongly imagine, oftentimes, that we live one kind of life and the world is getting on in another way altogether. For instance, these days we have a total bifurcation of physics and psychology. Psychology is the study of the inner nature of man, and physics is the study of the outer nature – as if one has no connection with the other. One can be a very good psychologist knowing nothing of physics, and one can be a very good physicist knowing nothing of one's own self. The compartmentalisation of subjects in our curricula of studies, as if everything is watertight, is, again, very unfortunate. We have no connection of one with the other.

Knowledge is a universal process. It is not merely physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics or psychology. These are various outlooks or angles of vision of a single reality before us. From one angle of vision, our knowledge of the world looks like psychology; from another angle, the same world presents itself before us as an object of physical studies, and so on.

Therefore, we can look at the world from a thousand different directions; and the world is infinite in the facets of its presentation. As a beautifully cut crystal or a diamond may have various facets reflecting it in various ways, the world can present, and does present, itself in various ways. But we are unable to adjust our minds to the totality of the universe. We can, as finite individual percipients, behold only one facet of this world at a time, and the other facets are completely cut off from the ken of our perception.

But ignorance of the law is no excuse. We cannot say: "I am very sorry. I did not know the world as these things also. I am a psychologist." "I am a physicist. I do not know who Ashoka is," one gentleman told me. What kind of physicist are you? Does it mean that you are totally ignorant of human

history? Look at the way we are taught these days. We do not know who Napoleon is, who Ashoka is. Just because we are physicists, we know only atoms and forces. Well, this is very unfortunate, again.

The world does not want us to take it piecemeal. Would you like me to look at you piecemeal? Would you be happy? You would like me to understand you as you are. Then you would be my friend, and I would be your friend. If one day I look at your feet, and the next day I look at your nose, and the third day I try to see something else in you, and I react to you in different ways at different times because I have never seen you properly or wholly at any time, you would be horrified by this kind of attitude.

The world is really dissatisfied with us. Nature may be said to be angry with us, as we may be angry with anyone who will not try to understand us and reacts piecemeal in respect of us – day by day changing his attitude towards us, like a chameleon. If we would not brook piecemeal attention from people, why should the world tolerate this kind of attitude from us? The world resents this kind of compartmentalised, piecemeal, distorted attitude of ours in respect of it, and so many a time it gives us a kick; and it is annoyed, which is often manifest in the process of nature. Our sufferings – external, as well as internal – may be said to be natural to the consequences of our not understanding the world. What do we lack, finally? Not money, not social position. We lack knowledge.

Now, again I am coming to the point. Do not be under the impression that knowledge is a tool, an instrument to give us physical amenities in life – to give us a lot of wealth and make us politically or socially important persons. Knowledge is not an instrument; it is the end in itself, because all our adventures in life depend upon the way in which we understand things. And perhaps, when we know a person wholly and become friends of that person one hundred percent, we require nothing from that person. If you are my

real friend in the true sense of the term – in the sense that you have understood me wholly, and I know you wholly – we have ceased to be two persons because of the intimacy of our friendship. You will not expect anything from me; I will not expect anything from you. Merely the knowledge of the fact that we are one will be a satisfaction. Friendship is a satisfaction by itself, and not because two friends act as media or instruments of each other so that one may use the other as an instrument. A friend is not an instrument of another friend; otherwise, it cannot be called friendship. They are equals in every sense of the term. So equally are they tuned in their being that they, for all practical purposes, have ceased to be two individuals. They are one mind and one soul in two bodies, and they do not expect anything from each other.

To expect one thing or another thing from somebody else is to keep that person at arm's length, and we are not really united in our being with that object. The word 'object' that we usually use is indicative of that something with which we have not communed ourselves. It is not a friend. An object cannot be a friend, and a friend is not our object. The world is an object of the physicist, of the scientist, of the psychologist, of the chemist, of even the physician; it has never become our friend. Why should the world treat us as our friend? If we are not going to accept the world as our own, why do we expect the world to treat us as its own?

In a way, in a very important sense, the world is our own face reflected in the mirror of space and time. We are seeing our own self when we look at the world through this mirror we call the space-time continuum. When we smile at the world, the world smiles at us. If we grin, it will also grin. What we do to it, it does back to us. It is so because of the fact that, basically, the world does not seem to be so segregated from our personal lives as we imagine in our ignorance.

The world is not outside us. Now, here is the beginning of our studies in these sessions. Is the world really outside us?

In India, we have systems of thinking along these lines, one of them being called the Sankhya philosophy, which spent years and years – ages, perhaps – in trying to understand what this world is made of. What is the stuff of nature, and how am I related to it? The Yoga System, which is the practical application of the knowledge of the reality of life, is based on a doctrine which is the knowledge itself, properly speaking. ‘Sankhya’ is a word that is used in one system of Indian thinking which is engaged in the analysis of the objective world in its relation to the subject of knowledge.

All these things that I have mentioned to you just now are a sort of introduction to this great theme before us. What is your relation to the world? How are you connected with it? How is the world connected with you? In what way are people around you connected with you? In what way are you related to anybody in this world? Is this not an important subject to study? And what else can be more important than this, because here is the crucial point on which depends everything else in life. If this point is missed, if you blunder and flounder in properly conducting your studies and analyses here, you will blunder and flounder everywhere in life. The whole structure of life will crumble if this foundation is not properly laid. Thus, the Sankhya philosophy tried to lay a foundation for the entire adventure of life by an analysis it called ‘the knowledge process’. This is a subject we shall take up in some more detail subsequently.

## Chapter 2

### THE NECESSITY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT REAL KNOWLEDGE IS

A time comes in everyone's life when one would see and realise that the world is not made in the way it appeared earlier; it is something different. And we begin to learn this lesson sometimes very late in life, not when we are young. Often, the world appears to be a field of adventure by young people. They are very heroic, bold; they climb mountaintops, plunge into ocean waves, and go skiing on icebergs. This is a world of such satisfactions to youth, who see this kind of meaning in the world due to what they are, and not because of what the world is.

But this would not be realised so easily. We will not know that our idea of the world is mostly due to what we are, and not due to what the world itself is. Practically everyone will miss this point in the process of living in this world. The world is so clever, we should say, that it will not permit us to go into these secrets. It has to be taken only at its face value. And this is, perhaps, what anyone would also expect. This is what we mostly do; we take the world at its face value. If it rains, we say it rains; if it is hot, we say it is hot; if it is cold, we say it is cold. This is just a statement which is superficially in agreement with a phenomenon that is taking place, a phenomenon which agrees with the receptivity of our sense organs like the eyes, ears, and so on.

Our senses are our friends. Not merely friends, they are inseparable from us. They are the only instruments we have with which we can know anything. If we see something, we think it is the way we see it. "It should be like this, because I am seeing it." If we hear something, again we say, "It should be like this, because I have heard it" – and so on. So, a thing should be exactly as it is seen with the eyes, heard with the ears or sensed in any other manner. This is called a philosophy of sensationalism. The sensation itself is the meaning of life. Whatever the senses tell us, that is the truth,

finally. If the skin feels cold, the world is cold; if it feels hot, the world is hot. Immediately we have a readymade opinion from our bags. "It is sweet," "It is bitter," the tongue says. At once it reacts and holds an opinion about that which is placed on it – and so on, with every one of our senses. Thus, it appears that we have nothing with us worth the while except our sense organs, if it is true that we are to know, judge, understand, appreciate, and evaluate things only through the sense organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, touch. There is nothing else.

But, there must come a time in our life, in everyone's life, when we will be opened up to a new fact altogether – that the world is not made in such a way as it is reported to the sensations. It is not true that the thing is exactly as it is seen with the eyes, etc. This awakening to the fact that the senses are not the true reporters of the facts of life is a real achievement indeed. But very few people are awakened to this fact. We live like animals, if we believe that sensations are the only available sources of knowledge. There is practically no difference between a human being and an animal, if sensation is the instrument of knowing and the supreme judge of anything in the world. Do you believe that generally our judgements are of this type only? Have we any other means of knowing things than our sense organs? We have nothing except these.

Again, as I mentioned, we will find that when we are very young children, boyish and juvenile in our enthusiasm, this enthusiasm is precisely due to the strength of the senses. In youth, the senses are very strong and, therefore, they boil and dash upon us like strong waves in the ocean, and like cyclones they hurl us down if we do not listen to them. That is why young boys and girls are sometimes cyclonic in their emotions, and even in their judgements of things. But this cyclone will cease eventually. The wind will not blow like this always. The waves of emotion will subside when the senses become weak. The turmoil of emotions and the over-

enthusiasm of youth, which does not listen to any advice, is the result of the power of the sense organs, which take complete possession of our young age; and, therefore, often it appears that no good advice will enter the brain of a young person. Good advice is wasted energy, though there may be means of communicating instruction, knowledge, or true education even at this age, if a proper methodology is adopted. This was one of the points that was realised by ancient masters in India particularly, who were not like professors in our colleges but like parents who felt the necessity to take care of untutored emotions and unlettered understandings.

In India, we had the ancient system of teaching called *gurukula*, which means the system of living under the umbrella and protection of a competent, knowledgeable person. It is necessary to live with that person, and not merely listen to what that person says, or read books. There was no such necessity in those days, because the life and the vibrating force of the teacher was more a teaching than the books or even the words that he spoke. That the influence of a living person is more potent and capable of communicating knowledge than any other means was something realised very early in India, which point is missed these days due to the mechanised form of education. Education has become like a robot – a huge machine, a push button system that produces only mechanical goods, and not living individuals or intelligent human beings.

We are misguided by various factors in life. It is not that we really want to be misguided, but we sometimes feel we are placed under such circumstances, right from our childhood, that we are automatically misdirected into ruts which go out of the point altogether.

The factors which cause or bring about this circumstance are many. As a good educationist or a psychologist would know, the way in which parents live in the house is very important, because we are always seeing them and living

with them; and we will certainly imbibe what our parents are, more than what they want us to do. There is also the social atmosphere around – the community. The setup of people in our area is also a great influence upon us. From babyhood onwards, we are under the influence of this atmosphere of the community, or even the township in which we are living; and because a baby's mind is flexible, malleable, soft – not yet hardened into an ego – immediately an impress is formed on it.

There are many other ideologies which impress upon the mind of a small child, and we must remember that although we are now sufficiently grown up, the impressions created on our mind during childhood are still there. They have not gone, and they cannot easily go. These impressions are also caused by the ideologies which the society in which we live holds as pre-eminent. There are cults, creeds, beliefs, religious traditions, rituals, ideas of 'God', ideas of 'no God', and many other things such as even a sociological or political interpretation of life – all which cannot be kept completely outside the area of receptivity of small children. Thus from childhood we are brainwashed in some way by these facts, and this cannot be overlooked in an educational process.

Some of you told me, "I cannot understand anything." It is not your fault that you do not understand anything. Nobody can say that you are bad people; there is no such thing as that. It is a peculiar arrangement of your thoughts, feelings and outlook of life, what you have seen and studied earlier, and also the opinion in general that you are holding in your minds, all which have weighed heavily on your heads in such a manner that you are inseparable from this opinion and outlook that you are holding. "This is what I have seen, this is what I have learned, this is what I have been told, and therefore it should be only like this. It cannot be in any other way." A kind of egoism – not necessarily adopted deliberately, but automatically arising due to the impression of these old vibrations thrust upon you by factors mentioned

– create a circumstance of non-receptivity to any kind of change in outlook. People always resent change in anything. They want to stick to something which is already there. No change is permitted; it is a fearful thing. You do not want to change anything, either outwardly or inwardly, because you get habituated to a particular way of thinking and living; and if this habit of living in a particular way has continued for twenty years, thirty years, forty years, you cannot change your outlook so easily – as you would not like to peel your own skin, and put on a new skin on your body.

As I mentioned in the very beginning, the world is a very hard nut to crack. It is not an easy thing, and it will not bend before our opinions, our ideologies. It has seen many like us, and it is going to see many like us. It is no use fighting with the world, and then imagining that we have understood it thoroughly. Neither can we understand it thoroughly, nor can we fight with it. Perhaps we cannot encounter it in any way, because we cannot understand it. Now, we are actually coming to the point of why we are sitting here at all. Have we no other work? We can go shopping and eat some sweets. What is the point in sitting unnecessarily, wasting time?

The point is very important. There is something serious about every one of us; and that we do not know that there is something serious, is a tragedy indeed. Even a sheep which is going to a butcher's shop will sense what its fate is going to be. Due to some vibration which it is able to receive from various corners of that locality, it feels something is wrong, and it bleats and resents and refuses to move. Even sheep have some sensations of the future. It is only man who is bereft of this sense of the future. He vehemently, inveterately and adamantly sticks to the present condition of what is reported to his senses and particularly to his emotions. There is a necessity to connect the past and the future to what we are at the present. This is almost the beginning of an educational career. If there is nothing to learn, and we know everything already, and our opinion is set, and our outlook of

life is permanently settled in our brain, why do we want to go to any school or college? Why should we listen to anybody? Why should we hear; why should we read? Everything is clear to us. "I know all things." What is the problem with us? Why do we run here and there?

There is something lurking within us, and telling us: "You are in danger." That danger is not visible. It is not on the surface of our consciousness. It has not come to the level of conscious thinking and, therefore, we are not frightened in our daily existence. If it has the capacity or the intention to come to the surface of our consciousness – if all that is in store for us is to come to the surface of our consciousness just now – we will perish just this moment by the fear of it. Our heart will stop, and we will tremble and cease to be.

But we are living still; we are not dying at one stroke. A very interesting statement of Buddha, among many other things that he said, is: "A person who really sees through the inner structure of this world will not be able to live here for three minutes." And, in the same way, if we can see through the inner core of things, people, or anything in the world, we will not like to speak one word afterwards. Our mouth will be shut forever, if we have seen to the root of things – whether of people, or of any other thing in the world. The Buddha's statement followed: "The world, to that person who sees the root of things, would appear like a burning pit of live coal." Live coal means hot embers, fire blazing, and we cannot keep our foot on it even for a second. Patanjali also says in his Yoga Sutra: "For an understanding mind, the whole world is misery incarnate."

Why is it so? Why do we not feel like that? Why should Patanjali say that, but we do not say that? The reason is that our unconscious and subconscious levels are buried, for reasons we cannot easily explain now; and a little peak of the huge mountainous weight of our personality, in the form of a conscious mind, is what we call our present life. Whatever we are thinking, feeling, seeing and reacting to now is this

little peak. This fact is well known to psychologists and psychoanalysts. Our whole personality is a tremendous iceberg which is buried in the ocean of the unconscious, and little of it is on the surface, and so we say we are 'this', we are 'that'. But the total weight of our personality, which is the cause of what we are going to be, will not manifest itself under unfavourable circumstances. Like a seed that is sown on the ground which will sprout only under given conditions and not always, our total personality will not come to the surface of our experience, except under given conditions. All the necessary accompaniments for the coming up of this inner buried treasure should be there. Otherwise, it will lie like a coiled-up serpent. Only if we interfere with it, will it come up.

Now, incidentally, by way of digression, I may tell you that in our yoga practice or in our meditation, we are actually interfering with this coiled-up serpent inside. This is our kundalini, which is very much spoken of by people. Immediately the snake will open its hood when we touch it. We will not know what we are unless we probe into these depths of our own being. Sometimes our depths come out when we are opposed, insulted, or kicked out. When we are praised, garlanded and respectably treated, we cannot know what we are. We must be kicked out of the world, spat at, and live like an unknown, unwanted nobody; then the unconscious will come up. The kundalini will come up at that time as a rapacious serpent with raised hood. It is now coiled up in an unconscious condition because it is not necessary for it to come to the surface just now. As the reserve force of an army need not be unleashed always and remains quiet except under necessary circumstances, we do not show our strength every day, unless we feel the need for it. We live like a simple, humble person, a very good person. But if we are opposed from every side, we will show our strength physically, mentally, and socially. Likewise is this buried serpent of our real personality, which will not come to the surface. But it will go on giving little pinpricks now and then,

and keep us restless – like snakes which are not visible and yet are living inside one's house sometimes show their heads a little bit, and keep us very miserable.

These potencies of what we call the unconscious and the subconscious are the conditioning factors of our present conscious thinking, feeling, reacting, etc. This is the reason why every one of us has one particular view of things. You think in one way and I think in another way about one and the same thing. There are as many philosophies as there are people, and as many viewpoints and standpoints of looking at things as there are individuals, because the way in which the conditioned personality manifests itself in conscious experience depends upon the varieties of circumstances in which the psychophysical personality is placed. This is why every one of us is different – one cannot be like the other – and each one has a peculiar idea of something or the other.

All this amounts to saying that none of us can be really happy because there is something hidden inside us which refuses to come to the surface – like a disease that is buried deep. Sometimes it comes like a boil, sometimes it comes like a sneeze, another time like an ache in the stomach, sometimes like a headache, but we will not know what the real fact is – why we are having all these types of manifested illness. The root is never known easily, and we see only the symptoms outside. Similarly, we have many a symptom of dissatisfaction in this world. We can never be happy with anything. We always have some complaint against everything in the world, because these inward dissatisfactions in the form of our buried personality come out little by little, not at one stroke, to the surface of consciousness as and when circumstances become favourable. If the whole of it comes up, we will cease to be in one second. It will not come. It is like a shopkeeper, who will not show all his goods at once. He has a godown [warehouse] where he keeps all his treasures, and little by little he brings out what is essential to the open market for us to see. He has a retail store, but he has also a

wholesale godown which is not visible to the customers, from where he brings out items to display when circumstances demand. In the same way, we have a godown in ourselves where everything is kept inside; but unfortunately, we do not know what is in the godown. It is a very intricate wound-up abyss of the unconscious.

Now, to imagine that the world is made in some way, and we understand it in some way and, therefore, it should be only that way and nothing else is permitted, is to succumb to the pressure of this deeper unconscious level of ours – which presents only one particular picture at a moment, and other pictures are withdrawn. It will not show us the entire picture of the world at any time and, therefore, we find that it is not easy for us to learn the highest truths of life or the deeper secrets of nature unless we place ourselves under the complete control, care and protection of someone who, like a good doctor or a physician, knows the student or the disciple not merely as he or she appears outside, but as the student is inside.

Often we think that we ourselves are the master. A patient cannot treat himself. Otherwise, why should we have hospitals, doctors? Let each one treat himself. This is not possible, because we cannot know the causative factors of the phenomena appearing outside – either as illness, or as unhappiness. Neither can one know why one is really ill, nor can one know why one is unhappy. It is not easy to know the reason.

Thus, coming to the main point of what we are intending to study, the essence of the whole enterprise of education is to realise the necessity to know things as they are, and not as they appear. But we, for reasons already stated, mix up appearance with reality, and vice versa. We insist, through the pressure of our sense organs and our emotions, that things, the world, should be exactly as they appear to us. This is why we have various ideologies and outlooks of life, which not only differ from one another, but even clash with one

another; wars can take place because of difference in ideologies.

But why should it be like that? It need not be like that. The world is not a war field in the sense that it is cut into two opposite parties. It is not properly understood. Therefore, great patience is necessary; and a hurried, emotional person, expecting the harvest to grow immediately when the seed is sown, will not be a good student. First of all, the world is very large, very wide. Secondly, it is very deep. Both these factors are important. How will we in a few days, a few months or even a few years of our little life in this world, with this inadequate instrument of our poor understanding, know the width of the world, the vastness of the cosmos, and the depth of things? So, the primary quality of a real student is a humility that is born of the understanding of the magnitude of the truths of things. The world is so deep, vast and magnificent that we are humbled by the very sight of it. Even when we see an elephant, we look very small. We cannot go near it. We feel miserable by the very sight of it. We feel very small before the huge dashing waves of the Atlantic or the Pacific. We are frightened by a huge conflagration or even a cyclonic blow. There are things in the world, even before our eyes, which sometimes make us feel that our strengths are nothing before these natural forces. We seem to be very important, but that importance can be wiped out in one second if the nature unleashes her forces – even by the wind that blows, let alone other things. A strong wind is sufficient to make us realise where we are.

Thus, a humility born not of hypocrisy, but of a real acceptance of the fact of the mystery and the magnitude of things, is the first quality of a student; and a disciple, a *sisya*, a *chela*, a student, is therefore one who has completely handed himself or herself to the rescue of this reservoir of knowledge we call the teacher or the master. But – I repeat what I told you a few minutes before – the egoism, born of an attitude compelled by the power of the sense organs which

have a voice of their own, will prevent us from having this attitude of humility. The egoism will persist. We will have a self-importance of our own, and an ideology of our own, which we would not like to be refuted by anybody. "What I think is right, and it must be right." With this attitude, no knowledge can be gained, because our basket is already full and nobody can fill it with anything else. Nobody can fill us unless we have already emptied ourselves; a full basket cannot be filled with anything else.

Most of the students these days go to educational institutions with a 'don't care' attitude, and an attitude of having known things already, sometimes more than even the teacher knows; therefore, it becomes a mockery, an utter failure, and a waste of energy, landing everyone in a catastrophe. This is the picture the world is presenting before us every day. It is a failure, a catastrophe, and a hopelessness. Finally we will go with the feeling that the whole of life is a waste, a hopeless pursuit, and nothing is worthwhile here. This happens because the world is opposing us, due to the fact that we are opposing it.

Why should we have this character of opposition evinced from the world if we are to live in the world? Either we need not live in the world, or we have to live in the world. If we want to stay in a distant space unconnected with the world, that is a different matter. We cannot have our own counter-bolt of opinion about the world as long as we are in it. It is like opposing the members of the family, ourselves belonging to this membership. We forget the fact that we belong to the world, we are in the world, we are breathing the air of this world, we are drinking the water of life, and we are here. A total egoistic attitude of self-sufficiency is the defeat of all education.

Now, these are the little things that we would like to consider if life is serious for us. But we feel that life is not a serious thing, that it is only a joke, a play, a game, and it can be lived in any way one likes. "Today I live it in this way,

tomorrow I can live in another way. Who is to question me? I am my own master.” If we are our own master, and nobody can question us, and we know all things, then the world will teach us a lesson that this is not expected of us in the atmosphere of our real relationship with the world, and the world gives a kick. This kick everyone receives – sometimes late in life, sometimes every day in life. We receive various types of kicks, due to which we are placed in a condition of utter sorrow. We are grief-stricken because we are defeated in life. We have understood nothing, and we have gained nothing. Yet, we have to live. We cannot end our life; that permission is not granted to us. So, life becomes a vale of tears. It becomes a bundle of sorrows and griefs. At least if we realise that the situation has arisen on account of our not knowing things properly, and there is no point in our asserting ourselves anymore, then we have become real disciples and real students.

Life is not very long. We do not hope to live in this world for ten thousand years. Nobody knows how many days, how many minutes they will live – nothing is known – so how is it possible for us to imagine that we have to live here for some millions of years? And if an understanding of the circumstances of our life in this world is not important to us, what else is going to be important to us? Here, we come to our original discussion that knowledge is supreme. There is nothing of any value in life finally except knowledge, because everything is limited to, restricted by, or conditioned by the way we understand things. The reaction of the world in respect of ourselves is a response to the way in which we envisage it, understand it, and react to it. Knowledge is supreme.

Last time I mentioned that in an ancient Indian system of thinking which spent all its time in the pursuit of knowledge, the Sanskrit word ‘*sankhya*’ is used. Sankhya means knowledge, but not knowledge that is merely a means to some material end – not a job-oriented knowledge.

Knowledge is more important than jobs because everything, including jobs, is conditioned by the kind or depth of knowledge that has gone into our being.

Here, we are also to consider a little as to what knowledge means. What do we mean by knowledge? We say it is very important. We all have some knowledge. Now, is it all right, or is there something more? Every one of us has some knowledge. We know that it is daytime, that it is not night; this is also a knowledge. We know that after some time we will have lunch; this is also a knowledge. Who can say it is not? And we have one hundred types of knowledge. But do we mean that *sankhya*, true knowledge, is this kind of knowledge? No. This is information about the phenomena around us. But *sankhya*, or true knowledge, is not information about phenomena around. It is something which is inseparable from our own existence. Knowledge is not away from our being. Most of the knowledge we have today is a kind of shirt that we put on. The shirt is different from us; we can throw that shirt away, if we like. But this *sankhya* knowledge is exactly what we 'are', and not what we 'know' in an empirical sense. It is not a professorial, academic knowledge. It is wisdom, enlightenment, insight, entry into the very substance of things as they really are, and not information that we have gathered from newspapers. That is not knowledge.

Here is the difficulty before every one of you, and that is why you say, "I understand nothing." How can you understand anything? This is something quite different from what you have thought in your minds. And if you are to be prepared to receive into your brains the meaning behind this type of enquiry, you have to be reborn once again, and forget that you are fathers or sons, mothers or daughters. You are born just now – reborn, just now – and you are ready to receive a new knowledge altogether. "Unless you are reborn, there is no freedom." This is a great saying of Jesus Christ, which has many meanings. He said it in a very lofty sense, but

it also means a very important requisite on our part in our daily life. A reception of Truth into our personality is impossible, unless we are prepared to be reborn into its conditions. Truth will not enter us unless we are prepared to accommodate the conditions of the structure of Truth itself into our being.

This is something very difficult, but unavoidable. You cannot miss it, because all meaning – any meaning that can be anywhere in anything in life – is the meaning of this knowledge, which nobody can gainsay. Nobody can say “I do not want it” and nobody can say “I do not understand.” You have to understand, if you have to live. Otherwise, you will find yourself in a condition where you will be forced by the powers of nature to learn by the instruments of pain, which it can inflict upon you.

Education need not necessarily be painful. We learn things by pain also, but why should we learn only by pain? Is there no other way of knowing? Can you not know things by being good and humble and receptive? Do you want to be beaten up and kicked aside, and then learn lessons? If you are not going to be humble and intelligently receptive to the necessity for a true educational career, you will be forced into this condition by the powers of nature, one day or the other.

Therefore, it is necessary and wise on your part to be prepared for a new type of knowledge and education, which itself is a great gain for you – and you would not want anything else in this world afterwards. That possession, that Knowledge itself, will be the greatest possession. Here, you have to understand what this Knowledge is, in order that Knowledge itself is everything in the world. Such is the importance of these studies. So, I request you to ponder over these issues, and be humble, good children.

## Chapter 3

### A PHILOSOPHIC OUTLOOK OF LIFE

There is a way of thinking called philosophical thinking, which is a little different from the ordinary way of thinking. What is the difference between philosophical thinking and the thinking we call 'normal' and 'usual' in our day-to-day life – the thinking of the office-goer, the thinking of the businessman, the thinking of the family man, the thinking of the busy man, and so on? How does our normal thinking differ from this peculiar way of thinking we call philosophical? What is the difference? If there is a difference, and evidently there is some, which is to be preferred? The ordinary, prosaic, man-of-the-street way of thinking, or the philosophic way of thinking – which is better? This can be known, if we know what the difference is between these two ways of thinking.

Previously, I mentioned that our thinking is almost entirely conditioned by sense perception. We think as we see, as we hear, and as we sense in any form whatsoever. Our mind is a kind of confirming authority over whatever information is given through the senses. The only thing that the mind seems to be doing is that it synthesises the various information received from the channels of the sense organs – eyes, ears, etc. The eyes see, but they cannot hear; the ears hear, but they cannot see. Each sense can do only one thing; it cannot do another thing.

A mind is necessary for some important reason, because without it there can be no coordination between seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, etc. Something is seeing, something is hearing; what is the connection? We feel that one and the same person can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste: "I am seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching." The eyes cannot say, "We are hearing." The ears cannot say, "We are seeing." How is it possible to bring together, into a blend of synthesis, these various sensations of seeing, hearing, etc.? That peculiar central operation inside, which

not only receives all these reports of the senses at the same time, but harmonises them into a single cognition – that internal operation is the mind. It does not seem to be doing anything more than this. It does not seem that we are thinking in a more qualitative way than we are seeing, hearing, etc. The quality of thinking does not seem to be superior to the way of seeing or hearing. Our thinking is also mostly sensory.

But the system called philosophic thinking does not end here. A philosopher in the true sense of the term cannot be satisfied with any information that is given in this way. He will not wholly believe what he sees, nor will he entirely believe the reports of the other senses, nor will he be satisfied with this act of synthesis which the mind is doing in regard to the reports of the senses in an ordinary, usual, commonsense way. The philosophic mind is more than the ordinary empirical synthesising mind. This is why it is sometimes said that there is a lower mind and a higher mind. The lower mind does this work of gathering information and simply synthesising it into a central act of what is called perception and cognition. But there is another feature which the mind is capable of, but which is not usually exercised by the busy people in the world.

The activities of the senses are so rapid, so insistent, so vehement, so pressing and demanding, that the mind is continuously engaged in attending to these calls of the senses – like a telephone operator is kept continuously busy with unending calls from all sides. He cannot even think, so busy is he. The senses act in such rapidity and with such force that this peculiar feature of the mind which is engaged in synthesising these sense reports keeps it always busy, and there is no time to think anything else. This is the fate of the busy man of the world. There is no time to think, except in terms of what reactions are received by the senses in regard to the operations outside in the world of nature and society. The whole of our life is a kind of reaction to events taking

place in nature and in human society. We seem to be doing very little independently; we are only reacting to what is happening outside insistently, perpetually. This is the ordinary man's life. It is a very unhappy state of affairs, indeed, that we have to be always cautious that we do not fall down, and we cannot keep quiet because of the noises made by the senses and the necessity felt at the same time to listen to these noises and react in a proper manner.

This is precisely the reason why we are restless. If someone goes on pricking us with a needle or pulling our ears constantly, day in and day out, we will be conscious only of these pricks and the pulls, and we will have no time to think anything else except that we are being pricked and pulled, dragged, etc. Not that we are incapable of thinking in any other manner, but we will not be permitted to think because of the continuous pressure exerted upon the mind by events and circumstances of the outer world, of nature, and of society.

But this is a kind of illness, in a very important sense, that we have no freedom except to react to circumstances, and to be employed, as it were, in the act of attending to demands from outside. This state of affairs cannot be considered as real freedom. If we are forced to do something, do we call it a free act?

We may be running for two reasons. We may be a participant in a race, and we are running continuously for a long distance because we have taken part in the race and we want to win a prize. We may regard it as an act of freedom: "I am running because I want to run. I have enrolled myself as a candidate in this race. So, in this running, I am exercising my own free choice." But suppose we are running because a hundred monkeys are pursuing us, a tiger is chasing us, an elephant is attacking us, and because we are chased from all sides by these wild animals we run for our life; do we call it a free act, though we are running in the same way as we ran in a race? Therefore, the action may be the same outwardly - in

both cases it is running – but they are two different things altogether. In one case, we exercise a freedom. In another case, we are forced to run due to reasons beyond our control.

Now, our life normally, empirically – in the ordinary sense –cannot be considered really as an act of freedom. We have to eat because we are hungry; we have to drink because we are thirsty; we have to sleep because we are tired; and we have to do many other things of this type, because we are pressurised by conditions of life which are manifold in their character. These are matters for deep consideration. How is it that life should be made in this way? Why should there be a need to eat? Because there is hunger. There the answer is clear, and there is no need to put further questions. Everyone knows why one eats. But it is not enough for a philosopher to know that hunger is the reason behind eating. That is only an immediate cause, a visible reason, that we are placing before our mind to explain our act of eating. But why should there be hunger? This question can be put only by a philosopher. An ordinary man will not put such questions. Nobody will ask why there should be hunger, why there should be thirst. They will look like foolish questions. But to a philosophic mind, they are not foolish questions. A philosophic mind will never be satisfied unless the ultimate reason for a thing is known. ‘This’ happens because ‘that’ is there, and ‘that’ is there because of a third thing, a third thing is there because of a fourth thing. Now, where does this end, finally? Where does it end?

The ultimate cause alone can explain the lesser causes and effects of every type. We will never be satisfied unless we know the ultimate meaning of things. “Why all this?” “What is all this?” These questions come to our mind. “What is the matter?” We go on asking, but no answer comes. “Why do we do anything at all?” “Why should anyone do anything?” “What is the matter with people?” “Why are they so busy?” “Why do they run?” People run physically, as well as mentally. “What has happened to people?” “Why do they not

keep quiet?" They cannot keep quiet because the pressures inwardly felt in the psyche, as well as felt from outside – from society and nature – compel them to be very vigilant and active, perpetually. These questions arise. They are a set of one type of question.

Children put questions sometimes: "Where does the sun go in the night? Nobody knows what has happened to the sun. We see him coming from the east and jumping down into some pit in the evening, but in the morning again we see him from the same place. How does he jump from the west to the east?" Children think that sun must be jumping in the night when they are fast asleep. One boy gave this answer. I asked him, "How does the sun again come from the east?" "He must be coming suddenly in the night when we are asleep, and so in the morning he is again starting his drama." These are questions which occur to children's minds: "Why does the sun not fall on our heads? There is no support in the sky. The stars, the moon and the sun are all hanging in empty space, without any support. Why do they not fall on our heads?" We may put such questions, and easy answers do not come: "From where have I come?" "Where was I before I came to this world?" "My father has died, my mother has died. I see so many people dying. Where have they gone?" These questions arise in our minds, and we cannot find an easy answer.

These are the difficulties of a philosophic mind. It cannot be easily satisfied with mere perceptions of things. We see a man dying, and the matter is over. He has gone. But the philosophic mind cannot be satisfied merely with seeing somebody going. "Where does he go?" "What happens to that person that has gone?" "From where has that person come?" "What is the reason why we cannot even know our own future the next moment?" "What is this big world around us?" "From where has it come?" "Who made it?" "Or has nobody made it, and it is just there as it was?" These questions require an answer. "Does the world exist as it is?"

“Is it its own creator?” “Or does it have no creator?” “Has somebody made it?” “If somebody has made it, where is that somebody?” These are also some questions that occur to minds, and we cannot easily get an answer to these questions.

When we feel that we cannot receive answers to any important question in life, we feel miserable indeed. It is worse than being in a concentration camp. “What is going to happen to me?” “Where am I?” “And why am I here?” Oh! We cannot rest, we cannot sleep, and it is impossible for us to have a moment’s peace. Thus, a truly philosophic mind cannot rest in peace until it gets an ultimate irrefutable answer – not to one or two questions only, but to every question pertaining to every type of existence.

These are the philosophic minds, and you know the difference between a philosophic way of thinking and a commonsense way of thinking. Do you believe that it is necessary to know the reason behind things? Or will you be satisfied by merely reacting to phenomena or events that occur outside? Why is there a curiosity to know things? “What is there above?” “If I go up, what will I see?” “Suppose I soar high above, ten million kilometres above, what will I see?” “If I go further above, what will I see?” You will feel giddy in your head. No answer will come. “If I go down and down, what will I see?” We cannot say these are silly questions. These are things which will keep us agonised that there are things in life which we cannot understand.

Are there things which we cannot understand? If that is so, there must be a reason why we cannot understand. Again, the philosophic mind presses itself forward. “Why should I not know all things?” “Why am I kept in this ignorant condition that I cannot know anything, finally – though apparently, it appears all things are fine? I have a good house to live in, a soft bed to sleep on, and nice dishes to eat.” These are satisfactory things, no doubt, but a philosophic mind cannot be satisfied with a soft bed, a bungalow or any kind of

physical comfort, because it knows that these cannot stand for long. They may not even be there the next day.

Hence, there is a curiosity born of a dissatisfaction as well as a perception of wonder. "How do things arrange themselves in this world in the manner they occur and present themselves?" This rouses in our minds a sense of wonder. The whole world seems to be a miracle. "How does it behave in the way it behaves, and why should it do so?" "Why should I not know things?" "Why should I be ignorant of knowing things?" "I will not deliberately keep myself ignorant." Nobody would like to be ignorant. Even an ignorant person does not wish to be called an ignorant person. One resents such statements. We do not want to be called 'idiot', 'stupid'; we cannot bear such statements. We feel we are not that. We do not like to rest contented that it is enough to be ignorant.

But why should we be ignorant? Have we made ourselves ignorant deliberately, or has someone else thrown us into this condition? These are again questions, and we have no answer to these questions also. Everywhere there is confusion of thought. An entry into this abyss of human difficulty is attempted by a philosophic mind. Ancient thinkers, both in the East and the West, were very actively engaged in this adventure of knowledge. They were not satisfied with anything else. How can we say that anything else is important in this world, if these things are not to be known? If certain important serious matters are hidden out of our vision, how can we say that life is a satisfying field of existence even for a few moments? We realise, now, why knowledge is so important.

Well, these are the foundations of this novel enterprise of the human mind we call philosophy. Philosophy does not mean reading some books or thinking something erratically while sitting on a chair. It is an attempt to have the true wisdom of life, and to know how to live in a world of this kind. Many a time, we get kicks and blows, and we get

buffeted from all sides due to our not knowing how to conduct ourselves properly in the atmosphere in which we are placed. We go on experimenting with various ways of conduct, and in this experiment we learn lessons, no doubt, but often with the blows that we receive and the kicks we are given. Often, we learn lessons with pain, and not in a happy way.

The ancient thinkers busied themselves with this great adventure – the pursuit of knowledge. Not ordinary knowledge of the empirical sciences, not the knowledge which we equate with the subjects we study in the usually known educational institutions, but true knowledge which is inseparable from wise living itself. Therefore, knowledge is the art of wise living. Knowledge is life itself, and is as important as life itself.

The process of the investigation of factors and conditions which contribute to the rise of this knowledge is philosophy. In India we call it *darsana*, the vision of Reality, and the practical methods that we employ to establish ourselves in this vision of Reality is called yoga. And, in Indian technical terminology, the doctrinal side of this philosophic knowledge is sometimes called Sankhya, and it is also known as Vedanta in an important sense which has to be known properly.

Yoga is the technology, the practical application of this knowledge in our day-to-day existence. Therefore, yoga is living knowledge. To apply knowledge to our practical existence in this world is yoga. Yoga is translated as 'union'. You must have heard that yoga is union. With what is this union to be attempted? Union with what is yoga? It is union with the ultimate state of things, not with things as they appear. We have unions of every kind here. A businessman is in union with his money, a mother is in union with her child, and everyone is in union with what they love in any manner whatsoever, but this is not yoga. A mother is not really in union with her child; it is only an imaginary union. The rich man is not in union with his money; he is only imagining that

it is a union – and so on with every type of imagined union with objects that we seem to possess but really cannot possess.

But yoga is not such a union in the form of a mere imagination in the mind. It is an exact, practical entry by way of communion – in such a way that this union of ourselves with that with which we have communed abolishes the distinction between us. Life does not anymore appear like a puppet show whose strings are operated by somebody else, someone who cannot be seen. We know the secret of the drama of existence, and we cannot any more be kept in a state of ignorance of values – because ignorance is, in a way, our incapacity to recognise any vital relationship that we have with the ultimate state of things.

“Why are you going on mentioning the word ‘ultimate’ state of things?” you may ask me. “What is the matter?” The reason is that whatever is happening in this world now is caused by something else, because an effect has a cause. Unless we know the cause, we cannot know why things are happening as they are. Otherwise, we go on complaining, and nobody is going to listen to our complaints. We go on crying – and many have cried – and there the matter ends. This is called crying in the wilderness. Who bothers about our cries? But, we need not cry if we know how things happen, and why things happen.

This particular phenomenon we call life in this world, as it is seen now, is an operation by some cause which is not visible to the eyes. That cause may have another cause, and that cause may have another cause. There is a chain of railway carriages, and we know how many carriages are chained together and moving on a railway track. The rear carriage is pulled by the one that is in front, and that is pulled by that which is in front of it, and so on. We know very well that although it appears that the carriage in front is pulling that one behind it, they are all pulled by an engine which itself is not pulled by anything else. Hence, everything is

moved by something else, but there must be something which itself is not moved, but moves all things. Only then will we know why the railway train is moving. 'This' is pulled by 'that', 'that' is pulled by 'this' – and finally, who pulls all things? Then only can we know the mystery of movement. Otherwise, we know only relative movements – one pushing the other – without knowing why this pushing should be there at all.

Thus, the reason behind all occurrences, events in life, seems to be an important matter for study and understanding; and this reason is not merely the logical reason. "Why does it rain?" We know some sort of a reason is there behind it. Geography and some sort of astronomy will tell us why it should rain at all. But this is only a temporary answer to the phenomenon of raining. There are many other causes beyond this explanation offered by astronomy and geography. Finally, we must know that there is a reason behind not merely 'this' event or 'that' event, but that all events are caused by a central reason. 'This' is caused by 'that', 'that' is caused by another thing. That may be so, as one thing pushes another thing, and that thing pushes a third thing, and so on. But the final answer to all these relative motions, occurrences, activities and phenomena in life can be explained only by a final reference. If this is known, we know how things are, and why things are, and we will not put any more questions. We become spectators of the events of the universe; and we do not merely remain as spectators of something happening outside us – we realise that we ourselves are participators in this great activity of the universe.

This is very important for us to know. The events of the world are not taking place only outside us, as if we are unconnected. I mentioned previously that we are also in this world. So, when we speak of events in life, phenomena of nature, activities of the world, we do not mean something happening unconnected with us. All happenings have

connections with us also, because we are also part of the world, whatever be our idea of the world. We may call it the social world, the political world or natural world of physics and astronomy, but we are a part of the environment we call 'this world'. Hence, events cannot take place except in connection and interconnection of parts belonging to a whole; and if we are really wise and intelligent enough to understand the circumstances of life, we will realise that no particular person or thing is the cause of anything. There is an interconnection of causative factors. This is so because the world is one single entity; it is not made up of unconnected parts. It is a living body, something like our own body. Any event in any part of our body is an event occurring in the whole body.

Certain systems of medical science tell us that every disease is the disease of the whole body. Even if we sneeze, it is not only the nose that is sneezing; the whole body is sneezing, and any ache in any part of the body is an ache of the whole body. All illness is a total illness. There is no such thing as an ache only in the head. It is a total ache of the entire psychophysical organism. In a similar manner, philosophers have recognised and realised that any event in the world is not an isolated thing happening somewhere, unrelated to others; it is a total event. The pain that we feel in the sole of our foot when a thorn pricks it is the pain felt by the whole body, and it is not only the foot that feels it. Every event is so connected with all other factors because of the fact that the world, even physically speaking, is a single entity. Because of this, and because of the fact that we are also involved in it as parts of nature – parts of the world – every question is a total question, and every situation is a universal situation. We seem to be participating in a universal life, and not merely in a family life, a communal life – or much less, an individual life. There is no such thing as 'your own' life, and 'my own' life, and 'his own' life or 'her own' life. Such a thing is not possible, in the same way as our

bodily organisms are not independent activities taking place of their own accord.

Here is the distinction between a philosophic outlook of life and the outlook of the man of straw, the man in the street. We have been men of straw, and we are perhaps that even now. But we can never be satisfied with this kind of drab living. We want to know what is the matter with all things. This is why we are searching for something. We go here, there – to Nepal, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, and all places – because we do not know where what is. “Let us search for something,” but we have found it nowhere. It cannot be found anywhere, because it is everywhere. It is like searching for the sky. “Let me search for the sky.” Why do we search for the sky? We are in the sky. And we know we are in space, so we need not search for space.

The problems which require an answer are widespread questions and widespread problems. They are not in Japan; they are not in India; they are not in America. The problem is the intricate, inexplicable relationship of the individual with the Total Whole. Therefore, we can get truth everywhere, and we can have a problem of the same kind everywhere. The same problem is everywhere, and the same answer can be envisaged and elicited from any part of the world. We can touch a person by touching any part of the body of that person – any part is that person only. Similarly, since the whole world is one single organic entity, we can be anywhere; it is as if we are everywhere.

This is a new vision which would be worthwhile for us to entertain, because we would realise that even the possibility of entertaining such a wholesome, holistic vision of things brings us a new kind of satisfaction – a satisfaction that arises from the very fact of it being possible for us to have a total vision of things. It is not a satisfaction that comes merely by eating, drinking and sleeping. It comes merely by ‘knowing’ that this is so. Knowledge itself is satisfaction.

## Chapter 4

### YOGA – AN INTEGRATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The doctrines behind the practice of yoga, whatever be their background and theoretical foundation, come to almost a unanimous conclusion that the novel adventure known as yoga is an indispensable in the life of a human being, and it principally consists in what may be called 'integration of being'. Now, this suggestion that one's being has to be integrated – and this is precisely yoga – this principle, at the same time, implies that the final aim of the 'being' of anything or anyone is the enhancement of that very 'being' itself, a sort of augmenting of the 'being' of one's own self in such a way that the achievement of integration leaves nothing left over as something yet to be achieved, known, contacted, realised, or experienced.

There is a sort of integration already established in our psychophysical personality – we are not disintegrated individuals – due to which fact, we seem to be thinking in a sane manner. We maintain a kind of physical health, which is what may be regarded as the harmony of the physiological system; we seem to be thinking cogently, logically, sensibly, which is also a sort of integration of our psyche; and above all, we maintain that sort of integration in ourselves which makes us feel convinced that we are not dismembered as a composite of parts, but an undivided something. This is the reason behind our conviction that we exist, and we have no doubt about it. This conviction of one's own existence is a state of consciousness, and it is integrated because it has no doubts about its own self. It is not schizophrenically divided within itself, and no one feels like a bundle of differentiated parts. That we do not consider ourselves as discrete elements artificially brought together into a tentative completeness is a proof that we have a sort of integration in our own selves. This is psychophysical or social sanity, which is our present condition – the state of affairs in which we are. But this is not enough.

Yoga considers that there are larger dimensions of integration, areas of contact which have not yet been explored by our present little integration of individuality; and the existence of such larger dimensions of a wider form of integration is what keeps us restless from birth to death. The satisfactions with which we are acquainted in life are the consequence of a little bit of integration that we have achieved. By 'integration' we are to understand a sort of harmony that obtains between ourselves and anything with which we are connected, in whatever manner that connection be. Our satisfactions, our joys, and our securities are direct results of this harmony which seems to be there obtaining between ourselves and the outer atmosphere – call it social, or anything else – and also within our own selves in the layers of our own personality. This is why we are satisfied.

But we are also dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction in life is the other side of the fact of our existence, which arises on account of there being something more to be achieved than what we have apparently achieved in our life. What we seem to have achieved is the source of our joy, and what we have not achieved is the cause of our unhappiness.

So, yoga is a practical science, though it is founded on a very important system of theory, doctrine – a logical foundation, we may say. As far as you are concerned – students in this academy – we need not go into the details of the theory, because that is too much for you. We shall confine ourselves to the actual practical side of what you consider as yoga, for which you seem to be moving from centres to centres in search of That which you are seeking unknowingly.

The aim of yoga, therefore, is an integration of consciousness. This is artificially achieved by our attempts at possession of desirable things, and a tentative conviction we entertain in our own selves that the possession is secure and we have nothing more to ask for in this world. The presence

of something which we have not yet obtained, and yet seems to be there expecting an answer from us in regard to our relation to it, keeps us insecure. So far as the satisfied human being is concerned, it may safely be said that the so-called satisfactions of human nature, if they give the indication of there being a completeness in themselves, would also show that their source is insecure, unfounded.

It is only the discriminating consciousness that feels dissatisfied with its present achievements. Ignorance is bliss, and when we know nothing about what lies ahead of us, and we are not even conscious of there being anything at all beyond our possessions and our areas of operation and action, we are kept in a state of ignorance. This ignorance also brings a sort of joy, because of the disconnection of consciousness from the awareness of there being something beyond itself. So, the ignorant person is happy, and we too are happy, though we know very well that our very physical existence here is not secure. It is a terrible insecurity in which we are placed, and the next moment's fate of our physical existence is not known to any wise man in the world; yet, we are happy. This is an instance of how ignorance can be bliss.

However, yoga is that art of awakening the sleeping consciousness of the human individual to the fact of there being something beyond its present location and area of action, and making it really integrated. We have to be very slow in trying to understand what 'integration' means. What do we mean by this word, which we are mentioning again and again? What is yoga, then? It is a communion that is not merely established as a sort of external achievement, but an inward attunement which is directly experienced in relation to that which is beyond and above the present level of conscious experience.

This is something like what goes by the name of 'intuition', in a very, very specific sense. It is a direct entry into the object, so-called, of consciousness – an object, which

need not necessarily be a physical something. By 'object', we have to understand here anything that lies outside consciousness as the content thereof. A content which cannot be assimilated into consciousness but remains outside it somehow, with which the consciousness has to struggle to establish a sort of relationship – this is our present life. We know very well that the world of people, the world of things, the world of nature, is outside our consciousness; and yet, we cannot rest quiet by merely being aware that it is outside our consciousness. We are terribly insecure by being aware that there is something outside the purview of our consciousness, and we wish to abolish this insecure feeling in us by imagining that this object is not outside us.

A person who is intensely in love with something abolishes the insecurity that is apparently there, arisen out of the independence of that object in respect of the experiencing consciousness. A person who is hateful in his attitude also is engaged in a similar act of abolishing the feeling of insecurity arisen on account of a hateful thing, by engaging himself in that procedure of behaviour by which the object does not any more exist as an outside something. I do not know if I have mentioned to you that in love as well as in hatred, we are engaged in a single operation – namely, the abolition of the independence of the object, and an insistence that it is no more there outside us. In love, we absorb it into our consciousness, and it is no more there outside us. In hatred, we try to abolish it in some way or the other, by various means, and it is no more there as a contending party.

Consciousness cannot brook the presence of anything outside it; the whole question boils down to this issue. We cannot tolerate the presence of anything else, but we cannot help being conscious of there being something outside us also. So, there is a tentative, artificial adjustment which the human consciousness makes with everything around it, which is what is called social concourse. It does not mean that we are friendly with anything. But we know very well

that we cannot help it. There are occasions when we cannot establish this friendly reconciliation with objects, for reasons known to our own self. Then, we retaliate, and create a circumstance wherein again we are under an impression that we are integrated, in the sense that the object outside the consciousness is not there. In circumstances where it is possible for us to abolish the existence of that object by absorbing it into our own self by love, affection, and converting it into a satellite, as it were – a subordinate of our consciousness – we are again integrated artificially. 'Artificially' is the word to be underlined. A real integration is not established anywhere in human life.

Thus, no human being can be said to be really secure and happy. There is only an imaginary satisfaction we are creating – a fool's paradise, as it were, is this world. We seem to be quite secure, happy and comfortable because we have created a fool's paradise around ourselves, in which we are ruling like masters. This is a fool's paradise because it is not really a paradise. It is not real, because no real integration has been established by our consciousness in respect of the atmosphere around it – call it people, call it things, call it the world of nature.

Yoga does not tell us to be satisfied with this artificial integration. It is seeking to establish real integration. Again, to come to the point, what is real integration? It is not a tentative adjustment that consciousness makes with its atmosphere by love or hatred or by political manoeuvres, but by a real embracing of the very being of that object – an embrace wherein the subjective consciousness and the object so-called do not any more exist as two entities, two persons, two terms of a relation. There is no relation whatsoever; it is a relationless widening of the dimension of our being. When we widen our dimension, we exist as a non-separate, indivisible, secure something, and not merely in a state of artificial extension of our dimension – as is the case with a rich man, for instance, or a political ruler whose

jurisdiction or dimension of existence is artificially expanded to the extent of the area of his operation. A king or a political administrator is integrated very, very artificially with the area which he rules, and the rich man is artificially integrated to the extent which his wealth can go. But no one can possess wealth, because the wealth is something outside the consciousness of one's being. The possession of wealth and the security that one feels in its possession is totally artificial, because one can be dispossessed of it in a second. So is the case with land, property, and political power.

The power of yoga is a different thing altogether. It is a power which is identical with our very existence itself, and not because people have voted for us as a political leader. It is not a political power that we are wielding, because we can be rid of it in a moment if we get fewer vote. So is the case with wealth of any kind. We can be robbed of all the wealth we have, and we will be a pauper in a moment. But the power of yoga is that of which we cannot be dispossessed at any time. Our strength lies not in what we possess, but in what we are. Yoga is, therefore, that sort of integration of being, whereby our state of existence – what we 'are' – becomes larger than it is now. We are something more than what we are now. Remember these words. We do not become larger by possession or by reaching up to a distant space by travelling geographically or astronomically. The power of yoga is the power of our being itself. It arises on account of what we are, and not what we have. What we have has no sense, because we really cannot have anything in this world, since nothing can be possessed in the sense of an external object.

Consciousness refuses to be artificially and externally associated with anything outside it because, basically, yoga tells us that our being is infinite. It is not a finite dimension that we are seeking to achieve; it is an unlimited dimension that we are asking for. This is the reason why nothing that is given to us can make us happy. May the world be ours, but

we are still unhappy, because we know that there are more things than this world. Finally, even if the whole universe is under our possession, we may be cut off by death, and we do not know what happens to us at that time. The fact that our psychophysical existence can be wiped out in a moment by operations which are beyond our control is also a feature which demonstrates the artificiality of the way in which we are living, and the non-yogic way in which people conduct themselves.

What is yoga, then? It is that sort of expanding the 'being' of our consciousness. It is not the expanding of the consciousness of possession of anything; it is not to become a rich person, and it is not to become a very important person in the world in the eyes of people. Nothing of the kind is yoga. It is to become important in a different sense altogether – 'important', because that which is 'not you' becomes 'you'. The *anatman*, as they call it – the not-self, or that which is not at all us – which is threatening us, and which we would like to subdue and make a part of ourselves, that ceases to be 'that which we have to deal with externally'. We are struggling, actually, with our own higher nature. All our struggles, finally, are struggles with our own selves. It is not a struggle with people, it is not a struggle with things or the world outside, because the people around, the things around, the world – all these things that we call by these names and terminologies – are areas where we ourselves will find ourselves one day or the other, because our jurisdiction exceeds the limit of the present location of our consciousness.

If this had not been the case, we would be totally satisfied with everything that we have and anything that we are; there would be no need to think anything or do anything, and there would be no needs of any kind at all. But the world is full of needs, and it is nothing but that. The needs arise on account of the fact that our existence is finite, and we want to break through this finitude by any method that is available to us.

But all these methods that we employed, and we are employing now in the pursuit of a non-finite being of ourselves, have failed throughout history.

Yoga has a new method altogether, and that method finally hinges upon what is called meditation. It is, of course, the last stage in yoga, but it has its impact upon the lower stages also. Though the finale of the education career is the achievement of some perfection in one's personality, the characteristics of the educational process have something to do with even the lowest stage of education. They are not unconnected. The means is not unrelated to the end. So, whether it is meditation or the inner communion with Ultimate Reality that yoga is, this ultimate aim has its characteristics impressed upon the lower stages of yoga also. In a way, therefore, the final structure of the universe or the ultimate nature of Reality has very much concern with the lowest level of experience.

The Real is not ultimate in the sense of a distant or remote object. It is logically remote, but not physically remote. The distance that we feel between ourselves and that which we wish to achieve in yoga is logical, not geographical. It is not far away in the sense of several millions of kilometres or light years. It is as far away from us as the waking state is away from dream state. There is a large distinction, of course, and a difference between dream and waking – a world of difference. Yet, we know the difference is logical, not physical. Dream and waking are not two different locations physically.

Therefore, inasmuch as the distance between our present consciousness and the state which yoga wishes to attain is only logical, and not physical, there is a great hope for us. It is in this sense that we say that Reality is immanent in every one of the degrees of its expression. It is immanent in the sense that there cannot be a real distance between the aim – the goal, the end – and the means. The distance is not like between Rishikesh and Delhi; it is like the distance

between our childhood and our present state of maturity. There is a distance, of course. We were small babies many years back, and now we are grown-up individuals. There is a distance, but that distance is not measurable mathematically by foot rulers or any kind of measuring rods. It is a different kind of distance altogether, the distance between ignorance and knowledge. What is the distance? There is a large distance, of course, but yet we know what sort of distance it is.

Thus, the distance between ignorance and wisdom is the distance between you and God. This is the distance between your present state of consciousness and that state which you are trying to attain in yoga. So, be happy that you are really not far away from it. You need not travel with visas from one country to another country; no such need is there. It is sitting on your nose, and you have only to open your eyes that it is sitting there. But, this is precisely the comfort that yoga gives, and also the difficulty that is before us. Nothing can be more comforting than to realise that everything is with us, but nothing can be more difficult than to handle our own selves. We can handle everybody. The whole army can be handled by one man, but he cannot handle himself because the nearest thing is also the most difficult thing. The nearer a thing is, the more difficult it becomes to understand. Distant things, of course, lend a sort of charm and attraction, but when they come near, they become formidable objects. And the nearest thing is your own self, and you are the most formidable difficulty before you. This is why yoga is not easy, though it is the most comforting thing because you are handling your own self.

How can you have any difficulty with yourself? "I am 'I'. So, I am very happy. If it is a question of handling my own self, there is no problem before me. I can handle myself." But that is also the problem, because nobody can be more difficult than you yourself. Here is the majesty and the beauty of yoga, and also the terror behind it.

Thus, you will find that there is a great difference between ordinary learning and the acquaintance with the practical science of yoga. The practice of yoga is not an ordinary learning, like a science; it is not a reading of a book, or gathering some information or obtaining a certificate; it is nothing of the kind. It is living in a particular manner, and living in consonance with the conditions prevailing in that logical superior state which is what you are seeking. The characteristics of your higher being are to determine the way of your present state of living.

What you call ethics, or a moral way of living, is nothing but the determination of the lower conditions of living by the characteristics of the immediately higher state of affairs. It is not a social mandate that you call moral life or good conduct. Nobody is asking you to do anything or behave in a particular way. It is a necessity arisen on account of the immanence of a higher dimension of your being in the present state of your consciousness. So, morality is your own law. It is not something that is told to you by somebody else. A consonance of your present dimension of consciousness with its own higher area is goodness, morality, ethics, servicefulness, and so on, is worthwhile as a value in this life.

Finally, you will find that the most important object in this world is yourself. You will be surprised to hear that you are an object. In what sense are you an object? Here we have a great philosophical difficulty, as it were: "What do you mean by an object?" An object is that which you wish to study, investigate into, and know fully. But, in all methods employed by science as it is understood today, the object is always considered as something totally unconnected with the experiencing or observing subject. This is a peculiar feature in classical scientific attitude: the object has to be totally cut off from the scientist. It is impossible for the scientist to observe himself through a telescope or even through a microscope. He is sure that what he sees through these instruments is not himself. How is it possible for a

person to see himself through a microscope? He sees something different. Therefore, there is a conditioning of the very methodology adopted in science by the assumption that the object of observation and experiment is totally outside the observing subject. This is an unfounded hypothesis because it appears that the world is finally not made in such a way that things are alien foreigners before you, whom you have to look upon with a suspicious attitude; so why do you experiment on a thing?

It is not possible to assume this sort of classical scientific attitude in yoga in respect of the world, because you are in the world, as I mentioned sometime back. But the scientist is not in the object. This is very unfortunate for him. He, now, today realises, perhaps, that he is also in the object to some extent, which has broken down the foundations of classical physics and landed our scientist friend in a new field of knowledge, where he has been compelled to awaken himself to a vista of 'objects' - which, far from being totally disconnected or unconnected from him, are such that he is participating in their very existence.

While once upon a time science, or even commonsense, might have told us that we have to deal with the world, now we are told that we are not going to deal with the world; we have to participate in the world. The world participates with us to the extent we will be able to participate in it. The world is our friend to the extent we are its friend; and we know very well that in a true state of friendship, the differentiation in thinking usually noticed between two persons ceases, and two minds think as one mind. A friend is one who thinks exactly as you think. If he thinks in a different way, to that extent the friendship is conditioned. Unconditioned friendship is a unity of thoughts into a single operation of the psyche. Likewise, we may say that our friendly attitude towards the world - or any object whatsoever, if we think it is worthwhile in any way - would require an endeavour to think as the world perhaps would expect us to think in

relation to it, as a particle or an atom would expect us to develop an attitude towards it. The world no more remains as an object of experimentation and observation; the world is there as our protector, our father, our mother, our friend, philosopher and guide – our own self, in an awakened state.

Therefore, the cooperation of our present state of consciousness with the higher degrees of its own being – it being the aim of yoga – implies our cooperation and attitude of harmony with anything that is wider than us. It may be human society, it may be the world of nature, or it may even be the world of angels and celestials. All that we regard as outside us or beyond us becomes that mysterious something with which we have to confront in such a way that we abolish the unfriendly attitude that we earlier developed with it. Yoga is that attitude of communion by which we handle things, and the atmosphere or environment around us, as something which is also immanently present in our present state of being. So, again to repeat, yoga takes us to that field of performance of duty wherein, throughout the various stages of our ascent in the attainment of this purpose, we visualise larger and larger areas of our own self until, in the attainment or the achievement of the final aim of yoga, we attain to that infinitude or unlimitedness of our own being wherein an object no more remains as a contending element.

Often it is said that this is equivalent to the establishment of the consciousness in its own self. This is a very pithy statement that is often made in yoga parlance: “Yoga is the establishment of consciousness in its own self.” You would be wondering, “Is it not established now? Is my consciousness not established in itself just now? Is it outside me?” It is certainly outside you. It is not in itself. It is ‘outside’ itself, in the sense that it is conscious of something outside it. The consciousness of anything outside consciousness is the aberration of consciousness and the non-resting of consciousness in itself. As long as you, as a consciousness or

centre of awareness, are aware of that which is not yourself, your consciousness is not in a state of yoga.

Thus, you are to struggle throughout your life, and not only for a few months or years. You have to lead a dedicated life of organically struggling – not mechanically striving – in order to establish this union with your own higher psychic forces, and finally with your own conscious being, until the finale of your conscious being becomes indistinguishable from what you may consider as an unlimitedness of achievement, beyond which you need not have to struggle to achieve anything.

These are difficult things for the brain to receive, and more difficult to put into practice in daily life. But you will find that it is not so difficult as it is made to appear, provided you are sincerely asking for it – and not merely making fun of it, or mocking at it, or experimenting with it, and just looking upon it as an object of diversion, intellectually or sentimentally – because the aim of yoga is not an abstraction lying beyond the ken of your present living. It is a solid reality, more real than the solidity and concreteness that you seem to be feeling in your own present state of existence.

You require a Guru for all these purposes, a living Guru, because if you are really honest in this field of practice, you will find, as you move further and further, that you will have to confront greater and greater difficulties because you are facing features of reality with which you are not acquainted, and the guidance of one who has trodden the path is absolutely necessary. Any sort of egoism and a feeling of self-satisfaction born of unnecessary self-affirmation is uncalled for in yoga. Utter humility, submission, and a feeling of sympathy with the higher values of life are necessary. You will certainly succeed if you are honest and sincere.

## Chapter 5

### MAINTAINING ONE'S POSITION

It is a well known fact that in the practice of yoga, maintaining oneself in a position is pre-eminently important. The maintaining of a required position is sometimes called *asana*. You all perform *asanas*, or yoga exercises. These exercises are positions maintained by you and, in a very significant sense, the whole of yoga may be said to be the maintenance of a specific position.

This word 'position' has to be understood in a very comprehensive sense. It has a vast implication, and it covers practically everything that is required of you – though, in common parlance, people understand by 'position' only a particular posture of the physical body. Though the posture of the physical body is a requisite position and it is essential in yoga, yet this understanding of the posture or position in yoga as a physical exercise does not include all its suggestions and meanings because you will certainly agree that your life consists of more than just what happens to your body. The incidents concurrent with the bodily position and the occurrences commensurate with bodily activity – or, for the matter of that, anything related merely to the physical body bereft of any other relation – cannot be said to include everything that you are. Nobody believes: 'I am only the body; there is nothing else in me'. If there is something in you other than the body, then yoga posture is not exhausted merely by physical exercise; but it could be said to be a complete system of yoga if you are only the body, and there is nothing else in you.

Now, what is it that you are made of? That substance, that stuff, that peculiar something that you are or you are made of is what is to be kept in position, in a state of balance. You have heard it said that yoga is a state of balance – but what sort of balance? With what are you setting yourself in balance? Though this is not difficult to understand, it is not easy to grasp at one stroke.

One may imagine that to know one's own self is the easiest thing, because one's own self is the nearest thing to oneself, one's own self is completely under one's control, and nothing in the world can be easier than to know one's own self. But, nothing can be more difficult. As I pointed out the other day, the nearer an object comes to you, the more difficult it becomes to understand it. You hold opinions of a particular type in an external relation you maintain with things outside, but you find that such a relation cannot be maintained when the object becomes a proximate something, such that at a particular moment, you may not find it possible to see any difference or any distinction between yourself and that which you try to know or understand; and you are trying to know your own self, to understand what you yourself are.

The understanding has the necessity to keep an object before its eye in order to understand, and you cannot understand unless there is something which is to be understood. If there is nothing that you can understand or nothing is there to be understood, the very meaning of understanding is ruled out. What are you going to understand when you are trying to understand yourself? Where is the object? And which is the subject there? When I see an object, I say, "I see this. I know this table, this desk, this person, this something that is in front of me"; but I am not in front of me, so I cannot make such statements in regard to my own self. I cannot say, "I am seeing myself"; nor can I say, "I am touching myself". These statements, which usually apply to persons and things outside, do not apply to our own self.

Hence, this understanding may not be adequate for the purpose of understanding your own self. All knowledge fails when it becomes a means to the knowledge of one's own self, though it becomes a great success when it is a weapon to know what is not itself. There is this peculiar difficulty which is easy to miss, because of the fact that the only thing that we miss in our daily occupations is our own self. We have

everything in the world except ourselves. We lose ourselves first in order that we may gain others. The gaining of another is not possible unless you lose yourself first, and it is up to you to know whether it is worthwhile to lose your own self in order that you may gain something. If you have already lost yourself, who are you to gain something else? What sort of 'you' can possess another thing, inasmuch as you have already lost yourself? The object that you possess will also be a substanceless, balloon-like emptiness, because the possessor thereof himself has become empty due to the loss of personality. This was a great question which Draupadi posed in the court of the Kauravas: "How can Yudhishtira lose me, inasmuch as he has already lost himself?" To this question no answer can be given, and nobody gave an answer. Likewise, how is it possible for anyone to possess anything in the world after having lost oneself totally? The object that is possessed also will be an ephemeral appearance which has no content or substance.

These ideas will make you cogitate a little bit on the difficulty that you are facing in this great adventure you call 'acquiring knowledge'. It is not an easy thing. You may stand on your head for years, but you will not succeed because there is a basic problem that is ingrained in our own existence. Existence itself is a kind of evil, in a very highly philosophical sense, and this is perhaps the quintessence of Buddha's message: "Existence itself is an evil. You have to be rid of existence." In a different way, Schopenhauer said the same thing: "Existence is evil. Be rid of it."

What sort of existence is evil? This is not clear to us. The enigmatic term 'existence' can cut like a double-edged sword; it can take us both this way and that way. And the existence that we attribute to our own selves in our operations in daily life is mostly an artificially concocted related existence, not a substantive in the proper sense of the term. A thing that stands merely because it is related to something else, really does not stand by itself. Most of our relationships are the

very values of our life. What we consider as worthwhile and valuable in life is that which has been produced out of a kind of relationship that we establish with something else – a contact that there is between ourselves and others. There is, for instance, political importance, economic importance, social importance, or any kind of value that you attribute to your own self in relation to something else – which means to say, inasmuch as you are subservient to something else by means of your hanging on to it by relation, the values that you obtain in this world are also hollow. They are not substantives; they cannot stand on themselves. Thus, mankind today may be said to be living a totally artificial life which is bereft of any significance – bereft of significance because of the fact that it seems to be hanging on something else for its substance. Therefore, we say the world is relative, and not absolute.

Inasmuch as one thing is hanging on the other, and ‘that’ thing is influencing ‘this’ – things seem to be standing in a position by mutual relationship. We cannot say that things are standing by themselves. The planets and the other heavenly bodies that seem to be hanging in space are maintaining their position due to the orbit which they have been forced to chalk out by means of a mutual cohesive influence maintained by what is called a cosmic gravitational pull. As I mentioned the other day, the bicycle maintains a position only when it is moving; if it is not moving, it will fall down. In this way, it appears that our satisfaction with any kind of stability in our life here is based on a kind of relationship which itself is relative. Thus, an absolute value is non-existent in this world, and we cannot know things as they really are by any amount of outward relation.

It has been felt that we have no relation to our own selves, and we must, at least, be supposed to exist in a relationless manner: “I have no relation to my own self.” In this sense one may say that one’s own self is a non-relational substantive. This is a point that is made out by deep thinkers

and philosophers, and due to this feeling of theirs, they concluded that nothing in the world can be known as it is in itself unless one knows one's own self – because to try to know anything else first without a knowledge of one's own self would be to be contented merely with what is relative and not absolute. By 'relative', we mean that which is not at all valuable in itself – it is valuable only because it is connected to something else. The father is important because the son is a big judge or a collector; the son is important because of a relation with a vaster organisation to which he belongs; a person is important because he has some money in the treasury. Something or other is there which keeps the person in a state of imbalance with his own self. Imbalance is that condition where we do not stand by our own selves, and hang on something else for our existence. This is not possible, because while on the one hand we are asking for permanent satisfaction, we seek this permanent satisfaction by means of an impermanent relationship that is the only thing possible in this world.

All relations are impermanent. Why they are impermanent is a very difficult theme, into which we need not enter just now. It is enough for the time being to know that it is impossible for anyone to know things as they really are unless there is a means of knowing things as they really are. Nothing that is perceptible or cognitional – nothing that is related to mere sensory activity or even mental operation – can be considered as a proper means here in this objective, because all these instruments of knowledge that we have, the mind included, maintain a sort of knowledge position in respect of things by a mediate connection that they establish between themselves and the object. It is not an immediate relationship; it is a mediate relationship. An outward link is created in order that an object may be known in terms of this link, so that what is known is not the object as it is in itself, but only a feature that is coloured by the character or the nature of the means or the link that is between oneself and the object.

What is the solution, finally? Know yourself first, and then you will know how to know other things. But, as I mentioned at the outset, how would you know yourself? To know anything, the knowledge has to stand as the subject of another object. You are not the object of knowledge of yourself, because you are the subject of knowledge. You are the knower. If you are the knower, how will you know yourself? If you can grasp some sense out of this peculiar position – that you have to know yourself, in spite of your not being an object of yourself – you would know what yoga is.

However, here comes the meaning of what I started saying: yoga is the maintenance of a position. And all that I told you now in a few words is a preparatory introduction to what ‘position’ can mean in yoga. It is the position that ‘you’ maintain, and you have to know what ‘you’ are in order that you may maintain the requisite position in yoga.

You may be content with saying, “I am only what the photographic camera can see in me”; and you know what it sees. But, on a little analysis of your own position during leisure hours, you will realise that you have values in your own self; and your physical features, which alone are seen in a photograph, cannot be regarded as exhausting the characters of yourself. Do you know that even if the body is robust, healthy, and perhaps happy, you can be unhappy for other reasons? When you say “I am unhappy”, you do not mean the body is unhappy. It may be strong like an elephant, and yet the person may be unhappy for a reason which is not easy to know because if one could know why one is unhappy, one need not be unhappy at all. One would throw out all the factors that cause unhappiness if this could be possible. But this is not easily available. The causative factors of unhappiness are not easily available to anyone because they sit on the very brain of the person and, therefore, the very thinking process is conditioned by these factors that cause unhappiness. Thus, you find that the maintenance of yoga posture, finally, in the sense of the yoga system, is a hard

thing to do. This is why people had to work through the sweat of their brow for years and years to understand what all this finally means.

The thing that 'you' are cannot be merely the body. Even a person with a little common sense will know this. I just mentioned casually, through the analogy of happiness and unhappiness, that the bodily happiness need not be your happiness, and the bodily unhappiness need not be your unhappiness. Even if surgeons cut off limbs of the body, which cannot be regarded as happiness of the body, a person can still be happy; and a person can be in a condition of a total ruin, for other internal reasons, even if the body is perfectly healthy.

Thus, our life is more internal than external. Our external life appears to be a very great thing for us because of the fact that the internal factors do not intrude much. It is something like our feeling very happy and satisfied merely because our creditors do not show their faces. A debtor may be happy as long as the creditor does not show his face, but when he shows his face, immediately the debtor's face falls, and the reason for his unhappiness is very clear. The outward show of joy vanishes in a moment when internal factors displace themselves and create an imbalance in the system.

Now, you may wonder: "Am I happy only when the mind is happy, and is this all that I expect in this world? Or is there anything else in me?" Many people imagine that mental peace is very important, and they seem to be very clear in their minds when they say this – but really, they are clear about nothing. The words "I want peace of mind" are merely words; the meaning of these words is not very clear, and cannot be very clear, because you cannot know what you mean by 'peace', or 'happiness', or 'unhappiness'. You cannot easily know what happiness and unhappiness mean, if you attribute your happiness and unhappiness to factors other than yourself: "If I get something, I am happy. If I do not get it, I am unhappy." So, you feel that you are a slave of that

which is supposed to make you happy or unhappy. Are you a slave? Would anyone like to be a slave of anybody? But, all those who imagine that they will be happy only due to the possession of objects are utter slaves, and this also applies to the causes of unhappiness. On the one hand, you cry for freedom and say you are very independent, but your 'independence' is a name that you give to a total dependence on factors other than yourself, which you think is the cause of happiness or unhappiness, whereas nothing of the kind is the truth. You make your own destiny. Your own fate is in your hands; nobody else is the cause. It is futile to argue that other people are the cause of what you are, because nobody will interfere with you, and nobody has any business with you.

But we seem to be imagining a different world before us – a world that is totally different from the world as it really is. The conditions of our internal existence, though they may appear to be mental for the time being, are something more. Ordinary lay thinking will not be able to know what is actually meant either by peace, happiness or unhappiness, because the lay mind has a simple answer: "I want this. I do not have it. Therefore, I am unhappy," and: "I wanted it. I got it. Therefore, I am happy." These are simple statements that people glibly make, as if everything is clear when these statements are made.

Your position is not merely the physical body's position. Of course it is also, at the same time, the position that the mind maintains, but there is something more than even this. The necessity for the body to maintain a particular position in yoga – or at any time, for the matter of that – arises because the mind has to maintain a particular position in order that you may be psychically happy and healthy. A psychically unhealthy person cannot be regarded as healthy, though it may appear that the body is well fed and is maintained properly. The need for a balance in the physical system arises because of its association with the mind; and vice versa, the mind is associated with the body. But the

conditions that the mind expects in order that it may be healthy, happy, or peaceful – for its wholesome existence and satisfaction – are determined by factors which are supermental. These are conditions which go beyond the mind itself. We cannot know why we wish to have peace of mind at all. Why do you cry for peace of mind? Let it not be there; what does it matter? You cannot answer this question. You very stubbornly and arrogantly assert: “I want peace of mind” – as if you know all the things in the world when you have said this, and there is nothing more to say.

The requirements of the mind in association with the body that make you a psychophysical organism – the requirements of this situation of yours – depend upon the very structure of the universe. You are not such a free person as you imagine, though there is nothing to prevent you from being ultimately free if you are going to be in a proper position and harmony with that which is the only cause of real freedom; and if you accept that you are inseparable from the inner constituents of the universe – being yourself a constituent factor in the very make-up of the universe – the position that the universe would expect you to maintain is the position that it itself maintains.

We are now slowly moving beyond the limits of ordinary human understanding, which satisfies itself merely with the knowledge that everything is fine if the body is well fed and the itching mind is provided with the tentative joys which it seeks from fleeting objects. But even these fleeting objects appearing to give a temporary satisfaction to the psychophysical organism – even this appearance – is due to something that is happening in the universe as a whole. The causes are something else. But we are blissfully ignorant of the causes, not only of our happiness and unhappiness, but even of our very existence here in this world for this short span of life. What makes it possible for us to be alive in this world and be breathing? Is it under our control entirely? You know very well that you do not breathe because of your

power over the breath, that it has something to say independently. The heart does not function because you are working very hard for it; you have nothing to say about it, and it is your master entirely, as is the breath. There are things which keep us alive, and yet remain totally independent of what we imagine we are. Likewise, there are umpteen factors which range beyond our sense perception and mental understanding, which decide what is expected of us. But we decide ourselves what is expected of us, as if we are omniscient: "I know what is required of me, and you are nobody to tell me." "I cannot accept anybody's advice because I know all things." "I am not prepared to listen to anybody's advice because I think for myself and do not wish to listen to anybody." If these are the outlooks generally maintained in your life, then you naturally pay the price for it, and you cannot excuse yourself merely because you do not know the law of the universe.

Law is impartial in every sense of the term; it has neither friend nor enemy. When I speak of law, I actually refer to the manner in which the universe operates. The system that is maintained by the universe throughout the stages of what we call its evolutionary process is the law that it maintains simultaneously; and if we are also subject to a sort of evolutionary process because of the fact that we are inseparably contents of this process, it is incumbent upon us to follow this law of the evolutionary process. The universe evolves as a total whole, and not by bits or parts – even as, when we grow from the state of a child to a more adult condition, it is the whole of the personality that grows, evolves. Here you have an example of what evolution means. Nothing independently, as an extraneous part, maintains a say of its own. We grow entirely. Every cell of the body participates in this process of growth, and it is not that the nose grows today, and the ears grow tomorrow, and the legs grow the day after tomorrow. There is a perpetual total action taking place in the whole organism when it grows. This is evolution as we see it daily, with our own eyes.

Likewise, evolution in a cosmical, natural, physical, or astronomical sense is also a total movement of the universe. Remember what I told you a second before: Inasmuch as the evolution you have observed in the growth of your own personality is total, and the universal evolution is total, and also at the same time because you are inseparably related to the universe in every way, your evolution and the universal evolution are one and the same. Your evolution cannot be independent of the universal evolution.

Therefore, to grow into a state of perfection, towards which is the movement of the universe by way of evolution, you have to participate as an entire personality, and not as a partial individual, with this requirement of the universe. All the layers of the universe are inside you. The human being is a cross-section of the cosmic structure. Thus, whatever is in you, is in the universe; whatever is in the universe, is also in you. It is a mutual cooperation that is taking place in an organic manner, and not merely as a cooperation of two friends. There are no two individuals here. To the system of yoga, at least, the human individual and the universe are not two things. And again, to bring in the analogy of the human organism, your fingers and toes, and your own body, are not two things. It is one thing only that we refer to by two different terms.

If the world and you are not two different things, your growth is conditioned entirely by the system that the world maintains. Thus, the position maintained in yoga – the so-called asana – is, of course, a physical position, because the physical world and the physical body are both there; but remember that the physical position is not the entire position of yours because – to repeat again – the body may be maintaining a so-called balance but, at the same time, the mind may be imbalanced.

It may look that the imbalanced mind is maintaining a physical balance, but this is not yoga exercise because the exercise called yoga asana is the posture that 'you' maintain,

and not merely the posture that the body maintains. And what are 'you'? Think a little bit about what you are. It is of course true that whatever you are is associated with this little physical body, but you are inseparably related to many other things also as a citizen of the universe. You belong to a larger government presided over by a power which has its own principles, rules, regulations and laws, operating inexorably and impartially in such a way that you cannot have a worthwhile rest even for a moment if you are not in a position of harmony with this system that operates. Any pain felt in any part of the body is a pain felt by the whole body. Any imbalance anywhere is the imbalance that is communicated to the internal core of the universe.

Thus, the yoga system takes you beyond the ordinary limits of mere social thinking, political thinking and economic thinking, to cosmical thinking. If this is not possible, yoga is also not possible. It begins with little performances, but these little performances have inside themselves, immanently and hiddenly present, the requirement of the largest and the greatest. The highest principle of universality is operating even in the littlest of our actions. This makes every action a yoga.

You have heard that there is a system of yoga called karma – karma yoga. Karma yoga means yoga of action. Your performances, your deeds, your operations, and whatever you seem to be busy with, become a yoga if these performances are the emanations of the balanced position that you are maintaining because, as you know, what you are doing is actually an expression of what you really are inside. It is not possible to be honest to one's own self by doing what is not one's own essential nature. Your action and speech are an expression of the contents of your own inner personality. Thus, the yoga exercise as a sort of activity that is visible to the eyes is a yoga, no doubt, because it is, at once, an internal position that is maintained simultaneously together with this external performance, by simultaneously maintaining a

consciousness of your requirements in the light of the law of the universe.

Yoga is a universal science. It is not a science of the laboratory or the classroom. It is not something that you do invisibly, unknown to people. There is no such thing as secret yoga. It is a public performance, in the sense that every inch in the universe will know what you are doing, just as the whole body will know what is happening to any part of the body. The consciousness of your being inseparably related to a larger operation of forces in the universe is important if your yoga exercises are to become meaningful and fruitful. You must know, therefore, that yoga exercises are not like outdoor games. They are not a public performance of any kind of known exercises. It is an internal dedication that you are performing. There is a total difference between yoga physical exercises and exercises in the form of games in the field outside.

Thus, even a yoga asana is a worship of God. It becomes a divine activity on your part because your physical body is not outside you, and you are not outside that which the universe is and that which is the ultimate controlling principle of the universe. Yoga is all life put together, and not merely one part of your life.

Hence, through the media of the performance of yoga exercises, and other systems known as *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, etc., you are gradually tuning your internal layers – together with the body, of course – with the corresponding internal layers of the universe. In every level of your attunement, you are one with the law of the universe, so there cannot be a moment's unhappiness for you. Unhappiness is a chimera; it cannot be. The world exists as an embodiment of great joy. As the Upanishads are never tired of telling us, *ananda*, bliss, is the root of this universe and, therefore, the outcome of this *ananda* cannot be *duhkha*. *Duhka* appears to be present as a sort of evil due to a

maladjustment of our personality with the requirements of the cosmos.

## Chapter 6

### BEING IN BALANCE WITH THE WORLD

*Asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana*, which are stages in the yoga system of Patanjali, mean the posture that is maintained, the harmonised flowing of the breathing process, the adjustment of sense activity with mental operations, the concentration of the mind on that which it finally seeks, and its absorption in that object. These essentially are the directly practical aspects of yoga.

We are almost entering the inner court of yoga practice when we begin with the adjustment of our personality with not only human society, but with nature itself. The earlier stages, known as *yama* and *niyama*, are concerned mainly with performing a great feat of attuning ourselves to the laws which are called social or external in the human sense of the term. These earlier stages are difficult because one cannot adjust oneself with another always and in every way. That is a great hardship. But a greater difficulty arises now, when you have to face nature itself and the constituents of your own personality, finally leading up to the total attunement of the world and yourself with the Ultimate Reality.

The point behind the practice of yoga exercises, which I tried to dilate upon in some way previously, is actually intensely practical. You may be wondering why you should be seated in a particular posture, why there should be a prescription for a pose of the body in yoga, and why it matters what pose you are in. This question arises on account of not properly grasping the relationship between the physical and physiological components of our personality with physical nature outside. We have an ingrained and inveterate habit of convincing ourselves that we have practically nothing to do with the world of nature outside. "What on Earth have I to do with the Sun, Moon and stars? What does it mean to me if the mountain is there outside, if the river is flowing or the Earth is under my feet? I am in no

way concerned with these things.” This may be the feeling of the untutored individual. But nature – the physical universe – is not so very unrelated to us as we may imagine.

Usually, with the equipment of ordinary academic understanding, this knowledge of the inner relationship of ours with the physical universe would not be practicable. Any amount of theoretical learning will not tell us what sort of connection we have with the world of nature, because this relationship is not visible to the eyes. Those who believe only in what they see with their eyes are thoroughly mistaken in their judgement of things, because the greatest principles governing existence are invisible to the eyes. The visible forms of operation are the least aspects of the law that operates in the universe. The vital elements in nature are not direct objects of sense perception. People who are totally wedded to sense activity are likely to think that the world of nature is unconnected with them, which is not true.

One of the medical systems in India, known as Ayurveda – very ably propounded by a master physician called Charaka – begins with this interesting doctrine and principle of the organic connection of physical nature with the physical system of the human being. The illnesses of the body are attributed to maladjustment of the body with the world of nature. This maladjustment takes place on account of a physical affirmation of the individual as an independent something, unconnected with nature.

Earth, water, fire, air and ether may be said to be the basic building blocks of what we call the world of nature. Do you believe that you have nothing to do with them, that the five elements are left to their own fate, and we are lords of our own kingdom here? This is not so. This physical body of ours is nothing but a form assumed by certain parts proportionately taken from the five elements. We have in our physical body nothing but what these five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether are made of. These are in our body, and these are the substances of our physical body. So

Charaka, the great physician par excellence, makes out that health – at least in the purely physical and physiological sense – is a harmony of the physical constituents of the personality with the physical constituents of the world outside. We sneeze, we have an ache, we have temperature, we feel excessive heat or excessive cold. All these difficulties are attributable to the difficulty of our physical and physiological system in feeling any sense of kinship with the world of nature outside. This is to say a few words about the medical or the health aspect of the relationship between the physical body and the physical universe.

However, our point here is a little different. It is not merely medical. It is something beyond the visible requirements of our physical personality. There is a necessity for you to maintain a balance with the world outside even physically, if you are to have peace of mind and what is called happiness of the psychophysical organism. You cannot quarrel with nature and be happy. Nature is not merely your parent, but an inseparable part of your larger physical dimension. There is practically no distance between your physical body and the world of nature outside. The mountain may look like a distant object, the Sun and the Moon and the stars are all far away from you, and everything is physically remote from the point of view of your sensory perception – but nature does not get exhausted merely with what you see with your eyes.

Nature includes even space, and you should not be under the impression that what you call space is a non-entity, that it is just a vacuum, a kind of emptiness in which the visible gross elements are contained as if in a cup. Space, so-called, is not a cup in which the world of nature is contained. This was the old classical view of scientists in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Even Newton, the great man, believed that space and time have no connection with the world of nature, that the world of nature is the visible concrete substance physically felt – earth, water, fire, and

perhaps air. But today we are awakened by these observant minds that space and time, which do not appear to have any related connection with the visible forms of nature, are involved in the very substance of physical nature. Space and time are not outside the mountains and the rivers; they are internally woven with the very substantiality, the very existence of what are called the visible elements, to such an extent that scientists are forced to believe that even these so-called hard earthy material objects such as brick and stone, table and chair, and so on, are only configurations of space-time. You will be flabbergasted to hear that a hard brick which can break your head is made up of only space-time. How is it possible? Well, this is a matter for you to go into detail as a sort of diversion, at least.

The idea is that subtle features are the causes of gross things. According to the Indian cosmological system also, space is not emptiness. It is only the child's mind that believes that space is unconnected with physical objects and our physical bodies. Cosmological doctrines of Indian philosophy hold that there was an evolutionary process of the physical elements. Space was the first element, and time went with it. A vibration that was set up in what is called space became motion, and got condensed into what is called air. Space, time and motion are the original existences in physical nature. Motion does not mean motion of some physical object; it is a vibration, and it should not be connected with hard substances. Electricity is not a hard substance like a brick which you can touch and feel, but you know that it exists as something more powerful than even solid bricks and steel rods. Therefore, vibrations are not ethereal abstractions; they can produce stronger effects than even steel rods or nuggets of hard substances.

Space, time and motion are considered to be the original conditions of everything in the physical universe. Air is a concrete visible form taken by these vibrations, which are not visible practically. Friction produced by the movement of

air became the cause of what is called heat, and heat has various potencies in itself. It condenses into various forms of visible substances. You must have heard from at least one school of astronomers that this Earth was once upon a time a part of the Sun. It was chopped off from the body of the Sun by certain occurrences, whatever be the cause of these occurrences. Some believe that a large star came near the Sun, and the magnetic influence that it exerted on the Sun was so intense that a chip was cut off from it; and there are others who believe that there was a gyrating motion of the Sun which caused a piece of it to come off. Whatever be the reason, the belief is that this Earth is a child of the Sun. And we know what the Sun is made of. It is tremendous, unthinkable heat, rising beyond 6000 degrees Celsius.

The astronomers' conclusion is that the Earth was a boiling mass that was gyrating in space in this terribly heated condition for some millions of years; and even today the centre of the Earth, called the barysphere, is fire, molten mass, due to which we feel more and more heat as we go nearer and nearer to the centre of the Earth. When we go above the Earth, we feel chillness because we are away from its centre. The centre of the Earth is said to be boiling even today, and this sometimes becomes the cause of eruptions such as earthquakes, etc. The original heated condition of the Earth had to take an immense, almost immeasurable extent of time to cool down, and it became a liquid mass – which are our oceans, and everything that is liquid. Earth came afterwards. The liquid portion, the watery element, is the consequence of the cooling down of the heated stuff of the physical element. Water condenses into ice, and it hardened into what is called the crust of the Earth.

The Indian cosmological scheme to which I made reference also believes in the dissolution of the cosmos – that as things came, so also they will have to go. We have to return to that place from where we came. Astronomers believe that the principle of entropy, a cooling down of the

cosmos by an equidistribution of heat, will mean the end of all things. Whatever be these doctrines, the Indian cosmological scheme mentions that a day will come when the drama of the universe will cease, whether by entropy, as physicists tell us, or by any other reason such as the will of God or the cyclic motion of nature. Whatever be the reason, the Earth will get dissolved in water.

We know that water is nothing but hydrogen and oxygen, and a proportionate mixing up of hydrogen and oxygen becomes water. And we know there is hydrogen and oxygen in space, in air. Fortunately, they do not mix in the proportionate combination required to produce water. Perhaps the entire gaseous element will get mixed up in this proportion, and the whole thing will become water. Nature has mysteries that we cannot even contemplate in our minds. Earth gets dissolved in water, water gets dried up by fire, fire will be extinguished by air, and air will be lost in space.

Now, space is not an emptiness. This is the point that we have to understand very clearly. Thus, even our body which is so heavy, weighing so many kilograms, is ultimately space-time. It is a puckered kink of space-time, as it were, which looks like a heavy substance, and just because it is heavy it need not be solid, because heaviness is a feature felt by the pull of gravitation. Otherwise, there will be no heaviness at all. Therefore, heaviness is not a criterion for the substantiality or solidity of an object; it is an illusion produced by the power of gravitation. And even solidity is supposed to be an illusion created by electrical repulsions produced by the contact of that of which our body is made and that which we touch. Well, these are interesting things into which we can research in more detail.

The point, finally, that comes out of all this analysis is that the physical body is not outside nature. It is pointless for us to imagine that we are outside nature, that we can go scot free: let anything happen to the world, let anything be taking place in the natural physical world, and we can still be happy.

No! What does yoga tell us here? What does Patanjali, at least, speak to us? Yoga, as you all know very well, is a communion that is expected to be established between ourselves and Reality.

From a purely psychological or psychoanalytic point of view, reality is social existence. When psychoanalysts tell us that mental illnesses arise on account of conflict with reality, they practically or entirely mean the irreconcilability of our ideas, our desires, our passions, our emotions, with the norms prescribed by the society of people outside. Whether they are right or wrong, or you are right or wrong, is a different matter. The question of ethics does not arise here. It is a principle of irreconcilability between what you think is proper and what society thinks is proper which causes illness. As you have not the strength to fight with society and its regulations, you try to be submissive to these forces exerted upon you by society; and in this assumed submissiveness of yours, you drive your passions and inclinations, your desires and longings, and all your impulses into the subconscious and unconscious levels of your psyche. You become an embodiment of tension, craziness, erratic behaviour, and complexes of every type, and you are no more a normal human being. This opinion of psychoanalysts is a great truth on one level of analysis. Hence, according to psychoanalysts, reality is social existence with which you have to be in harmony. This is a fact that is established and accepted by the yoga system also; and by *yamas* we mean nothing other than what Freud, Adler and Jung have said.

However, this is not the end of the matter. The Reality that we are speaking of, with which you have to set yourselves in tune, is not merely social law – though it is also a very important thing, and you know what will happen if you fight with human society. You do not want to do that, because you will not exist afterwards. But, there is something more than all these things. The yoga system prescribes a rule or a norm by which you have to be in harmony with the

reality not only of human society, but also of the world of nature. Can you believe that you can be happy merely by being in tune with human laws but being opponents of natural laws? They will kick you out, and you will not be there. You will cease to be.

Therefore, the yoga exercises or *asanas*, which are not very complicated from the point of view of Patanjali's system, imply an attempt on your part to keep your physical and physiological system – your muscles and nerves – in tune with what nature outside will expect from you. Though in the hatha yoga system many types of *asanas* are prescribed – *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana*, and so on – Patanjali does not feel the need for all these complicated exercises. He has a simple recipe: you have to be seated. This is because there is something that you will be expected to do after you are seated.

You may ask what is meant by being seated, and why you should be seated rather than standing or lie down. The standing posture is not possible for a long time, because the very reason for this prescription of maintaining a balance in the system is that you should be able to concentrate your mind on what you consider as the final reality. If you begin to concentrate the mind on reality while in a standing position, you will withdraw your attention from your body and from the effort of standing, and you know what happens if you are not conscious that you are standing; you will collapse. Therefore, a standing posture is not suitable for concentration of the mind in yoga.

Why not lie down? This also is not suitable, because you are likely to relax so much that you may become unconscious and sleep. Yoga is not sleeping, though it is not a consciousness of external objects in a distracting sense. Thus, the yoga prescription strikes a *via media*. It says do not stand, because it is not proper; and do not lie down, because that also is not good. The *via media* is sitting.

Even when you are sitting, you may feel aches. Your knees will give pain, and you cannot bend your legs properly; and you will find the greatest ache will be in the spine. You cannot sit erect for a long time. Why should you sit erect? You may ask why you should not crouch, or lean backward as you do in a dentist's chair. This is also not suitable.

Again, you have to understand the purpose of this seated posture. It is not because somebody is ordering you to do it. It is not because Patanjali says "sit" that you are sitting. There is a science behind this seated posture, and I have already tried to mention what it is. The muscles, the nerves, and everything that your physiological system is made of, is connected to the physical nature outside, and nature maintains a balance. Nature does tolerate any kind of imbalance that is introduced into it. There is a possibility of a certain catastrophe arising in nature – it may be even a cataclysm, or a whirlwind, or a cyclone – if an imbalance of any kind is felt by natural forces, because nature is a balance. The whole universe is an ultimate balance, and if it is necessary on your part to maintain a balance between yourself and the world of nature – and everything that the world is made of, finally – you have first of all to be balanced in the constituents of your body. There cannot be non-alignment of your personality in any sense of the term, because you cannot be in harmony with others or with anything outside you if you are not in harmony with your own self. You cannot be a friend of another if you are an enemy of your own self. When you have sorrow caused by the dismembered quarrelling attitude of your own internal constituents, how can you have a wholesome attitude towards others? "Be good. Do good," is what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to tell us again and again. You cannot be good to others unless you are good essentially, good in your make-up itself; and doing good is only an external expression of what you are as a good individual.

However, the point is, again, the maintenance of a balance in the inner constituents of your personality as a preparatory step to maintain a balance with the world of nature; and yoga will expect from you much more than these little prescriptions because yoga will end in meditation and *samadhi* – which is not merely your tentative feeling of attunement with nature, but a total absorption in it, such that nature becomes not merely your friend, but inseparable from your existence. The Yoga System, as propounded by Patanjali, goes into such ecstatic reaches of experience that your inner layers get tuned up with the inner layers of the cosmos in such an intensive manner that you begin to feel that you are not any more a human being, not a man or a woman, not ‘this’ or ‘that’, but a particle of nature, a wave of nature, a vibration of nature, a pressure point of natural energies.

You are not a human being as you are imagining yourself to be. In the ultimate reaches which are called *samadhis*, you cease to be a human being. You become something which is a part of the cosmic setup of things. You cannot regard a part of nature as a human being. The humanity that you are speaking of is only a social interpretation and understanding of that which is super-social and super-individual. The particles, the atoms, the waves, the energies, the vibrations, are not human. They have nothing human in them. They are impersonal energies like electric energy, which cannot be called a man or a woman, and yet it is more than what you call humanity.

Thus, natural forces are impersonal laws with which you have to attune yourself in what yoga calls *samadhis* – and as you move higher and higher in yoga, you become more and more superhuman, impersonal, and no more an individual looking at the world as a mass of humanity, as a sea of people. You will see that you are in an ocean of powers, forces, vibrations, and perhaps what people today call the space-time continuum. This is what is awaiting you in the finale of yoga.

So, Patanjali tells you to be seated in a very equanimous position, in which you will be so equanimously posed that you will not even know that you have a body. Sit in a very calm posture for a few minutes without feeling any ache or pain in the body. Sit for five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes; you will not know that you have a body at all. You feel a sense of buoyancy of spirit. The intense feeling that you are the body arises on account of your non-alignment with the objective world, and even at the stage of yoga asana, at least from the point of view of the system of Patanjali, begin this meditation. Even the yoga asana itself is a meditation, because it requires a great power of concentration of mind to be seated in such an equilibrated position.

The inner constituents of your personality, to which I was referring again and again, are also to be understood properly. What is meant by the inner constituents? As I mentioned, the physical body is ultimately constituted of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether. The bones, flesh, nerves, marrow, blood, and whatever is in your physical body, is nothing but the result of the permutation and combination of earth, water, fire, air and ether. But there is something else; there are energies. The *prana*, which takes the form of breathing, is also an essential. And the breathing process, which is the expression of the energy we call the *prana*, is the generator which pumps strength into our body, due to which we are able to move, walk, lift our hands, and perform the physical and physiological functions. If the *prana* does not pump energy, we cannot even move; there will be no life in the body. The body has no vitality of its own. It cannot move, just as a brick cannot move or a cart cannot move unless it is pulled. This dynamo that pumps energy into the physical body and makes it move, as railway carriages are made to move by their engine, is the *prana sakti* within us – the energy, vitality, force, vibration, or whatever we may call it.

You must know what is inside your body before you can go further. This physical body is made up of the five elements. Then there is the *prana* which performs various functions, and it assumes various names on account of the performance of these functions. *Prana, apana, vyana, udana* and *samana* are certain Sanskrit terms used to describe the functions of the *prana*. We are not very much concerned with these functional differentiations now. Suffice it to say that there is a vibrating force within us which is vitality, energy, *prana*, which expresses itself as the breathing process through the nostrils. But you have also a mind which thinks. You are not merely the physical body, the physiological system and the *prana*. You know that when you are fast asleep, the body is there, and the *prana* also is there. You are breathing, no doubt, but the mind does not think, so you do not know that you are existing. Hence, whatever you know is an act of the mental faculty. The mind is a general term we use to describe everything that is called 'psychic function'.

In the Sanskrit language there are special names for these operations of the psyche. In western psychological parlance, the word 'mind' generally includes everything that is called the psyche. In a general way, we call everything that is psychical as 'mind' or 'mental'. Well, that is all right for all practical purposes, but in the system of Indian psychological analysis, what is called 'mind' in the English language may be regarded as that particular faculty which indeterminately thinks. 'Indeterminate thinking' means just being conscious that there is something, without actually knowing what it is. This is general perception. When you just look at something, you know that something is there. This especially happens when you are just getting up from your bed and not fully awake. You wipe your eyes, and then begin to see what is around. There is something, and you know that there is something. This knowledge that there is something around you is an indeterminate cognition of the mind, called *manas* in Sanskrit. Then you become awake more acutely, and get up from the bed and begin to see things and people standing

in front of you. It is not just 'something'. This is determinate understanding, where the intellect begins to operate.

The mind is *manas*, the intellect is *buddhi*. The *manas*, mind, performs the function of indeterminate thinking, and the intellect decides and determines that it is such and such a thing. And there is a will, sometimes called volition – *buddhi sakti* in Sanskrit. The power of the understanding is the will force – the volition, so-called. When you merely think that there is something, it is *manas*, or mind, knowing that there is something; when the understanding or the intellect operates, you decide that it is something. Then the will says, "Oh! It is a snake!" Now you understand it is not merely 'something'. It is decided by the intellect that it is a snake. Then the will orders an action – 'Quit this place'; and the *prana* is ordered – 'Take action'; and the *prana* urges the leg – 'Run!'; and you know what you do when you perceive a snake in front of you. Or, if you see something very pleasurable – "My dear friend has come! Oh, my dear, you have come after a long time!" – you embrace. This is the action of the will as a consequence of a determinate understanding of the intellect, superior to the general thinking process of the *manas* or the mind.

So, as I mentioned, apart from the body and the *prana*, you have the mental process of thinking, the understanding process of the intellect, and volitional activity of the will. There is a fourth something which is called 'ego'. This is a very difficult thing to understand, and in Sanskrit it is normally translated as *ahankara*. Thus, the psychic function includes *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, *ahankara* – wherein we have to include the *buddhi sakti*, or the volitional process. *Manas* is indeterminate thinking, intellect is determinate thinking, will is *buddhi sakti*, which is the power of action. Then there are the principles of ego, and there is *chitta*, which is a Sanskrit word which cannot easily be translated into English. Some people regard *chitta* as the subconscious – the principle by which you have a memory of things. For the time being, you

may just be satisfied that *chitta* means memory or the faculty of remembrance, and that is something directly connected with the subconscious. You have to know what this subconscious is. Sometimes we are even told there is something called the unconscious. And there is the ego.

These things have to be very properly understood in order that you may know what you are expected to do in yoga practice as a step towards the freedom of your psychophysical personality and the freedom which you hope to attain in the sense people generally call Liberation, or the attainment of Eternal Life.

## Chapter 7

### YOGA DISCIPLINE

While 'the stabilising of oneself' is what is meant by asana, or the assuming of a posture in yoga, it is often found by work-a-day people of the world that this maintaining of a posture, in any sense of the term, is not as easy as it may appear on the surface. Many a difficulty is felt by seekers and students of yoga even in this elementary requisite of the asana or the posture which has to be maintained. Many of you might have felt different types of difficulty in this simple exercise. Common causes of this difficulty are sometimes attributed to one's non-habituating to maintaining a single posture or attitude in daily life, because most people have no single attitude throughout the day.

Remember that the mind and the body are not two different things. The mind is not contained inside the body as something is placed inside a vessel. When we use terms like 'mind' and 'body' we are likely to misconstrue their meaning and significance, as if they are two different worlds altogether with no inner relationship. It is due to the difficulty of language that we are made to use two terms, 'mind' and 'body'. Actually, there is no 'and' between the two, because the body and the mind are not a plural existence, but a unitary existence operating in two facets.

Some thinkers have given a peculiar analogy as to how the mind and the body collaborate with each other in their action. The analogy comes from the West, from the philosophers of the renaissance, and it is that the mind and the body are like two faces of a clock with two dials facing opposite each other, but with a single mechanism operating inside. This is a possibility, as you can well imagine. You can have a single clock with one machine, with two faces opposite to each other or different from each other in some way, so that you can see the working of the machine and the pointers showing the time from two sides. This is an analogy which tries to make out that the body seems to operate in

one way, and the mind also seems to operate in collaboration with it, because of the fact they are controlled by a single operating principle. Thus, mind and body are two faces of action of a single requirement of our personality.

Thus, in the posture that we are to maintain in yoga, known as asana, we should not think that it is merely an action of the body, that whatever the mind is doing is immaterial because the body is the only thing concerned in the yoga asana. I mentioned a few points last time, which would have made it clear that the yoga asana is not a physical exercise like the games played in the fields outside. This is not a game, and it is not a physical exercise. It is an exercise of the human personality, which cannot be identified merely with the physical body. Thus, no benefit worth the while or worth the name can be expected from the performance of yoga *asanas* if the mind, and the emotions especially, do not cooperate with this performance. There would be no benefit even in the intake of a medical prescription for the health of the body, if the mind is totally opposed to it for some reason or the other. You cannot cure a disease by swallowing a drug if the mind wholeheartedly resents the treatment due to its occupation with something which is totally contrary to the process of the treatment indicated.

The mind of the human being is mostly in a distracted condition. It is never concentrated for even five minutes continuously on any particular thing. It is a veritable grasshopper that jumps from thing to thing, for reasons which need not detain us here at the present moment. The fickleness of the mind has some impact upon the activity of the body. Thus, the pain that you feel in your attempt to be seated in a particular posture, even physically, is not totally unconnected with the condition of your mind. It has some relationship with the way in which you are thinking, your aspiration – and pre-eminently, your feelings and your emotional condition.

You begin to feel a lot of pain when you are seated in a physical posture for the purpose of yoga meditation; and you will start feeling this pain the moment you sit, because the mind has decided that it has to feel the pain. It knows very well that it is being compelled to do something which it normally would not like to do. Pain is a necessary and immediate consequence instantaneously arising, a consequence of what you do against your voluntary expectations, because the observing of any kind of discipline – whether it is in the form of a yoga asana, or any other thing for the matter of that – is invariably considered as something which is basically not desirable. Discipline is not desirable. Intellectually and superficially, everyone may accept that discipline is necessary, but in the heart of hearts there is some peculiar feeling that discipline is contrary to the freedom of will – that discipline is a restriction of freedom, whether in thinking, feeling, or acting. It requires a herculean effort in the form of adequate training to become convinced that freedom and discipline are not opposed to each other, because freedom is always equated with a sort of license to do whatever one likes, irrespective of its consequences on the atmosphere or people outside. “I can do whatever I like, in any manner, at any time, at any place; this is my idea of freedom.” But this is not a proper attitude of even a rational mind, because the freedom of one person is not supposed to limit the freedom of another; otherwise, there would be a cry and clamour on the part of everyone to be one hundred percent free, because who would not like to be free? And why should the freedom be ninety-nine percent? It should be one hundred percent, or even two hundred percent.

Now, if everyone wishes to be two hundred percent free, it would mean a total disregard for what may happen to another, because regard for the presence or requirement of another would be a kind of discipline, which you do not want. So you can imagine the consequence that may follow from the erroneous thinking that discipline is opposed to freedom. Freedom is impossible without discipline, because if an

undisciplined freedom is conceded to any particular person, the very purpose of the asking of this freedom would be defeated because there would be no freedom, for reasons well known to everybody.

The mind has a peculiar, childish attitude of wrongly thinking that sitting in a particular posture is somehow a discipline; therefore, it is a limitation on its freedom, so you do not want to do it. But somehow you are told it is good for you, and your psyche in one department of its activity compels itself to this exercise called the physical posture; though inwardly, it cannot be ruled out that you would like to be free from this exercise: "I would rather go somewhere – either shopping or to the mountain peak – than be seated in a posture. What good does it do to me?" There is a double attitude on your part, due to which on the one hand you feel it may do you good by performing this exercise of yoga postures, but on the other hand there is resentment to it, because somehow it is not a total freedom that is granted to you. This psychological difficulty which finds that it is not easy to go hand-in-hand with this discipline of exercise, is one of the causes why immediate displeasure is expressed by the muscles, nerves and the body as a whole – even when you start sitting.

Be honest to your own self, and analyse the working of your mind when you are seated in a meditation hall, for instance. Do you not feel that it would be good to get up as early as possible? You may even be looking at your watch – whether there is ten minutes left, five minutes left. "What a boredom! Great stupidity!" "Oh! Five minutes left." Then the muscles become relaxed, because they know there is only five minutes left. But if another half hour is remaining: "Oh, good God, I am tired! How long, how long will I sit like this?" These feelings are not an infrequent occurrence in our own psychic world. We do not have a real interest in anything – not even in God Himself – though it may appear, or rather we

make it appear to our own selves, that such an interest is present. A sort of self-deception is always there in everyone.

But this is the crucial point that we have to probe into and investigate carefully. There is a misconception of the goal of one's life or the aim that one is pursuing – or finally, a concept of what is really good for oneself. We have a perfunctory understanding of what is proper, good and necessary for our own selves. Even the idea of what is good for us changes from moment to moment. What I think is good for me today may not be my idea about my good tomorrow. This is a very interesting feature indeed.

Coming to the point, the difficulty that you mostly feel in being seated in a particular posture is not merely the difficulty of the body, though a part of the difficulty may be attributed to the body not being accustomed to be seated like that. Especially people who are used to sitting on chairs with their legs extended – office-goers, clerks, secretaries – find it difficult to sit with crossed legs because they are physically not used to such kind of sitting. That is, of course, a part of the problem; but the major problem, which is of a greater crucial significance, is the non-cooperation of the mind itself.

Now, this much may give you some idea of not only the necessity to be poised in a particular posture for the purpose of yoga meditation, but also the reason why this is ultimately essential.

Last time, I tried to explain how we are connected to the vast environment of the universe itself. The universe is a state of balance – it is not a chaotic imbalance of movement – and any kind of imbalance that may sometimes be observed in the activity of universal forces or natural forces can be attributed to the attempt on the part of the universe to maintain its balance. The scale should not weigh heavy on any particular side. If such an indication is seen that there is an imbalance in any particular direction, the universe immediately gives a kick in the opposite direction, and this kick is felt in various ways throughout the processes of all

existence. It can be a kick that is felt in the very historical process of humanity, which are called the catastrophes which human history faces, whether politically or socially. It can be a kick even physically, such as when we fall sick, there is ache in the body, and there is some imbalance in the function of the alimentary canal, etc. There can be any kind of indication by the equilibrating activity of natural forces outside, or their impact on social forces or on our own personality. Thus, the fact that the universe is finally a balance, and also the fact that we are not really outside the universe in a mechanised fashion, makes it incumbent on the part of everything in the universe to be in a state of harmony with the balance maintained by the universe. Thus, the yoga posture is one gesture that you are exercising or extending in the direction of your cooperation with the universe – at least in one level of your being.

But yoga is not merely a physical posture, though it is so important, and you know how important it is. I mentioned during the end of the previous session that the internal structure of our personality is mostly psychic and psychological. There is the mind that thinks, the intellect that understands, the will that cogitates and determines, the memory factor, and the egoism. The last thing that I mentioned was the factor that goes by the name of ego. An ego is the particular posture that consciousness maintains in affirming its located existence in a particular area of its relationship.

This phrase ‘particular area of relationship’ is to be underlined, because this is something very important. The ego is a kind of affirmation of consciousness within the limit of the area of its operation. It can be the whole country or the nation with which the consciousness can identify itself, and affirm the validity, the truthfulness, naturalness, justifiableness, legality, etc., of the position that its association with this area maintains. We can go wrong even in extreme patriotism if it is a position contrary to the

welfare of other nations also – irrespective of the fact that it may tend to make one believe that it is in the direction of the welfare of one's own country – because the existence, the welfare, the security, and the durability of the position maintained by a particular national attitude, at least these days, is well known to be organically related to such positions that other nations also can maintain. Here again we are coming to the same point of what freedom is, and how it is not in any way opposed to discipline that is required even in an international relationship. Just as there is social discipline, moral discipline, personal discipline, there is also an international discipline which has to be maintained by the comity of nations if they are to survive, or even to exist.

The ego of the human being can crudely operate within the body only, as it operates in an animal – a dog, a cat, or a wild beast. That is a peculiar animal sort of egoism, which asserts only its body and justifies every impulse that may arise through the instrumentality or the means of its bodily organism. Sometimes the human mind can also work in this way; there can be human beings or human attitudes which are totally self-centred even in a physical sense. The physical well-being and physical comfort of a particular individual may overwhelm that individual so profusely and profoundly that the requirement which one feels at that time in terms of one's own physical body may be considered as the total reality. For an animal, the body is the total reality.

But, all human beings are not so crude in the affirmations of their egoism. This is only a rare occurrence that can be seen with difficulty in certain corners of human behaviour. There are polished forms of egoism, which sometimes take the form and the shape of even what sometimes goes by the name of altruism. Merely because the affirmation of consciousness has gone outside the boundary of the physical body, it need not cease to be egoism. One can be highly egoistic merely in one's relationship with one's family. There are people who are terribly attached to their family, and their

concern is only what they consider as a sort of well-being and security of their family, even if another family goes to the dogs. They can hang another, if only it would conduce to the secure existence of their family and the relations with whom they are connected.

There can be egoism of various types. We are well acquainted with what is known as communal tension arising in human circles; and what can be this tension except a result following from a clash of interests among communities? A clash of egos is what we call war or battle, and a war can take any shape and can cover any area of operation. Sometimes war takes place even within our own selves. A little battle continuously goes on in most of us, so that we do not know what to do with our own selves. Psychologists call this a non-alignment of the inner layers of personality, which may sometimes require psycho-pathological treatment; or it may be a very serious mental case requiring hospitalisation – a clash of the inner layers.

Now, this is nothing but a war that is taking place within oneself; and every illness may sometimes, or often, be considered as a kind of battle that is taking place. It is a serious condition, an emergency-like situation, arising in one's own self, such as when one's temperature rises to 104-105° F and every activity is stopped at that time. The concern of the physical and psychophysical organism is only to see that the temperature comes down, and every other activity is stopped because of this emergency situation arisen in the body. Likewise, there can be a moral condition of emergency, there can be an emotional condition, and such other peculiarities to which psychologists and psychoanalysts are well accustomed. There are various types of defence mechanisms which the mind manufactures within its own self to counteract the eventuality or the possible occurrence of this emergency situation. But an emergency situation is not a natural condition. It is also a kind of disease that you are trying to rouse up to counteract some other disease that

has somehow manifested itself – as you vaccinate yourself against smallpox. However, it is nevertheless a kind of illness that you are introducing; and an emergency is nothing but that. It may be necessary, but it is not a natural condition.

Thus, the egoism of the human personality, which is the principal opposing force in any spiritual effort, is something to be understood with great caution, clarity, and patience. You may feel that you are not at all an egoistic person. “What sort of egoism do I have? I want practically nothing.” Many people honestly feel that they have no desires at all. “What desire do I have? I want nothing.” But this is not true, because conditions which make us feel that we are comfortable and secure in any way, whether outwardly or inwardly, may tentatively create a feeling within us that neither do we want anything, nor do we have any desires, nor are we as bad as people may imagine us to be. Nobody would accept that one is a bad person. “What sort of definition do you have about me? What is wrong with me?” We resent any kind of attitude on the part of another which may find fault with us. We are always perfect; there is no defect in any one of us. The detection of a defect in one’s own self is the interference with the egoism of the human being.

I began to tell you that egoism is mostly associated with the function of consciousness within the physical frame of the individual. It is a self-affirmation of the physical individuality, coupled with mental action. It can be a family affirmation, a communal affirmation, a social type of affirmation, or any kind of attachment, for the matter of that. Egoism is that vehemence of conscious behaviour which attaches itself to a particular area only, as if outside it nothing is and nothing can be.

But, what is spirituality? What is religion? What do we mean by the practice of yoga? It is the inner aspiration deeply felt within everyone to be set in a state of union with Reality as such – being qua being. This aspiration to be in a state of harmony with Reality may be considered by

everyone as a source of happiness, satisfaction and well being, but it may limit itself to a finite form or a totally distorted shape of reality that is conceived by oneself. For the purpose of pure psychoanalytic studies, reality is nothing but social existence. This may be a sort of reality, and we all know how far we are hanging on the opinions of others, and how difficult it would be for us to exist in the world if society were not to cooperate with us. This is something we can accept, and we have to accept. But this is not the whole reality. We can be unhappy for other reasons, even if the whole of human society is friend. Even if all humanity adores you as a genius, a master and a great hero, and considers you as its well-wisher and is your friend, you can be unhappy for reasons other than those which you thought were the cause of your unhappiness.

“The non-cooperation of people with me is the source of my unhappiness.” This is what most people may feel in themselves. But you will certainly find time to think a little more philosophically when you discover that you can be unhappy even when the whole world of humanity is your friend, because the world is not exhausted by the existence of humanity. The world does not contain only human beings. It would be very poor philosophy, poor science, and poor commonsense that go headlong with the conviction that “in the whole creation, the only reality is the existence of human beings like me”. In fact, you will realise that the more consequent determining factors of even the possibility of one’s life are not human, that they are outside the very purview of human thought. The forces of the world are not necessarily human forces. Even history, which mostly is identified with the movement of human thought and human behaviour, is conditioned by factors which are not human. Students, or even philosophers of history, know that history is not merely the movement of the whims and fancies of thinking people, but it is a superhuman operation of forces which compel humanity to operate and work in a particular manner.

Thus, reality is not merely social existence, as psychoanalysis may say. Yoga considers reality as something which is superior to what is merely visible to the eyes. Therefore, in our advance in the pursuit of yoga, we do not merely content ourselves with being a little good with people in the form of what is called *yama* and *niyama*, or even being contented with maintaining the positions or yoga *asanas*. There is something more about yoga than all these things told to us. The qualities of being a very good person, a very helpful person, a very serviceful person, a well-respected person, and a very great master of physical yoga exercises – with all this, yoga is not complete. Perhaps, it has not even started.

It starts with a deeper understanding of the profounder implications of one's relationship with the universe. The egoism of the human being apart, there is a common difficulty felt by every one of us in exercising even proper understanding in regard to anything. We are egoistic, no doubt, in one sense or the other; that is one picture, one side of the matter. But is our understanding adequate to the purpose of what yoga would expect of us? What is our understanding? What sort of understanding do we have about anything? Again, we are conditioned even in our understanding by social environments, family upbringing, political motivations, and the type of education that has been imparted to us. This is again a conditioning and a limiting of the concept of reality, even from the point of view of our intellectual understanding. While egoism mostly goes wrong in its notion of what is good for it and what is reality, our understanding – which is mostly associated with our egoistic affirmations – is in a very, very inadequate position, at least from the point of view of the requirements in yoga.

There is a deeper and higher requirement on our part in the light of yoga – which is the restraint of the senses, the disciplining of the way in which our mind or our consciousness works in terms of sense organs. Again I am

coming to the point of discipline, which generally no one likes. The world 'discipline' is always very unpalatable because we have an inveterate habit of convincing ourselves that discipline is something which we do not voluntarily take upon ourselves but is imposed from outside. This is a thorough misunderstanding of the meaning of discipline. Discipline is not what you are asked to do by somebody else. It is a need felt by you yourself to maintain an inner relationship with the larger dimension of reality – from which you are not different, and outside which you do not exist. Discipline is a voluntary acceptance of the existence and operation of a law of your own higher being.

Remember that discipline is something that you voluntarily accept upon yourself, and even when a law seems to be operating outside and you may mistake it for an action imposed upon you by people around you, it is not something that is acting from outside; it is a pressure that is exerted upon you by your own larger reality. And your reality extends beyond your physical reality. Reality is more profound and active in its operation and insistence upon you as it expands more and more, even externally. You cannot consider the discipline that you have to maintain as a member of the family to be a pain that is inflicted upon you, because you know the well-being of your family is your well-being, and vice versa. Likewise is the discipline that you are expected to maintain in the society in which you are living, in the country of which you are citizen – or rather, as a unit of humanity itself. But as long as you limit your concept of reality to family, to community, or even to humanity, you are likely to feel that this discipline comes from factors which are outside you, because you cannot feel that other people are the same as you. But, to repeat what I said earlier, reality is not exhausted by humanity. It is larger. That which is finally real, in which every other lower reality is included, is the whole universe, and there is nothing outside the universe.

Hence, the law of the universe which expects you to behave in a particular manner is not an imposition from outside, because the universe is not outside you. So do not be under the impression that discipline is something that is imposed upon you by others – because there are no ‘others’ in this world. The others are only a content of the universe with which you are organically connected. Thus, yoga discipline, which will take deeper and deeper significances as we proceed further, will make you more and more happy, rather than make you feel constrained to believe that you are undergoing a painful exercise. Yoga is a great satisfaction, which you will realise shortly.

## Chapter 8

### CONTROL OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Now we are on the border of certain vital issues in the practice of yoga, and everything that we have considered up to this time is a sort of preparation for the quintessential essence of the whole matter. The control of the senses is the principal issue involved here. It is said everywhere, in practically all the religions in the world, that the senses have to be restrained, and should not be given a long rope. They should not be permitted to act wildly, according to their own whims and fancies.

Why should the senses be controlled? What is wrong with them? We know very well that the senses are our great friends that bring us immense satisfaction in the form of enjoyments of every kind. All our joys are sensory, sensuous. If life is a happiness, for all practical purposes it appears that this happiness comes through the sense organs. Thus, life would be meaningless if the senses were not to be operative in their own fashion.

Now we are being told the opposite, as if we are not to exist at all in the world, when it is said that the senses are to be restrained. The restraint of the senses would imply the diminution of all happiness in life, inasmuch as for us there is no happiness minus sense activity. This is a problem of the common man, and man in general.

The necessity to restrain the senses arises due to a fundamental feature which is characteristic of the universe as a whole. We have heard again and again that, finally, it is impossible to consider the universe as an object of the senses. The world around us is not really 'around' us. The world that we see is really not something that is 'seen', but is a little different from what it appears to us. The world is not an object of the senses; and if the world is not an object of the senses, and if the senses cannot think of the world except as an object, there is something seriously wrong with the senses

– which would also mean, consequently, there is something seriously wrong with our idea that happiness is only sensory. One consequence follows from an accepted premise.

Is the world – or the universe, so to say – an object of the senses? Is it an object at all in any sense of the term? The structure of the universe as a completeness in itself, permitting no externality whatsoever, would not permit us to wrench ourselves from any kind of vital relationship with it and look at it as if it is a stranger in front of us. What we call earthly, worldly involvement, which is often called the bondage of *samsara* – this earth earthy existence, this turmoil and sorrow of life – is said to be ultimately traceable to the event of the inward segregation of the perceiving, knowing subject from that which it considers as its object. For us, the world is the object, and every object is part of the world; and, in a way, we may say there is only one object in front of us – namely, the world – whatever be the variety that it contains.

There is no need to repeat the reasons why the world cannot be and should not be considered as an object of consciousness. This has been said again and again, and we need not reiterate this point. If the involvement of ourselves as seeing, knowing, perceiving subjects in the very fact of the existence of the world or the universe cannot permit us to regard ourselves as totally isolated from the world, then the senses are not a good means of knowing the world as it is in itself. The world is not capable of being known correctly by the employment of the sense organs. This would bring us to the point as to why it has been held again and again that the world of sensory perception is relative and phenomenal, and it is not absolute, not noumenal. What we see with our eyes or sense with any other sense organ is a phenomenal world; it is not the real world. Hence, the joys of the phenomenal world are also phenomenal. They are not real joys.

The phenomenality, or the relative character of the world or the universe, becomes apparent due to the consequence

that follows from a sensory interpretation of the universe. The interpretation of the object by means of the instrument of even the mind, much less the senses, is not a proper attitude either of the mind or of the senses in regard to the object. Nothing can be known by placing it as a total outsider to the consciousness that intends to know it. Knowledge, or the knowledge process, is a crucial issue in profounder studies in our educational career. This profundity involved in the very process of knowing anything is the secret of philosophical analysis and conclusions.

We take for granted that everything is clear to us the moment something is presented before our eyes; but it is not so clear. The presentation of an object – call it the world or the universe, if you so like – before our consciousness in the process of sensory perception is conditioned by invisible operations which go by the name of the space and the time factors. Space and time refuse to be regarded as objects of the senses. They somehow connive to remain independent of our idea of the object of knowledge, and secretly they manoeuvre a misconstruing of everything by the perceiving subject by interfering with every type of knowing – knowing in any way whatsoever. Space and time interfere with us inwardly as well as outwardly – perpetually, continually, unremittingly. But the interference of these principles, space and time, in our knowledge process is so subtle and invisible in every way that we cannot know that they are interfering with us at all. When we look at a thing while wearing spectacles, we are not conscious that there are spectacles on our eyes because if we begin to see the spectacles, we cannot see the object. We should not be aware that there are spectacles on our eyes – we should not look at the spectacles or the glasses that we are wearing – in order that the objects can be seen. If we begin to see the glasses, we will not see any object. Therefore, the spectacles should remain invisible conditioning factors in order that the perception may appear satisfactory and clear. Similarly, if we begin to cognise or

perceive space and time themselves, we will be in a different world altogether.

Hence, the senses working together with the mind, and even with the intellect, do not present to us a correct picture of things as they really are. As philosophers tell us, things in themselves are never seen and never known; they cannot be perceived. What do we perceive? We perceive only a whitewash or a colour that is painted over that which really is, by the brush of the space and time factors. So, we see only a painting or a whitewash or a colourwash, but not that which is behind this painting or veneer that is smeared over its surface. But inasmuch as only the outer conditioning factors become the real objects of our perception or mental cognition, we mistake phenomenality for reality, relativity for absoluteness, temporality for eternity, and even pain for pleasure.

We regard a real sorrow as a joy. It is to be considered as a sorrow, because we are duped into the belief that our understanding in regard to its object is entirely untarnished and unblemished, and it is a safe guide for us in our knowledge of the essential substance of creation. The world is not an object, either of mental cognition or sense perception. That it appears to be such is really to be regretted very deeply. This world is a world of regret, basically, because we are involved in a state of affairs which refuses to be known in any way from the point of view of the instruments of knowledge available to us. Our sorrows are invisible things. They cannot be analysed, vivisected, or known in any way. What we know is, therefore, a peculiar presentation. Sometimes the world is compared to a mirage, which looks like water and recedes as we approach that reservoir of water. The more we try to touch the horizon, the further it moves from our reach.

No one can possess any object in the world, finally. Nobody has done it, and nobody will ever do it. The object cannot be possessed merely because of the fact it is not

something that is expected to be possessed. Nobody can be subservient to another in the sense of an object, either of the senses or of the mind. There is a noumenal independence maintained by everything in the world, and it is not for nothing that we are told by the Upanishads, for instance, that the world is a 'Self' rather than a 'not-Self', an atman rather than an *anatman*, a pure universal subjectivity rather than anything that is of the nature of an object.

If the world is not an object, then so much the worse for our sense activity, because there is no function that is expected of the senses – there is nothing that they can do – if the world is not their object. If we are able to realise the reason why the object is not really outside the perceiving subject, and also why the world cannot be an object of the percipient, we will also know why the senses are to be controlled. It is because they are wild movements of consciousness, erratic activities of our mind, chaotic behaviour of our personality, and therefore we are entirely out of balance when we actively operate only through the senses. A disbalanced personality always overemphasises sense activity; and total dependence on the values of the senses is a dependence on what we call 'a misguided existence', finally. Who would like to live such a life?

Thus, yoga takes this question very seriously, and in the interest of introducing a wholesome, healthy characteristic into the personality of the human individual, it admonishes that no one can be really healthy if the senses are not restrained – because an over-activity of the senses is not a healthy condition of the personality. It is not healthy because it is a wrong way of thinking and acting. It is wrong because the senses are jumping on things which are really not there. This is a very interesting thing, indeed. Why should we control the senses? It is because the overwhelming activity of the senses acts like a screen over our internal vision. We have a blurred vision of things, as if mist is hanging between us and what we perceive, when the action of the senses is

impetuous, overactive and uncontrollable. They come over us like a flood. They dash upon us like uncontrollable waves of power, desire and passion. The senses are actually repositories of desire and uncontrollable impulses which insist that we should go out of ourselves in order that we may be happy in the world.

Thus, dependence on the sense organs for obtaining any satisfaction or joy in this world is to accept that we have to be other than what we are in order that we may be happy. What a wonderful thing – that we have to be other than what we are in order that we may be happy. We have to sell ourselves to that which is not really there, and lose ourselves for nothing in order that we may enjoy a phantasmal satisfaction in the world.

It is really a work of opening our eyes in which the yoga system is engaged. In yoga parlance, '*pratyahara*' is the principal word used for the restraint of the senses. *Pratyahara* usually means withdrawal of the senses. This is very difficult to understand and hard to achieve because, as we go wrong in understanding anything and everything in the world, we also go wrong in understanding the very meaning of sense control. We may imagine, like children, that not to be attracted by the visual objects of the world would be to physically close our eyes and not see them. This may be wrongly thought to be a sort of *pratyahara*; but it is not what is expected of us by yoga.

It is to be again emphasised that when we speak of the senses, we do not entirely mean the physical fleshy organs like the eyeballs, the eardrum, the tongue or the nostrils. The eardrum is not the ear, the eyeballs are not the eyes, and so is the case with the other sense organs. A sense, in the light of the system of the practice of yoga, is not the fleshy part which acts as a medium for the expression of this activity called the senses. What are the senses? From the point of view of a purely religious or spiritual outlook, or an outlook of yoga, the 'sense' that we are referring to is an impulsion of

consciousness in a particular direction, and it is not the eyeballs or any such thing. These eyes, these ears, these other sense organs are the locations in the physical body for the expression of the internal impulses. The electric energy that is behind the working of an electrical gadget is different from the physical part of it, which is a material substance. The impulsion is a force, and it cannot be seen, heard of, touched etc. It is a vehemence of our consciousness; it is a flood-like push that is exerted by our own selves in a particular given direction. We urge ourselves in a particular way, and force ourselves to act in a particular manner. Basically, if we are consciousness proper, what we call sensory activity is also an activity of consciousness. The channelisation of our own true being through the avenues called the physical sense organs – this is actually sense activity.

Hence, the withdrawal of the senses is not to be equated merely with plugging the physical ears, closing the eyelids or shutting the mouth in a physical sense; because, while as a process of quarantining the impulses of consciousness we may, for some time, also be required to adopt these measures of physically abstaining from contact with objects, we know very well that quarantining is not the whole of the treatment that is called for. Treatment is a positive work that is required, while segregation is an external tentative measure that is adopted. It may be necessary for us to place ourselves – even physically and geographically – under circumstances in which the senses are not tempted. This we cannot rule out as a necessity. But this is not the whole of yoga because, as we know very well, the impulsion of consciousness we are referring to is principally what is called desire.

Desire, longing, passion, is the urge of consciousness for a particular contact which it expects from that which it regards as its object for the time being. Now, this impulsion of consciousness is certainly expected to utilise the sense organs for its expression, as a copper wire is required for

passing an electric current, otherwise it cannot pass. The inner impulsion of consciousness requires the cooperation of the physical sense organs, no doubt; but electricity is different from the copper wire, and it can be vehement even with the absence of this means of expression.

Thus, while *pratyahara* should imply a sort of austere living even socially and physically, it is not enough, because the process of *pratyahara*, or restraint of the senses, is not shutting the mouth of the conscious impulse. "Don't speak. Keep quiet." If we say this to the conscious impulse, it may be frightened for the time being because of the orders that we have issued, but a frightened person is really not a subordinate person, because we cannot impose fear upon anyone and then get work done for all time. The result of such an order or a mandate that we issue by the power of our will may appear to be successful for a few days, or even for a few months or maybe even for a few years, as we can put a bund across a flowing river and prevent its flow further on, but we know very well what will happen to the restrained waters if they are held like that for a long time. They may break the bund, and go anywhere they like.

Therefore, the control of the senses also is a part of the educational process. It is a part of the psychology of real education. A spiritual seeker has to be a good psychologist in the sense that he has to understand the reason behind the way in which he conducts himself, the manner in which his mind operates, and the reason why anything at all happens to him. Why do we desire anything? It is not enough if we prevent the expression of this desire; it is also necessary to know why a desire arises at all. And we know very well why desires of any kind express themselves: it is the persistent asking of consciousness to feel assured that it is always right in its imagination that its object is outside it. It is telling us again and again that we have to certify, corroborate, and agree with its opinion that the world is outside it. If we say that the world is not outside, it is not going to listen to us.

This is the reason why the desires cannot be easily controlled.

Now you know why the restraint of the senses is an education, and not a policeman's action. It is an internal developing process by which we very tenaciously, but with immense patience, educate. Educating is the process of the automatic opening of a bud into a blossomed flower, and not breaking the bud in order that it may look like a flower. Just as a broken bud is not a flower, in the same way, a suppressed desire is not *pratyahara*. The wildness with which desires sometimes act in us would indicate how far we are removed from a real conviction of the ultimate nature of creation or the final order which the universe itself is. Our knowledge is utterly poor in regard to anything, for the matter of that. The poverty of our understanding and knowledge of anything, really, can be known from the extent of our desires. The strength of our desires tells us how poor our understanding is of anything.

What does yoga tell us? It has many things to tell us. The process of *pratyahara* is, again, a graduated endeavour on our part. It may take years for us to succeed, as is the case with anything that is educative. In the beginning, as the Yoga Vasishtha sometimes tells us, we have to accept what the senses tell us, and should not oppose them abruptly. There are people who rebut anything that is said to them: "I don't agree." This is not a healthy way of refuting an argument, because logic is not a sudden rebuttal; it is also a gradual educational process.

When the child cries for something undesirable, we say, "Yes, you will get it." This is a satisfaction to the crying child, though we are not going to give it. The child may be crying for a sharp knife, and we know that we are not going to give it. But if we say "I am not going to give it to you", it will cry still more. So what do we say? "You are going to get something better than this from the shop. Tomorrow I'll get it for you, so keep quiet today." Then, today the mind is

keeping quiet under the impression that tomorrow the knife will come. It will not come, as we know very well, but meanwhile we adopt such measures which will prevent the child from asking for such a thing at all, by somehow or other channelising its interest in something very positive, very interesting, very attractive, which is pleasing to it. It is not a denial of what it asks for, but a substitute that we are giving in place of what it is asking for. Suppression of a desire is dangerous, and sometimes we are told that even substitution is not an alternative. Though substitution is not an alternative, it is one step beyond mere repression of the will or the force of desire by a mandate of the will power.

There are supposed to be three ways by which we try to deal with our longings or our desires. We fulfil them; whatever is asked for is given. This is the indulgent attitude. But often, for manifold reasons, we suppress the desire because we are in an atmosphere where it cannot be manifest with impunity. It is also possible to give it a substitute, which is another method that we can adopt.

A good psychologist will tell us that even substitution is not a real success in the restraint of the impulses. Sublimation is supposed to be the only way. But what is sublimation? Literally, it means melting down. We melt down the desire until it becomes liquid, as it were, and it is no more the solid, hard thing that was confronting us. But what is this melting down of the desire? How can we melt it? "I want this," says the mind, the consciousness feels, and the senses argue – and it is said that sublimation is the way. What is sublimation, which is spoken of so much in psychology, psychoanalysis, and even spirituality?

This is precisely what yoga attempts. Sublimation is the melting down of the desire into the cause from where it arises. The effect is not merely driven back to the cause, but melted down to the cause, so that it is no more there except as the cause. It is not there as something outside the cause or the source from where it arises. It is no longer there. The ice

has become water, and the ice is not there at all. It is not that we push a lump of ice into the water and allow it to maintain an individuality of its own in spite of its being immersed there. In the sublimation of a desire, the individuality or the impulse of the desire is not allowed to remain outside the cause or the source from where it arises.

Why do desires arise? Here is a moot question before us. Why do we ask for that which is really not there, finally? Why do we ask for a satisfaction which is really not a satisfaction? How is it possible for us to get deceived so profoundly and so intensely, so miserably, from birth to death? This is a deep philosophical question, and the life spiritual is at the same time the life philosophical.

We are now trying to discover what it is that the yoga is finally telling us. It tells us that we have to meditate, and we have to attain communion with the Ultimate Being. It may be possible for some of us to feel a discomfiture even when these things are told to us. "Why should I commune with that Ultimate Being? What is wrong with me now? What is the harm if I am just what I am now? I have a fat salary, I am a rich man, I have a huge bungalow, I am well-off. What is the use of this communion with that which you call the Ultimate Being?" Such peculiar difficulties may arise even now itself, and these difficulties will heap up further problems in the form of a terrible situation we will have to face in our attempt to control the senses, or even in our attempt to lead a good life. Therefore, great patience is necessary. Yoga is not a three month course; it is a three births course, so be prepared for it.

## Chapter 9

### YOGA MEDITATION

If we had leisure and time to concentrate on the implications of our studies and analysis, we would have realised that this system of living known as yoga is a sort of hackneyed name that we give to the most normal way of living, which again, at the same time, is invariably associated with what is known as meditation. Neither yoga, as anyone would like to understand it, nor meditation, as one may be accustomed to, can be considered as something or anything outside the normal way of living, if 'living' or 'life' is to mean a progression towards larger and larger successes, achievements or attainments. If living in the world – or life – is not to mean merely existing like a stone or a tree, and if it does not mean merely vegetating, but is a purposive advance or movement in a given direction, this purpose towards which life is an advance can be fulfilled or achieved only if this something called 'yoga' or 'meditation' becomes nothing but the way of such living itself.

The meditational procedure is not a mystical introversion or a difficult circus feat which only certain people in the world are expected to perform. It is a systematisation of thought and living, which is invariably associated with any project of worthwhile success and attainment.

The environment in which we are placed calls for this adjustment of ourselves we call meditation – call it yoga, if you so like. We cannot independently live, freeing ourselves from all associations with our environment. The very meaning of 'environment' is that area which is sticking to our personal life, as our skin is sticking to our body. We are not living in an environment with which we are vitally not connected. The very meaning or significance of this term is that it is an unavoidable association of our very existence or life in this world. Plainly speaking, yoga is this unavoidable obligation on the part of any person to place oneself in

harmony with the environment in which one is, whatever be that environment. To come in conflict with an environment would not be yoga, and to be perpetually feeling a sense of opposition from an environment outside is also not yoga. Rather it is not meditation, at least, because the yoga of meditation, or the yoga which is meditation proper, is the healthful adjustment of whatever one is with that we call environment, whatever it be.

The thing we call peace of mind, inward satisfaction, or even security is that friendliness and a state of en rapport with which we are not only related in our day-to-day life, but from which we cannot in any way extricate ourselves, because our very existence is inseparable from this environment. If environment is something different from our own selves, then we need not bother about anything in this world, because the world itself is an environment about which we seem to be feeling the necessity to bother. The need to think of anything is, at the same time, the need to think that there is an environment around – otherwise, there would be no necessity to think at all. The thought of any particular thing is nothing but the thought of that which is outside us, which I call the environment, the atmosphere, whatever be our notion of that particular thing.

This ‘environment’ is a very intriguing peculiarity, because every person has his own or her own idea of this environment. For some person, the environment may be a little office in which he or she is working: “I have no other environment. I am concerned only with my office, and if I don’t come in conflict with my colleagues in the office, I am supposed to be perfectly all right.” But this is only one way of looking at the environmental condition. Everyone is not only in the office, but everyone is somewhere, and that ‘somewhere’ is one’s environment. It may be a shop in which we are working; it may be a laboratory, a school, a university, a train in which we are travelling, or any blessed place. But it is certainly true that we are somewhere, in some way. That

peculiar 'somewhere' or 'somewhen' is our environment. This is always with us wherever we go, because our movement in any direction, in any part of the world, is not going to free us from being in some sort of an environment. We may change the physical location or the conditions of our immediate environment, but we are nevertheless in some environment. A change of environment is not freedom from environment or freedom from involvement in it. So, no one can be freed from being involved in some environment, notwithstanding the desire that sometimes arises to change the environment in which one lives.

The point is not in what environment we are. The point is how we are able to get on with this environment. But if there is a perpetual rub which we feel between ourselves and our environment, it is something for us to think deeply upon why this situation should arise at all. There is a vehemence on both sides: the environment refuses to adjust itself to our way of living, and our way of living refuses to adjust itself with the environment. Both sides assert a sort of individuality of their own, and this affirmation is from two parties which are somehow related to each other for important reasons. The irreconcilability of the circumstances of two sides, which are really not two sides literally, is the conflict of life. It is the problem of existence, and it is the sorrow of man. This is solved, or is attempted to be solved, by what people call yoga or pinpoint as the way of meditation.

I have tried to mention that there is no necessity to demarcate the inner essentials of what is known as 'yoga' and what is called 'meditation'. For our practical purposes, they are one and the same thing because even when we are not attempting to meditate in the proper sense of the term, even when we seem to be taking only the initial step in the direction of yoga, that initial preliminary step also is a kind of meditation. I told you that even the physical exercise of yoga is a condition of meditation. It may be one type of meditation;

nevertheless, it is that. Therefore, yoga is meditation. *Yogah samadhih* says the great commentator on the sutras of Patanjali. Yoga is virtually meditation; it is nothing else. Even when it appears to be something else, it is just that in one form.

Whenever we feel a necessity to be healthily associated with anyone, anything, or any condition, we are performing an act of meditation. The effort on our part to be in union with that which is outside us, is the act of our meditation. When we are in a parliament house as a member thereof, we are nevertheless in a state of meditation, because the necessity we feel to be non-conflictingly involved in the body called the parliament is our meditation. Otherwise, we know how we behave when we are not in the parliament. When we go to purchase vegetables in a shop, we do not feel the necessity to behave like a member of parliament or to inwardly commune ourselves with the body called the parliament. Whenever it becomes necessary for us to be in tune with whatever is external to us, we are in a state of meditation, though we may not be willing to consider that meditation as a sort of holy or spiritual exercise, as we understand spirituality. We need not bother about these words 'spirituality', 'religion', etc., for the time being.

Yoga or meditation can be freed from all these preconceived associations which make us feel a sense of holiness in ourselves – as if we are lifted above the world and not connected with anything else outside us. It may be a holy exercise, but it is not holy in the sense that other things are unholy to us, because that unholy or extraneous element around us, which becomes a content of our consciousness for any reason whatsoever, also becomes an object of meditation for us, and it ceases to be unholy and irrelevant. A thing that is totally irrelevant for our purposes cannot become a content of our thought or consciousness; we cannot define it, and we will not feel a need to say anything about it – or, much less, think about it.

Yoga or meditation – or yoga, which is meditation – is a necessary duty, an obligation anyone and everyone is called upon to fulfil or perform in order that one may be healthy. If health is the coordination of the components constituting the body, then this principle should apply equally to the necessity to bring about a unison among the components which form any body whatsoever with which we are not only externally connected but invariably related, and from which we cannot free ourselves, for obvious reasons. So, while health is a very desirable thing, perhaps the most desirable thing in the world, and while it is true that health is a condition of our physical and physiological system, it is certainly not exhausted by the balance of the physiological system. This is because in spite of the fact that the physical and physiological system is in a state of balance and can be said to be healthy from a medical point of view, we may be unhealthy for other reasons than purely physiological. A political catastrophe which is hanging heavy on our heads, or a social onslaught or a mental agony cannot be considered as a healthy state, though the body is robust, well-fed and very strong.

Hence, the health of a person is the harmony or the inner coordination of a cooperative type among the constituents of any environment, which is precisely the 'body' of ours. Our body is not merely the little six-foot frame that we are thinking of. Our body is anything which is necessarily related to us in our life – such as a family, or even an office atmosphere. We cannot say that the office is irrelevant to us, because it is our body, and any kind of disharmony among the constituents of the office atmosphere will be our ill health. We will not have a moment's peace; and a restless condition of mind cannot be considered as a state of health. Yoga meditation, to bring it down to the most practical fields of concrete existence on the face of this Earth, may be said to be a universally applicable technique of coordinating oneself with anything and everything with which one is invariably related, and from which one cannot be free at any time.

This environment with which we are related, from which we cannot be free, and whose relationship with which we should be so very harmonious, is a very intriguing outward dimension which ranges beyond even human comprehension, such that we will realise one day that our environment goes beyond even the stars. It is not a mere idle thinking when we are made to feel that our little existence inside our kitchen is invariably connected with the conditions of even the distant stars. We are not talking merely theoretical astronomy here; it is a practical state of affairs. If this is true, our environment is not such an easy thing as we can define at once with a few words.

Yoga meditation, thus, is the simple recipe of it being possible for us to be friendly with one person in the world; and from this little recipe of it being possible for us to be in a state of freedom from conflict with even the littlest thing in the world – from this basic position of the smallest act of sacrifice we perform by being in harmony with this basic thing – from this littlest thing up to the highest conceivable adjustment that we can imagine in our mind, yoga is a uniform law. Yoga is, therefore, not merely meditation on a holy thing called God, as we may imagine in a sacrosanct mood or in a mystical condition of introversion. There is no great sacrosanct holiness about it. It is as holy as any science is in this world – as holy as arithmetic, mathematics, or any kind of sane thinking. It has, therefore, no connection with the so-called isms or religions of the world. It is not religion at all, and we need not even call it a philosophy if we think philosophy is frightening armchair thinking. It is a basic fundamental of any systematised thinking, which is also a healthy way of thinking, and without which life would be a chaotic mass.

What is yoga, and what is meditation? It is not to assume a very holy attitude, as if we are superior to other people. It is not a question of our being better than anybody else; this is precisely what we should free ourselves from in our thinking.

When we take to religion, spirituality, yoga, meditation, or a life of God, as people may think, we are not lifting ourselves to a high, lofty, elevated realm whereby we look down upon the crass Earth of matter. It is an inward adjustment of ourselves with That which really is – and we know what really is there. We have thought well to appreciate that whatever may be there anywhere is that with which we are connected and, therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be in a state of meditation always, if meditation is our obligation to be in tune with that which is outside us. Else, we will be in a state of restlessness of mood and agony of spirit. Such a simple and humble way of living is yoga.

The humility that is usually associated with great wisdom of life is a necessary consequence that follows from the invariable association of oneself with all things. The superiority complex that may enter into the mind of any unwary person is an unfortunate consequence of not considering all the aspects of one's associations with the world. The mind of the human being is made in such a way that it cannot think all things at the same time. There is something which it misses always, and that which it misses becomes the target of its opinion, positive or negative, because there is no need to hold any opinion about that with which we are invariably related. The life of opinion is transcended automatically by the life of the superior reason, by which we do not have to hold any opinion about anything in the world. That state of affairs does not arise because of the fact that there is nothing on which we have to hold an opinion. This is the case because that which usually remains as an object on which we have to pass judgement, or regarding which we have to hold an opinion, is no more that which we have to look upon as an extraneous something – because the notion of an extraneous something is the notion of non-yoga, non-meditation.

Meditation, therefore, is inward communion. The word 'inward' also has to be understood in its proper spirit.

Inwardness does not mean here the abstraction of any kind of relationship with the outer world. It is not to be understood in this sense. To close the doors and close the eyes and be seated in a mood of thinking personally need not necessarily mean inwardisation of spirit. The word 'inward', to be understood in the sense of yoga and true meditation, means that capacity of consciousness to feel its presence in the very thing which it considers as its content or object. We are driving to the point which yoga considers as *samadhi*. It is an inwardisation in the sense that the so-called object, or the external environment, does not anymore remain as an external content of the contemplating consciousness, but becomes that with which it has to tune itself in such an intensive manner that it is its own self. As I mentioned, the skin of our body is our own self; it is not an object that we have to think as if it is outside us. As the skin of our body is ourselves, the object of our thought is also ourselves. We need not have to think of it anymore, further on, as we might have been thinking of it earlier.

So, the meditation in which the consciousness engages itself during yoga is an inwardisation in a very, very special sense. The contemplative process of consciousness is inward because it has no outward object to think at that time. The outwardness, or externality, or the position of a thing as if it is there in front, ceases to be operative because of the consciousness contemplating the basic relationship of itself with that object in such a way that it has already become a limb of a larger body of consciousness. I come back to the analogy of the parliament house. A really dispassionate and unselfish sacrificing member of the parliament will not consider other members as outside objects. He will consider them as limbs of his own larger body. The parliament is only a body of which the so-called person is a member and, therefore, one member cannot consider another as an object, if he is a true patriot and a real statesman. It is one single operation which we call the body here in the analogy of the parliament, or any kind of organisation. A member of an

organisation cannot consider another member as an object, because all members constitute a single body.

Hence, the object in meditation is no more an object, because the object – or, for the matter of that, any object whatsoever – becomes such an invariable association of consciousness that the object, as well as the subject contemplating, become features of a larger area of experience. Again to come to the analogy of the parliament house, the parliament is neither this member nor that member; it is something more than all the members put together. It is an impersonal power which brings or cements together all these members called the members of parliament. Actually, the parliament cannot be seen with the eyes. It is a power, a force. It is a universalising principle.

Thus, the thing that we are trying to achieve in meditation is not merely the inward association in a literal sense, to be achieved by the subject in relation to the object. It is inward in a different sense altogether, namely, the transcendent meaning implied in the relationship between the contemplating consciousness and the object is inward to both the two terms of the relation we call the subject and the object – consciousness, and its content. This is something I tried to explain on an earlier occasion. In an act of deep meditation, the consciousness neither thinks of itself nor of the object as an outsider. It is trying to overcome the limit set by its own localised existence and the apparent localised existence of its outwardness in the sense of an object. There is a larger being which includes the meditative subject as well as the object meditated upon. This association of consciousness with that transcendent something lying beyond and yet implicit in both the subject and the object is what we call *samadhi* in yoga. It is not a mere blankness of the mind; it is an intense awareness of our having broken the limitations of our personality, and also outgrown the limitations of that which we call our object or our

environment, to which I made reference already. This is the height of yoga meditation.

Here, we are achieving a purpose which is the purpose of everybody in the world. It is the purpose for which the universe is apparently evolving from stage to stage. It is the intention of the cosmos. In a way, we may say, in the act of meditation we are participating in the purpose of the world, in the intention of the cosmos, in the fulfilment of the direction of the universe as a whole. Thus, there is nothing peculiar, strange, or weird about yoga mediation. It is a most necessary, invariable concomitant of any purposive and large-hearted existence.

Mediation, whatever be the way it pursues, aims at a particular uniform goal or aim. We can climb the top of a hill from many points at the base of the mountain. We can climb to the peak of that mountain or hill from any side, but when we climb up to the peak, we will find that we are in the same place which anyone may have reached through any other way. So, meditation is the peak of yoga, which is attainable through any way, by any road which one can follow according to the direction which one takes or the location in life in which one is placed.

Yoga meditation is, therefore, a simple technique and not a difficult art, but it requires a little bit of leisure of the mind to think by itself. What most people lack is the leisure to think. We are preoccupied with pressures which call our attention in different directions, and find little rests for the mind to feel the need to place itself in this condition of attunement. Actually, this pressure that we feel by the calls of life is an unnecessary intrusion in the very purpose for which we are living in this world, because any pressure is a disharmonised element outside, with which we have not been able to set ourselves in tune. It is a toxic matter which the body cannot tolerate anymore – here, our body being what we are involved in.

It is possible to find leisure even in the midst of intense activity. We may wonder how it is possible, because they are contradictions. Leisure and intensity of any activity are not to be equated with some particular thing. But the engagement of a person in a diversity of pursuits need not necessarily mean the absence on the part of the mind to feel a sort of attunement with these diverse pressures. This is a very subtle psychological point. A pressure is not necessarily something with which we are unconnected. It is something with which we are connected – otherwise, we would not feel its presence. But we may wonder that if we are really connected with it, how does it come upon us like a pressure? It comes upon us like a pressure or a pain because we have not been able to understand the voice with which it speaks, the language which it utters, or its own demands. This pressure called the activity of life – which we consider as the cause of our not finding leisure or a moment's rest – is not something unrelated to us because, as I mentioned, if it is unrelated to us, we would not bother about it. It is really related, but there is a miscalculated and disproportionate arrangement between ourselves and itself, and this disproportionate relationship between ourselves and that which is pressing upon us is the cause of our considering this pressure as an undesirable pain.

This is important for even non-yogis to understand, because nobody would like to be under a pressure of any kind. It is a very terrible thing indeed in life. But our difficulty is that we cannot escape from it, because if it is something from which we can escape, we would have shoved it out and thrown it into the ditch, and we could be free from it in one moment. There is a conflict in this peculiar situation we call the pressure in life. And what is conflict? It is an irreconcilable position we are maintaining – irreconcilable because on the one hand we do not like it, and on the other hand we cannot avoid it. Look at this situation, how difficult it is, and what a travesty: we cannot avoid it, and we do not want it.

Now, what are we going to do with that thing which we do not like but we cannot avoid? We know where we are. But we have to find a solution, because we have already said it is unavoidable. If it is unavoidable, the reason why we do not like it has to be explained. We have to go a little deep into this matter: "Why do I not like it, and why is it that I feel a kind of pressure when I have already decided that it is unavoidable? I am speaking in two languages – blowing hot and cold at the same time – when I say I don't like it and yet it is unavoidable. So, I don't know what I am speaking when I make statements of that kind." We cannot be *yogins* or spiritual heroes or anything meaningful or worthwhile in life if this kind of question goes on harassing our mind day and night. We cannot have peace, let alone yoga meditation. We cannot have rest, we cannot have peace, we cannot lie on our bed for a little sleep, and we do not know on what to place our head.

The difficulty of this kind arises because we are very terribly affirmative in holding opinions about our own selves and about other things. We have an opinion about ourselves which is one hundred percent correct according to ourselves, and we also have a hundred percent correct opinion about that which is called the pressure. Both are hundred percents; and two one hundred percents clash. We cannot have two one hundred percents; it is not possible. A hundred percent is hundred percent.

Here, we may employ an interesting suggestion made by a great thinker. When we are in an atmosphere which we consider as unavoidable and which we do not like, we may adopt this technique. That which we do not like and which is unavoidable is something which we would like to change, so that it may be in harmony with our way of living. If it is possible for us to change the condition in which it is pressing upon us, well and good; we can do that. We can change the whole world, and be happy with it. But if we find that we cannot change it or bring about any kind of circumstantial

improvement in the condition which is pressing upon us for reasons well known to us, what is the other way? We have to change ourselves. Either that has to fit into our condition, or we have to fit into that condition. If neither I will budge nor you will budge, there will be war. It can be a war inside our mind, or it can be a war outside in the world; either way it is a war. If we do not want a war either psychologically or socially, we have to adopt one technique, either this way or that way. There cannot be two adverse positions totally irreconcilable with each other.

On a careful investigation into the substance of the matter, we will find that the outward world which is pressing upon us does not require so much to be changed as the need we may feel to change our own self. Again, this dual position which we feel the need to maintain in regard to ourselves and that which is pressing upon us may be overcome and transcended if we take resort to that which is above both ourselves and that which is pressing upon us. The pressure is coming from the object outside, and the pressure is felt by us as individuals. In the Bhagavadgita, towards the end of the third chapter, there is a great teaching which points out that clashes of any kind between the subjective consciousness and the object which is pressing upon it can be overcome only by resort to the Atman – *yo buddheh paratastu saha*. And what is the Atman? It is that which is neither in us nor in the object, but is in us as well as in the object, so that it is pervading an area larger than that occupied by us as well as the object. The Atman is that which is wider than what we are, wider than what is pressing upon us, and therefore, it is a transcendent presence, though it is immanent in us as well as the object. This is why people say that God is both transcendent and immanent.

## Chapter 10

### THE STAGES OF SAMADHI

In the specialised system of meditation, as we have it in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, there is a novel and very interesting method prescribed for every student, which may be said to go directly into the heart of the matter. What is it that we are meditating upon? What does the mind think when it meditates? It may appear, as it is sometimes felt by most people, that the mind is blank and thinks nothing in meditation; but it is not blank or literally a nothingness, because the emptiness or blankness which the mind may seem to maintain is also to become a conscious experience.

In meditation, one does not become unconscious; and if one is conscious that the mind is not thinking anything, one must be clear as to what one is actually saying when making such statements. What do we mean by saying that we are conscious of nothingness? It is a statement whose meaning cannot be very clear so easily. It is a state of awareness. But if it is an awareness of a blankness or a nihil, then that blankness or zero has to become an object of consciousness. It has to become a content thereof.

While there is some great point in the teaching that the mind does not think anything in a state of meditation, it can easily be misinterpreted by novitiates. While the blankness may easily be identified with a cessation of all thought minus consciousness, turbidity or torpidity of mind can nevertheless be a state of stability because *sattva* and *tamas* have certain similar characteristics – namely, fixity, stability, and a sort of immovability, we may say.

Intense awareness may look like no awareness at all. Hence, the absence of any kind of consciousness may look like a state of intense concentration of mind. This is known as *stabdha avastha*, or the cessation of all activity of the mind. But cessation of activity need not necessarily be associated with a consciousness of that cessation of activity. We are not conscious that we are not active in the state of sleep. We are

not active in sleep, but we are not conscious that we are not active. This is a very important demarcating point. The essential behind any worthwhile state of concentration of mind is the kind of awareness that is maintained.

Now we come to the point of the pre-eminent method prescribed by Patanjali, on which he does not expatiate too much, nor does he seem to enter into great detail about it, though this is the central point of his system of meditation. Whatever be the object of our meditation, let it be this or that, this particular thing we call the object of our thought is a peculiar blend of three characteristics. This definition of the object of thought is the novel instruction of Sage Patanjali. The three factors which contribute to make the object of thought what it is are to be understood carefully before one tries to concentrate or meditate upon that object.

What are these three features that go to constitute the object of thought? The object as such is something by itself. It maintains an existence of its own. It has a status which it maintains, as every one of us may be said to have a status of our own. We are something, in spite of there being no relationship of ours with anything whatsoever. When we are bereft of connection with everything, deprived of every possession, and reduced to the condition of a practical nothing in terms of external relationship, we may still be something in ourselves. Minus all external relations, we do not become a nothing. It is impossible for us to conceive that we can be a nothing at any time, under any circumstances. When we are rid of every possession and there is nothing that we can call our own, and there is nothing with which we can establish any kind of contact or relation either externally or internally, we are reduced to a barest minimum of what we are. Even that barest minimum of whatever we may be is something, and not nothing. This is what we call the status of a particular thing. That which remains in a particular thing even if it is divested of every kind of relationship or interpretative association – that barest substantiality of the

very root of anything – is the status, or what we may call the ultimate reality of that thing. This is one feature of any object, including our own selves. This is one aspect or feature of the constitution of what we call the object.

There is a second factor which goes to constitute what we may say is the appearance of the object to thought or consciousness. This second feature is the characterisation or the definition of that object, in terms of which it is known as something, as distinguished from something else. A tree is different from a stone. That which distinguishes the tree from the stone is the conglomeration of characteristics which can be seen only in that thing we call the tree, and cannot be found in anything which is not a tree. When we say that there is ‘something’, we mean that this so-called ‘something’ is possessed of certain characteristics, or qualities, attributes, properties, by which we specify that thing by what is called psychological definition. Unless we have a psychological definition in our minds of any particular thing, that thing cannot be distinguished from something else. This differentia, or *visesha*, as it is called in Indian philosophy – this specialised heap of characters attributed to a particular thing which makes it possible for a perceiving subject to know that it is something distinguished from something else – is the second character, feature, of the object.

The nomenclature is one feature by which we know or think of a particular thing. The utterance of a particular name rouses in our minds the form of that object which is referred to by this particular name or definition. The association of the form of the object with this characterisation or nomenclature is so intense that it is not possible for a person to think anything else at that time, except that particular form which is supposed to be indicated by that definition. When I utter the word ‘tree’, you cannot think of a ‘stone’ or something else. It is impossible for you to think of anything else except that thing which is considered as ‘tree’ by everybody else. No other idea can enter the mind except the

idea of that thing, which is to be known as that thing only because of the association of a given form with a particular nomenclature. This is a sort of limitation we impose upon the independent status of the object, and whether or not the object as such is concerned with that definition or nomenclature, for the percipient this is a very important particular thing.

We are all called by certain names, and we know how important that name is. The importance of our name is such that we cannot for a moment be dissociated from our name. "I am so and so; my name is such." Now, we know very well how meaningless a name is when there is no necessity to define oneself in terms of that name. If we are alone somewhere, and we are not going to be known or seen or contacted by anybody, our name has no sense for us, because nobody is going to call us by that name and we do not require to be called by ourselves in terms of that name. So, it is possible under certain circumstances to be free from association of names, though as social beings, we have never been placed under those conditions where names are not necessary. However, it is not a total impossibility. The object that is known, therefore, independent of whatever it may be by itself, is also definable by certain relational characteristics – namely, name, nomenclature, word, definition.

The third feature which Patanjali mentions is the idea that we have about something. The conditioning of the object by the way of thinking is a very central point in philosophical studies. What is the relationship that mind maintains, or thought maintains, or consciousness maintains, in relation to what it thinks or knows? Does the mind determine the object? There are thinkers called Idealists who emphasise the conditioning power of the mind of the percipient, which influences the nature of the object of perception when it is perceived. The Idealist doctrine is that nothing can be known as it is, except in terms of the mould into which it is cast by the structure of the mind that thinks. Realism, which is

opposed to Idealism, holds that objects are directly perceived by the mind, and the form of the object as known by the mind is not merely a duplicate, a copy, or a conditioned reflection of the object. It is a direct something, as it is in itself. However, we are not concerned here with these quarrels of the Realists and Idealists.

The point that yoga makes out in the context of meditation is that some interaction takes place between the object and the thought that thinks the object, whether or not this conditions that, or that conditions this. Now, the fact that there is an interaction taking place between mind and the object is to be taken into consideration, because any kind of interaction is a contribution that is made mutually by two parties. At least some contribution is made by someone, because every perception is a maintenance of a relation between consciousness and object. We have thought over this matter adequately on earlier occasions, and we have also seen how difficult it is to understand what sort of relation is maintained between consciousness and object. This relation has also been found to be a mysterious, intriguing something, which maintains an independence of some sort, so that it is able to distinguish between the percipient and the object. The relation between the seer and the seen cannot be identified either with the seer or the seen. We know very well what consequence will follow if it is going to be merged either with the seer or the seen. If the relation between the seer and the seen belongs only to the seer and not to the seen, there would be no relation between the seer and the seen, because it has already got merged with the seer. If it belongs to the seen and not to the seer, then also there is no connecting link between the seer and the seen, because it has become identified with the seen.

Somehow, the fact of the external perception of an object necessitates the operation of a third thing called relation, which can neither be identified with the seer nor with the seen. This situation implies that any perception of an object

is not a simple entry of the object into the mind without any transformation taking place at the time of perception. This particular ideational transformation, which takes place in the perception of an object, is a third conditioning factor, which need not necessarily be identical with the independent character of the object in itself. The thing as such cannot be known as long as it remains totally outside the thinking process or is placed outside, external to the senses.

Thus, what is one to do in the meditation of an object? What is our purpose in meditation? What do we intend at all in our endeavour called meditation? Our endeavour is simple. We have to know the object as it is, and we wish to identify ourselves with it, possess it, control it, and know it thoroughly, root and branch. To know a thing as it is in itself can be said to be a real knowledge of the thing. To imagine some characteristics in something is not to know it as it is. To hold some opinion about a thing may be some kind of information, but we know very well how conditioned it is, and how hard removed it can be from the true nature of the object as it is in itself.

Patanjali says that if meditation is to be an attempt on the part of consciousness to know a thing as it is in itself, it has to be freed from the notion which one has about it, and also freed from the nomenclature with which it is characterised, or by means of which it is defined. I must know you independent of your name, and I must know you independent of the way in which I am able to think of you. This is not an easy thing, as we know very well. It is ordinarily impossible to dissociate a thing from its name. The idea of the name immediately jumps into the mind, and also the notion which one holds about that particular thing – it is of this nature, it is of this character, it is related to me in this particular manner, etc. – is also impossible to avoid.

How will we avoid it, if it is supposed to be an absolute necessity that knowledge of a thing as it is in itself is practicable and desirable? Everyone will accept that

knowledge should be pure and unadulterated. Adulterated, conditioned knowledge is no real knowledge, and if true knowledge of a particular thing – or anything, for the matter of that – is desirable, and one thinks it is possible, it has to be freed from these external associations either by means of ideational thinking – holding of a notion about it – or from any kind of verbal definition.

*Sabda, artha, jnana* are the three terms used in the sutra of Patanjali. By *artha* he means the substantiality of a thing. By *jnana* he means the notion one holds about that thing. By *sabda* he means the characterisation of that thing by name or definition. So, freeing an *artha* – or a substance as it is in itself – from external associations, either by way of definition or ideation, is the first step. Perhaps it is the only step.

How do we do this? This is a great feat of the power of the will. A tremendous strength of will is necessary to free oneself from conditioning psychological factors when dealing with any particular person, thing, or even situation. A total dispassion of outlook may be called for. It has to be total, because there should not be any preconceived ulterior notion or motive in this attempt. It is not that I should know you as I want to know you, but I should know you as you would like to be known – also, as you would like to be known in the sense you really are, not in the sense you think you are.

Hence, appearance is to be broken through in order that reality may be penetrated and contacted in meditation. These are the secrets of what is called initiation in yoga, and are not details which are explained in any textbook. We will not find it in the sutras of Patanjali or any book on Vedanta or yoga, because while it may appear that it is clear to us, it is really not so, because it is not possible to make everything clear to a mind which is not prepared for this task of utterly clearing the path of its knowledge of an object. We are all, as human beings, accustomed to think of the world in a given fashion, and yoga tells us that this fashion should be overcome.

The fashion of our thinking is a very part of our social and individualised existence itself. In order that we may overcome this limitation set upon us by our personality and our social existence, we have first of all to rid ourselves of our individualised associations, as well as the preconceived notions which we may be already entertaining in our minds – not only in regard to an object, but even in regard to our own selves. In meditation, it is not that we are dealing merely with some object; we are also dealing with ourselves at the same time. Here, again, we have to repeat the point we emphasised earlier – that the so-called object in meditation is not a totally outside something, because the attempt in meditation is not merely to contact an external something, but to free the so-called something from the externality in which it is involved. Here we have to exercise our thought a little bit to know what actually this means. The object we are thinking of in our mind is placed outside us somewhere, either physically or even psychologically, and the thing – the objective we want to achieve in meditation – is to free that so-called something standing there as an object from the externality in which it is involved.

We are told later on that this externality is nothing but the placement of a thing in space and time. Anything that is in space or in time is externally related, and it is impossible to free anything from this involvement in externality as long as it is thought to exist in space and time. So, a further step is taken by Patanjali's instruction when he says that a stage has to come in our meditation when it must be possible for us to contemplate the object not necessarily as placed in space and time, but independent of space and time. This is not something that is to be attempted by the force of will, because any pressure exerted by the will on the nature of the object of contemplation will not permit the freedom of the object from the thought of involvement in space and time. We ourselves are in space and time. I think I am here, and I think you are there. This idea of my being here and your being there is the idea of something being in space and time;

and something being in space and time means something being external to the other. If something is external to the other, there cannot be internal relationship; there cannot be union, communion, fraternal feeling, or any kind of worthwhile, positive interaction.

Hence, when instruction is given by Patanjali in respect of the necessity to free the object as such from association with notions and definitions, at the same time he also intends to tell us that we have to find a way of contemplating a thing as not placed in space and time. How is it possible? Is it possible to think anything as not placed in space and time? Is there anything in the world which is not in space and time? There is nothing. Then where comes the question of contemplating a thing independent of space and time? While it is true that there is nothing which is not in space and time, and therefore it may appear that there is no way of thinking a thing independent of space and time, yet there is something above all these things.

In philosophical circles, certain schools of thinking tell us again and again that a thing as such can never be known because all thinking is through space and time and by the conditions of thought; therefore, there is no such thing as knowing a thing as it is in itself. We may feel for the time being we are satisfied with this kind of statement of the philosopher, because we know very well what actually he means. We accept the fact that our minds are accustomed to think in a particular way only. There is a set, logical way of thinking, and we cannot jump out of this set mould of logical thought. So it is true that even when we are trying to think in a super-logical way, we are not actually freeing ourselves from the conditions in which the very thought is involved. But, that there is something called the thing as it is in itself, and it cannot be known under the circumstances of the placement of the mind in space and time, is a subtle suggestion that it is possible to contact the thing as it is in itself – because one who knows that it is not possible to

contact a thing as it is in itself, also knows that there is a thing as it is in itself. This knowledge cannot be considered to be conditioned knowledge, because conditioned knowledge will never permit even the idea that there can be anything independent of phenomenal involvement. This is something about the philosophical difficulties involved in our attempt to free things from involvement in space and time.

But there is something which cannot be identified with location in space and time, and that is our own selves. However much, physically speaking, we may feel that we are involved in space and time, there is something in us, something we call 'ourselves', something that I call 'myself', the peculiar 'I' or the 'we' which thinks that there is what is known as space and time. The consciousness of space and time is the crucial point here that one has to consider. The consciousness of the fact that there is something called space and time and that everything is involved in space and time, itself cannot be involved in space and time. This is a very subtle point. If we know that everything is involved in space and time, this knowledge of the fact that everything is involved in space and time should stand outside space and time. Thus, our immortal rootedness, the pure consciousness that we are, is something which is not in space and time, because it is the knower of space and time, however much we may be forced to think that we are always in space and time.

The Yoga Sutra, or any system of yoga, catches hold of this point. If there is something in us which knows the involvement of things in space and time, and therefore that something in us cannot itself be part and parcel of space and time, this can also be said to be the essence of every other object. If we can consider ourselves essentially as something not in space and time, anyone else also can think in the same way, and all objects in the world – even an atom, even a particle of sand – can be thought of in terms of something by itself, and capable of being known as not involved in space

and time. This non-involved something which knows the involvements in space and time is the eternity that is speaking through temporality. The eternal something in us speaks in its own style that everything is temporally involved, and the knowledge of temporality cannot itself be a part of temporality. This eternity that is in someone is also the eternity that is in everyone else. Thus, we may say the whole universe is basically eternal – essentially, of course, not as it appears phenomenally, as an involved something.

Now, Sage Patanjali tells us it is possible for us to enter into the essence of the object, as we have been able to enter into our own essence and come to the conclusion that there is something in us which is not so involved in space and time. This contemplation of any particular thing as something in itself, not involved in space and time, would be to attempt at a union with that object. What prevents us from coming in union with anything? It is the externality of the object. That which is outside is always outside – it cannot become something that is inside – and, as we have noted, the outsideness of a thing is the spatio-temporality of that thing, or the conditioned character of that thing in space. So, the freedom of the object from the thought of involvement in space and time is at once the grasping of the eternal principle that is in that object. And eternity is not temporality; it is not time, it is not space.

But you may ask me, “How do I do this, finally? What is it that you expect me to do? Here again comes the question of a personal training and a position which is called initiation. The mind has to be first of all prepared for this instruction. If a very subtle and intricate method of thinking is forced on an unprepared mind, what will happen is that either no consequence will follow – nothing will happen at all, as nothing will happen to the rock if we pour water on it, as water will not enter into it – or there can be an undesirable reaction set up by the mind. There can be aberration of thought because of the unpreparedness of the mind. Such

subtle thinking cannot be forced into the mind of any person unless it is prepared for it, and it is well known that the preparatory stages are very carefully defined for us in the earlier stages of yoga, known as the *yamas* and *niyamas*, and the *sadhana chatushtaya*, etc. The internal preparation of the psyche for the reception of this technique is important, lest the mind find itself totally incompetent and unprepared for this purpose.

The final point is that in the last onslaught of meditation, the presence of this principle of eternity is recognised in everything else, particularly in the object of meditation, not by the means of a thought thinking an object, or much less the sense conceiving it, but by the soul that contemplates. True meditation is a performance of the soul, and not merely a thought of the mind. We are not merely thinking something in meditation, we are 'being' something; and we know very well how different our 'being' is from the way in which we think. Our 'being' is what we call our soul, and we embrace that object as a soul in itself. As we have a status of our own, the object also has a status of its own. We called this status the soul of the thing. It is soul entering into soul. What do we mean by the soul? It is, to repeat once again, that very thing which we consider as something which cannot be regarded as involved in space and time.

Anyone can imagine how difficult this feat is. It is difficult, no doubt, but the difficulty arises due to the prejudices of our mind. We have inborn traits of thinking which we have taken for granted as the only real ways of thinking. "I have been born and brought up in this way of thinking; this is the only way of thinking, and there is no other way." There is some other way, and this has to be known first and foremost.

The instruction in regard to meditation on the object prescribed according to the system of Patanjali is the grasping of the object as such by that which we are essentially. That is, our total being is engaged in a process of

total awareness, and not engaged in perceptual activity or the thought as a sort of concept. Meditation on an object is not a concept of the object, much less a percept of the object. It is a 'being' contemplating a 'being', whereby we may be said to be actually contemplating that object as if we are that object itself. This would be the result that may follow, finally. In the heights of meditation, we are told that a consciousness of the object reaches such intensity of experience that one does not know whether it is 'A' meditating on 'B' or 'B' meditating on 'A', whether we are contemplating the object or the object is contemplating us, because that thing which we originally called an object ceases to be an object.

Why the object should cease to be an object in meditation will be known to us if we go back to the earlier lessons, wherein we learned that the universe is an interrelated completeness, an organic totality, where nothing can be regarded as an object, and nothing is a cause, nothing is an effect. So, the idea that one part of the organism is an object of another is not a correct idea of the object. And meditation, according to the system of yoga, is therefore an endeavour of consciousness to reach up to its cosmic level of the interrelatedness of things – wherein, in which condition, nobody is a thinker of anything, and also nobody is a 'thought-of'. There is a cosmic interconnectedness, so that the whole universe stands supreme as a single awareness. This is what is called Universal Being – the aim of yoga.

*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnat Purnamudachyate  
Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnamevavasishyat  
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih*