

THE PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF YOGA



by

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a series of discourses that Swamiji gave to the Ashram's Y.V.F. Academy from December 1982 until February 1983 on the philosophy and practice of the Yoga Sutras of Sage Patanjali.

Chapter 1

THE BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY

You must have already gathered, to some extent, the structure of the whole approach to the project of study and training. At the very outset, it is necessary for every one of you to undergo what is usually called a deconditioning of the mind by freeing yourself from all earlier prepossessions of thought, predilections and conceived notions of life, whether they have been introduced into your mind by family circumstances, by the cultural pattern of your country, by political atmospheres, or whatever the reason be. Therefore, do not listen to these instructions and undergo these studies with preconceived notions. Inasmuch as it is a process of learning, receiving and imbibing what may be considered entirely new to many of you, it is important to keep your mind as a clean slate. This is because there would be no necessity to undergo any training or do any study of this type whatsoever if things were already clear to your mind.

You are all fairly grown-up persons with some sort of an understanding of what life is, and yet you must have felt that this understanding is inadequate and it was not able to serve your purpose. Whatever be the education that you have undergone and the social position that you may occupy, you must have felt that there is something more than all these things, and there is something dissatisfying, or rather distressing, which is keeping you uneasy. This problem or knot in the psyche of your personality has to be broken through, and the fortress of this ignorance has to be broken open, for which a new type of adventure has to be embarked upon.

The reason why we do not seem to be satisfied with our studies or learning, or with our possessions or with our social position is that we have a horrible misconception about all these things. We have never understood things in

their proper spirit, and never seen things as they really are in themselves. We have always a blinkered vision of things, obstructed or narrowed down and limited to the conditions of our own present state of personality, and we have never a broad vision which is applicable for the generality of thought proper.

Every human being has many layers of impulse, and these layers or strata of personality are arranged in such a manner that a human being may be said to be more of a composite admixture of elements, factors and categories rather than an indivisible substance. Though we may appear to be solid bodies, impregnable substances, we are not so. Neither chemically, physiologically, biologically or even psychologically are we indivisible, impregnable substances. This so-called personality of ours is a combination of various features, factors, conditions, presuppositions, impulses, urges, longings, frustrations, etc., such that it will be difficult for us in sober moments even to believe that there is anything real and substantial in us at all. We seem to be floating bubbles appearing to be robust, but there is a hollowness inside; and this emptiness or vacuum that sometimes manifests itself outside is the reason for our restlessness in life.

Mostly we consider ourselves to be adequate, or not inadequate in any manner, but the truth of the matter comes out occasionally when we realise that we are not as important as we imagine ourselves to be. There are powers in the world which can foil us in one second, and there are energies which cannot be controlled by us. There are conditions of life on which we hang abjectly, and which have such a clutch over us that it is very difficult to believe what amount of independence we have in this world.

These are facts that will come to the surface of your consciousness only if you analyse yourself and study yourself deeply like a good psychologist or scientist, not like a housewife or an officer or a father or mother, or a rich man,

businessman, industrialist – as this is not the way in which you have to look upon yourself. You are an entity which has to be studied dispassionately in a psychoanalytical manner and diagnosed in a medical fashion, as it were. When you conduct this search within your own self, you will be flabbergasted to know that you are quite different altogether from what normal mankind would imagine itself to be.

Thus, there seems to be a good reason why we keep ourselves unhappy throughout our life. When we look at the world, we take for granted that everything is fine, but everything is not fine. There is some mystery behind the world, the very world that we see with our eyes. Some secret operation is going on behind the screen of the world, as it were, which is the reason for the vicissitudes of human life and the turmoil of political existence, and anything that takes place in human history. There seems to be something behind the visible phenomena of nature, controlling all things, due to which nobody in this world seems to have any say in any matter whatsoever. Everybody seems to be a dancing puppet. Even emperors danced to the tune of these inscrutable voices operating behind the screen of the world, and they have gone to kingdom come. Empires and emperors, men and women, rich and poor, good and bad, necessary and unnecessary – everything has gone to a no-man's land.

This is the vista before us, which can not only frighten us, but can stimulate a sense of wonder and inquisitiveness in regard to the very atmosphere in which we are living. This sort of enquiry, this way of questioning, this method of doubting and wondering is what we may call the beginning of philosophy. It is in the nature of the very core of the human being to go into the roots of these problems in life, when there is a dissatisfaction with the normal demands of human nature. We do not become philosophers as long as the world satisfies us, but a time must come and a time will come when things cannot satisfy us. They will appear as meaningless presentations before us, tantalising us,

deceiving us, tricking us and hoodwinking us into certain temptations and beliefs over which for the time being we may have no control and into which we have no insight.

We cannot be deceived for all times, though we can be deceived for some time. A day may come when the world cannot any more deceive us. We begin to detect some mischief that is working behind the scenes and distracting us from our intentions and keeping us under a subjection of illusion, and then it is that we become dissatisfied with everything. We cannot be satisfied with either our learning, or our wealth, our friends or with anything that is seen in this world. We begin to suspect there is something wrong in this world. A dissatisfaction creeps into the very vitals of our personality, and we do not want to speak any more. We begin to believe that we have been deceived throughout our life by the phenomena of the world – political, social, economic, personal, everything put together.

Here begins the philosopher's task. An enquiry into the true reason of things is philosophy. Philosophy does not mean a system of thinking like that of Kant or Hegel, Plato or Aristotle, or Nyaya or Vaisheshika, so these names may be brushed aside for the time being. Though there is a lot to learn from all these systems of thinking, we need not go into the jargon and labels of philosophic thinking. We are more concerned with the vitality of our own personal life – what is most practical and immediately useful – and do not merely go after academic knowledge of either ancient or mediaeval times.

'Philosophy' is a word that we use to comprehend that system of operation of our mind or consciousness by which, it being not satisfied by anything that is visible or tangible, finds a necessity to probe into the structure or the reality that is behind what is visible and tangible. A philosophy is, therefore, a system of the operation of our deepest consciousness, by which we try to contact the very substance of the universe. We are now catching phantoms, and are

running after the shadows of the originals. The originals are not visible to us. When we see a cinematic projection on a screen, it is merely shadows dancing on the screen that we enjoy; the originals are not there. Nevertheless, the shadows carry a semblance of the original, due to which it is that we seem to enjoy even the dancing shadows on the screen.

The world seems to be satisfying on account of a peculiar characteristic of it being a reflection or a shadow of an original. The fact of its being a shadow of the original – which is really there – is the reason why there is a semblance of satisfaction in this world. But there is a great misconstruing of the modus operandi of these satisfactions, and we have literally put the cart before the horse and are seeing everything topsy-turvy, upside down, and not as the world really is.

If I do not see you as you really are, you will not be satisfied with me, and if you do not see me as I am, but interpret me from your own peculiar narrowed vision of things, I will not be satisfied with you. Thus is the relation obtaining between us and the world. The world will not be pleased with us if we misconstrue its operations, read wrong meanings into its workings, and try to exploit our vision of the world for our own individual purposes. In a similar manner, we too will not be satisfied with the world. Neither is the world going to take care of us, protect us or even mind our existence, nor are we going to be satisfied. There is a mutual tug-of-war going on between man and the universe, and it is continuing even today. Neither has there been an indication that the world is satisfied with us, nor is there any indication that we are going to be satisfied with the world. There seems to be a total chaos of presentation of values in the world.

Here is the drama of human sorrow. We are not born into sorrow in the world; we are born as small babies, laughing, smiling, crawling, and seeing the world as an arena of a sort of personal and social satisfaction. It is only when time

passes that nature begins to unleash her forces and show her teeth. We have often been told by poets that nature can be red in tooth and claw, if the time for it comes. Nature is not always red; she hides her teeth and claws. Even a tiger's claws are not always visible, and are projected only when they are necessary. Nature has unleashed these weapons like an army, and devastated empires and foiled the efforts of man. Not even the best of men have succeeded in this world. They have been taken into the limbo, thrown into the dust and covered up, and no one knows where what has gone.

This is distressing information that we gather by studying our own experiences in this world. Dissatisfaction with the initial view of things is supposed to be the mother of all philosophy. A satisfied man cannot be a philosopher, because this satisfaction is make-believe. It is a whitewash; it is like a balloon, with no substance inside it.

The dissatisfaction with the surface view of things, which I said is the beginning of philosophical studies, is also, at the same time, a satisfaction, which is the other side of having discovered the causes of the sorrows of mankind. A physician is very happy if he finds that he has really gone deep and diagnosed the root of a chronic illness to which there had been no cure. "Oh, here is the matter! I have found out the cause." To discover a cause is itself a great joy. So on the one hand the philosopher is a dissatisfied person – dissatisfied in the sense that nothing in the world can satisfy him. On the other hand, no true philosopher can be satisfied until he has grasped the very basic roots of the problems of life.

Hence, a philosopher lives in two worlds, the phenomenal and the noumenal, as they are generally called. A philosopher lives in this world. He can see you, he can speak to you, he can understand you, he can guide you, he can understand your difficulties, and he may suggest a panacea for your problems; yet, he does not belong to this world, having rooted himself in a substance which is not of this world. A good physician can know every aspect of an

illness without actually suffering from it. A true philosopher is one who has a correct grasp of every operation in this world of phenomena, and yet stands above it as a spectator of time and existence. As the great Plato once said, a philosopher is a spectator of existence at all times, and is not involved in the activity of nature. He is like an umpire; he does not take part in the game, but he knows both sides very well.

I began by telling you that you must first decondition your minds and forget all that you have studied, because though you might have learnt something, it may not be sufficient for you. There is a necessity to conduct the thoughts in a new way altogether now, because philosophy is not merely subject matter to be swallowed by your mind but, more properly, it is an art of conducting the thought itself. It is not a substance that you eat, but a method that you adopt in the very operation of your thinking.

Philosophy, therefore, is an art of thinking, rather than a substance that goes into your psyche. It is not importing of some knowledge from outside; that is not the actual task. The knowledge is inside you already; we have only to remove the debris that covers it. Thus it is that you are straightened, aligned, made whole, properly adjusted in your personality, streamlined from every point of view by philosophical studies. You become wise, as it is usually said. The wisdom of life is the substance of philosophy. The wisdom of life is not learning what is in books, and it is not even academic information. It is a tremendous common sense that you exercise in the light of the insight that you have gained into the relationship that really obtains between you and the world outside.

Now, I have used the word 'world' several times, as if its meaning is very clear. You have heard this word uttered in many places, and you have some sort of idea what this world is, but this idea is not sufficient. This insufficient notion about the world is the cause of your insufficient satisfaction. It is

not easy to know what this world is. Even a child will peep through the window and ask from where the world has come. How this world has come? From where has it come? This question of a baby is the beginning of philosophical enquiry. Do you not wonder what all this is? How have you grown into what you are today? How have things happened, and why should they happen at all? What is history? What is astronomy? What is human adventure? Why are you here at all? The final question raises its head as a tremendous apostrophe before you: Why are you in this world at all? What for? What would it be to the world if you were not to be? What would you gain and what would you lose by being or not being yourself?

The question of the very purpose and meaning of existence arises when we investigate into the composite structure of the world and ourselves, which involves the relation between ourselves and the world. There is not only a world in front of us, and it is not merely that we are here as observers of the world; there is also a sort of coordination between ourselves and the world. All the activities of humanity today, in the interest of social solidarity and political organisations, etc., are movements of humanity in the direction of establishing a proper relationship among people.

We do not know what sort of relationship is there between one and another, what to speak of the relationship between the whole of humanity and the world outside. There is a lot to know when we go deep into these difficult subjects. There is, first of all, a need to know the proper relation obtaining between the constituent parts of our own personality, physically as well as psychologically. There is then the necessity to know the relationship that obtains among people – what sort of connection obtains among ourselves here. There is a third necessity, which is to know the relationship that is between the whole of living beings and the world of nature. These are startling questions, but

unavoidable problems. No one can be at peace in this world without receiving some sort of a satisfactory answer to these great questions that must arise in the minds of everyone one day or the other. What am I? What are these people, and what is this world? This, in a broad outline, may be said to be the foundation of philosophical studies.

Right from ancient times, people have scratched their heads and wracked their brains trying to get an answer to these questions. But, from where will the answers come? Will they drop from the skies? The answers do not easily come because what we call the answer to these questions is a method of acquiring knowledge, the process of enlightenment into the structure or the reality of things. How do we gain knowledge of anything at all? This is the primary question that philosophical studies take upon themselves. The problem of knowledge is the initial problem of philosophical studies.

How do we know anything at all? Inasmuch as all our attempts are to know, we must first of all be aware of how we can know anything. What instruments have we? What apparatus are we wielding in ourselves? Are we competent to know anything at all? Knowledge is a process conducted by the knower – yourself, myself, whoever it is – in respect of that which is to be known. The object of knowledge has to be set in a particular relationship with the subject that knows, and this proper streamlining of the relationship between the object to be known and the subject that knows is the task of the whole knowing process.

We do not seem to be clearly acquainted with anything in this world. We have wrong notions of our friends, the people around us, our neighbours, our government, and things in general. We have some sort of glib information about the general structure of things, and most of it is incorrect. Even if we gaze directly into a thing, it cannot be said that we have understood that thing correctly. Even if we go on gazing at something for years together, we cannot know what it is

made of because there seems to be a need to employ a newer technique of knowing. Mere gross sensory operation and the usual social etiquette do not seem to have succeeded in giving us a correct knowledge of things.

This is why we have, finally, a deep sorrow within ourselves. When we become elderly we begin to feel that we have done nothing worthwhile in this world, and we go to where we know not. We have known nothing about things, but somehow we have dragged this cart of our body through life and managed to pull through these exigencies of personal and social existence. Somehow we have got on; but getting on is not really living. We may somehow get on in life, but that is different from living a real life. An unsatisfied getting on, an anxiety-ridden living, a problem-laden existence is not life. It is a sort of wretchedness, which is the fate of most people in the world. We want to get over these forms of malady that seem to be descending upon us.

Thus we are here, seeking some avenue of approach to tear this cobweb of our ignorance, to know things as they really are, to grasp the destiny of our own souls, and to see what we can do in this world. God bless us with this knowledge.

Chapter 2

PHILOSOPHY – THE ART OF CORRECT UNDERSTANDING

The conditions of life, whose basic characteristics I tried to expatiate upon on in the previous talk, would logically and necessarily direct us to a study and investigation into the causes of the experiences we are undergoing in life. Why should things be as they are? Why are we what we are today? And what could be the reason behind our inner impulsion to search and to quest for solutions of difficulties – obviating problems? And, what could be the reason behind our restlessness, our endless asking for endless things? What is the mystery of life? What is it that man is aspiring for? Towards what is the universe moving finally? What is the secret behind human history?

Are these questions capable of being answered? Whether or not they are capable of being answered under normal conditions, they have to be answered one day or the other. If they cannot be answered at all, they cannot arise in our minds. Totally impossible things do not occur to the minds of man. The occurrence of possibilities as ideas, or even merely concepts, should act as a great consolation to us that these possibilities have to be actualities under other conditions. In the present condition of our thinking and living, certain aspirations of ours may not appear to be capable of being fulfilled; but our asking is itself an answer to this asking. How could we ask for a thing which is impossible? Even if we want to catch the moon, if this asking is a sincere longing from within us, there should be some way, at least as a remote possibility, of contacting even such a distant object like the moon. Perhaps a human longing, surging from the heart, defies everything that can be called an impossibility. There is perhaps nothing impossible finally, under given conditions, though it may not look like that under existing circumstances.

If you remember the few words I spoke to you last time, you may perhaps have gathered that we, as human beings, live in two worlds at the same time – a world of actual experience, and another world of possible experience. There is something we are undergoing, and there is something else which is possible for us, and all our efforts are towards the actualisation of this so-called remote possibility. All the efforts of mankind, right from the beginning of history, should be considered as an unremitted effort for the materialisation of possible values – to bring the ideal into the real realm of experience. Here is the beginning of what we may call philosophical study or even the foundations of yoga practice, because yoga is based on a deep philosophical foundation. Our studies in this course will, therefore, comprise the systematic investigation into the very rock bottom of human experience, which is what is called philosophy, and the instruments of action that we may have to employ for the purpose of our expected achievement, which we may call a study of psychology, and the subject matter proper which seems to be in our minds, namely, the practice of yoga. What we call yoga practice is the fine fruit which has to be churned from this widespread tree of the total life of man – of everybody – arisen out of the root of a deep philosophical perspective of all existence.

To continue from where we left last time, the question that we posed before ourselves was, how do we know anything at all? How does anyone know that there is a world outside? And how is it that this inscrutable knowledge or perception of a thing called a world outside sits so tightly upon our minds that we have taken it for the whole of reality, and for us the reality is nothing but this world and our involvement in it? How come this predicament? Our involvement in the world arises on account of our giving a value to the world, which again is a consequence of our perception of the world as a truly existent something. How have we driven ourselves to the conviction that there is a

world outside us? This has been taken by everyone as a hypothesis, and is something which is taken for granted.

The sceptical mind, the scientific outlook, which always seem to be very logical in its approach, is rooted finally in something which cannot itself be proved – namely, the world that is there outside us. We cannot prove that there is a world outside, while we expect everything else to be proved. How is it that we are compelled to accept the existence of something whose reality is not capable of logical proof? Here again we come to a dual aspect operating in our own nature – the logical and also the super-logical. While we are very logical and scientific, and even mathematical, in our outlook and enterprises in life, the very base of our conviction is itself not logical because there is no logic behind the existence of the world. It is there, and there the matter ends. We have to take it for what it is. But why should we be forced to accept the existence of a world as it appears to our eyes or our senses, while we want logic and mathematics for everything else?

This impulse from within us compelling us to accept the existence of a world outside as a reality, in itself arises out of a nature which is super-natural. There is something in us which is not merely natural, not merely logical or intellectual. We are not merely arithmetic, geometry, algebra, logic. There is something in us which is beyond all these methods we employ in conducting our enterprises in life. Man is not merely empirical; he is also trans-empirical. He is not exhausted in this world. He also belongs to some other realm; else, questions concerning the other world or something beyond this world cannot arise in the mind. These are conclusions that we deduce from the implications of certain experiences that we are passing through in this world.

Philosophy is a study of implications of experience, and thus it differs from science. Science is concerned only with sensory experience, which has to be corroborated by

intellectual analysis, but philosophy is not merely a study of experience; it also deeply studies the suggestions that are imbedded beneath the experiences of mankind. There is something called 'reading between the lines'. If we read only the lines, it is science; but if we are able to read between the lines and grasp what is implied, suggested and hidden, then we are philosophers. Now our perception or knowledge of the world – which we all take for granted that it is actually there – is to be studied. The question of how we know anything at all is the beginning of philosophy, and the answer to this question has come from various sources. The schools of philosophy, the systems of thought throughout the world, are man's attempts to answer this question.

What is knowledge? What do we mean by knowing anything at all? What is our concept of the process of knowledge? When we say, "I know this," what do we actually mean in our minds? "I know that there is a pillar in front of me." When I make this statement, what do I actually mean? Can I explain myself in greater detail? The pillar is not me and I am not the pillar, but I know that there is a pillar in front of me. How do I know that there is a pillar, and what do I mean by 'knowing' that there is a pillar? This simple instance of the procedure of knowing a simple thing like a pillar in front of us, will answer the question of any type of knowledge of the whole universe itself. From one instance we can extend the conclusion to all instances that are practicable in life.

Knowledge of an object outside, whether it is a pillar or any human being – or anything, for the matter of that – is a very intriguing procedure. It is a very complicated process, and not as simple as it appears on the surface. We cannot define the word 'knowledge' by looking into dictionaries. Dictionaries give synonyms which perhaps tell us that knowing means being aware of, understanding, comprehending, being conscious of, apprehending. These may be our thesaurus ideas, dictionary meanings, all of

which do not take us far. Whatever be the substitute of a word that we use to describe the process of knowing, the intriguing feature behind it remains forever.

We are not here only to know the dictionary meaning of the word 'knowledge'. What is actually happening when we know an object? Such a philosophical procedure is something to which mankind is not accustomed. We are not used to thinking like this. We are not interested in these questions, because we can get on in life merely by imagining that there is something in front of us, whatever be the way in which we have come to this conclusion that there is something in front. Why unnecessarily go into answering difficult questions which do not concern us in practical life? This is the ordinary man's approach. But a philosopher is not an ordinary man. He cannot be satisfied if he feels there is something which he cannot understand. Ignorance is a great sorrow. We do not like to be idiotic, and we never want to feel that there is something which we cannot know. We want to probe into it. There is a curiosity in the mind of man. There is a pressure from within us to know everything. We do not want there to be something that we do not know. It irks us, and we cannot sleep. What is it? "This is something I cannot understand. It must be known." So we go exploring, investigating, and delving deep into things so that we can sleep well with the satisfaction that there is nothing which has defied our understanding. We do not wish to be defeated by the world; that is a sorrow to us. "I have been exploited, defeated, thrown out, and there is something which has been hidden from my view. This I do not want." Nothing should be hidden from our mental vision, and we want to know everything. This is a philosopher's attitude.

Now, about philosophy in general. By philosophy, I do not mean any particular school of thought. I mean a general philosophic attitude of the impulsion from within the human mind to know all existence at one stroke. From this point of view of the definition of philosophy as a general enterprise of

mankind as a whole, the process of knowledge seems to be a kind of involvement of the knower with the object of knowledge. We are somehow involved in some way in that object, without which fact or feature, we cannot explain how an object is known at all. It may be a brick pillar or it may be the whole universe; whatever be that content of our knowledge, unless we are involved in the object in some intimate manner, we cannot know it. So knowledge of anything is an involvement in that thing which we know.

The word 'involvement' is something very interesting for us to investigate into. What do we mean by involvement? We seem to be moving from one difficulty to another difficulty. We know what involvement is. "I am very much involved in this," we sometimes say. When we make a statement like this, we know what we mean. We are part and parcel of that in which we say we are involved. I am not totally outside that in which I am involved. "I am involved in this mess. I am involved in this situation. I am involved with this person, in this litigation, in this, in that." When we say we are involved, we mean that particular content – that object, that circumstance, that person, that thing – has become part of our nature. That is what we mean by saying that we are involved in it, which means, again, that that particular thing in which we are involved is not an outside object entirely.

First of all, we began by saying that we know an object. Now we seem to be heading towards some strange conclusion that it cannot be entirely an object in the sense of a totally isolated thing from us; and if it had been a totally isolated thing, there would be no involvement, and if there is no involvement, there is no knowing it. So the fact of knowing a thing, having an involvement in it, necessitating an organic connection with it, shows that it is not really a totally separated object. Thus, the so-called object of our knowledge is not to be called an object literally. We may call it an object for practical purposes, but really it is not. The father and son are two different individuals. For all practical

purposes, one is an object of the other in the sense that one can see the other, but the involvement of one in the other is such that in secret, personal, private life at home, they cannot treat each other as objects. Physically, they may look like objects of each other, but in many other ways they are not objects.

Human involvement, emotional involvement, intellectual involvement, social, political involvement, whatever be the involvement, is nothing but an organic entering into the very circumstance and existence of that thing, so that it is no more a thing, and anything that happens to that thing, happens to us. The world is revealed before us gradually as something which is not totally cut off from us. If it is totally cut off, we cannot be involved in it; we are not concerned with it. Why should I become concerned with that which has no relation to me in any way? We are very much concerned with the world, with every little bit of things. If that concern were not there, there would be no problem of existence. All problems of life, all issues arising out of life, are results of an unavoidable involvement in life, which is involvement in the world. Therefore, we cannot regard the world as something totally unconnected with us. It is part of us.

This is the beginning of a deeper result that is to follow from further investigation. We go deeper and deeper into the Atlantic and the Pacific until we touch the bottom and grasp the treasure that is in the bowels of the ocean of this great mystery called existence. Somehow, we now have a suspicion that things are not what they seem. There is some mystery behind things, apart from the manner in which they are presented to our eyes. The world is not as it appears to our eyes or other senses. The objects of the world seem to be actors in the drama of the theatre of existence, putting on attire; but when the dress is removed, they are different things altogether. All things in the world are dressed up, and they appear to be other than what they are. Don't you think that you see only dressed-up personalities in a drama, and

therefore you are enjoying it? If everybody appears naked as he is, then there is no performance, and the world performance will cease in one second if everything appears naked in its truth. Therefore, we are presented with a picture, a phenomenon, a made-up presentation, which we are obliged to gaze at, look at and appreciate, to consider as a reality in itself, just as we consider dramatic performances as realities, while subtly we know it is, after all, a dramatic performance. He is our own brother, he is a nephew, he is somebody else; he is not Ravana or Rama standing in front of us. We know this very well, yet we enjoy the Ravana and Rama on the stage. "Oh, wonderful performance!" we say, knowing well that it is something else that is inside.

In human experience, the eternal and the temporal clash with each other. That is why we are partly pulled by this world of sensory experience, and partly kept restless with a longing for that which is above the world. Partially we are longing for this world, and partially we are totally dissatisfied with it because we belong to a world of eternity on one side, and to the world of temporality on the other side. We are mysterious presentations. These little persons seated here are not ordinary presentations; they are great miracles in themselves. Each person is a miracle in himself or herself, in the sense that there is a mysterious coming together of the transcendent and the empirical in each person.

That is why we are pulled in two directions. Sometimes we laugh and sometimes we weep; both things we do in this world. We are happy sometimes, and terribly grieved at other times. Sometimes a great consolation comes to our mind, and a solace speaks from inside our own hearts. In an uncanny way, some satisfaction speaks to us. There seems to be some consolation that, after all, things will not be as bad as we thought them to be: "The world is not going to the dogs; one day it shall be better." Do we not think like that? Or do we think that hell will descend on us? Even if we think

that hell is going to descend, it will not be always there. "One day I shall be better." This feeling in us, coming willy-nilly from inside, that, 'some day, things will be better than they are today, due to which we are working for the betterment of mankind', is the eternity speaking through us. But at other times we say that everything is hopeless, wretched, nonsensical, idiotic, good for nothing, and we want to quit this world. This is temporality speaking from inside.

The senses present one picture, and our deeper spirit presents another picture altogether. Perception, knowledge of an object in the world – knowledge of anything, for the matter of that – appears to be intriguing and incapable of ordinary understanding because of this mixture of two aspects, the eternal and the temporal, coming together in the process of perception. On the one hand, nothing can be known unless it is outside us. That which is inside our eyes and inside our own mouth cannot be known by us as an object; but on the other hand, we cannot know anything unless we are organically involved in it. There is, therefore, a conflict in the process of knowing.

There is an unnatural procedure taking place in every act of knowledge, and therefore also in every act of desiring, without our knowing what is actually happening. When we desire a thing, long for a thing, ask for a thing, want a thing, we are creating a conflict in our minds. As I mentioned, the very process of knowledge is a sort of conflict between the temporal and the eternal. Every desire of man is a psychological conflict because a desire cannot arise in respect of an object unless it is outside oneself, but also, at the same time, a desire cannot arise in respect of an object if it is totally outside and independent of us in every way. We cannot long for a thing with which we have no connection, which has been isolated from us in every way, root and branch, from top to bottom. If something is totally outside us and we have no connection in any manner whatsoever with it, it cannot be the object of our desire. On the one hand, this

is the case. A thing that is totally outside us cannot be ours and, therefore, asking for it is a meaningless adventure; but, on the other hand, if it is really one with us, we will not ask for it. So, a thing should be neither outside us, nor in us. We are asking for something impossible in manifesting any desire. We are creating a difficult situation which we cannot solve, and nobody can solve.

Therefore, desires are troublemakers. They can never give us peace of mind because they can never be satisfied. A desire cannot be satisfied because it is a conflict in itself. It is a conflict because we are asking for two contradictory things at the same time. An object should be mine, and yet it should not be mine. We do not know what we mean when the mind asks for this. The object has to be mine – otherwise, the desire to possess it cannot arise – but it should not be mine; only then I can ask for it. A thing which is already mine cannot be asked for, and a thing which is totally not mine cannot be asked for. So a desire is a contradiction, a psychological malaise. This arises on account of an erroneous perception of the object itself. There is an error creeping into the very process of knowing anything whatsoever in the world, on account of which an error called ‘desire’ – love and hatred included – arises. We have to resolve this conflict which is the source of every other conflict in every walk of life – in family, in ourselves, outside, inside, everywhere. All the difficulties of man arise on account of this erroneous perception of things.

Now, when we root our very life individually or socially in some error of perception, our reactions to things so wrongly known also bring about great difficulties. Emotions, cravings, passions, hatreds, and turmoil inside the psyche, which are the themes studied in abnormal psychology, arise on account of a basic metaphysical error, as it can be called, which has been very beautifully studied in pithy *sutras* by the saint Patanjali. There is, therefore, a philosophical blunder, which I referred to as a metaphysical error, at the back of all

the troubles in life. We do not understand things properly; therefore, we are emotionally disturbed in regard to everything.

Philosophy has this objective before it: how can we understand things correctly? Philosophy is the art of correct understanding, knowing things as they really are and not merely taking for granted that they are as they appear to the senses. The knowledge of an object has taken us to a conclusive apprehension that the world is not so much outside us as to be capable of being converted into a tool for our satisfaction or exploited in any manner whatsoever. The world cannot be exploited. We cannot exploit anybody in the world because all things in the world are part of the world only, and if the world is not going to be a tool in our hands, nobody can be a tool in our hands. There is a status that each thing enjoys in this world. The world has a status of its own.

We forget that we are a part of the world. Are we outside the world? For some reasons, at some time, under some conditions, we are likely to feel that we are not part of the world, which is why we crave and hate, we want to grab and exploit, we want to possess and reject. Ideas like these arise in our minds because sometimes we affirm our egoism so intensely that we begin to feel that we are totally independent of things. We have nothing to do with the world, and the world has nothing to do with us. We can do anything with it. This is a dictator's, despot's and tyrant's attitude, whose fate, history records very well. The world is not going to be converted into an instrument of our satisfaction in any manner.

The process of knowledge has given us an indication that the very fact of our knowing that there is a world outside involves the conclusion that we are not outside the world, and the world is not outside us. Knowledge is an organic process. It is a whole situation, and not a partitioned linkage of little perceptions, bit by bit, one disconnected from the other. It is an entire situation arising, connecting us with the

object and the object with us, so that the longing for an object or the love for anything whatsoever in the world is a love for a wholesome experience in us, about which we have not thought properly.

We are dissatisfied with a limited bodily experience. This finitude of our individual existence compels us to connect ourselves with another object for any reason whatsoever, so that the finitude of our individuality – physically, psychologically, etc. – appears to be broken open, overcome to some extent, by our going out of our finitude in the longing and perception of an object outside, so that there is a larger psychological expanse of our personality created in our possessing an object by knowing it. Knowledge of an object involving the possession of it in some manner creates a satisfaction because we have outgrown our finitude to some extent, at least in our imagination.

All happiness is imagination, finally. It is only a thought operating in a particular manner. Suddenly it works in a particular way, and we are in a state of jubilation. The finitude of our personality is tentatively overcome, for the time being at least, by our coming in contact with another object because we have extended the area of our action beyond ourselves, up to the limit of that object. We have become larger beings; we are not finite to the extent that we appeared to be earlier. A touch of infinitude is injected into our experience when we seem to be in contact with an object by way of knowing it, involving in it, possessing it, and perhaps enjoying it.

Thus, a universal element seems to be entering into our finitude in every act of perception. Otherwise, we would not even know that there is a table or a desk in front of us. The knowledge of an object outside, even if it is a fountain pen or a pinhead, is possible on account of an element which is larger than, wider than, and transcendent to this little knowledge which is creeping within our own brains. Our mind is not only inside our brains. It goes out. If its

connection with the outside world was not a conscious process, the world would not be known to exist at all. Our consciousness, which is our spirit, apprehends the existence of an object outside, sees it, and thinks external to it, under some conditions which require that the knower has to exceed his own finitude. If we are locked only within our body, in our consciousness, we cannot know anything in the world. We will be a prisoner within our body. If we were locked up like that within the prison house of our own individuality, there would be no external perception. There would be only a brick wall around us – and not only that, there would not be a desire to break through finitude.

The desire to overcome all finitude in every way, materially as well as socially and in every other manner, is an indication of our belonging to a kingdom of heaven, as it is called, a realm of experience which is transcendent to all limited experiences in life. Essentially we seem to be angels, fallen down into mortality due to some peculiar fate of nature. Else, we would not long to be angels once again. Why do we want to catch God? How does this desire arise? It is because once upon a time we have been with God, and now we have come down for some reason, into which circumstance we have to investigate a little. We were, once upon a time perhaps, on the lap of God Himself. We have been hurled down, as it were, due to some circumstance; else, how would the desire for God arise in the mind? How would it be possible for us to ask for infinite possessions, infinite experience and immortal existence? If we were never immortal, how would the idea of immortality arise in us? If we were totally mortal, scattered beings, unwanted by everybody, how would the desire for immortality arise in us? How would we ask for the Absolute? Why do we want to attain yoga?

These are suggestions from within our own heart, our conscience and our spirit, that each one of us belongs to a realm of infinite, immortal being, God-experience; therefore,

it is a possibility. It is a possibility because it is our birthright. It is our belonging. It is our property, as it were, that we have lost due to a miscalculation in some way – a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of values. We have to regain this original status of that perfection from which we have fallen. The paradise that has been lost has to be regained. Until that time, we cannot have peace of mind. This science, this technique, this art of regaining the paradise that has been lost, is what we call yoga.

Chapter 3

THE MYSTERY OF ONE'S OWN SELF

Philosophical enquiries are either inductive or deductive in their methods. Modern thinking, especially of the Western type, is mainly inductive in the sense that it deduces universal conclusions out of information gathered from isolated particulars. Experimentation and observation is the method of science and even modern critical philosophy. It is inductive because it does not come to conclusions except through particulars which are accessible to experiment and observation. This experiment may be sensory in the case of science or rational in the case of philosophy; however, the methodology is almost similar in either case. We have to see before we believe, or understand before we can accept. These are the trends of thinking these days in science and philosophy.

Ancient Indian thinking was mostly deductive. It was critical and rational, no doubt, but its criticism or its rationality would not go counter to direct experience. Thus in India, philosophy has been called *darshana*, or vision of Reality. It is not merely a critical analysis through the intellect of man, which they found inadequate to the purpose. It is not possible for the intellect to understand everything in the world. Though there is a great utility in the application of reason and intellect within a certain limit, beyond that limit it is not only not useful, but it can even mislead us.

Indian thinkers of ancient times – the philosophers, the saints and the sages – approached the question of Reality by a practical application of personal methods, through experience, and they convinced themselves that they were face to face with God, with Reality, with Truth, with things as they are within themselves. Their critical reason was of course there to corroborate their experience. Logic was not opposed to the vision of Reality. The deductive method

follows the coming down to specifics from generals already experienced by insight – by *samadhi*, by *sakshatkara*, by Realisation – which is called immediate experience or non-mediate coming in contact with Reality, whereas sensory and even logical understanding is mediate, not immediate, in the sense that human instruments of knowledge cannot really come in contact with anything in the world.

If we are to understand contact in its true spirit, we can contact nothing by means of the senses or even by the mind. This great issue – that man or anything that man has, either sensorily or rationally, cannot come down into contact with Reality as it is in itself – is the great thesis of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. He spent his life writing a book proving that human faculties are inadequate to the purpose of contacting Reality. We may ask why this is so. Why are we not equipped with adequate instruments to contact things as they are in themselves? The point which is very critically and largely expatiated upon by this philosopher is that we look at things with spectacles on our eyes, and the spectacles condition the nature of the perception. Whatever the nature of the glasses we put on, that would be the nature of the conclusions we arrive at by our visions.

The glasses which the rationality of man puts on are sensory as well as intellectual. We wear two types of glasses. The scientist also wears a set of glasses, and he cannot escape being conditioned by these spectacles – namely, space and time. The scientist sees everything through space and time only, and he cannot escape this predicament. There is nothing which is not in space and time, and the scientist himself is involved in space and time. This is a defect in the sense that we cannot overcome the shackles to which we are subject by our very placement in the atmosphere of space and time. The philosopher fares no better because, though he is accustomed to a very critical analysis of things, he also wears certain mental spectacles in addition to being conditioned by space and time, because the mind cannot

even think except in terms of space and time. While our senses are conditioned by space and time, the mind also is of the same category as far as cognition or perception is concerned because the mind cannot conceive what the senses do not perceive.

Further, there are additional difficulties of the mind of man, in addition to space and time. There are certain habits which are logical or psychological in their nature. We have certain logical habits – we may call them psychological habits, if we like – namely, anything that we can think in our mind has a quantity, is of some shape, some size, and it occupies some place. We cannot think of any object which does not occupy a place. Even if it is a pinpoint, it has a quantity, a dimension; it has a three-dimensional jurisdiction which it occupies. This is the habit of thinking of objects in terms of quantity. We cannot think anything without a quantity attached to it, however small be the measure of quantity that is associated thus. Secondly, we cannot conceive any object unless we relate it to something else. The definition of an object, psychologically – the idea or notion of anything in our mind – is possible only by comparing and contrasting the qualities of that object with other things. We say a crow is black because there are things in the world which are not black. If everything is black, we cannot know what is black. We cannot visualise the colour of a particular object unless we contrast it with other colours which do not belong to that particular object. Likewise, no quality of any particular object can be conceived in the mind except by comparison and contrast. So, there is a relativity involved in the conception of an object; an absolute object cannot be seen or conceived. Also, no object can be seen or conceived unless it has some quality, a character by which we can define it. Nothing that is indefinable can be conceived. This is another difficulty of the mind, namely, the necessity to define everything in terms of certain characteristics or qualities by comparing and contrasting, by way of relation with other things. So quantity is there, quality is there, and relation is

there. We cannot think anything except in terms of these characteristics.

Kant mentions a fourth limitation, namely, the condition in which a particular object is. Everything is in some state, some condition, some situation, some circumstance; it cannot be without circumstance. We cannot think of objects except in this manner. These are the spectacles as conceived by Emmanuel Kant. How can we know what is there in the world, as it is in itself? The thing in itself, the world as it is, the Supreme Being or whatever we call the Reality as such, cannot be known by the human mind because on the one hand there is space and time, and on the other hand there are these psychological spectacles.

This is a great advance in critical thinking made in the history of Western philosophy. But there is something hidden behind Kant's critical observations, which was noticed by his successors, such as Hegel. Kant uttered a great oracular statement which is valid for all times, which meaning was not clear even to himself because there was something unconsciously suggested or implied there. These suggestions were carried further into their metaphysical edifices by his great successors in Germany, England and America. These conclusions which were carried further in the critical field of philosophical studies in the West almost coincide with the great visions of Indian thinkers. Though not identical in every respect, they are almost ready to shake hands.

Now, these are certain problems which philosophers raise before their minds and, as I mentioned, the difficulties which Kant poses before us, including those that any other thinker of this type may raise, arise on account of following only the inductive method, under the impression that there is no way of knowing anything except in this way. But there are more things in heaven and earth than philosophy dreams of, said Shakespeare. Philosophy cannot dream of everything; there is something more than that. We ourselves are a great

mystery. The philosopher himself is a mystery which he has to understand first, before he tries to understand the spectacles of the world outside him.

How do we know that we exist? Do we know it by any argument, inductively conducted? No logic is capable of proving or disproving our existence. It is a fact taken as it is. Here is a conviction in regard to ourselves which defies any logical approach. We would not like to be cast into the mould of logical thinking. We are above logic; logic proceeds from our minds, and we ourselves cannot be tools of logic. All proofs, philosophical or scientific, are emanations of something which itself cannot be proved. I mentioned the other day that the world being there in front of us is something that is taken as a hypothesis both by the scientist and the philosopher. Likewise, there is a greater hypothesis that we take for granted – namely, that we exist. Do you know that you exist? Can you apply any method of knowledge to know this? No method of epistemological analysis – the theory of knowledge – can be applied to your existence. I exist, I am; there the matter ends. No further talking is permitted. I know that I am. How do I know that I am? This is an impertinent question because nobody would like this question to be raised. Why do you ask this question, whether I am? I am, and there the matter ends. I am, yes.

Now, I will digress a little further to another great thinker in the West, called Descartes. The question of 'I am' was taken up by him for consideration. While the position of our existence is something prior to thinking we 'are' and therefore we think, and this seems to be a correct way of approach to our own selves, Descartes came to the conclusion "I am, because I think". *Cogito ergo sum*: I think and therefore I am. We do not know why he resorted to this method of proof of his own existence, as thinking cannot be considered as a proof of one's existence, while the other way round, one's own existence is adequate explanation of every other activity. Our existence is an explanation of everything.

This existence was taken hold of as a principle subject, or object of study, by ancient Indian thinkers. Nobody can deny one's own self. One's doubts can be extended to anything in the world, but that doubt cannot be extended to one's one self. We may doubt anything, but we cannot doubt that we are, because if we start doubting that we are, the validity of that doubting itself will require another precedent reality, whose existence we cannot doubt. So, nobody can go on doubting doubt itself. Thus, there is something which is indubitable.

This was the stand taken by Vedanta philosophers in the East. The existence of one's own self – True Being, as it is called – is the basis of all proof, and unless this is taken for granted, we cannot be convinced of the existence of other things such as the world or objects – or anything, for the matter of that. If we have a doubt regarding our own existence, we will have a doubt about everything else also – about the world, and about anything that is connected with us. The conviction that the world is there as a solid reality in front of us, which we cannot gainsay under any circumstance, arises because we are sure that we are and, therefore, knowledge of the world proceeding from our own self is also something to be accepted as a value. We cannot doubt the fact that we see the world, because we do not doubt that we are here, and anything that is ours is very valuable to us. One loves one's own self, as psychologists generally tell us. Because the self is a doubtless existence, everything that is connected to the self is also doubtless. And the whole world is connected to the self in one way – in an important way, rather. The existence of the world is a conclusion we arrive at by means of a perception of it, through means of knowledge emanating from our own self, which is doubtless existence. This existence of ours is the rock bottom of Indian philosophy.

There are varieties of terminologies, definitions, descriptions being applied to this existence of one's own self.

What is meant by the 'existence of one's own self'? Now we are entering into certain discussions held among Indian thinkers. What is this existence of one's own self, which is persistently intruding into our experience? Who am I? What is the self? Unless this is clear, nothing else can be clear to us. If I am not clear about my own self, how could I be clear about anything else connected with me? Even the whole world, even the concept of God Himself, everything, is finally hinging upon the character of the self – the 'me' or the 'I', so-called.

"I am." I mentioned that we cannot doubt that we are. But what is it that we mean in our minds when we say "I am"? This should be explained a little further. Is this body, this little physical frame, this son or daughter of somebody, the 'I am', that we are speaking of? Maybe. Mostly, we think this is the 'I am'. We often refer to our bodies so vehemently often throughout the day, as if the body is the be-all and end-all of ourselves, and all our reference is to this body only. This is an unphilosophical, uncritical attitude of man, whereby he concludes that for all purposes in life, he is the body only. What else can be there? Man cannot see anything else in himself except this conglomeration of bones, flesh, nose, eyes, ears, and what not. But a philosopher is not satisfied merely by reading the lines; he also reads between the lines. Is it true that we are only the body? Is this the only experience we are undergoing in life, or do we pass through other experiences?

The great adventure of Indian thought has been along the states of consciousness, the conditions through which the self passes, and the experiences we undergo in our own personal life. Do we experience only one continuous field of perception such as this waking world, this Rishikesh, this India, this world, this humanity, or have we any other condition also? The philosophical analyses go deep into further experiences we are capable of and through which we pass. We are not always awake; sometimes we sleep, and

sometimes we dream. We are unconscious at times; we are semi-conscious in dream, and we say we are very intensely conscious in the waking condition. These three conditions are important from the point of view of deep philosophical studies.

Do we exist in all these three states? Nobody can deny that we exist in all the three states. How do we know that we exist in all the three states? While a dreaming person cannot know anything of the waking world, and we cannot bring to the waking world anything that we saw in the dream world, and in sleep we knew nothing, how can we conclude that we existed in all the three states? Who told us this? Especially in sleep we are totally unconscious; we could not be aware that we were, and yet we say, "I was." Who told us this? Who is making this statement that we existed in sleep and dream, as we were in the waking world? Is it this body? Can we say that the body is making this statement? No sensible person will say so.

The statement "I existed in all the three states" is not made by the body because, firstly, the body was not operating in the dream world. It was dead, as it were, lying like a corpse, and it had no consciousness of entering into the dream world. But, much worse, it was practically non-existent in the sleep condition. There was nothing practically observable or sensible or knowable in sleep, yet we say, "I existed in all the three states." Who is making this statement? Not the body, it is very clear, because the body is not conscious. The body seems to be conscious because it is pervaded by consciousness, as a copper wire can be said to be electricity because electricity is passing through it. The force generated by the power house is charging the wire in so intensive a manner that when we touch the wire, we get a shock. The shock is not given by the wire; it is given by the force that is passing through it. Yet, we identify one with the other and say the wire gives a shock. Likewise, the body is conscious in the same manner as the copper wire is

electricity. We know the difference between the two, yet we mistake one for the other and mix up one with the other.

The body appears to be conscious. We can touch any part of the body and can feel a sensation because intelligence, consciousness, pervades every cell of the body, as every grain or atom of the copper wire is charged with electricity – or, as the example that is usually given goes, an iron rod heated until it becomes red is charged with the heat of the fire unto its minutest particles. When we touch a heated iron rod, it burns. What burns is not the rod but the fire, yet the iron rod burns, we may say. The body is conscious in a similar manner. That it is really not conscious can be seen in conditions like dream. In the dream world, while we seem to be conscious of a different realm altogether, the body lies there unconscious. We can place a few particles of sugar on the tongue of a dreaming man, and he will not taste it. He will not hear music, and he will not know anything, because he is not there. The so-called ‘I’ is not there in dream. As far as the body is concerned, the ‘I’ has isolated itself from the body. It is not called a dead body because what we call the *prana* keeps it alive, but the mind is withdrawn. Mind, which is associated with a type of consciousness, is withdrawn from the body. In death it is completely withdrawn in every sense of the term, but we do not call sleep and dream death because the vital energy – the *prana*, as it is called – keeps the connection of the subtle body with the physical body. If the *prana* is withdrawn, then there is death of the body. Hence, in the condition of dream, we are conscious of a different world, and the body is not the thing that is so conscious.

Thus, we conclude that this ‘I am’, ‘I exist’ – this centrality of our existence – cannot be the body. Therefore, we are not sons or daughters of somebody; we are something else. We can be anybody else in dream. But there is a greater mystery awaiting us in the state of sleep. Dream is a great mystery indeed, but a profounder mystery is deep sleep. What

happens to us? How is it that we are completely cut off from every kind of experience? We are not there at all. Nothing is there – neither ourselves, nor our relations, property, loves and hatreds, the world, creation, or God. Nobody exists for us. What happens to us in sleep? Do we exist there? Yes. Who told us this? Here is the mystery. Who is making this statement, “I was in a state of deep sleep”? Not the body, not even the mind, because the mind was not operating in the state of deep sleep.

While we are obliged to conclude by this analysis that the body is not the ‘I’, even the mind does not seem to be the ‘I’, because in sleep we exist even without the mind. While in dream we can exist without the body, in sleep we can exist even without the mind. What were we then if we were not the body or the mind? The pride attached to physical personality and intellectuality goes when we realise that we seem to be a little different from both body and mind. We are not the physical frame nor the intellectual personality, because both these important items of our experience were completely ruled out in sleep; yet, we existed there. “I was in a state of deep sleep.” Who was in the state of deep sleep? ‘I’ was. What is this ‘I’? Not the body, not the mind. Who else?

Are we not a great mystery? Are we not a wonder in ourselves? What wonder can there be in this world greater than this peculiarity that we ourselves are, which defies every kind of definition. We cannot compare ourselves with anybody. We cannot define ourselves in terms of any quantity, quality, relation, mode, etc. We are nothing of this kind. We are not capable of being shackled even by space and time, because they were not even there in sleep. We were there. Therefore, we could be there even without space and time, without these definitive characteristics of objects of the world, without relationships of any kind, without being men or women, without being the physical body, without being even human beings. Without any of these things we consider as valuable and meaningful in the world, we existed. We

existed in the state of deep sleep as something which is not at all of this world.

The ancient masters of India caught hold of this as a central point to be meditated upon and experienced. This is the point of what they call *darshana*, or vision of Reality. The vision of Reality is the goal of our life. Everyone knows this, and we are all after that. We have to directly come in communion with this great mystery of the universe.

We are pursuing this by what we call the practice of yoga, but the mind has to be very clear about all these things. These analyses, these studies, and these discussions we are carrying on are intended to clear the muddle of the mind, the cobwebs of our personality, the dirt of our thinking, and make it perspicuous, clear and doubtless in regard to everything that is us and everything that is connected with us.

So, while philosophy as merely an intellectual pursuit is not sufficient, it is a walking stick that we can use for a time. While the walking stick does not walk, it is us who will have to walk, yet it is an aid in our walking. Likewise, philosophical analysis, whether of the East or the West, purely from an intellectual, rational point of view, cannot take us to God or the ultimate communion with the Absolute, but they can aid us in walking towards that Supreme. They can be a kind of support to an extent, up to a certain limit, and beyond that some other law will operate.

This peculiar thing that we are in the state of sleep is the mystery of man. This is the so-called 'I', and all enquiry regarding "Who am I?" lands us in this difficult situation of trying to know who we ourselves are. The great point that is made out of this situation by philosophers in India is that we existed as pure consciousness. We were not unconscious. Deep sleep is not really an unconscious condition, though it appears to be unconscious. The appearance of an unconscious state in deep sleep is associated with certain

factors, which are other than our real nature. There are certain impeding elements which cover the consciousness.

Without going into details about this intricate matter, I may sum up by saying that the ancients concluded that unfulfilled desires are the causes of this unconsciousness. There are deep layers of the psyche in which are buried the impressions of all our lives – desires, fulfilled as well as unfulfilled. Fulfilled desires create an impression of a potentiality or a latency of a further impulsion to repeat the fulfilment of that desire. When a desire is fulfilled, the desire is not extinguished. It always leaves a subtle impression in the mind in the form of longing for an endless repetition of that fulfilment because no desire can finally be satisfied, for certain reasons which I have outlined earlier and into whose details we shall go further on. The unfulfilled desires which are the frustrations of the psyche – which have been repressed even on the subconscious level, for reasons we all know very well, in all the lives that we have lived – also act as an additional thick layer of cloud which prevents our being aware that we are.

Unfortunately, the consciousness that we really are becomes identified with the desires; we become one with our desires. “I want this.” When a statement like this is made, there is a mix-up of what we really are with what we are not. The “I want” is a confusion in the mind; and that every desire is a sort of contradiction on the basis of an error involved in perception itself, is a fact which I have mentioned. This contradiction, which is desire of every kind, produces a big difficulty before us in the form of a darkness which causes us to be apparently unconscious in the state of deep sleep. If we were made up of unconsciousness only, if the substance of our being – the Self, as it is called – is constituted of only unconsciousness and nothing more, then we would not remember that we slept, because we cannot remember anything that occurs in unconsciousness. The memory of sleep is considered as proof of the existence of our being as

an essential point of consciousness during the state of deep sleep, and not essentially unconsciousness.

We cannot be constituted of unconsciousness. The building bricks of our personality essentially, basically, at its root, cannot be unconscious. Who would like to be called an unconscious idiot? We would not like to be called that. Even an idiot does not want to be called an idiot; even a foolish person does not want to think that he is foolish – because essentially we are not fools. There is intelligence within us, and this is the so-called Self of the human being – the Self of anything, for the matter of that. In Sanskrit, we call it the Atman.

What is this Self made of? It is made up of pure consciousness only. It is not made up of unconsciousness, as it appears in sleep. It is not mind as it appears in dream, and it is not body as it appears in the waking condition. Neither are we body, nor are we mind, nor are we unconscious. What else are we? Pure scintillating awareness, consciousness.

Where is this consciousness? Philosophers push this argument further and further. Where are you? “I am here in this hall, in Sivananda Ashram.” This is not a correct statement because it becomes meaningful and valid only if you say you are the body. “I am in Rishikesh.” As far as you are the body, it is so, but if you are honest in believing that you cannot be the body merely, then your statement that you are in a particular place in the world is not a correct statement. Nor can you extend it to a mental realm, because you seem to be not even a mind. Where are you, then? Where is this consciousness? Where are you sitting? Here is a further probe into the mystery of one’s own self, the mystery of Ultimate Reality itself.

Chapter 4

THE NATURE OF ULTIMATE REALITY

We are slowly moving in the direction of coming to a conclusion as to the nature of an ultimate reality, which alone can attract us and compel us to seek our fulfilments in it. All this effort, this study, this analysis, is for this purpose.

Is there a thing called Ultimate Reality? It has to be there if our desires and aspirations are to have any meaning or sense. If our incessant search, day in and day out throughout our life, has any worthwhile meaning, it has to be fulfilled one day or the other in the attainment or the achievement of something finally and ultimately real – not temporarily or tentatively real, or real for the time being – a final quenching of every thirst and an appeasing of every type of hunger of the personality. This is possible only if there is such a thing called the ultimately real. Towards this is our effort in our studies.

Last time we discovered that we seem to be mysterious somethings which cannot be identified with the body. We cannot identify ourselves with the body, because in the state of dream we seem to be existing even without any relation to the body. We do not even seem to be minds thinking, because in sleep, the mind does not think. The mind is almost not there, and yet we are there. So, we can be there even if the body and the mind are not there. In some important sense, we did exist in sleep, minus our association with the body and the mind.

In our daily life we always refer to ourselves as bodies, sometimes as minds. We associate ourselves with the bodily personality only, for all practical purposes, in every business of life. There is nothing else in us which we can think of. Rarely do we refer to our intellect, our reason, our mind, our emotion, our psyche, but there is nothing else we can discover in ourselves. Yet, there seems to be something

which is coming to the surface of our discovery when we analyse this enigmatic condition we call deep sleep.

This condition of sleep in which we did exist without any association with all these things we call meaningful in waking life – body and mind – is a gateway to a great knowledge about our own selves. If we are something, and we did exist as something different from the body and the mind, in what condition did we exist? We are unable to think properly here because the body alone is the object of our thinking; and to some extent, thought itself is the object of its own function. All our knowledge is psychological, mental. We have no other knowledge available in this world. But this knowledge is inadequate for the purpose of knowing what it was that existed in deep sleep. The mind cannot turn back on its own source; it cannot climb on its own shoulders or peel its own skin. The mind is turned back baffled when it tries to know what it was that existed in deep sleep. The mind can think only that which is in front of it; it cannot know what is behind it. In some way, just as we cannot see our own back, the mind too cannot see its own source. The area or jurisdiction of mental activities ceases when we cover the domain of waking and dreaming. The mind operates during waking and dreaming, but it cannot operate during sleep. Therefore, all our apparatus of knowledge fails and becomes valueless when we try to know our own selves.

Look at the wonder! We have no means of knowing our own selves. We have means to know other people, other things, but we cannot know our own selves. Why? It is because the mind cannot know its own source. The effect cannot go back to the cause, for an important reason which we have tried to touch upon previously – namely, the conditioning of the mind in space-time and causal categories. In deep sleep these categories do not work, and space-time does not operate either. There is nothing practicable – no space, no time, no causation, no objects, no associations of any kind – a nihil, a zero as it were. But were we a zero in

deep sleep? Not at all! We were solidly existing, and not annihilated nothings.

We were not destroyed in deep sleep. We existed very substantially, wholly; yet, we cannot know in what condition we existed. How do we know that we existed in such a completely fulfilled manner in the state of deep sleep, when we have no means of knowing that we existed? When the means of knowledge are not there, how does one know that anything is there at all? Who is telling us that we existed in sleep? It cannot be the mind because it was not working, and it was not the body. Therefore, there is a peculiar way of 'knowing', that is other than mental knowledge.

The process of psychological knowledge is not the only kind of knowledge. There is another way of knowing, which is superior to perception and psychological cognition. We can perceive the objects of the world, we can cognise concepts, but we cannot perceive or conceive our selves because the perception process is the activity of the senses, and conception the work of the mind. The senses and the mind do not work in deep sleep; therefore, we cannot know what we are, through the process of perception and cognition.

What other way is there? There is direct apprehension. We sometimes call it intuition. Even now, at this moment, we know that we are, not because we open our eyes and look at ourselves. We can close our eyes, and yet know that we are. We apprehend ourselves in a total way, not in a sensory manner, and a conviction arises in us that we are – not by means of inductive or deductive reasoning, not by perception or cognition, but by a self-assertive, indubitable feeling which we can call realisation. We have a realisation of our own self – “I am” – and we do not require any proof from a textbook; no experiment is necessary here, and nobody need observe this fact of our being. We know that we are, for a reason which cannot be explained.

Therefore, there are things which are real and convincingly existent, yet cannot be proved by logic. Science

and logic are not the only way of knowing things, because in our own case, they fail, while we can apply these instruments in the case of other things and other persons. So we did exist in the state of deep sleep, and we were wholly real; we were not incomplete, we were not fractions. Can we say because our body was not there, and our mind was not there, that only a fraction of us was there? Were we only one third in deep sleep, because the body and mind were not active? No, we were not one third; we were entirely, a hundred percent. Then even minus the body and mind, we can be a hundred percent. How is it possible?

There is a very clearly observable phenomenon of amputation of the limbs of the body. If the arms and legs are surgically removed, we may say that fifty percent of the body has gone, but yet the person will not say he is fifty percent. He is still fully a hundred percent. Even if the bodily limbs are cut off, the person is a hundred percent. Therefore, the person is not the body; otherwise, if one finger goes, some percent of the person must be diminished.

By the other types of analysis we conducted, we felt that we were entirely present in sleep, minus even the thinking process. Not only that, we were immensely happy; we were not grieving or sorrowful going to sleep. We are tired of the joys of the world, and we go to a joy which is superior to all the joys of the world of senses because there is a fulfilment in sleep which exceeds the satisfaction of coming in contact with any object, including the whole Earth itself. Even a sick person is rejuvenated when he wakes up from sleep. Tired people come out with greater strength, and feel a new sense of life after awakening.

What was the satisfaction? From where did it arise? How is it that we feel a new sense of life coming to us when we wake up from sleep? We had nothing to eat, we were fasting the whole night, and yet we were happier in that condition of fasting than in the waking condition of eating. What could be the reason? When we had no friends, no associations,

nothing to do, no contact whatsoever, and no joys of the world, we felt happier than all the joys acquired in the world. From where did it arise?

It arose for a simple reason. In the waking and dreaming conditions – or, for the matter of that, when we are in association with the body and the mind – we are not wholly ourselves. We become wholly ourselves only in sleep. We partially distract our being by associating it with something which it is not. We have already known that we are something entirely different from the body and the mind; and to be daily, persistently clinging to this body and the mental activities as if they are me, would be to run away from ourselves. There is an estrangement of personality – a psychological aberration, we may say – taking place in waking and dreaming conditions. Even now we are not wholly ourselves because we have turned away from ourselves to some extent in thinking that we are the body. We have wrongly associated ourselves with something with which we could not logically identify by a convincing analysis and a satisfactory deduction. If we cannot, by any amount of understanding, identify the body as ourselves, how do we wholly depend only on it and ask for satisfactions through the limbs of the body?

Hence, we are living in a desert of what we call this life, where we search for a little water in the oasis of sense contact. This oasis is very small; we cannot find it everywhere in the vast desert. We are never satisfied. Let the whole world be given to us; we will be wretched still because this so-called world is an object of the senses which we come in contact with by a turning away from ourselves through the senses and the bodily instrument. All this should explain why waking life is not such a happy condition as sleep. But why do we come back to the waking state again and again, if sleep is the best thing? This is a subject of psychology, and we are not discussing psychology at present; we shall keep it aside for a further discussion. Why is it that we are forced to come

back to waking life again and again, every day, in spite of the fact that it does not seem to be our real condition?

In the state of deep sleep, therefore, we existed entirely, wholly, completely, one hundred percent. What was the substance out of which we were made? What are we made of? The building is made of bricks, the book is made up of paper, the desk is made up of wood; of what are we made? Because that state in which we existed wholly and totally in the state of deep sleep was dissociated from what we call the body and the mind, we cannot say that we are made up of the body, or even that our substance is the mind. What was it, or what is it?

Here is something transcendent to our approach. We ourselves are transcendent to our own mental consciousness. We are more than what we are; we are greater than what we appear. Our jurisdiction is wider than the little bodily area we are occupying now. We existed, but not as any substance either physically, materially, socially, politically, economically, and not even psychologically. Minus all these things, freed from all these associations, we did exist as a hundred-percent being. We cannot say anything about that condition except that we were simply aware – a mere awareness. We can say nothing more. The truth cannot be accessible to us because, as I mentioned, it is no longer a content of the mental consciousness. We were, we are, and there the matter ends. We were not something as persons – as men, women, etc. We were not any of these things. We were unqualified existence, without any adjective – pure being which can be associated only with pure consciousness: “I am”. I was in sleep, but not as something, not as this or that – not as the son or daughter of somebody, as a boss, as a rich or a poor person. I simply was. I am.

This being of ours in the state of deep sleep has to be associated with consciousness because we cannot say that we are an unconscious, brick-like substance. Nobody would accept this condition, especially as we know that we can be

aware of the fact of our having slept yesterday, a remembrance which is posterior to our existence as something in deep sleep. All memory proceeds from past experience, and experience is always associated with an awareness of being something. Therefore, with this very difficult logical conclusion, we realise that we have to be considered as pure being, consciousness, and nothing more, nothing less.

In Sanskrit there are words such as *sat* and *chit*. *Sat* is pure being; *chit* is consciousness. We are *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. *Ananda* is bliss, the bliss of sleep, surpassing every other joy of the world. We rub our eyes when we get up from sleep, and want to go back to sleep again if possible. But the worries of life pull us back to waking, so somehow or other we get up, unwillingly, and run about. We were *sat-chit-ananda* in the state of deep sleep, which means to say, existence, consciousness, bliss – that is all.

Knowing this, we have stumbled upon some valuable content of our own reality. An ultimately real something is in us, and we are ultimately real and not unreal. This real something which we are is seeking fulfilment in all its desires and aspirations, in all its longings, enterprises and activities in life. We are struggling in our life to come back to our own source of pure being and consciousness, even by an erroneous movement of the senses in terms of objects of sense. Even when we go wrong in our life, we are trying to do the right only, but there is a blindness that covers our senses and the mind. What this blindness is concerns the actual practice of yoga.

There is something ultimately real in us – pure being, consciousness – which cannot be dissected into parts. It does not mean that some consciousness is here and some consciousness is there. There is no gap between one aspect or part of consciousness and another aspect or part of it. Consciousness cannot be partitioned. The idea of partition cannot arise in consciousness because division implies a gap

between two parts; and nobody can be conscious of a gap, except consciousness itself. So unless consciousness is present even in the gap, there cannot be a gap, so the gap is ruled out. What does it mean, finally? Unlimitedness is the characteristic of this consciousness. The essence of man is an unlimited existence, if it is consciousness. Infinite is the nature of man, and as there cannot be two infinities, there cannot be two realities. So, there is an ultimately real something, and that ultimately real something has to be pure being and consciousness, and also it has to be one only and not two. Therefore, there cannot be two ultimate realities, two infinities, two Gods, two Absolutes, two final achievements of life.

Thus, the process of the evolution of life seems to be a tendency of everything in the direction of this fulfilment, namely, a realisation or coming in contact with this Great Being. This is something we have to keep in our mind always because all our further studies will depend upon this conclusion. There has to be an ultimately real being, which is immanent and, at the same time, transcendent. It is immanent because it covers all forms of existence.

As I mentioned, since consciousness cannot be divided, cut into parts or partitioned, it has to be infinite. Therefore, it has to be everywhere. This state of being everywhere, in everything, in every form, in every condition, is called immanence. It is also transcendent at the same time, because it is beyond the body and the mind. It is not a physical immanence; it cannot be identified with contacts of any kind. The infinite does not come in contact with anything, because it itself is all things. There are no objects outside infinity. By the word 'infinite' we mean that which has nothing outside it, because if there is anything external to it, it becomes finite. The finite is that, outside of which there is something; and the infinite is that, external to which there can be nothing. Hence, the only infinite that there can be has to also be transcendent at the same time, since by this little study and

analysis we have conducted just now, we seem to be realising that this mysterious reality is beyond the body complex, and even the psychological operations. It is transcendent and immanent at the same time. It is everywhere. It is all things, and yet nothing can be considered as limiting it. This is the Absolute that philosophers speak of. This is the Supreme God, the Creator of the universe that religions speak of. This is what is called the Father in heaven because He is transcendent; but He is not outside creation, as creation has come from this Being only. He is transcendent as well as immanent. He is God, the Supreme Being.

This is the ultimate reality which Vedanta philosophy calls Brahman. In English we may simply say pure consciousness, existence. Sometimes it is called Purusha or the Ultimate Person. Sometimes it is called Purushottama, to distinguish it from ordinary persons. When we consider God as a Supreme Person, we are likely to imagine God as a sort of large human being. To obviate this misconception, to free our mind from associating any kind of human characteristics to God, we call God as Purushottama, Supreme Person, and not simply a *purusha* or an ordinary person.

God is a person and also an im-person at the same time. Impersonality and personality can both be the characteristics of the Ultimate Reality from different angles of our vision or viewpoint. This Supreme Person who is the Creator of the universe, called the Ultimate God in religion, is sometimes called personal because we associate It in some way with creation. The relationship of God to the universe is a theological and philosophical problem. It cannot be easily explained, because when we go further and deeper into this subject and press the matter to its logical limits, we have such difficulties that we are not be able to say anything about it. Because we cannot help seeing a universe in front of us and, at the same time, cannot assert that there is something outside the Supreme Being, we assume a dual position in philosophy and religion by conceiving the Supreme Being as

impersonal sometimes and personal at other times. If there can be nothing outside the Supreme Being, there cannot be a universe outside, and then the question of personality also does not arise. But we cannot give up this idea of a universe being there; and God has to be related to it in some mysterious, unintelligible manner, and assumes a super-personality, the Purushottamatva we speak of in our religions.

Now, in India we have various systems of philosophy, the most prominent being Sankhya and Vedanta. To study yoga, we need not concern ourselves with many other schools of thought. These two systems are very important because there is some interrelation between them. The Sankhya and the Vedanta form, in several ways, the foundation of the practice of yoga. Yoga is the implementation of the conclusions arrived at by Vedanta and/or Sankhya. Though there is a great difference between the classical conclusions arrived at by these two systems of thinking, there is also an interrelation which makes it desirable to study something about those systems.

The Sankhya is a doctrine of the presence of an ultimate reality called *purusha*, whose essential nature is consciousness. The *purusha* is a difficult word that Sankhya uses which does not mean a person like a human being, but something superior to what it considers as matter, or *prakriti*, in its language. That which is not matter – non-material existence – is called *purusha*. A thing that is non-material has to be conscious; therefore, the *purusha* of the Sankhya is a centre of consciousness. It is considered by the Sankhya as an infinite consciousness. The *purushas* asserted by the Sankhya are considered infinite and interacting, like the monads of Leibnitz. Leibnitz was a German philosopher who asserted the presence of infinite substances called monads, whose essential characteristic is consciousness and yet which are infinite in number. There are many monads,

many centres of consciousness, interacting with one another. This is one doctrine.

The Sankhya had to accept that these infinite *purushas* are also infinite in number because the consciousness of the human being – he may be a Sankhya philosopher or whoever he is – refuses to accept that the world is not there. The world is definitely there, and it is not that only one person sees it; many persons see it. The personality of the subjective consciousness of the *purusha*, though it was identified with a non-material substance, became identified with the plurality of individuality. A mixing up of the empirical and the eternal took place. The empirical multiplicity of individuals became identified with the infinity of consciousness. It is a very interesting mix-up that occurred, and oftentimes we also make that mix-up due to the difficulty of thinking in any other manner. Thus came about the Sankhya. I am not going into further details about this matter; it is just a little information as to what Sankhya is.

The *purusha* is non-material infinite consciousness, and there is another thing, namely, this material universe. It is necessary to know something about Sankhya, though not all its minor details, because it is connected in some way with the practice of yoga – perhaps the practice of any type of yoga, not merely Patanjali's yoga. The evolutionary doctrine of modern science is almost the same as the evolutionary theory of the Sankhya, to which Vedanta is not opposed, though it transcends Sankhya in some other way for another reason. Therefore, the *purusha* is, according to Sankhya, the pure centre of consciousness – yourself, myself, everybody included – and *prakriti* is this vast universe of what is called 'matter'. It is unconscious. While the *purusha* is non-material, and therefore conscious, the world, *prakriti* – matter – is unconscious.

So, consciousness and unconsciousness meet in the perception of the world. An unconscious material substance called *prakriti*, which is this vast universe of physical matter,

becomes the content of a subjective awareness in all perceptions. *Prakriti* and *purusha* join together in the knowledge of anything. Consciousness contacts matter in the perception of any object, even in the conception of it. How does consciousness come in contact with matter? They are dissimilar in their nature. How could we expect two dissimilar things to come in contact with each other? The Sankhya has one example of how it comes in contact. Consciousness does not enter into matter really; it does not become matter. We do not become the object in the knowledge of the object, nor does the object enter us. The object maintains its independence of consciousness, and consciousness, which is the *purusha*, maintains its own independence, even in an apparent coming together. It is an apparent coming together, not a real coming together. This is the bondage of the soul, says the Sankhya. The *purusha*, who is independent, infinite consciousness, wrongly imagines that it comes in contact with something which it is not.

Finally, whether it is Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, or whatever else it is called, the question of the problem in life seems to be a question of our apparent contact with something which we are not. I mentioned to you already that we are coming in contact with something which is not our essential nature, when we are awake. That is why we are grieved in the waking state. The Sankhya tells us in a highly philosophical manner the same thing – the sorrow of the individual consists in its wrong apparent association with that which is not its essential nature. Matter is not the essential nature of consciousness. *Purusha* is not *prakriti*, and yet one comes in contact with the other. So according to the Sankhya, liberation or salvation consists in the freedom of consciousness from contact with *prakriti*, the absolution of consciousness from its relation to matter, or rather the resting of consciousness in its own self, freed from any kind of association with that which it is not. This is something about the final philosophical conclusions of Sankhya.

Chapter 5

COSMOLOGY ACCORDING TO THE SANKHYA AND THE VEDANTA

Yoga is a very secret practice, and the word 'yoga' has mostly been misunderstood, misconstrued, misapplied, due to a popular usage of the term these days, almost like a slogan of politicians. It has lost its meaning due to repeating it often for every blessed thing in the world and not knowing what it actually connotes.

Yoga is a mysterious application of ourself to the task of life. It is mysterious and secret because it is not the usual commonplace empirical way of living. It is an application of science, logic and intuition to the utmost, to the furthest limit practicable; hence, in our understanding and also in the application of the techniques of yoga, we have to use not only our common sense but also a carefully conducted understanding.

Yesterday I referred to two important systems of philosophic thinking in India, known as Sankhya and Vedanta. Inasmuch as the application of yoga techniques depends upon a foundational doctrine, we may say a theory of the universe, it is necessary for us to know this foundation. What is the ground on which yoga practice stands? What are its presuppositions? These are explained principally in Sankhya and Vedanta, which are complementary systems or logical stages of understanding the structure of creation as a whole.

The Sankhya doctrine of the evolution of the universe is especially important to understand the stages of the practice of yoga because yoga is actually a gradational communion established between ourselves and the universal setup of things so that when the height of yoga is reached, we stand in perfect communion with all creation. We do not stand any more outside it as observers or even as participants. We live

inseparable from the law that operates. This effort on our part to commune with the internal constitution of the universe in all its graded manifestations is yoga proper. Particularly the system of yoga known as Ashtanga Yoga, or popularly what is called the Yoga of Patanjali, is directly rooted in the Sankhya doctrine. It is also based on the Vedanta conception of the universe.

The evolutionary stages mentioned constitute the levels of perception and observation by the consciousness of the individual of what is there as its content. There is a mysterious arrangement of our own interior personality to some features of which I made reference last time when we discussed the three states of consciousness, waking dream and deep sleep. We are not a compact marble statue seated here, but internally constituted arrangements of patterns and layers or levels of densities of being, so that our personality – this ‘me’, this ‘you’ here – is not a solid indivisible substance, but an arrangement of several particular facets, features, conditions, circumstances, layers or grades. Our consciousness, the true being of ours, passes through these constituent layers of our personality when we observe, see or understand anything, as the light of the sun may pass through a prism and get conditioned by the structure of the prism.

Thus, our observation of things, our understanding of anything in this world, is restricted to the manner in which our deep being-consciousness passes through this prism of our complicated personality arranged in the manner mentioned. Hence, the world beheld by us is not directly beheld by the Atman, or Being proper. To refer to our old analogy once again, here we have a set of spectacles through which we look at things. Previously we were told that we wear the spectacles of space and time and other conditions of understanding, and now we also seem to have many other spectacles with us, which are part and parcel of ourselves. Just as our skin is a part of us and we cannot remove our skin

as we remove our coat or our shirt, these internal constituent layers of our personality, which act as peculiar spectacles of the true Being in us, cannot be thrown out because due to some peculiar juxtaposition and misplacement of values, our deepest being has got muddled up with these spectacles.

Do you not think that if you love a thing very deeply, you are disturbed by whatever happens to that thing? The object that you love deeply can upset your mind or raise your mind to heights of joy, as the case may be. My son, my daughter, my wife, my husband, my property and so many my-things, which are dear to me whatever be the circumstance in which these dear objects are placed, may react upon us so powerfully that it would appear that we ourselves are passing through the conditions of the object. If the object is happy, I am happy; if it dies, I also die. This happens even in a psychological attachment of what we call intense longing, love, affection, craving, and so on.

Deeper is the mistake that has taken place in us in our attachment to this body and the inner constituents thereof. We do not merely love our body and these layers of ours as we love anything in this world, but this attachment of our true being to this body-mind complex has become so intense that it is not possible to regard it as something outside us. It is not that we merely love the body and the mind and our personality, we *are* the body and the mind and everything that it is. We can imagine the difficulty that we may have to face in freeing ourselves from this misconceived relationship with what we really are not. This will also explain to you how difficult yoga practice is. You are dealing with your own self, the only thing which you can never understand fully. These conditioning layers of our personality compel us to visualise the whole of creation also in a corresponding series of gradations. Whether or not the universe is made up of layers or planes, it matters little to us, because for us they are made in that way because the world of perception is real and meaningful to the extent to which it becomes a content of our

consciousness; otherwise, we are not concerned with it in any manner.

Therefore, in the practice of yoga – or, for the matter of that, in our dealings of any type – we are concerned with our own world, not the world as it is in itself. Nobody knows what the world is, as it is in itself; but there is a world with which we are connected, which we have wound around ourselves as a silkworm winds a cocoon around itself, and we are very much concerned with it. This world is the subject of our study. Our bondage is that entanglement which is a part of our conscious experience. That which is not a part of our experience does not become a part of our study or concern in any manner.

Thus, a psychological necessity arisen on account of the conjunction of our consciousness with this psychophysical personality makes it also necessary for us to conceive a corresponding cosmic series of layers of being. The world which is the macrocosm is organically related to us as the microcosm. In Sanskrit we say the Brahmanda, the cosmic egg so-called, is an expanded form of this little personality, the individuality of ours – or rather, the other way round, we are a specimen of the cosmos. Each individual, each organism, each particle of sand or atom is a symbol of the whole cosmos. Everything that is in the universe can be found in one sand particle, in one particle of anything, even in an atom.

The individual setup is what we are and, for the reason we have noticed in our earlier lessons, this individual setup of ours has been somehow given the position of an observer of the external universe. We noticed in the previous session that a mistake has been committed in a highly metaphysical sense, we may say, in considering ourselves as observers of the universe. The object, so-called, has managed to remain outside the subjective consciousness. The *purusha* has become mixed up with *prakriti*; consciousness is entangled in matter, and according to one system of yoga at least, freedom

or liberation consists in the extrication of the consciousness from its involvement in matter, *purusha* freeing himself from *prakriti*-consciousness, not feeling the necessity to see things only through the prism of individuality.

When we understand things through this prismatic individuality of ours called cognitive or perceptual understanding, and we can behold the fact as such directly through the centrality of our being, the Atman so-called, we are supposed to have intuitional knowledge. Intuition is direct apprehension of Reality, and that is the act of the soul, the Atman, the Self, the True Being – Pure Consciousness. But in ordinary circumstances of our life, this does not happen. We have no intuition because the Soul, the Atman, Consciousness, the true Being of ours beholds the fact of the universe through the medium of our psychophysical individuality – this body, this mind, and anything that we are made of.

In the description of the gradational arrangement of the universe, corresponding to the arrangement of our own internal personality, the Sankhya and the Vedanta are in agreement, except in their terminology. There is a difference between the final solution which the Vedanta arrives at and the Sankhya understands, but that final conclusion is not our final concern at present. We are now directly interested in the process rather than the aim that we are going to experience in the end. In the process, Vedanta and Sankhya agree. They have different ways of describing these conditions and stages of experience, but the fact remains the same. In Sanskrit theology this system, or the doctrine of the creation of the universe, is called *srishti*. God created the heaven and the earth, says the Bible. God was sitting alone, unbefriended, and He said, "Let there be light," and there was light, and then the five elements and everything came, earth and heaven included. This is a theological doctrine of creation which is familiar not only to Christianity, but to Hinduism and several other sympathetic religions. This

system of thinking in terms of creation of the universe by an ultimate reality is philosophically called cosmology. This is a very important subject for us to keep in our minds always.

Modern science – such as astronomy, physics and biology – is concerned with cosmological arrangements of the universe. When we speak of molecules, atoms, electrons and electromagnetic forces in scientific language, we are speaking of cosmology. When astronomers tell us that the Big Bang took place at the origin of things and nebular dust of the cosmos spread itself into the Milky Way, the galaxies, the many stars of which the Sun is one, and so the planets came about and there was a gradual arising of life on Earth from a state of bacteria, amphibians, etc., to animals, to the human state, etc. – we are speaking of cosmology. Any theory, any doctrine or system of thinking which discusses the rising of evolutes from original causes, in any manner whatsoever, either by way of descent or ascent, is called cosmology. The doctrine of the arrangement, the coming and the going of things in the universe, is cosmology. It is something very interesting and important. All science is based on this way of thinking. From where do things come? How do they come? How many things have come? Why do they come? All these questions are discussed in cosmology.

Briefly I will tell you what Sankhya says about this. According to the Sankhya, the supreme intelligent principle is *purusha*. It is infinite in its nature, all-pervading; everywhere it is. Consciousness cannot be divided, partitioned or cut into parts. This consciousness, this supreme *purusha* is absolutely independent, *kevala*, and sometimes this attainment of supreme independence is called *kaivalya*, a word which is synonymous with liberation, freedom, *moksha*, etc. A total absolute independence attained by consciousness of the *purusha* is *kaivalya*. *Kaivalya* means the state of being *kevala*. *Kevala* means totally independent. Such is the *purusha* – infinite all-pervading, omnipresent in its being. This is the true nature of pure Being, which is the

true nature of every one of us also. We are the *purusha*. The *purusha* does not mean a male or a female, or any such thing. It is only an unfortunate usage of word in ordinary parlance to mean the male gender, but for want of a better term, is used here to describe a centre of consciousness, which has no gender, no sex, no form, no shape. It is not in space, not in time, and it is not anything we or anyone can think of or conceive. It is radiance which is spread out everywhere. That is the essentiality of the *purusha*, and that is the essential being of everyone and everything.

The Sankhya posits the existence of a content of this infinite consciousness of the *purusha*, by which it becomes aware that there is an objective universe. This is the beginning of creation. In theological or religious language, we may say it is the will of God operating. What is meant by the will of God? It is God intensely thinking the potentiality of an objective creation. This is described in a dramatic manner in certain other scriptures such as the Upanishads, and in larger concrete details in the epics and the *puranas* of India. Now we are concerned with the basic factors involved in Sankhya and Vedanta. The consciousness of this infinite *purusha* conditioned by this universal material content is the beginning of the creation of the universe. It is a cosmic will, cosmic thought, cosmic ideation with the potentiality or the latency of the future form that the creation has to take. This can be made clearer by an example in common work-a-day life.

Look at an artist who paints a picture. What does he do? He has an idea in his mind about the way in which the picture should appear. This idea of the form of the painting, which is to take a concrete shape afterwards, is the beginning of the creation of the picture. God, the supreme *purusha*, the ultimate Reality, is supposed to be associated with the universal material content. When we use the word 'material', we have to be very cautious. It does not mean matter such as brick, stone and wood. It is pure possibility of being,

objectively aware, just as when modern physicists speak of a material universe they do not mean the universe of brick and mortar, they mean an indescribable, inconceivable potentiality of what they call the space-time continuum. Much more subtle is this state where we try to understand the pure ideation in the mind of the Supreme Being of the possible future manifestation of the universe. First the artist conceives the pattern of the picture, and in the second stage this idea is projected on the canvas in the form of drawing outlines with a pencil. Then the artist touches these outlines with the necessary ink, making it more visible; and finally, in the end, he fills it with ink of diverse colours. Then we say, here is the beautiful painting of Michelangelo, of Ravi Verma, and so on. But it originated in the thought of the artist; it was already there.

The creation of the universe is supposed to be something that took place in this manner, in different stages. In the beginning it was only an idea, but that idea was superior to the material content. We should not be under the impression that ideas or abstractions are unrealities. We are accustomed to think in terms of hard substances so much that we cannot imagine that there can be a non-material existence. When modern science tells us that the universe is not material, we do not understand what they are saying. They say that the so-called imperceptible mathematical universe is the original universe of which this is a shadow cast. The mathematical point-events, the abstract space-time continuum – which is not space and time, but something more than that – is the original archetype which casts a shadow, as it were, in the form of this concrete universe.

Can we imagine that concrete things are shadows of ideas? Our mind cannot understand this, and will not accept it, because we are prone to think in concrete objective forms only. For us, money means currency notes, a coin, a metal piece which we can touch with our hands. But money does not mean that which we touch with our hands; it is a value of

purchase which is in the idea of people only. Money is in the heads of people, it is not outside. If the ideas of give and take, commercial valuation and mutual agreement among people do not exist, paper notes and coins will have no value. Likewise, there are many things in this world which are apparently concrete and substantial, but are really ideas only. Organisations are ideas, governments are ideas, monetary systems are ideas, our loves and hatreds are also ideas, our satisfactions are ideas, our sorrows are ideas; finally, we will find there is nothing anywhere except ideas. Yet we believe that the world is nothing but concrete bricks, cement, iron, wood, etc., which it is not.

Again coming to the point of the origin of the universe, the substantial super-substantial ideation seems to be the beginning of all things. This potency, latency, or the hidden condition of a future universe is, according to Sankhya, called *mahat*, the great being filled with the idea of the universe, cosmically aware. For all practical purposes, this is the God we are thinking of in religion. What Sankhya calls *mahat* is cosmic existence, which assumes such an intensive self-awareness of its own universal being that, in the Sankhya terminology, it is further designated as *ahamkara*.

The word '*ahamkara*' in the Sanskrit language has a dual meaning, and we have to be very careful in understanding the meaning of this term. Those who have heard of this term may perhaps think that *ahamkara* means 'egoism'; this is the way in which it is usually understood. 'Egoism' means self-affirmation, and a proud person is called *ahamkara*, etc. Any type of intense individual personal self-affirmation is called *ahamkara*. But, unfortunately, again the Sankhya uses the same word with two different meanings. When we speak of the cosmic condition of existence, we have to understand the meaning of the word '*ahamkara*' in a cosmical sense only, as 'I am'. When Moses asked God, "What shall I tell people I saw on Mount Sinai?", God replied, "Tell them you saw, 'I am what I am'." This is God; we cannot describe Him in any other way.

This consciousness of a universal 'I am what I am' is the *ahamkara* of the Sankhya, but it is not egoism of man or any kind of individuality. Nothing of the kind is suggested there. Thus, the *mahat* and the *ahamkara* are terms which imply cosmical total consciousness and an awareness of that being God's original act of creation. I do not want to burden you too much with Sanskrit words, but these are certain interesting things and so I mentioned them.

Purusha is the supreme independent consciousness, and *prakriti* is its objective universal content. In its union we have *mahat*, and then that itself is called *ahamkara* when it is assertive in a cosmical sense. Here we have a complete picture of cosmical creation corresponding to these terms.

Though Vedanta uses another set of terms altogether, the series is described in a similar manner – Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat. Though the Supreme Being that Sankhya calls *purusha* cannot be classically identified with the Brahman of Vedanta, it can virtually mean the same thing. And the objective content of this supreme Brahman as a potentiality of future creation is Ishvara, who concretises himself into Hiranyagarbha and Virat, almost identical with what the Sankhya calls the *mahat* and *ahamkara*. With this, cosmic creation is over.

But we are not very much concerned with cosmic creation. Let God do anything, we are concerned with our difficulties only. Now, what is our problem? God has created the universe, they say. The Vedas say this, the Upanishad says this, and the Bible says this. Let it be so, but what does it matter to us now? Our difficulties are real to us. What has happened to us actually, now? Why are we in this condition, if God created this world in this manner? We will have to study this further on.

Chapter 6

MODERN SCIENCE MEETS ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

The cosmology of Sankhya and Vedanta, as far as practical purposes are concerned, should be considered as similar. We have discussed to some extent the content of this doctrine in its principle stages, especially in the concept of creation as a universal manifestation of the Supreme Being gradually descending into denser formations until, in the terminology of the Sankhya, we have these cosmic principles known as the *mahat* and the *ahamkara*. Correspondingly, we also noticed that these stages are almost the same as what Vedanta calls Hiranyagarbha and Virat. It is essential for us to remember what these things actually mean. The terms are not important; the clarified concept involved in these terms is what is of consequence because these become stages of meditation in certain types of practice, whether according to Sankhya and Yoga or Vedanta.

The human mind has found it very difficult to visualise these stages, and it shall always remain a difficulty for the human mind. We cannot imagine what Virat is, what Hiranyagarbha is, though illustrations and analogies have tried to make the point clear to us as far as possible. These stages represent dimensionless expanses of the Ultimate Reality. 'Dimensionless' means no object is there outside this universal consciousness; it is infinite. What we call the finite is that which has a counterpart side by side – one finite is set against the other, one finite becomes the object of the other, one finite is related to the other – but here, no relation exists. This is a relationless – rather, a conceptual visualisation – of the original stages of the creation of the universe.

There is a belief based on the declaration of the Upanishads that up to the level of Virat – or to speak in the language of Sankhya, *ahamkara* – creation is divine. But we

all know very well that we are not living in a Virat condition. We do not know what Virat is, what *mahat* is, what Hiranyagarbha is, what sort of creation this could have been. We live in a world of human societies with discrete particulars and consciousness of isolated individualities, with loves and hatreds, prejudices and intense egoisms of various categories. From where do they descend? They cannot be found in the Virat, in the *mahat*, or in any of these degrees or stages of manifestation mentioned. This is the Kingdom of God, to put it in popular language, or we may say the Kingdom of Heaven, where supreme divine righteousness reigns supreme.

But creation is not complete in the sense we understand creation, even at this level. Something else takes place. There is a further descent into special forms of particularities – or we may call them individualities. This is described in some detail in the Upanishads, such as the Brihadaranyaka and Aitareya. Our foundational scriptures in regard to the doctrine of creation are the Upanishads. In the Epics and Puranas, they go into great detail, into more concrete forms. This final act of God, we may say, or the fiat of the Supreme Being, played this drama of self-manifestation into these levels of descent which we call Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, or *prakriti, mahat, ahamkara*. In this dramatic act, God has played a game within Himself. There is an aphorism in the Vedanta Sutras saying that this creation is a play of God. It is a play with His own self. He is not playing with somebody else; that ‘somebody’ does not exist there. It is supreme ‘I am what I am’. It is itself delight of an infinitude of being, inconceivable for the human mind, because one cannot imagine what this kind of delight could be in a play with one’s own self. However metaphorical the description of the process of creation there may be, we have to take it in the way it is described and humbly accept that we are not intended to understand it.

Whatever it is, something interesting follows which is very pertinent to the states of the practice of yoga as far as people like us are concerned. The Upanishad tells us that a tripartite split occurs immediately after this lowest descent takes place – call it *ahamkara* in the Sankhya language, or Virat in the language of the Vedanta. A threefold split takes place, as it were, in this supreme body of a universal nature, which is indivisible in itself in its pristine purity. A section of this universality is thrown out as the objective universe and a section is struck off as the individual percipients; but here, interestingly, perhaps humorously, the Upanishad cautions us by saying that God has not committed any blunder in this apparent splitting of Himself into the objective universe and the subjective percipients. In central administrations – whether governmental circles or otherwise – even when they give a long rope to subsidiary departments, they keep hold in a very careful manner, lest there be an assertion of total independence on the part of those who have been given some sort of freedom. This is what God has done, says the Upanishad. He has given a beautiful picture before us of this vast creation and He has given us the freedom, as it were, to stand or to fall, as Milton puts it beautifully. God has given us the freedom to stand or to fall. We may choose either way, and perhaps we have chosen to fall rather than stand because it is easier to lie down and flow with the current of the river than swim against it, because swimming against the current is hard. We always choose the easier way, the softer, the tastier, and the pleasanter, as the Upanishad tells us.

However, this is a little digression. God has kept a control over this multiplicity of manifestation by keeping a central authority, even in the midst of these apparently isolated particulars. These central principles of authority that He has placed are known only to Him and not to anybody else. The way in which a central intelligence operates is not a public matter; it is a great secret of management, and such a secret is operated upon, as it were, by God Himself, by the positing

of what is Himself, as the devas or the divinities, the presiding principles to superintend over these particulars. It is not possible to have consciousness of an external world unless there is some intelligent connecting link between the percipient and the perceived world – or any object, for the matter of that. Visibly there is no such link. You will not see any link between me and you; there is nothing, practically. Yet any kind of logical observation of the situation of perception would reveal that perception is a state of consciousness with which the percipient is endowed in relation to an object; and this has to be explained in an intelligent manner in light of the fact that the object always remains outside the consciousness that perceives, and yet one cannot account for the possibility of such a perception if the object stood totally outside consciousness. This peculiar connecting link is the superintending deity. I become aware of you on account of the presence of a central operating medium, whose glorious functions are beautifully sung in the Varuna Sukta, a hymn of the Atharva Veda, which is something beautiful for you all to study. The Varuna Sukta says that when two people secretly speak in the corner of a dark room so that no one will hear what they say, a secret agent is noting and observing what is spoken. Everywhere and in every walk of life, in every level of being and under every condition, when two people speak there is a third principle. Two things cannot collaborate or come in contact with each other for any purpose whatsoever unless a third invisible principle also participates in it, as an umpire in a game. This umpire is not visible to the eyes of either of these two terms of the relation we call the percipient and the perceived object, you and I, and so on.

Thus, the threefold creation mentioned is, on the one hand, the vast universe, so-called, which has its own internal constituent diversity, and, on the other hand, the individual percipient. To make it more concrete and intelligible to you, midway between the world that you see outside you and yourself there is something which nobody can see. That is the

central intelligence of God operating, and no one can know where it is or how it is. The Upanishads say that every limb of the body has a superintending principle over it. The sense organs, the mind, the ego, the subconscious, the intellect, and all that we are made of, have some presiding deity. For instance, the Sun is supposed to be the presiding deity of the eye, or the instrument of perception, and so on. As many levels of manifestation there are, as many degrees of creation as we can conceive, so many divinities are also there.

Here comes the great question of the multiplicity of gods or the diversity which the religions speak of among the celestial entities – or, more popularly, the many deities of religion. Are there many Gods? These questions sometimes occur to our minds. Why do we worship this god and that god? Are there so many Gods? There are not many Gods. These gods are the officials of the central government of the Supreme Being, and we cannot say the officials are many governments. They are the fingers of the centre, operating under a central control, and if we can call the officials of a central government as many governments, then we can call these divinities also as many Gods. But no one will consider the officials as many governments, as they are only the operating media of a central authority. Likewise, these gods are not Gods; they are the fingers of a Single Person. Our ten fingers are not ten persons, though they may move in ten different ways. Similar is the way in which God works in this multiplicity, whether in the form of the percipient subjects and the perceived objects or in the form of the multiplicity of the divinities or the superintending intelligences.

Now, in the Sanskrit language or in the language of the theology of the Vedanta, particularly, there are certain names for these section-wise creations of the Supreme Absolute. The cosmic universe objectively perceived is called the *adhibhuta prapanca*. *Prapanca* is the universe, the vast creation, and *adhibhuta* is the visible, concrete, or we may say the material universe. These terms also appear in the

Bhagavadgita, and it is good to remember them. *Adhibhuta* is the objective universe, the material content of objective experience, *adhyatma* is the subjective percipient principle, and *adidaiva* is the divinity I referred to.

There are mainly three aspects, or rather phases, of this universal manifestation of the Ultimate Being we may call Virat, and these are the *adhibhuta*, the *adhyatma* and the *adidaiva* – the objective universe, the subjective individual, and something mysterious operating between the two. While we know something about the objective world, and very little about our own selves as the percipient individuals, we can know nothing about the third principle. We not only do not know anything about these divinities, but we also cannot have access to them because they are subtle organisations of highly potent divine elements and they cannot be contacted unless certain disciplines are practised.

We can contact any god, we can have a vision of any divinity, we can summon any celestial, if some discipline is practised. Now I am giving you a little hint into this matter, since it may be interesting to you, though it is not a part of the subject that we are discussing. You can summon anything – any god, any celestial – provided you undergo a certain discipline, and you may be interested to know what this discipline is. You are concerned mostly with your own self, and there is a prejudice in the mind of every percipient individual that the world of perception outside is totally segregated. We have no time to consider the necessity of there being such a thing as a divinity presiding over both the subjective and the objective side in order that perception or experience of any kind may be possible at all. The divinity reveals itself in your consciousness. Whatever be the degree of the intensity of the divinity, whatever be that god, it reveals itself before you when you overcome the barrier that you have created between yourself and the world, because this divinity is nothing but the link between yourself and the world. It is the bridge between you and the world outside,

and how can you be conscious of this bridge as long as you are concerned only with one side of it and not your organic relatedness with the other side? The word 'bridge' is used in the Upanishad. The Chhandogya Upanishads refers to it as *setur vidharanaar*, the great ideational connecting link. *Esha setur vidharanah*: the whole world is maintained by this bridge, says the Upanishad. This is the bridge of the central universal consciousness, which has never forgotten to maintain its authority even in the midst of this lowest of discrete particularities that have been created. God is very wise; He has never let loose His control.

Now, the consciousness of this divinity, the realisation of this celestial superintending principle in our own direct experience, is possible only to the extent we are able to outgrow our egoisms or our self-affirmations as physical bodies and psychic entities, totally different from the world outside. Insofar as you are able to approximate yourself to the world outside and become a friend of things in a communion that you establish in an organic manner with the world and the objects outside, in that light and to that extent only will the divinity reveal itself. Therefore, no egoistic person can have the vision of God. God is a non-ego, and the stages of this experience of the non-ego are the stages of the realisations in your meditation, in your *samadhi*, or in your divine experience.

We again come to the point that there has been a threefold manifestation, the *adhibhuta*, the *adhyatma*, and the *adhidaiva*. Modern science, or any kind of science for the matter of that – physics, chemistry, biology included – are busy with the objective world, and certain branches of psychology have busied themselves with the individual percipient. The scientific analysis of the objective world and the psychological analysis of the individual is a vast area of study. You should be acquainted with these themes to some extent, though you need not go into great details of these researches. They may not be very intimately connected with

your own purpose here, namely, the practice of yoga; but it would be good to know that science has probed into the structure of the physical universe and has come to gradational conclusions through the process of the history of science that this physical universe is made up of five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether.

This is an ancient conclusion which stands good for practically all purposes even today, but scientific curiosity is not satisfied merely with this study and observation. It was noticed that these five elements are not actually five gross objects standing before us, but they are constituted of minute particles called molecules and, as you all know very well, these molecules are made up of finer things called atoms. Western thinkers such as Democritus and Indian thinkers such as the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika logicians thought alike in concluding that this vast universe of five elements is finally constituted of the building bricks we call atoms – which are dimensionless according to some, but have minute dimensions according to others. But, great controversy prevailed later on as to the manner in which dimensionless atoms could produce a dimensioned universe. How would it be possible for atoms which have no three-dimensions to create a world of three dimensions? How could something come from nothing? *Ex nihilo nihil fit*: nothing comes from nothing. Anyhow, this is out of the jurisdiction of our study.

The world of material observation is supposed to be constituted of atoms, but today we have gone deeper and discovered that the world is not made up of atoms. It is more a force rather than a thing; it is more a condition of living than a substance; it is a circumstance rather than an object – all of which are only words with no meaning for us. We do not know what it all means. We live under a peculiar condition, and this condition is called the universe of experience, all of which means finally that the world as it is presented to our senses is not the real world. There is some mystery behind the visible forms of the contents we call the

five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether – or the various objects, forms, colours, sounds, etc. There are neither colours nor sounds nor tastes nor smells nor touches. These sensations are nothing but certain peculiar reactions set up by the structural idiosyncrasies of our own sense organs which react in particular manners to a uniform spread-out continuum, call it by any name you like. Some people call it the space-time continuum; some say it is the electromagnetic field. Whatever the name be, there seems to be some uniform ubiquitous equally-distributed something which is not at all the so-called diversified hard stone, water, fire, etc., as we see.

Why are there five things, five sensations? They are the five manners of the reception of this one ubiquitous thing by the diversity of our own sense organs. God knows, if we had a hundred senses, we would see the world in a hundred ways. Fortunately we have only five senses, so we have five experiences. We are not going to study science here. This is only to point out that the objective analysis of the physical universe has, no doubt, come to a very grand and majestic conclusion that the universe of perception is not merely a diversification of particulars, but is somehow a continuum which is indivisible in its nature. Though this is something very interesting and worthwhile remembering, and we may say science has done a great service even to philosophy, the study of religion and the living of a spiritual life, yet it has maintained a peculiar prejudice of its own – namely, the world is outside. Our problem is not what the world is made of, but where it is: it is outside. This is the crux of the whole matter. But today our scientific friends have become friendlier with us, and have somehow or other jumped into another unexpected conclusion that the world cannot really be outside the observer because the world so-called, the universe that we are thinking of, is inclusive of the observer himself. When we speak of the universe, we are not expected to discount our own existence as an observer, who is part

and parcel, perhaps organically connected to this so-called universe of perception.

Now, here is a terrible difficulty before us. How would we observe a world of which we ourselves are a part? Here science has nothing to say. It cries "Halt! Thus far and no further." When science halts, philosophy begins or, rather, religion starts, we may say. So, modern physics and science are great advances, and they have shaken hands with philosophy, metaphysics, and perhaps even with spiritual adventures. That is one side of the matter. The great benefit philosophy and religious researches receive from scientific discoveries of modern times is that the observer cannot stand outside the observed universe. Then, who observes the universe? Who is the scientist?

This will give you a little clue to understanding how God has become this threefold universe in spite of the fact there cannot be a threefold partition of a one indivisible Absolute. God cannot be cut into three parts. The Supreme Being is one indivisible existence even now, and yet it appears threefold. Perhaps these few words I uttered today, in the light of what science has concluded, are also a clue to understanding how one indivisible Being can appear as a threefold variety, *adhibhuta*, *adhyatma*, *adidaiva*. The stages of the cosmology of creation are going to become more interesting further on.

We have to know ourselves very clearly; we have to diagnose ourselves threadbare in order to know what our disease is. What is our sickness? What are we suffering from? Why do we study yoga? Why study Vedanta? Why meditate? Why any of these things? What is the matter? There is something very strange about us which keeps us restless and makes us feel everything is irksome. What is wrong with us? Why do we do anything at all? This has to be probed into with an incisive understanding, in which adventure of ours these studies in cosmology that have already conducted by the Sankhya and Vedanta are very helpful to us by explaining

the threefold partition, as it were, of the one indivisible Absolute, Brahman, *mahat*, or whatever it is called.

I have said something about the physical universe of five elements. The Indian doctrine says that these five elements are the product of a peculiar permutation and combination of subtler principles, called *tanmatras*. These are invisible potencies, potentialities of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether. They are the principles of sound, the principle of touch, etc. I mentioned to you that we have five senses or five sensations. The corresponding objects of these five sensations are the *tanmatras*. These are objective counterparts of the subjective reactions set up by our senses – sound, touch, colour, taste, smell. The objective principles or the substantial basis of these sensations lie behind the manifestation of these gross elements, called *mahabhutas* – earth, water, fire, air, ether.

The objective universe manifest from this Virat, or the Supreme Being, became a sudden spatial expanse. There was only space in the beginning, or we may say space-time. Here our ancient doctrine seems to be telling us the same thing which modern science tells us again: there is only space-time, nothing more, nothing less. God created the world out of nothing practically, as we can understand this statement of the Bible. What was the material out of which the universe was manufactured? Where was the material for God? Nothing! The world is made of nothing, and now you will perhaps know why the world is nothing, finally. It is not a hard substance; it is a big balloon, inside which there is nothing. That there appears to be something very valuable in this nothing, is due to another reason. That reason again, to come to the point, is the presence of the third divine element, a substance, a reality appearing behind this presentation of the phenomena. Even appearance cannot be without reality behind it. As the old adage goes, if the rope is not there, a snake cannot be seen. Though the snake is not there, the rope is there; therefore, we feel the presence of a solid substance.

We feel that there is a solid universe, a tangible thing before us, not because there is anything tangible or solid actually, but because there is a reality behind the sensation of tangibility, the cause of our feeling that there is some hard world in front of us.

This physical universe of five elements, therefore, is a product of what is called the quintuplication, a peculiar fivefold permutation and combination of these *tanmatras* – *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*, which means the principles of sound, touch, etc., mentioned already. Thus, the physical universe is created. Then where are we coming from? The question arises: “You have told us about these five elements and *tanmatras* all coming from the Supreme Being in some way, and here we have our Jacks, Johns, Ramas, Krishnas, Gopis and Radhas. From where do these people come? Who created them? Who created us? Where have we jumped from?” We are more interested in these things than the study of the physical elements. Let them be there; what does it matter to us? But our problems are our problems.

Now from the widespread cosmological study of an objective universe, we have to turn our attention to the study of individual psychological entities called persons, human beings, animals, this and that. So from the objective side we turn to the subjective side, and then we see what has happened to us and where we are standing today.

Chapter 7

OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION

Almost bidding goodbye to cosmological discussions, we now turn to individual psychology, which aspect of study follows as a natural consequence from the fact that the individual cannot be outside the universe. The so-called individual is a cross-section of the cosmos in a miniature microscopic form; in a microcosmic form, we will find in ourselves everything that is in the world. As the Upanishad picturesquely puts it, the vast sky with the Sun, the Moon, the stars, the clouds, the lightning and the rain, is also within us. Nothing that is outside in the vast creation is absent in our own individual personality. We contain potentialities of everything that is vastly expanded in the form of this perceptible universe. Thus, we may say that we ourselves are the switchboard of the whole cosmos. In a mysterious manner, we can operate the whole world from within ourselves. This is perhaps the reason why ancients have proclaimed again and again, "Know thyself, and thou shalt know everything at the same time." "Know thyself and be free." The knowledge of one's own self is at once the knowledge of the whole of creation, because in our own selves is the latency of the cosmos.

It is very important, therefore, for every one of us to know something of our own selves now that we have briefly and in a broad sense understood that we are inextricably connected with the universe. The subtlety of this subject of individual psychology arises on account of a peculiar relationship that obtains between us and the universe. By 'individual psychology' I do not mean Adlerian psychology of the West, though the same term is used in connection with Adler's doctrine. What I mean by the term 'individual psychology' is the system of the internal operations in any particular individual, and it may include the psychology of Freud, Adler, Jung, and everyone else.

The individual – yourself, myself and every other self – is a complicated arrangement. All the layers of the cosmos are imbedded in us, inasmuch as it has been made clear that we cannot stand outside the world and look at it as a stranger. We are wound up with everything that we see. The layers of the universe are also the various levels of our own personality.

Studies in psychology in India, and in the East generally, have been a little different from those studies conducted in the West. Western psychology has mostly confined itself to the waking condition of the human consciousness. It is only latterly, when psychoanalysts came to the forefront, that they began to discover that there is something deeper than the conscious. Before the coming of Freud in the West, the concern of psychology was only limited to the conscious level. The perceptual field was the field of psychology, but psychopathological conditions which were studied later on brought people face to face with deeper facts of the human individual, and it was noticed that the human individual is not merely a consciously operated mind. There are hidden impulses and so on, as perhaps you all know.

Psychological studies in the East are mostly based on profound philosophical considerations. Ethics and psychology in the East are rooted in the metaphysical doctrines – or, perhaps, the spiritual ideals – they have set before themselves. Western psychology or even analysis has been mostly empirical in the sense that it was concerned with human society, and nothing more. But Eastern psychology was not limited only to the operation within the field of human relationship, though it included that also because human life is considered as something exceeding the limitations of social relationship merely. Though we are units in human society, we are not merely that. We are not merely units who go to a polling booth and cast our vote, though that is also one of our functions. We are a greater mystery than what obtains in mere social considerations, economic

relationships or political involvements, in spite of the fact that we are political citizens, socially connected individuals, and also involved economically. We are more than all these things.

The psychology of the East, especially as it could be studied from the point of view of observations made in India, can be gathered from the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. These three texts give us some hint as to the way in which psychology has been studied in India. It has been considered as a branch of a vaster study in the light of the aspirations of the human individual. We are connected to so many facets of our longings that psychology cannot be considered as an independent branch of learning. Psychology is one of the facets of our studies, a very important phase no doubt, but it does not exhaust the entire field of knowledge.

The way in which we contact the world in our perceptions and our experiences is the factor that conditions our feelings and even our general individual outlook in life. The way in which we contact the world is the framework under which we operate in every aspect of our life. Just as the scaffolding of a building will give us an idea of the character of the building that is to be raised, we may also know the type of experience we can expect in this world by the type of understanding we have of it. What sort of understanding are we provided with in regard to the world of perception? What do we know about the world?

As far as the common man is concerned, or rather every one of us is concerned, the world stands outside. For all practical purposes, it is an outsider. Whatever be our rational conclusions and logical deductions in our classrooms, the man in the street may be considered as the specimen of the manner in which the man in the world thinks. Study in libraries and research in laboratories do not operate in our practical life because the natural constitution of the human personality weighs so heavily upon one's experience that it

exceeds the power of our understanding, our reasoning and our scientific researches. Thus, we may say that man is mostly instinctive and not rational because the instinctive actions of human nature seem to outweigh rational considerations in public life and even in private affairs mostly. Why does this happen?

In a very brief observation made by Patanjali in his Sutras, we are told that the *modus operandi* of our knowledge of the world outside – the means of communication that we establish between ourselves and the universe – is itself involved in a basic error. All logic, which is the framework of rational operations, is also therefore based on a fundamental error. Thus, there seems to be some point in our being told again and again that intellect, reason, or understanding in terms of sense observations, cannot enable us to contact reality. The basic error which is pointed out by this little statement in the Yoga Sutras is that the world cannot rightly be regarded as an object of perception. The basic error is only this much. It is simple and easy to understand that we are forced to consider the world as an object of sense perception, and that intellectual understanding and everything based on sense perception follows from this consideration.

But the truth is that the world is not such an object. It is related to us in a different way altogether, and inasmuch as this basic error in perception has become the normal way of perception, everything that follows from it as a consequence also has become a part of our nature. We act and react in the form of likes and dislikes in respect of things outside. It is not possible to avoid these results that follow from our perception of the world as an outside something. Anything that is outside has to be related to us by means of actions and reactions of the psyche. When we speak of the world of perception, we mostly limit ourselves only to that little area of the world with which our psyche is concerned, our desires are concerned, or our personal relationships are concerned.

The world is larger than can be accommodated by our psychic relations; but each person has his own or her own world. I mind my business within the jurisdiction of my mental operations, and the world beyond that – whether the world is there outside or not – is not my concern. So, we are tied up in a psychic world more than a physical world. The physical world is, no doubt, the arena of our existence and our activities, but our loves and hatreds – our bondages, properly speaking – are confined to our psychic world.

What is the psychic world? There are two kinds of world experience – namely, that which is related to things as they are, and that which is related to things as we see them. In Vedanta studies in India, this distinction is very important. These two kinds of experience are known as *Ishvara-srishti* and *jiva-srishti*. These terms imply the creation as it is in itself, and creation as it means to us. Gold and silver, money and property, persons and things, are something in themselves, but they are something else to people who are related to them. An establishment of a peculiar personal relationship gives value to things which cannot be associated with their own independent nature. The objects which mean something to one person may not mean anything to somebody else. The meaning that we read into objects is a psychic operation, and the objects themselves are what they stand in their own status. I may like you, or I may not like you. My liking or not liking you depends upon the way in which I interpret you, understand you and read meaning into you, but that is totality different from what you yourself may be in your own status. Under different conditions such as my moods, my longing, my desire, my prejudices, my instincts, my conditioning factors, I may react in a particular manner in respect of persons and things outside, but I may not react in a similar manner tomorrow on account of a change in the very constitution of my psyche and the entire apparatus of perception. So, we find that there is an important distinction between the psychic world in which we live and the physical world which seems to be the object

of scientific studies. We do not look upon people as scientific objects. They are fathers or mothers, brothers or sisters, husbands or wives; that is all we can understand from people. But scientific observation of the very same object may not have to consider these relationships or sentiments.

Thus, the study of human psychology takes us into the consideration of this distinction that has to be drawn between the status that objects enjoy in themselves and the meaning that we read into them. Every one of us is compelled to read meaning into things; and here is our problem. The problem of human life in the world is precisely the problem of demarcating between the psychic world of each individual and the world as it could be in itself. For the time being, we need not concern ourselves with the nature of the world as it is in itself. Let it be whatever it is. Let us focus on how we understand the world because, for us, the world is that which we understand in our own minds and that in regard to which we act and react. This also brings into highlight a consideration of the reason why we should act and react in this manner.

Individuals are constituted differently. When we speak of individuals here in this classroom, perhaps we refer to human beings only. But the universe is not exhausted by human beings; there are many things other than men and women. All discrete individuals, organisms of every type, should be considered as percipients of the world in one way or the other. According to the tradition known to Indian culture, there are some millions of species of individuals, and it is not that the whole universe is occupied by man only. Perhaps man is not the most important creation, though it is often believed that he is the apex of God's creation. There are wonders which exceed human understanding. The Upanishads highlight the presence of realms superior to the human world – the realm of angels, divinities, gods and supermasters, before whom we may look like swine, insects, etc.

Hence, the individuality that is the subject of our study is a principle of understanding the very location of perceiving anything that is external. The fantasy in which we are involved right from our birth to death, by which we regard a thing as totally outside us, creates certain undulations in our psyche – disturbances which try to set themselves in order by a reaction – and that is the kind of life we live in the world. All our day-to-day activities are certain reactions we set up in relation to things, to adjust and adapt ourselves to the conditions prevailing outside. Therefore, we may say that throughout our life we are in a state of tension; we are not natural any day because we have to adjust ourselves before other people. We have to put on a circumstance of our psyche which should not come in conflict with the presence of another individual or another circumstance in life, whatever it be. This necessity that we feel to adapt and adjust ourselves to outer circumstances from moment to moment is a great strain on us, and so we are tension-ridden and emotionally disturbed individuals.

No person can be said to have real peace of mind. Though it appears we have some peace, it is mistaking the disease itself for health. When we are sick for years and years, we seem to acquiesce ourselves to that condition and pass it for a state of health. The human psyche reacts in respect of outer circumstances, and the instruments that the psyche manufactures for different types of reactions in respect of the world outside are what we call the psychic apparatus. Just as warriors have various weapons – guns, knives, swords, spears and what not, as necessity demands – so is the instrument that the psyche manufactures. According to the condition that we have to pass through in this world, we manufacture the type of apparatus to deal with it. These interesting antennae of our psyche are the well-known nomenclatures in psychology.

In the West we have, broadly, the section-wise thinking of the human psyche in terms like 'understanding', 'willing', 'feeling', and there the matter ends. Understanding, willing and feeling are the principle subjects of psychological studies in the West. But, though we may broadly categorise our functions in this manner, we seem to be more complicated in ourselves than can be visualised by these categories only. There is, coming back to the point of Indian psychology, the basic presupposition of human nature, namely, self-assertion. We are, principally, self-assertive individuals. Before we do anything else, we first assert ourselves. "I am something; this has to be accepted first. If you cannot accept that I am something, especially as I understand myself, then I cannot be your friend. It is not enough that you accept that I am; you also have to accept that I am as I understand myself." This is a type of super-arrogation which each one foists upon oneself, and this is why there is tension in society. How could it be possible that everyone would agree with everyone else in this type of assertion that we should understand them only in the way they understand themselves, and they should also understand us similarly? If the whole world thinks in this manner, how could there be any peace of mind? Yet, we are somehow living in this hell. We are somehow getting on, dragging the bullock cart of this body through this mire of life, day and night, and feeling that every day is weighing heavy like an iron hill on our heads. This is not life; this is a great torture that we are undergoing in the form of living in the world. Why should this torture be? Can we free ourselves from this illness we call life? The way in which we are living in this world can be considered as a great malady that has grown over us, with which we have somehow accommodated ourselves in such a way that the dacoit has become our friend, because we cannot escape his clutches.

Yoga psychology goes deep into this matter and probes into the secrets of our sorrows. Why should we like and dislike things? What do we mean by saying, "I like this" and "I do not like this"? Why should this situation be there,

especially as it does not seem to be a universal feature associated with particular objects? Why is there this peculiar irreconcilable attitude of the individual by way of assertions of this type? And why do we cling to our body and fear death, in spite of these difficulties with which we have to pass our life? Whatever may be our sorrows, let hell itself descend on us, we would like to live in this world. We would like to prolong life as much as possible by any amount of medication and treatment, even if we are rotting with an illness that cannot be cured. What is this clinging to existence in this physical frame? Why does it arise? This is briefly studied in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Broadly, in greater detail, we are given information about it in the Upanishads, and there is something about it in the Bhagavadgita also.

As I mentioned, our personality is to some extent a cross-section of what we see in the world. If we cut a tree crosswise, we will find rings and patterns in that cut piece which we can find in any other piece that has been cut from the tree in a similar manner. We are likely to mistake ourselves for this gross body only, mostly speaking. In our daily life we identify ourselves with this body only – this bony frame, this flesh and this entire physiological structure. Not only that, we do not believe, even for a moment, that this physical body is not a solid substance. Firstly, it is not true that we are only this body. Secondly, it is also not true that this is one compact structure. It is an arrangement of little pieces of different types of elements – call them physical, physiological, chemical or whatever – and as a house is built of brick, mortar and many other things, this body, which appears to be a solid substance, is really constituted of little pieces, organisms, cells, and such stuff as would make us feel ashamed of ourselves; yet, our consciousness gets so attached to this medley of arrangement we call the physical body that it looks like a compact indivisible substance. As the cement that we use to hold bricks together may make us feel that the whole building is one indivisible mass, notwithstanding the fact it is made up of little pieces, the

pervading character of an indivisible consciousness within us, which permeates through every cell of the body, makes us feel that we are one compact whole from head to foot.

The physical body is one vesture of the individual makeup. In Sanskrit we call this *annamayakosha*, a vesture that is principally constituted of the food that was eaten by our parents and also the food that we eat every day. *Annamaya* means constituted of material substance; this is the body. But, for reasons we have observed sometime back, we cannot be this body only. We noticed that for certain important reasons this body cannot be 'we'. We have more important things to consider than the requirements of the body. For example, our psychological requirements are of greater consequence to us than the needs of the body. Don't we think that the satisfaction of the mind has a greater significance for us than the satisfaction of the body? If the mind is agitated, how could the body be satisfied with any delicious diet? We lead a mental life more than a physical life. People live for honour and respect more than for food and drink, as we know very well. We cannot brook being bereaved of honour and respect for a moment, though we may physically fast for months. This shows the extent to which we are psychic individuals more than physical bodies; and our psychic individuality is, again, a makeup of different particulars such as understanding, self-arrogation, volition, feeling, emotion, love, and the like.

The instincts that we generally refer to in our studies are vitally connected with our emotions. When the instincts operate, the emotions automatically operate also. The form in which instincts act and react, or operate, is the way in which emotions function in us. Emotion is an undulation in the psyche, waves in the sea of our psychic personality. We are mainly, basically, instinctive, and therefore emotional. We are prone to be emotionally disturbed more than intellectually or rationally convinced. It may be difficult to convince us intellectually or rationally, but it is easy to

disturb us emotionally. In a minute we can be disturbed by certain events that can take place or a word that is uttered. A word cannot convince us rationally, but a word can upset us for months and years. Therefore, certain students of psychology and even political science and sociology have concluded that the human individual, whatever be the rationality that he or she may claim to have, is emotional and instinctive at the root – which is not a great credit for us. This is another way of saying that we have not become wholly human. We are hiding the secrets of our nature, which is not human, for the sake of appearing human for the purpose of an outer existence in social and political fields.

But occasionally, even in our political associations and social relationships, the hidden secrets come out. We cannot always hide ourselves. This hidden nature of ours is a problem for every one of us and, therefore, we become problems to others also. Each is a problem to another in this world, and so each has a fear of the other. Everyone is afraid of everyone else; this is why we want governments, police, army, bodyguards, and locks and bolts on our doors. We cannot wholly trust another individual. Though we can partially accommodate ourselves to the belief that everything in the world is in a friendly atmosphere, we are terribly afraid of even the movement of a leaf, and that is why we guard ourselves very carefully with every blessed thing possible. This is the law of the jungle that seems to be insinuating itself into our blood, and if we are to relate this circumstance of our present life with the doctrine of biological evolution, which tells us that we have come from lower species – from matter to life, from life to mind, and from mind to intellect, or rather, more prosaically, we have come from vegetable to animal and from animal to man – we may conclude the animal and the vegetable are still with us and in us, in an important proportion.

We are biologically like vegetables and instinctively like animals, but rationally we propose to be like human beings.

The characteristic of an animal is selfishness; the whole world is within itself only. For the beast, the world is only prey, food for its physical sustenance, and it has no consideration for another. The character of Homo sapiens is supposed to be the capacity to understand another as one understands one's own self. Where we are not prepared to understand another as we understand ourselves, where we are not prepared to be as charitable to another as we are charitable to ourselves, to that extent we may say we are not human beings, we are still animals. An animal is not so considerate; when it is hungry, it will eat anybody. If man also can eat his own brother under pressure of circumstances, we may say that the biological evolution has not been complete in the intellectual evolution of man.

The Upanishad tells us that there are higher stages of evolution than the stage man has reached. Darwin's theory is not a complete picture. It is not that we have come from vegetable to animal, from animal to man, and there the matter ends. Nothing ends. The very fact that we are still aspiring for something more than what is available in human life shows that evolution is not complete. We are still on the journey. We are pilgrims on the path, and the Upanishads are guiding lights for us here, which tell us that there are realms and realms beyond the human kingdom, that our aspiration will not cease and our finitude cannot be exhausted, and we can never be happy until Supreme Universality is attained.

Our present psychological condition does not seem to be wholly ready for the reception of divine light. We cannot so easily become yogis unless we become wholly human beings first. It is difficult to believe that an animal can jump to God at one stroke; there seems to be a necessity to pass through various stages of evolution. The animal has to become man. Are we really men? Yes, perhaps, if we can convince ourselves that this humanitarian feeling is present in us and we are not mostly animal-ridden.

This is a little light that I tried to throw upon the way in which human nature seems to be involved in the operations of the psyche, and loves and hatreds are included in this circumstance.

Chapter 8

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

Coming to the psychology of yoga, we have to draw a distinction between the field which it covers and the area of study generally associated with what we commonly know as psychology. For those who are educated in the Western sense particularly, psychology perhaps means an investigation into the functions of the human psyche in all its structural peculiarities and patterns, and it mostly concerns itself with empirical relationships, human affairs, man as he appears to another man – functions of the mind studied as they can be experimented upon or observed by the very apparatus of which the mind is constituted.

The difficulty with the human mind is that when it applies the technique of empirical observation in the study of anything, it gathers information about circumstances, events and things as they could be accommodated by the instruments of perception and cognition which it wields, and it cannot know more than that. We have observed that philosophy is not to be identified with a mere empirical approach to things; it is not also a mere intellectual feat or rational study based on observation and appearance, but it is rather an attempt to go deep into the very suggestiveness, the implication, the hidden significance of what we call experience in general.

There are underlying peculiarities and facets in the experiences we undergo in life apart from the outer forms of the experiences themselves, and thus there is a difference between the method of science and the adventure of philosophy. But, more profound is the spiritual requirement of any study that goes by the name of yoga and, in the field of the practice of yoga, human nature is studied not as an isolated bit of experience or an object as we study in physics,

chemistry, etc., but something which is an expression or emanation of a wider field which conditions it – a field which cannot be experimented upon or observed by mental faculties or sense activities.

As we had occasion to observe recently, the cosmology of the Sankhya, the Yoga and the Vedanta tells us that the human being is not an independent unit that can be studied in isolation, irrespective of its relationship with others, because it is a conditioned outer expression in space and in time of an unconditioned non-spatial and non-temporal being, because of which the aim of yoga is super-temporal. The purpose of the study and the practice of yoga is not merely temporal achievement or acquisition of any empirical character. It is transcendent in a very important sense because the aspirations of the human being themselves point to something which is transcendent to the observable field of its own present operations. Our daily activities, our conduct and behaviour, our relationships with other people and things, the business of life as a whole, may be said to exhaust what we call the empirical world. But philosophy is not merely a process of the observation of these features of our life. It is not looking at the world as a cat or a cow would look at it, though we can look at the world in that way also, and oftentimes we look only in that manner. There is something peculiar and special in the very constitution of human understanding which enables it to infer the very presuppositions of the possibility of such experience. There are certain hidden causes behind the effects which appear in the form of world experience.

Thus psychology, in the light of Yoga and Vedanta at least, is rooted in philosophical studies. In the cosmological enumeration of the categories mentioned in the Sankhya and the Vedanta, man is rooted in the universe. So, there is a cosmical sweep that pushes forward even psychological endeavours, and all our little desires are blown by the winds of the cosmos; they are not merely human in their nature.

This is a small introduction to our present occupation by way of study of the inner constitution of the human individual as a preparatory step to the practical techniques that we have to employ in yoga proper. The human individual is a cross-section of the universe. Whatever is in the universe is also in a microscopic, miniature form in the individual. We are little cosmoses, little universes; therefore, a study of the objective manifestation of the universe, which we called cosmology, also implies a corresponding study of this cross-section called the individual, the human being, with which alone we are primarily concerned.

Now, there is something very interesting about this cross-section, this individual, this human being, this 'I' and 'you', appearing to be a chip of the block of the universal setup of things. We are many times called 'images' of the cosmic Being; "Man is made in the image of God," is an oft-quoted saying. We have to understand these statements with caution. In what sense is the individual a part of the universe, and what are we going to understand by this proclamation that man is made in the image of God? Here, philosophical investigations are likely to go a little out of their bounds and drive empirical characteristics into the realm of what cannot be accessible to the senses, the mind and philosophy when it is unable to pull its legs out of the earth, and the field of sense observations may introduce empirical, logical categories into realities which go beyond the ken of mental and sensory experience. Thus, we are likely to picture the universe in terms of what we sensorily experience and mentally cognise or intellectually understand. Even the Ultimate Reality, whatever be its nature finally, is likely to be interpreted by the human mind under the conditions in which it is clothed.

We have been warned by deep thinkers that the individual is not so simply a part of the universe, though in a very important and specialised sense we are part. We are not bits of the Almighty and literally pieces of the universe, though we are that, with a cautious note to be underlined at

the same time. This is very important to remember in order that we may free ourselves from any kind of illusion about experiences that one may have in yoga, meditation, etc. People generally have illusions about these things. The experiences under conditions of mental concentration can easily pass off for a divine delight or an entry into the bosom of the Absolute, which circumstance can make us feel a little over-estimated in our own selves because of a lack of proper judgement of the conditions necessary for assessing the true nature of transcendent experience. When the individual was struck off from the universal setup – call it *mahat* or *ahamkara*, or Hiranyagarbha or Virat, or whatever the name be – something understandable took place.

When a citizen of a nation is banished from his country or a person is imprisoned in a jail, something peculiar happens to him, apart from the fact that he remains the same person irrespective of his location. There is on one side the fact that nothing has happened; wherever we are, whether we are in a temple or a jail, we are the same person, we are the same x y z, a b c d. What has happened to us? Instead of living here, we are living somewhere else. This is one aspect of the matter. But, something different has taken place to the person proper. That person is not the same as he or she was earlier because the person, so-called, is not merely a physical location. Our physical or geographical placement is not the only definition of ourselves, because we understand ourselves as something more than only the requirement of the physical body. There is a change of the very outlook of the person; the person proper, changes. A jailbird is different from an emperor on a throne, though physically they are the same – and what the difference is, each one will know. This is only a prosaic example that I am placing before you to draw a distinction between our position in the setup of the cosmos and the position we are occupying now as human beings on this earth.

Incidentally, by way of a little digression, I may cite an interesting anecdote that occurs in the Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya Upanishads which is profound with deep spiritual meaning. The celestials and the demons, the gods and the *asuras*, were at loggerheads with each other. There was a war going on between the gods and the demons. The gods were overthrown by the demoniacal principles; they were defeated, and cast out of the heavens. The gods thought, "What has happened to us? We are in a very unfortunate state." They consulted their Guru, conferred among themselves, and hatched out a plan that they would sing the holy chant called the Udgitha in Upanishadic language, which is a sacred hymn of the Veda. They told the divinity of the eye, "You chant it, and by that chant we shall energise ourselves so powerfully that we shall overthrow the *asuras*." When this contemplation was going on in the mind of the celestials, the *asuras* understood this and attacked the divinity of the eyes and prevented it from chanting, and so the plan did not succeed. The same thing happened with the divinity of every other sense organ – the ear, nose, and so on. All were defeated and quelled.

It was a very sorry state of affairs for the gods. Then they told the *prana* within to chant the Udgitha. The *prana* is to be understood in the sense in which the Upanishads understand it, and not as the *hatha yogins* understand it. It is not merely the breath in the sense of a function of the empirical individual. The Upanishads understand many things by the word '*prana*', finally meaning thereby, 'the total representation of a cosmic force in ourselves'. Then the chant of the Udgitha by the *prana* produced a novel effect; it was not like the senses operating. The *asuras* attacked the *prana* also, and the Upanishad very humorously tells us that they were thrown out, as a ball of mud cast over a hard rock breaks to pieces which will be scattered helter-skelter. The *asuras* were pounded and thrown hither and thither by the very force of this chant of the Udgitha by the *prana*. Then the gods won victory. They were once again positioned in their

original location as divinities, as celestials, as pristine gods, and were not merely the empirical superintendents of the sense organs of individuals.

This is a story, an anecdote, a parable which has many meanings. Great masters sometimes speak in parables for the understanding of the common folk, since direct logic or scientific instruction may be difficult for us to absorb. We are ourselves these gods, these angels who have been defeated by the *asuras*. What are we to understand by the *asuras*, or demons? For our purposes, the *asuras* are nothing but the forces of sense attraction, outward impulsion, centripetal energy, the impulsion of consciousness to move out of itself, away from the centre. The Atman is trying to become the *anatman*, as it were, the Self becoming the not-self, and there is a desire on the part of everyone to jump out of oneself into the objects of sense outside – to run about in space and time, like a crazy one. This longing is the *asura*, the demon in us; and when it attacks us, we are naturally defeated.

The Upanishad says that the eye can see both good and bad, the ears can hear both good and bad, the tongue can taste both pleasant and unpleasant, and the same is for the nose and the touch. The positive side is the celestial, and the negative side is the demoniacal. But there is something in us which cannot be so affected. The 'I' or the 'we', the central personality or the root of the personality, is neither a good thing nor a bad thing. It is that out of which these concepts arise. There is something super-ethical and super-moral in every one of us, which means to say, super-social, super-relational, which gets into the rut of thinking in these relational terms when it is fashioned into the mould of sense experience and conditioned intellectual understanding.

I mentioned the terms *mahat* and *ahamkara* in the language of the Sankhya, and Hiranyagarbha and Virat in the style of the Vedanta. We are integral parts of this Universal Being. The gods were thrown out and were defeated in this war, which means to say that they were cast out in the same

way as Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. There was the fall of the angel, as we hear in scriptural cosmology. This fall is the story of creation, the fall of man.

When this happened, the divinities lost the position they occupied; and we have lost our position. We are not now positioned as officials in the government of God. We are like people thrown out of our offices; and we know what happens to a person who is thrown out of a government office. He no longer has anything to do with the government. He is a nothing and a nobody, and he feels very sorry. But when a person is positioned in a particular office in the government of the universe, the whole energy of the universe flows into that person. A single official in the government can summon the power of the entire government, if the necessity arises. He is a conduit pipe, as it were, of the whole force of which he is an inextricable functional part. We were in that position; we could see God. Adam could see God and speak to Him, but we cannot see him; we do not know where God is. When we were positioned in the Virat, or in the cosmic Being, we interpreted the whole creation in a different way, quite different from the way in which we see things now. The central authority of a government looks at things a little differently from the way an ordinary person looks at them, for reasons which everyone knows. The position which one occupies under a given condition will decide the way in which one looks at things. We are now looking at things – the whole, persons, and everything – in a way in which we were not seeing them earlier, when we were positioned in the organic structure of the Universal Being.

Now, to give you a little idea as to the meaning of this anecdote from the Upanishad, what it seems to mean is this. The chant, so-called, is the attempt of the fallen soul to revert to the cosmic originality, and this attempt is foiled by the powerful urges of the senses and the empirical understanding of the mind. The more we try to move towards God, the original Universal, the more is the

vehemence of the pressure we feel from the counter forces. The senses drag us more at that time than they would ordinarily under normal circumstances, so this war is going on; and the sufferings, the encounters, the difficulties of a *yogin* are very strange indeed. They are not like the ordinary sorrows of the man in the street because the *yogin* is really being pulled in two different directions with equally powerful troops. The chant, so-called, is the yoga meditation, and this meditation is not to be conducted with the eyes, the ears, the nose, or any of the sense organs. This meditation is not to be conditioned in any manner by sense experience. It should not be a visualisation through the eyes or an interpretation through any experience of the senses. This was not successful because the senses have an affiliation with something else which is other than what we are aiming at in meditation. They are not true friends.

The senses have been accustomed to a life which is different from the kind of life we are attempting to live by way of yoga meditation, so we cannot summon their help in this endeavour. The meditation is practised by us, and not by the senses. This 'us' is the *prana* spoken of. As I mentioned, we are not the senses, not even this body. There is a centrality of status occupied by our consciousness which is impersonal in every sense of the term. This true 'I' in us, the soul, as we call it, the Atman in the language of Sanskrit, is to be summoned. "*Evam buddheh param buddhva samastabhya atmanam atmana*" (Gita 3.42), are the words used in the Bhagavadgita. The senses have to be controlled by invocation of a power which is superior even to the senses and the mind. "*Buddhe param buddhva*": having known that which is superior even to the understanding, and invoking its grace and power, one can subdue the senses and the mind. So, when this was undertaken by the gods, they conducted a meditation which was enough to produce a force that could not be counteracted by any of the sensory impulses. The soul is stronger than the senses. There is something in us which is

more powerful than any power that the senses know or the world knows.

This story that I have narrated will give an idea of the jurisdiction of our studies in spiritual psychology, yoga psychology, including mind and understanding. We are studying the present condition of the human psyche with the presupposition of what its background is and, therefore, yoga psychology is also a philosophical study. It is not an empirical science in the sense in which it is understood in Western parlance. Ethics and psychology, in India particularly, are rooted in philosophy, in metaphysics, in the very spiritual outlook of life. So, even psychological studies are spiritual studies, and are not merely sociological or economic studies.

The individual cross-section, therefore, while it is a miniature of the cosmos, is also a fallen piece and is not merely an organically living piece, in the same way as when a hand is severed or the heart of a person is plucked out. It remains the same physical heart for all observational purposes, but it is no more a living heart. The heart that we study as a living organic part of the human system is different from the heart that is plucked out from the body, because its organic relationship is removed. This is, again, where the true philosophical or spiritual outlook of things differs from the scientific outlook. Science believes that everything can be studied isolatedly; one bit of an object can be studied independent of its relationship with anything else. This cannot be done if it is true that things are not basically cut off from other things. A finger that is a part of the body is a different thing from the very same finger cut off from the body. It is not the same thing, and we cannot say that we can sever a finger and keep it in a test tube and study it in the way it would operate as a part of a living body. Thus the human individual, when it has fallen, severed from the universal, has become a piece which has been cut off from the organic structure of the universal Virat; therefore, our experiences today as human individuals, through the

instrument of our psyche, is different from the way in which we would have observed things and known things as originally connected with God-being.

Now, what are these instruments of which we are made? We have a mind, we have emotion, and we have various other psychic faculties, instruments of cognition, perception and contact for the sake of experience. Psychologists differ in their opinion as to the way in which these instruments are manufactured by the individual. Desires are the causes of the particular type of instrument that is projected by an individual. The necessity conditions the character of the instruments of action. This is what some psychologists, such as Lamar in the West, hold. A tiger requires teeth and claws, and a dog requires canine teeth for purposes well known, but the human being does not require such teeth. It does not require claws and talons or a beak, while the bird may require them. The porcupine requires protective spikes on its body, but man does not require them. The bear has thick fur, but man does not have this fur. It is said that all these differences are due to the necessities of the conditions in which these individuals are placed for survival. This is one view of modern psychology. Why should we have eyes? Why should there be a nose? Why these sense organs? Because the central individual, the *jiva*, so-called, has to pass through certain experiences, and these experiences are possible only through these instruments. The desire to see is the cause of the projection of the eyes; the desire to hear is the cause of the projection of the ears, and so on.

This is an interesting arrangement of several particular layers, though there can be an endless categorisation of these layers when we go deep into the psychoanalytical structure of the psyche. For all practical purposes, to understand this in the light of Indian psychology, we have five layers – the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the causal. In Sanskrit these are generally called the *annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *vijnyanamaya kosha* and

anandamaya kosha. We are not one solid body, like a steel frame, seated here. There are five layers. They can also be split into many other minor layers for deeper study, but for the time being it is enough if we know that these are the levels of our inner being. When we perceive a thing, when we understand or cognise, these layers condition this cognition, this perception.

Now, we will revert our attention to some of the studies we conducted earlier. We realised that our essential nature is consciousness, call it *purusha*, call it the Atman, whatever it is. Minus this consciousness, no cognition, no perception or awareness of anything is possible. The cognition or perception or the knowledge of an object outside is the act of consciousness. This activity of consciousness, by way of perception of an object outside, is limited by the structure of these layers through which it has to pass. It is as if there are five screens made in five different ways in front of a light, and the light rays have to pass through these five screens. Or more properly, to make it clearer, we may say there are five types of lens placed one over the other through which light rays have to pass; and we can imagine what the interpretation of this light would be in respect of the object outside when it passes through five differently constituted lenses. The object will never be seen properly; it will be a completely made-up picture, a distorted form that is presented to the consciousness. We can imagine what sort of idea we can have of the objects of the world or of anything in the world if this were to be the reason behind our knowing anything and if these were the causes of our knowledge of anything in the world. We do not understand anything properly. It is not possible because we have this peculiar set of spectacles. Once we thought we have only one pair of spectacles, space and time; now we are given to understand that there are many other difficulties, one making the other worse than the earlier one.

We have to extricate our consciousness from involvement in these lenses, these vestures, these layers, these conditioning levels of being, stage by stage. Actually, these layers are not like spectacles we can throw off at our will. I can put on my spectacles, and take them off and put them aside, but these layers are stuck to us as our skin is sticking to our body. We cannot remove this layer of our personality called the skin by peeling it off; we cannot peel our flesh and marrow. More intimately are these layers stuck to the consciousness, so that we have become the layers. I am the body, am the mind, I am the *prana*, I am the senses, I am the intellect, I am everything; they are inseparable. Consciousness has got involved in these layers in such a way that it has become them, and so the freedom of the consciousness that we are aiming at through yoga meditation is a hard task. Nothing can be more difficult than that because even in little things of the world, where we are involved in deep affections, loves and hatred, for instance, in which condition the object is not so vitally connected with us as our skin or marrow or flesh, we are unable to free ourselves from them.

If our affections are poured over an object, we feel we are dying, as if we are wrenched out of that object; or if there is bereavement from that object, we feel life is worthless if the dear object has gone. Oftentimes people commit suicide, hang themselves, because that which they considered as necessary, lovable, dear, has gone. If objects that are so remotely related can affect us to such an extent, imagine the way in which we can be affected by these layers which are not so remotely connected, but have become one with the consciousness. When the thief has entered the police camp and he has become the police, who can detect him?

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Chapter 9

PREPARING FOR YOGA PRACTICE

Since yoga is a practical science and not merely an idealistic philosophy, it very carefully considers the realism of human involvement in every bit of experience, even the lowest and most insignificant, because there is no such thing as insignificant experience, finally. Everything has some role to play in our life, insofar as it becomes a part of our experience, a content of our consciousness. Thus an excessive idealistic exuberance, minus the realism of personal involvement, may not bring the desired result in practice. Religions sometimes go to excesses, as materialism can go to its own excesses, and any excess is not going to touch even the border of the fact of life. As it is wisely said, "Truth is in the middle." It is neither that extreme, nor this extreme. Neither is it true that the world is all and there is nothing else, nor is it true that there is nothing in this world, because the realistic approach is nothing but the consideration of the value that one attaches to any kind of experience. Whether a thing is real or not is not important. What is important is the value that we attach to any particular thing, event or experience; and anything that is valuable to us, is real to us. This is important for us to remember. Even a phantom may be real if it affects us seriously, and it has to be dealt with accordingly.

The science of the practice of yoga, based on a very vigilant consideration of all the levels of involvement of consciousness, goes slowly, stage by stage. In our studies, which were first philosophical, we noticed that it became necessary for us to also consider the cosmological stages of what we call evolution, inasmuch as the ascent of consciousness in yoga seems to be unavoidable except through these stages. Then it became necessary for us to know our own selves as psychological specimens of these cosmological arrangements because individuals that we are,

or anything is, cannot be basically set apart from the total experience. We are human beings; and though it is true that the world does not consist merely of human beings and there are other things also, we are mostly concerned with human beings only because it is not essential for us to revert to the levels which we have already traversed – the animal stage, the vegetable stage, etc. Our occupation being practical – down-to-earth practical, and not merely a theorising of academic themes – it is enough if we consider the stages above us and not what we have already crossed over in the process of rising from the lesser levels.

We are now at the human stage. What do we mean by the human stage? What is the kind of life that we human beings live in this world? What are our problems and difficulties, and the causes thereof? These may be the initial stages on which we may base our yoga practice. As we have noted already, we should not take the next step unless we are clear about the first step. What is the condition in which we are living just now? We are not in our consciousness, involved in that universal cosmological arrangement. This is not visible to our eyes, not even intelligible to our minds. What we see with our eyes is also what we think with our minds, mostly; and our involvements, which are basically psychological, are sensorily conditioned because our mind thinks as the senses react, and the intellect merely confirms what the mind apprehends in terms of the senses.

We are living in human society, though each one of us has his own or her own independent status as an individual. I am what I am and you are what you are, and there is, therefore, an individuality and a personality and a special status which each one enjoys. Yet, we are mixed up and involved, very, very necessarily perhaps, with outer relations. Our life is constituted through and through, it appears, of external relations only, and none of us is living a totally independent, individual life. This is something which we easily miss in our attention to the processes of our life, because many of our

involvements are not visible to the eye. We are involved in them to such an extent that they become part of our nature.

Political theorists and sociologists usually think that the human being is a social animal. This is something very interesting; we are defined as social animals. However, whether we are animals or not, that is a different matter; that we are social, seems to be a great truth about us. The necessity to live a social life arises on account of a defect in our individual existence. We are not capable of literally living an independent life because literal independence would mean the segregation of oneself totally from every kind of connection with everyone and everything in the world, which will lead to the death of the individual. We lead a socially coordinated and cooperative life, in the sense of give and take. In some sense, an element of commercialism seems to be present in this arrangement of social coordination. I give you what I have that you do not have, and I take from you what you have that I need and do not have. This is a kind of barter system of the psychological nature, which has become an axiom and a maxim, all which is taken for granted by us, and we are really not ourselves literally. We are something other than what we are in the sense that we partake of the relative life of external coordination with individuals other than our own selves.

Yoga takes into consideration this fact also because we often complain about the present state of the world, saying that the world is wretched, but we do not mean that we ourselves are wretched. We always mean that others are wretched. The world is bad, which means to say that all others are bad, except us. This is how we can understand these statements. Why should we make such statements, and why should we feel the necessity of even thinking in this manner, if not for the fact that we are social, socially coordinated, socially involved, and cannot exist except as a social unit?

Hence, yoga takes its stand on the basic requirement of human nature, which is a day-to-day affair that is pre-eminently a social existence. Whatever be our individual philosophy, learning or inward idealism, we live a social life practically. All our dealings and thinking appear to be social in their nature. This is perhaps the reason why it is sometimes over-emphasised in certain circles of thinking, and socialistic philosophy seems to think that it can gain an upper hand and create a philosophy of its own and go to the extent of declaring that the very life of the individual is only a product of social arrangements. This is, in a moderate form, socialism; in an extreme form, it becomes communism. This is an overemphasis laid on a weakness of human nature: taking advantage of our weakness and then exploiting us, making us feel that we cannot exist without social relations and economic considerations. Though it is a fact that, under given circumstances, we are socially and also economically conditioned, we are not only that.

It is an apparent fact that we are politically, socially, economically conditioned; but it is not the ultimate fact. The ultimate fact is that we are independent; we do not want to be conditioned by anybody else. There is no desire in us to be slaves, and yet we are slaves economically, socially, politically because, coming back to the essential studies we made earlier, we live in two worlds, as it were, the empirical and the transcendent, at the same time. The transcendent aspect of us, which is the Reality in us, affirms total independence and that we would not like to be servants of anybody; but the empirical side says we cannot be but servants. We cannot exist independently, as empiricity is nothing but dependence on external conditions. This is why we say the world is relative, it is not absolute.

We live in a relative world, which means to say, everything – every event, every person, every circumstance, every condition – is related, conditioned by everything else. Everything hangs on everything else. Such is this world, and

also such is the need we feel in our life, insofar as some important part of our personality, individuality, is purely empirical, physical, vital, mental, emotional, social, and everything of that nature. The transcendent side is buried; it is never visible. Though it is not visible, it is powerful in its voice, and the power of its voice is what keeps us restless, day and night, in spite of our wealth, property, association, power, authority, and so on. All greatness, glory and magnificence bestowed upon us empirically does not satisfy the transcendent in us. At the same time, we are pulled by the devil of empiricity, and we feel that we cannot exist without breathing external air, drinking external water and hanging on external officials of an administrative authority. So, these being the aspects of the realism of human empiricity, they also have to be dealt with.

Though the illness is false, medicine may have to be administered to cure it. Real medicine may not be necessary to cure a false illness, but some sort of medicine is essential. "As is the deity, so is the worship," says an old adage. In this regard our deity is our weakness, our foibles and our needs in our present condition. This is the god that we have to worship, and the offering has to be of a similar nature. A transcendent offering cannot be accepted by a relative god, nor can a relative offering be accepted by a transcendent god. As we are worshipping relative divinities, relative offerings have to be made. This is the realistic and practical approach of yoga. It understands us thoroughly in our present condition, whatever be that condition.

We are grief-stricken in many ways; unhappy individuals we are, and we go to yoga merely because we are unhappy. If everything is fine with us, why think of God and yoga? There is something that agonises us, something is dead wrong somewhere, and nobody is satisfying, nothing is pleasing. There is dread of death, illness and anxiety of various types. These make us turn to yoga, turn to religion, turn to

spirituality and to God-experience. Why are we unhappy? What is our grief? Who has caused the sorrow in our minds?

Nobody feels that they are the cause of their own sorrows; everybody feels that somebody else, something else, is the cause. This somebody, this something, this event, this circumstance outside which is apparently the cause of our difficulties, is the outcome of our relationship with it. So, the first requirement in yoga practice is setting right our relationship with things, and not immediately jumping to the skies. We have been told again and again that we have to be very kind, we have to be compassionate, we have to be serviceful, we have to be good, and we must do good to people. The idea behind these ethical and moral instructions is that we should not create conditions in ourselves which will set up adverse reactions from outside. This is a difficult thing for us to practice because there is in us a thing called egoism, which affirms itself and which will not yield to the egos of others. There is, therefore, a clash. The ego is a mischievous imp working within us which always says that it is right, and it will not accept that anybody else can be right. If this attitude continues, any kind of social coordination is not possible. We become dictators, and if every one is such a person, perpetual war will take place, and the law of the jungle will operate.

Yoga does not envisage such a daily conflict among egos of people, since the ascent of consciousness in the direction of higher reaches can be possible only by a sublimation of these causes of conflict. The word 'sublimation' is very important. It is not a withdrawal or a running away from conditions, creating sorrows, conflicts, etc., because we cannot run away from the devil. It will catch us one day or the other. We have to master it, make it yield to us and, in a way, absorb it into our own self, making it a friend of our own self, and so on.

Often, we do not sublimate the psychological and social causes of our sorrows. We keep the causes of conflict

repressed in our personality, and this repression causes complexes in our nature. We become abnormal in our behaviour, irritated at once, and intolerable of even the smallest event that takes place outside. This irritability, intolerance and incapacity to accept the validity of anyone's opinion in the world is a reaction set up by the repressive attitude of our own ego, which is unable to manifest itself due to the strength of the reality of society outside. This is again unfortunate. This is the theme of psychoanalysis.

Thus, a repressive attitude is not the way of yoga. Yoga does not ask us to run away from realities. As I mentioned, a reality is that in which we are involved and which we consider as real. Something may be real to one person but not real to another. A mother clings to her dead baby, and we may wonder why she is clinging to a corpse. But for her there is a value and a reality in it, and our arguments have no meaning to her. Monkey mothers sometimes carry their dead babies for days. They know it is dead, but the infatuation is such that take it with them wherever they go. There is a reality in it; we cannot laugh at it. Therefore, our reality is what is real to our emotions, our understanding and our present involvements.

This is why we have to analyse ourselves at the outset in the practice of yoga. We are gradually moving towards the practical side of the yoga system. It is very, very important to be honest to our own selves, and then it is possible to be honest to others also. There is no self-deception before nature. Nature is an open book; everything about us is written there, publicly, and anyone can read it. No one is a private individual here; everyone is a part of the natural whole and, therefore, any hiding from the facts of nature will not work.

We have peculiar difficulties which are sometimes known to us, and sometimes cannot be easily known – public problems and private difficulties. We have publicly known problems which are advertised by our personal expressions

to people in our correspondence and even in newspapers, but there are peculiar, private sorrows which always cannot be made public. Both these have to be considered in the reality. There are certain difficulties which we can rationally understand and investigate into, and we can deal with them by ourselves, but there are certain difficulties which we cannot deal with by ourselves. Rational, scientific types of problems can perhaps be tackled by our own selves, but where sentiments and emotions are involved, we cannot be our own physician. Here we require a very strong guide; this is unavoidable.

The realism of yoga practice goes so deep into the problems of human nature that it asks us in the beginning to adopt gross means of solution rather than subtle appliances of an invisible and intangible nature. For instance, many people imagine that mental detachment is all that matters and one can physically be anywhere. This is true to some extent, but it is not the whole truth because, again, we come to the realism of our psychological makeup. It is not true that we are merely minds and so we can merely think something and be happy. We are also bodies, though we are not only bodies. Not only that, we are not just a mix-up of bodies and minds; we are also another type of involvement, which is social relations. Thus, the grossness of our involvements becomes as much a reality to us as the subtlety of our nature inwardly, and so yoga's ethical mandates tells us that a seeker who is honest to himself or herself should be physically away from circumstances which are detrimental to practice. But this does not mean it is a solution.

Physical isolation from adverse circumstances is not a solution to problems; it amounts to a kind of repression or running away. A physician may ask you to observe a fast before medical treatment is administered. Though fasting is not the cure, it is a necessary stage. Sometimes the patient is quarantined when the disease is infectious or of a dangerous nature. Though quarantining is not the cure, it is not the final

treatment, it is necessary under given circumstances. In yoga, quarantining is called living in an ashrama, in a convent, in a church, in a temple, in the Himalayas, in a holy place, and so on. Though it is accepted that this is not the solution to the problem, it is necessary because we have to take the first step in a realistic manner. We should not be in the midst of tempting atmospheres or distracting environments which will pull us this way or that way, positively or negatively. Therefore, a holy environment, sequestration, isolation and living in a conducive atmosphere are prescribed, so that we may have sufficient leisure to prepare ourselves for the coordination and the cooperation or harmony that is expected of us in regard to human relations.

Why does a scientist work in a laboratory, closing his doors, not seeing anybody, concentrating his mind? Why does he not work in the street? We know the reason very well. Though scientific observations can be done in the open street, circumstances are not favourable, and so he closes himself in the quarantine of a laboratory and then conducts his experiments. Similarly, these holy places are places where we conduct experiments in the laboratory of our life, for creating circumstances under which we can know the facts of life and then prepare ourselves for the next step, namely, harmony. At the initial stage and at every stage of yoga is a procedure we adopt in establishing harmony within ourselves and the atmosphere. Yoga is nothing but harmonisation of relations, until we establish the final harmony with the Supreme Being Himself.

Chapter 10

A SYNTHESIS OF YOGA

The practice of yoga is very conscious of the seeker being a human being first and, therefore, involved in human relations. It is not an angel that is entering on the path of yoga; it is the ordinary man, the ordinary mortal with all the foibles and idiosyncrasies of human nature who is in quest of a life of perfection through the practice of yoga.

In every methodology of handling affairs or treatment of conditions, the more stringent and important aspect is taken into consideration first. The acute forms, either of relations or of conditions, are more significant, since they press upon us acutely, immediately and more concretely than possibly more chronic forms of relation and condition, which are burned deep within. The reason why we are hungry every day is more important than the fact that we are hungry, but we are not bothered about the reason behind the hunger so much as the fact; and we take the fact first, though we cannot ignore the necessity to also know, at the same time, the reason behind this phenomenon.

Our approach to yoga practice should be most practical in its literal sense and there should not be any misgiving or misreading of value, especially when it is a matter concerning one's own self. While we may be very cautious in our dealings with others, we may not be so very careful with regard to our own selves because the self cannot judge itself in an objective manner, as it would deal with things and persons which are external to it.

Though human relations may appear to be the considerations at the very outset of the practice of yoga, they also include every kind of relation. It is true that we are human beings and are, therefore, more concerned with human relations. However, on the path of yoga we are not going to concern ourselves merely with human beings but

with a larger world whose contents are more than human, wider than what the human mind can comprehend. When we speak of the alignment of human relations in the light of yoga, all living beings may be considered as necessary items to be set in coordination with oneself. Most of, or perhaps all, of our inner agitations, annoyances and disturbances can be attributed to a maladjustment of this peculiar necessity which we call relation – or more properly, human relation. The streamlining of human relation is the initial step in the loftier aspiration of the seeker to set himself in alignment with higher forces and larger or wider dimensions of reality.

There is no place where reality is not present. Even in the least of things and the lowest of relations, one can discover the presence of a transcendent reality. A super-relational meaning can be seen in every type of relation. The necessity to undergo a sort of training in this art of establishing proper relation with others arises on account of the intensity of human egoism in general. The pre-eminent purpose of yoga is the abolition of this ego, the rooting out of this instinct of self-affirmation in a psychophysical form. While we very well know what it means to have a relation with another, we may not be entirely clear about the purpose of the relation itself.

Why should we have any kind of relation with anybody? We do not go deep into this matter; we take things generally for granted on their outer surface. When we condescend to understand the necessity to have relations with other people, it is possible for us, who are egos essentially, to unwittingly expect everyone else to set themselves in alignment with ourselves. "The whole world should go with me" may be the feeling of everyone. Perhaps, basically, this is the feeling. I would wish that the world thinks as I think, but why should it think as I think? This is a question which the ego will not put to itself.

The very meaning of egoism is the refusal to consider one's need to exhibit a conduct which one expects from others. We expect too much from others and nothing from

our own selves. This is the state when the ego reaches its climax, and such a climax of ego is present in root form, latently, in every person. Every insect wriggles and writhes to maintain itself, and it does not care what happens to others as long as it survives. The survival of the ego is the internal meaning that we can read in the vicissitudes of human history.

The purpose and great aim of the great, novel adventure called yoga is the discovery of Ultimate Reality and a communion with it. Therefore, it becomes imperative on the part of every seeker to convert oneself into a means to this approach; and the means becomes significant, meaningful and worthwhile only when it embodies and enshrines within itself some characteristic of the goal or the end which it conceives. If we are seeking something, asking for something or aiming at something whose nature is totally different from the characteristics exhibited in our personality, we would be pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp, asking for the moon.

This is what most people do in the world. Therefore, they do not succeed in life because there is a basic gulf between their nature and the character of that which they ask. But the seeker in yoga has to be made of a different stuff. The world cannot change itself into our personal pattern because 'the world' is a term we use for an area of operation of which we are a part. We cannot expect the whole to participate in the whimsical functional idiosyncrasies of a part. The part has to cooperate with the whole.

Hence, self-sacrifice is what is expected in the form of discipline called ethical behaviour or moral conduct. Yoga systems, whatever be the shape they take, all emphasise the need for a disciplined behaviour of the seeker on the path of yoga, and what we call ethical or moral conduct is only an outcome naturally following this disciplined carrier of oneself. Here, by 'discipline' we mean that technique, that science, that art by which even at the first step or the initial stage we implant in our own selves, as a means of approach,

the characteristics of that which is the end or the goal of our quest.

Therefore, a selfishness of any kind – a desire to appropriate everything for one's own self and an intolerance of others' opinions or even existence – cannot be regarded as compatible with the requirements of the ethical mandates of yoga discipline. A good person, generally so-called, is believed to be one who can accommodate others' circumstances into one's own opinions and into the way in which one lives. If participation in the structure of creation is the duty of man, then what we call ethical behaviour need not form a separate teaching or instruction. We need not be told what to do, because as things become clear to us – if we know that our duty is principally participation rather than acquisition or demanding – we will know how we have to behave and conduct ourselves. Thus yoga morality, the science of ethics according to the system of yoga, is a personal and social outcome of the inner attunement of one's personality with the characteristics of that Great Being or Goal which is one's object of quest.

Together with ethical behaviour, a holiness of attitude also forms a natural consequence of this internal discipline which one imposes upon oneself. We are not merely good persons, but also holy persons. These two go together, especially when we honestly tread the path of yoga. 'Holiness' is that atmosphere that we create around ourselves due to the planting of a sort of divine element in our own personality. It does not mean that God has immediately descended into us, but there is the 'wind of God', as it were, blowing in our direction. Our ardour and our sincere longing from the recesses of our hearts for that which we consider as the only worthwhile thing in life will be enough to create an aura of holiness in us. So, together with the personal and social requirement of ethical and moral behaviour, there is an incidental result that automatically

follows from this discipline – namely, a holiness of behaviour, a holiness of spirit.

People often regard these considerations in yoga as not very important, since no one believes that he or she is bad. Most students of yoga feel: "I am a good person. What is wrong with me? Why should there be so much instruction on behaviour, ethicality, morality, etc.? Am I wicked? This kind of instruction is redundant in my case. Why would I take to yoga if I was a bad person?" We feel we have given up all instinct of unethicity or immorality and evil nature; we are treading the path of goodness, servicefulness, love and affection; therefore, these teachings on what is called self-discipline, in the light of ethics and morality, social conduct, etc., are already outgrown by us, and we now stand in need of a higher teaching. This may be our feeling, but this is not entirely true.

No one should imagine oneself to be so advanced as not to be in need of a careful guard to be placed around one's own self, because human nature is a medley and a mix-up of every type of element. It is a huge cosmopolitan setup where every blessed thing can be found. That certain features are not manifest in our life and we appear to be always polished and chastened in our behaviour need not necessarily mean that we are incapable of any other kind of behaviour. Man has the potentiality for any kind of action and conduct, and that he behaves only in a particular way during the generality of his outer life need not mean that he is only that. That he is not only that, and he can be anything else also, will be brought to the surface of one's experience when the world confronts the seeker. This was the great dramatic picture painted before us in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita. A noble hero, a robust polished personality like Arjuna, could find himself at sixes and sevens and almost lost his soul because he was confronted by the world and was not merely in the midst of sycophants or people who regarded him as great and wonderful.

While we are in conducive circumstances, the elements which are incompatible with a higher life do not manifest themselves; but when we are in conditions or circumstances of life where we are totally thrown off our guard, the very ground under our feet is cut off and we have no place to stand, at that time all the elements that are within us will come forward like children clamouring for satisfaction. It is this possibility that makes it necessary for us to keep a watch on our own selves; and until a certain state is reached, we are always expected to be in the atmosphere of a Guru. There is a gravitational barrier which, when it is crossed, will permit us to stand on our own legs. There is a stage when we can fully guard ourselves and understand ourselves and know how to place ourselves in a given condition.

But in the lower stages this may be difficult because, as I mentioned, there are elements in our personality which have not been consulted or even taken notice of in our enthusiasm for a different kind of life. They are there in our nature; but because of the pressure exerted by circumstances of conscious life, the other layers of our personality, which are not conscious, have not been given a chance to speak. They are like opposition members in a parliament; when they have no strength, naturally they have nothing to say. Sometimes they shout, but often the ruling force, which is the conscious mind, presses this opposition so powerfully that it has no occasion to speak. But it cannot be kept silenced for a long time because in our higher reaches on the path of yoga, we are not to go as a fraction of personality but as a whole personality, burnished. It is the whole of us that goes to God, and not only a part of us. We cannot say, "Here is my good part. I am here." Before the Almighty, both sides are taken into consideration. The two sides of our personality are like the Pandavas and the Kauravas; they are within us. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as they are called, are within us, and either one can come up and greet us.

Though yoga principally, mainly and generally is considered an art of meditation – seated in a posture with a concentrated focussing consciousness – it should not be forgotten that our desires, our longings, our idiosyncrasies and our prejudices are imperatively to be transmuted into a force which will contribute to this pose of concentration and meditation. These elements in our nature, we may call them good or bad, are like forces of electric energy. They may be in a position to pull us or kick us, like AC and DC currents, but nevertheless they are forms of a general energy. They can be transformed and transmuted into the necessary force, but they should not be within us as antagonistic elements.

This energy should not produce two contrary types of conduct within us. They have to be blended into a single force. We have to be a single person; we should not be a double person. But most of us are double persons. We have one life inwardly and one life outwardly, and we know that; we are not unaware of it, but the circumstances of our psychic and social lives clash with each other. This is unfortunate, and we cannot say anything more about it except that it is unfortunate. These conditions are brought about by various factors such as the illiteracy, ignorance and cursedness of human society which cannot properly understand human individuals; or, it is due to the selfishness of the individual himself. It can be either way, or it can be both ways in some percentage or proportion.

How to tackle this problem is like another question: How to give a proper education. We cannot easily answer how a correct system of education can be introduced into a country, a nation or a society because the causes behind the difficulty in introducing such a system are multifaceted. Though it is not impossible to solve, it is almost on the borderland of a difficulty that cannot easily be crossed over, but is a necessity. When we take a step in the practice of yoga, we should not place ourselves in a circumstance in which we may have to retrace our steps. We expect to be welcomed,

but we will be welcomed by the higher step only if we have fulfilled the law of the lower because we cannot step over into the higher level of yoga when we owe a debt to the lower level.

Here again, we have to be very intelligent and cautious. Do we owe any debt to our nature? Do we owe some debt to our own emotions, feelings, cravings, desires, prejudices, loves, hatreds? If we owe some debt to these, the devil has to be paid its due. He may be a devil, but he has to be paid what he asks for; and he has to be paid in a proper way – in such a way that it does not create further conflicts – because we are aiming at a solution of a problem, a treatment of an illness, and not to create a further difficulty or manufacture a new disease. Hence, great vigilance has to be exercised in our attitude towards our own selves which, when streamlined properly, enables us to become streamlined in our relations with other people also.

These are great systems of teaching and discipline which go by the name of *yamas* and *niyamas*. In fact, certain schools of thought are nothing but human relations purified into a diviner requirement. Animals cannot suddenly reach God. We cannot jump to God if we are at the beastly level. It is only human nature that can be prepared for the next higher stage, a more purified or diviner stage. The subhuman elements, or those below the normal level of human beings, may have to be brought to the surface of human consciousness. This is the art of psychoanalysis, where the baser elements are supposed to be brought to the surface of consciousness. They should not behave wildly, like animals in the jungle, but have to be transmuted into a finer force of better relations with people and also with one's own levels of being. These are not unimportant requirements or duties for a seeker, because otherwise they will stand before us like a huge iron hill one day or the other.

Whether or not we rush forward with a tremendous enthusiastic speed is not important. The important thing is

that we have considered practically every pro and con of the step, and then we have taken the further step. Different schools of thought, various systems of yoga, have methods of practice which vary one from the other. In these series of lessons we are not referring to any particular system of yoga but to the general requirement of every system of yoga, whatever be our chosen path, because all paths of yoga, whatever be their nomenclature or label, finally find themselves meeting at one point, a common place which is the ultimate aim - namely, meditation, *dhyana*, sometimes called *upasana*.

We have heard that there are many kinds of yoga, and often we are pulled in different directions in our choice of the system of yoga that will be suitable to us, such as *karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, *hatha*, *tantra*, *nada*, *japa*, *mantra*, *yantra* yogas, etc. Though it would be good to be acquainted with these disciplines referred to by these various names, we cannot walk along two roads at the same time. We have to choose one path. Teachers such as Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj advocated the adoption of a synthesis of the various systems. Most people who are highly educated in this art advocate a combining of the essential features of the different methods and not merely being streamlined along a segregated path, especially when this so-called segregation may involve a neglect or ignorance of certain essential parts of one's own nature.

These so-called yogas of various names are only different methods or types of discipline introduced into different parts of our personality. As we are made up of very strange elements, most of which are not yet known even to our own selves, it becomes necessary to synthesise. Just as we have a balanced diet and do not eat the same food every day because a balanced diet is necessary for maintaining a balance of health, so it may be necessary for us to get acquainted with the aims of these systems of yoga so that we

may be well informed and not kept in ignorance of any value of life – or, especially, of any part of our own nature.

No system of yoga can be watertight or airtight. Though in the earlier stages each system can be taken independently for the purpose of individual discipline, at a slightly higher stage it is impossible to go along a segregated path. We find that advance or movement forward along any path of yoga involves a simultaneous parallel movement along other paths also. We cannot be perfect in one and imperfect in another. Perfection is an all-round achievement, so one who is perfect in one path automatically becomes tuned in to the perfections of other paths also, if he has guarded himself properly in these disciplines.

Hence, a synthesis of yoga is what is generally advised as a cautious discipline on our part so that we may not overemphasise or become prejudiced in our practices. We should also be vigilant about the wholesome progress that we are making in our own life because when we move towards that which we call Ultimate Perfection, the goal of life, we move the entirety of our nature and, therefore, the synthesis or a blend of the various facets of our personality becomes absolutely essential.

Chapter 11

YOGA TECHNIQUES

According to an important system of yoga that tradition usually follows, the course of consciousness through its ascent in the direction of the attainment of perfection usually follows the series which nature seems to have followed in its evolution; and often it is felt that yoga is the returning process of the soul to the source from where it has come down, and the track which it traverses in its ascent is in the reverse order of that which it followed in its descent. The effect returns to the cause, and the cause returns to its own cause, and so on, until ultimately the final cause is contacted in a communion where further ascent is not called for. Therefore, we have to remember here the various stages of the involvement of human consciousness in its coming down, as it were, until it has reached its present state, where we all are placed.

We have noticed that this human personality is constituted of certain layers which are, broadly speaking, the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the spiritual. These go by the name of the *koshas* in Sanskrit. How did consciousness happen to get involved in these *koshas*? What was it that covered it at the very outset? Because no one has seen what has happened and no one could visualise the way in which God operated, as it were, during the time of creation, no human being, no individual, can know what has happened to its own self, since returning back to one's own cause through the means of the effect will not be possible.

By way of study of the proclamations in the scriptures and by inference drawn therefrom, we may come to know that the involvement, which is also called the bondage of the soul, has been a gradual descending from more ethereal and finer forms into greater density and the concretisation of

experience. These are philosophically forbidden areas and no one can probe into these divine mysteries, but there seems to be some point in the conclusions drawn by students of yoga from the proclamations of the scriptures and in the light of inferences so drawn by way of reason, that the physical body is the grossest development of this process of involvement of the spirit and, evidently, it is the latest formation. The inner circles are manufactured earlier, as it were, and the outer ones are formed later on. There is a blinding of consciousness, perhaps, which prevents its awareness of there being any kind of conscious relation between itself and the Universal whole. This blindness, this unconsciousness, this ignorance, may be said to be the so-called original sin, if at all we may call it by that term, whereby the individuality is officially sanctioned and becomes established on its own throne of imperialism, and the Universal – of which it has been ever a part, to which it owes affiliation and allegiance, from which it can never be separate – is forgotten totally.

This forgetfulness was the earliest stage of involvement, and this is confirmed in some of the statements we read in the writings of later masters of yoga such Patanjali, who mentions in one pithy aphorism that *avidya* or ignorance is the primal cause of bondage and everything follows thereafter. *Avidyā, asmitā, rāga dveṣa, abhiniveśaḥ kleśāḥ* (Yoga Sūtras 2.3) is the *sūtra*. Our loves and hatreds, our clingings and passions, and all the turmoil of life may be said to arise from an original ignorance. This is corroborated in Buddhist psychology also, where the ignorance of one's own essential nature, whatever be that nature, is supposed to be the cause of the involvements of individuality in external relations, leading to the necessity to invent in one's own self instruments – sense-organs, mind, intellect, etc. – to implement such relations.

The covering of consciousness is sometimes called *anandamaya kośha*, the causal sheath, or to put it plainly, a sort of cloud which envelops consciousness in an intensified

form, such that it affirms an isolation of this bit of consciousness that is apparently segregated from the larger dimension of its own self. When this affirmation – egoism, so-called – is confirmed in a seed form, it then manifests itself in visible form as direct consciousness of personality, and the types of relation that have to be established with others – external persons and things – are also naturally confirmed, as a sort of corollary from a theorem.

Inasmuch as the Pure Consciousness that everyone is, was first driven out into the exile of self-conscious individuality by the action of an inscrutable ignorance whose definition is beyond us, and everything follows from that particular state until we reap human bodily consciousness and external consciousness, the yoga process considers the reverse process as the proper technique to be adopted in yoga. In the previous session I gave you a brief outline of the ways and means that one may have to adopt in yoga to free oneself from external involvements, which may be called social.

Therefore the yoga technique, in one of its principle forms, precisely considers the mathematical series followed in the process of the coming down of consciousness into this grosser existence of bodily individuality, and endeavours to retrace its steps backwards. Thus it is that the first step that a spiritual seeker normally takes, in religious parlance, is an attempt to free himself from outward relations. This is visibly manifest in the desire to live alone, uncontaminated, unrelated by human society or any sort of relation which may bring into highlight the sense of possession, love and hatred, and the like. People who live in families, in offices, and in such involved circumstances try to take leave of these conditions when the aspiration called yoga takes possession of them. The significance behind this feeling in an individual to free oneself from involvements of social types is the need of consciousness to extricate itself from the lowest of involvements at the outset, for the purpose of achieving

higher freedom by further weaning itself away from subtler and subtler forms of involvement.

The whole of *samsara*, as it is called in Sanskrit, is a bundle of involvements, layer after layer, heaped one over the other. These are also called the knots, *granthis*, by which the soul is tied to bondage, and the knots have to be untied gradually, one after the other. One adequately frees oneself from social and political or even economic involvements, and feels a sort of strength in one's own self to stand by oneself, not in a foolish and haphazard manner but in a consistent way, being sure that one can stand on one's own legs. Here again, caution is to be exercised; discretion is supposed to be the better part of valour. Then it is that the desire to be alone takes possession of oneself, pre-eminently. A truly spiritual seeker feels happy when being alone and feels miserable in the midst of people, while the worldly person feels miserable being alone and runs to shops, cinemas, circuses in order to feel satisfaction in the world. There are people who can never sit alone, even for a few minutes. They feel miserable, wretched, as if they are in hell. They run in search of friends with whom they can shake hands and chat so that the boredom of being alone is obviated for the time being at least. For them it is death to be alone, whereas it is death to be in the midst of relations for the truly religious consciousness and the spiritually seeking soul.

But here, to repeat once again, we have to be very careful that we really have a desire to be alone. Often we are driven into a consciousness that we have to be alone due to the difficulties of life. The situation in which Arjuna found himself, as described for us in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita, should not overtake us. The desire to be alone is very good, very holy and expected of everyone one day or the other, but the motive behind it is equally important – perhaps more important. Why do you want to be alone? Ask this question to yourself. Is it because the police are pursuing you? What is the reason you want to be away, somewhere in

a corner? Have you lost everything? Has everyone in the family died and there is nothing worthwhile? Is everything bitter? Do you want to hang yourself psychologically? Is this the reason behind your desire for being alone? Or, is it something else? This has to be investigated into very carefully. The motive behind this desire to be alone is very important because, after all, it is the mind that creates bondage, and it is also the mind that will lead you to liberation.

You have to examine and analyse yourself very carefully, threadbare, as to the genuineness of this spiritual element that is present in this desire to be alone. Is it because you have been suffering pain? The desire to be alone should not be a desire to be free from the pains of life; it should be a positive longing, caused by a pull of the higher spirit. The higher joy is pulling you, and it is not the lower pain that is driving you out. If this is clear, the path is also clear to you, and then God Himself will take care of you. The world is no longer necessary. It is not necessary because God is larger than the world. You have not renounced the world; you have caught hold of something which is bigger than the world. Hence, the positivity of spiritual aspiration is confirmed. It is not a negative withdrawal; it is a positive attunement with a larger dimension of truth which includes the whole world. It does not exclude the world as a wretched evil.

Thus, being sure of your genuineness in the aspiration that is manifest in you spiritually, religiously, along the line of yoga, you can live a solitary life. You do not need anyone's help. You do not need anyone's help because you have the help of everyone, from every corner of the world. It is not that you are bereft of all support and you are thrown into the winds of fate – nothing of the kind. Spirituality is a positive achievement, and not a negative losing. You lose nothing by treading the path of the spirit, though to an untutored mind it may appear that you have lost your father, mother, wife, children, property, land, and everything has gone. This is a

foolish idea that may enter into an uneducated seeking spirit. You do not lose anything; you are gaining. Otherwise, who would want to lose anything purposely and deliberately, unless they are idiotic? The path of the spirit is the path of gaining larger realities in their originality, and freeing oneself from the illusion that shadows are realities.

This why true religious seekers, spiritually-oriented students, like to live alone. Again I repeat, you must understand the reason behind this desire to be alone and the significance of one's being alone. It is not a geographical aloneness but a spiritual aloneness, and the distinction between the two has to be very carefully drawn. Spiritually-oriented aloneness is not the same as a geographical, astronomical or political aloneness.

Then, what happens? The spirit has gone above the lowest of involvements. It has transcended one barrier and feels that it is granted a sort of freedom, at least in one percentage. The physical body, as I mentioned, is the lowest of the formations of bondage; and when the consciousness peeps through the sense organs of the physical body for the purpose of the fulfilment of desires, it becomes a social unit, a political individual, etc. When this is overcome, the consciousness need not anymore depend on the sense organs to get satisfaction. It can withdraw itself, for reasons already known. Then it finds that it is stationed as an integral part of this bodily individuality, this physical frame which is constituted of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether. This is not a small achievement. Though actually this looks like an initial step in the yoga practice, it is a really great achievement, and you yourself will know what an achievement it is if it has been effected adequately in your own personality.

To be free from external relations is not an ordinary achievement. You have to be superhuman in some way in order to attain this trait. Ordinary human nature will not permit this. The five elements will be your friends, and no

other friends are necessary in this world when you are rid of the desire to be in relation with external persons and things. The whole world is constituted of the five elements only. All that you see, this grand universe that is before your eyes, is nothing but a permutation and combination, a configuration of these five elements. Whether it is beautiful or ugly, whether it is gold or iron, it is all the five elements, nothing more, and even your body is just that. You feel a sense of belonging to the five elements when you realise that in the state of freedom from external relations you stand united with the cosmos of physical manifestation.

The true significance of these thoughts cannot enter people's minds unless certain stages have been passed through earlier. The usual physical posture, called *asana*, that is closely associated with yoga practice is the first step that is taken in your attempt to set your physical frame, and everything connected with it, in tune with the physical elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. It is believed that when this has been effected properly, the elements do not torment you as they would torment an ordinary individual. Hunger and thirst become diminished in their intensity. You do not feel like gorging yourself as an ordinary hungry person would. Desires become diminished because desires are the psychic pressures felt by us as the result of this vehemence felt by the body in its affirmation of individuality, and when we are free from this pressure that is exerted upon our psyche by this physical affirmation of one's own individuality, then desires naturally become diminished in their intensity because a desire is nothing but a psychic pressure originated by the affirmation of individuality which requires external contact, possession of persons and things, and so on.

Yoga *asana* is something well known. People generally believe that yoga *asana* is something that anyone can do, that it is just bending the body in a particular way and the yoga exercise is over. But yoga *asana* is a spiritual technique, not a

physical exercise. It is not a feat of the body. It is an inward communion that you establish through the physical manifestation of your personality in terms of its relation to the five elements because of the fact that the body is constituted of the five elements.

Now, at this stage of realisation of the experience, your physical individuality realises that human relations are not important because there are higher relations. It is the five elements – not people – that are the rulers of the world, and befriending them is more important than befriending living organisms, because they too are constituted of the visible frame only. This is a stage which is very much emphasised in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, but in other forms of yoga so much stress on the physical posture is not laid, for other reasons. Though it is not absolutely necessary that one should always attempt a physical communion of the bodily or psychophysical frame with the five elements, it is a great assistance. You may walk without a walking stick, but if you have one, it will help you in some way.

When the spirit assumes immense strength within itself and its ardour, its spiritual longing is overwhelming – it has inundated you in and out, and your love for God has broken its bounds and you cannot stand on this Earth continuously for even three minutes because of this anguish you feel in your soul of your isolation from God – if this superior spiritual possession becomes your experience, you become a saint in one second and no yoga *asana* or physical posture is necessary. You will be taken care of by the higher forces. But inasmuch as most people are not in this condition of an overwhelming longing for God-realisation – they cannot be flooded like that so easily – it is always suggested that it is better to be cautious and humble, and remember where you stand. There is no harm in being seated in a disciplined posture, though this requirement is not a uniform mandate for everyone in every stage.

The process of *asana* and *pranayama*, so much spoken of, is a very great assistance in the practice of yoga, but it is not essential where the spiritual seeker is made in a different way and devotion to God takes the upper hand. If the longing of the soul for the Infinite preponderates, there is no stress laid on these initial requirements called *asana*, *pranayama*, etc. They are taken care of by themselves by the powers that be. I am not going to enter into great detail about *asana* and *pranayama*, because you all know something about it.

In this series of lessons I am trying to confine myself only to certain broad outlines of the principle issues of yoga practice, namely, the spiritual and the religious side of it especially, culminating finally in a sublimation of sense consciousness and a focussing of this consciousness on that ideal which is called the object of meditation. All yoga is meditation finally, whatever be the adjective that is attached to the practice.

Here, as we have observed earlier, a word of caution may be administered. The sublimation spoken of in yoga is similar to the sublimation that is involved in renunciation, austerity, Sannyasa, self-abnegation, living alone, etc. All spiritual sublimatory process is a gaining of a higher position by a transcending and not a rejecting or an isolation from the lower. In every higher step you gain what you have transcended; there is no loss on the part of the spirit. Even a single step that you take in this direction is a positive gain. In this path, no loss is involved. You may not gain, but there is no loss; and perhaps you will gain positively. The spiritual connotation of yoga practice is always to be considered as more important than its outer forms, which are also sometimes necessary, but they are like the legs on which we stand, and the legs are not the whole body.

Even rituals have a place in religion, and are not just idiocy or totally redundant. As legs are necessary for the body to stand and yet it cannot be said that the leg is an essential part of the body, so is ritual, devotion, worship, etc.

One should not be foolishly overenthusiastic, as many times people are, in imagining that they have outgrown the need for ritual, worship, etc. One cannot easily overcome all these things. We are living in a world of ritual; we are living in a world of image worship. We hug idols of various types. A passport is an idol, a currency note is an idol, and everything that we consider as valuable in this world in its configured form is only just an idol. Any affection, any regard, any value attached to any particular thing in the world is idol worship. Therefore, one cannot easily be free from it, though in some unnecessary enthusiasm people imagine that idols are not necessary. We are only just idols, and no one can be free from them.

This also applies to the worship of emblems. The worship that is conducted in churches, temples, monasteries, holy shrines, is also very important because it is a worship of symbols, and symbols are not unnecessary; they are also some sort of idol. The worship of the national flag is nothing but idol worship. It is a worship of a symbol. Keeping a photograph of some person in our pocket is symbol worship. When we bow our head before someone or something, it is idol worship.

Here again we have to be realistic in our approach. Religious practices which involve these elements of devotion are to be considered as very valuable in their own way, in their own place. Charity is the greatest virtue. We have to be very generous and charitable in our attitude towards the various modes of worship and ritual, as performance in the various faiths and cults and every stage of religion, is after all, a stage of religion. We do not condemn a child because it blabbers, as we were also babies once upon a time and it was a necessary stage through which we had to pass. Every stage of religion is a necessary stage, and there is no unnecessary form of religious worship or performance.

There are people who are prone to this direction of devotional worship of God in a symbolic form, either visibly

or conceptually, which is the main course followed in what is known as *bhakti* yoga. Who can resist this temptation to love the infinite? We will go mad if we think of the magnificence of God. Saints dance in ecstasy like crazy people because of a superphysical, superhuman, super-individual possession, under whose sway they are. Love, which is a word with which we are very familiar in this world, assumes its true form in this ecstasy of divine possession. No one can help running into a state of ecstasy, of emotional feeling of love, if only they are clear about the notion of what God is. It is because of an egoistic conception and an ultra rationalistic idea of God which is ridden with a bit of egoism of human individuality and an incomplete notion of what the Ultimate Reality is, that we are unable to appreciate its grandeur and magnificence. Once we are able to feel the majesty of it, we will be crazy in one second; and that craze is that which everyone longs for one day or the other. It is these crazy ones who are finally the children of God, because when the soul takes possession of us, all rules and regulations of society, and physical relation or any kind of relation, is stepped over because of a higher law operating. This is why the path of *bhakti* yoga is not a name to be attached to one kind of emotional behaviour. In the Bhagavadgita particularly, the word '*bhakti*' is repeated several times, and it often appears that it has been emphasised as something far superior to every other approach.

Here, we are asked to understand that *bhakti* means that longing of the soul for that which is the Oversoul. In this particular path of what is called divine love, the stress laid on externals is not considered as so very essential because when I love you wholeheartedly, I know very well no formality is necessary in regard to you. We have formalities, etiquettes of behaviour, when our friendship is not whole. When it is clear that I am one with you and you are one with me root and branch, right from the bottom of the soul, there is no formality. The love of the Gopis for Sri Krishna or the love of any saint, for the matter of that, was under such possession,

and was free from all etiquette. They ran naked, caring not for the etiquette of human society, because they were possessed by a law which could take care of them.

The yoga techniques, therefore, are variegated. The love of God that I referred to, which frees one from obligations to any kind of external performance, is not an ordinary love in the sense of a psychic operation as we see it in human relations. The love of God is not love for an object and, therefore, it is not mere emotion. It is the flood tide of the ocean of the spirit. Just as the whole ocean rises up during flood tide, the whole being that we are rises to the occasion. It is not emotion and, therefore, it is not human affection. Human love, human emotion is directed to an outward object, whereas divine devotion is the rising of the soul to its own self in its wider form. Love of God is not loving another person, because God is Paramatman, the higher soul, the Supreme Spirit, the supreme Atman, the larger manifestation of what we are in our essentiality. It is the flowering of what we are basically. A distinction has to be drawn between what is called a metaphysical element in divine love and the psychic form of human affection. This is one aspect of the practice of yoga, which concerns itself wholly and solely with the ardour which is called love of God.

The sublimation to which I made reference is the returning of the consciousness from its contact with things due to tasting a higher experience in which the delights of sense are included. The pleasures of life are our obstacles; they pull us in the direction of things. This difficulty is naturally overcome without much of an effort on our side when we sense a taste of higher delight, as a person who has woken up from dream into this world experience does not anymore wish to go back to the dinner that he had in the dream palace.

Thus it is that sublimation is a higher delight, and not merely a physical austerity or a painful experience that we impose upon ourselves. It is a natural positive step that we

take in the direction of a higher possession. Sublimation is, therefore, to mention once again, a larger gain which keeps us satisfied within ourselves, and we are no longer pushed in the direction of external contact.

Chapter 12

THE INNER SECRET OF TRUE YOGA

When we touch the point of meditation as the essential in yoga practice, we must be careful to note what it is that we are aiming at. Commonly, and in the usual course of things, even a careful student is likely to imagine that in meditation a step has been taken among the many others that have already been traversed. This idea of meditation being a limb or a part of the entire gamut of yoga may become confirmed by such enunciations as there are eight limbs – *yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi* – and one of them is meditation, as if the act or the pursuit of meditation stands aloof from the other limbs, even as one person may stand apart from other people with whom we might have been associated.

This error is difficult to avoid in the light of the fact that we are all accustomed to think only in terms of little particulars or individuals, and even when we feel a necessity to think of groups, organisation, societies and the like, we can do so only by thinking that these groups are made up of little individuals – such as a parliament or any kind of structured body. The concept of the whole, as far as our minds are concerned today, is nothing but an abstract interpretation of a coming together of all particulars involved in it, and we cannot think of an organisation without individuals constituting it.

But the meditation which the yoga refers to as the finality of its adventure is not one individual among many others. There is a basic difficulty felt by the human mind in thinking of what is generally called transcendence of particulars. Meditation transcends the lower limbs; it does not stand as one among the many limbs, but we are always used to thinking of it that way. It outgrows the steps that we have crossed over and, in a very important sense, remains as the

transmuted completion, the final fruit of the whole course of practice gone through earlier, as a mature genius may transcend all the stages of learning and experience he has undergone earlier. The mature individual is not one limb, one aspect or one part of the total personality. It is the whole personality in which the earlier stages of educational transmutation do not remain isolated like particulars, segregated from this completed personality. The seed and the sapling, the tendril and the little plant are absorbed into the wide and strong tree which stands above all the earlier conditions through which it has passed.

Meditation, even when it is considered as a final step in yoga, is not to be regarded as final in an arithmetical sense. It is not a calculus of numbers, as we have in the process of counting. This important connotation of meditation, when it is properly grasped by the meditating consciousness, will free it spontaneously from the usual difficulties felt in meditation. Generally, with all our acumen of knowledge and ardour of pursuit, we remain as little babies as far as our understanding of essentials is concerned. We cannot think except in terms of a shopkeeper, a commercial man, and perhaps, at best, a mathematician. But yoga is not mathematics, it is also not a trading in a commercial sense, and it cannot be associated with any kind of enumeration of particulars in the normal empirical sense.

When true meditation, which is the fruit of yoga, is understood in its spiritual sense, it remains something inscrutable in itself. It is that stage, if we can call it a stage at all, wherein all the earlier stages of experience, learning and practice are gathered up, absorbed into its being and converted into a force which overcomes the limits of all the earlier stages and stands supreme as the final victory of the spiritual seeker.

Bring back to your memory the study we have made earlier concerning the stages of the evolutionary process of the universe – how from the one, the many seems to have

evolved, and how in this scheme of the large and widespread evolutionary process, we as human individuals stand in a particular position. The purpose of our study of cosmology, or the process of the evolution of things, is to know where we are at present and what is expected of us in our longing for perfection, liberation or freedom. The higher we go towards the cause, the more complete we become in our experience, and it is not that at a later or advanced stage we look down upon the lower particulars as isolated things scattered before us. They will not be there; they will have been absorbed into the higher stage.

When we say the lower is not in the higher, again we have to be cautious in understanding the meaning of this statement. The lower is not in the higher in the same way as the child is not in the adult; but, the child is in the adult in a different sense altogether. So, the cause contains the effect by abolishing the character of the effect as it stood earlier. A masterly adult genius stands above the child which he was once upon a time and which he is no longer, notwithstanding the fact that the child condition is still within him in a transmuted, supernormal state.

Thus, in our effort at meditation as the essential function in yoga we have to know the technique of gathering up all the stages through which we have passed and stand above these stages, not looking upon them as external things, outside the consciousness that meditates, but as limbs that have been absorbed into the very body of meditation. So, if meditation is the last word in yoga, it is inclusive of the disciplines we have undergone in the earlier stages. The word 'earlier' is to be understood not in a chronological sense, but in its logical meaning.

In this manner, we become more and more complete as we ascend in the stages of yoga practice, and we become happier and happier as we move forward, and feel a sense of strength, energy and power superior to the strength that we wielded through our personalities in the earlier stages. Why

does one feel stronger, more powerful and more adequate in a larger sense in the later stage? It is because the powers that were there earlier have been included within oneself. The larger ascended stage is more powerful in every sense because all the energies of the lower states are to be found in this condition which is superior by way of sublimation, transmutation and absorption into its own being.

When we try to understand the true meaning of the meditational activity in yoga in this light, it is difficult to know how the mind will refuse to concentrate and wander about into particulars, objects of sense, and get distracted by thoughts which are irrelevant to the purpose. The question of irrelevance should not arise if we have really, honestly, passed into this higher class of ascent from the lower classes; but if we have passed merely by bribing the teacher and not by studying, then naturally these problems which we face, or which we hear that people are facing, will be common to us. We cannot use bribery here. Everyone has to undergo every type of discipline necessary for this purpose. It is honesty to the core as far as oneself is concerned. One cannot deceive oneself here. Though in ordinary worldly life we live by deceit and exploitation, these are a misnomer and meaningless terminology in yoga, where we stand alone to our own selves.

So, meditation is a gathered-up granary of all the treasures which you have gained in the earlier stages of practice, where you have become immensely rich due to the resources which you have gained and brought together by self-transcendence, by the ascent of personality through graduated discipline, which varies in some detail from one particular system to another particular system. The disciplines prescribed in the path of devotion, *bhakti* yoga, or the other disciplines in the system of Patanjali, or the well-known system of direct contact with the Universal Being known as *jnana* yoga, all differ from one another in the minor details of the implementation of methods, but these details

are minor and not major issues. Principally they aim at the same purpose. A uniform type of discipline is expected from a student, whatever be the path one chooses.

To bring back to your memory the point I touched upon earlier, any kind of self-deception will not work here. You cannot have secret longings in your hearts contrary to our officially proclaimed aspiration which is God-realisation, or perfection through yoga practice. You may officially be yogis but privately grief-stricken individuals with frustrated emotions and torn feelings. This will not work. Here again, you have to be honest to your own selves. Every disease has to be noted carefully. Even if it be a little difficulty like a thorn in the sole of the foot or a little trouble that is gnawing into you, these difficulties have to be counted as essentials in the sense that their presence will affect your peace of mind in the later stages. Every debt that you owe has to be paid. This is an ancient tradition in the religions of India. A person who owes some debt to others cannot go scot free; whatever you owe has to be paid. Just as we owe something to the environment around us, consisting of people or things, we also owe some debt to our own selves. There are layers of personality, vestures of the individuality, which have their own demands, their own asking and clamouring voice. We carefully attend to some of these clamours every day when we try to appease our hunger, quench our thirst, guard ourselves against cold and heat, and so on, but these are all minor types of attention that we pay to our requirements.

The major issues are emotional, intellectual, and wholly private. These are the urges of the whole empirical personality in certain directions natural to empiricity as such. Everyone who is lodged in this body as a human individual, in this world of space, time and objects, everyone who is stationed in this manner will naturally have certain impulses consequent upon this position. We may call it a devil which is obstructing our spiritual longings but, nevertheless, that devil has to be paid its due. Any kind of

frustration is a secret admission of the reality of that which we officially declare as unreal. This is a self-hypocritical attitude. We publicly own a philosophy which does not go hand in hand with the doctrine of the emotions, the feelings and the sentiments. Do you not believe that we have sentiments which are not necessarily logically acceptable, emotions which can be turned upside-down at the least wisp of wind blowing over us? Who can say that there are no unfulfilled longings? Though we may say they should not be there, these do's and don'ts of religion cannot be applied to our own emotions. They have to be treated like untutored, uneducated patients who require proper administration of the necessary panacea.

The guidance of a spiritual master, and the support that you receive from the study of scriptures, and even the company of colleagues who are honest in their pursuit, help you in this direction. If you have normally passed through the stages of discipline required of you, there should be no reason why there should be distraction in meditation. If there is distraction and a troubled feeling even when you are sincerely seated for meditation, you should conclude that you have not passed into that stage honestly; you have somehow cheated, and got a degree that you do not deserve. This is the reason why you have distractions, troubles, and a sense of pain in the body and even in the mind when you sit for meditation. How could you have any kind of agony or a sense of uneasiness when you are preparing to confront the Almighty Himself? Should you not be in a state of joy? "Oh, the wondrous time is coming to me." Your feelings should blossom forth in a delight which surpasses all the satisfactions of life if you honestly and sincerely believe that meditation is the opening up of your own soul before the great God of the universe. But if you have a suspicion in this regard, some kind of doubt, then you will receive a kick from your own feelings.

This again comes to the point that you have not touched the point of meditation by suitable disciplines. Neither your studies have been complete, nor your disciplines have been up to the mark, and perhaps you have not convinced yourself as to the validity of the very step you have taken. Yoga is not to be ventured with an experimental attitude. If you are going to experiment with the existence of God, or Perfection, to see if something comes out, nothing will come out because suspicion is the greatest enemy of a spiritual seeker particularly. To doubt the possibility of the achievement of that which you are aspiring for is to doubt the value of your own existence. There is a cutting of the ground from under one's own feet, and you do not know where to stand. Doubting the possibility of an infinite achievement is equivalent to doubting the value of one's own thinking – to doubting your own thoughts, your own feelings and even your own aspirations. Doubting one's own self is an obvious picture of travesty which requires to be adequately treated by competent methods.

Thus, what I want to tell you is that meditation is a fulfilment of the whole of your life as a spiritual seeker. There, you stand as a ripe fruit of this well grown, mature tree of self-discipline you have maintained all along. Meditation is not an action; it is not something that you do with your body; it is not one item among the many items of your doings in the world. I have already tried to dispel this difficulty by mentioning that meditation is neither an isolated action among many other things that we do in the world, nor is it some effort on the part of our physical personality. It is an achievement by itself, where we stand above our own selves. We stand on the pedestal of the larger self that we are, whereby we at the same time go parallelly beyond the attractions of things outside because a vertical spiritual ascent also involves a horizontal expansion. The higher you go, the wider you become at the same time. You do not ascend like a single rocket, unconnected with other things in the world. It is not a plane or a helicopter that is

rising above. When you lift yourself in a spiritual sense, the whole world comes with you because you are connected vitally with the whole world.

The idea, the foolish notion that you are one among many other people has to be overcome at the very outset. As every thread is involved in the fabric of the cloth and to lift one thread in a cloth would be to lift the whole cloth, you realise that when you raise yourself spiritually, the whole world of your experience is also raised up. This is what I mean by saying that every ascent also involves an expansion in the dimension of one's being. Normally all these are difficult things to remember. We cannot understand what all these things mean. "What do you mean by the whole world rising with me? I cannot understand because it is well known that the world is not with us; Rishikesh is not part of me. That it is somewhere outside is very clear to me. So what good is there in thinking the world is with me? It is nowhere with me; it is totally external to me." The mind says that, and it will say it so vehemently, forcefully, repeatedly, again and again, that you will have to believe it – and then down goes the meditation.

It is necessary, therefore, to inject into yourself the earlier studies – at least the fruit of your earlier studies that the world does not stand outside you. These distant stars in the heaven are not outside you. There is no distance for your true being and therefore, in a sense, it is free from the anomalies of space and time. You belong to the world, and the world belongs to you, but in a way quite different from the way you may interpret it by your present way of thinking. At present when you are told that the world is with you and you are inseparable from it, you have to work hard by the stretch of your imagination to believe that it must be like that; but your feelings tell you that it cannot be. "The desk is outside me, and it is never me." But it is you in a very important sense, which has to be clearly known when we take to the spiritual path.

Hence, meditation is not your doing, or anyone's doing; it is a happening. It is something that takes place. It is not that which one puts forth effort to do with the strength of one's body or individual mind. It is a spontaneity of expression, an automatic flowering, a natural opening of the bud of the soul, in which event, a simultaneous revelation of the inward involvement of the soul with all things takes place – our Oversoul, the true Self within everyone and everything else in the world. Therefore, an awakening of the Soul, the true Self, to its own essential nature automatically involves an intuition into the selves of other people also. When you know yourself, you also know others at the same time. This is so because you do not stand outside others, in the same sense as the higher stages are not outside the lower stages.

This will be clear if you have properly understood the meaning of what we learned through these investigations in the field of cosmology, the coming and going of things in the process of creation. A very investigative attitude of the mind has to be adopted every day, and you have to find sufficient time for this work. You should not employ a mere business attitude to yoga. "I shall sit for one hour and do what is possible." You should not give lip sympathy to such an important thing and speak to this great being before you with tongue in cheek, with no real affection for it.

Again this experimental attitude will come: "Perhaps something will come. If it doesn't come, it does not matter. I can get on somehow." The yoga system says that if you can somehow get on without it, well, get on, because there is a peculiar thing called honesty to one's own self which is difficult to explain in words. Honesty in regard to one's own self is more difficult to understand than the honesty that we should have in regard to others. Often, we may be honest to others, but we may not be so to our own selves due to the weakness of the very nature of which we are made and the subtle voices that speak from within us which are contrary to our higher longings. At present we live in two worlds, the

higher and the lower, and these lower realms have a strong sway over us because they are ruled by the sense organs, and information is conveyed to us only through the senses, which is something that is not capable of becoming reconciled with the longings for the higher world.

In the beginning stages of yoga it is a very terrible toil, as you must have concluded by all that you have heard from me. It is a great, painful austerity in the beginning stages – though it is not supposed to be a pain, really speaking. It is very difficult to free yourself from a bad friend whom you have always thought of as a real friend. Because you considered yourselves to be friends, it took a long time for you to realise that he is a dacoit and he will not leave you so easily. As you have been his friend for such a long time, for years and years, in the beginning it will be hard for you to free yourself from the clutches of this dacoit friend. Because you have realised the situation too late, you can imagine how much willpower you may have to exercise in this area.

Really, to be honest, there should be no pain, but it is painful because we are now living in the lower ego and not in the higher Self. The bodily ego works very powerfully in terms of the senses, so we have all sorts of subtle longings within us – political longings, social longings, economic longings, physical longings, moral longings, ethical longings, personal longings, this longing, that longing. All these are present in each one of us, though we may complacently admit to our own selves – again, not truly – that they are not there. Each one knows to what extent one is involved in these political, social, economic, personal, physical, ethical and moral levels. Who says they are not there? But, let them be there; we are not going to quarrel with them. We must be able to convert these levels or associations by transmuting them into that which we are seeking as our final aim.

Yoga is not opposed to normal life. It is not against politics, economics, sociology, etc, though some enthusiastic seeker might think that yoga is quite different from life in the

world. Yoga, spirituality, religion, divine love or the path of God is not opposed to life in the world; it only transforms the life into gold rather than the rusted iron that it appears to be now. The life that you are living is not negated in yoga. It is transmuted and converted into the pristine purity of its essential nature. Life becomes more genuine, meaningful, sensible and perfect, rather than being refuted, negated, as people may wrongly imagine. The world is not destroyed or abandoned in yoga. It is converted, transformed, sublimated and made whole, healthy, rather than the condition of ill health in which it is sunk today.

Thus, you will appreciate how noble an adventure yoga is. It is not something you do as Mr. or Mrs., this or that, boy or girl, etc. It is that indescribable something in you which is permeated with the very web of the whole universe and which equally permeates the very structure of all things. Therefore, to truly aspire to the aim of yoga is to also aspire to the well-being of all people in the world; it is also a step taken in the direction of service to mankind. It is perhaps the greatest service that you can conceive in your mind, because thereby you try to enter into the very substance of all things. It is a gesture of good will and service, more potent and effective than the service that you may be able to do with the words you utter or the gestures of your hands and feet. If you know this inner secret of true yoga, the essential in meditation, you should have no reason to get distracted or pulled hither and thither, which is unthinkable if the discipline has been undergone carefully, stage by stage, slowly, and with immense patience. Such is yoga.

Chapter 13

THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION IS EVERYWHERE

We have often heard it said that a thing as it is in itself cannot be known. This is because the thing in itself is supposed to be covered and its understanding limited by and to the means of knowledge, the instruments of perception, just as we cannot have right knowledge of an object if we behold it through some curtain or veil, especially when the curtain or veil has the power to disfigure the shape of the object. That the conditioning factors of human knowledge will not permit anyone to enter into an insight of things as they really are, is a feeling entertained by even advanced thinkers in the philosophical field. And, if this is true, then yoga, which is supposed to be communion with Reality, could be not possible.

The so-called thing as it is in itself is the Reality, and if it cannot be known or contacted by any means known to us, then one cannot have any dealings with such a thing. This is true in some way, but it is not wholly true because if there is nothing in us by which we can come to know of the existence of things as they really are, or the thing as it really is, we would not even think about it. We would not say anything about it; we could not even say that it cannot be known.

So, there is some mystery in us, and it is not wholly true that we are permanently covered over with a veil and it is impossible to have contact with Reality. Ordinarily we see that such impregnable and hard-to-understand conditions such as space, time and causation prevent us from rising above their own prescriptions. Anything that we think of is in space, in time, and it is causally related. If this is so, a thing independent of these conditions cannot be known. Therefore, for all practical purposes, considering the position in which we as human beings are placed now, there is some point in the notion that no one can know things as they are.

But we have in our own selves some means of knowledge, an instrument of contact with Reality as such, which is not so involved in either space, time or causal relations. If we dispassionately try to probe into our own being, in some corner of our room, freeing ourselves of all the prejudices characteristic of the human psyche, we will be able to know that we, the so-called 'I', or the root of our being, is not in space, not in time, and not related to anything else.

We have a desire within us to stand independent of all things; and all our longings, adventures, enterprises, projects and actions in life are directed to the achievement of freedom. Any kind of relatedness is ultimately abhorrent to our sense of freedom. We do not wish to be shackled by any kind of hanging on something else for defining our own selves, much less to enable our own existence to be practicable. That we are helpless and we seem to be inextricably related to and involved in things is a sorry state of affairs. Even though a person may be serving a life sentence in prison and there may not be any chance of him being released, we cannot say that he has no desire to be free. His longing is for utter freedom, notwithstanding the fact that he cannot achieve it under the existing conditions. The possibility of freedom is always there in the longing for it. The prisoner, the captive, has some chance of freedom if the walls are broken down, if the gates are left open, or if conditions become favourable for this achievement.

Thus, while there is a world of bondage in which we seem to be sunk, the bondage of involvement in spatial location – we can only be in one place and cannot be in all places at the same time – we are also caught up in this process called the advance of time from past to present and present to future and, more vehemently so, are involved in conditioning relations with every blessed thing in life. This is the sorrow of the human being; this is what we usually call *samsara*, entanglement in earthly bondage, and it is

practically impossible to break through this fortress of spatial locatedness and limitedness to time and relation by causal association.

Yet, with all these difficulties before us, we cannot be said to be satisfied with it. We do not acquiesce in this condition and say, "thus far and no further!" We struggle to be free. This desire in us to be free totally, not to be satisfied with a location in one place, and many other things mentioned, indicates that there is a supernatural instrument in our own selves by which we can really be free.

What is freedom? Freedom is utter non-involvement in things. Any kind of involvement is bondage. To be forced to be in a particular condition is bondage. To be compelled to do a thing whether or not we want to do it is bondage, and to be forced to even exist in a particular given circumstance is bondage. We are forced to be within this body only; we cannot enter any other body. We cannot pierce through this body and run out of it. We would like to be everywhere if possible, but that is not possible. We are forcefully lodged in this little prison house of the body. This is a sorrow indeed, and we are subject to all the victimisations of the time process – being born, getting old, and dying – and then all the limitations characteristic of dependence on things hang on us. What is the joy in life if this is the state of affairs? There is an unthinkable tragedy that seems to have descended upon mankind, on all things created, if this were to be the final state of affairs and the end of it.

But, that does not seem to be the end of it. There is an ever-increasing upsurge of longing in our own hearts to free ourselves from limitations of every kind –spatial, temporal and causal. Who would not like to be present everywhere, if possible? Who would not like to be living forever without being cut off by the time process? Who would not like to be totally independent of all relations and of hanging on other things? If this is to be our central longing, there should be something in us which projects this longing and this

centrality in us from which this veiled longing arises, overwhelming all these factors of dependence, bondage, etc.

This central being in us is what we call the Soul or the Atman. This is impossible to know or understand by means we employ in the perception of objects because these means, these instruments, this apparatus that we employ in the perception of things is a part of the bondage consisting of involvement in space, time and causation. It is like a blind man leading a blind man. This is the kind of life we are living in the world. We know nothing, really speaking. There is a camouflage of knowledge, whatever be the intensity of it, because all our instruments of knowledge are part of this gang of thieves mentioned already – temporality, speciality, causality. But there is a way out, and there has to be a way out. This is the great task which yoga takes upon itself by a novel technique which is not perception or cognition, but meditation.

Meditation along the lines of yoga is not seeing or thinking an object, because visualisation through the senses, or even conceiving through the mind or the intellect, is again an act of spatiality, temporality and causality, and meditation is nothing of that kind. It is an action, if at all we can call it so, of our own soul, and not of our psyche. Meditation is not an act of mentation; it is not imagining something in the mind. It is a process of breaking through all these imaginations, thoughts, feelings, volitions, and piercing through even these faculties of perception and cognition by the action of the soul.

In an important sense, in its true significance, meditation is what the soul does in its aloneness. This is true religion. Religion is often defined as that which we do when we are absolutely alone; perhaps this is so in every sense of the term. But, how do we bring the soul into action? Does it act? It acts, and it does not act. It does not act with physical limbs, with which we are acquainted. The soul does not see with the apertures of the eyes or hear with the canals of the ears. It has no need for sense organs of this kind because the soul is

all sensation at the same time. It can see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and do everything by every part of itself because every part is the total whole as far as the soul is concerned. The part and the whole are identical in the soul because the soul cannot be partitioned into segments. There are no parts.

The soul is the representation of the Almighty in us, the Supreme Being operating in its entirety, completeness, utter perfection, totality always, which cannot have partitions of any kind; therefore, whether we call it God, Almighty, Supreme Being, Brahman, the Absolute or whatever the name be, it is capable of action in every way, from every part of its being, and it can hear through the eyes, see through the ears, walk without feet, grasp without hands, think without mind, and be everything. These are the mystical expressions used in such scriptures as the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and even by those who had insight into this Reality in other climes and times.

It is this unlimitedness which is lodged in us, which we really are, that rises into action in this sublime task called yoga meditation. In this act of spiritual rising up of the soul within us, which is real meditation; this consciousness in us projects itself with an intensity that can pierce through this veil of the spatial location of an object, the temporality it is involved in, and also its causal relations. The object stands outside us because of its spatial locatedness, temporal conditioning, and causal relation. You are there and I am here, outside you, and because of this very reason there is space, there is time, there is causal dependence. If this three-pronged or threefold limitation in the form of this veil of spatiality, temporality and causality is lifted, everyone will merge into everyone else in this world. There will be no personality, no objects, no human beings, nothing to see. There will be a presence of everything, everywhere, at all times. There will be an inundating sea of existence if this veil is lifted.

The base of the sea is within our own hearts; that is why we are kept restless from moment to moment. We cannot have a moment of rest because basically, at our root, we are this vast sea which seeps into everything else, notwithstanding that we seem to be totally other than it, and are dependent on our sense organs for seeing things through space, time and causal relation.

Thus, when we consider the matter in its true signification, we find that we have only one object in front of us which appears as many objects. Even if there is a large army of millions of soldiers confronting us, it is the General of the Army that is really confronting us. His presence is the presence of the army, his victory is the victory of the army, and he is the root of the operation of this battalion. Likewise, there is a concentratedness of the objectifying energy of the universe through every single thing in the world, and whenever we see any object, we are really seeing the whole universe there. Every object, even a little pencil or a pinhead, is constitutive of a force of objectivities that is throbbing behind it in the form of the universal process.

So, in meditation, it is immaterial what it is that we are concentrating, meditating upon. We can touch the ocean anywhere and it is the same ocean, the same waters. Wherever we are, we are in the same sky, same space. To touch space or sky, we need not fly in planes or helicopters. Wherever we are we can touch the sky, and it is the same sky that is everywhere throughout the universe. Similarly, we can touch and contact any object in this world, and we are touching the whole cosmos. In a way, when we touch any limb of our body, we are touching the whole person. If we touch our little toe, we have touched ourselves.

This is why while the choice of the object in meditation is important from certain aspects of consideration, it is immaterial finally if we know the psychology of it. The psychology of meditation is that the object is not as important as the attitude of the mind in regard to the object.

What binds us or frees us is our psychological attitude, not the thing as such. Anything can make us happy, anything can make us unhappy, provided there is a remodelling, reconditioning of our inner attitude towards it. Our reaction inwardly in respect of a condition prevailing outside is the cause of our bondage; that is also the cause of our freedom. Inasmuch as this seems to be the fact, we are causing our own bondage and we are finally responsible for own freedom also.

Any object can be a good object. There are certain techniques in meditation which take up any blessed thing for the purpose of concentration. It may be a rose flower, it may be a painted picture, it may be an idol in front of us, it may be a dot on the wall, or it may be anything, for the matter of that. It may be a photograph, it may be a painted picture, or it may even be only a concept in the mind. The point is that in meditation there is a coming together of the forces of the psyche into a single focussing of attention. This is what is important, and not the object that we have chosen.

The necessity to choose a particular type of object for meditation arises on account of the feasibility of the mental attitude in respect of certain chosen objects because our minds are made in such a way that they like certain things, and they are in a position to concentrate with affection and wholeheartedness on certain things only and not on all things. So, we take advantage of this peculiar predilection or the tendency of the mind to like certain pictures, formations, conditions, images, concepts, etc., and we drive the mind along that line. We can bring a naughty child under control and take him along the lines we would like him to move by giving him a candy, a toy, or that which he likes. If we start forcing him to do something or to move in a certain direction against his will, he will not move, so we gradually turn him in the direction we would like him to move by directing him through that which he likes. "We will go to a movie. We will watch T.V. We will have ice cream in that shop." We can tell

the child a hundred things of this nature, and then he agrees and does what we would expect him to do.

This is the reason why there is a need felt for choice of the object in meditation, though in fact, whatever we choose may be good enough. Every person in this world is equally good and not to be compared with others, but we do not see things in that way due to reasons which are obvious to our own selves. So, we choose favourable conditions, suitable circumstances, pleasing things, and so on. This suitable object, that which we consider to be the proper thing for us to concentrate upon, is called the *Ishta Devata* in Sanskrit – a chosen deity.

Now, when we say it is a deity, we must be able to know what we actually mean by that. A thing becomes a deity, our god, when we love it wholeheartedly. Money is god for the rich man, the miser, and he cannot think of anything else. Likewise, there are many other gods for people when their emotions are centred on particular objects. When our love, affection is bursting out of its boundaries and flowing in the direction of one thing that we seem to like immensely, that thing is our god, for the time being at least. We cannot have any other god in this world.

Is there anything in the world, or anywhere, which we love wholeheartedly? Usually, we will not find such a thing. There is practically nothing in the world towards which we can direct one hundred percent attention. We are capable of streamlining only a little part of ourselves – with a suspicious attitude there also – in regard to any person and anything in the world. We do not wholly like anything; it is impossible. This is a serious defect in us. We cannot like anyone or anything wholeheartedly because we are always doubting Thomases at the root. We have a suspicion in regard to every person. We are guarded always, with sword drawn.

This should not be if we are to know the structure of the universe, the nature of things as they are, and the way in which we are related to things finally, which is also the

purpose of our yoga actions or activities. The purpose of meditation is to break through the location of an object because objects are not really located in space. The bondage of existence is nothing but this peculiar thing called location. Neither are we in one place, nor is anyone in one place. Everything is related to everything else; everything is everywhere.

To understand this, we have to probe through these veils which make things appear as if they are in one place only. It is this misconception of the mind that things are only in one place that makes us love things and hate things. "This thing that I love is only here and nowhere else; this thing which I hate is only here and nowhere else." This is the reason why we distinguish between objects of affection and objects of hatred. But this is not possible because objects are not in one place, and therefore we cannot love or hate a thing as if it is only in one place. So, here is our bondage; this has to be overcome.

For this purpose it is that we take any particular concept or object for focussing our attention as a kind of support in our yoga adventure. Therefore, we have the Ishta Devata, the deity that we choose in our meditation. Though the Ishta Devata, or chosen deity, is mostly understood as a notion of God, or an angel or celestial that we entertain in our minds, if we try to know it in a more psychological way, this deity is anything that we like wholeheartedly. It may be any blessed thing, but it becomes a deity when we cannot draw our attention from it – and we have to see it only, think of it only and would like to be that only, possess that only. If this is our condition, then we are before our god.

But, the human mind is not in a position to consider any material thing or even any human being as a deity. We cannot consider any person as a god. We find it is very odd that any person can be a deity or a celestial or an angel, though during moments of psychological upheaval of love, etc., we sometimes pour ourselves on persons and things.

Religious tradition in human thinking compels us to imagine that these deities are not in the world, but outside the world. We never imagine that God can be here. He is always away somewhere, beyond space, above the skies, and so we conceive a celestial, imagine a deity, and project before our consciousness some picture of spiritual perfection. We have a Jesus the Christ before us, a Lord Krishna, a Rama, a Devi, a Buddha, or some great perfected being.

All this is mentioned in the *sutras* of Patanjali. Some trans-empirical, super-spatial object conceived as a divinity is taken by us as a thing on which we can concentrate our minds for the purpose of achieving yoga union. But if we know the scientific psychology behind the very process of meditation, there is no necessity to stretch our imagination to something that is above the skies. Any object that is physically seen or mentally conceived can help us to enter into the sea of existence.

Thus meditation, which is the final aim of yoga, is a perfection of attitude of our whole personality. This is so because, as I mentioned, in meditation our soul comes to the surface of consciousness. In our usual daily routines our soul does not seem to act in that manner; we are sensuously conditioned persons, psychologically limited individuals. We are either rationalists, emotionalists, active persons, business people and so on, and the soul is nowhere here. The idea is that in our daily routine of life, the whole of our being does not come onto the surface of action. Only a part of our personality operates. Whether we are in an office, whether we are travelling, whether we are in the family, whatever be our engagement in life, normally the whole of us is never active. Some part is hidden behind; it is non-operative, as the entirety of the person never acts.

When does it act? In deep sleep the whole being sinks down, but in ordinary activity the whole being does not come up. If we are drowning in the waters of the Ganges and it appears as if there is no chance of escape, at that moment the

whole being starts acting. Only one who has such an experience will know what it is. When we have lost all hope and we are in the waters, we will see what happens to us and what we feel at that time. There, the entire soul acts with all the indomitable power that it has. Or, we are in the jungle, alone with not a friend, pursued from all sides by tigers. All the energies that are capable of action will rise into operation, and we will see that there is nothing inoperative in us at that time. Every cell of the body will act. The whole soul rises because that is the occasion for it to arise. Intense love, intense agony, intense sense of frustration, almost at the point of dying – the whole personality acts. In meditation also it is supposed to act in a similar manner. How would we concentrate in the same intensity as we would think of survival when we are drowning in a river or our hair has caught on fire – how would we run to extinguish that fire which catches our hair? These are examples, analogies and illustrations to inform us of the whole-heartedness that is to be at the back of the concentrating process in meditation.

Mostly we are incapable of this kind of an attitude. We have always a happy-go-lucky attitude towards things: “Let us do it. Let us drink, let us eat. Let us go.” We have this simple childish notion about all things, taking things lightly, and we also take yoga lightly as a routine. Like we have a cup of tea, so too we have a few minutes of meditation as well. Why not? What do we lose? This kind of ‘cup of tea’ meditation is a blasphemy, a kind of unfortunate woolgathering attitude of the mind which has to realise the seriousness of it if it knows how immensely, sorrowfully, grievously, unfortunately it is sunk in *samsara*.

If we know where we stand really, we cannot have such a happy-go-lucky attitude in life. It is as if death is at the elbow – and it is literally so, in every sense of the term. Wretched is our condition. If this is to be brought to the surface of our consciousness and we are face to face with the gravity of the situation, it is not possible for us not to be serious about this

supreme duty of the human spirit, which is communion with its higher dimension, which is called the Oversoul, the God of the universe.

Chapter 14

BREAKING THROUGH THE NAME-FORM COMPLEX

We were discussing the subject of meditation. Here, when we go further into the nature of the object of meditation, we notice that every object, whatever it be, is a name-form complex with which it is bound to a particular space-time location. The substance of any object is not capable of any external contact because the true substance is a universal existence, and that which is universal cannot become an object. But there are objects. These objects are pinpointed name-form complexes; and every object, every person – anything in this world – is a type of the basic substance with a particular nomenclature attached to it and a form that is conceptualised by the perceiving or the knowing subject. This is a purely technical aspect of the nature of an object, which includes the nature of anything – including one's own self as a visible individuality.

The purpose of yoga meditation is to pierce through this name-form complex, to tear this veil of empirical formation and enter into the substance. This entering into the substance of the object is called *samadhi*. Incidentally, this entering into the substance of the object is the same as entering into the substance of all things because all things are made up of the same substance. According to the Sankhya, or the specific yoga of Patanjali, all forms are constituted of *prakriti*. They are modifications in one way or the other of the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – which are not things but forces which concentrate themselves at a particular point; and this assumption of a location of a particular point is the notion of space and time. Thus, name, form, space and time all go together, and we cannot separate one from the other. We are involved in a multi-formed complex, and many factors have contributed their might in

forming a particular individuality, whether it is organic or otherwise.

Now, what do we do in meditation? We do not merely think the object because we have already noted that every thought assumes that the object has a name and a form and if our meditation is of a name and a form, or even a name-form complex, it becomes an ordinary psychological concept based on a sensory percept. While this sort of perception or cognition cannot be avoided, however much we may try to penetrate through the name and the form of an object there would be no success in this endeavour because all this effort of ours is psychological and, therefore, the mind which is itself involved in space and time cannot usually win victory here.

We have to understand a little more about this peculiarity of the name-form complex, which is associated with the true subject or the true object. What do we mean by all these things? The Sanskrit terms '*nama*' and '*rupa*' translated into English mean 'name' and 'form'. These terms ordinarily mean the inseparable connection of something, whatever it is, with a definition of it and a particular form which it has, which distinguishes it from other forms. The knowledge of a particular form is possible only if it is capable of being distinguished from other forms. That which is uniformly present everywhere cannot be seen. We say, "Here is this, here is that" and so on because everything is distinguishable from the other by the form, the pattern, the structure and the nature of the individuality of the thing concerned. We say, "Here is this person, here is that person" because one person differs from another in the makeup of the whole individuality or the personality. This is a very important basic differentia that is invariably associated with every objectivity or form of objectivity.

Also, there is a definition, a characterisation of the object. We cannot distinguish between the form of an object and the definition of it that we associate in our minds. When we think

of any particular object, we have two associations mixed up in the concept; they cannot be distinguished easily. We know very well that a stone is different from a tree. Mentally, psychologically, we describe the stone in a particular way and distinguish this description from that which we give to a tree, for instance. This description of a particular object is not easily separable from the structure of the object because this description is entirely dependent upon the way in which the object is constituted. We, by way of a reaction to the nature of that object, recognise the speciality in the constitution of the object as distinguished from the constitution of a different object, and on the basis of this direct and immediate instantaneous perception or recognition of the peculiarity in the structure of the object, we distinguish it in our minds by describing it in a particular manner, not necessarily by language. But before that, we have to have a description of it in our minds. A psychological description is converted into a linguistic definition. We cannot dissociate our minds from this sort of involvement in the knowledge of an object.

Can we look at a tree, see it, and remove from our minds the description that we attach to it by naming it as a tree? Try dissociating it. You would be surprised how much you are attached to names or descriptions. We are called by certain names; I have one name and you have one name. It may appear that this naming of an object is a secondary affair in life and is not very important. We can name a thing in any way we like; nevertheless, the psychological association of something or anything with the name attached to it is so intense that the impact it has upon the object makes it inseparable from the object itself.

Take the example of a sleeping person. If that person is called by another's name, he will not wake up. A sleeping person will not wake up if he or she is summoned or called by another name, but if called by their name, they awaken immediately. This proves the intensity of the association of

the definition or description by way of name with the consciousness or the psychic individuality of the person. Can we forget for the time being that we have this name? Can any one of us dissociate ourselves from the name with which we are called? Though theoretically this may not look impossible, in practice we will find that it is hard. This name is ingrained into us; it has become part of our skin and blood. We have to develop that intensity of thought by which we can know ourselves independent of the description that we attach either to our own selves or that others attach to us by this name.

Firstly, in meditation on an object, try to dissociate that object from the name which is attached to it. This itself will be a very difficult thing, though it looks like an initial step merely. It is not possible to easily dissociate the object from the name that is connected to it, but it has to be done because the name is only a convenient *modus operandi* we have adopted on mutual agreement in order to distinguish things from each other. Things independently in their own selves have no names. If we are alone somewhere, unknown, unbefriended, and not likely to be seen by anyone, we would not feel the need to have a name. Why should we be called by any name when there is nobody to call us and we need not refer to ourselves by any name? In that situation, we will see that we can exist independent of a description.

But there is a more difficult thing, which is the form. It is harder to dissociate the substance from the form which it has assumed than to dissociate it from the name with which it is connected. When we conceive a tree, it will look only like a tree in form, and it cannot look like a mountain or something else. We cannot look at a tree and imagine it is a heap of stones or something else. The necessity to distinguish the substance of the object from the form which it has assumed arises on account of the fact that all objects are certain permutations and combinations of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. All objects are some shape taken by a certain percentage of

the combination of these three forces, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. If we remove threadbare the inner constituents, we will find the formation melts away. Now the form of the object sits upon our heads so tightly and compels us to think of it only in that way, especially as we are forced to gaze at it as something external to us. When it becomes something, an object outside us, it has naturally to be conceived in some way; we cannot know it in any other manner. This conception of the object is the reason why we have to define it in a particular way and also recognise it as formed in a particular manner.

One of the methods of meditation on the object as prescribed in standard systems is the contemplation of the object as it would know its own self, rather than as we are looking at it. This is to say very little, not going very deep into what is implied here. The technique is simple if we can apply a little bit of our will in regard to it. We conceive people, persons, things, etc., as they appear to us and not as they appear to their own selves. This is an obvious phenomenon known to everyone. We have an opinion about things and persons. This opinion is, again, an association of that person or thing with name and form. There is a difference between the opinion which the subject holds about the object and the opinion which the subject holds about its own self, especially if the subject is not associated with any other object.

Even when we conceive ourselves, we conceive ourselves socially in many ways because we cannot dissociate ourselves from association with other people and things. Even if we sit alone in a room or in a forest where we are not seen by anybody, we cannot forget that we are likely to be associated with other persons and things. So, there is a little bit of relative definition of our own selves even if we are literally alone in a room or in a forest. Though this may not be literally practicable, it is theoretically conceivable that it is possible for us to be absolutely independent and unrelated to other persons and things. We need not associate ourselves

with any kind of relationship to other people and things in the world, and can know ourselves as if we are alone in this world. Just imagine that you exist alone in the world; nobody else exists. You would have a different notion about yourself than the notion that you now entertain in regard to yourself when you are in the midst of human society where you have to put on appearances and adjust and adapt yourself to social circumstances.

The assumption of an independence on the part of the object is the great task in meditation which, incidentally, is similar to the independence that one may assume about one's own self if one is freed from all conceptual relationships either with people or with things. In one stroke of a great effort of imagination, we may have to place ourselves in the context of an aloneness in the universe, unrelated to things. Actually, in meditation we psychologically cut off all relationships. Though we may physically free ourselves from relationships by moving to a distant place, to the top of a hill for instance, the psychological dissociation may not be complete.

It is necessary to dissociate oneself from all kinds of conceptual relationships because relationships are temporary adjustments of name and form for the purpose of maintaining itself. Every form of existence is a kind of product arisen out of a relationship. Minus relationships, forms will dwindle. This relationship is outwardly social but is inwardly metaphysical. The social relation is hard enough of course, but what is called a metaphysical relation is harder to understand. While it is difficult enough for us to imagine that we are unconnected with other people and things in the world because we are connected with them so intimately that any kind of severance of this relationship looks like peeling our own skin – so difficult is social relation – there is another thing called metaphysical relation, which is what has to be broken through in meditation.

Things appear to be inwardly related to one another by an association or structural pattern on account of the concentration of the forces of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This is something more than what we can conceive in social patterns. This has to be broken through by a bombardment of the form of the object by the concentration of the mind. As we are sometimes told that the bombardment of an atom by powerful beams of electric energy releases strengths which are not visible outside, so the inner constituent force or strength of the object will be revealed when it is bombarded by the power of concentration. A diffused form of bombardment will not effect this required result. There should be a concentrated bombardment. This is exactly what is meant by concentration, *dharana*. *Dharana* is the concentration of the mind. The mind has such a power that if it is properly employed, with a correct understanding of its nature, there is almost nothing impossible for us. Nothing is impossible because our mind is a point of universal energy. It has at its back immense power, a magazine of force, as if the whole ocean is behind us, pushing us onwards, and we are a drop on its surface.

But, unfortunately for us, this consciousness of being backed up by such an energy is absent in us. We are unaware of the presence of this force behind us on account of the awareness getting diverted to external objects — objects which attract us or repel us. The concentration, the *dharana* that is required in yoga, is to be such that whatever thought may arise in the mind in regard to any object whatsoever may have to be harnessed only for the purpose of this concentration on hand.

To repeat what I said sometime earlier, this is not easy as long as we believe that there are values in life which are other than the values that we attach to the object of our meditation. This is a terrible weakness, and a little amount of study or hearing may not be sufficient to free ourselves from this difficulty. The wholehearted concentration of the

entirety of our mind on a given object of meditation will not be possible as long as the mind refuses to undertake this task. It will give lip sympathy and a little bit of attention to the object which we call the object or the target of our meditation.

Most of our meditations are only lip sympathy paid to that object because the whole mind cannot go, for reasons well known. We have other occupations in life. These so-called occupations may not always be on the conscious level. You may be wondering, "What occupation do I have? I am a totally dedicated yogi. I am devoted only to God. I do not have any other occupation." You may be honest in this feeling as far as your conscious activities are concerned, but you know very well that a human being is not merely the conscious mind. It is a buried debris of all kinds of impressions which often come up in dreams, memories, frustrated feelings, fears, anxieties, etc., which are not always visible on the surface of consciousness.

Therefore, the psychic occupations, arisen on account of the very fact of one's being a human individual in human society, prevent the withdrawing of all the rays of the mind into a single focus of attention. But this is not impossible, provided we have succeeded in reconciling ourselves to the conviction that this so-called object of our meditation, whatever it be, is *all* the things that we want in the world. "It is my God, the deity. It is the whole objective of life, and anything that I require, want or need will be found here. This is my deity, and I need nothing else." If it is possible for you to convince yourself that what you have chosen as an object of meditation is *the* thing that you need and nothing else is needed, then through the avenue of this particular object you can break through the subtleties of the cosmos and enter into the treasures of the universe. If this conviction is there indomitably, why should the mind not come back to meditation? But weaknesses which are common to human nature always speak, telling us constantly that the world has

beauties, values and delicacies which cannot always be imagined to be present in that object which we have conceived as our goal of life.

We have to get past these difficulties by the application of will. An application of will is important. We may have good understanding and good intentions, but the will may be lacking. The will is the application of the whole of our understanding and the whole of our feelings. The will is the total cream of the very substance of our being. If our whole substance is not concentrated, and part of our personality is given over to other enterprises, projects, etc. which we subconsciously feel are somehow or the other important enough – important in the sense that they are not organically connected with the object of meditation – then to that extent our meditation will be weakened; it cannot be strong. The sensations which are often associated with experiences in meditation are consequent upon the rejoicing of the spirit that it has found, after all, what it wanted.

At present we are only experimenting with things. We have found nothing in this world. None of us can be said to have found what we wanted. We are moving from place to place, running hither and thither, eating this, drinking that, touching this, seeing that. We are conducting a kind of experimentation with persons, things, and places, etc., to see if what we want can be found there. But no one can find things by jumping like a grasshopper from circumstance to circumstance. Anything can be found at any place because all things are concentrated in all places. Just as we can find water in any part of the ocean, we can find what we want in any part of the cosmos. The treasure that we seek can be found anywhere we are seated. The value we are aspiring for is under our own seat, but finding it is a training that we may have to undergo, an education that we have to be provided with, requiring years and years of effort.

Considering all these aspects of the problems we may have to face in meditation, we would accept that a lot of

preparation is necessary before we sit for meditation. Though meditation is the final word – it is the last stroke that we deal at the problem of existence and will solve all our problems and nothing will remain afterwards – to deal this stroke we may have to prepare ourselves adequately to acquire the necessary strength. That strength can come only if we are collected in ourselves – if we are wholes and not parts or fragments.

At present we are shreds of personality, torn individuals and fractions rather than wholes because we think many things at a time, and an endless number of thoughts occur to the mind every day. Every thought is pictured in the subconscious. As the film of a photograph receives the imprint of any form that is brought before it, every thought of any object produces an imprint on the mind. These create distractions, and we are disturbed. Again, to come to the point, why should it be necessary for us to go on thinking one thousand things every day? What is the point? Why do we jump from thought to thought? Again, the answer is, we are experimenting with things. We have not been convinced of the ultimate value of anything in this world. We cannot have a hundred-percent affection for anything because a total value cannot be recognised in anything in the world. This is because our understanding of anything is meagre. We have a surface education of things, some sort of information that has been gathered regarding things, but a real understanding of anything is lacking.

Now, considering all these aspects, we may have to apply our will with a tremendous power of aspiration which has to be effected by various methods, as one method alone may not be sufficient. We have to tackle the mind, attack it, as it were, from various aspects of its expression, by adopting various means of *sadhana* such as trying to be alone to oneself as far as possible throughout the day. You may be a very busy person, an officer or an official of some type, but in spite of all that, by streamlining your daily routine you may

be able to find some time for your own self. There should be absolute aloneness for as long as possible by cutting short activities which are avoidable. You know what is unavoidable and what is avoidable. The essentials may be maintained, and what you consider as non-essentials should be severed from your occupations. Then you will find time. Many people complain that they have no time. It is not that they have no time, but they are unable to find a proper routine for the day. Why should there not be time? The people do not work twenty-four hours of the day. There is time. So, first of all, find adequate time to be alone to yourself.

Then, have a programme by which you can occupy your mind. When you are alone, what do you do with your mind? What do you do with yourself? You will find that you cannot deal with yourself so easily. You rebel and revolt against this kind of aloneness. This is why ancient masters have suggested many methods. In the earlier stages, several techniques may have to be adopted. In the early stages of our education many subjects are taught, but as we go further and further the subjects become focused, and finally there is only one subject. In the beginning we have to be trained in various ways because we do not know what our specialisation will be later on.

Thus, we have to find time to do a little bit of sacred study, *svadhyaya*. Sacred study is a bombardment of the mind by the same subject again and again – not merely by conceptual concentration, which is hard, but also by study of scriptures or texts which deal with the liberation of the soul. *Svadhyaya* is important. It burnishes the mind, brushes it, cleans it, because it may be difficult to maintain a single thought throughout the day. In the study of scriptures, which deal with such sublime things, we are no doubt concentrating the mind, yet we are not troubling it excessively because we give it a large ambit, a wide area of movement, so even though the mind is circumscribed to a limit of activity within

the periphery of the theme or the subject of the text concerned, yet it is a sort of concentration.

Chanting of the divine name, usually called *japa* or prayer, as you may have been taught by your own religious faith, is an important item. In the beginning, offer prayers out loud. You can loudly chant mantras or recite hymns either from the Bible, the Upanishads, the Vedas, or any scripture. If you are afraid of chanting loudly before others, go to a forest and chant loudly until your voice reverberates in the atmosphere. Pray to the Almighty. Pray every day, for as long a time as possible. Study scriptures, chant the divine name, do *japa*, and have a very systematic routine.

Write in your diary what it is that you are to do and not do, and adjust yourself to this routine every day. Maintain a kind of self-checking diary – a spiritual diary, as Swami Sivananda Maharaj used to call it – to have an idea of the progress you are making. Are you making any progress, or are you stagnating and nothing is happening? The reactions that you evoke in regard to the environment outside, the number and kind of thoughts that occur to the mind every day will give you an idea of the nature of the progress that you are making. Every day we react to our environment. We react by words that we utter, by thoughts that we entertain or by deeds that we perform. Watch yourself every day. “What is the reaction that was evoked by the environment outside me which drew thoughts, words and actions from me, and in what way am I better today?” Keep a record of the time that you have spent in your *sadhana*, the extent to which it has lengthened its course, and the increase in the quality of the concentration of the mind.

Japa, *svadhyaya* and *dhyana* – recitation of the divine name, study of a sacred scripture and meditation – these three may be said to be principle modes of spiritual practice, though there can be many other modes such as prayer, the special ways into which you might have been initiated by your own religious circles, and so on. But, above all things, a

watch has to be kept over one's own self in regard to one's mental, verbal, physical, social, and many other performances.

I spoke these introductory words to give you an idea of the kind of preparation that you may have to make before you try to bombard the subject with the power of your concentration to break through the name-form complex in order to enter into its substance. Existence, consciousness, bliss, name and form are supposed to be the constituents of everything: *nama, rupa, sat, chit, ananda*. *Nama, rupa* constitute the world of perception; name, form constitute what you see with your eyes, what you sense with your senses. But the basic reality is *sat, chit, ananda* – existence which cannot be disassociated from the consciousness of it. This is the freedom that you are aspiring for because this existence is universal. Inasmuch as it is universal, it is not related to any other thing and, therefore, there cannot be any suffering. So, *sat-chit-ananda* is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, which is one compact being of utter freedom which is at the back of all objects and subjects, but which is shrouded in the name-form complex which has to be broken through by the power of concentration.

Chapter 15

STEPPING INTO THE REALM OF UNIVERSALITY

At the commencement of meditation, a necessity is felt to set aside all thoughts which are irrelevant to the point of concentration. Here again we have a usual difficulty: we cannot easily set aside things when those things have some value and strength of their own. But, the task becomes easier if the intensity of the strength generated by the concentration process exceeds whatever value may be seen in items that are considered not relevant. To the novice at least, it will not be easy to consider irrelevant thoughts as totally meaningless. They have their own meanings. Things which are not necessary for us need not necessarily be unreal; they may be real in their own way. The difficulty then arises due to the association of reality, meaning and value even to those items of thought which, for some important reason, are considered as not reconcilable with the task for the process of meditation.

We develop a sort of holiness of attitude in our meditations, and we have our own notions of unholy, unimportant, obstructive, and so on. Here, the mind assumes a dual role: on the one hand, of attaching itself to the spirit of aspiration in the direction of the chosen object of meditation; and, on the other hand, it cannot forget that there are things and values in the world which do exist in their own status and yet attempts at discipline have been considered to be obstructive or harmful. We cannot avoid this feeling in the mind, at least at the commencement, because we have always been brought up in a world of duality where there are good things and also bad things. The good and the evil are the two opposing forces in life, and in our pursuit of the good we naturally try to avoid the evil. And, for the spiritual aspirant, all things are naturally considered to be in the category of evil either according to the tradition in which he has been

brought up or the type of initiation that he has received, and are dubbed as irreconcilables.

In the beginning, there is a struggle because of the tug of war that goes on between the will that is applied in the direction of the understanding, and a subtle feeling that there is also evil and its entry should be barred completely. Though this is a problem felt in certain types of meditation, it is not to be found in every system or every school of the practice of yoga. In the system of Patanjali particularly, and certain other systems which are different from the well-known technique called *jnana* yoga, this necessity is emphasised to differentiate between the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, the necessary and the unnecessary, and so on. Only in certain advanced types of thinking, which usually go by the name of *jnana* yoga, an intellectual effort is exercised to bring into the fold of the area of meditation all items that become the content of thought as contributory rather than obstructive.

We are unable to adapt ourselves to certain circumstances in life. Our body and mind and social conditions are not suited to such an adjustment, and therefore this dualism becomes an unavoidable necessity. But where the higher understanding can be applied in gaining an insight into the inward coordination of all things – rather, an inter-relatedness of everything – we will find there are no enemies in this world; there are no evil ones. They appear to be such on account of our present psychophysical state of life, existence, being structured in a manner which cannot go hand in hand with the structure of other things in the world.

Fire is very hot, and it can burn us to ashes. Fire burns us because the velocity of its inner constituents is far in excess of the powers that constitute our own body. Fish do not feel the intense cold of the Ganges. Individuals who live in different parts of the country, under different climes, are able to adjust themselves to the atmosphere due to the pattern of

their body. The whole of creation is strewn over with such a variety of the different intensities of manifestation that each one, each part, each segregated item, feels isolated due to the affirmation of this isolatedness and the inability it feels to adjust itself to the conditions and the structural intensities of other persons, other things, etc. Heat and cold, good and bad, and all such differences are occasioned by either physical irreconcilability or psychic irreconcilability with conditions other than those into which we are born or with which we can accommodate ourselves under given conditions.

This is why in meditation these natural circumstances of our psychophysical existence insist on having their own say, and the ethical mandates generally considered as unavoidable in a life of yoga require that we have to be holy and good and our thoughts should be such that they are in harmony with the nature or the character of the object or the aim of our meditation. For instance, we have some notion of God, some idea of utter perfection, which may not always go hand in hand with the ideas of those things and conditions in life whose outer form and reaction do not coincide with this notion or idea. But this arises on account of the limitations of our own personality, and their intensity will be felt only to the extent we are limited in that manner. When we grow in the intensity of our meditation, the pressure of these limitations will become less and less, so that after years of practice one may not feel the need to set aside thoughts. There will be no need to think of the existence of irreconcilable thoughts, or those apparently irreconcilable thoughts will be fused into the positive thoughts which are the thoughts of the object of meditation.

Thus, at the outset, we have a fourfold area of action: the area of thoughts which are irreconcilable, the area of thoughts which are undesirable, the area of that thought or series of thoughts which are conducive and are in harmony with the object chosen, and the thought of the process of meditation itself going on and the thought that oneself exists

as a meditating individual: I am conscious that I am meditating. There is also the consciousness that I am undergoing a mental modification within myself in the form of contemplation, meditation. There is the thought of the object which is perceived before me by the eyes or conceived by the mind. Then there is the fourth thought of those things which are not desirable. In the state of what is usually called *pratyahara*, or the withdrawal of the senses from objects, there is this necessity to psychologically create for oneself a conducive atmosphere by freeing oneself from the necessity to think those things which are not desirable, or are perhaps harmful.

Every religious system describes a holy way of conducting oneself, principles of what are called a sacred living. We are always kept in a state of a subtle awareness of the evil one when we are tuned up in our minds to a life of holiness, sanctity, discipline, and the like. It is this subtle feeling of the presence of the evil one as a dangerous force existing outside that creates anxiety in the mind of the meditating consciousness of the individual, but this can be gradually overcome by protracted practice. The only remedy is continued practice; we cannot find any other solution. We may fall down several times and the mind may slip from its point, but it will gain its grasp, the grip over the object, when we persist in this act of concentration for hours, days, months and years. Finally, the intense clarity in regard to the very purpose of meditation will solve our difficulties.

In most cases there is a peculiar difficulty caused by the absence of clarity as to the very purpose of meditation itself, and we can safely say that this is the main obstacle and every other difficulty is consequent upon this thought. Different people have different notions, and there may not be a uniform notion about this purpose. Some difficulty in life has driven us along this line of what we call the pursuit of yoga, but there may not be a clear conception of what we are actually driving at.

What is it that you need in meditation? Or, why are you making this effort? Here, answers will vary from person to person because a complete grasp of the aim of life is not easy for untutored minds. But if you can bring back to your memories some of the points we discussed in our earlier sessions, perhaps you will remember that the aim of spiritual practice, the very purpose of yoga meditation, is union with Reality. It is not intended to bring you temporal acquisitions or gains that are going to satisfy you in this world. But you generally judge your success in yoga by the visible effects that you are expecting therefrom, and often visible effects may not follow at all if your intent is entirely spiritual because while results will naturally follow as a consequence of your meditation, and they must follow if the meditation is carried on properly, they may not be visible on the surface. As a fruit ripens from the internal core and this internal ripening is not visible until it reaches the outer surface, you should not be too enthusiastic or anxious about the results of your meditation. Actually, the great principle of what is known as karma yoga is only this much: the results should not be expected.

But you must be very careful about the manner you adopt in your activity. If you are sure that you are adopting a clear-cut and subtle, sincere and correct method in meditation – that this is the way, and there is no other way – you need not be anxious about the consequences or the results. If a farmer is sure that he has done well in tilling the soil, sowing the seeds, and tending the plants, etc. – he is sure that he has done the best, and everything that is necessary has been executed very precisely – there should be no anxiety afterwards. But anxiety may come if you have not done it properly.

So, duty does not involve expectation of result. As a matter of fact, the expectation of a temporal, ulterior result is an extraneous thought, which is to be set aside. We have already talked of extraneous thoughts, and one of these

extraneous thoughts is the thought of the result that is to follow. That should not be there. You are subtly expecting a reward from God Himself for having worshipped Him for years, and this is unbecoming on the part of a sincere seeker because if you are a religious person, naturally your aim is the Realisation of God, not the realisation of a present from God. Even if you are not religiously oriented and have no concept of God the Almighty as Creator, etc., but you have some sense of a perfection or ultimate reality, naturally you would not expect something other than the ultimately Real from that which you call ultimately Real. But we always have a tendency to expect something from the work that we do. We will not do anything unless something follows from it.

Thus, spiritual living differs from the ordinary way of living. In every way of conducting oneself in temporal life, there is a result expected out of the actions performed – why should you work if nothing is to come out of it? Here, the truly religious or spiritual life differs. The religious or spiritual life is itself the goal, and not a means to some acquisition which is other than itself, because what is called spiritual living is the way that we tread in the direction of the transcendent or the eternal. Naturally, we cannot expect a temporal result to follow from living a life eternal. That would be a travesty, putting the cart before the horse and upsetting everything. We are still aspiring subtly in our minds for that which we are trying to avoid. We are clinging, with an ambivalent attitude of emotion and feeling, to that which we are, at the same time, trying to run away from. On the one hand, we say we do not want it; but, on the other hand, we really want it, and these two difficulties catch us emotionally.

It is true that we do not like to be harassed by the circumstances of temporal living, including the difficulty of birth and death, transmigration, etc. We would like to live eternal life in God – life in perfection, life in the Absolute – but we have a tremendous condition: this life in the Absolute

should not cut us off from all the joys of life, and these joys must be present there. We know what these joys are. We have comforts, facilities and values which we do not like to be bereaved from, and so they all have to be present there. We require temporal values to be literally present in eternal life. These are the difficulties.

What are generally spoken of as the obstacles in meditation are only these. They are created by our own minds. In scriptures on yoga we sometimes hear of obstructing spirits, angels and powers of nature descending, obstructing us, preventing us from advancing. These powers which are considered as tempters or obstructers are the external visualisations of our own longings, our loves and hatreds. Both that which we love intensely and that which we hate intensely will present themselves before us as concrete objects because the world contains every material for the manufacture of any form. We have only to dig out that particular aspect, as we can dig out any a statue from a block of stone. This impersonal structure called the world is a vast resource for any kind of form and presentation. We can get anything from it. Our desires, our longings, our hatreds become the instruments or the tools to dig out those forms which are the counterparts of our subtle longings – positively as love or negatively as hatred. Thus, loves and hatreds are the obstacles, and the immense necessity to free ourselves from these emotional tensions will be clear to us if we know well that these psychic actions in the forms of loves and hatreds are reactions of the individual to temporal circumstances and they have no real relevance to the life of the true spirit, or true religious life.

The fourfold area of psychic action I mentioned with which the meditator or the meditating consciousness is concerned becomes limited in its ambit as one advances, and we will have only the thought of the chosen object. There will be a free flow of the mind, unobstructed by the winds of desire, moving in the direction of the chosen object or deity –

the goal that we have chosen. Finally, inasmuch as one uniform substance exists at the back of ourselves and the back of the object which we have chosen for our meditation, we will find that when we enter into the object by communion of thought, we have entered into our own self also, at the same time. So, in the union which is the culmination of yoga, there is the coming together of the reality within us and the reality in the cosmos.

What is the aim of yoga, then? What is the final purpose? It is communion with Reality, yes; but what is Reality? Reality is that which is free from the limitations of the process of time – past, present and future – and which is free from the limitations caused by location in space – the limitation of existing in only one place at a time – and also the limitation of being related to something else. That only can be called ultimately real which does not stand in need of relating itself to another thing, which is not limited to the necessity of being at only one place at a time, and which is also not limited by the division of time as past, present and future – that is, free from the action of space, time and causality. As every object in this world, everything that we can know, is limited to these operations of space, time and causality, nothing in the world satisfies us. We are not satisfied even with our own selves because we, as persons, are also equally limited to the operations of space, time and causation.

Therefore, neither our own body nor anything else in the world can be adequate for the purpose of fulfilling our longings. Our desires, our longings cannot be fulfilled by anyone or anything in this world. Even the highest achievements in life cannot suffice because the largest dimension of acquisition in this world – whatever be the glory of the Earth that we can conceive of in our minds – is only a shadow cast by that which is transcendent in terms of these limiting factors called space, time and causal relation. We can never be satisfied until we break through the

limitation of space and overcome the limitations of time. Until we stand independent of being related to things, we are shackled by these factors.

Yoga is the way of entering into the bosom of that Supreme Substance which is ubiquitously present everywhere because it is not in space, not in time; it is not an individual observing another, or related to any 'other'. We can only give a negative description of Reality; we cannot positively say what it is because any positive description we attempt will also be a limitation. Any qualification that we associate with what we conceive as Reality will limit it only to that particular quality; therefore, most definitions of Reality are negatives. We can say it is not this and it is not that, but we cannot say what it IS. However, certain notions which we entertain in our minds in regard to the Ultimate Reality give us positive suggestions – such as omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, and the inward feeling that one is approximating oneself to this condition of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, a conviction that, after all, one is moving along this path.

A suggestion from within one's own self that at least one step has been taken in the direction of this great achievement will be adequate to certify that you are progressing on the spiritual path. Nobody else can certify this; you have to know it for yourself. You will have a feeling within that things are alright, and this supreme value that you are seeking will speak for itself. It will guide you. Inward guidance will reveal itself in forms which are not necessarily describable in terms or visible to the senses.

As I mentioned, in these sessions of our studies we are not concentrating on any particular system of yoga practice but are trying to know the general background that is at the root of all spiritual aspiration and religion in general. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali provide information about the experiences one may have to pass through in the higher forms of meditation and a loftier essence, into which details I

do not propose to enter. Suffice it to say that when you cross the barrier of the process of perceiving things, you are pulled by a gravitation which belongs to the other world. There is a particular line of demarcation between the temporal world and the transcendent realm; that demarcating line is the content of your very perception of things, namely, the consciousness that there is a world outside. It is a demarcating line because once you cross this barrier, you will not feel the need to look upon things as objects outside. In the beginning they will gravitate around you as your own friends, and perhaps later on as collaborators in your higher pursuits, and further still as inseparable attendants of your own practice, landing in the end in the consciousness that they are limbs of your own cosmic existence.

I have to make this a little more clear, in case you have not understood what I mean by saying that there is a demarcating line. Once we descend from the ultimate Universal comprehensive existence – call it by any name such as *mahat* or *ahamkara* in the language of the Sankhya, or Hiranyagarbha or the Virat according to the Vedanta philosophy – and get cut off from the sense of Universality into a sense of individuality, we have been thrown out of the gravitational field of the transcendent and we are pulled by the earthly gravitation, due to which our senses move outward. There is no outward perception in Virat. There is an integrated perception of the total existence that is severed from our vision when we enter the field of this demarcating line I mentioned, where we begin to perceive through the senses rather than be merely aware through an intuitive act of our association with the Universal whole. Once we enter into this field of perception of the world as an object outside, we are drawn outwardly to things, rather than inwardly to the Universal. Then many things follow one after the other, just as when we let a ball roll down a staircase. Once it has gone out of our hand, it will go on rolling down until it reaches the lowermost level. Similarly, once we are severed from this relatedness to the Universal omnipresence and

enter into this peculiar borderland of perception of things outside, we are hurled down further into the need to establish contact with things. We cannot simply be aware of things; we then have to establish contact. In the beginning it is merely a compulsion to be aware that things are outside, and then a compulsion follows from this, namely, the desire to establish some sort of contact; and that is what we call like and dislike. Then all sorts of social relationships arise, and desires go on piling one over the other which lead, due to the frustration of their non-fulfilment, to rebirth – reincarnation in other forms of living beings.

In yoga we reverse the process, and come to this point where we do not have the need to love or hate, to like and dislike; we are perceptionally aware. There is a general consciousness of the existence of the world and the pull of objects, as love and hatred is no longer there. This is also a point discussed in detail in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. I have mentioned that psychology is mostly divided into two sections, abnormal and general. What is studied in abnormal psychology is the action of the mind in a manner which is charged more with emotions than by reason or understanding. The difference will be known to us when we can distinguish between mere awareness of an object as a content of general thinking and awareness of an object which we intensely love or intensely hate. The psychic situation created by the cognition of an object which is liked or disliked is a subject of studies that comes under abnormal psychology. When we look at a tree in the jungle, there may not be much of an emotion evoked in us. That is one kind of perception. But when emotions are connected with perceptions, we get bound to the objects more tightly than in the act of mere knowledge or awareness of an object. We are connected to objects even when we are merely aware of their presence; that is also bondage, but a greater bondage is to be tied to them by way of like and dislike.

Therefore, in the beginning we have to be free from the emotional interpretation of things, and then we have to free ourselves from even the rational interpretation that the world is outside. I like this and I do not like this – these ideas must drop from our minds first. Then we will have merely an idea that the world is there, objects are there, people are there, everything is there. But even these ideas must drop out so that things will not be there – people are not there outside us to look at. We will have a different transmuted awareness of an inner fraternity of these persons and things, which is stepping into the realm of Universality by taking our steps away from our immersion in the world of temporality, or the descending act of the mind in terms of emotions, feelings, etc. When thoughts rise from even the mere awareness of the presence of things, we reach the height of meditation and the powers of the world will take care of us. Human effort is no more necessary thereafter.

Chapter 16

YOGA – THE EFFORT OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO REGAIN ITS STATUS

What is the field that we have covered these days? Allow your mind to range over the entire area of your studies and contemplations. At the outset, the world presents itself before us as the only concern of our life, impinging on our consciousness with such strength and vehemence that most people have gone to the extent of feeling that the world is the only reality because nothing else is felt. No other sensation is available to us except this vast projection before our eyes called the world of objects, of persons and things, and our occupations. The impact upon our minds of this so-called thing before us called the world is so strong that for all practical purposes we as human beings do not seem to be independent, but are totally dependent on conditions provided to us by the circumstances prevailing outside, call them physical or social. Man's independence becomes a chimera if his experiences and the ways of his living are prescribed to him by the conditions prevailing outside, and if the world is to be his dictator, the regulator of his laws and the determining factor of even the thinking process itself.

It has often been felt that even our thoughts are conditioned by the world outside. Materialism and schools of thought which are akin to this way of contemplation of reality have been forced to feel that, inasmuch as even our thoughts do not seem to stand independently and are compelled to think in particular manners prescribed by the conditions of the world outside, man is a puppet in the hands of the forces of nature. The power of matter seems to be prior to even the action of the mind, so that we seem to be thinking and seeing what is already there even before we start thinking and seeing. This is something taken for granted by every person. Our hungers and thirsts, our emotional and intellectual turmoil, and our social and political anxieties

confirm, as it were, our dependence on this doctrine which today goes by the name of materialism which, philosophically described, is only a way of feeling that life is impossible without dependence on external factors. And who is not forced to think in this way? If the breath that we breathe is from the air outside, if the water that we drink is from outside, if the food that we eat also comes from outside, and the frightening laws of the organisations of humanity are external to the thoughts of man, materialism seems to be the only philosophy that can be accepted.

But man is in a state of turmoil because he resents dependence on anything outside. The struggle of the human mind is to avert any imposition from outside. Though it is felt at the same time that it is impossible to get over this imposition, which seems to be stronger and more capable in its action than all the thoughts of people put together, there is a dubious atmosphere psychologically created in the mind of man where, on the one side, he feels that it is impossible to live a life of total dependence, slavery – utter hanging on things which are not one's own self – as, such a life is worse than wretched; but on the other hand, there is the feeling that the world is too much for him. No one can conquer the world. The world has conquered man; it has destroyed all people that were born here. No one has lived forever, and even the strongest men have gone to dust. This also creates a suspicion that perhaps the world is indomitable.

Here is a great condition put by the mind of man: it is impossible to live like this. Whether or not the world is stronger, we cannot go on living in this manner. The prison walls may be stronger than the captive inside, but he cannot live in this way for a long time. He knows that he cannot do anything to the prison – it is built very strongly and is very powerfully guarded – yet no one can be happy merely with a conviction that the walls of the prison are strong. There is a desire, and a desire also seems to indicate a possibility of a fulfilment of a desire, that the walls of the prison can be

broken through and freedom is possible. If freedom is not possible, why should there be this longing to be free? Are we asking for a will o' the wisp? Are we crying in the wilderness? Is our longing merely a weeping in the forest, where nobody is going to listen to us?

There is something in man which seems to be more than man. Here begins the operation of what we call philosophy, the investigation into the possibilities of attaining freedom. Freedom is a must, and it cannot be avoided. It has to be achieved one day or the other, by one means or another. This is our longing, and we want nothing else – freedom, and the impossibility to be constrained by another. A dog may be lying in the shade of a tree for hours and hours on its own, but if it is chained, it will start whining after a few minutes. It was lying there for hours, but if we tie it, it would like to move because of the bondage. “You have tied me? Don’t! I can lie down freely if I want to, but you cannot force me to lie down.” Even an insect feels this. All living creatures appears to present a picture of the impossibility of living without a promise of final freedom.

This is a point on which all philosophical investigations are founded. The longing of man is the ultimate answer to the question of life, and no one can say anything more than that. The deepest impulses within us seem to be uniformly present in the whole world. There does not seem to be any corner of the Earth where the cry for freedom is not felt. Thus, investigations in the field of philosophy take their stand on the possibility of achieving freedom. And what is freedom?

From the few words of introduction I mentioned just now, you would have noticed that freedom is the conviction in the deepest consciousness of oneself that life need not mean dependence on external factors. We have studied these external factors in some detail, and I am only trying to bring about a recapitulation of the area that we have covered. Space, time and causal relations are the principle restraining

factors which limit the operation of consciousness to only certain areas and certain methods of action. We cannot think as we like; such a freedom is not given to us by space, time and causality – the conditioning factors of all things in the world. We may believe that we are thinking independently, but nothing of the kind is the truth because even the independence of our so-called thinking is within the area permitted by the action of space, time and causality. Our freedom is something like the freedom of a cow that is tied to a peg by a long rope. The cow may feel a sense of freedom to move to the extent that is permitted by the length of the rope, but beyond that it is constrained. We seem to have a little bit of freedom, which is sanctioned to us by the conditions of our own individuality and personality, but that freedom is finally restrained and it cannot go beyond that prescription of space and time. We can think within a locality, within a process of time, and within a type of relationship, and not more than that.

But, are we only this much? This is not only a question of philosophy, but also a moral problem before the human being. It is an ethical question, it is the principle query, it is the significance of life, it is that which brings meaning to us – else, life loses sense. Are we limited in this manner? The investigations of philosophy are different from the studies in science in light of the fact that science studies only observable factors, objects which can be experimented upon, and cannot go beyond the realm of sense perception. It takes for granted what the eyes see, what the ears hear, what the other senses reveal, and the mind of the scientist acts merely as a synthesizer of the reports of the senses. New qualitative knowledge is not provided by the mind. What we think independently, and what we understand through our reason, is also simply a synthesized cumulative conclusion drawn from what material is available through sense perception. But philosophy differs from science. It does not study merely what is given on the surface; it reads between the lines, as they say. It is like a judge in a court. He examines all

evidence, but his judgement is not based merely on what is said by the witnesses and other evidence presented. The quintessence – the implication, the hidden import secretly lying behind the outer evidence provided by the senses – is sucked out of this evidence .

Thus, philosophy goes deeper than our sense perception. In this attempt to delve into the depths of the problems of human knowledge, philosophy comes to the conclusion that everything is decided finally by the means of knowledge. That seems to be the equipment by which any judgement is passed. That we are limited, that we are not to be limited, that we ask for freedom but that we are bound, and many other things with which the world is bound, are all known to some person. 'I' know these factors, 'you' know it, some knowing subject, some centre of awareness, some principle of consciousness is what is aware that there is freedom, or there is no freedom, and so on.

Therefore, there seems to be an unavoidable necessity to take into consideration the factor of consciousness which is inextricably involved in the knowledge of anything. Though for the time being we may accept that the world is larger than anyone and more powerful, stronger than anything conceivable, yet it is certain that even this knowledge of the vastness of the world, the power of the world and the dependence of consciousness on the world is an act of consciousness. It is known by consciousness. Hence, philosophy studies not merely objects of sense but the very conditions of knowledge. The condition of knowledge takes us back to the very principle of knowledge.

What is knowledge? What is awareness? How do we know anything at all? How do we know that the world is there at all? We have been crying so much about the world, but how do we know that it exists? This is known by an act, an operation of some indescribable light or radiance that seems to be inseparable from ourselves. This radiance, this

light, is called by various names – call it awareness, call it intelligence, call it consciousness, call it the Atman, Spirit.

Where is this consciousness which conditions all knowledge? Because of the fact that it is the source of all knowledge and every kind of proof or evidence, it has to be considered as a subject rather than an object. Consciousness, which knows things, is not an object like a stone, a building, a wall or a tree; because there is an object, it has to be known by a consciousness and, therefore, it itself cannot be an object. Hence, consciousness has to be a subject, not an object. What is meant by a 'subject'? A subject is that state of existence which cannot be externalised in space and time, or by causal relations. Therefore, what we call consciousness is not capable of being conditioned by space, time or causal relations. If we imagine that it is so conditioned, that knowledge of the fact of its being conditioned also is to be known by itself only. Thus, the limitation that we apparently seem to discover in ordinary consciousness is overstepped by the implications thereof – namely, knowledge of a limit is not possible unless the limit is overstepped.

Thus, our consciousness seems to be an unlimited existence. It is an omniscient possibility. Man, the human individual, has the potentiality of knowing everything, which means to say, the potentiality to have infinite power and capacity. The omniscient possibility also implies the possibility of omnipresence. Knowledge of everything may not be possible if omnipresence is denied. So there seems to be a latency of a tremendous significance in the human individual, though human beings may appear to be puppet-like nothings. Human beings are not puppets, though it appears that they are. There is a potentiality of omnipresence, all-comprehensiveness and all-knowledge, all-power freed from the shackles of space, time and causality, which means to say, immortality is hidden in the heart of man. This is a great discovery, and after coming to

rational conclusions of this type, yoga takes the practical step.

It requires a herculean effort on the part of the individual to apply this knowledge to practical living so that the potentiality may become a revealed, conscious reality. Potentially, we are capable of infinite action, infinite knowledge and infinite existence, but in our conscious life we seem to be little bodies, small individuals. The purpose of yoga is to bring the potentialities of omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence onto the level of conscious living. Therefore, yoga is entirely practical. Yoga is not a theory, though it has a deeply philosophical theory, the outlines of which I mentioned briefly in a few words.

The whole universe, which appears as an object of consciousness, is pervaded by consciousness. This is an unavoidable conclusion that we have to draw when taking our stand on the possibility of the omnipresence of consciousness. Though there is an immanence, a subtle presence in the whole world, this immanent, subtle, conscious presence is inseparable from us. This is clear from the fact that consciousness does not seem capable of being divided into pieces because we have already known that no limit can be set to consciousness. It is unlimited. The unlimitedness of consciousness suggests its immanence, its omnipresence. It pervades the whole cosmos and, therefore, latently, potentially, in a hidden manner, we seem to be pervading all objects, without which, knowledge of the objects of the world would not be possible. If objects were totally cut off from us, if the world were not to be consciously, vitally connected with us, we would not be in a position to know that the world is there at all.

So, we are more than what we appear. We are immortal essences, not mortal, fragile, physical bodies merely. The omnipresence of our essential nature implies the organic structure of the universe with which we are not merely connected, but from which we are inextricable. We seem to

be the universe ourselves. And what is yoga? It is the recognition of this fact, an awakening of consciousness to the fact of its being organically present in all things, a Universal being. What is yoga? Its aim is Universal Realisation. It is an actualisation of the potentiality within the human being. It is a waking up from dream, as it were – or rather, a wakening from sleep. The possibility of knowing the whole world is present in the state of deep sleep also; but it is only a possibility. Practically, there is nothing; it is like a dead seed. But it can become a live force when it germinates into the active operative field of what we call waking existence. Something like that is the action of yoga.

This great objective of yoga practice, which is based on this conclusion of a great philosophy which recognises the immortality of consciousness, is the recognition of the omnipresent existence as the only Reality. So, Reality can only be one, not manifold. We cannot have many universes. What we call a universe is the totality of all existence, and we individuals, we persons, we human beings, these things, are not outside this organic structure. What does yoga tell us, then? It is the effort of consciousness to regain its status, in every level of its expression. It appears the universe has revealed itself in various levels or degrees of intensity.

This is what we study in the schools of thought – the Sankhya, the Yoga, the Vedanta. These levels of being are the levels or the stages of the practice of yoga. The system of Patanjali which delineates eight limbs, the stages of knowledge which are described in such great scriptures like the Yoga Vasishtha, and the methods of meditation prescribed to us in Upanishads, etc., all mean that yoga is the return of consciousness from its present condition to that which is possible, practicable and real. The potentiality is brought to the surface of a living awareness. This is done gradually. Yoga, as far as we are concerned, should be regarded as a graduated step. It is not a sudden jump or breaking through, and no such attempt should be made.

Inasmuch as we are accustomed to logical thinking and a gradational approach in everything, from the lower we go to the higher, from the effect we proceed to the cause, from the known we go to the unknown, and from the potential we reach the actual.

Our present condition is an involvement in various particulars, let alone the metaphysical involvements of space, time and cause. We have more poignant and touching involvements in human society. Our mutual behaviour, our conduct, and our obligations also seem to be a part and parcel of yoga practice. Yoga is a comprehensive science; it does not exclude any value in life. If anyone has the wrong notion that yoga is an affair not concerned with this world but with some extra-cosmic God or some immortal realisation which has no connection with the world, then that is a totally misconceived notion. All reality, in all its degrees, is taken into consideration in the gradational practice of yoga.

What is a degree of reality? Anything that is inseparable from your present state of consciousness is a reality for you. We have to be realists, and most practical. Whether a thing is ultimately real or not, is not important here. We are troubled, not by the ultimately real, but by what is real to our consciousness. Something seems to be impinging on us, and we take those things as real. The involvement of consciousness in a particular condition makes that condition a reality. We are involved in mutual behaviour.

The so-called *yamas* and the *niyamas*, and the *sadhana chatushtaya* of the Vedanta, are all prescriptions to consciousness, to adjust and adapt itself in a harmonious manner in regard to its outward relations. We have to be very cautious that we do not take double or triple steps in the practice of yoga. It is better to go slowly rather than to go fast and then feel a necessity to retrace our steps. Our difficulties and involvements should be made clear to our own selves by ourselves. Each yoga student should be honest

to himself or herself: What are my difficulties and what are my needs? These have to be portrayed systematically in a chart, in a diary, and they have to be broken through – untied, as knots are untied. We should not have conflicts of any kind, and yoga is a resolution of all conflicts. The whole yoga and the Bhagavadgita in particular may be said to be a system of breaking through conflicts of every kind. Have we any conflict? Are we opposed to any circumstance in life?

We have a dual opposition primarily, though we have a more difficult opposition or conflict of a different type which we may have to encounter after some time. We have a difficulty felt every day with our relationships outside, and we have a difficulty felt in our own selves. We cannot always get on with people outside and the conditions of life; the ways of the world and the course which people seem to be following do not always seem to go hand in hand with our requirements, our present ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, necessary and unnecessary, etc. So, we have a social conflict. We are always in dread of the externals. We guard ourselves, we dress ourselves, we behave in a particular manner, and we put on appearances because we are afraid of the outer atmosphere, with which we are not reconciled.

There is simultaneously an inner non-alignment of ourselves. We are not always honest even to our own selves. We have a specious argumentative logic which always justifies its own whims and fancies, and our emotions and passions often are justified by reason, which creates a conflict within our own selves. There is something in us, which may tell us that all our emotional reactions are not necessarily correct, but reason says that they have to be correct; otherwise, they cannot be fulfilled, because the necessity to fulfil even irrational instincts will call for a rational justification of these instincts.

In psychoanalysis this is called a rationalisation of instincts, which is what we do practically every day. There is a self-justifying attitude of every individual which tears our

personality to shreds. We think in one way, speak in another way, and act in a third way. We are one thing today, another thing tomorrow; one thing with this person, one thing with that person, and a third thing altogether with our own selves, so that we can never have peace of mind. We are in awful fear of everything in the world. What will happen to me tomorrow? What will the world think about me? Such fears arise on account of a principle and central non-alignment of the layers of our own personality – physical, vital, psychological, rational, instinctive, emotional, volitional, and all things. These are like children fighting with one another inside us, and every day we spend a lot of energy in seeing that we do not go mad; otherwise, they will tear us into pieces. Our psychological difficulties are so intense that we may not be able to live a sane life for even three days if we do not put forth great effort to see that a cementing factor is somehow or other applied to these otherwise dissenting elements in our psychological personality. This difficulty within us is projected outside into the social world and even the physical world, and whatever is wrong within us, is also seen outside. This is a twofold conflict: the social and the physical or, rather, the outward conflict – the irreconcilability of ourselves with the world outside – which is mainly caused by a torn personality inside.

Philosophical investigations, the foundations of yoga practice, have gone so deep into this matter that they have proclaimed the only panacea possible for all these ills. No drug, no medicine, no good word, no delicious dish, can make us all right. Something is seriously wrong at the very root; that is the isolation of ourselves as beings from the cosmic whole. This is the fall of man, as scriptures say – the cutting off of consciousness, which is the true subject, into the condition of a little part which is shrouded in a physical vesture, which is the human personality.

There is, therefore, a cosmic problem before us, apart from the social and outward problems and the inner

psychological tensions. These inward difficulties and outer conflicts are caused by a cosmical difficulty. There is a vaster problem before us than what we can see with our eyes or envisage with our little minds – namely, our isolation from the cosmic whole. While yoga is very eager to see that we do not come in conflict with people outside and the world externally, it is also equally clear that our inner personality should also be set in tune and be streamlined into an alignment; but yoga is more particular to see that we are tuned up to the cosmos.

The procedure that yoga practice adopts in bringing about our alignment with the outer atmosphere and with our own inner constituents of personality may be considered as the outer court of yoga. The real yoga starts when we feel competent to tune ourselves with the universe itself. Here meditation becomes pre-eminently active and important. *Dhyana*, the yoga of meditation with which we are all familiar, is not an ordinary step that we are taking. It is, perhaps, the last plunge into the ocean of life. The other preparatory stages are not unimportant because psychological sanity is not unimportant, social harmony is not unimportant, good behaviour is not unimportant, ethical and moral conduct is not unimportant, a good sleep is not unimportant, and so all these are also to be taken into consideration in our great enthusiasm for yoga, union with the Absolute, though it is true that we are aiming at that finally.

Thus, be careful to note that yoga is not merely one of the sciences or one of the schools of thought or a philosophy; it is *the* philosophy of life. It is the final answer to our questions. And yoga is not something taken to by just a section of people in the human world, but it is the unavoidable need felt by every living being. Yoga is not meant only for the so-called religious people or spiritual seekers, as people wrongly think. It is the science of existence, the art of living. It is the

system of living a happy life, and who does not want to be happy? Thus, yoga is a necessity for all humanity.

Chapter 17

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF EDUCATION

As the course of education is a way of ordering one's life in the requisite manner, all studies in the course have to be intensely practical. We do not study or undergo education because we have nothing else to do. It is a sole necessity that arises on account of a specific type of discipline that we have to manifest in our own lives in relation to the environment in which we live. Thus, education or study of whatever kind is not a mere social achievement or a hobby; it is, as it were, medical administration to the sick personality that finds it difficult to set itself in harmony with those conditions and factors of life which contribute to the well being of not only oneself but of everybody else. We become educated only to the extent we are able to understand one another. Where this understanding is lacking, education is absent. Thus, there is a great difference between study and education. We can study anything, yet we may be illiterate from the point of view of culture, good manners, and the very purpose of our studies.

This specific kind of educational career, which is the main objective of an academy of this kind, is thus intensely practical. It concerns me, it concerns you, and it concerns everything with which we are connected. In every kind of educational career we pass through, there is a vast sea of difficulty before us. We are confronted with the same problems which we seem to have faced since we were born into this world. Our knowledge does not always seem to be adequate to the purpose of facing life, because to live life in this world is not merely to be contented with information that we gather about how things behave. Life is not an object of empirical studies as are carried on in the field of modern science, or science as it is understood.

There is a necessity to bring into the surface of our active life the very soul of what we call existence, and mostly – very

unfortunately – mankind has been unsuccessful in bringing the soul, which is the motive force behind our longings or our needs, into the daylight of the facts of life. The activities of life, the ambitions of man and the aspirations of humanity have ever remained certain mechanised movements, and these movements have engaged the attention of mankind throughout history. The mechanistic character of these processes, lifeless and soulless as they have been, added more and more problems to the existing ones and, as time advanced, it became more and more difficult to live in this world. Today, we find that our life is more difficult than the lives of people who lived some centuries back. We have greater problems facing us than the difficulties that mankind might have faced then. What is the reason?

We have mistaken the outward appurtenances of human comfort and satisfaction for cultural advancement or even refinement of personality. The acquisitions of man in the advance of human history, with its apex today in the year 1983 – these and many other things connected with these – have always been certain consequences following from man's inveterate difficulty to find what he seeks; and all the equipment which man has manufactured for his satisfaction and security are sources of further difficulties because they are not the required instruments for the fulfilment of mankind's longings. Security that can be afforded by outward factors cannot be considered as a worthwhile achievement.

This is our problem today. We are secure, satisfied, under the impression that we have no fear because we have weapons to guard us, food to eat, clothes to wear, houses to live in, friends to talk to, and hobbies in which we can engage ourselves. This, to put it in the language of human psychology, is called escapism. Man's mind is trying to escape from the problems of life by the manufacture of these instruments and the avenues which it seeks for diverting its attention from the problems of life. Our satisfactions today

are mainly a diverting of our attention from the existing difficulties.

This has been our education, finally. The more we learn about running away from problems, the more we seem to be educated and more cultured, more advanced, more progressive in the march of human history. 'Travesty' is the only word we can use for this circumstance in which humankind finds itself. Yet humankind is complacent about itself, though at the root it is threatened out of its very existence.

It requires a very, very difficult manoeuvring of our own spirits from inside in order to discover what is really wrong with us or with anybody else. No library will be of any help to us because libraries are certain tools which make it appear that we have been furnished with all the necessary information in life; but they are like huge chemist shops where every drug is available but we cannot cure our illness because a chemist shop is not the way in which a physician works.

Thus, while the endeavours of every one of you in searching for satisfactions of a higher nature through means which you have been adopting are genuine, honest and piously motivated, they have also to be in consonance with the facts of life because however genuine the approach may be, it can also be based on miscalculations. It is easy for the mind to get into the rut of the old-fashioned, traditional thinking into which you are born, and from which man's way of thinking cannot be extricated.

We are not here to study books and to gather information; that is not the purpose. It is also not in order to appear well learned in the eyes of people. What we seek is a different thing altogether than what would make us important in this world, in the eyes of society. The eyes of nature are wider than the eyes of mankind, and in its eyes we may not be worth anything, though in the eyes of mankind we may be rulers, Caesars, emperors, duchesses. We may

have everything that we need, all the money in the world and every armament with which we can protect ourselves from hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and from insecurities consequent upon inclement atmospheres outside, but one cannot be always with drawn sword in hand. This is not life, because nature is essentially a friend of man; nature is not his enemy.

The empirical sciences, which have given birth to all the modern philosophies of politics and armament, have struggled hard to insist that nature is an enemy of man and therefore we have to guard ourselves against her onslaughts. Our search for distant objects in the astronomical world, and our eagerness to see that our neighbour does not catch our throats, are all demonstrations of the extent of our understanding of nature and our appreciation of the goodwill of our own brethren around us.

After centuries of effort for the betterment of man, the conditions prevailing today demonstrate that all the efforts have failed because there has been a basic miscalculation of the very relationship that man holds with nature or, we may say, anything which is the cause of nature itself. The suspicion that we have, the fear that we evince in our hearts in regard to our environment outside makes us build large fortresses around us and secure ourselves within strong buildings because there is a fear from even the movement of a leaf and the wisp of a wind. All this is the treasure that we have to carry finally when we leave this world – a bundle of fears, insecurities, dissatisfactions, repentances, and a sorry state of affairs. Many have come and many have gone, and we shall also go, but everybody goes as a crow goes, a bird goes, a reptile goes. There has to be a difference between an enlightened spirit departing and a fly departing: not to quit the world but to embrace it in a larger understanding, unlike the fly that departs with no such understanding.

Hence, we should not be under the impression that we have studied a lot and we have nothing more to do, because

we will find that the more we probe into the mysteries of knowledge, the sea of learning and the ocean of wisdom, the deeper it is. We should never be under the impression that we have understood things completely, as long as we are in a state of fear and have a perpetual requirement of something or the other which we have never acquired and about the acquisition of which we have great doubts. The satisfaction that what our soul needs, or what we as a whole personality need, has been obtained, may be considered as an insignia of our true culture and our education. A love manifests from us, a consideration for the creation that is around us, which is a sense of belonging to a family that arises in us on account of our understanding of nature.

Education is, therefore, a process of the understanding of the environment in which we live, which is a large complex of arrangements, layer after layer, inwardly as well as outwardly – inwardly as the psychological edifice of this personality, and outwardly as a large sea of humanity and the vast physical universe. It is in this direction that we have been trying to drive our mind as a sort of investigation of the mysteries of our own life; and if you feel that something has come out of these studies and you are in a better position psychologically and rationally, you may consider yourself thrice blessed. Else, the study has to be pursued because life itself is an educational career. We do not finish our studies within three months, six months, eight months or even a few years because if education means such type of understanding of nature and environment outside as would require us to be in tune in all its levels, then we would never be fully educated until we reach God Himself, the centrality of the cosmos, for which grade after grade we have to rise, and perhaps one life may not be sufficient for completing this education.

But ancient Masters have opined that if our sincerity, earnestness and honesty of pursuit are to the mark, these possibilities of having to take many incarnations to complete this education may be compressed into even a single life by

the intensity thereof because quality surpasses quantity. A million lives are worth nothing if they are qualitatively meaningless, but the fire of aspiration that we can implant in our own hearts with an understanding equal to the mark, may perhaps work a miracle. Life is a miracle, creation as a whole is a miracle, and what is called the ultimate purpose of existence is also a miracle as it cannot easily be contained within the limits of our little understanding.

Thus, we have to be very humble before the might of this universe. The humility may go to that extent of total abnegation of ourselves so that we no more exist and only the universe is. The unselfishness which is considered a characteristic of true culture is a movement towards the recognition of values in other people and other things than one's own self to such an extent that in utter unselfishness we no more exist – only others exist – so that the otherness of people and things in the world becomes a selfhood. It is difficult for the mind to understand how this could be, but this has to be. This is the basic principle of a normally requisite education of mankind.

What is our final conclusion after all our efforts of so many years that we have spent in this world? The conclusion evidently is that now we have to gird up our loins, something like a soldier who is prepared to enter the field of battle after his training in a military academy. The training itself is not enough. It is the preparation for the act for which he has to be prepared; and our education is that sort of understanding which will keep us always ready to meet the eventualities of life, without judging them as either favourable or unfavourable, because what we call nature, this world, this creation is not to be interpreted or defined in terms which are purely social, personal, or even ethical. They are neither favourable to us nor unfavourable to us; they are impersonal areas of action spread out before us for our own education, in the same way that a university is neither favourable nor unfavourable to anyone. It is there for what it is. It may look

favourable or otherwise, according to the manner in which we can fit ourselves into it. Thus is the world, thus is creation. We cannot say whether it is good or bad, necessary or unnecessary, pleasant or unpleasant – no such judgement can be passed on it because these notions about it arise in our minds on account of our peculiar idiosyncrasies of adjustment with this atmosphere that we call creation.

The more we study, the smaller we become before this great wonder of creation. Great saints and sages were small persons. They descended, and reduced themselves to such an extent that their existence itself was not known. They did not appear in newspaper headlines. The greatest personalities come unknown and go unknown; they are not the objects of advertisements throughout the world. Nobody knows them, and they are not eager to know anybody. This situation is to be considered as a spiritual consequence of the process of self abnegation which follows from an understanding of one's true position in this cosmos. We are not to consider it as an object or a tool for our satisfaction. We do not live here to enjoy. Joy is our main objective, but that cannot come by subjugating someone else or denying the status to others which is really due to them. We cannot be happy by exploiting anyone, by converting another into a slave, much less by trying to reduce nature itself to the condition of a servant. This can never happen, and nature will not permit this.

Thus, if our history has proved to be a long chain of human efforts towards the subjugation of nature, man is totally mistaken to harness it to fulfil human passions and psychological impulses. He will not succeed because for this error that he commits in his understanding of nature, he may have to pay through his nose, as all great men in the world have paid in the end, to their utter consternation. Great men have come and gone into the limbo of non-existence; no one knows where they are. Billions of years have passed, perhaps, since the creation of this Earth, and how many have

come, where they have gone, nobody knows. Why should this happen? Why this problem before us? Why should it be that things are as they are? Are we to be driven into a concentration camp of an unknown region where we are subjugated by forces over which we have no control and no knowledge?

There is a fear which we try to cover up with an outer veneer of pleasure, which we seek by contact with objects of sense. We dread a situation which is yawning in front of us. The dread is so severe and vehement that we have to be working from moment to moment to cover it up with a whitewash of pleasure, which we appear to acquire by means of contact with objects that tantalise us and deceive us every day. What is this dread? We do not know when we will quit this world; there is no gainsaying about this difficulty and there is no knowledge as to what will happen to us when we quit this world. Nothing can be worse for a man than to be placed under these circumstances. We do not know for how many minutes more we are going to breathe here. And then what happens? No one knows that either. Such a condition is around us, and yet we try to lick a drop of honey which seems to be dripping through the thorny bushes of the objects of sense which we embrace in our utter illusion. These difficulties have to be obviated; and if our efforts are in this direction, we may be said to be really honest, sincere from the bottom of our soul.

Therefore, caution is the watchword of education, humility is the watchword of education, understanding of others is the watchword of education, sympathy and a feeling for what is around us is the watchword of education, such that we do not anymore remain as a judge of things because we can be equally judged by those things which we are going to judge. No one can judge things; that necessity should not arise in an organic atmosphere where everyone belongs to everybody and we live in a fraternal family, the brotherhood

of mankind, as children of the immortal, under the fatherhood of the Creator of this universe.

This is sufficiently important to contemplate on – so important that we may not be able to open our mouths after deeply thinking over the seriousness of these aspects. We shall be mum because the matter is so grave. For the solution of these problems we try to develop an understanding, which is education. This was the main highlighting feature of the mission of great Masters who incarnated themselves on Earth, masters such as the great Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharishi, and such stalwarts who came as messengers of the Almighty, as it were, to summon us back to the source from where we have come as exiles. That curriculum of education that they have instituted into humanity is inclusive of all that we are trying to learn in this world. In this sense it is perhaps that the famous passage in the Bhagavadgita says, *adhyatma vidya vidyanam*: Of all the sciences and the arts, and the branches of learning, the science of the Self is pre-eminent.

The science of the Self does not mean study of psychology. The Self is not to be understood in the sense of that which people are blindly searching for in psychoanalysis or psychopathological studies. This is a difficult thing to understand. The Self is that principle by which we will be able to be friendly with all – that cementing factor which will convert all our enemies into our friends and the world as our family. This principle is called the Self. It is not a little radiance of a candle that is in the physical heart of a person. It is a great principle, universally operating everywhere; that is what is called the Self, and the study of that is called *adhyatma vidya*. Thus is the message to you all from the great founder of this institution – Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, whose humble followers we all are.