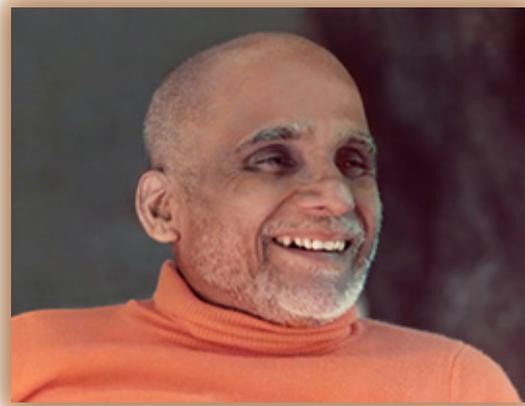


# THE NATURE OF THE TRUE RELIGIOUS LIFE



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA  
The Divine Life Society  
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India  
Website: [www.swami-krishnananda.org](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org)

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## **Publisher's Note**

This is a series of lectures that Swamiji gave in the Ashram's Academy from March to May, 1981.

## **Chapter 1**

### **WE ARE MYSTERIOUS SOMETHINGS**

The Academy of Yoga and Vedanta has invited you for participating in a specific type of training, as you all know very well. When you applied for admission into this course, you had naturally an unintelligible feeling within that the way in which you are living in the world at present requires a streamlining and a reorientation. If this conviction or feeling were not to be there in your minds, you would not have come here. There was a sort of inadequacy and lacuna that you felt in the way in which you lived in the world, though it might not have always been clear to you what that lacuna was, and what it was that you were lacking.

Often we feel unhappy without knowing why we are unhappy. This is a phenomenon through which many people pass. Suddenly we are depressed, and we feel that something is wrong with us, or something is wrong elsewhere, though it is not easy to know what is wrong and why is it that we are in a mood of dissatisfaction. This is a psychological phenomenon that requires deep investigation because every experience and every event that takes place in the world is inseparably connected with our own being. We are affected by our experiences and the events of the world because of our relationship with them. If we are unconnected with things, nothing can affect us. If the wind blows, we are affected; if rain falls, we are

affected; if somebody utters a word, we are affected. If anything happens even in a distant country, it may have some unique impact upon us. Practically there is nothing which cannot affect us. Even if something happens in a distant star which is some million light years away, the impact of this event may be felt by the Earth.

The Earth, which is this revolving planet on which we are living, is one among the many pilgrims journeying in vast space, which fact astronomers can tell us in some detail. The Earth has colleagues in the vast space, and therefore it is, in a way, related to distant things which are invisible to the eyes. As we are inhabitants of the Earth, how could it be possible that the distant stars are not affecting us?

What is it that cannot affect us? The vast space, and inscrutable time, seem to have something to say about every one of us. We have to slowly open our eyes to a new vista, or vision, of our relationship when we try to enter a school of education. We know very well how important education is. Else, we remain like animals, living instinctively. Education is an awakening to the facts of life to which we are oblivious, usually.

When we are born from the mother's womb, we come with no knowledge. Everything is dark, and some blind instincts such as hunger, sleep, etc., begin to operate. Our parents put us in school, saying that we require education. What do they mean by that? What is wrong with our stay in our

own house? Why do we go to an educational institution? It is because the need is felt that an understanding of the intricate relationships that obtain between us and others should be available to us; otherwise, we live like frogs in a well. When we are small children, we know nothing except our family members. This is our father, our mother, our brother and sister; that is all, and we are not concerned with anything else.

When we begin to get introduced into our relationship with the community outside, education starts. Education begins the moment we begin to realise that we are not confined only to the family—parents, brothers, sisters, etc. The art of conducting ourselves harmoniously in relation to the community and to the people outside the family may be said to be the beginning of education. We know very well how important it is to be harmoniously coordinated with people outside the family also.

Then education expands. It is not enough if we know only our little community. We are introduced into the larger background of the geography and the history of the place in which we are living. Our comprehension expands in two ways. When we go to school and start our educational career, geographical and historical studies are primary. Go back to your school days and remember what you learnt at the very outset. I do not think you studied physics, chemistry and mathematics at the very beginning. There were simpler things, but very

important things—a description of the physical location of your own personality: the area, the district, the province in which you live. You were gradually introduced into the geography of your country, and did not study world geography first. Then you were introduced into the historical antecedents of your life—this is India, this is America, this is Europe, etc. So many people lived before you, not only a few family members. You were awakened to a larger dimension of your relationship to people who were before you, and also to the area of land that is around you. This is the kindergarten form, as it were, of the educational career, the beginning or seed form.

As I commenced by saying, our relationships do not exhaust themselves merely with human history, which we may study in our schools and colleges, because the Earth does not contain only human beings. We already know very well that this Earth is inhabited by things other than humans. When I say “things other than humans”, I do not mean merely animals and plants. There are more things on Earth than humans, animals and plants. There are invisible things. Forces which compel the Earth to rotate on its axis and revolve around the Sun are invisible to the eyes. You can imagine the importance of this atmosphere in which you are living. What is it that compels the Earth to move? What is this motive force? Where is the dynamo that pushes it? If the Earth could be pushed with such vehemence by a power or a force that you

cannot see with your eyes, can you say that you are not being impacted by this force when you are crawling like an ant on the surface of the Earth? Who can say that this invisible force is not impinging upon you? Can you say that your life is controlled by only your family members or historical personages, or even by the geographical atmosphere?

This little history of humanity, this geography, this family, these great things that are spoken of as world problems and world issues, look so small, petty, meaningless and laughable when we awaken ourselves to the presence of the terrible forces which can push the very Earth in a particular direction. And when the Earth can be pushed with such force, what about human history? Where are our great people, our Napoleons and Caesars? They go like a wisp of wind. They can be blown off like an ant. The great importance that we attach to the phenomenon of human processes in history looks meaningless before these giant forces which we cannot see with our eyes but can only infer by logical deduction.

Education is not merely studying things which we can see with our eyes. That is a gross form of education, but there is a subtle form, which is a study of inferences. For example, mathematics is not an object that we see as something visible to the eyes. We cannot see mathematics with our eyes, but we can conceive what it is. This conceptual learning which is mathematics is more valuable to our lives

than the gross things that we see with our eyes. We know very well how important mathematics is in life. This is one example I place before you to indicate that conceptual things and invisible things may be more important than visible things.

Logic and mathematics are the principle sciences, but they are not connected with physical objects. We can be logical and mathematical even with closed eyes, without seeing anything, without hearing anything, without having any physical contact with any object. These conceptual sciences are, in a way, inferential sciences. We conclude that if two and two make four, the multiples will also be commensurate with this calculation. We cannot see this, but we can infer it from a certain logical deduction drawn by syllogism.

Likewise is the case with the powers that determine the life of things. To reiterate what I told you earlier, your life is a bundle of relationships; it is not limited to your physical body. A little common sense will tell you that you exist in this world by coordination, relationships and associations, etc., with other things in the world. Everything that you do, right from the morning to the evening, is nothing but an association that you establish, in some way or the other, with things outside. You cannot exist physically, independently, within your body. No one can exist without some sort of an atmospheric relationship. This atmosphere in which you are integrally placed—not mechanically placed, but very organically

placed—is a very vast environment around you.

I can give a very humorous example to illustrate this. It is very simple, but it will open your eyes to some startling facts. There is a watch, and it is supported by something. What is it that supports this watch? This little desk, this small table is the support of this watch. What is it that supports this small table? This floor. If the floor were not there, the table would not be standing here, and the watch would not be in this position. What is it that supports the floor? The beams underneath. If the beams were removed, the whole floor would collapse. What is it that supports the beams? The walls underneath. What is it that supports the walls? The Earth at the bottom. What is it that supports the Earth? Now you have to think a little bit. How is it that the Earth does not drop down somewhere? Without any support, it is hanging in space.

Nothing can hang in space. It is unthinkable. The Sun and the Moon, the planets and the stars are hanging in space without any support—with nothing at the bottom, and nothing from above, such as a chain, that can pull them up. The support of all these masses of matter cannot be seen with the eyes. They are mutually related. One pulls the other; one determines the movement of the other. If a systematic logical or mathematical determination of the movement of the one by the other were not to be there, there would be a clash of planets. The Earth would go and hit the Sun, or the Moon would

dash against something else. There is an orderly constitutional laying down of principles behind the movement of not merely the constituents of the Solar System, but also of the Milky Way, the galaxies, the nebulae, and so on, of which, as astronomers tell us, we are like specks of dust.

What is it that supports the Earth? The whole universe is supporting the Earth. The atmosphere of the cosmos is supporting the movement of the Earth. So what is it that supports this watch? Oh, you will be surprised. This little watch is being supported by the entire cosmos, not by this little desk, as a carpenter may say. A carpenter's vision is very poor. The knowledge of the geographer or the historian is a little wider. The astronomer knows much more, but even he knows little because it is not enough if we say that there is a cosmic interrelationship among the masses of matter we call the planets, etc. It is merely a statement which an astronomer makes, that there is such a relationship. But why should there be such a relationship? Who ordained that such a relationship should be there? Who made this law that the Sun should pull the Earth in a particular manner? Here we come to a stop. Our education tells us nothing further. We hold our breath in utter ignorance and awe, and are completely flabbergasted and put in a state of consternation. We realise that we are really ignorant, in spite of our education.

When we know the limits of our own

knowledge, we realise that our education has been nothing, a husk. When problems arise before us, we cannot solve them. A certificate that we have from a college is not going to solve our difficulties. It is a piece of paper with a little ink splashed on it. We cannot appease our hunger with that paper; and if a terrible confrontation is there in front of us, this little paper is not going to be of any help to us. What is it that is going to help us, finally?

Here begins true knowledge, true education. Perhaps many of you must have felt there is something wrong with what you studied, and it is very inadequate. You are all educated persons, well-read people, but I do not think that you are happy. Something tells you this is not sufficient; there is something lacking, and you have not been able to find out what it is, so you thought someone will tell you. I believe you will find someone who will tell you what you lack, because you are not unbefriended persons. You do not lack support or help in this world. You are not helpless people.

Many times you may feel, "I am unwanted, helpless, a poor nothing. Who cares for me?" This kind of feeling may sometimes enter into your mind. But be certain, at least from this moment onwards, that you are not a helpless nobody. Every moment you are seen by somebody. Millions of eyes are looking at you, and everything that you do is known everywhere, just as any occurrence in any part of your body is known to the whole body. If a stone hits a toe of your foot, it is not only the toe

that knows that this event has taken place. The whole body knows that the toe has been hit by a stone. This analogy will explain your relationship to things.

The universe is your family. Calcutta, New York—these are not your locations. This little example that I placed before you of the interrelationship of everything will reveal that you do not belong to a small nation, a country, a house, a parentage. Perhaps you do not even belong merely to this Earth. You should be happy to hear all this. “Oh, this is wonderful! I am not so poor and helpless as I appear. Do I belong to this universe, really? I thought I am only a citizen of Calcutta, Delhi or Bombay. I thought I am only a poor nobody living in a hut in Rishikesh. This is what I was thinking, and now I know it is not so. Do I belong to this Earth? I thought I am only a citizen of a small village or a big city. Now I am told I belong to this whole Earth. Wonderful! I am told something more. I am not only of this Earth, I belong to the Solar System.”

What a beautiful thing to hear! Your digestion will improve at once because you become so happy. “Is it so? Am I a friend of everybody? The Sun knows my existence. He will take care of me. How beautiful! If I fall sick, the whole world will come and help to relieve me of my illness. Doctors will run to me. Why should I run to doctors?” The world will be at your feet. Why should you run after the world?

Do you not think that you are protected by your family when you have any difficulty? If you are unable to get up from your bed, your mother comes, your father comes, your brother and sister come. Everybody comes: "My dear boy, what has happened to you? What can I do for you?" Do you not think that everybody in the family is concerned because you are not able to get up from the bed due to a little headache? Why is it so? Why is it that all your family members are running to you? It is because you belong to them. Similarly, if you know that you belong to this world, why should the world not come to you?

As I mentioned, you do not belong merely to this Earth; you belong to a larger atmosphere of the whole universe. All the citizens of the cosmos will run to help you: "My dear boy, what can I do for you?" If you hear these things, you will simply go mad. Your brain will cease to function. The joy which will inundate you will come in such a flood that you will not be able to open your mouth afterwards. "What a poor and idiotic life I was living up to this time, thinking that I am a little boy or a little girl, of this and that place, etc. I am eligible for support, protection and care from the forces of the universe, if the truth is that I am interrelated to all the forces—the cosmic rays and everything else."

You are a citizen of realms which are invisible to the eyes. Modern physics says that this world is not a realm of three dimensions. We have been told this again and again, and this has been dinned into our

ears, that this world is not a world of only three dimensions—of length, breadth and height, as it appears to our eyes. They say these three dimensions are only an illusion of a four-dimensional complex, which is the reality. Our brain has never been able to understand what this fourth dimension is, just as when we are dreaming we cannot know what is waking.

In dream a teacher may come and tell us there is such a thing called waking, but we will never understand what it is until we wake up. What is the use of going to a dream college and learning dream lessons from a dream professor in the dream world? Whatever he says has no relevance to reality because waking is something different from whatever is told and heard in the dream world. Such is the learning that we have. Whatever is told to us has no sense finally because all this knowledge is connected to this three-dimensional world which, we are told, is not the true world. It is not the true world, and what we learn from it is also not the truth. We can only infer the presence of a fourth dimension, just as in the dream world we can only infer that there is such a thing called the waking world, though we cannot see it with our eyes.

Finally, philosophy and all deeper studies appear to be inferences drawn by comparison with certain ultimate possibilities, because inference is not possible unless there is a syllogism; and for that, there should be a premise. Without a premise,

there is no deduction. Therefore, we cannot infer anything—such as that there is a fourth dimension, etc.—unless there is a premise to hang our arguments on. What is this premise? What is this indubitable referee which we can consult, and from which we can draw enlightenment to understand other things? Knowledge is an association of facts, and to make associations possible, there must be some background. We cannot have only associations without a connecting link between the parts which are associated. When there is such a thing called flying, there must be something that flies. There cannot be only flying without something that flies. Similarly, we cannot have associations, relationships, etc., without items with which we are related or associated. Likewise, we cannot draw a comparison or an inference without some point of reference which will determine the conclusions to be drawn by these associations, logical arguments, etc.

Rene Descartes, a philosopher of France, argued like this in his book called *Metaphysical Meditations*. All philosophers think like this, and many of you may also sometimes think like this. “Everything seems to be doubtful and unclear. I cannot come to any definite conclusion about anything. This may be true or that may be true. This may be true or it may not be true. How can I be sure of anything? What is the guarantee that what I see with my eyes is true? I may be in an illusion. Who tells me that this is the truth? Who tells me whether I am in a real world or

in a phantasmagoria? Am I waking or am I dreaming? Are my conclusions correct or are they not correct? Is there anything indubitable in this world? Is there anything which I cannot doubt, or is everything only a heap of doubts?" The philosopher Rene Descartes went on arguing thus.

In India, Acharya Sankara argued in this way when he wrote his introduction to the famous commentary on the Brahma Sutras. If everything can be a matter of doubt, naturally there must be someone who is doubting everything. The doubts are not the doubters. The doubt is different from the doubter. There cannot be only doubts without somebody who doubts—just as, as I mentioned, there cannot be merely the process of flying without something that flies.

Everything is doubtful, says the doubter. Now, can you doubt the fact that there is such a thing called doubt? Please listen to me very carefully. You can doubt everything, but you cannot doubt the fact that you are doubting. If you doubt that you are doubting, doubt does not exist; therefore, the fact that the doubter exists cannot be doubted. Everything can be doubted, but the existence of the doubter cannot be doubted. If the doubter is also doubted, there is no such thing called doubt. The whole thing is swept away.

"So there is something which is indubitable, a doubtless fact. The fact that I doubt cannot itself be doubted. This is a strong point for me," said Rene Descartes. And Sankaracharya tells us in his

commentary on the Brahma Sutras that the denier cannot deny himself. If the denier also denies himself together with all the things that he denies, the denial also goes; therefore, there is no such thing called denial. Therefore, the negator cannot be negated; the doubter cannot be doubted. There is some stronghold left for you in this doubtful world, and the stronghold is that you remain as a doubtless something.

What are you? "What do I mean by saying that I exist as a doubtless something? What is this I?" This was the analysis of Rene Descartes, and also of Sankaracharya. I believe all great men think alike, whether they belong to the East or to the West. They belong to a different brotherhood altogether; they have no nationality. Their thinking is very interesting: "I have come to confront something very valuable in my life. Perhaps there is a way of knowing what truth is. I have come to only one conclusion, finally, that though everything may be suspicious, doubtful and indeterminable, there is something which can be determined and cannot be doubted, and that is I myself. I cannot doubt that I am here. If I doubt that I am here, there must be somebody else to doubt that fact. So there is something behind, which does not allow any doubt to enter into its constitution. I am. This cannot be doubted."

Who can doubt that he is? However much you may doubt everything, you cannot doubt that you exist. You know very well, "I am." Well, everything

may be doubtful, but that “I am” is not doubtful. It is very clear. But what is meant by “I am”? You imagined that you are the son or daughter of some father or mother, and now I have told you that you are not merely that. Similarly, you imagined that you are this six-foot body, and now you will realise that you are not that either. This is another truth that will be revealed to you. You are not really this six-foot frame; there is something else inside you.

There are stages which you pass through where the physical body is discounted and is not necessary. For example, when you are dreaming, the body is not there as an object of your perception. You can dream even without the body. Did you exist in dream? Yes. Was the body there? No. So can you exist without the body? Yes, it follows that you can exist without the body. So does it follow that you are the body? It follows that perhaps you are not the body because you could be dreaming without the body. It is very simple. In a few seconds—by the analysis of the phenomenon of dream where you could be as a pure mind thinking, without relationship to the body—you will realise that you are not the body. So, what is your conclusion now? “I have come to the conclusion that I can exist without the body and, therefore, I am not the body. It is very clear.”

Then what else are you? “Well, from the fact of dream, it amounts to saying that perhaps I am a mind that thinks, because in dream there is only a mind. I now realise that I am not the body because I

could dream in the mind, through the mind, as a mind in dream without the body.”

But in deep sleep, where was the mind? It was not working. Did you exist in sleep? Yes. Was the body there? No. Was the mind there? No. What were you, then? Very strange! “I was in deep sleep, yes. Of course I did exist. But I did not exist as a body, and I also did not exist as a mind.” How could you know that you existed in sleep when you knew nothing in sleep? There was no body, no mind, nobody to think anything. Then who is saying that you are existing in sleep? But you are still sure that you slept. You say, “Last night I had a good sleep.” Who is saying this? Not the body. Do not say the body is saying this, because it was not there. Even the mind is not saying this, because the mind was not working. So who is saying that there was a good sleep last night? Go deep into this fact.

You are a mystery. You people sitting in front of me are mysteries. You are not boys and girls. You are not these bodies and minds. Therefore, you are not human beings. If you are not the body and not the mind, as can be known through this little analysis of waking and dream, you come to the conclusion that you are not a human being at all. Well, if to be a human being is to be associated with a mind and a body of this nature, then if you are associated with a human body and a human way of thinking, you say you are a human being. But in the state of deep sleep, you could exist without the association of the body and the mind; therefore,

you could be without association with the nature of a human being. Because in deep sleep you did not exist as merely a human being, therefore your essential nature transcends humanity. This is another great mystery that is revealed about you.

Do not forget what I told you. I have told you a lot within these few minutes, and if you can remember these things with clarity of thought, perhaps I need not speak to you again. What I told you today is enough, but it will not remain in the mind. It will slip out of your minds the moment you go out the door. So be careful.

I have now brought you to the conclusion that you are mysterious somethings which are dissociated from the body and the mind. What it is, and what further conclusions follow from this interesting analysis, we shall refer to another time.

## **Chapter 2**

### **THE RELIGIOUS IDEAL OF GOD-REALISATION**

Now bring your minds back to where we left during the previous session, and continue the thread of the analysis. A study of the phenomena of waking and dream has given us an indication that we are perhaps neither the body nor the mind. A very strange circumstance seems to overtake us when we are fast asleep. Very few might have found time to contemplate the mystery and the enigma that is hidden behind this experience called sleep. We generally just go to sleep as if everything is fine and it is all a simple affair, but it is not so simple as it appears. There is an indescribable satisfaction that follows our entry into the state of deep sleep.

Everyone knows the importance of getting into the state of sleep. It brings us not merely a novel type of satisfaction incomparable with the joys of the world, but it also energises us. Even a sick person wakes up with a new strength and a rejuvenated spirit, a result that follows spontaneously by the mere fact of our having gone to sleep. It is difficult to understand from where we receive this energy when we have eaten nothing in sleep. We have come in contact with nothing which we can call an object of the world. There was practically no relationship with any type of objective existence. Yet the satisfaction of sleep is superior to every other delight that we may be

familiar with through contact of the senses with physical objects. From where has this joy arisen, and how is it that we are energised and seem to receive a strength of our own? No one can know how this happens and why it should be like that.

But before we try to seek an answer to this difficult question, we will pursue the chain of the argument that we followed in the previous session. When we are fast asleep, we are not bodies, we are not minds. It is very clear that even in dream, we seem to be operating as individuals independent of bodily connection; but in sleep we seem to be existing even without the activity of the mind. Minus the body and minus the mind, what are we?

Physiology and psychology get exhausted in the body and the mind; therefore, in the condition of sleep we seem to be in a state which physiology and psychology cannot touch. Therefore, physiologists, doctors, medical men, biologists cannot understand us. Nor can psychologists understand us, because we can exist independent of the area which is accessible to the psychologist or the medical man.

In what condition do we exist in sleep? Perhaps we would be able to conclude that we did not exist there even as human beings. We never felt that we were men or women, that we were family individuals. We never knew that we belonged even to this Earth itself. It was a state of utter unawareness. "I knew nothing." This is what everyone says when he wakes up from sleep. Now, this is not a very simple statement that a person

makes. We are making a very significant statement when we say "I knew nothing". We are saying this without knowing what we are saying, like a child blabbering a great truth without being able to probe into the intricacies of it. We merely blurt out that we knew nothing. But if we make a judicial enquiry into this statement, we will find that we have been caught by this very statement. If we knew nothing, how could we say we knew nothing? One who knows nothing cannot even make a statement that he knows nothing because it is a self-contradictory statement. An obliteration of awareness automatically precludes any statement regarding it, because no statement is possible unless there is an awareness precedent to the statement. We cannot make a statement about a condition of which we have no experience. We cannot say anything about what we have not experienced in some form or other, positively or negatively.

We had an experience of sleep; no one would deny that. "Yes, I did sleep." This memory, or remembrance of the fact of having slept, is a great clue to a secret of our own existence. Here we have a key to opening the door of a great enigma. Let us argue logically, very leisurely, without any emotions and without any presuppositions. The memory of having slept is a result that follows from our experience of having slept, because memory is nothing but a recollection of a past experience. When we say that we remember something, we

mean that we can recollect having passed through a condition of some sort or other. To have a memory of an experience, we must have had an experience. And what is "experience"? Experience is a conscious undergoing of a process, a state of affairs which becomes a content of our awareness. Where there is no awareness, there is no experience. We do not speak of experience when consciousness is completely absent. There is no experience when there is no consciousness. Therefore, if in sleep there is absolutely no consciousness, as we are likely to believe, there cannot be any experience of it; and if there is no experience of it, there cannot be any memory of it.

Now, the fact that there is memory of having slept indicates that there ought to have been some sort of an experience in which consciousness was hidden, latent or patent. We cannot observe the phenomenon of consciousness in sleep. We can only infer it. When we see muddy water in the Ganga, we infer that there must have been rain uphill. We have not seen the rain, but we conclude that it must have been raining; otherwise, the water would not be muddy.

There is a very interesting analogy which epistemologists sometimes bring forward to substantiate the logical conclusions we arrive at by this sort of reasoning. There is a person who never eats during the day. We never see him eating even once, right from morning till the night, but we find him becoming bulkier and bulkier, stouter and

stouter every day. He is putting on weight. How is it possible if he does not eat during the day? So we infer that he must be eating at night; otherwise, how could it be possible that a person becomes heavier, stouter and healthier by eating nothing? In epistemological circles, this argument is called *arthapatti*. Likewise, the memory of having slept soundly brings out the truth that this memory would be impossible if there had been no consciousness whatsoever. We would have not existed at all if there was nothing left. But we know that we existed. How could we know that we existed unless there was some sort of an awareness? Here is a very important point for us to probe into.

The study is not yet complete. This awareness that we existed in sleep is not conditioned by either the mind or the body, or by any sort of objective phenomenon. Neither the physical nor the psychological world were there to limit this awareness. It was, therefore, a pure principle of unlimited awareness. It was unlimited because it was not restricted by either mental phenomena or physical phenomena. Apart from this fact of its having been unrestricted by the mind and the body, the very nature of consciousness would reveal that it cannot be limited by any external presence.

The study of consciousness is the most difficult of studies because consciousness cannot become an object of study. Consciousness can never become a thing visible to the senses, or even cognisable by

the mind, because of the fact that consciousness precedes the operation of the mind and the senses. It is the experiencer; therefore, it cannot be experienced as an external to its own self. Something cannot become both a subject and an object at the same time. Consciousness is always a subject, and it is the seer, the hearer, the toucher, the experiencer, and the knower of everything.

Consciousness, in which state we existed in the state of deep sleep, is not capable of limitation by anything that exists anywhere because—listen to me very carefully here—the very awareness of the presence of limitation would prove that awareness is beyond limitation. When we say there is a boundary and a limitation to a particular thing, we are aware, at the same time, that there is something beyond the boundary. The consciousness of limitation implies an awareness of that which is beyond the limit. Hence, even to imagine that consciousness can be limited, consciousness should be beyond limitation.

Also, we cannot imagine that consciousness can be divided into parts. It cannot be segmented or partitioned because to imagine that there can be parts in consciousness would be to imagine simultaneously that there could be a gap of space between one part and another part. But who is there to know there is a gap between one part and another part? Nobody can know it except consciousness itself. So consciousness should also be present midway between the two imagined

parts, which means to say, parts are impossible in consciousness.

What follows from all these analyses? Consciousness is not capable of division. It is indivisible, it is impartite, and it is limitless. This is only an inference we can draw because we cannot actually see or experience it for an important reason, which will be the subject of our studies a little later.

This fact of our having somehow or other stumbled upon an indivisibility and an unlimitedness is the source of our joy in sleep. Why are we so happy when we go to sleep? Because, knowingly or unknowingly, we have been enthroned in the kingdom of the Absolute. But we are blindfolded. We have been lifted by some power and placed in the context of a limitless being, only we are prevented from being aware of this fact. Suppose somebody blindfolds us, covers our eyes tightly, does not allow us to see anything, and lifts us and places us on the throne of an emperor. We would not know that we are seated on the throne, though it is true that we are on it.

The Upanishads give another analogy. Going into the state of deep sleep is something like a person walking over a treasure every day, not knowing that he is walking over it. There is a treasure trove under the earth, and every day we are walking over it. What is the use of walking over it when we do not know that it is there—or being very wealthy, very rich, but not being aware that

we are so?

Therefore, we can know the importance of awareness. Our being anything would convey no meaning to us if our consciousness were not attached to it. Therefore, the greatest principle and reality of the universe is consciousness. Minus consciousness, everything is a corpse. All our possessions, all our relationships, and all our wealth and glory amount to nothing when consciousness is dissociated from it. To be a king is to be conscious that one is a king. To be rich is to be conscious that one is rich. To be anything is to be conscious that one is that thing. Minus consciousness, nothing is.

Hence, the deep potentiality of the indivisibility of being, into which we are taken in the state of deep sleep, brings us an indivisible happiness. The happiness of sleep is incapable of limitation. If an emperor who rules the whole Earth could not sleep for one year, he would rather sleep and not be an emperor than be an emperor without sleep, because in sleep we go to our own self. In waking and dream we move away from ourselves. There is an aberration of consciousness. In a philosophical style, we may say in waking and dream we move towards the not-self. In sleep we go towards the self.

Now, you will be wondering how such an energy and such a satisfaction can follow from entry into one's own self. The common belief is that happiness is due to the contact of consciousness

with an object, and the commonsense view is that the powers and the joys of life are the result of coming in contact with the things of the world. But I say a different thing altogether. The joys of the world are not true joys. They are a sort of make-believe into which we are diverted by a peculiar circumstance in which we get involved. Why do we feel happy when we have a desirable object in our possession? We may be under the impression that the object gives us joy: "I have this possession; I am so happy." Possession makes us happy. Even the thought of a dear object brings us joy, and when we see the object with our eyes, it brings us greater joy. When the object comes nearer to us, it is a still greater joy. When the object is under our control and possession, it is an indescribable joy. When the object has become part of our nature—we have become one with it, we have absorbed it into our being, it is no more outside us—we go mad with joy. Hence, joy is the union of the subject and the object. The nearer the object comes to us, the greater is our satisfaction in respect of it.

Think over this phenomenon once again. We are happy because we have a consciousness of our having come in union with the object. It is not enough if the object is merely placed on our lap, minus a consciousness of it. There must be an inward organic association with it. The governor of the Reserve Bank of India or the Bank of England cannot be said to be happy because he has millions of rupees or pounds in his hand. He has control

over a large sum of currency because he is the governor of a bank, but he is getting a petty salary like anybody else. He has no organic connection with the object on which he is sitting. Hence, mere physical contact with an object cannot bring joy. If we hold the purse of someone else in our hand, it cannot bring us joy. It must be our purse. Another's purse will only bring dissatisfaction, agony and insecurity.

Therefore, coming in contact with an object is not enough. There must be a conscious participation in the existence of that object. Again we come to the phenomenon of consciousness. You can imagine how important it is. If your consciousness cannot organically participate in the presence of the object, you will not derive any satisfaction from it. And if the object remains outside you, disconnected from you, you will not be satisfied. There should be an inward relationship between the object desired for and the subjective awareness. As experienced people in this world, you know this very well. There can be a deep dissatisfaction of a few members within the family if there is no inward relationship among them, notwithstanding the fact that one member is only a few inches away from the other. One would not like to speak to the other, and they turn their faces away from each other even if they are physically touching. Hence, physical contact is not enough, and that is not the cause of your joy. It is an entry of consciousness into the object, and

the object's participation in the structure of your consciousness, that becomes the source of satisfaction. Then how does it follow that objects in the world bring joy? They do not bring any joy. You are under an illusion.

What happens is this. When there is a desire for any particular thing in the world, consciousness moves out in space and in time, through the channel of the mind and the senses, in the direction of that object. When consciousness moves out of yourself, you have gone out from your own self. There is a self-aberration of yourself. You are no more yourself. When you love an object, when you think deeply of an object with a longing for it, you have transferred your personality to that object. The subject has become an object. You have become somebody else, and there can be nothing worse for you. To lose yourself and transfer yourself into the position, the structure and the context of another would be to become a slave of that thing, to sell yourself to that thing, and to lose your existence itself. When, due to desire for the object, the subject enters into the object through the movement of consciousness, which channelises itself through the mind and the senses, there is a loss of self-consciousness.

What you call unhappiness is the same as the loss of self-consciousness. The more you love an object, the more you forget yourself. A person who is intensely in love with something else has no consciousness of his own self. He becomes mad,

practically. He becomes a crazy individual, losing self-control. This has become an unfortunate event in the mind of a person because he has lost himself. Here we remember the great saying of Christ: "What good is it to gain the whole world and lose your own self?" But everyone in the world is trying to do only this—to gain the whole world and lose one's own self.

We run after the things of world and would like to possess the whole world, and even the Sun and the Moon. We go to Mars and Jupiter, but it does not matter. We want only these; but we have lost ourselves. We have cut the ground from under our own feet and we are in a totally helpless condition, but we are not aware that this is happening to us. In the movement of the mind towards an object, therefore, there is a loss of self, and the self has become the not-self; the Atman has become the *anatman*. Then what happens? Great sorrow befalls us. A person who has desired an object but could not get it is in a very unfortunate state.

What happens to the mind when the object comes nearer and is apparently possessed? The mind ceases to think of the object. The necessity to think of the object ceases because of the satisfaction or the conviction that the object has come to one's own possession. When you cease from thinking of the object on account of the belief that you are in control of the object, the mind has returned to the self. The mind returns to the self; you come back to your own self. The not-self has come back to the self

under the notion that there is no further necessity to move into the not-self. When you have entered into the self, you have touched the border of this indivisible core that you are, about which we discussed a few minutes before as a state into which we enter in deep sleep.

What happens in deep sleep also happens when you come in contact with loveable objects. The phenomenon is the same. When you go to sleep, you know nothing about yourself, and when you are in possession of the dearest object that you can think of, you are again in a state of deep sleep only, but of a different type. You are in a rapturous mood, which cannot be described. "Oh, I have got it." This feeling that you have got what you require has brought you back to yourself. This coming back to yourself is the source of your joy, and not the physical possession of the object. As I told you, a mere physical contact cannot bring you joy.

Hence, it is untrue that the world can give you joy. The joys of the world are only a phenomenon which arises on account of this peculiar inward mystery that operates behind the fact of your coming in contact with objects. When you see an object, you do not know what is happening to the mind. So whether you are in a state of happiness in waking or you are in a state of happiness in sleep, you are in your own self; and when you are unhappy, you have moved away from yourself.

This self cannot be an object. It has to be always a subject. *Vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād* (B.U.

2.4.14): “Who can know the knower?” says the Upanishad. Who can see the seer? We cannot see our own eyes, because our eyes are they that see. And, with a greater emphasis, it is true that consciousness cannot become an object of consciousness. Consciousness cannot become its own object, because it is the knower of the objects; and inasmuch as we have concluded by a study of the nature of consciousness that it is impartite, that it is indivisible, it follows that it is universal. Anything that is indivisible is universal because to be divisible is to be involved in the relation of subject and object, and such a division is not possible in consciousness for the reasons already noted. This again will lead us to the conclusion that our essential core is universality, and not particularity. So when we go to sleep, what happens to us? We unconsciously touch the border of universality. That is why there is such a reaction set up and we suddenly get transformed into a superhuman state, as it were, and come back with an experience which we cannot describe through words.

Now, if you connect what I told you today with what I told you during the previous session, you will realise that our essential core as human beings is inseparable from the structure of the universe. Yesterday I told you something about the nature of the universe, and the possible relation that subsists between ourselves and the universe. Today I took you down deep into your own self, and here again

we seem to realise that not only our external structure, but even our essential pith is inseparable from the pattern of the universe.

We are organically connected to all things. Hence, when we come back to our own selves either by the phenomenon of the so-called possession of a dear object or by entering into sleep, we suddenly contact the whole universe, not knowing what is actually happening to us. But this experience is only for a flash of a moment. We cannot be happy for a long time. Even if we have the good fortune of enjoying the greatest satisfaction in life, it cannot be a continued satisfaction. It has a beginning and an end, and it has breaks in the middle. We cannot be always in that condition because this contact with the Universal is not given to us for a long time, for various reasons.

The practice of yoga, about which you have heard so much, is nothing but this graduated attempt that you are making to come in contact with your deepest essence, which is commensurate with the structure of the universe. In yoga you try to do two things at the same time: go deep into your own self, and expand yourself to all things. There is an increase in the dimension of your personality on one side, and there is an entry into the deepest essence of your being on the other side. Therefore, to go within very deep, and to go without very far, mean one and the same thing. This is why modern science, which has tried to move externally and reach the farthest limit, as it were, of externality,

has come to the very same conclusion which the ancient masters arrived at by an inward analysis. This is perhaps the meaning of the oft-quoted saying, "Thou art That. Know thyself and be free."

How could you be free by knowing your own self? You can have some idea as to how this could be. Knowing your own self is not knowing yourself as so-and-so. You have already understood to some extent that you are not any of these things—neither a man nor a woman, not even a body, not even a mind, not even a human being. Therefore, to know your own self would be to enter into the impersonal quintessence of your being, which is also the quintessential essence of everything else. When you sink below the surface of a wave in the ocean, you have touched the ocean, which is the root of all the other waves at the same time. So is the case when you go deep into your own self; you have touched the depths of everybody in the world. So to know yourself is to know everybody at the same time. Wonderful is this discovery! To know yourself is to know everybody. If you know yourself, you know the whole of creation. Again to repeat, to go to the root of a particular wave in the ocean is to know that which is at the root of every other wave also, so to know that which is the deepest essence in you would be simultaneous with the knowledge of the deepest essence of the whole cosmos.

This will, to some extent, solve the great question of the existence of God, a problem that is generally discussed in the philosophy of religion. I

have not uttered the word “God” up to this time. Now I bring you to this theme of the well-known, interesting ideal which religions generally speak of as God. What is meant by it?

The analyses that we have conducted up to this time seem to be complete in themselves, yet there is some question which remains to be answered: the religious ideal of God-realisation, about which people speak so much and so many books are written in various ways. Often we are frightened by this word. We can be shaken from our roots by the very thought of a thing called the Almighty, or the Godhead. We are frightened because of a subconscious suggestion that it is a terrific force, an incomprehensible power which we cannot confront with the apparatus of which our individuality is at present constituted.

Normally we look upon God as an object of awe. It is a frightening something. Religions have managed to keep us always in a state of awe by saying that God is above; the Father is in heaven. God is not on Earth. Because God is not on Earth, we feel very helpless. If our great Father is in heaven and He is not on Earth, we are wretched indeed. This brings a sort of fear, and we always look to the skies when we pray to God. We are introduced into these religious moods by the education that we have received through our families and our schools and colleges, and the traditions in which we are living.

Teachers of religion, both in the West and in the

East, have deeply considered this matter. Great thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine in the medieval ages of Europe, and even much earlier Plato, Aristotle and others, and Acharya Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava and the teachers of the Vedanta philosophy in India have bestowed sufficient thought on the problem of the existence of God in its relation to the structure of the universe and the makeup of man. This consideration generally goes by the name of philosophy or, in a restricted sense, it is called metaphysics. The study of the relationship between God, world and soul is philosophy proper. It is the foundation of religion, and you cannot practice even yoga without knowing something about these things because when you do yoga, you must know what you are aiming at finally.

What do you want to gain by yoga? Try to answer this question to your own self. You cannot have an easy answer to this query unless you analyse all these questions and problems threadbare so that all these issues of life become perspicuous before your mental eye, and there is no doubt left in your mind.

Into this theme of the foundation of religious philosophy we enter now.

### **Chapter 3**

## **THE FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY**

The foundations of religion lie deep in the awareness of the relation that subsists among the primary principles of God, the world and the individual. A study of these ultimate truths often goes by the name of philosophy, metaphysics, ontology, theology, etc. God, the world and the individual—these sum up the principle scaffolding structure of every kind of study or any branch of learning, for the matter of that. All social relations that give rise to studies which are usually called humanities also come under the relationships already mentioned, namely, the mutual relation of individuals.

During the previous session I brought your mind to a point where it could concentrate upon the possible character of the Ultimate Reality. What is meant by Reality? What is real? Great thinkers have bestowed considerable thought on this question. Anything, any circumstance, any event or any phenomenon which has a tendency to transcend itself, to change itself, to transform itself or to undergo any kind of modification cannot be regarded as real in itself because self-satisfaction is a character of Reality, and the tendency to outgrow oneself, transcend oneself or move away from oneself is the opposite of it. We move from one place to another place because we are not satisfied with one place. If a particular point in space were

all-in-all, complete in itself and self-satisfying, there would be no need for even motion. But nothing in the world rests without motion. Everything moves, everything changes, and everything gets transformed into some other condition.

The urge for self-transformation and movement is, naturally, a direction taken in a particular manner. All movement is in a direction, whatever be the nature of that direction. The tendency of any organism or any substance in the world is towards the achievement of a purpose. The purpose of the movement of a river is to reach the ocean. The purpose of the cellular activity of living organisms is to build themselves up into a superior self-supporting individuality which can adjust and adapt to the environment of the world. Likewise, there is a purpose, an aim or a destination before the mind's eye of any kind of movement, whether consciously known or not known.

Since all transformation of any kind has to be regarded as a tendency to the achievement of a state where further transformation would not be necessary, we are logically led to the conclusion that nothing in the world can be called real because there is nothing in the world which does not change itself, transform itself or tend towards something beyond itself. There is nothing in the world which has no desire of some kind or the other. Even molecules and atoms seem to manifest a desire to reorganise themselves into a new pattern of molecules, etc. Every moment seems to be

conditioned by a purpose, and this purpose is the Reality towards which transformation gets directed. Though we cannot comprehend within our minds what Ultimate Reality can be, we can infer that such a thing has to be. It ought to be there if the processes of the world are to assume any meaning at all. Life loses all sense, significance and meaning if its movements and processes are not directed to a particular end or purpose. A sensible movement is a purposive movement. A purposeless movement cannot be regarded as significant in any manner; and what we call Reality is nothing but this purpose.

Now, this would also imply, by way of suggestion, that Reality has degrees. How does it follow? It follows from the fact that every individual in the world cannot have a uniform consciousness, or awareness, of the purpose of life. It is true that everything has a purpose, and every person has an aim in view behind every kind of movement, activity or intention, but this purpose is not uniform in the intensity of its manifestation or the dimension of its comprehension. I have an aim in what I do, and you have an aim in what you do. It is very clear. If even an ant is crawling on the floor, it moves in a direction with a purpose. If the wind blows and it rains, and the sun shines, there is some great purpose in these organic movements of nature. Granted. But my idea of my aim behind my activities every day, and your idea of your aim, and the ant's aim, and the aim of atoms and molecules may not be uniform in their nature, notwithstanding the fact

that everything is directed towards a purpose or an aim.

The dissimilarity of the structural pattern of the purposes envisaged by different individuals would imply that there are degrees in the consciousness of Reality. Whether there are really degrees in Reality or we are only encountering it in this manner is a different question, which we will touch upon a little later. However, for the time being, it appears that everyone in the world is not thinking of a common purpose, at least in the outer form in which it manifests itself. But there is a basic similarity in spite of a dissimilarity in detail. This gives us some hint as to the fundamental character of Reality.

The foundational similarity among the purposes envisaged by individuals is that there is a subtle longing in everyone and in everything for a perfection which knows no limitation. Though we cannot define Reality in adequate terms in our own language, we can accept this much: Reality has to be a state of perfection where no dissatisfaction or inadequacy of any kind can prevail. This much we have to concede, though we may not be able to say much else about it. A state of perfection is an achievement of every conceivable objective, a union with every type of aim which the mind can conceive. It may be an infinite expansiveness in power, dominion and possessions, and an infinite expansion in the time process, a deathless or an infinitely prolonged length of life, and a satisfaction which is of the most intense nature. At present we

may confine ourselves to these three features, at least, of what we may call perfection.

To the extent that there is something outside us which will limit our operations, to that extent we may say we are not perfect. Where there is freedom given to us to have infinite operations, and there is nothing to limit us outside, we may be said to be spatially infinite. Spatial and temporal limitation are the basic limits set to our activities and our existence. The presence of space includes or implies the presence of persons and things other than ourselves, so we look very small. We are just one individual among many others. We are terribly limited to this little body. Very finite we are, on account of the presence of other finites. The existence of other finites is a limitation put upon a particular finite. Also, the limitation of time imposed upon any finite object limits it durationally or temporally. There is death or destruction of every finite object.

Now, we would not like to be involved in these things if we were given utter freedom. We would wish not to be destroyed and not to be subjected to the abolition of our finitude by the hands of death; and we would also wish not to be limited by the presence of other persons, other individualities, other things in the world. This desire within the individual again indicates the nature of the purpose or aim towards which individualities are moving, a perfection which will try its best to break the boundaries of space and overcome the limitations

of time.

Hence, a uniform character of all the purposes of all individuals, irrespective of the details of their differences, would be that state where space and time are overcome. None of us can even imagine what it would be to exist in a state beyond space and time. Whatever be the extent to which we scratch our heads, we will not be able to understand what it is to be beyond space and beyond time because nobody has gone beyond space, and nobody has overcome the limitations of time.

But there is an urge within; there is a longing inside which refuses to restrict itself to the heavy limitations imposed upon it by space and time. This great purpose of the universe can be regarded as the Ultimate Reality of things. Religions call this Reality as God. In Sanskrit terminology this great Reality is sometimes designated as Ishvara, the Supreme Substance, the Absolute, so called because there is nothing external to it. It is not related to anything else.

Every finite is related to every other finite by way of mutual action and reaction. Inasmuch as here is a state where relations of any kind are completely obviated on account of its transcendence of space and time, we call it the Absolute. It is so called because it is non-relative. "The Absolute" is a term that we use for a state of existence which is free from relations of every kind due to freedom from external contacts.

Adepts in this lofty thinking generally tell us that the Supreme Being is free from three kinds of limitation. There are three kinds of limitation, which in Sanskrit are called *sajatiya bheda*, *vijatiya bheda* and *svagata bheda*. *Bheda* means difference. There are three kinds of difference in the world. The first one is what is called *sajatiya bheda*. *Jati* means a class, a category, a species. *Sajatiya* means that which pertains to a species, a class or a category. So there is one kind of difference which pertains to class, category or species. What is meant by this?

All people belong to one species, called humanity. We are all human beings, but there is difference among ourselves, and this does not require any explanation. We all know how one person is different from another person, though all persons belong to one category, one species of mankind, or humankind. All trees belong to the category of trees, but one tree is not the same as another tree in every respect. So this is one kind of difference—a distinction that obtains between individuals of one particular category. This does not obtain in the Absolute. This *sajatiya bheda*, which we see in this world, is not to be seen in the Supreme Being because the Absolute is not an individual belonging to a species.

The second difference is *vijatiya bheda*, the difference that obtains between one species and another species. Man is different from animals, human beings are different from plants, and so on.

The distinction that obtains between one species and another species, one category and another category, one class of beings and another class of beings, is *vijatiya bheda*. This also does not obtain in the Absolute because there is nothing external to the Absolute.

The third kind of difference is called *svagata bheda*. *Svagata* means intrinsic difference. The right hand is different from the left hand, the head is different from the feet, the heart is different from the lungs, and so on. These are limbs of a particular individual. Parts of a single organism differ one from the other, notwithstanding the fact that they belong to a single organism. Differences that obtain between parts of a single organic body are called *svagata bheda*. This does not obtain in the Absolute because the Absolute has no internal parts. The Supreme Being has no internal differences, no external differentiation, and no distinction of class or category or species.

The Supreme Being is also that which persists in the past, present and future. What is Reality? Truth, or Reality, is that which is uniformly persistent in the past, present and future. As we know that in this world there is nothing which can persist in a uniform manner in the past, present and future, it appears the world does not contain Reality. It would follow in some way that if the Supreme Being is of this nature as defined now, and we cannot see anything in this world which is of this nature, God has to be beyond the world. The

consequences of this concept of the transcendence of God as an extra-cosmic Creator beyond the world will be studied by us later. This leads to the various religious philosophies of India, and of the whole world. This much you may have to remember today regarding the nature of the Ultimate Reality.

But there is a thing called the world. We can see it before our eyes. The world insists that its existence should be recognised. We cannot say “no” to it. The processes of nature compel us to accept its existence. There is a thing outside us called the world. Though deep philosophical analysis has led us to a conclusion that there is something beyond the world, yet there is also a thing called the world. What is the connection between the world and this great Reality that we have just now studied by analysis?

In one sentence, I told you that often it appears that the Real is not in this world because of its Supreme non-exclusive character. If it is transcendent totally, it can bear no relation to the world. If that which is called Real is not to be visualised, seen or recognised in anything in this world, which is subject to transformation, change and death, we cannot conceive of any kind of relationship between God and the world. If that is the case, you and I, involved in this world, cannot reach God. The aspiration for God would be a futile attempt because we have already decided that there is no connection between us and God. There are some philosophers who feel that this is the state

of affairs, to which we shall revert later on. This is frightening, and will put us out of balance in one second. If all our hopes are hopeless and all our desires are a cry in the wilderness, if all our activities are working in a dream and all our ambitions are a phantasm, man can go mad in one second.

But there is something implanted in man himself which does not believe that this is the final state of affairs. The aspiration within man is proof enough of the possibility of a permanent relationship between the world and Reality. No human being can rest contented with the conclusion that God is totally transcendent to the extent of a severance of relationship with the world. Whatever be one's reason behind it, the heart will not permit it because the great root of the human personality seems to feel that it has a relation to the Ultimate Being. Our aspirations, our desires, our activities, and all the projects that we are undertaking in this world are a standing refutation of any conclusion to the effect that God is totally transcendent and unrelated to the world. Here is an enigma placed before us. From one side, it looks that there is no connection between God and the world, and from the other side, it looks that without such relationship, our existence itself would be meaningless. So here we leave the question for the time being.

God and the world and the individual—yourself and myself and every blessed thing—constitute the

individualities, or the contents, of the world. What is the relationship between you and the world? This point I have already touched upon during the first session itself when I brought you round to the way of thinking which leads to the conclusion that the universe is an organism, a total whole, and not a house divided against itself. The cosmos is one integrated completeness; therefore, all its contents—including yourself, myself and all things—have to be related to it in an integral fashion as limbs of the body or cells of our own organism. Your relationship to the world is organic, not mechanistic. You know the difference between mechanical relation and organic relation, about which I also mentioned some detail. A mechanistic relationship is the connection of parts to a whole, like the parts of a machine of any kind, wherein one part is not having any living connection with another part. A motor of any kind can be regarded as a mechanical structure with many parts involved in it, yet one part has no organic connection with another part; we can remove one part and replace it with another. But an organic connection is an inseparable relationship, like the parts operating in a living body. Such is the relation of man to the universe.

From this point of view, it would appear that the world is not outside us. The fact that the world is not outside us follows from the fact of our integral relationship to the universe. If it is not outside us, where is it then? Does it mean it is

inside us? There are some people who say the world is inside us. It is not so. The world is neither inside us nor outside us. What it actually is, and where it is, you yourself will be able to understand by a few seconds of contemplation of the fact of your inseparability to its structure. The parts of your own body are neither outside you nor inside you; they are inseparable and integrally related to you.

The question of relation is the central point on which every philosophical discussion hangs, finally. Causal relation is the greatest of all relations—one thing causing another thing, or giving rise to another thing, or for the matter of that, any kind of relation to any other thing. You will find that there is some peculiarity in the concept of relation. It is not so simple as it appears on the surface. Imagine that there are two things, A and B. You cannot imagine any sort of relationship between A and B unless A and B are two different things. If A is the same as B, the question of relationship does not arise. It is taken for granted that A and B are two different things and, therefore, you are trying to see a relationship between them. But if they are totally different, the question of relationship does not arise. You have already concluded there is no connection between A and B, and yet you are saying there should be a relation, so it is a self-contradictory statement.

We do not know what we are saying when we say there is a relation between this and that. We

make statements without sense. Yet, it has a deeper sense which escapes outer notice, in the same way as we find ourselves in a great difficulty in understanding the relationship between God and the world. Yet, this difficulty can be solved by the employment of a proper apparatus of understanding.

The relationship of one thing to another thing, of one individual to another individual, and of all individuals to the world, and the world to God, finally—all these relationships are of a similar nature in the sense that everything seems to be hanging on everything else, and one thing cannot be understood without the other. How one thing is decided by another, or determined by another, you can know by an analysis you can conduct in regard to your own self. You become aware of the world outside after first being sure that you exist. For instance, when you wake up from sleep, you do not suddenly become aware of things outside, especially when you are in a very deep sleep. You will not even be able to know where the door or the window are. In such a state of affairs, you will not be suddenly aware of things outside. There is a total unconsciousness in sleep; and when you wake up, there is a slight and faint feeling that you exist.

When you arise from sleep tomorrow morning, try to analyse this circumstance. You will find that you know nothing except that you are barely existent. You will not even be able to see your own clothing. Whether the clothes are on or not, you will

not know. You will know this after a few moments. You will simply be aware that you are there as something indeterminate and indescribable. After a few minutes, you will know what you are: "I am such and such." Then you will become aware of the presence of articles outside, that things exist outside you. There are walls, there is a door, there is a window, and somebody in front of you. At first you will not be able to recognise who it is. Then after a few minutes you will know that it is so-and-so.

The awareness of the presence of the world outside is a consequence that follows from the primary assurance of our existence. If we exist, the world also has to exist, because the world is only a name that we give to the atmosphere around us. A spatio-temporal environment around us is what we call the world, and inasmuch as we are here as finite individuals, we are forced to feel the presence of other individuals also located in a similar atmosphere. This is called the world. Now you can imagine how the presence of the world is connected with you, and how you are also related to it in an inseparable manner.

But then a third thing introduces itself, and it cannot be seen with the eyes. You see only yourself and the world; the third thing cannot be seen, but your reason will tell you a third thing should exist in order that you may be aware that the world is. How do you know that the world exists except by a mechanism of knowledge that operates between

you and the world outside?

There is a process of awareness which connects you, as an individual, with the world, which is the object of your awareness. This connecting link between you and the world is something invisible to the eyes, but its existence has to be postulated. Inasmuch as this is a relation that has to be there between every individual and its object, if you carefully think over it, you will realise that this is a universal necessity. This conscious relationship between the seer and the seen, yourself and the world, is a universal need which is to be accepted as the only factor that can explain how you become aware of the world at all. This universal relation is, again, that which is considered to be the Ultimate Reality of the world, a Transcendent Being which is outside the purview of sensory activity and mental operation. It cannot be seen with the eyes because it is the seer, and not the seen. That which propels you to see cannot be seen with any organ of sensation, mentation or ratiocination. Yourself, the world, and a transcendent Reality are thus integrally related—God, the world and the individual.

There was a great thinker called Ramanuja, one of the great philosophers of India, who established a great religious system called Vishishtadvaita, in which he considers this sort of relation obtaining between God, the world and the individual. The Supreme Being is God Himself, the Absolute, the Ultimate Substance which is the universal relation

of all things, like the intelligence pervading our own body. But we know our intelligence is not the same as our body. There is some sort of a difference. Hence, he concluded that the world is not the same as God, yet it cannot be outside God, even as our body cannot be outside our consciousness. We cannot keep our body somewhere and our consciousness somewhere else. They go together. There is an intimate, inseparable relationship between body and soul, our physical organism and our consciousness inside. Similar is the relationship between the world and the Supreme Being, said Ramanuja. The world is not the same as God because it is material in nature, unconscious, changing, transforming, subject to destruction, whereas God is immortal, so how can the one be the same as the other? We know very well that our intelligence is immortal, but the body is perishable. This analogy was extended to the ultimate cosmic principles, and Ramanuja concluded that the individuals, the *jivas*—yourself, myself, and all others—also are parts of this Cosmic Body, like the cells, as it were, of our body.

According to the doctrine of Ramanuja, God can be compared to the consciousness within us; the world is compared to the body, which is inseparably connected to the consciousness within us, yet not identical with it; and our own selves, all things in this world as individuals, are compared to the cells in the body. The cells constitute the body; likewise, the individualities constitute the universe.

They are dependent on God—wholly dependent, but not identical with God. Here is the sum and substance of a great religious philosophy which Ramanuja propounded.

“But how could you imagine that a material thing could be dependent on consciousness?” asked Madhva, who was another great religious thinker, who would not reconcile himself to the truth propounded by Ramanuja that matter is hanging on consciousness, the world is dependent on God, and individuals are somehow or other inseparable from God’s being, though not identical. Madhva would not accept even this much. He thought that we have nothing in us which can compare us with God because we are finite, and God is infinite. We are subject to death; God is immortal. We know nothing practically; God knows everything. How can we say that there is any connection between us and Him? The materiality of the universe precludes any kind of relationship with the supreme omniscient consciousness of God. So he established a doctrine which concludes that there is a total difference between God, the world and the individual, and there is no connection between them. They are all absolutely independent things, having no relationship of one with the other because of the structural difference in their existences.

“But such a total difference is not possible,” said Ramanuja, “because you cannot say that something exists outside God. The positing of any existence outside God would limit God Himself. The

omnipresence of God precludes the independent existence of other individuals, of even the world itself. Hence, the Supreme Being should be one, all-in-all. Though it has to be acceded that the world and the individual are parts of Him, they are not totally different from Him, though we cannot say they are the same as Him.”

Here we have two great thinkers saying two different things, and these religious philosophies persist even today. Though not in every way, in some respects at least, the dogmas of Christianity have some semblance to the philosophy of Madhva—namely, the doctrine of the Father in heaven, the Son of God, the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the divinity of the sacrament, the possibility of eternal heaven and eternal damnation. Doctrines which are accepted by Christianity are also accepted by Madhva. They do not agree in every detail, but they seem to be in agreement with the basic factors that God is in heaven and the world is evil, from which we have to withdraw ourselves by way of renunciation, and the world is a snare which will tempt us into ungodly activities. No man can serve two masters. We cannot be a servant of the world and also be a servant of God at the same time. God is God, and Mammon is Mammon. This is what Christ taught, and any religious man would teach, holding the doctrine that the world is perishable, a field of temptations, and a bondage in every respect.

Many religious students, even many among us,

are in this state mostly. We try to flee from the world as a snare, as an object of temptation, a bondage. The world is bondage. That is why people go to monasteries, ashramas, temples. Also, God is not in this world; therefore, to rise to the supreme heaven of the Absolute, God the Creator, Ishvara, Narayana, the Father in heaven, whoever He is, we have to reject the world with the power of renunciation. This is a religious doctrine which is prevalent not only in Christianity but also in Hinduism, and perhaps in all religions. It follows from this doctrine of the irreconcilability between the transiency, the cussedness and the tempting character of the material world, and the immortal perfection of God.

Thus, in our study of the philosophy of religion we have taken one step, which will take us further and further. I request you all to make a note of all these things that I told you because I will be saying these things only once, and next time I will be proceeding further; hence is the request that you carefully attend to the processes of thinking and the arguments that will take you to a great conclusion which, in my opinion, will relieve you of all tensions once and for all, God willing.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION**

When we look around in all directions, we see things, objects, plants and trees, animals and men, but we do not see religion anywhere. We are not able to recognise the presence of religion anywhere in the world. We see only people moving about doing something, and we see animals, plants, things, and all their subdivisions, but not the thing called "religion". We may be under the impression that we see religion in temples, churches and holy places of pilgrimage, but what do we see there other than buildings and people, books and decorated objects? Do we see religion? We see the same things inside the holy of holies that we see in a shop or in a railway station, only the arrangement is different; and the pattern of the presentation of the very same objects may convert them either into a shop or into a temple. Thus, temples and holy shrines seem to be distinguished from the marketplace by the pattern of the arrangement of things, and not because we see something altogether different.

Here is something which is very mysterious. By travelling long distances, we cannot discover the presence of religion anywhere. We can see human beings running about saying something and doing a variety of things. This satisfies the curiosity-ridden investigative faculty of man for the time being, but one day he will be tired of this travel. A day comes

when man gets fed up with everything. He has seen nothing, in spite of all his searches. He seems to be caught up in a peculiar enigma which beckons him from one side and tantalises him from another side. This is what we are searching for—a thing which we cannot escape from, and a thing which we can never get. What a pity!

Here is the quandary and the mystery, enigma, problem and difficulty in life, where we are not allowed either to live or to die. We have no freedom to keep quiet, nor do we have the confidence that we are going to obtain what we seek in this world. Hence, life has ended in a struggle without an achievement.

People are very fond of saying that life is an adventure, but the adventure is always directed towards the achievement of a purpose. If the purpose is always receding from the ken of our searching faculty like the horizon moving further and further away, never getting caught by the grip of our hands—if the adventure of life is only an adventure and nothing more than that, and we are going to gain nothing out of it—this is what is called catching a will-o'-the-wisp.

When old age supervenes, when life fades like an evening flower, we seem to be disillusioned of all things. Religion has not come, and we know nothing about all these things. How is it that we are in this predicament? We sometimes seem to be overwhelmed and overcome by an enthusiasm of a religious type—and there is not one man in this

world who would not have been urged onward by an instinct of religion in some form or other, at some time or other in life—but yet, nothing can be seen with the eyes.

The seriousness of this problem diminishes, and we seem to be able to discover a ray of hope when we see another phenomenon of this type in our own personal lives. The recognition of our own existence is not an object of perception. As we cannot see religion anywhere, we also cannot see our own selves. We may say that we are seeing ourselves seated here. We have already noted on an earlier occasion that this thing that we see seated here is perhaps not the true me or you, the reasons for which are already well known to you.

We may close our eyes, plug our ears, block all our senses, yet we will know that we are. That means to say that there is a kind of knowledge which does not require the apparatus of the senses, one example of which is the knowledge of our own being. Everything else in this world requires the operation of the senses. If the sense organs do not work, we cannot know anything that is happening anywhere. But there is one thing which we can know, even without the operation of the senses: the fact that we are. We know that we are. Even if we are blind and deaf and cannot speak, yet we know that we are. This is a strange thing, a capacity which overcomes all dependence on the faculties of perception which are so very essential to things in the world.

It is possible that religion is of this kind. It may perhaps belong to a category to which we also belong. We do not seem to belong to the objects of the world, but today we have converted ourselves into objects. This is the reason why we cannot see religion with our eyes. We see only objects. The reason is that we are also objects. Man has lost his subjectivity; and in a world of mechanistic associations, he has become one nut and bolt in the machine of life, and has finally landed himself in the predicament of a factory worker so that everything he does in life may be regarded as a sort of mechanical action in the large factory of life. And what do we see in a factory? Only objects. Even the worker in a factory is seen as an object. He has no subjectivity, he is such a dependent individual. He is one of the parts of the huge machine called the factory, without which the factory cannot run. Have we also transformed ourselves into the parts of this machine which we call this world of science, physics, astronomy, and all human activity?

When the knowing subject has been absorbed into the world of objects, a state into which we have apparently landed ourselves, we can neither see religion nor see any other value in this world. There are things we value very much, such as goodness, honesty, truthfulness, religiosity. We value these things high above every other advantageous thing in this world, yet these are the things we cannot see with our eyes. We cannot see goodness anywhere. We cannot see truthfulness. They are not objects of

sense. We are hugging principles which are not capable of being discovered by the sense organs, the well-known faculties of man. Finally, we find that all the values of life seem to be super-sensory, and the mechanism of the senses proves itself to be inadequate in the search for these super-sensory values.

The presence of a superior to one's own self is the initial fact of the operation of the phenomenon called religion. The very meaning of religion connotes the recognition of a superior to oneself in some way or the other. If everything in the world is like us, the religion that we think of loses its sense. The awareness that there is something different from us, and perhaps superior to us in some way, compels us to establish a relation of obeisance, reverence, awe, respect, affection, and everything of this sort between ourselves and that object.

It is not always necessary that this object of reverence should be visible to the eyes. Many a time we are frightened without knowing why we are frightened. Even the unlettered man feels there is something which defies him, and which will not listen to his dictates or mandates.

Students of religion have gone deep into these stages of the development of the religious consciousness in human life, and after a meticulous examination of this phenomenon, have come to the conclusion that we cannot see religion in this world unless we feel that there is something in the world which is superior to us.

Now, today, we are living in a world of equality of social forces and forces of every kind. There is nothing superior to us. The boss and the subordinate are on a single pedestal. The ruler and the ruled are similar in every character. Nothing is inferior; nothing is superior. Why should we want religion in this world when there is an equal distribution of physical forces and economic powers? Whatever I am, you are, and whatever you are, I am. Who is superior and who is inferior? Who can be obedient to another? Obedience has no sense in a world of total equality where everything moves along a beaten track of a common purpose; and this common purpose is nothing but the objectness of the human being. We have all become objects, and no object can be regarded as subservient to another object. The externality that characterises things in the world also infects the human being, so that we are also externalised persons. For instance, do we not see one another as scattered here in a group of people seated in this hall?

Inasmuch as we are externalised units of perceptual centres, we have no subjectivity in us. You see me, and I see you. Then who is the subject and who is the object here? Inasmuch as everyone is seen by everyone else, everyone can be regarded as an object. Thus, the world is full of objects. This is an objective world, and in this objective world where only objects exist, subjects have no place.

Then we have what we call the mechanistic

religion of materialism. It is a doctrine of the involvement of everything in material forces, so that there cannot be anyone who can observe these forces. Even the so-called observer of the forces is a part and parcel of this quantum of material forces. In a world of pure matter, the blind movement of matter is the object as well as the subject. It is difficult to understand how matter can see itself. Here is a point which requires consideration.

But the stuff of mankind is such that it cannot always be beguiled by these doctrines because there is dissatisfaction, a character which cannot be attributed to matter. It is man that is dissatisfied, and more dissatisfied than any other object in this world. Nothing can please him finally, and he is in search of an objective which he does not seem to be able to discover in this world of pure objects. He cannot understand why it should be raining, why the sun should rise, or why the seasons should roll on in such a precise, scientific manner. There are laws operating in this world over which man has no control. The feeling that there are things over which one can have no control frightens us. We are in a world where there are things which we cannot understand, which we cannot rule, which we cannot command, and yet without which we cannot exist. We cannot command the winds and the waters and the elements. We have nothing to say about them. They are totally independent of us. Yet without their existence, our existence would be obliterated in a second. This shows to what extent

man is dependent on the forces of the world.

The desire to investigate into the nature or the specific character of this dependence on forces over which one can have no control is the beginning of religion. We begin to investigate into this phenomena: "How is it that I have become so much dependent on the world? How is it that I cannot know anything, finally?"

People who are totally absorbed in the objectivity of the world have no religion. They are sleeping, like matter. In the lowest condition of man—which anthropologists designate by varieties of names such as the primitive man, the Neanderthal man, or whatever man he may be called—man seems to be sunk in the material objectivity of things so deeply that, in the earlier stages, an awareness of a superior force controlling him may not arise.

Religion proper, in a pronounced manner, manifests itself only when we begin to feel the presence of a pervasive principle which seems to be operating behind the particularities of the world, of which we are also unfortunately a part, though this pervasive principle cannot be seen with the eyes. An abstract universal seems to be controlling the concrete particulars, without an acceptance of which life seems to be unintelligible. An inference that particulars in the world cannot come together in any systematised manner, or in an intelligible way without the operation of an abstract force behind them would lead us to a deep philosophical

mood. Any organised effort or movement is unthinkable unless there is a force of organisation behind the particulars which are to be organised. Any association, organisation, society or group will be an unintelligible nonsense if behind this so-called association there is not to be a pervasive force.

This pervasive force is, again, an invisible object. We cannot see a thing called government. We see only people sitting together in a large hall, calling themselves members of parliament. We see only chairs and tables and people, not the parliament. Thus, the thing called parliament is a pervasive influence that operates behind these particulars called human beings seated on chairs in the parliament house. We cannot see an organisation; we see only people calling themselves an organisation. What is called an organisation is a pervasive force, an influence that seems to be seeping through the particularities called the individuals.

So is the case with any kind of association, even between two parts, two individuals, two persons. Two people are friends; one is a friend of the other. Friendship is invisible to the eyes. We see only two people. Friendship is, again, a permeating force operating between two parts and bringing them together into a cohesive completeness. This seems to be the feature of everything in this world. The scattered particulars, whether they are material or organic, cannot convey any meaning to us unless

they are organised in some fashion. For every project or enterprise, we embark upon an organisation of some sort, by which we mean to say that we introduce a superphysical influence into the visible physical units—call them objects, call them human beings.

This awareness wakes us up into a new vision of things: that the values of life are not physical objects. That which we regard as really dear and meaningful is not a thing that we can see with our eyes, and the things that we can see with our eyes are the least important things in the world. Yet, we may be muddled in our thinking and go after physical objects and cling to them, imagining that these are the values.

On a careful analysis, we will realise that the values that control life are not visible to the eyes. They are totally beyond the ken of sense operation. Be a little investigative and go deep into the structure of every phenomenon in this world. You will find that the thing that you love most is that which you cannot see with your eyes.

I mentioned the phenomenon of friendship between two persons. A loves B as a friend, and clings to B as an object of endearment. The object is imagined to be the embodiment of affection. The object is itself affection concretised in that particular form. But we know how unimaginative a person should be to think that the affection that one evinces in regard to a person is the same as the person. We have already had occasion to observe

that every association is an invisible pervasive influence, and friendship is one such. It is an influence that is mutually exerted between two individuals, and the individuals themselves are not the influence. This is a transcendent operative force which we love so much as friendship. But occasions there are when friends can part ways; one can bid goodbye to the other under given conditions. What happened to that affection which was poured upon the individual earlier, recognising the individual itself as a form, as it were, of affection? The friendship has ceased to operate under conditions which cannot permit the operation of this affection. Therefore, affection is a condition, and not an object. It is a state of affairs, and not a thing that we see with the eyes. It is not a human being that we love as a friend, but something in our heads which has somehow withdrawn itself to its own source due to unfavourable circumstances.

We are not discussing friendship here. I am only giving this as an example to show that finally, when we go deep into the philosophical aspect of what we call religion, we realise that religion is a phenomenon which cements all particulars into a cohesive whole of superior transcendence in a universal pervasive manner, and it is not a thing that we can see in temples and churches. We can see it only in the minds of people. Religion is a longing, and not a thing that is seen. If the longing is absent, the things may be there as they were, but they cease to be religious. A watchman may be

sitting inside a church for years together without having a spark of longing. He is only a watchman of the building, and not a religious person. He may be a caretaker of that structure called a church, but he cannot regard himself as a seeker. A seeker, a religious individual, is therefore one who longs for that pervasive invisible influence, without which particulars lose their collocation, arrangement and meaning.

Thus, we may again be led to a very strange conclusion that religion is a transcendent force and not an empirical phenomenon. It is transcendent because it cannot be seen within the jurisdiction of the objects of sense. We have searched all over the world and have found nothing of religion. But we found that it is present, as the government is present, though it is not visible to the eyes. We see a collector, a minister, a president, but they are not the government. The government is something incapable of ordinary definition. We cannot search for it. The thing called "government" is present inside this building, but we cannot see it anywhere. Go anywhere throughout the country, and you will find that it is not anywhere, yet it is everywhere. The principle of religion is nowhere to be seen with the eyes, yet it is present everywhere as the meaning that is hidden behind the relationship between particulars. Thus, religion is a meaning, and not a substance. It is not a thing that we can catch hold of with our hands. It is a significance, a value, a connotation, and a supersensible mystery.

Inasmuch as religion eludes the grasp of the senses, and defies any kind of experiment and observation in a scientific manner, it may appear that religion does not exist in this world, and we may be prone to deny even the very existence of it. Anything that is invisible is an object of suspicion. But, as I mentioned, there are things which may not be objects of experiment and observation. You cannot conduct an experiment and observation of your own true being, notwithstanding the fact that you are sure that it exists. Therefore, a particular form of existence may be permissible under the scheme of things, though it cannot be an object of science or perhaps even of philosophical analysis. Religion is not philosophy. It is something superior. It is not an intellectual activity or a ratiocination of the academician. It is a feeling of a stuff that is at the root of your being; and if you can recollect the analysis in regard to the root of this being which we conducted perhaps in the first two sessions, you will know what this root of yours is.

Thus, we may safely conclude from these analyses that in the aspiration for religion, the whole of our being is caught up. The root of our personality is welling up into action in order to grasp the whole that is present in the midst of all the particulars. The deepest that is within us is asking for the deepest in the universe, the whole of us is asking for the whole of the cosmos, and when the entirety of us rouses itself into action, we become truly religious individuals.

But the whole of us never acts and, therefore, we are never wholly religious at any time. We are fragmented in our observations. We are partially religious, but never entirely, wholly religious because the total spirit in us never rises into action. We are emotionally active at some times and intellectually active at other times, and we are physically active at some times, but the deepest within us never comes to the surface. It is said that the deepest stuff in man operates on rare occasions, but not always, just as the reserve force in the army or the police does not come to the forefront at every moment of time, only when it is required. Usually the reserve force is not necessary, and therefore it does not come to the forefront.

The essential force of our personality does not rise into conscious action because its action is not necessary under the existing circumstances. We can get on without it. Our will operates, our intellect operates, our feeling operates, but none of these is wholly us. These are like servants whom we employ for particular purposes, and a servant is not the same as the master. There is a master principle within us which does not act unless it is evoked into action by supernormal circumstances operating in the world. Normal circumstances cannot rouse us into action.

Students of biology and psychology feel that rarely does our whole personality act, such as when we are drowning in water, for instance. I do not know whether any of you have had this experience

of drowning. When everything seems to be hopeless, and it is impossible even to think, our true being rises into action, and at that time our greatest power is harnessed for activity. The greatest in us begins to act when we are drowning in water. At other times, why should we act? Things are going well. When we are drowning, and we know very well that everything is failing and nobody is going to help us, then the final reserve force that is within us comes into action. The entire army is unleashed because a tremendous enemy is attacking, and nobody else is ready to help us. What is the greatest power that is within us? It is the reserve force, the deepest within us, that comes into action.

When we are fast asleep, we seem to be going to the same condition. In sleep there are certain emotions of a romantic type or an aesthetic nature, which very rarely manifest themselves in life, where our whole being is roused into action, such as when we listen to superb music—not ordinary music but superb music, enrapturing us and throwing us out of gear totally. Such music is very rare, but it does exist. There are types of music that can throw us out of track totally, and we are no more ourselves. At that time we lose personality consciousness, and our soul acts. We may be thrown out of gear in this aesthetic fashion even when we look at a beautiful painting of Michelangelo, Ravi Varma, or one of that category. You will not be able to draw your eyes away from that painting. You are absorbed. You, with a capital

Y, get absorbed into this phenomenon called the painting. It may be a form of architecture, it may be a sculpture, it may be a superb form of literature or great poetry where you get drowned and forget yourself totally. In this condition, your true being acts. But it does not act, ordinarily. When you are roused into a fit of tremendous anger, perhaps, sometimes you go mad; in this madness, also, your whole being acts—though in a negative manner, not in a positive way.

Religion is a positive manifestation of the totality of our being in a conscious manner, not unconsciously as in sleep, not partially as it does in any ordinary activity. Therefore, religion is a very rare thing in this world. Not everybody can be religious, because of the difficulty in comprehending what religion is and deploying it for the purpose of daily activity. We are just nobodies; we are like machines, tools, moving in the street. When we go to purchase vegetables in the shop, what religion is there in our minds? Religion has vanished in toto because the recognition of the presence of this peculiar force connecting particulars is absent when we reduce ourselves to purchasers of vegetables and travellers in a bus. We are only just objects seated in a railway train, not religious individuals. Our religion goes to the winds at one stroke because of the visibility of an object which wholly enthrals our objectivity. Our objective personality takes possession of us to such an extent that the true subjectivity is no more there.

Hence, to be truly religious in the right sense of the term, one has to exercise great caution, and perhaps it requires great training. An untrained mind cannot be religious. Reading a scripture or listening to a sermon need not be equated with religion. There are many in this world who do this. We can go on listening to sermons and reading scriptures, yet we may not be religious people because of the phenomenon of objectivity which has caught hold of us, into which we land ourselves and through which we manifest our personalities in ordinary activity—like boors, like animals, not even as human beings, what to speak of the divine call which religion is.

Thus, when we go into the foundational nature of religion, we discover that it is a magnificent something which can enthrall us wholly and make us forget ourselves entirely, if only we can know what it is. To come to know what it is, and to employ it in our day-to-day existence, is the practice of religion.

## **Chapter 5**

### **BECOMING FIT FOR MOKSHA**

We noted in the previous session that the religious spirit has an element of transcendence, inasmuch as it cannot be discovered in the objects of the world. Here is a very important point which should draw anyone's attention. This feature of the religious ideal as a necessary transcendence, rather than an immediate presence, has given a novel touch to the religions of the world. All that people do in the name of religion can be explained by this very important feature of the transcendence of the religious ideal. People take to asceticism; they leave homestead and chattel, and all property. Every connection is severed, and the severest attempt is made to withdraw oneself from every visible phenomenon of the world.

Religion has become synonymous with renunciation. It cannot but be that because we have said the religious ideal is not in this world and, therefore, renunciation is called for. Why is it called for? Because the things which attract us here are the things which cannot help us in the pursuit of the religious ideal.

This has a serious impact upon human life, and all the religions that are prevalent in the world today have one uniform characteristic, namely, the abandonment of every type of contact with things in the world, and an idealistic occupation with the religious goal as proclaimed by both the reasoning

of one's own mind and the declaration of the scriptures of the religions. This call for renunciation is there in some measure in the teachings of the ancient masters, the prophets, and the writings available in the scriptures.

But the nature of the human mind is such that it can pay attention to only one thing at a time, and not to more than one thing. While it is true that the religious ideal cannot be found in this world because of its universality, pervasiveness and transcendence, it is not wholly true that it is not in this world. Here again is a great question before us, which puts a check on our excessive enthusiasm in respect of what religions call the renunciate spirit or the ascetic ideal.

Think for yourself for a few minutes. If a thing is totally transcendent, beyond your reach, how could you ever reach it? The very acceptance of the transcendence of a particular being implies a total isolation of it from your present way of living. But who is it that is aspiring for the religious ideal? It is you, it is me, it is these people in the world who have been segregated by the logic of religious pursuits, which is totally irreconcilable with the true nature of religion.

There is a double aspect of religion: transcendence and immanence. Inasmuch as the religious ideal is an all-pervasive, invisible, permeating presence, and inasmuch as such a thing can never be seen in this world, it goes without saying that it is a transcendence. But there is also

the other side of it, which cannot be ignored. If the religious ideal is wholly a transcendence, no one can realise it. Not only that, we cannot even be aware that it is transcendent. Our consciousness of the transcendence of the religious ideal presupposes a connection between our consciousness and this transcendence, so it is not literally transcendent as it may appear to the arid logic of the human intellect. This is, again, very important to note. If it had been only transcendent and nothing else—God is the Creator above the world, never to be found in this world—we could not even know this fact because knowledge is a correspondence between the seer and the seen, the knower and the known, the subject and the object. The knowledge of the fact of the transcendence of an ideal implies the knowledge process operating between the subjective knower of this fact and the object which is this supposed transcendence.

Hence, our knowledge of the fact of the transcendence of the religious ideal acts as an object of our knowledge, because we know it. Anything that is a content of our knowledge can be regarded as an object of that knowledge. God is the transcendent Creator above the seven heavens, and the goal of religion is beyond the ken of this world. This knowledge is there; we have come to this conclusion. But this knowledge is, then, a content of our subjective awareness. It is an object, and there cannot be knowledge of the object, or anything for the matter of that, unless there is a knowledge

process connecting the knower with the known. Therefore, this so-called transcendent ideal is connected with us in some way even here on this material Earth. So we have to be a little cautious in being overenthusiastic in our religious calls in the name of renunciation.

We have seen ascetics barely wearing clothing, eating almost nothing, not sleeping, not speaking, having no physical contact with any human being, and living in deserts, in forests and in caves because the religious ideal is not here, it is in the heavens. While it is true that it is in the heavens, and nothing in this world can help us in this great pursuit—granted it is a fact that any amount of contact with the things of this world, organic or inorganic, will not help us in the realisation of the religious ideal—this is not the whole truth. There is some hidden significance which we have missed in our analysis of this theme.

We are living in this world. We have a physical body, a mind, social relations, and all the concomitants of this apparatus of the psychophysical and psychosocial personality are with us. It is in this circumstance of an involvement in the body-mind complex that we are aspiring to be religious and to reach God as the final goal of our life. So here marks a halt to the ebullition of enthusiasm which would reject everything that is the Earth and the world, and hold on to a future ideal of the salvation of the spirit.

Together with the concept of the transcendence

of the religious ideal, we have also a simultaneous notion that it is a future ideal, to be realised in the future—after some days, months or years. This is another peculiarity of our way of thinking. It is not in this world. It is transcendent; therefore, it is a future ideal. We cannot have it today. We have to work hard and put forth great effort.

Anything that is only in the future, but not in the present or in the past, is segregated in the time process, and it becomes temporal. The character of eternity is abolished by the futurity of its nature. That which is only in the future, that which is only in the present or only in the past, and not at all times, is what is called non-eternal, perishable. Then this great goal of religion would be a perishable ideal because of its being only in the future, and we cannot have it now, nor was it in the past. Thus, there is another mistake in our thinking. It is not wholly a future ideal. The ideal appears to be in the future because of our involvement in the transition and the succession of events we call the time process. These are limitations of the human mind. We cannot think of eternity except in terms of the time process, and we cannot think of God except as a transcendent Creator.

But it does not, and need not, necessarily follow that the fact is this. While one aspect of our thinking suggests the transcendence and the futurity of the ideal, another aspect will tell us that a future thing will be non-eternal, and a transcendent thing cannot be obtained. Hence, the religious ideal is not

in the future, and also it is not entirely transcendent. It has a connection with the present, and it was also in the past, ushering us onwards.

The most important aspect here in this consideration is our relationship to the great ideal we are pursuing, call it the religious ideal or the spiritual ideal. The study of scriptures and texts which glorify and magnify the creative aspect of the Supreme Being are likely to sweep us off our feet, and we may ignore the immediate needs of the circumstance in which we are placed. We are moving onward, no doubt, to the realisation of the spiritual ideal, but we are taking this step from the present moment, and we are not already in the future. Inasmuch as the future has not been contacted, and we are in the present in this condition of human society and body-mind relations, together with the ideal of salvation which is moksha, as it is called in Sanskrit, we have also to take into consideration the appurtenances that are necessary to enable us to pursue this ideal. We may have to reach a destination some thousand kilometres away, and if we are thinking only of the destination and not of the ways and means of reaching it, our conception of it would be too idealistic, minus all realistic elements.

Hence, the idea of moksha, or the liberation of the soul, which is often identified with the religious or the spiritual ideal of all religions, yogas, etc., is related in a very inextricable manner with the immediate realities of life. Therefore, religion is in

this world and it has to be in our own room, in this very hall, in this very body and mind, and it cannot be outside. If it is wholly outside, we are not intended for it.

We have needs which are of a different nature from the aspiration for moksha. Can anyone say that it is only moksha that one wants, and nothing else? We have hunger, thirst, fatigue, illness, and there are countless relationships in this world with people outside and things in general. The ascent of consciousness to the realisation of this ideal is a gradual disentanglement of consciousness from its involvements in its own lower stages. Every step in the direction of perfection is a positive growth of the spirit, as it were, an untying of various knots which have tethered us down to this Earth experience. If there are a hundred knots which tie us to this Earth, every knot has to be carefully opened. We cannot imagine that there is only one knot—hence, the great length of time that we may sometimes take in even understanding what we are supposed to do in this world.

Recall to your memory the great verse of the Bhagavadgīta. *Manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye, yatatām api siddhānām kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ* (B.G. 7.3): “Among the people in this world, one among a million may aspire for this ideal, and even among those who are really aspiring, one may succeed.” All do not succeed, even as everyone who appears for an examination need not necessarily pass, though they have struggled hard.

The difficulty here is the ambivalent attitude of our mind, which sinks between the Earth and the heavens, and takes excessive measures of either attachment to this world or complete detachment from the world. Now, religion is not an extreme attitude of consciousness. It is a balancing of it. We cannot either hate the world or love the world. We are not permitted to do either. We cannot say the world is the den of Satan and go into the desert or try to find God in caves, nor can we have this universal perfection in the limited particular objects in the world. We are caught from both sides. This is what is called Morton's Fork: being caught from both sides. John Morton was a minister of King Henry VII. He was a very shrewd man. He was bent upon taxing people, collecting large taxes, and if he saw rich people, well dressed and living in a gaudy way, he would say, "You are well-to-do persons, so you have to pay tax. You have enough with you." But if he saw a poor, wretched man with tattered clothes, he would say, "You are hiding your wealth. I know; I understand. You are putting on this appearance so that you may avoid paying tax. So pay the tax." If you were rich you had to pay, and even if you were poor you had to pay because he said poverty is only an appearance. You are rich, and you are avoiding tax by looking poor; and a rich man, of course, has to pay. So either way, you have to pay.

Similar is this peculiar religion before us. It catches us either way. It will not allow us to live in

this world, and it will not permit us to abandon this world. This is also the difficulty in understanding the gospel of the Bhagavadgita. It is not so easy to understand what it says. It appears that sometimes it is emphasising certain aspects pertaining to this world, and at other times it looks as if it has no connection with this world and it is talking about some great unreachable ideal of a transcendent nature.

The difficulty of Arjuna as portrayed in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita is everyone's difficulty—my difficulty, your difficulty, every seeker's difficulty. It is an attitude of going to extremes. Go ahead, embark upon a battle, pursue everything in this world, and struggle to gain as much treasure from this world as possible. This is one extreme. The other extreme is, you want nothing from this world. Everything is transitory, transient, unreligious, unspiritual, ungodly, satanic, devilish, and so you hibernate into a mental condition of total dissociation from every kind of reality.

Now, when I use the word "reality", again I have to tell you what actually I mean by this word because there are various definitions. That which is real is, in an ultra-logical manner, sometimes defined as that which persists in the three periods of time: past, present and future. There is no such thing in this world; therefore, reality is not in this world, may be one conclusion. *Satyatvaṁ bādhārāhityaṁ* (Panch 3.29) says Vidyananya in his great

work Panchadasi: “Non-contradiction is the test of reality.” It should not be transcended, contradicted or negated by any other thing or experience. And what is there in this world which cannot be contradicted, negated or transcended? Everything is subject to this difficulty, and so there is nothing ultimately real in this world. This definition of the ultimately real is called *paramarthika-satta* in Sanskrit.

But there is another degree of reality, called *vyavaharika-satta*. It is empirical reality. The reality of the workaday world—the reality, for instance, that you are sitting here and I am speaking—cannot be called an ultimate reality, but it has some reality, and what sort of reality it is will be known to you, each for one’s own self. It is tentatively real as far as this particular framework of space and time continues. Consequently, as long as we continue in this condition, this teaching of mine is valid. But if the whole space-time structure changes, and our bodily and psychical structure also change simultaneously, then the entire circumstance changes, as it happens, for instance, when we wake up from dream. Dream is a reality. We cannot call it unreal, because we have an experience, and every experience is real at the time of its being experienced. But we cannot call a dream ultimately real because dream is contradicted by waking, and we have already said that anything which is subject to contradiction cannot be called reality. Dream is transcended, contradicted and negated by the

waking condition, and therefore we say that dream is not real. But when we are actually in that state, it is negated waking and, as individuals of a particular type, we are passing through the vicissitudes of pain and pleasure even in dream. We know very well how happy and how grieved we were in dream also. How could that be regarded as unreal?

The daily occurrences and contacts in this empirical world come under what is called empirical reality, *vyavaharika-satta*; they have a pragmatic value, a workable value, but not an ultimate value. Compared to the empirical reality or value of the waking world, dream is called *pratibhasika-satta*. *Pratibhasika* is apparent reality, dream; *vyavaharika* is empirical reality, waking; and the Supreme Being is *paramarthika*, the Absolute Reality. Now we are not in the state of the Absolute. This is well known to every one of us. We are in the states of *pratibhasika* and *vyavaharika*, or to clinch the whole matter, we may forget the dream occurrence and say that we are in the practical world of pragmatic relationships.

Now, the pursuit of the religious ideal, or the ascent to God, is a gradual lifting of our feet from the condition in which we are now. It is like passing from one class to another class in an educational institution, or as when we grow from childhood to adulthood, we get out of one condition and enter into another. When we have a test or an examination in a particular class in a school, we

pass out of that class and go to the next class. When we go to the next higher state of study, the higher class, the lower class is not rejected; it has not been isolated or cut off as unreal. It was real, and it is real even now when we are in a higher stage. The only thing is, we have overcome its limitations. We have transcended it, not rejected it.

Hence, we may again bring to our memory the renunciation that religious teachers expect us to embark upon. Asceticism, which is the characteristic of religion, is not a rejection of the world; it is a transcendence of the world. We have seen the whole world through and through and have no need for the world now, just as when we wake up from dream we have no need for the treasures of dream; but when we were in the dream, they were necessary. A dream sickness may require a dream medicine, and so on, so we cannot say it is wholly unreal. But now we have come to another degree of reality. Thus, the rise of the spirit in its movement towards supreme perfection is an ascent from one degree of reality to another degree of reality.

Thus, renunciation, asceticism, *vairagya*, *sannyasa*, monasticism, or whatever be the name by which we call this attitude, means certain indications of our overcoming our dependence on things, and not being either dependent on things or saying they are not real. That would be the ostrich attitude. An ascetic is not an ostrich who buries his head in the sand and says there is nothing outside him. We see the world outside, so how do we say it

is not there? But if we cannot see it, that is a different matter. Then we have really perfected ourselves in renunciation. We have really renounced all the wealth of dream because we have no concern with it, we are no more in need of it, and it has no meaning for us. We have transcended it, and have come to a higher level of experience. Renunciation becomes complete only when we have overcome the world, and not rejected the world; otherwise, like a crocodile it will catch us one day or the other. Any desire that is unfulfilled is a dangerous weapon inside us which we are secretly keeping, as if it is not there. All our desires are the knots with which we are tied to this world.

Hence, the ancient masters, the teachers of yoga in India especially, conceived of a fourfold attitude called dharma, artha, kama, moksha. We cannot say there is only moksha and nothing else. This is an extreme attitude of ours, extreme because we have forgotten we are in the *vyavaharika-satta*, or the empirical world. When the world is there before our eyes, we cannot say we are not seeing it. When we do not see it, then questions do not arise, just as when we do not see a dream, we have nothing to say about it. Nobody goes on discussing the dream world. It is just gone, finished, and we are in a different degree or level of reality.

But we are very much concerned with the world. We do not treat it as just a dream. We are involved in it wholly, totally; therefore, because of the fact of our involvement in the network of the

entire phenomena called the world, a rise into the next step in religion, or spirituality, would be not an individualised isolation of our body-mind complex from the network of the whole world, but a rising of the total situation itself. It is as if the whole world is rising when we are rising, because when we wake up from dream, the whole dream phenomena has also gone. It is not only one individual that has gone up into the waking condition and the dream friends are still there. Just imagine how interesting it is. You saw many people in dream. You saw mountains and rivers, and you had relationships with many things, and then you woke up. When you woke up, they also woke up. There is no friend there in dream. You cannot say you have left them there in the dream and have now come alone to the waking world. Everything has come up totally, en masse.

This is the kind of thing that will happen when you rise to the next step in the Spirit. It is not only some individual quietly sitting in a corner and wrenching oneself from the world and going to godly regions. That is not possible, just as you cannot leave your friends in the dream world and come alone to the waking world. The friends also have to come. In waking, all things there get transmuted into a new value altogether. Such a miracle takes place when you ascend to the higher nature of the Spirit—namely, the whole world comes with you. It has to come with you because you are not outside the world, nor is the world outside you. We have noted this in earlier sessions.

The world is not outside you. If it is not outside you, how can you leave it here and go to God? That is not possible.

There can sometimes be a great error in one's spirit of renunciation. You leave your home and come to an ashram and think that you are a renunciate. It is a great mistake, because the whole world will come with you wherever you go. You are inextricably connected with the world, organically related to it, and the whole world has to come with you, even when you go to God. This is a mystery and a miracle. Man's mind cannot easily understand what all this means. As you go higher and higher, you will find there are greater and greater mysteries to encounter. It is not a mathematical equation or the driving of a car on a straight beaten track; it is a zigzag path, and a very difficult thing to grasp.

The point is that the concept of moksha is involved in other associations of ours, which go by the name of dharma, artha and kama. I will briefly mention what they mean and what their relation is to the ideal of moksha, or the ideal of the liberation of the soul.

You are not merely a soul. You are also a mind and a body. Can you keep the soul somewhere and the body somewhere else, and the mind in a third place? It is not possible. Inasmuch as moksha is the freedom of the soul, you may think that you are concerned only with the soul and not with the mind, not with the body, and not with its relations.

This is a mistake because at present you are a complex, and not merely pure spirit. Now you are involved spirit, and not pure unadulterated spirit. Hence, the ideal of pure unadulterated spirituality is inapplicable to an involved individual who is in the body, who is in the mind, who is in a family, who is in the world, and is involved in many things.

Therefore, we should call a spade a spade, as they say. We should know what our situation is in this world, and should not overestimate ourselves as great yogis. This is a great mistake. Nobody is a great yogi. It is very difficult to achieve that state. One has to be very humble here. It is better that you are humble and know where you stand, rather than to imagine that you are on a high pedestal.

The relationship of the soul with the mind and body brings into relief the need for our involvement in what is called dharma, artha, kama. While moksha is the ideal of the spirit, there are ideals connected with the body and mind and its relationship outside. As I mentioned a few minutes before, we have to gradually withdraw ourselves from our associations, and renunciation is only that. There is a simultaneous action taking place when we rise into a higher level. The lower is overcome. *Vairagya* and *abhyasa* go together; renunciation and practice are simultaneous activities. The moment we sit for the practice of a higher ideal, we are automatically withdrawn from the lower. Therefore, when *vairagya* goes, *abhyasa* also goes; and when *abhyasa* goes, *vairagya* also goes.

Hence, in the pursuit of the ideal of moksha, we do not take only the soul, leaving the mind and the body here. The whole complex has to get transmuted. When we are thirsty we drink water, and we do not eat *chappatis* instead; when we are hungry we eat solid food, and are not satisfied with merely liquids; when we are tired, we want to lie down on a bed; and when we are ill, we require medication. As different conditions of our personality call for different types of attention, the different layers of our individuality call for these outlooks known as dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Hence, we are not only in a state of moksha, and it is not possible to pursue this ideal ignoring the bodily, the social and the psychological levels.

We have physical needs, mental needs, intellectual needs, emotional needs and social needs. This is why great teachers have cautioned us that no need can be turned a deaf ear to. As it is often said, we cannot ask a creditor to go away. If we say, "Get away, I have nothing to do with you!" he will say, "No. I have got something to do with you." Similarly, we may say we have nothing to do with the world, but the world will say, "My dear friend, I have something to do with you. I am not going to leave you so easily like that."

In our religious enthusiasm we should not be enemies of the world, nor should we cling to the world as a mother clings to her child. We should adopt a judicious attitude, as a judge in a court has a balanced attitude towards the contending parties.

He does not belong to either this party or that party; otherwise, there will be no judgement if a judge associates with one party.

Hence, *samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (B.G. 2.48), says the Bhagavadgita. “Harmony is yoga” and not excess, not extreme. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogo’sti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ, na cāti svapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna; yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu, yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥā* (B.G. 6.16-17). The Gita says that we should be very harmonious, equilibrated and sensible in our work, in our rest, and in our empirical and religious pursuits. In everything there should be a golden mean, a *via media*.

We are not wholly in God, as we know very well, and we are also not wholly in the world because one part of us pulls us above. That is why you have come here to listen to people speaking. But the other part pulls you back to the world, so you are midway between the world and God. Certain characteristics of the world are in us and certain characteristics of the Spirit may also be in us. Due to the characteristics of the Spirit in us we are praying, contemplating, and looking up for that blessed day when God will embrace us. But as the world is also there calling us; we are hungry and thirsty, and feel wretched in many ways.

Thus exercising great wisdom, we have to strike a balance between the calls of life that are of the here, and those that are of the hereafter; and, as I mentioned, we should be aware of what dharma,

artha, kama and moksha mean. Artha is the material ideal. All material needs come under artha. We cannot say that we have no material needs. We have material needs, and so we have to strike a balance with them also. Kama is the vital need, emotional desires, aesthetic, romantic desires. And dharma is the compulsive law that operates in such a way that we cannot come in conflict with anybody in the world. Not only in the world, in all the seven planes of existence we have to be set in harmony. The law of harmonious relationship of all individuals in all the planes of existence, including this physical one, is dharma. When these calls are listened to properly, when the debts that we owe to this world are fully paid and nothing is left out, we may become fit for moksha.

## Chapter 6

### THE PURUSHA SUKTA OF THE VEDA

For the first time in the history of the world the great vision of religion was proclaimed in the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, which can be regarded as the most magnificent vision bequeathed to us by the ancient masters. To the seers of the Veda, religion was life. The way they conducted themselves was their religion, what they spoke was their religion, and the vision that they had about things in the world was their religion. Religion was not a textbook; it was not a scripture. It was not a study, or something heard from other people. It was something that was seen directly. This seeing is called the Veda. It is called *darshana*, the vision integral, not the vision of the eyes or the sense organs. It is not perception, but intuition. It is *sakshatkara*, or realisation, an immediate contact with the quintessential essence of things—not a mediate contact as we have through the senses in respect of the objects of the world.

Thus, in the vision which is the Purusha Sukta we have a masterly stroke, unparalleled in religious history, where man ceases to be man in his envisionment of the Cosmic Man, whom he designates in the language of these mantras as the Purusha Supreme. Those of you who might have heard of this great hymn of the Veda will know what it actually connotes. It is a short prayer, or we may say it is an exclamation, a psalm, an ecstatic

expression of a tremendous upheaval that took place within the recesses of the being of the great sage who had this vision.

The central principle of the culture of the whole of Bharatvarsha can be said to be impregnated within this single small poem, the Purusha Sukta. All the scriptures are ramifications, commentaries, explanations, annotations, etc., of this central Truth; or rather, we may say, the other way around, everything else that it said in the other parts of the Veda is a large commentary, as it were, on this little poem called the Purusha Sukta. It is a little but big poem in which man contacts God. Man in his essence comes in contact with God in His essence.

To this day, it is the accepted tradition of the culture of India that religion has to be alive, actually. This is very important to remember. Religion is not what we do in the empirical sense; it is what we see with our eyes. What we see with our eyes is religion, not what we do with our hands and feet. If we perform worship with our hands, and see an image of stone with our eyes, we are not practising religion. If it is only a portrait that we are worshipping, and our eyes see only a portrait while our hands are waving a sacred lamp, that is not religion. We may wave any lamp, we may do anything with our hands and mutter anything with our tongue, but what we see is our religion. If we see only a temple erected by a mason and a metal or stone image that has been installed, this is not religion. Therefore, religion is vision, seeing, and

nothing more, nothing less.

Here is India's religion before you, if you want to know what India's religion is. There is no nomenclature that can be attached to this religion. All these names that are associated with the forms of religion in the world are later developments in the history of mankind. A vision is not a racial prerogative. The one who had this vision of the Purusha of the Purusha Sukta was not a Hindu, was not a Christian, was not a Muslim. He was not a man. When man has the vision of God, he no more remains as man because man is the name that we give to an embodiment whose faculty is a conglomeration of sense organs. You can recall to your mind the words of Sri Krishna as recorded in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita: "These eyes cannot see Me." Arjuna's two eyes could not have the vision of the great Purusha who embodied Himself in that description of the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

What the Purusha Sukta means in the Veda, the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita also means. They are one and the same. One is a Sruti, the other is a Smriti. By a Sruti, what is meant is a sacred lore that has come down to us by the lineage of Guru and disciple. It has not come through libraries or textbooks. These sacred mantras were listened to by the disciple and chanted, recited or taught by the Guru.

As a little digression before I go into the meaning of the Purusha Sukta, I would like to

mention the system followed in India of the study of the Veda. It is not like study in a college or university, with which you are acquainted. The Veda cannot be chanted so easily. In a way, we may compare the system of the study of the Veda mantras to the study of music. We cannot read a book of music and become a musician. It requires a practical guidance from a person who can sing for us. We have to listen to the singing, and only then can we learn music. A mere notation in a book will not be a sufficient aid in the learning of music.

The verses of the Veda are called mantras. There are Sanskrit poems, called verses in English. There are two types of verses. One is called the Sruti, and the other is called the Smriti. The verses of the Vedas are not called slokas; they are called mantras because they are charged with a divine potency. The verses of all the other writings—including the Bhagavadgita, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Manusmriti, whatever it is—are called slokas, which means “great sayings”. A sloka is a well-said saying. A mantra is distinguished from an ordinary verse in this sense, that a mantra is a vibration pressed into the configuration, or form, of a group of expressions called words, or language. A mantra of the Veda is, therefore, condensed energy. It is not a word in the ordinary sense. It is not a language that we speak when we chant a mantra of the Veda. We are giving expression to a tremendous force and, therefore, our apparatus within also should be trained to receive the potency of the

mantra which we are going to recite or chant. The modulation of the voice is very important—the intonation. As we hear a raga in music, there is *swara* in the Veda.

There are four feet to every mantra; and when a Veda mantra is taught, the teacher, the Guru, does not recite the whole mantra at one stroke. I am one of those fortunate ones, I should say, who had occasion to study the Vedas under a very holy man, and I know how it is taught and how it is learnt. A foot is first chanted by the Guru, and the student recites it three times. Then the second foot is recited by the Guru, and the student recites it thrice. The third foot is chanted, and then the student chants it thrice. The fourth foot is chanted, and the student again recites it three times. This goes on three times again. This recitation of a foot three times goes on three times, and so a single foot is recited nine times. Then the Guru chants two feet at one stroke. That is half the mantra, half the verse, we may say, which again has to be conducted in the same manner: three times, three times, nine times again. So you know how many times it has been recited. Then the whole mantra is chanted, not only half, again three times. The process is again repeated three times, so that it is nine times once again. When this is completed, the student will automatically know the whole mantra by heart. He need not go on racking his head. It is like mathematics. If this process is complete, the student automatically knows it by heart.

Immediately the mantra is complete, and he gets up with great satisfaction: "Now I know what it is." See, what a system they have introduced!

Likewise is every mantra taught. Religious men study the whole Rigveda, for instance, which consists of some ten thousand mantras. Ten thousand! And to study it in this way, how much time will be necessary? Some four years, at least, must be taken. To study the four Vedas, it may take a larger number of years—sometimes twelve years, at least. Nobody studies all the four Vedas. Each person is supposed to belong to one particular Veda, and I myself belong to the Rigveda school. Some belong to the Yajurveda school, and some the Samaveda school. Nobody belongs to the Atharvaveda, as it is an appendix to the Veda. The religious essence of the Veda is in the three texts called Rig, Yajur, Sama; the fourth text is only an appendix, and it is not studied, generally. Well, this is how the Veda mantras are recited—seated in a holy posture, facing the east, after taking a bath and washing the mouth, and not getting up until the study is complete.

A mantra is a great power. Why is it a power? Christ says somewhere in his gospel that what he spoke was not merely a word, it was Spirit that came from his mouth. As I told you during a previous session, all great men think alike. Whether it is a Christ or a seer of the Veda, they say the same thing, finally. It is Spirit that came out from the mouth of the great chanter of the mantra of the

Veda; and when we are reciting it, we are becoming en rapport with this great Spirit that is enshrined in the mantra of the Veda.

Such a mantra is here before us in the form of the Purusha Sukta. How is it chanted? There are three types of intonation, sometimes a combination of all the three, the three being called *udatta*, *anudatta* and *svarita*. These are technical words of the Vedic language. A passage is chanted with a lifted voice, with a lowered voice, and with a middling voice without either raising it or lowering it. These are the three ways. Each mantra, each verse, each passage involves these three types of intonation. This is the difficulty in the recitation of a mantra.

There is the famous Mahamrityunjaya, for instance, which comes in the Veda and is a Veda mantra. I am taking the Mahamrityunjaya as an example because you are all acquainted with it and are chanting it. You may have observed that there are three types of intonation in this mantra. Please listen to the way in which I am chanting it according to the accepted tradition. *Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe*—this is one foot. I mentioned to you there are four feet. *Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe* is the first foot. The second foot is *sugandhiṁ puṣṭi-varadhanam*. *Urvārukamīva bandhanān* is the third foot. *Mṛtyor mukṣīya mā 'mṛtāt* is the fourth foot.

Now, *tryam*—that is elongated and the voice has gone up; it is called *svarita*. *Tryamba*—the *ba* is neither high nor low; it is just in the middle. *Ba* is in

the middling voice. *Tryambakaṁ*—*ba* and *ka* are in the middle voice. They are in a straight line. They do not go up like *tryam*. *Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe*—one straight line. *Su*—the voice has immediately come down. *Sugandhiṁ*—again the voice has gone up. So you see, the three intonations are in one foot itself. *Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe*. *Su*—you lower your voice. That is called *anudatta*. *Sugandhiṁ*—that is *svarita*. *Puṣṭivardhanam*—again your voice has come down.

How can you chant this unless somebody teaches you? You do not know where the voice has to go up, where it has to be down; otherwise, it will be like broken music. *Urvāru*—all the three syllables are in a lower voice. *Kamiva*—again *mi* goes up, and *va* goes down. *Bandhanān*—*dha* goes up. *Mṛt*—again the voice goes down. *Mṛtyor mu*—*mu* goes up. *Ṣīya*—*ya* goes down. *Māmṛtāt*—the *tāt* goes up. This is one example of a Veda mantra. Sometimes all the three intonations are combined, and it is more difficult to chant it. I will not touch on all these things just now.

These are the techniques of intonation, and the meaning is changed if the intonation changes. This is the speciality of a mantra as distinguished from an ordinary sloka or verse. Though the word may be the same, if the intonation changes, the meaning will change.

You might have heard the ancient story where some gentleman wanted, by the performance of a sacrifice with the chanting of certain mantras, to

produce a demon to attack Indra, and the performers of the sacrifice were not willing to produce such a demon. They did not want that some terrific force should come up and attack Indra. But somehow, without knowing the intention of the person for whom the sacrifice was to be performed, they had taken this engagement, and they started the sacrifice. When it was started, he said, "My intention is to produce this force to attack Indra." They were in a greatly perplexed mood. They said, "This is very strange. Do you want us to do this kind of sacrifice?" They could not say no, they could not say yes. Once they started performing the sacrifice they could not say no, but they could not say yes either because they did not want to undertake this kind of enterprise. So they chanted the mantra as it was expected, but changed the tune, and immediately the effect was the reverse. *Indraśatro vivardhasva* was the mantra, which meant: "Enemy of Indra, rise up." A force was generated.

Now, the changing of the tune connoted some peculiarity there. An enemy can be one who attacks, or can be one who is attacked. Both can be meant by the word "enemy". So the changing of the intonation converted the mantra into a most unexpected meaning: "Great force, rise up to be destroyed by Indra." That meaning was introduced, instead of saying, "Great force, get up to destroy Indra." That was the intention of the man who wanted to perform the sacrifice, but these people

who changed the tune put another meaning into it: "Great force, rise up to be destroyed by Indra." Then Vritra got up, and a great war took place, and Indra destroyed him.

Panini, in his Shiksha, also says this. Panini was a great sage who was a master of Sanskrit grammar and the phonetics of the recitation of the Veda. He said that if a Veda mantra is not chanted properly according to the required intonation, it may come back upon you like a thunderbolt. And so the tradition of India does not permit the purchase of a book from a shop and a reading of it for oneself. You cannot read a chemistry book or a physics book even, what to talk of the Veda mantras. This is by way of digression. I have given you some information about the importance of Veda mantras, the glory and the force and the potency that is hidden, etc.

Now we come to the Purusha Sukta proper which, as I said, is the foundation of the religion of Bharatavarsha, wherein the vision of the Supreme Reality is proclaimed at the very outset, in the very beginning, in the first mantra itself. The Purusha Sukta says that the Great Being has countless heads, countless eyes, countless hands and feet: *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt, sabhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvātyatiṣṭad daśāgulam* (P.S. 1). The immanence and the transcendence of the Supreme Being is declared in this one single mantra. In one mantra consisting of four feet, the integrality, the comprehensiveness, the

absoluteness, the transcendence and the immanence, all are declared. Such is the concise form in which these great ideas have been expressed in this one single mantra.

When it is said the Supreme Being has countless heads and eyes and hands and feet, etc., we remember a parallel passage in the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita: *Sarvataḥpāṇipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham, sarvataḥ-śrutimal loke sarvam āvr̥tya tiṣṭhati* (B.G. 13.13). *Sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ*: "Everywhere it has hands and feet, everywhere it has ears and eyes," says the Bhagavadgita. It is quoting the Purusha Sukta, as it were. As I told you, the whole religion of India, and every aspect of it, is centralised in the Purusha Sukta, and you can find there everything that is said anywhere else.

This Great Being is all eyes and all ears, all hands and all feet, all limbs, and is pervading the Earth and the sky. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam* (Isa 1), says the Upanishad: "The whole universe is pervaded by this Being." The same thing is said here, even before that. The whole cosmos is pervaded by this Being. This is to declare the immanence of God. Now you will realise that this immanence is of a very special nature. As you go forward, onward, with the study of the Purusha Sukta, you will find that it is a novel type of immanence that is proclaimed here.

Here is an example of an ordinary daily occurrence of immanence. When you wash your

clothes, you put your clothes into a bucket of water. You will find that the water enters every fibre of the cloth. You may say that the water is immanent in the cloth; every little bit of the cloth has been soaked in water, and there is no part of the cloth that is not wet. But you know the cloth has not become the water, despite the fact that the water has entered every fibre of the cloth. Cloth is cloth, and water is water. So this immanence is a very strange thing. It is an impregnation entering into the vitals of the substance, yet standing apart from it in one way. That is why, in one passage of the Bhagavadgita, the Great Lord says, "I am in all things, yet I am not in all things. I am in them, yet I am not in them. They are in Me, yet they are not in Me." The water is in the cloth, yet it is not in the cloth, because you can wring the cloth out and dry it, and then there is no water there. The cloth is once again the same cloth. So water can say, "I am in the cloth, yet I am not in the cloth." This is one type of immanence. But there is another kind of immanence, such as clay becoming a pot. Clay has been moulded into a pot, and clay is immanent in the pot. Now you see the difference between these two types of immanence. You cannot wring the pot out of the clay and have only the pot minus the clay. That is not possible. When the clay goes, the pot also goes. But when the water went, the cloth did not go. So that is one kind of immanence, and this is another kind of immanence.

There has been a history of study, controversy

and contemplation on the actual character of the immanence of God in this world, whether it is as water entering the cloth or as clay entering the pot. How did God enter the world? We shall not enter into this controversy just now. However, the Purusha Sukta says that the Supreme Being has enveloped the whole cosmos, and if He has become the whole cosmos as clay has become the pot—the entire clay has become the whole pot, and there is no clay left out afterwards—then there is no transcendence, there is only immanence.

God is not only immanence because if that were the case, there would be no Creator of the universe. That the Creator always stands outside the universe is a great dictum of Aristotle, for instance. The cause of an effect cannot be identical with the effect. It has to be a little bit away; otherwise, it cannot be called the cause at all. If the whole cause has become the effect, then there is no longer a cause. The Creator of the universe cannot be exhausted in the universe because then we cannot call Him the Creator.

There is an element of transcendence in the constitutions of certain governments. For instance, in some democratic or republic constitutions, though the president is a part of the whole nation, in some respects he stands above it as a super-constitutional head. He maintains some power which is super-departmental. God seems to be transcendent in this way, with a super-departmental power. He can set right everything in

one stroke if He wants to. But God will not interfere with the law operating, as the president does not interfere with the laws of the magistrate, the court, etc., imagining that he is above everybody. It is a law that God has Himself set and, therefore, the immanence participates in the requirements of the transcendent as a constitution of the departments of the government may participate and get associated with, yet not contradict, the supremacy of the president.

The Purusha Sukta says that God envelopes the whole cosmos, yet transcends it—*ātyatiṣṭad*. In the homely language of the Veda, *ātyatiṣṭad* means “goes above”. The Vedic language is very simple, homely, like a parent speaking, not like a professor in a college or a university proclaiming his knowledge. It is like a mother or a father very lovingly speaking that is the Veda.

A homely example is given to a child: God is above the universe by ten fingers—*ātyatiṣṭad daśāṅgulam*. By ten spans, as it were, God is above the universe. By the word “ten”, we are supposed to understand that God is not exhausted in this world, that He also stands above the world. God may be even one inch above, it does not matter; yet, He is above the world. But the annotators, the understanders and the students of the Vedas tell us that “ten” does not mean merely the numerical distance of ten fingers’ length or ten inches, ten cubits, etc. Ten means numberless, because there are only nine numbers in arithmetic. The last

number is zero, which means there is no such thing as a tenth number. One and zero make ten; and zero, not being a positive number, is excluded from the series, and so there are only nine numbers. So when it is said that God has transcended the universe by ten cubits or ten spans, ten inches, etc., we are to understand that He has transcended the universe infinitely, not only by a little length of space. God transcends the universe infinitely, though He pervades the universe infinitely.

*Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt, sabhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvātyatiṣṭad daśāgulam.* The declaration that the Supreme Being is all hands and feet, all eyes and heads, shows that He has no limbs. How can there be many things in one place? We cannot have eyes where there are ears. We know very well by common sense that where one thing is, another thing cannot also be there. So how is it said that He is everywhere hands and everywhere feet and everywhere eyes and everywhere heads? There seems to be no meaning in this statement, because all things cannot be everywhere.

The idea is that the Supreme Being is neither eyes, nor heads, nor hands, nor feet. These are only symbolic descriptions for our understanding, because we cannot understand anything except in an anthropomorphic, human way. It means He can see through the head, walk through the eyes, and speak through the legs. Every limb can perform every other function, not like us where only the

eyes can see, only the ears can hear, and only the legs can walk. Every limb can perform every function; every atom of creation can do anything. Every speck of space is filled with every kind of potency, and it is capable of doing anything. All might and supreme omnipotence is hidden within every speck of space, every unit of time, and every atom of man. Such is God's force. His very existence is force, His very being is power, and being and consciousness come together in the Supreme Being. This is the connotation hidden behind this symbolic statement that the Supreme Being is all eyes, all heads, etc. Such an inscrutable Almighty is immanent in the whole creation, and yet transcends it.

This is a short explanation of the first mantra of the Purusha Sukta. A little more about it I shall tell you later on.

## Chapter 7

### THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION IN THE PURUSHA SUKTA

All philosophical study is centred around four great themes: the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the process of creation, the status of the individual, and the mutual relationship among individuals, called society. The whole of philosophy is only this much—four themes. All these four themes are pressed into the Purusha Sukta in a very few words, so that we may say the whole of philosophy is here in sixteen mantras.

During the previous session I touched upon the subject of the characteristic of the Ultimate Reality as enunciated in the very first mantra of the Purusha Sukta: *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt* (P.S. 1). Actually, only the first half of the first mantra is the foundational enunciation of the nature of the Supreme Being. From the second half of the first mantra until a few mantras onwards, there is a very concise and pithy statement of creation: how the great Almighty, the One Being, encompasses all that can be regarded as the universe, the cosmos.

Recall to your memory one important point I referred to in this connection, namely, that the Supreme Being has no sense organs; and when it is told to us symbolically that It is all heads and all eyes and all feet and all hands, what the mantra implies is that It has no heads, no hands, no eyes, no

feet, no limbs, because that which is everywhere is really nowhere. That which is everything is equal to nothing. In a similar fashion, we may say that every face of the Supreme Being is every other face at the same time. Anything that we can think about God is also, at the same time, any other thing that we can think about God. This concept of God is a novel idea in our minds. It cannot be compared with any other idea that is related to things visible, audible, etc. God thinks, acts, feels and does all things at the same time. God's existence is His activity. While our activity proceeds from our existence, God's existence is identical with His activity. Being is acting, being is knowing, being is force, being is all things. Everything is everywhere, timelessly and spacelessly.

*Sabhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvātyatiṣṭad daśāgulam:* "Enveloping everything, He stands above infinitely, transcending the whole of creation." *Puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yad bhūtaṃ yacca bhavyam.* "This Supreme Purusha," as the Almighty is designated in the Purusha Sukta "is whatever was, whatever is and whatever will be." *Evedaṃ sarvam:* "All this"; *yad bhūtaṃ:* "whatever was"; *yacca bhavyam:* "whatever shall be, whatever will be"—the past, present and future are melted in the eternity of infinite comprehension.

The compactness of eternity is not a composite of the past, present and future. It is not woven into a fabric by the threads of the past, present and future, but is an unimaginable, unthinkable, transcendent

indivisibility which is not a combination of the past, present and future but is something in which these three limitations of the time process are overcome completely—as dream is overcome in waking, to give one instance.

The concepts which are found in studies of the Vedanta philosophy—Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, terms which do not occur in the Purusha Sukta—have a parallel series in this Sukta when, in a half mantra, the Sukta says *tasmādvirāḍajāyata virājo adhipūruṣaḥ*: “From this all-comprehending Almighty, the Virat is born.” Though the word “Virat” occurs in the Purusha Sukta, the word “Hiranyagarbha” does not occur, though it occurs elsewhere in the Rigveda, in the Hiranyagarbha Sukta, which is in the Tenth Book. It is said here that the Virat is revealed as bodily coming out from this great Purusha; and the Purusha once again manifests Himself through the Virat as the superintending principle of creation, known here, in the language of the Purusha Sukta, as Adi Purusha.

These terms can sometimes, with a little variation, be seen in the Bhagavadgita also, especially in the beginning of the Eighth Chapter. *Adhibūtām kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidāivatam, adhiyajñō’ham evātra dehe dehabhṛtām vara* (B.G. 8.4). These verses at the commencement of the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita practically refer to the manifestations stated in the Purusha Sukta in very precise, pithy and pregnant words. When God becomes the universe, He does not become

something else.

Yesterday when I was casually speaking to a few people who were sitting in front of me outside on the veranda, I put a question, almost in a humorous way. In the beginning there was God, and there was nothing except God; and this is the fundamental principle of all religions. The Upanishad says this, the Bible says this, and every other scripture says this. There was God alone in the beginning. *Sad eva saumya idam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam* (C.U. 6.2.1), says the Chhandogya Upanishad: “Pure Being alone was there. One alone was, and that One Being manifested this universe.” Or, to put it in more plain language, God created the world.

Now, we have to bring about a harmony between these two statements “God alone was and there was nothing else outside Him, external to Him” and “God created the world”. From what substance did God create the world? The carpenter created the table out of wood; the mason created the building out of bricks. Out of what substance did God create the world if our earlier statement that God alone was, and nothing else could be, is true? So the Bible says God created the world out of nothing. Well, what else can we say? When it has been accepted that God alone was, the word was with God and the word was God, how can we escape asserting that God created the world out of nothing? There was no substance, no wood, no brick, no mortar, no cement, nothing of the kind. This is not a very safe statement. Very serious consequences will

follow from this statement that God created things out of nothing. I shall tell you what consequences follow from this.

There are others who think that it is meaningless to say that a substantial universe has been created out of nothing. The world is not nothing; it is something. How can something come out of nothing? *Ex nihilo nihil fit* is a logical dictum: "Nothing can come from nothing." If nothing was the cause of the universe, the whole universe is also nothing, and we, as a part of the universe, are also nothing—a very strange conclusion indeed. We cannot stomach all these things. Therefore, it was opined that God created the world out of Himself, not out of nothing. Hence, this whole universe is God Himself manifesting in space and in time. But this also has a serious consequence. It is not a very safe statement because if God has become this universe, we are subjecting God to the process of becoming. Being cannot be identified with becoming, because Being is a timeless eternity, whereas becoming is a time process. We cannot subject the indivisibility of the Eternal Being to the movement of the process of what we call time. Unless time is present as an element involved in the process of creation, God transforming Himself into the world is inconceivable.

There are some philosophers, thinkers, religious theologians who think that God became the world as milk becomes curd, yoghurt. This is another interesting thing. Milk has become curd; like that,

God has become the world. It seems very easy to say this, but it is hard to understand its implications. If milk has become curd, the whole of the milk has become curd. We cannot have only half the milk as milk, and half as curd. If the whole of God has become the world, no further God is remaining that we may reach through our aspirations; and there will be nothing called moksha, inasmuch as curd cannot become milk once again. Yoghurt does not become milk once it has become yoghurt. Finished, the matter is over. Then no moksha is possible; there is no such thing as moksha because moksha is curd becoming milk once again, and that is ruled out. Thus, there is a snag in this doctrine of the modification of God into the world because modification involves limbs, parts, spatio-temporal involvement. No modification is conceivable except in terms of space and time, and God is above space and time. Hence, the doctrine that God became the world through a modification is also hard for the brain of man to comprehend. On the other hand, that God created the world out of nothing also seems to be very difficult for us to grasp.

Now we are landing ourselves in an impasse when we discuss the doctrine of creation. It was Acharya Sankara who, for the first time in the history of philosophy, boldly proclaimed that the doctrines of creation are not histories of events that took place in time. The process of creation described in the scriptures, whether it is in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or wherever it be, is

not a chronicle that a historian has written of events that actually took place in the process of space and time. In order that the seed of modification, or creation, be sown at the outset, space and time should be there. But space and time are a part of creation; therefore, they could not be prior to creation, and unless they are prior, there could not be creation. This is a very difficult subject before us, and without going too much into the details of these intricacies inasmuch as our main theme is the Purusha Sukta, I shall bypass this problem by giving one simple example which will bring some sort of satisfaction. How has creation taken place, whether it is a modification or it is a creation out of nothing, etc.?

This question can be solved by an analogy that you can bring before your mind by present-day observations in science. Imagine that there is a stone, a piece of granite, in front of you. When you look at the object, what do you see? A round or oblong-shaped object, hard to the touch, what you call a stone, is what your eyes report to you. Your senses tell you that here is a hard stone. The eyes, the ears, the nose, the taste and the sense of touch always collaborate with one another in describing a particular object. There is no discrepancy among the reports of the five senses.

But if you bring a microscope and look at this same stone, you will realise that you are not seeing the very same thing in the same manner as you saw it earlier. You will find that the stone is a family

comprised of small members. It is not a round, hard stone; it is made up of small molecules. Go deeper, with a stronger microscope, and you will see they are not chemical substances called molecules, but indescribable units which are sometimes called atoms, with a large space intervening between one atom and another. Go deeper with an even stronger microscope, and you will see a seeping energy rushing hither and thither in a hectic manner, and you will not see the molecules or the atoms. You will see a tremendous activity billowing like waves in the ocean, an activity comparable only to an electromagnetic action, a field of force, a field of energy emanating from an electromagnetic setup. It is not a molecule, it is not an atom; it is something different, as you can imagine for yourself. You will see there is no rotundity or squareness or oblong nature of the object. It is a concretisation, or a concrecence, or a particularisation of a heap of force which has centralised itself in one speck of space, at one point in time.

Now bring the doctrine of creation. You may say that this seeping energy has created the atoms, the atoms have created the molecules, and the molecules have created the stone; or you may say the energy has become the atoms, the atoms have become the molecules, and the molecules have become the stone. Now, can you say that the energy, the atoms and the molecules, have transformed themselves into the stone, as milk becomes curd? You cannot say that there has been a

transformation. You are only seeing things more and more clearly, that is all. You are not seeing a transformation of things. You cannot say that the atoms of the stone have transformed themselves into the molecules of the stone because if they have actually transformed themselves, they will be seen as molecules only, and cannot be seen as anything else.

One thing cannot be seen in three different ways at the same time, because one thing cannot be more than one thing at one and the same moment of time. A is always A at one moment of time. A cannot be B. So if we are seeing one and the same thing as A and B and C and D, it is very strange. It only means that the substance has not become A, B, C, D; we are only enhancing the intensity of our perception and employing a newer faculty of observation in the envisagement, or insight, into the very same object. Just as we cannot say that the force which is appearing in a concretised form has become, or transformed itself, into the more concrete form, we cannot say that God has become the world. Yet, God is the world in the same way as the atoms are the stone.

Now, in the same way as the atoms have become the stone, God has become the world. But as we cannot say that the atoms have become the stone—they have not become the stone; they are just what they are, even now—in the same way, we cannot say that God has become the world. So the process of creation, says Acharya Sankara, is like an

x in an equation. He does not use the letter “x”, but I am saying this for your understanding. “X” is a kind of symbol we have introduced in the understanding of a great problem, and the symbol itself has no significance. It has no substantiality in itself. The x in an equation is not a number by itself, but its importance is very well known to every student of mathematics. The x helps us in solving a great mystery, an equation, and then it is automatically cancelled when the equation is solved.

Thus, the doctrine of creation is a ladder for us to climb to the pinnacle of the Ultimate Truth, but when we reach the top, the ladder is no longer necessary. Even this analogy of a ladder is inadequate here because we will not even see the ladder after we reach the pinnacle, as x cannot be seen when the equation is solved. We see only the solution, and the means that we have employed is no more there.

Thus, these strata of creation—Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, and the Adi Purusha mentioned in the Bhagavadgita or the Purusha Sukta—are the strata of our confronting, through the layers of our personality as it is now, at this present moment of time, in the present state of evolution, this great Almighty which has no degrees of reality in itself. Before the sun rises, we see things dimly as a homogenous mass, as it were. We cannot clearly see the mountain with trees or stones, with animals moving, etc. As the day breaks and the light becomes clearer and clearer, we see

things more and more clearly, and our understanding increases. But it does not mean that merely because we see things more and more clearly, things have become different. The things are the same; they have never changed themselves or become something else. They have been seen in different ways because of the inadequacy of the apparatus of perception or understanding.

Thus, the Purusha Sukta comes down to the level of the cosmic appearance as this universe, and the whole of the Vedanta doctrine of creation is simply stated in three words of the Purusha Sukta when it says that the Almighty Purusha became the Virat, and the Virat appeared as the multitudinous variety of this creation superintended over by the Adi Purusha, the Lord of the universe, the God Whom we worship in religions.

I also told you that philosophical studies involve four themes: the great Reality, the process of creation, the status of the individual, and the society of human beings and of everything. The individual is nothing but a spark of this huge fire of God, and these are the gods of religions. Christianity speaks of angels, Hinduism speaks of devas, and every religion speaks of some divine beings. These divine beings, these gods, these celestials, these angels are the sparks which have been shot forth bodily, as it were, from this Almighty conflagration. This analogy, this picture, this image is given to us in the Mundaka Upanishad: "Sparks emanate from fire; thus, individuals shoot forth from the

Almighty” (Mundaka 2.1.1).

The gods are said to be qualitatively almost equivalent to the Almighty Himself, though quantitatively they are very small sparks. We know fire is fire, even if it is a spark; but a spark is a small quantity of fire, while a conflagration is a large mass. In Hindu mythology and theology, and in the Puranas, we hear that in Vaikuntha, the attendants of Lord Vishnu are also of the same form as Narayana Himself. We cannot distinguish one from the other, and an attendant may be mistaken for Vishnu Himself. He has four hands; he has the *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, *padma*, and the same gorgeous appearance, but he is not Vishnu, he is not Narayana. Likewise, a spark may look like fire, but it is different from fire in the sense that it has not got the strength of the whole conflagration.

These devas were originally created. The first creations of God were angels. We do not speak of Adam and Eve in the beginning itself. Angels come first, and Adam and Eve come afterwards. In Indian theology, human beings—Manu and Satarupa—also come later on. So these angels were the first manifestation of the one Supreme Light, which alone was as the Supreme Logos.

The Purusha Sukta continues. *Yatpuruṣeṇa haviṣā devā yajñamatanvata*: “A great sacrifice was performed by these angels, in the form of a cosmic worship in respect of the Almighty.” The moment the angels were created, they offered their obeisance to the Almighty. “Great Lord, obeisance

to Thee.” This was the first utterance or the first inward communion of utter harmony with the Almighty and, at the same time, was implicit obedience to the Almighty. How was this obedience manifest? What was the first worship which was performed in creation?

We perform worship in temples and churches, but these gods, angels, also performed worship. They performed worship in the form of what can be called *yajna*. *Yatpuruṣeṇa haviṣā devā*, says the Purusha Sukta. They performed a great sacrifice, a gorgeous worship of the Almighty, at the very outset, in the beginning of creation. How did they perform this sacrifice? What was the worship that they offered to the Almighty? There were no flowers, no incense sticks, no place to sit, and no temple, no church, no building. What kind of worship or service can be offered? What sacrifice is practicable at that moment, at the outset of creation, when the spark has shot forth from the Almighty and it is beholding the great vision that Arjuna saw, as described in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita?

*Yajñena yajñamayajanta*: “They performed the sacrifice through the sacrifice.” The material was the Purusha Himself, not some flower that they purchased from the shop, not some incense stick from a bazaar, not some water brought from a river. There were no rivers at that time. No vessels were there, and no ground on which to sit. In such a predicament of proximity to the terrible Almighty,

the sparkling effulgences of the angels—the celestials, the devas—contemplated; and the contemplation itself was the sacrifice and the worship. Thus, the highest worship is contemplation; the greatest sacrifice is meditation. The greatest martyrdom, we may say, of the spirit of the angel was a surrender of his very being to the Almighty Presence. This was the original sacrifice, and this was the origin of law; this was the origin of dharma.

*Tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan.* These sacrifices that they performed, this worship that was offered by the gods to the Almighty at the beginning of creation, was the origin of all law, regulation, constitution and dharma, in essence. Oh, wonderful! This contemplation of the Almighty by the divine celestials was the seed of the law of the cosmos—*rita* and *satya*, in the language of the Veda. *Satya* is the word used in the Veda to designate the law of the indivisibility of the Absolute. *Rita* is the law of the Absolute as manifest in the cosmos of space and time, from which all dharmas emanate, and every law is determined by that central organisational principle. All enactments in parliament, all regulations in human society and all principles followed in mutual relationship among individuals should be conditioned by the original law, which was the dharma of the Absolute as contemplated in the minds of the sparkling gods. What was this dharma? This dharma was the dharma of sacrifice—*yajna*, to repeat once again.

I had occasion to mention at other times also that the culture of Bharatavarsha is summed up in one word: *yajna*. If anybody asks what is Indian culture, *yajna*, sacrifice, is our culture. What is *yajna*? It is sacrifice, to translate it into a simple English term. What is sacrifice? It is that intricate relationship that you establish between yourself and the Almighty through all the strata of the manifestations of Himself. So in the act of sacrifice, in the act of worship, in the act of doing anything in this world, for the matter of that, you simultaneously establish a relationship with all the manifestations of God.

I will give you another example of how to understand this. There is a democratic government, and there is a central figure called the president, and he lays down a constitution through a parliament. The parliament elects ministers, called the cabinet. The cabinet forms the system of working in the various provinces, or states, as they are called. Each state has its own secondary minister or secretary, or call it by any other name, for the matter of that. Each province, or state, is again divided into districts. Each district has a head called the collector or the magistrate, and under him there are so many revenue officials, and below these revenue officials there are smaller officials who look to the organisation and welfare of villages. This is the lowest strata of the government.

Now this little man, who has a small authority over a village, may appear to be concerned only

with the law of that little village, for all practical purposes. He is not concerned with bigger things. He may not even know that there is a man called the president. It is not necessary. But we know very well this little legal management that he is conducting in a small village is conditioned by the immediately higher organisation, which is again conditioned by the immediately higher, immediately higher, immediately higher, until the last point is reached where we have the original seed of the enactment of law. So in a single act of this smallest official in a village he has at once unconsciously, as it were, established a harmonious relationship with the highest lawmaking. Though he may not be aware of all these things that are involved in his act, it does not contradict even his smallest act in a village. In a particular democratic setup of government, any law may operate upon the lowest official through the various strata of the descent of this law through these layers.

Likewise is every one of us. We are small beings, little nothings practically. Nobody wants us. Yet a little so-called insignificant behaviour of ours is a dharma that we are manifesting out of ourselves. It is a law unto itself. When we behave or conduct ourselves in a particular manner—say something, do something or even think something—we have moved the whole cosmos into action, just as when a little official in a village has done something, he has touched the layers of all the manifestations of the law of the government.

Imagine how careful you have to be in living in this world. You cannot say you can go scot-free and do something in a little teashop unknown to people, and nobody is seeing you. Everybody is seeing you in the little shop. Even when you have a sip of tea in a dark corner of a shop in Rishikesh, the Almighty sees. Be very careful.

Just as, with its long arms, the law sees every little act of every official in the development of the administration of a country, the original dharma of the sacrifice of the gods in respect of the Almighty's presence conditions every other dharma in this world. Therefore, it is said these worships that the gods offered, this sacrifice that was made in the presence of the Almighty merely by the act of contemplation, is the original dharma: *tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan*.

Now we have touched upon three important themes of philosophical consideration: the Ultimate Reality, the process of creation, and the individuals originating as the angels, the gods, parts of the cosmic fire, who gradually descend into the more manifest forms of individuals such as us.

Many of you might have read Plato's *Republic*, for instance. The philosophy of Plato envisages the Realm of Ideas. These Ideas are not your idea and my idea. I have an idea that I am sitting here, and you have an idea that you are listening to me. This is not the idea that Plato is thinking of. The Idea—with a capital I, if you like—is the contemplation of Plato's philosophical mind of what we call angels,

gods, celestials, etc., the originals of the duplicates which we are. Plato thinks these are all duplicates of an original prototype which is in a realm of Ideas, and this is a world of sense, and he calls it the realm of reason. It is not the ordinary reason that we are using in courts and in mathematical solutions. It is the pure reason of the spirit, the angel that is in us. We are also angels in our essence, but we have become very gross by descending into this body. Hence, these Ideas that Plato speaks of correspond to the angels of our religions, or the gods or the devas of the Purusha Sukta.

Sometimes it is said that all marriages take place in heaven first, and they are celebrated on Earth afterwards. It is not only marriages; every event takes place in heaven first. Even war takes place in heaven first. Even disease originates in heaven first, and it comes down to the level of the body and society afterwards, as great thinkers have told us that the originals condition and determine the processes of the manifestation and activity of the duplicates, or their manifestation.

Thus, we are not doing things wholly independently, as we are prone to think. We are limited by the original realm of the Ideas, or the originals we ourselves were at the beginning of creation, and these originals that we were are the conditioning factors of our present movements as gross bodies, as individuals, as human beings.

Much has been pressed into these few words of the Purusha Sukta. Something more about this

theme has to be thought over by us, a subject I shall take up later on.

## Chapter 8

### RENUNCIATION IN THE ISAVASYA UPANISHAD

We could discover a great meaning in the foundational vision of the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, as we noticed in the previous session.

The quintessential purport of the Veda is said to be embodied in what is known as the Vedanta, by which term what is intended is the conclusion that can be drawn from the variegated proclamations through the mantras of the Veda. Hence, the Upanishads, which conclude the Vedas, go by the name of the Vedanta. The word *anta* in Sanskrit may mean “the end”, or it may mean “the final meaning”, “the purport”. The central objective is the *anta*. The vast area covered by the mantras of the Veda converges upon the meaning of the Vedanta, which is embodied in the Upanishads. The Upanishads form mostly the tail end of a large literature called the Vedarashi. The Veda is divided into four sections known as the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad.

The Purusha Sukta is an example of a piece from the Samhita, which consists of hymns, psalms, prayers, or addresses to the great Deity in various ways. The Brahmanas represent the codification of the practical usage in religious ritual of the mantras embodied in the Samhita.

Human life is external as well as internal. It is also transcendent, going beyond both the external and the internal. Thus, while the Brahmanas may be

regarded as representing the external application of the intention of the Veda mantras, the Aranyakas are said to be the internal intention of the very same Vedas. The external intention is the Brahmana, the internal intention is the Aranyaka, and the mantra, which is the Samhita, can be interpreted in either way.

In fact, the traditional belief is that it is difficult to know the entire meaning of the mantras of the Veda Samhita because they can be applied to the various fields of life. *Adhiyajna* is the field of sacrificial performance, on which much emphasis is laid in the Brahmanas. *Adhibhuta* is the physical atmosphere, the astronomical universe, to which the Veda mantras also bear relevance. There is not merely ritual of the religious type implied in the Veda mantras, but also physical science, not excluding even mathematics. *Adhyatma* is the internal meaning to which we move when we go to the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. *Adhidharma* is the field of law, rule, system of living, the principle of behaviour and conduct, morality proper, whose principles are also to be discovered in the very same mantras of the Veda. Therefore, the Veda Samhita is an all-comprehensive gospel—*adhiyajna, adhyatma, adhibhuta, adhidaiva*, representing the divinities who are addressed in the mantras.

The *adhyatma*, which is the internal meaning, is touched upon in the Aranyakas. The word *aranyaka* suggests that these texts were studied in secluded

places—in *aranyas*, or forests, not in urban areas. The final meaning of even the Aranyakas is the Upanishads. The Upanishad is the secret teaching. *Aranyaka* is learning in seclusion, and *upanishad* is a mystical secret doctrine which is not openly taught to untrained disciples.

Each section of the Veda has its own group of Upanishads. We have today the most important ones, sometimes known as the 108 Upanishads, but they are mostly limited to ten in number, called the Ten Upanishads, on which philosophers of India have given their commentaries. Only one Upanishad, known as the Isavasya, does not belong to the Brahmana or the Aranyaka. It belongs to the Samhita portion—only one. All the other Upanishads belong to the Brahmanas or the Aranyakas. The concluding portion of the Yajurveda Samhita is the Isavasya Upanishad.

The foundational religious vision embodied in the Purusha Sukta is a directive to practical living. At the very commencement of the Isavasya Upanishad a gateway is opened, as it were, to put into practice this vision that is embodied in the Veda mantra, especially the Purusha Sukta. Almost the same thing is repeated in the very first few words of the Isavasya Upanishad: *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam* (Isa 1). *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (P.S. 1) says the Purusha Sukta: “The Universal Being is all heads and all eyes and all things.” This is another way of saying the universe is pervaded by the Supreme Being. And the Isavasya Upanishad says *Īśāvāsyam*

*idaṁ sarvaṁ*: “All this is pervaded by the Supreme Lord.” This is an equal, as it were, of the Veda mantra. That the Lord pervades not merely living beings, but even what we call inanimate matter, is one facet of the expression of this Almighty.

*Jagatyāṁ jagat*: “The moving and the non-moving are both indwelt by the same Lord.” On an ultimate analysis, there is no distinction between the living and the non-living. The non-living, or the so-called inanimate, is a dense form of the expression of the same power that permeates the whole cosmos. When it becomes translucent, it becomes the animal level. When it is transparent, it is the human. Thus, that which is moving and that which is not moving, that which is living and that which is not living, organic as well as inorganic, both these are pervaded by the Supreme Almighty.

During the previous session we had occasion to understand the meaning of this pervasion. I gave two examples. Water pervades cloth when it is dipped in water, and clay pervades a pot, of which it is an embodiment. These two are classical examples of the pervasion of the cause in the effect. The Supreme Being is the cause, the universe is the effect. Clay is the cause, the pot is the effect. Clay pervades the pot and water pervades the cloth in two different senses; and God pervades the universe, perhaps, in both these senses and in either way. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat*. The concept of the Ultimate Reality decides our conduct in life. All questions get

automatically solved by the way in which we are able to conceive the nature of the Supreme Being.

Differences in the outlook of life among human beings arise on account of differences in the conception of the Ultimate Reality, which means to say, the conception of the relationship that obtains among God, the world and the individual, which automatically follows from their notion of the nature of Reality. The schools of thought, the philosophies especially prevalent in India known as the Darshanas, are classical examples of this prevalent diversity of opinion regarding the notion of the Ultimate Reality. However, God pervades the world in every sense of the term. We may take it in the sense of the Nyaya or the Vaisheshika or the Sankhya or the Vedanta; in every sense, the pervasive aspect of God in the universe is applicable. Knowing this, be happy in this world.

*Tena tyaktena bhuñjitha, ma grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam.* This first verse of the Isavasya Upanishad is regarded by many people in India as the sum and substance of Indian philosophy, Indian theology, and the Indian doctrine of living. All these are pressed into these few words of a single mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad. Here we have ontology, theology, psychology, and practical life in only a few words. How are we to live in this world? By renouncing, we have to live in this world—*tyaktena bhuñjitha*. What sort of renunciation are we expected to participate in, or effect into our lives? The word *tena* explains the type of renunciation

that we are called upon to embody in our lives. A very intriguing term is this small word *tena*. “Therefore” is one meaning of the word *tena*. “By him, by that, by which” is another meaning. Sanskrit words often have several meanings, and enigmatically, pithily, aphoristically, the mantra tells us in a quarter verse: “Enjoy by renouncing.”

Nobody enjoys by renouncing. Renunciation is a kind of sorrow. Renunciation is actually regarded by people as the abandonment of the values of life—social values, political values, family circumstances, possessions of every kind, relationships of every type. All these things are the sources of joy in this world, and we should renounce all these relationships and then be happy. How could one be happy by renouncing all sources of happiness, which are the relationships that we establish with the objects of the world? We are happy when we are in a very benevolent and friendly family, we are happy when we are in a society where there is friendly relationship, we are happy when we possess the wealth of the world, and renunciation is just the opposite of this doctrine of possession. To possess is to enjoy. This is how we interpret things in this world. The more we possess things, the more is our happiness, and the Upanishad says, “Renounce and be happy.” What sort of renunciation it is that is suggested in this mantra is a matter to consider.

“Inasmuch as the Lord pervades all things” is a clause that has to precede this injunction that we

have to enjoy by renouncing. The second half is connected to the first half. All that is inanimate and animate is pervaded by the Supreme Being and, therefore, enjoy by renouncing. What is this “therefore”? What is its significance? Because of the fact that the whole universe is possessed by the Universal Being, therefore, we have no possessions. Perhaps we are also possessed by the Lord as one of the contents of this creation. Since we are a part of that which God possesses, envelopes, indwells, pervades, we have no special prerogative of enjoyership. Perhaps we have not the prerogative of even doership. That we are neither a doer nor an enjoyer follows from the fact of the pervasion of the universe by the Lord. There is no need to give a large commentary on this simple truth. If the Lord pervades the universe as clay pervades the pot, we would not be able to conduct even our thinking process as people involved in this pot-universe in which the clay absolute inheres.

The illustration of the clay and the pot brings out a very important significance of the cause being even the material of the effect. The cause is not merely an instrument in the production of the effect. God is not like a carpenter manufacturing the table of the universe, and God is not like a potter manufacturing a pot, standing outside the substance which is manufactured. In the case of the carpenter, who is the cause of what he makes, he stands outside the effect. But as distinguished from this example, we have the immanental doctrine of

the pervasion of the cause in the effect in a different sense altogether, as clay pervades the pot, which means to say, the clay exists as the pot; the cause is the effect. The cause is not merely in the effect; the clay is not merely in the pot, it is the pot. God is not merely in the world; He is the world. If this is true, which seems to be the fact if we are to understand the meaning of the first half of this mantra—*jagatyām jagat*—in this way, then we would be nowhere in this world, in the kingdom of God.

As we know very well, the highest source of bliss is God-being. The nearer we are to God, the happier we are. Our approximation to the Ultimate Reality is what makes us happier. The nearer we are to the Absolute, the happier we are. The nearer we are to the sun, the greater is the warmth that we feel. The farther we are, the greater is the chillness that we feel. The greater is the sorrow of man, the greater is the distance between him and God.

But where is this distance? The distance between man and God is abolished in one stroke by the introduction of this great doctrine of the Isavasya Upanishad that the whole universe is pervaded by the Lord, indwelt by the Lord, and ruled by the Lord. God rules the kingdom of heaven, and the whole universe is the kingdom of heaven, inasmuch as He rules all things. We, therefore, live in the kingdom of heaven even now. Well, we are not merely living in the kingdom, we are equally pervaded by the presence of the Almighty: *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam*. Therefore, possession is

unthinkable in this world. No one can possess anything in this world because the objects are pervaded by the Lord, and the subjects are equally pervaded by the Lord. You and I are both equally indwelt by the Supreme Being. The things of the world which you would like to possess are as much the indwelling vehicles of God as you yourself are, so how would you possess anything in this world? Therefore, renounce possessiveness. Possessiveness has to be abandoned. When you abandon the sense of possession on account of the realisation of the fact that things in the world are not actually objects, but are indwelt by the Almighty, even as you are, you cannot possess anything in this world.

There is no such thing as property. It does not exist. The idea of property is an illusion in the mind. Nobody can possess anybody else in this universe of interrelated existences and values. There is a commingling of principles in this universe. Which part of the body is the possessor, and which part of the body is the possessed? Let us see. In this body of yours with many limbs, which part is possessed by which part? Nobody possesses, and nobody is possessed, because of the absence of the need for possession. The need for possession ceases. When the need itself is not there, where comes the question of possession? The urge to possess the objects of the world arises on account of not recognising the indwelling principle of God, and if God is the centre of all bliss, happiness, this non-

recognition will be tantamount to entering into an abyss of sorrow.

Hence, renunciation, the *tyaga* that is indicated in the Isavasya Upanishad, is a very subtle point which is not easy to grasp unless we are careful. We all renounce things. "I have no connection with my family. I have no connection with anything. I am independently living in a *kutir*, in a cottage in a forest, so I am a renounced individual." This may be the idea of a religious seeker. But the Upanishad does not tell us to be physically away from things in order that we may renounce, because being physically away from anything is impossible in this kingdom which is pervaded by the Almighty in every nook and corner. You cannot go outside the world; therefore, you cannot renounce anything. If you can go outside the world, you can say you have renounced the world; but you are standing on the world, in the world, and you say you have renounced the world.

Renunciation is, therefore, not a spatial distance that exists between you and the object that you would like to possess. Nothing of the kind is what is intended here. It is a consciousness, an awareness of there being no such thing as possession in the world; therefore, at every point in space, in every part of the world, you are a renouncer. You can be the highest renouncer while being inside a huge factory or seated inside the Bank of England or the Reserve Bank of India. You need not go to the Himalayas to renounce. Therefore, be happy.

How does happiness follow from renunciation? Happiness follows because by the renunciation of the idea, the notion or the sense of possession, you get nearer to God. It is the sense of possession that cuts you off from God. The idea of possession of things, attachment to anything in this world, arises on account of your involvement in spatial distance and the temporal process—space and time. But God pervades all things: *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*. He pervades even space and time; therefore, space and time cannot demarcate one thing from the other. Hence, you cannot possess anything.

Therefore, when we are able to contemplate this situation of non-involvement in spatial distance and the temporal process, we are almost on the lap of God. We have contacted God in one second, as it were, by refusing to admit the spatial distance and the temporal procession; therefore, at the same time, we are renouncing in spirit, and not merely geographically, socially or politically. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” says the Gospel. We must be poor in spirit, not poor in cloth and living in a thatched hut. The “poor in spirit” is the one who is emptied of all content in the spirit, which means to say, emptied of all sense of the possessive attitude, which is the content of our spirit. When the spirit stands independent of all objective content, the spirit is poor, and such a spirit is blessed.

This spirit is finally inseparable from the Supreme Spirit because when the idea of possession is removed, it immediately leads us to

the consequence that should follow spontaneously. The nearness to God, which is the enhancement of our happiness, is insured by the diminution of the distance between us and God, which is achieved by an overcoming of the sense of space and time. The more we renounce, the more are we happy, therefore. But we must renounce in spirit; otherwise, physically we may be renunciates, while mentally we may be wealthy individuals. We may be contemplating gorgeous experiences of the senses and the mind, reveries, and building castles in the air.

It is the mind that liberates, and it is the mind that binds. The world does not bind, and the world does not do anything for us. *Mana eva manuṣyāṇām kāraṇam bandha-mokṣayoḥ, bandhāya viṣayāsaṅgo muktyai nirviṣayam manaḥ* (Amrita Bindu 2): “Mind alone is the cause of the bondage and the freedom of individuals. That mind which is connected to an external object of sense is the source of bondage; that mind which transcends relationship with objects is the source of freedom.” This is the meaning of this verse.

Renouncing the sense of possessiveness on account of the recognition of the fact of the all-pervading nature of the Lord, enjoy. How do we enjoy? When it is said that we enjoy, we do not indulge in the objects of the senses. The question of indulging does not arise, on account of this peculiar renunciation in which we have divinely participated. We enjoy as God Himself enjoys, as it

were. God's happiness is God's existence. Sat-chit-ananda is the definition of the Supreme Being: Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The Consciousness of Existence itself is Bliss. It is not the Consciousness of possession, but the Consciousness of Existence.

But in our case today, in this empirical realm, consciousness of the existence of wealth somewhere in somebody's treasure chest does not become the source of happiness. The mere existence of wealth somewhere does not bring us satisfaction. We must possess it. But in the case of God, the Chit of Sat is also Ananda at the same time. The Consciousness of Existence is the same as Bliss. Therefore, it is not Consciousness of Existence and Bliss, but it is Consciousness which is Existence, inseparable from what happiness is.

Limitation is the source, or the cause, of pain and sorrow, and it is the finitude and the limitations in which we are involved that make us run to objects of sense. We try to grab objects, possess things, under the impression that our finitude would be annulled. We wrongly think that we become infinite by coming in contact with many finites, but no amount of the possession of finitudes will make us infinite. All happiness is nothing but a touch of the Infinite given to the process of thinking. We cannot be happy unless an element of infinitude is present in us. Even when sense objects are enjoyed, without our knowing what is happening we are contacting the Infinite for a split

second; otherwise, we cannot be happy. Unless God contacts us and we contact God, we can never be happy here even for a moment of time. We will be perpetually in hell if God were not to be contacted, knowingly or unknowingly.

The psychology of the possession and the enjoyment of objects of sense would reveal that, at the time of possessing and enjoying the desired object, the mind reverts to its source, contacts the Atman within, contacts the Infinite itself, as it were. Not knowing that this is taking place, the mind foolishly ceases thinking of the object of sense because it is under the impression that it has possessed it and therefore it need no more think of it, while simultaneously it has entered the borderland of a non-possessive realm where it has stopped thinking and yet is conscious. A state where we are conscious, and yet we do not think, is God-consciousness. It is Consciousness where there is no thinking, there is only Being. Therefore, we are in a state of rapture and in a state of great thrill when we get what we want. But we pass through this experience for only an infinitesimal fraction of a second. This thrill has come from within, and not from the thing that we possess.

Therefore, God is the source of happiness. The Infinite is what gives us happiness here. The renunciation, or the *tyaga*, enjoined upon us in the Isavasya Upanishad's first mantra is a spiritual transvaluation of values—entering the kingdom of heaven, as it were, and possessing nothing, not

because there are no things in this world, but because they are not outside us.

The need to possess a thing arises on account of its being outside us. But things are not outside us. We know very well why it is so. As nothing is outside us, nothing can be possessed and, therefore, we are perpetually in a state of renunciation. Renunciation, *tyaga*, is regarded as a quality of God. *Aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ, jñāna-vairāgyayoścaiva śaṅṅām bhaga itiraṅā* (Vishnu Purana 6.5.74). God is called Bhagavan. Bhagavan is one who has *bhaga*. And what is *bhaga*? This verse says, *aiśvaryasya samagrasya*: “One who has reached the pinnacle of all glory, prosperity”; *vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ*: “of fortune, of energy and strength, of knowledge, and of renunciation.” In God we reach the pinnacle of renunciation. God is the greatest renouncer because He possesses nothing. He does not possess anything because He indwells everything: *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam*. So it is not like a beggar who does not possess things. It is a state of not possessing things on account of being identical with all things. Therefore, there is a difference between God not possessing things and a beggar not possessing things. Both do not possess anything, for two different reasons altogether.

The nearer you go to this state of non-possession in light of the pervasion of God in the universe, the greater are you a renouncer and, therefore, the happier you are—*tena tyaktena*

*bhuñjitha*. Therefore, says the Upanishad, do not covet wealth—*ma grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam*. There are two meanings of this little saying. “Do not covet the wealth of anyone.” This is one meaning. Do you know why you should not covet the wealth of anyone? The reason behind it is laid down in the first half of the verse: *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat*. The other meaning is, *kasyasvid dhanam*: “Whose is this wealth?” Therefore, do not be greedy.

Who is the possessor of wealth; whose is this wealth? Whose is this world; who is the owner of this property of the world? Nobody can be regarded as the owner of property or of things, since the things of this world, the wealth of this world, do not belong to anybody. As all things belong to God; nothing belongs to any individual. Neither do I belong to you, nor do you belong to me, but both of us belong to somebody else. Hence, in this world, one person is not the possessor of another. Exploitation is completely ruled out. No exploitation is permissible in this world ruled by God and indwelt by God. You cannot utilise me, and I cannot utilise you. What a grand gospel of perfect living we have here in this little passage of the Isavasya Upanishad! Whose is wealth? God’s is wealth. Therefore, *ma grdhaḥ*: “Do not be covetous, do not be greedy.”

Yet, there is a doubt in the mind. The other day a seeker in the Ashram came to me and asked, “How long am I to work in the Ashram? I have taken

*sannyas*. I am a monk. Still I have to work? How long will I be in this bondage of work, Swamiji?" He put this question to me.

The answer to this question is given in the second mantra: *Kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ, evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2). Why are you afraid of action? Why are you afraid of anything at all? The karma will not bind you. The question "How long have I to work like this even after I take *sannyas*?" arises because the meaning of action has not been understood properly. We are told again and again that action is binding, and that renunciation of action is freedom. But renunciation of action is not freedom, and renunciation of things is not freedom. This again is the great doctrine of the Bhagavadgita, with which you are all well acquainted. Arjuna said, "I shall renounce. I shall take *sannyas* and renounce all activity. I shall go begging for alms."

But what does Sri Krishna say? "What a foolish man you are! How can you avoid action in a world which is perpetually active? The whole universe is incessantly evolving in even its minutest part, to its very core. Not even a single atom in this universe is inactive. Arjuna, how do you say you will be inactive and you will take *sannyas* of inactivity?"

This is what the Isavasya Upanishad has said even before the Bhagavadgita was written. Many people think, and historians of philosophy say, that the Bhagavadgita takes certain ideas from the Isavasya Upanishad, and also from the Katha

Upanishad. Perhaps there is some truth in it. Action does not bind.

After having said all this in regard to the first mantra, or verse, of the Isavasya Upanishad, a doubt still persists. "What is my daily duty in this context of what you have said just now? What am I supposed to do every day? You have threatened me with this great doctrine of the pervasion of God and the glory of renunciation in the sense that is inculcated in this mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad. Now what happens to me? I get up in the morning, and what am I to do?" The answer to this question is in the second mantra. I shall explain it to you during the next session.

## Chapter 9

### THE UNION OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Throughout the process of history, religious life, which is emotionally associated with the existence of God, has often stood in contradiction to the workaday life of mankind. The conflict between knowledge and action has been an age-old problem. Is knowledge opposed to action? Is action opposed to knowledge? There have been protagonists of both sides.

The Mimamsa philosophy, famous in India, tirelessly proclaims that knowledge is an incentive to action, that knowledge propels us to act or conduct ourselves in a particular manner, towards the achievement of an end which is beyond knowledge. Knowledge is not an end in itself; it is an enlightenment which precedes a conduct, a behaviour, an adventure or a work that is to be done. After we know something, we do something. We do not merely know something and keep quiet. So the Mimamsa doctrine of action holds that every regulation, every law, every rule is a propulsion to do something. *Codaṇā-lakṣaṇaḥ arthaḥ dharmah*. This is an aphorism, a sutra from Mimamsa which says that we do not sit tight doing nothing after we know dharma, or law. Dharma is an incentive to action. Knowledge gives us an understanding of the way in which we have to conduct ourselves in life, or do something in the field of day-to-day existence.

This seems to be an easily acceptable fact from

the point of view of an ordinary commonplace observation. No one keeps quiet after knowing a fact. The knowledge of a fact is expressed by the implementation of some thought. But doctrinaires of knowledge hold that action is opposed to knowledge because, as a whole, every incentive to action is an acquiescence in the finitude of the individual, and an inadequacy of knowledge in the proper sense of the term is the reason behind any kind of impulsion from inside.

There are two extreme camps. We may call them, if we like, the right and the left—one camp holding that knowledge is supreme and all action ceases on the attainment of knowledge, and the other camp holding that action can never cease and knowledge is only a help in performing action more dexterously.

The Isavasya Upanishad, to which we made reference in the previous session, has tackled this problem, and on the basis of this, or in consonance with this, we may say, the Bhagavadgita has its doctrine of karma yoga. This is a highly intricate technique, not easy to understand, because generally people get tired of work. Man cannot easily accept that he is born only to act, to work hard and sweat throughout life. A question arises within oneself, “How long will I go on working like this? I have to retire.” There is a desire to retire from work. If this desire were not there, there would be no retirement from any kind of activity. We get tired, fatigued, exhausted or fed up, or we

feel that there is no longer a necessity to act, on account of having achieved what we wish to achieve through action. We act because we have to achieve an end which has not yet been attained. But once we have a grip on the goal we wish to reach, the means thereof drops automatically.

The first verse of the Isavasya Upanishad, *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat, tena tyaktena bhun̄jitha, ma ḡṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam* (Isa 1), the meaning of which I tried to explain during the previous session, automatically gives rise to the second verse. The consequence which follows from this great dictum of the omnipresence of God is a regulation of human activity and an alignment of human existence with God-being. It is necessary that the recognition of the presence of the Almighty everywhere, within and without, has to be reconciled with our final existence.

*Kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ* (Isa 2): “You should aspire for a long life.” You should not curse life. “Let me go quickly. Wretched is life; the earlier I go, the better.” Make no such statements. The life of man is neither so wretched as it appears, nor is it heaven. *Nābhinandeta maraṇaṁ nābhinandeta jīvitam* (Manu 6.45). The Manu Smṛiti says you have no right either to praise or to condemn. “How beautiful is this world!” This statement is not correct. “How idiotic is this world!” This statement is also not correct. The world is not as nice as it may appear to your eyes, and it is also

not as stupid as it may sometimes appear.

What we call life is the placement of our personality in the context of God's creation. This much is life. We are placed in a particular station in this vast atmosphere we call the creation of God. We know very well that we are inside this creation, a part of this creation, a part in a very vital sense, in a sense of a living relationship with the mighty expanse of God's creation—a living relationship, not a mechanical contact. Our relationship with things in this world is vital, living, organic, integral, inseparable. It is not mechanistic; it is not a dead relation. We are not corpses, and nothing in the world is dead.

The Creative Will of the Supreme Being is pulsating through the veins of every individual, and this urge of the Creative Will of God is felt even in a minute atom. The doctrine of creation in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us that God became two from the state of His Supreme Oneness, by which the Upanishad intends to convey that the one integral All-being became the subject on one side and the object on the other side. God became the seer as well as the seen. God declared: "I am that I am." Even to declare this in this manner, there should be an element of supreme subjectivity which envisages its own subjectivity as a cosmic objectivity—something beyond our heads.

The Self-consciousness of God is referred to in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as *aham asmi*: "I am." This cosmical sense of the I-ness of God is

the first step taken by Him in the act of creation. In the originality of the Absolute, there is not even the sense of I-amness. There is no subject and predicate in the Supreme Being. There is no "am". The verb "am" cannot be applied to God. But in the initial step in the direction of the creation of the cosmos, the stage of I-amness, or I-am-that-I-am, supervenes. This is what the Vedanta speaks of as Ishvara or Hiranyagarbha, and here the universe is organically involved in God's existence. The universe has not come out. But when there is a consciousness of the universe having been created, God as the Supreme Subject is counterpoised to the universe as the Supreme Object. The universe is one object and not many objects, and the observer of this single object is the single subject, the great, mighty Creator. God visualises His creation as a single observer of a single object which is spread out before His cosmic eye. There is a condensation of this cosmic sense, and it descends into greater and greater densities of formation and concretisation until the One is split into the isolated subject and the isolated object, in the process of which condensation of the original sense we have these principles known as *tanmatras*, *mahabhutas*, etc.: *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*, and *prithivi*, *apah*, *tejas*, *vayu*, *akasha*: earth, water, fire, air, ether, and so on.

But there is a further coming down, when the observer of the universe ceases to be a supreme individual and becomes a finite thinking unit, one

among the many others, the state in which we are today. Here we are in a state of utter finitude, involved in a physical or bodily encasement. We are not merely sparks of this conflagration of the universal fire, as we used to be in our angelic condition; we are smoking, like damp fuel sunk in the flame of fire, and we have to pass through the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and sleep—which are absent in God. For the sake of the experience of these three states, we have to manufacture within our own selves the instruments of these experiences, known as the five layers: the causal, the intellectual, the mental, the vital and the physical, in Sanskrit known as the *anandamaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha* and *annamaya kosha*. We are encased in a fivefold coating, a dense covering of the little spark that is within us, and putting on the fivefold spectacles of the *koshas*, we are looking at this creation of God. Therefore, it appears as if there are five things. We have five spectacles, and therefore we see five things: earth, water, fire, air, ether. If we had one hundred spectacles, we would see one hundred things. Fortunately, we have only five. The one has been split, as it were, into the fivefold manifestation.

But God is calling every finite individual, as the father would like to have the prodigal son back. The rebellious son revolted against the father, ran away with all the little wealth that he could grab from the benevolent one who is the father, and became

prodigal. The son may forget the father, but the father cannot forget the son. We are completely oblivious of the existence of God, the Supreme Father, but God is not oblivious of our existence, so He beckons every little finite unit back to Himself. “My son has gone away, and I am deeply grieved. When will he come back?” This is what the father would have been thinking when the naughty one ran away due the height of his egoism. God is calling us back. This urge of evolution, as we think of it in scientific language, is God calling everyone back.

Everything, right from the lowest to the highest, is running in the direction of God, speeding with all velocity. When God calls, who can resist this call? It is the Centre of the universe calling everything on the periphery, allegorically described in the Sri Bhagavata Purana as the Rasa Lila—the Gopis dancing around Sri Krishna. The whole universe is restlessly moving around this central nucleus of the great Almighty. The Rasa Lila is going on everywhere in the universe. Sri Krishna is the proton, and the electrons are the Gopis; and every organisation that we set up in this world is a Rasa Lila that we are performing. There is a central chairman, a president, a king, an emperor, a monarch, whatever we call him. He is the nucleus, and all the others, the Gopis, are electrons going around him.

The necessity for setting up an organisation even at the atomic level is an expression of the need felt by the finite for the Infinite. All our activities,

enterprises in society, are a blind groping in the dark in search of the great God Whom we have lost. Blindly we are searching for God in the dark rooms of creation. In our hunger, in our thirst, in our sleep, in our fatigue, in our longings of a multitudinous variety in this world, in our births and deaths and the transmigratory process, we are asking for God. In the shops that we set up, in the travels that we undertake, in the learnings that we are imbibing in the colleges and the universities, in the cries and the sorrows and the joys and the exuberations of life, we are asking for God. Everyone is restlessly dancing, crying only for this central unit which has been severed, as it were, through consciousness, by a folly inexplicable to the human mind. This restlessness is expressed as action, karma.

How can you resist doing something? You say, "I will not do anything." Who are you to say that? No one has the capacity, the strength or the permission to say, "I will not." To bring back the analogy of the Bhagavadgita once again, if we are all Gopis, we are also all Arjunas. As Gopis, we dance around the nucleus of the Absolute; as Arjunas, we are sunk in sorrow: "Oh, I will not do anything. I throw down my bow and arrow of effort, and will hibernate in the region of non-action."

"What a pity," says Sri Krishna, the Guru, the Master, the superior, our guide. Nothing in the universe can resist the call of God, and action is the response of the finite in respect of this call. When you know this fact that you are responding to the

call of God in the activities in your life, your activities become karma yoga. When you do not know why you are working in this world—when you are not aware that this activity of yours is only a response to the call of God—it looks like a drudgery, a bondage, a prison house, a jail into which you have been thrown. Then you curse life, curse samsara, curse everybody, curse the Creator, and say that nothing here is good.

But when enlightenment dawns, when you know the purpose, meaning and significance behind action, you will not dread death. There is no fear of becoming extinct. Neither do you lose by death, nor do you gain by living. There is neither gain nor loss in life. It is an impersonal adjustment of the finite with the Infinite. This is action. It is impersonal because you are not doing it for your sake or for anybody's sake. It is a necessity under the circumstances of your present condition of finitude. A necessity cannot be called good or bad. It is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. It is a need; that is all. There the matter ends. When you say it is an inescapable necessity, you should not call it good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. These ethical epits do not apply to an impersonal urge which propels you to act in this world in one way or the other. Therefore, karma yoga is impersonal action. It is not a personal duty that you do for your own self or for your family members. When you take care of your family, when the father protects the child or the son serves the father, when you owe an

allegiance to any organisation, when you do a duty of any kind, you are again responding to this universal call from the humble position in which you are placed.

In the kingdom of God, there is no first and last, no superior and inferior. No action can be dubbed as good or bad, and no action can be called necessary or unnecessary, because it is not connected to you as a finite individual. It is connected to the All-being of the universe, of which you are an inextricable part. You are doing nothing. The whole creation is pulsating with action, and the pulsation of action which is throbbing forth from the heart of the universe is felt by every part thereof, which we all are. The whole cosmos is working for God-realisation, and the impact of this work of the universe is felt by every one of us, which is why we act willy-nilly.

As the wheels of a vehicle move, you too move because you are seated in it; therefore, you are not doing anything. You are not a *karta*. You are not an agent of action and, therefore, you cannot reap the fruit of that action. Therefore, action cannot bind you. *Na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2): "Karma is not bondage." Man, why are you afraid of karma? It cannot bind you, it cannot cling to you, it cannot cleave to the individual. Therefore, try to live long. What do you lose by living long? Why do you say, "Let me go early?" What do you gain by leaving this world early, by committing suicide? You will be reborn into another realm.

The procession of the evolutionary urge of the universe in the various stages of its manifestation is such that no one can escape passing through all the stages. So inviting death early is not in any way a wisdom on the part of the individual because life is not cut off by death. It is continued in the next formation of another type of finitude. Merely because you have severed your physical connections earlier by foolish thinking and acting, you have not gained anything. Sometimes there can be a nemesis following actions performed foolishly. The body has to drop automatically, and not by force. As a ripe fruit is automatically, spontaneously severed from the stem to which it is clinging in the tree, and it is not proper or fair to pluck a raw fruit—that would be like peeling your own skin—so is the unwisdom involved in committing suicide or killing oneself, or killing anything, for the matter of that, because life in a body, in a physical embodiment, is the force of the prana exerted upon this vesture proportionate to the intensity of the desire which can, and has to be, expressed through this body only.

You have taken this body because of a particular desire which can be fulfilled only through this instrument and no other instrument. You have not become a lion or a tiger or an angel. You have become this so-called person that you are. You are a man or a woman, poor or rich, or whatever you are. When this particular desire has exhausted its momentum and it can have no purpose to serve

through this body, it becomes a redundant old cloth, as it were, a shirt that you have to throw away. But as long as the momentum is there, it will be vitally connected to the body, and if you interfere with it when it is vitally so related to the body, you will be touching a live wire, and it will react vehemently, as electricity kicks when you touch a live wire. A sorrowful state of existence may be the nemesis that may follow from this act.

Well, now we come to the point of the great doctrine of karma which is hiddenly promulgated in this second verse of the Isavasya Upanishad, and elaborated in the Bhagavadgita and all the doctrines of karma yoga. Life, as I repeated already, is a process of undergoing a training, as it were, in this field of education of the universe, for the purpose of encountering the great Almighty, from Whom you have been severed at the time of the act of creation. Until you enter the Being of God, action will not cease, just as the river does not cease its roaring until it reaches the ocean. No urge can be resisted until you come face to face with the Almighty Himself.

*Evam tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare.*  
This law appertains to you in this condition of your existence. As you evolve higher and higher, the sense of finitude becomes less and less felt. Your dimension goes on increasing, becoming larger and larger as you ascend higher and higher in these stages of evolution. When you move from the base of a triangle towards its apex, you are lessening the

distance between the two sides of the triangle, the two sides of the triangle being the subject and the object. At the base they are quite apart, as if they are not connected with each other in any manner, but when you evolve further and further, when the synthesis between the seer and the seen is achieved in a larger and larger measure, the distance between the seer and the seen gets diminished until it is completely lost in the apex. At the point of the triangle where the two sides meet, the distance between the two sides is completely lost. The subject has become the object, and vice versa.

Until this stage of unity of the seer with the seen is achieved, so long as the finite has not entered the bosom of the Infinite, action cannot cease. *Tvayi evam* is an ordinance in respect of you in this condition. What is the ordinance? It is to say that you have to participate in the program of the universe. Participation is your duty; doing is not your duty. You do not do anything, because you cannot do anything. Why is it that you cannot do anything? Because you cannot exist outside the world to which you belong.

A verse in the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita tells us that several factors are involved in the production of the result of an action. That is the reason why many times we do not succeed in our attempts in life. "I have done so much effort; I have not succeeded," is the complaint heard everywhere. You might have put forth all the effort, granted, but other factors might not have

cooperated. *Adhiṣṭhānam tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham, vividhās ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivam caivātra pañcamam* (B.G. 18.14), says the Bhagavadgita. The structure of the individuality—the constitution of your personality—is *adhithana*. You are not as strong as an elephant, for instance. You can do a little work, but not as much work as an elephant does. The second factor, which is called *karta*, is the intensity of the understanding of the intellect. The strength and the capacity of the instruments of the senses to perceive things properly is another factor: *karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham. Vividhās ca pṛthakceṣṭā*: The purpose for which you are engaging yourself in action, being multifarious, causes divided interest, and therefore you are not wholly concentrated in any particular action. This is the fourth factor.

Lastly, and the most important of all the factors, which decides the success of an action, is *daivam caivātra pañcamam*: the extent to which you are in harmony with the will of the Creator. The percentage that you are aligned to the Cosmic Will is also the percentage that you will succeed in this world. If you are only one percent in union or in harmony with the Divine, then your success will be one percent, not ninety-nine percent. Here is the great doctrine of God being the Supreme Actor and the individuals being only participators. Arjuna was not the real actor. Sri Krishna was the real actor, though He was only seated in the chariot and apparently doing nothing. God only sits, as it were,

on His cosmic throne.

As I told you the other day, God's existence is His action. God need not act with hands and feet, because He is above space and time, and He is the Supreme Actor. The Sun does not act with hands and feet, and does not speak with a mouth, but its very existence is the activity of the universe. Every cell of your body operates because the Sun shines in the sky. Likewise, the supreme enlightenment, the brilliance of God shining in the firmament of the supreme spiritual experience, has such an impact upon every cellular embodiment in the form of individualities here that everything pulsates to its tune. This is again the Rasa Lila, the dancing to the tune of God, not dancing to the tune of the sense organs and the objects. Inasmuch as you are not the real actor, for reasons already stated, and also inasmuch as you cannot cease from action, for reasons again already stated, karma cannot bind.

Karma is not irreconcilable with knowledge. Knowledge is action and action is knowledge in the case of God. God's knowledge is action. God's being and consciousness are identical with His creative activity. And to the extent you are able to participate in this unity of knowledge and action, which is the characteristic of God, to that extent you are a karma yogi in this world. Karma yoga is the union of knowledge and action. It is not knowledge alone, and it is not action alone; it is a blend of both, a necessity for which is again insisted upon in an enigmatic verse of the Isavasya Upanishad, which

comes later on: *Anyad evāhur vidyayā anyad āhur avidyayā, iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire* (Isa 10).

I am not commenting on the Isavasya Upanishad here. I have taken up this theme incidentally in the context of the explanation of the nature of the true religious life, which is the theme on which I am speaking.

The true religious life, therefore, is a life of aspiration for God, yes, but it is not non-action. It is not running away from things. Who can run away from the creation of God? Soar high and higher to the highest heaven, go deeper and deeper into the furthest nether regions, but you are not outside the realm of God's creation. Therefore, how can you resist or escape the impulse to action imparted to you by the creative will of God Himself?

*Evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare, kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet:* "Try to live in this world by performing action—performing action not as an agent individually placed, segregated from others, but by participating." *Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* (B.G. 3.11), says the Bhagavadgita: "Action is a cooperative function; it is not an individual enterprise." When the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita say that you have to engage yourself in action, it means cosmic action, not your action or my action. And to make clear the fact that it is cosmic, this verse of the Bhagavadgita which I recited just now says that cooperative interrelationship is involved in this

action of karma yoga. It is a mutual alignment of individualities in a particular context, or a society. When you are a member of a particular society, you work in alignment with the objectives of other members also, which again are totally aligned to the central objective of the organisation. Likewise, when I conduct myself, when I speak, when I think, when I do anything, I am in alignment with you in your thought, in your feeling, in your action; and every one of us is in alignment with the central objective of this organisation of the universe, of which God is the Supreme Ruler.

In this sense, life is a yoga of action. All life is yoga, any kind of life is yoga, and any state of existence is a participation in this cosmic purpose. Therefore, life is yoga. It is not raja yoga, karma yoga, hatha yoga, kundalini yoga, this yoga, that yoga, and so on. It is a perpetual inward communion that every form of finitude establishes with the next higher stage of ascent. Hence, every atom is performing yoga. Every cell of your body is in a state of yoga. It is crying for the Great Being. This cry of yourself for God is the action that you perform; therefore, karma is sadhana, not bondage. And karma is not merely action isolated from knowledge; it is Being itself moving forward as becoming, the ocean itself surging forth towards its Maker. Karma yoga is knowledge and action combined in a unique sense. It is not a coming together of two different things; they are two faces of a single body. Knowledge and action are not two

things, A and B, coming together, joining hands with each other—nothing of the kind. They are two aspects of a single effort, so that true yoga is not capable of being designated by any particular name. It is a total movement towards a total experience.

This mission of human life is, therefore, an acquiescence in God's calling, and the gospel of the Upanishads, condensed in these two verses of the Isavasya, is the gospel of man's movement to God. The first verse proclaimed the glory of the omnipresence of the Supreme Being. Inasmuch as the Almighty pervades the whole of creation, there is no possessor in this world, and there is no property. Greed is unthinkable. In this divine atmosphere of the presence of God in all things, our duty is to participate in the work of creation, which is a movement to God. Today we may call it evolution, sadhana, yoga, or by any name we like.

Life is glorious. It is not a curse. We are not in hell. We are in the kingdom of God, and God is calling us. Our great duty in life is to listen to this call in every minute movement of nature and every adventure in life, whatever be the form it may take. This is the way in which we respond to God. An awareness of this fact is yoga. Therefore, *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ* is the theorem, and the corollary that follows from this theorem is *kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet*. In mathematics there is a theorem and a corollary. Some great doctrine is stated in the theorem, and something follows from it automatically. The great doctrine that is stated is

that God is All-being, *Īśāvāsyam idam*; and the corollary that follows is that action is inescapable, that action is not bondage, and that we are not the performers of the action, we are only participators in the great urge of the creation of God, the urge towards God-being.

Therefore, in karma yoga three points have to be remembered. The first point is that we cannot escape from action. The second point is that we are not the doers of the action; we are only participators. The third point is that karma cannot bind, as we are usually told. Karma is inseparable from knowledge, and knowledge is inseparable from God's existence. Knowledge is *chaitanya*, *chit*, which is the essential nature of God, and that is inseparable from action. So action is, in a way, an expression of God Himself in the form of this creation, which is called *visargah* in the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

The whole universe is the action of God, and as we are involved in this action of God, we are perpetually involved in action. But whose action? We are perpetually involved in the action of God. Thus, God acting is karma yoga, and we, also, are said to be performing this yoga when we are participating in this great action of God.

## **Chapter 10**

### **RENUNCIATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE**

In our study of the essential message of the Isavasya Upanishad, we discovered the role of renunciation in religious life. This is a very important aspect of religious living, and its significance has been recognised in the practice of religion to such an extent that often it has been identified with religion itself. Religion goes as an equivalent to renunciation. The religious attitude gets identified with the spirit of the renunciate. The religious man is considered as an ascetic, and the greater is this spirit of asceticism manifest in his personal life, in the light of religion, the greater is the respect that he commands in society, which only explains the extent to which the world considers renunciation as the essence of religion. But while it is possible to regard renunciation as the essence of religion, it can also be easily misconstrued and get transformed into an irrelevant accretion in the true spirit of religion. Anything can be understood and also misunderstood.

There is a great reason why renunciation is regarded as a very important essential of religion. There is also a reason why it can easily get entirely identified with religion itself, thus missing the point in the great admonition. With all his logical acumen, and in spite of an academic acceptance of the omnipresence of God, man cannot escape the subtle feeling that the ideal of religion is a transcendent

and otherworldly futurity. Man is man, and he cannot be anything else.

The perception of the world as a transitory process, with which man's mind comes into collision, as it were, every moment, and the impossibility to perceive the ideal that religion seeks, both act as contraries in one's life. A great hope is at the bottom of anyone taking to a religious life, a hope which passes ordinary understanding, a hope whose meaning may not be clear even to one's own self. When we take to religion, we may not be clear as to what we are seeking, finally. It is an impulse, that is all, and there ends the matter. An impulse has no reason behind it. We are pushed onward in the direction of an overwhelming feeling going by the name of religion, and this feeling is constituted in such a way that it cannot easily get harmonised with what the eyes perceive in the form of a world of human beings, particularly.

The religious feeling is not always capable of getting clarified through human understanding and logic. Something tells us that God is not in this world, whatever philosophies may say, whatever anyone may proclaim. What tells us this peculiar thing? It is we ourselves. Our involvement in the world is the factor that tells us that God is not in this world, and therefore the world has to be renounced for the sake of the realisation of God. How is it that this feeling arises in us? The perceiver of the world that we are gets involved in the world, and our perception of the world is the

world itself perceiving itself. It is the transitory process recognising its transitoriness. When any one of us looks at the world as a changeful phenomenon, we cannot see anything permanent here. We have already gone a little deep into this interesting feature of religion, namely, that the permanent cannot be visualised in this impermanent process we call the world.

The great doctrine of the omnipresence of God does not in any way help us here because the doctrine remains as a doctrine, while the feeling continues to press itself forward as an intractable element in our lives. We have never seen God, and we cannot see Him with our eyes, and the feeling insists that it is so. In the present predicament of man, feeling sometimes has a greater strength than understanding. We know very well how largely we are governed by feelings rather than by understanding. We suddenly go out of gear in our lives by the rise of a strong feeling, which need not necessarily be commensurate with a logical understanding. We may be highly intellectual with an incisive understanding of the nature of things, but in our own houses we are an embodiment of feelings, and feeling is the root of individuality.

This mysterious and eluding operation within our own psyche, whereby the feeling seems to be getting an upper hand over the understanding, is perhaps the reason why even great thinkers, such as Schopenhauer, thought that understanding is only an offshoot of the will. They thought that all

that we call intellectuality is only a phenomenon, not so very strong as the will that is behind it, which can even be identified with the feeling of the individual. He became the founder of psychology with a metaphysical foundation of the West. It is an empirical outlook which gives rise to these conclusions, and our studies in libraries do not help us here because somehow or other, for reasons we cannot know, we seem to be governed by feelings rather than by logical understanding. We brush aside our intellect when feelings supervene. Feelings, emotions and impulses are almost one and the same thing. So when we are fired up with a feeling of the religious ideal, we are prone to put down the understanding which might have been a brilliant torch before us in our academies, in our colleges and universities. We become a heap of feeling in a state of ebullition, and religion becomes a matter of feeling, rather than of understanding.

It has been said again and again that religion is a matter of faith rather than of understanding, analysis, etc. And what does the feeling tell us? It tells us that we are finite individuals involved in this process of a finite world. How can we recognise God in this world—a world which is fleeting, which is characterised by the birth and death of all finite entities, including ourselves? Therefore, God is not in this world. Hence, we have to renounce this world. Here comes the masterstroke of the religious life: Renounce the world. This dictum of the renunciation of the world wholesale, lock, stock and

barrel, arises on account of the feeling, not the understanding, that we are far from the Infinite. The world is far, far away from the Infinite. The Eternal cannot be seen in the impermanent world and, therefore, renunciation is the masterstroke that we have to deal at the root of this tree of life. Then religious men become hermits, monks, ascetics.

In this context you have listened to the message of the Isavasya Upanishad, which need not be repeated. Bring back to your memory what I mentioned in regard to the meaning that seems to be hidden in the first two verses of the Isavasya Upanishad. There is, akin to this spirit of religion, a famous saying in the Mahabharata: *Tyajed ekam kulasyārthe grāmasyārthe kulaṁ tyajet, gramam janapadasyārthe ātmārthe pṛthiviṁ tyajet* (M.B. 5.37.16). Literally translated it means: “For the sake of the family, an individual may have to be renounced; for the sake of the community, a family may have to be renounced; for the sake of the country, a community may have to be renounced; for the sake of the Self, the whole world may have to be renounced.”

While the first phrases are intelligible, the last one is a dangerous saying when it is not properly understood. “For the sake of the Self, the whole world may have to be renounced.” Man is more prone to misunderstanding this than to understanding it because of his involvement in the finitude that he is, and what the world is. Very

easily he can misconstrue great statements of scriptures. “‘For the sake of the Self, the world can be renounced.’ Oh yes, now I understand what religion is.” He leaves his home, leaves his family, leaves relationships, cuts off connections, and lives in a cave for the sake of the realisation of the Self that is within, for the sake of the salvation of the Self, the soul.

*Ātmārthe pṛthiviṃ tyajet.* It is said that for the sake of the Self or the soul, the world may have to be renounced. What is this soul; what is this Self? Empirical-ridden man, overpowered by feeling and capable of seeing only his body and the world, cannot understand by the word “Atman” more than as a light that seems to be flickering within his own physical body, for the salvation of which he has to renounce the whole world. This, though it is not the real meaning of religious asceticism, may be the form which it sometimes takes, to the woe of the religious man himself. Religion prescribes renunciation, and for the sake of the Self, for the liberation of the spirit, the world may have to be renounced. But, as I mentioned to you, here is the danger in understanding this injunction.

This verse that I quoted from the Mahabharata may itself serve as an explanation of the true meaning of renunciation in the interest of the salvation of the Self. If you have listened to me when I gave the translation of this verse, you would have noticed that the great teacher who made this statement had in his mind a gradual enlargement of

the scope of one's personality, in the interest of which the lower dimensions are expected to be renounced. An individual is a dimension, but a family is a larger dimension. He said the renunciation of the individual in the interest of the family is to be understood in its proper spirit, not merely in its letter.

The family is not a group of people, and similar is everything that is said afterwards—the community, the world, etc. When we speak of the family or the nation, we are not speaking of a group of people. The nation is not a heap of people. Likewise, the family is not a group of individuals. It is a qualitative transfiguration of a value that is usually attached to the individual. Your personality, your individuality, is a qualitative something, rather than a quantitative six-foot body. You know very well you are Mr. So-and-so and, during unguarded moments, you are likely to think that you are only this body. This is a quantitative assessment of your personality: I am six foot, five-and-a-half foot, etc. But you know very well that you are not to be measured by a foot ruler or a yardstick. Yourself as a human being cannot be measured by a yardstick. You are not an arithmetical or a geometrical physical appearance. You know that you have a quality, a status, a something. There is something in you; or rather, you may be said to be something not easily capable of getting identified with this six-foot body. Sometimes, when you are angry, you say, "What do you think I am?" This statement is not

made by the body. It is not the body saying this. Somebody else speaks from within you.

There is a status within you which cannot be translated into any other word. There is a position that you occupy, some importance. Do you not feel that you have some importance? This importance is not the importance of the body. After all, what is the importance of the body? It has no more importance than what can be attributed to other bodies. But certain people feel that they are more important than others. Do you not think it is so? Where comes the greater importance of one individual than the others, while all look alike in light of their geometrical figure or the length and breadth, etc., of their bodies? It is a quality which speaks in the language of an importance, a status.

This quality gets enhanced when you identify yourself with a family, so there is a self in the family. This is why you have so much affection for family members. The affection, love, etc., that you evince to the members of the family to which you belong is not a love that you show to the bodies of people. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why you should be attracted to these bodies at all. What is there in these people? Why do you say this is your brother, this is your mother, this is your father? Even if they are, why are you clinging to them? This clinging arises on account of a peculiar subtle quality that pervades the members of the family, a quality that is already within you, which has only extended its dimension. When this quality

extends itself, it cannot be identified with a group of bodies. Therefore, a family is not a heap of individual units but a qualitative enhancement of an imperceptible cohesive force, which also explains what a nation is, what humanity is.

Hence, when it is said that one individual can be abandoned in light of the family, and the family can be abandoned for the sake of a nation and the world, etc., you have to understand what the meaning is. It does not mean that you can bid goodbye to the members of your family and say, "I go, and I shall not have anything to do with you in future." You are not bidding goodbye to the family members when you renounce the family. This is a very subtle matter which, if it is missed, the religious spirit is also missed at the same time, and your renunciation becomes a hoax.

This injunction is purely spiritual, and not social. When you are told that an individual may have to be abandoned for the sake of the family, and the family for the sake of the nation, and the world for the sake of the Self, what are you to understand from this instruction? It is not a social isolation of your individuality or the family group from the larger group called the nation or humanity or the world. It is nothing of the kind. Religion is not a social affair. It is spiritual in essence, so you cannot associate religious practice with any kind of social adjustment, and even your social dissociation from your family members need not be identified with any step you have taken in the direction of

religion. That is a very important matter to remember. When you have withdrawn yourself from the family for the sake of religion—withdrawn yourself from the whole of humanity itself, rather—what you have done is, you have taken a further step forward in a qualitative way, not in a social way. Socially, well, you have already told people, “I shall not have anything to do with you, and I shall not speak to you from tomorrow. I have become an ascetic. I am a monk.” This is not religion.

The religious meaning of this renunciation comes into relief only when you have qualitatively risen above the total of humanity, not before that. Do you think that you are beyond the total of humanity in your spirit? Then you have gone beyond humanity, and you can renounce the whole world for the sake of the Self. But which Self?

Here comes a very important question, which has to be answered with great caution. “Myself; I wish to attain salvation.” This misconstruing of the meaning behind this injunction that for the sake of the Self the world may have to be renounced has also engendered certain doubts in the minds of people: “What happens to my people when I attain salvation? It is a pity that I go to God leaving all my family members and brethren here in the dust of the Earth.” This doubt can enter into even a highly evolved person, not only an ordinary person. A great genius in thinking also can entertain this doubt: “What happens to the world when I reach God?” Sometimes the doubt can take such an

atrocious form that it can tell you, "You are a selfish man. You are trying to reach the feet of God while the world is suffering." This misconstruing is common, and you cannot easily get over this difficulty because you cannot get over the difficulty of feeling that you are, after all, a human being. You are one person among many others, and whatever be the renunciation that you have taken to, you are just one person: a son, a daughter, a sister or a brother. After all, you are that only; you are nothing more than that.

Whatever be your spirit of renunciation, you have not really taken one step in the direction of religion if this doubt can arise in your mind. You are hopelessly unfit for religious life if these doubts can arise in your mind, because these doubts arise on account of your involvement in the world as a finite entity among many other finite entities, and your feeling that renunciation of the family or of humanity is just socially cutting oneself off from an outward relationship with people. But that is not the meaning or the spirit of this teaching.

"For the sake of the Self" does not mean yourself or myself because in this sloka, in this verse, you would have observed that there is a gradual ascent, and an increase in the dimension of the point you have to reach by your renunciation of the lower categories. The family is a larger dimension than the individual, the nation is bigger than the community, the world is bigger than the nation; therefore, the Self should be bigger than the whole

of humanity. But do you think your Self is larger than humanity? You feel very small: "Humanity is so large, and I am a very small individual. How can I be larger?" But in the logic of the ascent that is prescribed in this verse, the Self has to be larger than the world; otherwise, what is the point in renouncing the world? Should you renounce a larger thing for the sake of a smaller thing? How foolish that would be!

The logic of this ascent which takes you to larger and larger dimensions from individuality to family, from family to nation, etc., takes you to a still larger thing called the Self—a Self which is larger than the whole universe itself. For the sake of that universal Self, you may renounce the whole humanity, but not until that realisation comes, not until that feeling arises, not until you understand its meaning. Otherwise, you will be a very foolish person to think that you have renounced family, humanity, nation and so on, and that you have nothing to do with anybody.

Very careful you have to be when you think that you are a religious man. Do not be foolish; do not be hasty. The mind can trick you in one second and pull you down to a lower pedestal. Though you may have thought you have renounced your family and have nothing to do with your parents, etc., what have you renounced? You have only cut off a social connection. But, religion is not social. Again to repeat the very important aspect of religion: Religion is the rise of the spiritual character of your

personality by degrees; it is not a social association or dissociation. Until this spirit has been understood, religion has not been understood.

Now we come to renunciation, the point where we began. What is religious renunciation, or asceticism? Is it putting on a cloth, entering a church, a chapel, a temple or a cave? Nothing of the kind is religion. Renunciation is the rising into a higher category of quality, and thereby the lower category is automatically renounced. The larger includes the lower and, therefore, the lower is absorbed into the characteristics of the higher. Hence, the lower is renounced spontaneously. The world is smaller than the Self; the Self is not smaller than the universe. But when you look at yourself, you may look very small.

Religion cannot be seen with the eyes. You can see only people and the world. Religion is a spirit that you entertain in your consciousness, and it is not something which you see with your eyes or grasp with your hands. This spirit of religion will explain the spirit of renunciation. Hence, when the spirit is absent, when you stick to the letter and not to the spirit, the letter can overshadow the spirit and the spirit may be completely lost sight of.

There is a graduated ascent in everything in the world—in any matter, in any occupation and in any enterprise. Therefore, religion has to be practiced gradually, by slow detachment. There is a famous verse in the Yoga Vasishtha which says that in the beginning you should not, and you cannot, give the

whole of your time to God. You cannot give even the whole of your mind to God, what to speak of time? So Vasishtha, the great master of the Yoga Vasishtha, says in his own language that in the earlier stages, you may be able to give only one-sixteenth part of your mind to God, and at that time when you are in that position, in that capacity, you cannot and you should not try to give the whole of your mind and time to God. Gradually the quantity should increase, and then the quality should also increase. The quantity should increase only when the quality increases, not before. You can give one-eighth, one-twelfth or one-fifteenth to God only when you know the relationship that obtains between you and God.

We regard God also as a social individual mostly. In the religious prayers that we offer, even in our religious outlook, for the matter of that, we cannot help regarding God as one person among many persons, maybe as a large person, larger than anybody else. The social instinct does not leave us even when we go to heaven. It pursues us wherever we go. Thus, in our conception of God, the social impulse catches hold of us and transforms the concept of God into a social individual. God is a large Father in heaven, a Brahma or a Vishnu or a Siva, and whatever our reason may say about His omnipresence and inclusiveness, as I told you, our feeling says that there is something left unsaid in this matter. Therefore, there is an immense duration of time that you may take in leading a

spiritual life. It is not a matter of one day or two days, and there is no harm in taking time. You will not be a loser here because a right step and a correct step, a perfect step, even if it is only one step, is much better than a hundred steps wrongly taken which may have to be retraced afterwards because of a miscalculation done earlier.

Now, what I have told you today is a continuation, as it were, of the meaning that we could discover in the first two verses of the Isavasya Upanishad where God's immanence was proclaimed, and the necessity on the part of man to engage himself in unselfish activity also was enunciated. The human individual cannot escape action. Karma yoga, in its seed form, was declared in the verse of the Isavasya Upanishad perhaps many years before the Bhagavadgita was written.

Thus, renunciation is an essential part of religious living because detachment, or non-attachment, is considered as a vital part of religious life. Today we have taken time to consider what this detachment is, and what it ought to be. In what sense are we to become ascetics and renunciates? When we take to religion for the sake of God we are entering into larger inclusiveness and, therefore, the lower isolatedness gets renounced automatically.

We have not actually renounced anything when we take to the practice of the presence of God. We have gained more things, rather than lost anything. It is like losing a disease for the sake of health.

When we become healthy we have lost the disease, no doubt, but we do not say we have renounced the disease. This would be a meaningless statement because disease is not a natural condition of the body. It is an unnatural state of affairs into which the body has entered, in which it has got involved. Ill health and good health are not two different things. We cannot keep good health here, on one side of the balance, and ill health on the other side. They are both inside the body, conditions of the very constituents of the body. Likewise, renunciation and spiritual living are conditions of our personality. They are not things: Here is renunciation, here is religion, here is meditation, here is God, here is the world. God and the world, renunciation and spirituality, are conditions rather than things; therefore, they cannot be isolated. We cannot renounce the world physically or even socially for the sake of a God who is in our minds, just as we cannot throw off disease and keep it somewhere in a corner for the sake of the health that we have attained. When we have become healthy, we cannot see the disease at all. It is not sitting somewhere in a corner, gazing at us with a spirit of vengeance.

In the same way as ill health is not to be seen and even conceived when we regain good health, when we reach a larger dimension of the spirit, the lower dimension will vanish like the illness which has infested our personality in the various degrees through which it has to pass. The world will look

like a disease in the end, and here we must know what the world is. Again to repeat, the world is a condition of our experience, and not a substance that we are touching with our hands and feet.

These are hard things for the brain to grasp, and much time is needed to contemplate all these details. Busybodies that we are, we find little time to think along these lines. Religion is not an easy matter. God is not a cheap stuff that we can purchase for three paise. Great sacrifice is necessary—great sacrifice not of a thing or of a substance, but of a prejudice. We have obsessions and prejudices in our minds, and they are hard to renounce. We may renounce our father and mother, but we cannot renounce our prejudice. We cannot easily give up our inborn traits, though we may give up things in the name of renunciation.

Religion and spirituality are hard things for a mind which is obsessed with social thinking, and physical, economic and material evaluations; therefore, great training is necessary under a competent Master so that the true meaning of religious living may be imbibed by you in your holy adventure.

## **Chapter 11**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLY RITUAL**

A common feature among all the religions is the performance of ritual, which is observable everywhere. The life of man is inseparably connected with various types of ritualistic observances. Even those academic type of intelligentsia who imagine that ritual is outmoded and unnecessary are involved in different types of ritual.

A performance of any kind can be regarded as a ritual. It is a general term signifying any kind of outward expression of an inward feeling. Any gesture is a ritual, and whether it is performed within a temple or outside on the street, the ritual remains the same. When we bow our head before a holy altar, we are performing a ritual, and when we greet our friend and shake hands with him in the marketplace, we are performing another ritual. Any kind of gesture expressing our internal feelings, for the matter of that, can be regarded as a ritual. So who is free from it?

But from the point of view of religion proper, ritual is the homage which the finite man pays to the incomprehensibility of the Infinite. We cannot help offering our obeisance in all ways, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, to that mighty invisible Presence, and this humble gesture of ours is the holy ritual that we perform. We cannot help feeling a need for this performance on

our part because our entanglement in finitude is so profound and, consequently, the Almighty Being seems to be so far away from us. As a result, we cannot help expressing our littleness before this greatness in a humble gesture of obeisance which, in ancient tradition in India, goes by the name of *sashtanga namaskara*—prostration with eight parts of the body operating together.

Many of you may not be aware of what this *sashtanga namaskara* means. *Ashta* means eight, *anga* means limb, and *ashtanga* is an eight-limbed prostration. We fall flat on the ground with our arms joined together, palms coming together, the whole body prostrate on the ground as a symbol of utter surrender and submission, a gesture of total annihilation of oneself, a surrender which is complete in every way before the great power—primarily the Supreme Being, and secondarily any great towering personality such as our Guru or the deity whom we worship—as a symbol before which, and before whom, we express our surrender. When everything fails, surrender takes place.

Very often we have been told that the finale of religion is self-surrender. The religious life culminates in the surrender of the self to God, which inward, sanctified feeling is expressed in worships of various kinds, and entertaining concepts of various kinds of symbols in the performance of this worship. As the body is supported by the legs, religion can be said to stand

on ritual as its feet. Ritual is not an essential part of religion, in the same way as the legs are not an essential part of the body; but ritual is an essential part of religion, even as the legs are an essential part of the body. How they are essential and how they are not essential will be clear to you by this homely analogy of the feet on which the body is supported and planted. Who can say they are unimportant, though you may feel that they are not important.

In Indian theological tradition there is a graduated system of the practice of religious worship, designated as *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. These terms are very reputed and well known in circles of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and practice, and they almost correspond to what is generally known as *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana*, only mentioned in a different system of terms: *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*.

A humble service which may take the form of very concrete acts, either in a temple or in the form of service to the Guru, is *charya*. You might have seen a swami in the temple who goes to the jungle, plucks bael leaves, collects flowers from the garden, brings tulsi leaves, sweeps the veranda, the outskirts of the temple, and keeps the precincts of the shrine very clean. This is *charya* that he is performing, the outward form of the service of the great deity of worship.

But you must have also seen one or two persons inside the temple. They do not sweep outside or go

to the jungle and collect leaves, etc. They are concerned with the inner sanctum, the holy of holies. They also do a little bit of cleaning, but that is an inner service which consists of such acts as keeping the idols and images very clean, dressing them, decorating them, and helping the worshipper by lighting the lamps and such other things, which is part of what is known as *kriya*. It is a service to the great deity and is internally related to the shrine, and may be considered as a little superior to *charya*. Even the actual worship performed by the central figure in the holy of holies is a part of *kriya* only. I believe this system is there even in Roman Catholic churches, and it can also be found in the Gurudwaras of Sikhs, and in Buddhist and Jain temples. I do not think it is absent anywhere in any form of religious service.

The worship that the chief priest, with his assistant, performs inside the holy of holies is the *kriya* that is performed. *Charya* and *kriya* are the outward forms of worship, the external shape that ritual takes. External ritual consists in the feeling that the body, and the limbs of the body, are essential in the performance of worship. We have to be seated physically in a posture, or we have to be moving in a particular manner. We have to be doing something with our hands and even chanting something with our mouth, with our lips, with our tongue, so that the organs of the body are an essential necessity in the rituals which go by the name of *charya* and *kriya*.

But ritual need not necessarily be connected with the physical body. It can be a purely mental act. Worship in a highly ritualistic and complicated way can be performed even in the mind. Mentally we may go to the jungle and collect *bael* leaves without moving one inch from our seat. Mentally we clean the precincts of the temple; mentally we perform *charya* and *kriya*. Even the waving of the holy lamp and all the minutiae of the worship are carried on inwardly in contemplation. This is *yoga*.

In Saivism, especially in Southern India, there were four great representatives of this type of performance of religious worship in the field of religious adoration of God. These great stalwarts, who are known to us today in these circles, are recorded in a book called *Sixty-three Nyanar Saints*, written by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Of these sixty-three, or we may say sixty-four, adding one more who is not included in this traditional list, there are four stalwarts who are regarded as representatives of these four aspects mentioned—*charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. These four stalwarts are Appar, Sundarar, Gnana Sambandar and Manickavachagar. Their names are well known, and I mentioned them as specific examples of worshippers who devoted themselves wholly and entirely, with all their souls, to the performance of divine worship in these ways.

In religion, the tradition of ritual has a great inner meaning. It is not a meaningless performance on the part of the devotee. In the previous session I

pointed out a peculiar feature that predominates in the human individual: the sense of finitude. We cannot help feeling that we are small, whatever be our learning. Who can help having this feeling in the presence of this mighty Creator of the universe? And we know very well that in our daily life we are almost slaves to rituals of various types. Who can gainsay that we can live without gestures of some kind? We do not live like a stone statue, without movement. Every minute of our daily life is a series, as it were, of symbols and gestures, which are rituals of some sort or other. These gestures, when they are directed to God, usually go by the name of religious ritual. Otherwise, they are secular gestures.

This brings us to a corresponding important point in the practice of religion, namely, worship of a symbol. God cannot be conceived except through some symbol, and we are not in such an elevated mood of the spirit as to be free from this necessity to conceive God as some symbol or other. Even the most far-fetched imagination of our reason can catch hold of only some symbol of God, not God as He is, or the thing as it is in itself. Even our idea of universality and omnipresence is a symbol that the mind is catching hold of. What is meant by omnipresence? It has no sense for the human mind. We have only to imagine certain events that occur in this world, certain forms which are visible to the eyes, and certain conceptions that are possible for us. Beyond that, omnipresence, omnipotence,

omniscience mean nothing to us. They are symbols.

Man does not merely have luminous reason; he also has deep emotion. During the previous session we noted the role of emotion and feeling in man, which brings to highlight the spirit of submission to which one resorts in one's obeisance offered to God. The most predominant and prominent way in which God is envisaged by the human mind is of a great emperor, a ruler supreme, a sovereign of the universe. God is defined as the sovereign of the whole creation, and you know what your feelings are towards a sovereign. Awe, wonder, fear, affection—all these sentiments come together in the presence of a supreme Sovereign. The worships in temples, especially as prevalent in India, are carried on in a way similar to the entertainment of a great king. The deity in a temple is a king, and this king has to be entertained in a royal fashion. You know how you would entertain an emperor if he were to come to your humble cottage. You can imagine what your feelings would be if you were to receive a notice today that the emperor, the king of your country, will pay a visit to your cottage after a month. What those feelings would be, each of you would know for yourself. "The king of the land is coming to my cottage after one month!" For a whole month you will be thinking this. For a whole month you will be making all sorts of preparations, everything conceivable to the mind—neatness, cleanliness, decoration, festoons, beauty, and anything that would please this mighty sovereign.

That is the worship offered in temples. The great God is received as a most honourable guest; and in India especially, there is great detail involved in the receiving of a guest. It is not just shaking hands: "How do you do? Please sit down." This is not the way of receiving such a mighty guest. It is a great ritual, it is a great performance, and it is an occasion for the emotion of uncontrollable joy. Many a time people weep when a great man comes. They cannot speak a word. Their throats are choked. Even the words "How do you do? Please be seated" will not come from the throat. No words will come because of the exuberance of joy that the great being has come.

In the Mahabharata, the instance of Lord Krishna coming to the humble cottage of Vidura is mentioned. Vidura was given the information: "Tomorrow the great Lord Krishna is coming to dine with you." Oh, the man's heart burst. That he was alive was a great wonder because he forgot himself so completely. When Sri Krishna entered the cottage, Vidura was beside himself, and he had no awareness that he was existing at all. He was no more Vidura, the host. He was nothing at all; he had completely vanished into thin air.

When the joy becomes maximum, it can inundate your personality to such an extent that your whole body and mind will melt. Such a spirit of inward inundation and joy is also the divine feeling of the worshipper in a holy temple, which can be seen in temples such as Tirupati, and such

great shrines in southern Indian particularly, which are able to maintain this ancient tradition even to this day, to a larger extent than in northern India. The rituals are observed with a greater detail, devotion and scientific punctiliousness in southern shrines than here in the north. If you want to see this detail, you must go to the Meenakshi temple in Madurai, or the Tirupati temple. Oh, it is wonderful! You will be simply shocked at the earnestness, the sincerity and the sense of holiness that surrounds the performers of the worship, and the realistic feeling of the presence of God in that symbol, the idol, the image of Meenakshi or Venkateswara, or whoever the deity be. There is no symbol there. It is not an idol, it is not an image; it is God speaking. There were devotees who could dance to the tune of Bharatanatyam or any other dance before the Mighty Being which, to the untrained eye, is only a stone image.

It is difficult to perform a ritual unless you are a heightened religious devotee. A person who sees only material things cannot be a devotee of this type. A temple is a representation of the universe. It is not a building of brick and mortar. The structure, the pattern, the arrangement and the layout of the temple is comparable to the Viratswarupa, or the Cosmic Form of God. This is the Tantra or the Agamic system of laying out a temple; and Agama rituals are a very essential part of the religious system prevalent in India.

You will be in a state of horripilation and thrill if

you go deep into these techniques of the construction of a temple. It is not just that thousands of bricks are purchased and some mason builds anything he likes. It is a systematic portrayal of the very structure of the cosmos conceived as the Virat Purusha, the Being that animates the whole creation. You would have seen in temples such as Rameshwaram, etc., and other great shrines, that the layout is characterised by certain specific details. In most of the temples you would have seen a huge pillar, sometimes with a flag on it, and nobody would know what this is. That is what is seen at the outskirts of the temple where grossly conceived sacrifices are performed.

To recall to your mind once again the meaning of sacrifice, it is the essence of religion and spirituality. Sacrifice precedes your eligibility to enter into the holy shrine and have a vision, a *darshan*, of the great deity. That particular altar at the gateway symbolises the place where the animal in you is sacrificed. Many people offer actual animals there; they slaughter a goat or a buffalo. That is a crude, outward form that ritual may take to signify an inward necessity, which is the sacrifice of the animal in man so that he becomes truly human, in order to gain entry into the divine that is in the holy of holies.

Many of the temples have five corridors, or sometimes seven, representing the inward layers of the body—the five *koshas* or the seven layers of consciousness. You know what the five *koshas* are:

the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya*—the physical, vital, mental, intellectual, causal. Or sometimes there are seven, as I told you, instead of five, representing the seven ascents or the stages of gradually rising from the material to the deeply religious, holy, divine, spiritual. You have to cross these gates one after the other, five or seven, and enter the dark holy of holies where a limpid lamp is burning lonely and solely in itself, illuminating the deity with its little brilliance.

In traditional temples, the holy of holies is not bright with sunlight, and there are not many air vents. Mostly they are dark. You have to rub your eyes to see what is inside. It is purposely kept dark, not because the temple builders were primitive, ignorant of ventilation methods. There were very wise people, and they symbolised in this darkness the *anandamaya kosha*, the inward holy of holies where everything is dark to the senses. God is born in midnight, whether He is Krishna or Christ, when everything is pitch dark to the senses, which can see things only in daylight. God is born when the senses are asleep. That is the midnight of the senses. In this darkness of the *anandamaya kosha* where the senses, the mind and the ego are all asleep and nothing is there, the Atman is twinkling in this deep holy of holies, call it the *anandamaya kosha* of your own individual personality or the great Ishvara of the cosmic causal condition. The temple represents both the microcosm and the

macrocosm. Thus is the symbol of the temple, and the whole process of worship is a large symbol of a graduated surrender of one's personality and a symbol of a whole-souled placement of the divine in one's own self.

If any one of you is conversant with the way in which *pūja*, or worship, is performed in a temple or even in one's own house, you would have seen that the performer chants some mantras, touches certain parts of the body—the head, the eyes, the ears, the nose and the chest—while saying something which you will not be able to understand. These are called *nyasas*. *Anganyasa*, *karanyasa*, etc., are the words used. Modern youth do not know all these things. They are too sophisticated, and regard religion as primitive. This is very unfortunate.

The Sanskrit word *nyasa* means placement, placing. You place the limbs of the divinity in the corresponding limbs of your own body. That is *nyasa*, done through the hands and through the limbs of the body. When this placement is done through the hands it is called *karanyasa*. *Kara* is hand, *nyasa* is placement. When it is done through the limbs of the body, it is *anganyasa*. *Anga* is limb, and *nyasa* is placement. The particular chants or mantras recited during this ritual of the placement of the divine in one's own personality mean that every part of your body is tuned up to every part of the divinity, correspondingly. The microcosm becomes en rapport with the macrocosm, and vice

versa. The head of the Virat, the head of God, the head of the Great Being, your deity, is your head. Your head becomes united with the head of the deity so that you think as the deity thinks, and the deity thinks as you think. There are no two thinkings. Thus, His eyes are your eyes, your eyes are His eyes, your nose His nose, your ears, your chest, your hands, your fingers are His, so that God has entered you and you have entered God.

If you have done this ritual properly, not in a hurry but with a deep feeling and understanding of its meaning and the processes involved in it, you will be in a state of thrill. You will silently weep at that time. You will silently weep, knowing the glory of God. You will weep with the joy that God has entered you. It is not a *puja* that you are doing in a temple. You are encountering your great Maker. What can be a greater achievement and a greater benefactory blessing upon you than this? You can imagine what it means. The Great Being's head is united with your head. The Great Being is united with you. The whole cosmos has entered you. The universe is pulsating through your veins and through every cell of your body. Then, when the *charya* and *kriya* have risen up to *yoga*, when the whole activity is purely mental, you enter into deep meditation of the union of the microcosmic with the macrocosmic, and then it is that anything can happen to you. What is meant by saying that anything can happen to you? You may lose your self-consciousness.

Sincere worshippers like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, to cite a recent example, were in ecstasy when they worshipped deities such as Kali. Dancing to the tune of music and the chanting of mantras in holy worships performed in temples is the form that worship may take. You may become unconscious. In a state of superconscious involvement, it may look that you are unconscious. The body may not stand this entry of a superpower.

Ritual, Karma Kanda as it is usually known in religious circles, is the gateway to the portals of religious practice. This performance of worship has many details. Sixteen processes of worship are mentioned—*shodasa upachara*, as they are called. You invite the guest, and entertain the guest in sixteen ways. You sing his glory: “Great one, I am so happy that you have condescended to pay a visit to my humble cottage!” Do you not think these are the words that you speak when a great one comes to your house? “How happy I am that, after days of longing to see you, you have shown this mercy to me by coming to my humble residence.” You give him holy water. You yourself wash his feet; such is your love, such is your devotion. You put a soft cushion. You yourself pat the soft cushion that is neatly arranged, and say, “Please be seated.” You take the great person by the hand and seat him. And if the one who has come to you is superbly great, inconceivably superior to you, you may not be able to say anything at that time.

Then the ritual starts, and all the offerings that

you are capable of conceiving in your mind are offered to this great deity. There is no need to go into these minor details. You can know it from other sources. It is a grand thing to make the guest seated and then see that he is entertained thoroughly, to his utter satisfaction, until he gets up and bids goodbye and departs. This process of the entertainment of a great emperor, the king of the universe, is the performance in the great temples of worship. On a smaller scale these worships are also performed by people in their own houses, with a corner kept as a sanctified place for worship of their own little idol of their deity. Though the process of worship in one's own house is similar to the worships performed in temples, in temples it takes a large, gorgeous form, such as processions, etc. If you have witnessed one, you will be surprised to see it, especially in southern India, to repeat once again. You will not see much of it in the north.

Today I was thinking of placing before you these ideas that occurred to me concerning the importance of holy ritual as a part of religious adoration of God. You should not be under the impression that you are too big, beyond the ritualistic level. Not so is the truth; the lower you are, the better for you. It is a great virtue for everyone to realise one's own position, and not to unnecessarily overestimate oneself as a *jnani* or a yogi. Each one should know what one is, and this recognition of one's own real position is itself a part of the worship.

## **Chapter 12**

### **SIMPLICITY BORN OF UTTER GOODNESS**

It would be good to bring your mind back once again to all I told you, in order that the significance of this instruction gets related to your practical day-to-day life. There is no use of listening to instructions and going through studies if the instruction or the study has not entered your blood and flows through your veins, and has become part and parcel of your physical and psychic personality.

It is our attempt to live life properly, not to study much. All study, whatever be its extent, is a gathering of knowledge, which has to be set into action in the environment of our life. In a large sense, this is the meaning of meditation. In a specific sense, it means the art of living. The way in which we have to successfully live in this world is itself meditation, though this name need not be associated with a perfect life.

The life that we are required to live in this world can be impersonally designated as a life of perfection, not a life of religion and spirituality or godliness, names which need not be associated with the task on hand, inasmuch as they are oftentimes associated with preconceived notions. Our minds are made in such a way that prejudices die hard. Whatever be our research in the line of religion, philosophy and psychology, after everything has been said, the mind will have something to say because of the feeble impact that the studies could

make upon our personality. We remain the same persons with years of study and any amount of learning, like a rock into which water cannot penetrate even if it is inside the Ganga for years together. Hard-boiled is human individuality. Flint-like is the ego of man, and it cannot melt with any instruction and any amount of learning. All learning remains, finally, like water poured on granite; water flows over it, and yet not a drop enters. This happens because of a notion that we have about our own selves, and consequently a notion that we have about ourselves and others, and finally a notion that we have about life as a whole. We are born with a particular outlook of things, and we oftentimes die with the very same outlook. It does not change.

Hence, learning the art of living requires a deconditioning of the mind. This is the reason why we seek sequestered places, come to the Himalayas or to any ashram: to decondition the mind, which has been conditioned into a particular way of thinking and living under a given atmosphere. The deconditioning of the mind is not possible unless we are put into quarantine, into a camp which is away from that atmosphere which has been responsible for influencing us in that particular way. When you go home and live in the midst of your family, suddenly your mind changes its way of thinking. All your certificates of Oxford or Cambridge mean nothing in the family, where you are once again a small boy or girl. The same thought

continues in the same old rut of thinking, and your certificate remains a piece of paper with no meaning.

You are here for a serious purpose, not to waste your time, because you have not plenty of time to squander. "Life is short, art is long," is an old saying. There is no end for knowledge. *Anekaśāstram̐ bahu veditavyam̐ alpaśca kālo bahavaśca vighnāḥ, yat sārabhūtam̐ tadupāsītavyam̐ haṁso yathā kṣīramivāmbumadhyāt* (Maha-subhashita-sangraha 1546) is an old Sanskrit saying. *Anekaśāstram̐*: "The learning is so vast, like the sky." We cannot comprehend it, even with all our might and main. *Bahu veditavyam̐*: "So much is there to learn that our life is not enough." *Alpaśca kāla*: "The time at our disposal is very little." *Bahavaśca vighnāḥ*: "Many obstacles come in the way even in this little period of time, the span of life that has been allotted to us." Therefore, the second half of the verse gives the advice. *Yat sārabhūtam̐ tadupāsītavyam̐*: "Abandoning the chaff, extract only the essence," as we are told that a swan can distinguish between water and milk even if they are mixed together. The milk of life, the essence of knowledge, has to be extracted from the chaff of every type of information that is available in different places in the world.

The test of the progress that you make in the art of living is the amount of satisfaction and freedom from tension that you feel in your own life. There is no use saying, "I have learned so much. I have this

degree and that title.” You have to set it aside as meaningless, finally. With yourself as a judge of your own personality, by silently contemplating your own self, you can gauge your own depths and measure the extent of the progress you have made by your own feelings about yourself, and also about other people around you. When you look around, what do you think in your mind? This will tell you what you are.

A type of diary may have to be maintained in order to undertake a psychological check-up of one’s own self. You have to be very strict with yourself, though you may be lenient with others. You should not be lenient with yourself and hard upon others. A strict disciplinary checking up of one’s own psyche and its functions is essential, and a specimen of this methodology of self-checking, going by the name of a spiritual diary, has been given in the prescription of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj: “How many times did I get irritated? How many times did I resent something?” and many other questions of this kind are put to one’s own self.

For how many minutes of the day were you able to entertain the idea of the goal of life? For how many minutes, I should say, because it is impossible to have this type of consciousness for hours. The hours of the day are spent in nonsensical thinking, which has absolutely no connection with our welfare. This is our fate because of the way in which our brains and minds are conditioned. We are the

same old donkeys that we were when we were born, and we have not become horses in a moment's transformation. All great achievement in life, in any field of work—whether scientific, biological, chemical or philosophical—has been the effect of hard labour on the part of the seekers.

The little pinpricks of our day-to-day existence, and the mutual action and reaction psychologically created among ourselves in social life, form part and parcel of the observations we have to make in the leading of the life perfect. What we call the life spiritual is the life perfect. A complete life is called spiritual life. It is not a monastic life, or a life in a cathedral.

Again I come to the point of deconditioning your mind. You have been conditioned into a way of thinking the moment the words “God”, “religion”, “spirituality” are uttered. You cannot escape this predicament of getting compelled to think only in one way the moment you think of the words “religion”, “spirituality”, “divinity”. These words immediately create in your mind a sense of alienation from things in the world, and an artificiality of living, a complex of self-centeredness in the name of a religiosity or a Godward movement of yourself. You may hear sermons from saints and sages to any extent throughout your life, but they will not create any impact in your mind if an inward desire to lead this life is absent.

Most people are driven to a life of religion and spirituality by a defeat that they have suffered in

life. This is unfortunate. It is not a coward that can go to God. Only a hero who has won victory in the battle of life can reach God. In this tremendous warfare of conflict with the forces of nature, and the ups and downs of social living, in this battle, in this tug of war, you are going to be the winner, and not be defeated. A person who is defeated here will be defeated hereafter also. It is not a question of changing the place and circumstance; it is the quality of attitude that matters. Each one of you will know whether you have been defeated in this world, whether things are too much for you and you cannot face them anymore; and then you turn to God, religion, monastery, church. If this is, and this has been, the cause behind your movement towards religion and spirituality, you will get nothing from them. Only a rich person can renounce. A poor person cannot renounce anything because the poor man has nothing. What will he renounce? A beggar cannot renounce, because he has nothing.

The spirit of renunciation becomes meaningful only when you have, and yet you do not want what you have. Renunciation is not the outcome of the feeling: "I do not have anything and, therefore, I am automatically a renunciate." You have all things. Everything conceivable, glorious, beautiful, worthwhile, pleasant, is under your command. You can get it if you want, and perhaps it is already with you; yet, you have no interest in these things because of a higher light that has entered you.

That the Godward ascent is a positive movement, and not a negative defeatism, is symbolically given to us in an instruction of the Taittiriya Upanishad where the gradations of joy are described. "Only a king can become a sannyasin," said Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Unless you were a king in the previous birth, you cannot be a real sannyasin in this birth. The idea of renunciation arises in your mind because you have seen the world through and through and enjoyed it one hundred percent, not because you could not get it. Otherwise, you will be reborn as a wealthy man's son with all the material amenities.

The Taittiriya Upanishad tells us something very interesting, which should make our hair stand on end. Imagine that there is a ruler of the whole Earth, a king or an emperor. In the history of humanity there has never been an emperor of the whole Earth. Such a person never existed, and perhaps it is difficult to imagine such a person. But for the time being, imagine that such a person exists. The whole world is under his control. He is an emperor, the ruler of the whole Earth. Very young, highly educated, very healthy, learned to the core, and the whole world is under his control. What will be his happiness? None in the world can even imagine what it can be, because nobody has been in that condition. All these qualifications cannot be found in one person: very young, healthy, educated, cultured, without any form of disease, and the whole world under his control. Such a

person never was, but if it were possible to have such a person, what would be his joy? He would burst with joy; that is all. That is the positivity of happiness which man can conceive in this world. But the Taittiriya Upanishad says that this great joy that you are imagining as the emperor of the whole world is a drop, a hundredth part, as it were, of the great joy that reigns supreme in the next higher realm, which is of the Gandharvas, the angels in the second realm, or the state of being that is just above this physical level.

To imagine what these levels are, we have to bring our mind to the point of concentration upon the layers of our own personality. There is the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the causal sheaths, one inside the other—one inside the other not in the sense of one being physically inside the other, but as gradations of the intensity of subtlety. So when we say there are higher realms, we mean the same thing as when we say there are layers inside our personality. They are realms inside the cosmos. They are not spatially high, even as the layers inside are not spatially inside but only logically inside. The Gandharvas are angels, divine beings, celestials who cannot be seen with the eyes, as electrons cannot be seen with the naked eyes but they exist inside the physical world. Their joy is one hundred times more than the joy of this great man about whom we have been speaking.

Only a person who has seen the light of this joy that is above can renounce this world; and the

Upanishad tells us this great joy, which is a hundred times larger than the joy of the emperor of the world, is also a drop, as it were, compared to a still higher joy of the gods in heaven. The gods in heaven, therefore, have a joy a hundred multiplied by a hundred of this emperor of the Earth—whom we have not seen with our eyes, whom we are only imagining.

One hundred times the joy of these celestials is the joy of the ruler of the gods, Indra. We cannot imagine what it is. Here, our mind will cease to think. One hundred times the joy of Indra is the joy of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods. One hundred times the joy of Brihaspati is the joy of the Virat, the Cosmic Being in its physical manifestation. One hundred times the joy of the Virat is the joy of Hiranyagarbha, still higher. We do not know what we are saying; these are only words for us. One hundred times the joy of Hiranyagarbha is the joy of Ishvara, and countless, incalculable, non-mathematical, super-logical—we cannot say a hundred times more, further—is the joy of the Absolute. This you are aspiring for. Now you can imagine what you are, and what it is that you are longing for. Your brain will cease to function, your mind can no longer think it, your mouth will speak no words, and you will not know where you are sitting if these ideas are to occur to your mind constantly, day in and day out.

What is the state in which you are living here, seated in this hall, compared to these tremendous

envisagements ahead of you, which are actually what constitute the essence of your spiritual path? The great stages of meditation mentioned in the various systems of yoga are the rising of the consciousness to these levels of bliss. So when you check up your own mind every day and make an assessment of your own self, you will know where you stand. Have you gone to that level of inner satisfaction which can be associated with the king of the whole world? Or do you feel like a helpless nothing, a useless nobody?

I mentioned to you in the previous session that you cannot renounce the world unless you have become greater than the world. Does any one of you feel that you are greater than the world? If this confidence has arisen in your mind, if this confidence that you are greater than this world has come to you for any reason whatsoever, if you feel reasonably so, with some substantiality behind this feeling “For this important reason, I am superior to the world of contents”—if this conviction arises, true *vairagya* has arisen. I am repeating what I told you sometime back. If you feel that you are only a small boy in this large world of terrible people, then the world cannot be renounced, and even the next step cannot be taken. Then even the second step in spirituality, religion, Godward movement, is not possible, what to speak of the higher steps.

The second step, the immediately superior one, is that which transcends this physical Earth, which goes beyond the joy of the emperor of the whole

world; and if you have seen through the joy of this type of person, you have passed through the world and known every bit of it, and can no longer be fazed by the logic of the world; and if you cannot be shaken by any word that anyone utters, then perhaps you have the strength to enter into the next realm.

The Godward movement, the movement towards perfection, freedom from thralldom, liberation of the spirit, is a positive movement from one degree of perfection to another degree of perfection. There is no loss in any stage of achievement. There is only gain in every stage. Spiritual asceticism, or religious renunciation, is not a giving up or a loss; it is a gaining of more and more substance. Thus, when you have renounced the world, you have not lost the world. You have got something which is bigger than the world. It is like gaining one million dollars by losing one dollar. Because the one is included in the one million, you have not lost anything. Everything has come back. All that you have apparently lost has been included in what you have gained.

The moodiness, dejection, melancholy, sense of defeatism, worry and tension in your mind in your religious life are unfortunate consequences which tell you that you are not leading a religious life, or even a good life. You have been thoroughly defeated by your own mind. Hence it is that anything puts you out of order and makes you become irate. The amount of calmness that is in your mind, the extent

of positivity that reigns in your mind, the quantum of goodness that you can see in the world rather than the evil in things, are indications of your advance in the life spiritual.

There is no such thing as a spiritual life isolated from the life of the world. Again, this point has to be remembered. Many times we think like children and speak like children when we say that we are after this or after that. It is not the truth. We are not after any particular thing in the world. We are after a wholeness, which is the health of our being connected with the health of human society and the world as a whole.

No amount of repetition of this truth—that the word “spirituality” connotes an inclusiveness rather than an exclusiveness—would enable the mind to free itself from the old prejudice that, after all, the one is different from the other. The good life and the godly life are one and the same thing. To the extent we are godly, to that extent we are also good. We cannot be humanitarian, charitable, sympathetic, affectionate or good unless one modicum of godliness has entered us. Only God can be good. That is why the great philosopher Plato defined God as the Idea of the Good, because only God can be good and nobody else can be good. The Sun is the supreme source of light, and everything is sympathetically brilliant. Likewise, we are sympathetically or conditionally good to the extent we are able to participate in the Idea of the Good; all other ideas are subsequent and subsidiary.

Many of us, perhaps all of us, are not even on the first step of yoga. We are unnecessarily imagining that we are very great persons. We are very poor fellows, really speaking, though with a genuine feeling to be good and to do something good. Granted that this sincerity is already in us, still we are wriggling and writhing on the lowest pedestal of social living. What we see around us is a society of people, and not anything divine. That is not seen in this world. Where is divinity in this world? Can you show me in which place it is? We see only people, human beings. We do not even see the whole world with our eyes. We see only human beings like us.

Even in this conditioned form of involvement in the thought of the world as outside us, we are further conditioned by the thought that only human beings exist in this world. Our state is really a pitiable one. We are thinking only of human beings; we cannot think of anything else. People, friends and enemies, men and women—all thought is of humanity only. Even the thought of the world as a whole, as it is in itself, does not occur to our minds. We are utterly pitiable fellows. The idea of the world itself has not arisen in our minds when we think of only human and humanitarian values, and not of world values. The idea of a world value has not yet come to us because the world contains more than human beings, as everyone knows. Perhaps, things which are not human are more important than the human, as we will learn when we go deep

into the matter. Things about which we are not thinking, and which are not human, condition even human life; and very foolishly we think that life is only humanity, people, and there is nothing else. So even in this world itself we are in a very low state, what to speak of the Gandharvas, angels, and Indra and Brihaspati. This is tall talk. We may take thousands of births to reach these stages.

Thus, humility is the hallmark of the spiritual seeker. Do not say, "I am seeing lights, I am shaking, and there is warmth in the spine." Do not speak all this nonsense. There is nothing of the kind. This is only a kind of hypnotism that you are introducing into yourself. You are yet to learn the art of humility before the majesty of the universe and the greatness of God. The more you learn of the grandeur of creation, the less you feel the importance of your own self. Here begins religion, here begins spirituality. And, as I told you, the life spiritual, or the life religious, is a practical way of conducting oneself in this world, and all your learning and listening and studying is an aid in the implementing of this learning in your day-to-day living.

What is your reaction to human society? What is your reaction to the world as a whole? This is the thing that is to be assessed first and foremost. A hater of the world is not a religious man, nor is a person who is attached to the world. It is an impersonal outlook of a large friendliness, the great *maitri* which Buddhism speaks of, a friendliness

which is equanimous and which does not see evil and ugliness in things.

The non-adjustable feature of your personality is the first thing that has to attract your attention. The great canons of ethics, known as the *yamas* in the system of Patanjali's yoga, are the prescriptions for bringing about a harmony between yourself and human society. When you cannot adjust yourself with anybody in this world, you are not even on the first step of yoga. You are a peculiar person. How is it that you cannot adapt and adjust yourself with anything and anybody? You quarrel with every person. There are people who are quarrelsome in their nature. In the office, in the family, in the shop, in the marketplace, in the railway station—everywhere they quarrel. Every word is a word of resentment, and not of acceptance. While many of us may not be so bad to this extent, this trait is present in every one of us in some percentage. We are not incapable of quarrelling. We are not incapable of going out of balance in our minds and becoming irascible.

The potential for retaliation in respect of the objects of the world is itself to be plucked out from the root. It is not enough if we are consciously good. Even subconsciously we have to be good. Many of us are consciously good. We are not quarrelling here, but we are capable of quarrelling under given circumstances. That capability itself should be removed. The disease has to go from the roots. Under no circumstances can we come in collision

with others. It is just an impossible thing for us to collide. Such is the harmony that has to be established within in the deeper layers of our personality. This is real harmony, and a conscious effort to adjust oneself with great difficulty with other people is not enough.

Many of us adjust ourselves with great difficulty, as we cannot help it. But the adjustment has to be spontaneous. We are not putting forth hard effort at adjusting ourselves with people. It has become so natural that we are like children, adjustable with anything. As the great Acharya Sankara says in one of his verses: "With an old man, he is like an old man. With a child, he is like a child. With a sick man, he is like a sick man. With a young man, he is like a young man. With a wise man, he is a wise man, and with a foolish man, he is a foolish man." We have no personality of our own. That is simplicity born of utter goodness, which again is a result of a total abolition of our egoism, by which we become one with things. Then the world is our friend. Then we have no fear.

Now we are afraid of even a wisp of the movement of the wind. A little straw that rustles can frighten us. The world is an enemy; people are opposed to us. Therefore, we are afraid. But when we are sincere, genuine well-wishers of all people, and bestow benediction on all creation inwardly, from the bottom of our hearts, the world will protect us. We will not require army and police. We will be protected by the forces which are around us,

provided we are their friends. They are our friends even now, but we do not speak to them. We are very busy. Our minds are turned otherwise. Yoga is a movement in the direction of the natural forces, which take us by the hand higher and higher, to diviner realms.

Thus, coming to the point once again, before we withdraw ourselves into an inward contemplation or a meditative policy, we have to be socially good, and harmonised and aligned in our personality. We should not go inward to meditation with an inimical feeling towards others. "Make friendship with your neighbour first," said Christ, "before you turn to God." You should not have an inimical neighbour. Make peace with the world first, and only then can you make peace with God. If the world is our enemy, God cannot be our friend. This is a hard thing for us. The world is still an enemy. We have many things which we do not like, and not liking is another name for an inimical attitude to things.

Is there anything which you do not like? Make a note of it in your diary. Make a list of all the things that you do not like, and give reasons as to why you do not like them. If you are unable to find an answer to these queries, go to your Guru and tell him that these are the things you do not like. Why is it you do not like a thing which others may like? A thing which you do not like may be the object of liking for another. How is it that the same thing is liked by one and disliked by another?

Hence, a policy of an inward subconscious,

deeper than the conscious, acceptance of true friendliness is the beginning of yoga. Yoga is not a religion. Yoga is the way in which we have to live in this world. It is union with the smallest atom of creation, union with the most insignificant things in the world. With those things we have to set ourselves in union. That is yoga. It is not necessarily union with the Absolute; it is union with a cup of tea, it is union with a banana that we eat, it is union with the most insignificant, silly things of the world—meaningless things, as it were, which no one considers. With those little insignificant nothings, we are in harmony. Thus, every cell and every atom of the world is in unison with us. We become world personalities—citizens not of India or of any particular nationality. We are citizens of God's creation. Nature is our friend.

This is the first step that we take in our onward movement, or we may call it an inward movement, or a movement in all directions. The steps in yoga that we take are at once outward, inward, and multi-dimensioned. From the universal we have come down to this particular personality of ours in the process of creation, evolution, and from this individuality of ours we have moved outward into an externalised form of relationship, called society. Now, the yoga practice is a reverse process of movement—inwardly, in a very technical sense. It is not a physical inwardness that we are attempting. It is an inwardness of consciousness, which is not a spatial or temporal inwardness. As,

in the downward movement of creation, we have come down from the all-pervading Universal to the particular, and from the particular we have gone outward into human society in space and time, in the same way, in the upward movement we retrace our steps from the outward involvements in the particular things of the world to the inward contemplation which usually goes by the name of meditation.

Thus, in the meditational technique, in the art of the inwardisation of the mind and consciousness, we withdraw consciousness from its attachment to particulars. We do not physically withdraw from spatial contact with things. A meditational technique is a consciousness technique. It is a work of consciousness, and is not physical or spatial in any sense. It has nothing to do with our physical location. It is an inward transvaluation and transfiguration of our conscious attitude. The whole world is consciousness finally, ultimately, as the end result. The objects so-called, the people we see around, are configurations of consciousness. They are gold shining as dross. A condensed form of light becomes matter. Modern physics says the same thing: Light can condense, become hard, solidified into the substances that we see as the things of the world. Energy can become matter, and matter can become energy; light can become substance, and substance can be converted into light. Consciousness has become the whole world. These people seated here, and these walls and buildings,

are Consciousness condensed, particularised, localised, pinpointed in space and in time. Therefore, in the process of meditation, they have to be decomposed into their generality. The ice has to melt into the generalised water of the cosmos. The hard-boiled individualities of things outside, the objects in the world, and our own selves, all have to melt in the menstruum of the originality of Consciousness.

Here we come to the inner depths of religious practice and yoga. All yoga is meditation, finally. Religion and spirituality are meditation. Any successful endeavour in life is a meditation. The whole of life is meditation. "The Earth itself is meditating, as it were," says the Chhandogya Upanishad. The entire enterprise of life is summed up in one word: meditation.

Meditation is the art of success—success in any field. In your profession, in your line of teaching, in your professorship, in your business, in your family life, in your dealing with anything and anyone in the world in any manner whatsoever, there will be success. "Success is sure," says the last verse of the Bhagavadgita. Success is certain. Where is it certain? It is certain where the two join together. In the language of this verse of the Bhagavadgita, it is "where Krishna and Arjuna are seated in one chariot". The individual and the universe melt into each other as rivers enter the ocean. We are able to think as Nature thinks, not as X, Y, Z thinks or A, B, C thinks. Meditation is the way in which we think in

consonance with the way in which Nature thinks, or God Himself is thinking.

The gradational ascent of consciousness in its attempt to think in alignment with the way in which Nature thinks, or God thinks, is the series of steps in the practice of yoga. These are the meditations, about which I shall tell you something in the coming few days.

## **Chapter 13**

### **ALL LIFE IS YOGA**

As a science of life, yoga goes deep into the ultimate reality of things and is not satisfied with the surface view of the world, to which we are usually accustomed. Thus, yoga is a very serious matter, the final step that a person takes in one's life. Being bent upon the solution of the great problem of existence, which harassed the minds of persons such as Buddha, and to enable people to tread which path, Incarnations such as Christ were born into this world. Messengers from the Eternal descend as Incarnations—sages and saints, masters and adepts—to help mortal individuals rise to the peak of achievement, towards which all life is moving. Hence, that “all life is yoga” is well said.

All life is yoga, any kind of life is yoga, anything that we do is yoga, whatever we think is yoga, whatever we speak is yoga—provided that what we think, what we feel, what we do, and how we behave and conduct ourselves is a continuous adjustment of our being with the requisition of that great yoga, which is the universe contemplating itself. What is yoga? Yoga is the universe contemplating itself. It is not our thinking of somebody, not A, B, C or X, Y, Z meditating on some God outside; it is the whole creation becoming aware that it is. That is yoga. It is in this sense we can say that every life is yoga, provided that it becomes a conscious affair. Everyone is unconsciously a part of this vast

universe, but we have to consciously be such a part.

Hence, yoga is a rousing of this unconscious relationship to a conscious experience. We are no doubt unconsciously in perpetual union with the whole of the universe; no one can gainsay this, but this has to become a conscious affair. We may be unconsciously the son of a millionaire, but thereby we regard ourselves in no way better. When we become conscious that we are the heir apparent of a millionaire, we become wealthy. It is the consciousness that matters, not the thing as such. The thing may be there or may not be there; our awareness of it is what really matters.

During a previous session I told you that the whole world is Consciousness. *Sarvam khalv idam brahma* (C.U. 3.14.1): “The whole universe is the Absolute scintillating in various forms,” says the Upanishad; and as Madhyamika Buddhism puts it, the whole universe is a void. A void of what? A void of forms and names, particularisations and sensations of every type. Nagarjuna, the great thinker of the Madhyamika school, declared that the whole of reality can be summed up in one word: nothingness. It is a nothingness of everything that is perceptible to the senses. Everything that is cognisable by the empirical mind and recognisable by the empirical senses, all this is a nihil, a zero; it is not there. It is a phantasm, but we think it is a hard, diamond-like, flint-like reality because we ourselves, as perceiving individuals of the same, are a part of this phantasmagoria. It is like blind men

being led by the blind.

Thus, there is no chance of our recognising the phantasmal character of things. We cannot know it as long as we are involved in it. When we have joined a band of thieves, we have to behave like thieves. Because we are part of this band of thieves, we cannot behave like policemen at that time. Thus, we have become part and parcel of this band of sensory experience. The world that we experience is nothing but a bundle of sensations. The world is not a solid object. It is a heap of sensations, vibrations, actions and reactions. This is what the great Buddha never tired of telling again and again in all his sermons. Transitoriness is the nature of this world. It is not that the world is transitory, but the world is transitoriness itself. It is not that a bird is flying; there is only flying without a bird—something very difficult to understand.

Many of the disciples of the Buddha could not grasp what he meant. The meaning is that there is no solidity, substantiality, perceptibility, tangibility, etc., in the objects of the world, including our own bodies. The substantiality, the hardness, the solidity, the thisness or thatness of things is an electrical repulsion brought about by a coming together of two electromagnetic impulses: from our fingers, and from the structure of that particular thing we call matter or objects.

People who have had the experience of an electric shock, of a high voltage particularly, would have known what one feels at that time. If you

touch a live wire of 240 volts you will not know what is happening. There will be a peculiar sensation of a tremendous weight, as if a hill is tied to your hand. A large weight is hanging on your arm. It will actually feel as though somebody is pulling you down with tons of weight, while there is no weight, really speaking, and nothing in your hand. A mere electrical contact, a repulsion created by the velocity of the electric force, can create a sensation of an iron weight hanging on your hand.

Why go so far? You have a solid, tangible experience of substantial centres of pleasure and pain in the dream world, which you cannot deny at the time of experiencing them. Oftentimes, you get awakened to a real perception of this world by a shocking experience in dream, such as the roar of a tiger or a fall from a tree, and the like. Unreal things can create real experiences. You can have a real waking from sleep by an unreal roar of an unreal tiger in dream. Very strange indeed! How can an unreal cause produce a real effect? This happens.

Thus, a complete revaluation of values precedes entry into the path of yoga. Great masters who are leaders par excellence, such as the Buddha and the Christ, as I mentioned, cannot be regarded as ordinary religious men. They did not belong to any religion, because they were percipients of Reality. And while we are told that yoga is union, actually what is intended to be conveyed by this statement is that the basic Reality in us comes in union with the basic Reality of things. In one terminology it is

called *samadhi* or *samapatti*; in another terminology it is called union with Reality. It is called God-realisation, Cosmic-experience or Cosmic-consciousness, freedom from birth and death, attainment of immortality, and other names you can conceive in your mind.

The structural pattern of our personality has got involved in the mire of externality to such an extent that we would find it hard to enter into the technique of the inwardisation of consciousness. We have heard it said that meditation is an internal affair, and when we hear that we have to inwardise our consciousness and centralise our being within in meditation, we may be under the impression that we have to close our eyes and look inside our chest or contemplate something within our physical heart, the inwardisation getting identified with a centralisation within this physical body.

This inwardisation referred to in yogic meditations is not of this kind. It is not a physiological, spatial or physical entry into our body. We are not withdrawing the mind from an outside something into an inside something, attempting to place the mind inside the physical body. This inwardness, or *pratyaksha chaitanyata* of consciousness, is hard for us to imagine in our minds because we are like the prisoners in the den which Plato describes in his *Republic*—looking at the shadows and beholding their movements on a dark wall, getting identified with the shadows themselves, and not knowing that we have an

archetypal or original existence. Thus involved in the perception of shadows, unsubstantial movements, we would not be able to imagine what it is to inwardise consciousness.

Consciousness is the seer, the knower, the pure subject. As a pure subject, it cannot become an object of cognition or awareness. Thus, when we transfer the logic of this subjectivity of consciousness to our earlier conclusion that the whole world is Consciousness, we can know where we stand at this moment. Stretch your imagination a little bit with effort. What do you feel at this moment? In this pure, non-objective or purely subjective Consciousness, which is the substance of all things in the universe, what is your location? Where do you stand?

This establishment of ourselves is yoga. There the mind does not oscillate, does not flicker, does not move to any object outside, because it is just not there. Things which are apparently hard melt into this liquidity of Consciousness, into which we too liquefy ourselves, to put it into intelligible language—liquefy in the sense that the location of our presence enters into the locations of all things. As all rivers enter into every other river in the ocean and every river is everywhere, all things are everywhere and we too will find ourselves everywhere.

This happens merely because of one important fact, that our essentiality as pure Consciousness recognises itself as equally present in all other

things also, due to the fact that the whole world is scintillating Consciousness—the *alaya vijnana*, the repository of Universal Awareness. It is not a particular person's awareness, not yours or mine. It is, thus, not an inwardisation of our particular awareness into our physical inwardness, but an inwardness of what may metaphysically be called Subjectivity proper. It is a metaphysical subjectivity, not a physical subjectivity of bodily inwardness. *Yato yato niścarati manaś cañcalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vaśaṁ nayet* (B.G. 6.26) says the Bhagavadgita: "As the mind moves hither and thither in meditation in search of its food, from there, from that particular corner into which it is moving, draw it inwardly into the Selfhood of itself." This is your effort in yoga.

We are living in an unreal world in one important sense. We are living in a world of shadows. These people moving in front of us are the shadows cast by the originals, which we cannot see because we have been chained to face one direction only, as Plato puts it in his great description. Our necks and bodies are chained tightly in one particular direction—towards the dark wall, upon which we see the movement of the shadows cast by the originals of people moving in the sunlight behind us—and we cannot turn our heads and see behind us, because we have been chained tightly. The space and time complex are the chains which tie us forcefully in the direction of the shadows, the

movements. They are called shadows because they are merely movements of another thing altogether, which cannot be seen with the eyes. We may call it the world of three dimensions or the world of shadows; we may say it is a world of movement, transitoriness, a world of flux, as Buddha said or Heraclitus said, or anyone might say in his own language.

The problem is that we ourselves are involved in this flux. Therefore, we cannot see it is there. Whatever be the sermons that we hear regarding the flux, the transitoriness, the shadowy nature and the non-externality of things, all these sermons, teachings and lectures go over our heads. Nothing will enter our vitals because we are involved in this very flux we are supposed to cognise.

Thus, yoga is difficult, like climbing on one's own shoulders. Hard is this because it is necessary to achieve an almost impossible task of standing aside, away from or apart from the whole flux of Nature, including the flux of your own bodily individuality, so that the meditator, the yogin, the seeker, the spiritual aspirant, is not inside your body. It is not you that is meditating. Here, the you or the I have gone. *Gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā* is a great mantra of Buddhist Mahayana, by which they proclaim the reaching of the other shore by this involved consciousness. *Aum maṇi padme hūm*. All these mantras of Buddhism imply the entry of the jewel of your essentiality into the lotus of universality. This is

*maṇi padme hūm*, and this is this *pārasaṃgate*, the entering or the reaching of the other shore of Consciousness of the Madhyamikas, of the Yogacharas, and of even the Vedantins.

Therefore, the meditating consciousness is not yourself. You yourself as a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, or an individual of this type or that type are not the meditating centre. You have already got out of this flux, so you are visualising the whole world as an object in front of you, as a movement and not as a substance. The world is not a substance; it is merely a movement. This is what they mean by saying it is a shadow. This can be recognised only if you can perform this almost impossible feat of getting yourself out of your body. You have to stand outside your own body.

There is a very beautiful sutra of Patanjali where he gives a hint at this possibility of your standing outside your body and looking at your own body. When you are able to see your own body as any other object, you are really meditating. Otherwise, you are only imagining that you are meditating, and you are regarding this part of the flux as a reality and considering other aspects of it as only a flux. There is a very simple, unrecognised sutra of Patanjali, but very important for the purpose of meditation, where he uses the word *mahavideha* (Y.S. 3.44). Many teachers do not even recognise the existence of this sutra because they cannot understand what it actually means. "Meditation is a *mahavideha* condition of the mind,"

says Patanjali. He does not explain by way of a commentary; the word is simply used. A great disembodied state of the mind is called meditation. By a disembodied condition of the mind in meditation, he means getting the mind out of the involvement in this body and feeling its presence equally in other bodies. This *alaya vijnana*, the Cosmic Awareness, this great Mind that thinks the whole world, the God-mind, if you would like to call it so, is what really meditates, and not your mind or my mind. The meditating mind is a divine mind, and to enter into this purely meditating divine mind, you have to find an exit from this body.

I am seated here, and each one feels that I am here. This little five-foot or six-foot length of myself is here. My mind is inside this body. My mind cannot be outside my body. This is what we, each one of us, thinks. Now, in this *mahavideha* meditation, in the attempt at getting out of this body, what are you supposed to do? Strongly feel that you are inside the body of another object. "I am inside the tree, not inside this body. I am the tree itself seeing this person seated here. It is not this person seeing the tree, but the tree seeing this person." Then you have gone there and entered into that object. This is also a system of telepathic communication. Telepathy, telecommunication, telekinesis, and such other things which you must have heard of, are techniques of a simple transference of your mind to that which you expect to think in a particular manner, do something in a

particular way, behave in a particular manner, etc. This technique can be adopted in regard to any object in the world. You can think as another person thinks. For this purpose you have to transfer your mind to the personality of another individual and assume the culture of that individual in every respect, to every minute detail. Right from the top of the head to the tip of the toe you are that person, not this person. That person is seeing this person; the mind has gone out of their body. This can be applied in respect of anything, or to all things at the same time.

This is a far more advanced system of meditation where you can feel your presence not merely in one particular thing to which you have transferred yourself, but in all things in which your basic mind is present—not the empirical mind, but the archetypal mind, the original mind, the *alaya vijnana*, the supreme Consciousness. Then you will see the world as an object in front of you, and you too will be an object as a part and parcel of this vast universal thing.

Thus, in this meditation, it is not any particular person that meditates because this person, so-called, which is yourself or myself, goes with the objectivity of things in space and time. You get out of this objectivity of space and time and you will find, if you are sincere, if you are honest, if you are sure that your technique is correct and you are one hundred percent hopeful that success must come—not may come, but has to come—that the world will

be dancing to your tune. There is no doubt about this. You will not be a servant of the world; the world will become your servant. The dog does not go with the tail; the tail goes with the dog. This is a conviction that has to arise in your mind. You should not go like a doubting Thomas. "O God, if there is a God, please help me." This should not be your prayer. "If it is possible, let me try." Then nothing will come. Why should it not be possible?

"If it was possible for Buddha, if it was possible for Christ, if it was possible for this person and that person, why should it not be possible for me? Certainly it is possible for me. And it is not only possible for me, but I am meant only for that, and I have no other function to perform in this world. Every other so-called duty or performance of mine in this world is a contributory link to this development of my personality toward this central achievement of the cosmos." This conviction itself is a meditation.

*Jijñāsur api yogasya śabdabrahmātivartate* (B.G. 6.44): "Even this conviction itself takes you above all the scriptures." The Bible and the Vedas are no more necessary for you when this conviction enters into you, whole-souled. It is in this condition that great saints such as Mira began to dance in ecstasy. They were not mad people. They were not crazy persons. They were at the height of immense sanity. The joy that took possession of them was such that they could not control themselves. Every cell began to dance in ecstasy, so the whole body danced.

Tukaram, Namdev, Ekanath, Mirabhai, Surdas, Tulsidas—they looked like madmen because they were dancing in superb ecstasy of an uncontrollable possession, which state they achieved on account of this conviction.

“Conviction” is a poor word. We have no word for this in language; it is not conviction, but something more than conviction. It is impossible to describe. *Achintyam avyaktum* (Kaivalya 6), says the Upanishad. Such certainty takes possession of you that the world is with you like a huge army behind an emperor, and you have greater joy than that so-called king whom I described in the previous session as the possessor of the whole world. You are not an emperor of only this Earth, but of the higher realms as well, with free access to all the worlds. *Teṣāṃ sarveṣu lokeṣu kāmācārobhavati* (C.U. 8.4.3), says the Upanishad. A free access, a permanent passport, as it were, for entry into every realm is granted to you by this indubitable certainty that has entered into you by a correct understanding of the principles of yoga practice.

A large amount of time has to be spent in this practice. The whole of your life may have to be devoted for this purpose. Yoga is not an experiment, it is not a vocation, it is not a profession, it is not a religion, it is not a faith, it is not a creed, it is not a political party to which you belong. It is your dedication. It is your envisagement of the meaning of the whole of life. It

is your perception of the Reality of things. Then it is that you can smile at the whole of life. You will smile at anything that you see. You will smile at all the events of your life and see all things as beauties, rather than as forms of ugliness. They are incandescent forms of the glory of the Almighty. Whether God smiles or frowns, it makes no difference to Him. As the cub of a tiger or a lion is not afraid of its own mother and can jump on its mother's face, scratch her nose and bite her ears with impunity, with no fear, you can ride on this lion of the world. It can do no harm to you. You need not be afraid of anybody. It is not for nothing that we are told in the stories and histories of great saints that God acted as their servant, unthinkable as it may appear.

Satan tempted Christ when he said, "If you are the son of God, convert these stones into bread. Why do you starve?"

"It is not that I cannot convert stone into bread, but it is written that you should not test or experiment with God," said the great Christ. "You cannot test God. Do you think I cannot free myself from this cup that I have to drink? The great Father will unleash the whole army of angels at my simple request. Why should Peter raise his sword? Get thee back, Satan! At a mere humble request of mine, my great Father can unleash the whole army of angels. But I want it not at this moment."

The army of Narayana, Rudra or Brahma will be at your beck and call. The great Sudarshana Chakra,

says the Bhagavata, was hurled spontaneously, as it were, by even the very feeling of a great saint. When God is willing to be your servant, as it were, *yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham* (B.G. 9.22), what about this world, what about this nature? What is this universe? Why are you afraid of it? Be bold. As I told you, only if you are convinced that you are greater than the world can you renounce the world. If you are a poor mouse or a little cat that is silently crawling in a corner of the world, helplessly driven by the forces of karma, yoga is not for you. If you are a bold, heroic, adventurous spirit on this path of God, relentlessly taking to this great goal, all the angels will be at your beck and call. The whole army will be behind you, as Christ put it.

As the Yoga Vasishtha says in a famous verse, the angels of all the heavens and realms will be at your service. They will consider it as their duty to protect you, safeguard you and provide you with your needs, provided that you have abolished your ego, you have entered into the cells and the hearts and the Substance of all things. Why do the angels serve you? Because you have entered them. They love you as they love themselves. They are not loving you, protecting you, helping you; they feel as if they are protecting themselves. This is why the world is at your beck and call. God bestows upon you the abundance that He is because of your entry into the Substance of things, which was the great vision of the Buddha when he recognised the transitoriness of things and had a vision of nirvana,

which is the originality behind the shadow performances.

So, my dear friends, do not be under the impression that you are merely having some three-month course of lessons. You are on an adventure. We are only here to speak to you in a friendly manner, not as great Masters, not as Incarnations, which we are not, but as co-pilgrims on the path who speak the same language and feel the same feeling on this great journey to the supreme achievement. These few months of the course here, therefore, can be regarded as a friendly concourse of fraternal spirits joining together in a common effort of a concentrated focusing of consciousness in an onward march for a common purpose. Neither are we teachers, nor are you students. We are friends on a common platform in the interest of a great purpose, which is the purpose of all beings. We are here, rather, to pray to the Almighty rather than teach or be taught. Who are we to teach you, and who are you to be taught? These relationships have to be overcome and transcended, broken through one day or the other. It is one spirit speaking to another spirit in a superphysical communion of inward feeling of union. This achieved, yoga has been achieved. This achieved, the purpose of life is achieved, and having become successful in this, you are a success in this world.

## **Chapter 14**

### **YOGA IS AN IMPERSONAL SCIENCE**

All study in institutions is an art, by which knowledge we equip ourselves with the necessities to live in this world in the way the world would require us to live. We do not go on studying throughout our lives and spend all our days in schools and colleges, just as we do not go on cooking throughout our lives. The cooking ends in eating. So is the case with study and training of any kind.

We are not to be under a teacher throughout our lives, till we pass away from here. An apprenticeship under a teacher, a study under a Guru or a training in an institution is a preparation, and not an end in itself. It is not that we spend all our days, throughout our lives, in reading and moving from place to place in search of teachers, as if that is the only thing we are expected to do. Simultaneously with our reading and studying and undergoing of training, we also live in the world.

What we call the duty of man is nothing but the art of living. We may call it the performance of a particular executive function expected of oneself, or it may be considered in any other manner from a social, political or personal angle of vision. It is essentially a friendly way of conducting oneself in the world. Yoga is friendship with things, to put it in popular language. The whole gamut of the ascent in the rungs of yoga is a graduated adjustment of

oneself with the friends that occupy this world as its inhabitants.

The world is populated by friends. The world has no enemies, just as we have no enemies within our own selves. But sometimes it is said that there are enemies even in one's own self. For instance, in the Bhagavadgita it is said that the higher self can be the friend of the lower self, and it can also be the enemy of the lower self. *Ātmaiva hyātmāno bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (B.G. 6.5): "The self is the friend of the self. The self can also be the enemy of the self." These are difficult things to understand, how we can be friends and enemies to our own selves. We cannot understand how this could be possible. How could I be my own friend, and how could I have an enemy within myself?

These are secret teachings, not popular instructions. Such analogical statements also apply to everything in the world. The world is a friend and also an enemy. Though basically one cannot be either a friend or an enemy of one's own self, even so, one cannot regard the world as a friend or an enemy, due to the peculiar placement of oneself in the constitution of things. The structure of the human personality is such, or at least expected to be such, that friendship and enmity within the organism is unthinkable, and therefore unwarranted. Likewise, the structure of things, the makeup of the world, is such that a friendly or an inimical attitude towards it is an unthinkable hypothesis.

Often religions tell us that the world is the body of God, in order to teach us the lesson that here, within this body which ensouls the intelligence of the universe, there is no chance of any repercussion or jostling of parts within the whole. There is a grand, measureless expanse of what we call the world. All study, whether it is secular or religious, scientific or aesthetic, is finally directed to the awakening of man's consciousness to that relation that exists perpetually between himself and the world. Whatever be our study, whatever be our occupation, it matters not in the end, insofar as it has its vital connection with the great objective of every man, which is life itself.

The dearest thing is life, and anything that is connected with life also appears to be dear and beloved. The most beloved of objectives is one's own life. There is a struggle for protecting one's life, and every appurtenance that we seem to be gathering around ourselves is an accessory regarded as helpful in guarding one's own life and perpetuating it to the extent practicable. Life is the greatest objective. Life is an end in itself; it is not a means to another end. We do not live for something else. Everything else lives for life. All our relationships, social or otherwise, are contributory energies which sustain life, and the greatest love is the love of life.

But what kind of life is it that becomes the object of love? Many times it has been said, almost endlessly, that the greatest of loves is the love of

one's own self, and all other loves are conditional relations established with this unconditional love of one's own self. This is again a hard matter, a difficult thing to grasp, because we have what are called altruistic activities, unselfish deeds, and impersonal affections, which would not permit us to accept that love of the self is literally the greatest of all loves. But this inability on our part to understand this great teaching is not a sanction to rebut it. The love of the self is certainly the greatest of loves, in spite of there being such a thing called unselfish activity. The so-called unselfishness that people parade in this world is a secret action of the self towards its own stability—a secret, intelligent operation which the self manoeuvres—which, socially and politically, goes in the name of unselfishness, public works, and so on, because the greatest of public existences is the Self itself. The Self is not a private existence; it is a public existence. Therefore, we are impelled towards public activities.

Unselfish activities, service to the neighbour, to the friend, to the poor, to the downtrodden, to the sick, to the needy, to another, is only an impulsion from this great Self, which is not a private self scintillating within this little body of ours, but is a large public expansion which operates behind even the Public Works Department, the social organisations, the United Nations Organisation, and cosmical humanitarian activities. All these wondrous, breathtaking enterprises of man which

go by the name of service for the liberation of the helpless, the ignorant and the poor are within this secret brilliance called the Self.

Therefore, the love of the Self is not in any way opposed to, rather it is equivalent to, the greatest of unselfish activities conceivable because the largest unselfishness is the Self itself, contradictory as it appears. How could the Self be unselfish? "The form of the Self is selfish, but the Self is unselfish." This seems to be a sentence whose meaning cannot be grasped. The Self is the greatest of unselfish existences because it occupies everything that we call the unselfish projects of mankind.

The Self is the rudimentary status which occupies the principle objective of all living entities, and perhaps even of non-living ones. I mentioned again and again on other occasions that there is a tendency to maintain oneself. There is an urge within every atomic unit to maintain itself integrally, uninterrupted by external interference. This tendency, this impulse, this urge within the minutest unit conceivable in the world is the Self of that particular thing.

What is the Self? Someone put this question the other day. Where is it located; where does it exist? The Self is not a substance. It is not existing anywhere. The Self is only the cohesive pressure that a particular point in space feels. For want of sufficient words in human language we have to go to analogies, comparisons, images and descriptive words to explain what the Self is. It is that

centripetal cohesive pressure that each one feels even in an atom, by which one maintains oneself and struggles to maintain oneself. There is the struggle for existence, as scientists and biologists tell us. This struggle for existence is nothing but the struggle to maintain the Selfhood of every bifurcated unit in the world.

But why is there, simultaneously, an urge to serve people and to be good to other people? Why this contradiction in the attitude of anyone in the world? On the one hand, we struggle tooth and nail to survive somehow or other, even if the world goes to the dogs. There is sometimes an impulse of that nature for self-preservation. We have to somehow escape, even though others may be drowning. We are not aware that others are drowning; we are struggling for breath, and at that time we are not thinking of another's breath. This instinct for self-preservation is relentlessly operating even in the most miserable of individuals.

At the same time, there is feeling for another. We often have a sort of impulse within us to save another from drowning. A mother jumps into the well to save her child, even if she herself is going to be destroyed. And "Love thy neighbour" is a very great dictum before us. What is this loving of our neighbour? How is it practicable and meaningful at all in this relentless, devilish urge, as it were, which compels everyone to maintain oneself in an utterly selfish manner? "Man is a wolf who is interested only in swallowing other wolves," said Thomas

Hobbes.

This serving, or loving one's neighbour, has no sense, but it seems to have sense due to an equally irresistible urge within us which speaks in a different language altogether in the form of national spirit, family organisation, love of father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister. Where comes this feeling of "my brother", "my sister", "my father", "my mother", "my son", "my husband", "my wife", "my nation", "my country", "my brethren"? Where comes this need? What is even the meaning behind such urges?

The meaning arises on account of a dual role which the Self plays in the context of existence. The Self is inside us as an individualised pressure towards a certainty of existence. Therefore, we are struggling for a little breath when we are inside the water, or when we are hunger-stricken we are even ready to steal a piece of bread from anyone, as we feel that we are passing away due to intense hunger. Such an immense urge within us to maintain our body, mind and spirit in unison is one side of the matter. This happens because there is an utter involvement of what we call the Self in this bodily limitation. "Utter" is the only word I can use. It has gone to the extreme of involving itself in this processional concrescence of physical forces called the body, even if one knows and is certain that one day death is to come and swallow this body. Everyone knows this. It may happen tomorrow, it may happen today. No one is ignorant of this fact. In

spite of this ostensible truth of the possibility of the quitting of this body any moment of time, an irresistible love for this body persists simultaneously. “Wonder” is the only word that can explain this phenomenon. Such is the involvement of this Self in every cell of one’s body.

Every cell of our body is a dear thing for us. We die for it. But, at the same time, our heart melts at the poverty of others and the suffering of a beggar, and we cannot rebut so easily the meaning behind the great Masters’ proclamations that unselfishness supersedes selfishness, and that unselfishness succeeds while selfishness does not. This is the other side of the matter. Unselfishness simultaneously persists together with the love for one’s own bodily existence because the Self, which appears to be relentlessly, mercilessly, cruelly confined to this body, is also relentlessly present everywhere in the universe, and this urge is equally great. Therefore, there is a pull from two different directions.

Hence, the art of yoga has been very wisely defined in two pithy statements of the Bhagavadgita as “harmony” and “dexterity in action”. *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (B.G. 2.48); *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (B.G. 2.50). Both things are said there. The word “harmony” is used without explaining what harmony means, though in an indirect way it has been explained in other passages in the Bhagavadgita. It has also not been explained as to what expertness in action is. What is

meant by saying that we have to be an expert in doing things, and what is meant by saying that we have to maintain a balance? Neither of these things are clear to us. But this is yoga.

On the one hand, yoga is *samatva*, a balancing of these two urges. *Yaj jñātvā na punar moham evam yāsyasi pāṇḍava, yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasyātmanyatho mayi* (B.G. 4.35): “Having been established in this yoga that I am expounding to you,” says Bhagavan Sri Krishna, “you will see the whole universe within Myself, and in Me also.” This is the enigma of the relationship of the world to us and to God. Sometimes it appears as if this relationship is hanging between the two, and at other times it appears that no such extraneous relationship is possible.

The balance that yoga expects of us is variegated in nature. It is not only of one kind; it is of every type. Every moment of time is a conflict in life. Every moment of our lives we are facing a problem. If we sit, there is a problem; if we stand, there is a problem. If we look at a person, there is a problem; if we do not look, also there is a problem. If we speak, there is a problem; and if we do not speak, there is a problem. What a difficult thing life is! The whole of our history in this world is a history of conflicts. That is perhaps the reason why the Bhagavadgita is told in the context of the great war of the Mahabharata, the battlefield of life. The universe is a battlefield in the sense that it is a confrontation of difficulties and a facing of

problems.

But problems are meant to be solved. They are not intended to be escaped from. No one can run away from a problem. The problem is going to pursue us like the skin that is attached to our body. We cannot run away from our own skin. The difficulties of life are a part of our existence itself, and one cannot run away from existence. Even if we are going to reach the heavens, the difficulties that we had on Earth will pursue us. As if by a rocket, these difficulties will follow us.

Hence, yoga is a moment-to-moment action. It is not something that is done in a meditation hall, a Buddhist *vihara*, a Hindu temple or a Christian church. Yoga is a moment-to-moment adjustment of ourselves. Every moment we are in a different type of adjustment and *samatva*. Every moment it is a new type of adjustment because every moment we are confronting a new phase of the problem. It may not be a new problem, and it may not be considered as an entirely new thing that is confronting us, but it is a new colour that it takes, a new picture that is presented of the very same object, a new side of it. Therefore, like a disease that may take various shapes in the course of the treatment, our problems and difficulties take different shapes as we proceed through life.

Thus, yoga is not a stereotyped movement of a single act which has to be persisted on in a uniform manner from birth to death. It is a living process, not a mechanical adjustment, how the body livingly,

organically and vitally adjusts itself from birth onwards. It is not a machine; it is a living being. We are not a mechanical complex. We are different from a machine in the sense that we are able to adjust ourselves automatically. Our psychophysical organism is an automatic system and does not require another operator from outside. Whenever the balance is disturbed, there is a peculiar secret apparatus kept within the organism to maintain the balance automatically. We are able to adjust ourselves to any difficulty. Otherwise, we will die in one second by the confrontations in life.

The temperature of the world goes on changing due to climatic conditions, but our bodily temperature is 98.4°F. Whether we go to the North Pole or to the equator, our temperature remains at 98.4°F. Though the outside temperature varies, we will find our temperature remains the same. How is it? Look at the mechanism of the body, how it adjusts itself to the problem of heat and cold that it is facing. This is an automatic action of the body.

Sometimes the mind also adjusts itself in this way by a secret apparatus of its own, known in psychological studies as defence mechanisms. If these defence mechanisms were not to be there in our minds, we would die in three days by the buffets that we get and the kicks that we receive from the world. If the body were not to adjust itself to the temperature in this manner, we would have died by the temperature differences in the world. Simultaneously there is a psychological adjustment

that we are making. Sometimes we brush aside a problem. If we go on remembering everything—“My father died, my brother died, my sister died, I have debt, what a loss, what a loss, what a loss”—if we go on thinking this, then we will not be able to live in this world. So there is a mechanism of forgetting. The mind has a secret computer system, as it were, by which it adjusts itself to maintain itself. Whether we have a desire or have no desire, whether we have an unfulfilled desire or a fulfilled desire, whether there is an unpleasant circumstance outside us or a pleasant one, whatever it is, the mind is able to adjust itself with this condition by its defence mechanism, which is comparable to the capacity of the body to adjust itself to the temperature of the world outside. Like that, a spiritual adjustment has to be made within the soul of man, which is the art of yoga. As the body adjusts itself, and the mind also adjusts itself to some extent, though not always, the you or the I, the specific root of our personality, has to adjust itself to the rootedness of everything else in the world.

Here, we find a necessity to, and a possibility of, making such adjustments—the coming together of the self within us and the self that is without, the coordination between the impulse to maintain oneself in an utterly selfish manner and an unselfish urge within us to be of service to others. The self within feels its presence in others as if by a secret antenna that automatically projects by

means and methods which are invisible to the eyes. This is why we have an intense love for ourselves, and also an intense love for other people. We are simultaneously both good people and bad people, at the same time. We can be like chameleons, but we should not be like chameleons. We should have a harmonious outlook, and strike a balance between the stages of the inward self and the stages of the universal Self.

Patanjali's systems of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* are the inward adjustments that we are expected to make within the layers of our own personality. These layers are sometimes called *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya*—the physical, the subtle, the causal, etc. These stages, *niyama*, etc., mentioned by Patanjali, are the inward harmonisations of the layers of the personality, which constitute a single encasement of the Self. The body, the mind and the spirit, the *koshas*—*annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya*—and the Atman within, are not distinct substances. We cannot say that here is the body, here is the mind, and here is the Atman. We cannot keep them separate, in watertight compartments.

There is a gradual condensation of Consciousness, which is the Self, together with an externalisation of it, and also a simultaneous centralisation in a particular point in space and time, which becomes the body-mind complex. The

yoga process is a gradual melting away, as it were, of all this hard ice of bodily individuality, and making it evaporate into the liquid of pure Consciousness, which is attempted inwardly by *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, etc. But that is not enough. We have to commune these inwardly aligned layers of personality and selfhood with the layers of the cosmical Self.

Yoga is not over merely with these initial steps of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*. There are the stages of samadhi, about which you might have heard. The samadhis, or *samapattis*—*savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *savichara*, *nirvichara*, *sananda*, *sasmita*, *nirbija*, words which make no sense to an ordinary man—are indicative of the nature of the cosmical adjustments that are made further on in the stages called samadhi. Yoga truly begins with samadhi; it does not end with samadhi. All the other, earlier stages are only an inward adjustment whose comparison we find in the first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita, where we are told about the different methods of a self-integrating process, culminating in *dhyana*, or meditation, as described in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

The Bhagavadgita does not end with the Sixth Chapter, and Patanjali's yoga does not end with *dhyana*, or meditation. A great step further and a leap into the beyond has to be taken wherein and whereby the inwardly adjusted layers of the self

simultaneously get adjusted with the cosmical layers of Selfhood. According to the Sankhya, these cosmical layers are the five elements, the *tanmatras*, the *ahamkara*, the *mahat*, the *prakriti* and the *purusha*; and according to others, it may be the Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara, Brahman. Whatever be the nomenclature, all yoga is universal, and it is not Christian or Hindu or Muslim. There is no yoga of a sectarian type. Yoga is a cosmical endeavour and a necessity of each created being. It is an impersonal science and not a religion, again to repeat the same thing that I told you many times.

These are very interesting things, very important things, and at the same time very difficult things to remember. You are students of the Academy, hearing something from somebody, writing down a few words when someone speaks, but you will not be able to remember all these things. When this session ends and you leave the hall, seventy-five percent of what has been said will leave your mind. You will suddenly see a new world outside this door which has nothing to do in a practical way, as it were, with what you have heard from me. This is a trick of the mind. It does not want you to succeed here. It wants you to fail miserably. Satan weeps, they say, if you succeed in withstanding his temptations and his snares. There is an old story—biblical or otherwise, something like a grandmother's story—that Satan asked, "Lord, when will be my salvation?" The Lord had

hurled Satan into hell. Satan implored the Almighty, "When will I be relieved?" The Lord replied, "When man will resist your temptations, you will be free." A very hard thing! Man will not resist temptations, so Satan will not be free.

Our temptations are not the usual stereotyped ones that we find listed in scriptures. The inability to remember what you heard here is actually a temptation, of a different type. "I cannot remember so many things that you have told me. I am fed-up. It is too much for me." Or, "Well, I am ill. I have got other things, this, that, so many problems." We have endless excuses not to remember a good thing, endless excuses not to find time enough to pursue this. The world is nothing but a bundle of excuses.

God bless you this day. This is sufficient for you.

## **Chapter 15**

### **MAINTAINING A SPIRITUAL DIARY**

The first thought that occurs to our mind when we get up in the morning will tell us something about ourselves. The basic substance of our life persists and calls for our attention as the first thought in the morning. Many times we are so muddled in our mind that there would be no time to find out what the first thought has been today, for instance. Many of us may not even remember what we thought when we woke up in the morning because the mind flows like a series of waves one following the other, giving no rest and respite for the earlier phase.

A disciplined mind will be able to keep a watch over itself. It is only the undisciplined, chaotic thoughts that clamour with a great noise, without having much meaning behind their demands. When there is a shout from a large mob, we do not know what each person is speaking. Likewise, there is generally a mob of requirements when our mind begins to work.

Often our thoughts are like a medley of forest growth, and not a well-ordered garden where everything finds its own place in an artistic manner. Our thoughts are rarely artistic. They are a muddle and a jungle mostly, so that any thought can occur at any time, for any reason whatsoever, and for any purpose. This situation is a specimen of an undisciplined mind that can say anything and think anything at any time under an impulse, whether

internal or external. A control over the processes of thought requires a great program to be chalked out and adhered to in our day-to-day living. An earnestness on our part plays a very important role in achieving success in this direction.

By this process of disciplining the mind, a time will come that we will have only a certain set of thoughts which alone will occur to our mind, and extraneous, irrelevant and unsubstantial ideas will not find a place in the mind. Just as a person who is embarking upon a particular project has a set of ideas concerning that project only, and no other thought can enter his mind on account of the intensity of the upsurge of ideas concerning the project, likewise, the intensity of a clarified conception of the goal of life will take the upper hand, and ideas and thoughts concerning these procedures to be adopted in the achievement of the goal will persist again and again, even in the middle of stray thoughts that may occasionally arise due to past habit.

It does not mean that every one of us goes to bed with a peaceful mind, whatever be our effort to achieve this state. Some sort of an anxiety or a pending work occupies the attention of the mind, and the greatest bondage is pending work. To go to bed with something that has to be done the next morning is a thing on which one has to bestow sufficient attention. The wisdom of life, whatever the nature of it be, calls for the recognition of our true status in this world. Any sort of overestimation

is unwarranted in a world of this kind. Great men have come and gone in a trice, and the world has its own legal operations in respect of every one of us.

Actually, we have no pending work. Such a thing does not exist, really speaking. But we involve ourselves in a sort of responsibility, which we take on our heads as a heavy load for reasons which even we ourselves cannot easily explain, and they tell upon us physically, socially, psychologically, and even ethically.

Every insistent demand in life may be regarded as a duty that we have to perform. The word "insistent" is to be underlined here, and it is up to us to find out what it is that is so insistent. An insistent demand is one whose neglect may prove detrimental even to the achievement of our goal in some indirect manner, such as a serious illness which is ignored. Though illness may not have a direct connection with the great goal of life, it has an indirect relationship, which is obvious.

There are small things in life which may miss our attention due to the great exuberance of aspiration for God. But that would be like the fate of a managing director of a huge factory concerning himself only with the large output that he is expecting from his organisation, forgetting that the personnel in the factory are not reliable and the machines are not in order. Such an enthusiasm would not be part of the wisdom of life. The mechanism of living may be requiring repairs of various types, and though in extraordinary

circumstances an overwhelming love for God may set right all matters by the operation of a law that does not belong to this world, normally we should not expect that law to descend upon us instantly. That is a miracle which can take place, but we should not expect it to take place every moment. Normally speaking, not taking into consideration these extraordinary conditions and supernormal possibilities, common sense and vigilance are expected of a seeker.

It is absolutely essential for every serious student of yoga to have a thoroughgoing systematic minutiae of the daily routine because a progressive following of a systemised routine for the day builds up the strength of one's personality, even as breakfast, lunch and dinner taken at regular hours contribute to the health of the body, while this benefit will not accrue if we are irregular in the intake of the food. Anything that is regular and systematised has the characteristic of strengthening itself inwardly, and the system that I am referring to in the daily routine mainly refers to a specified time to be allotted for a particular phase of sadhana such as *svadhaya* or study, *japa*, meditation, or even relaxation, which also may be regarded as a part of one's daily routine.

The great clarity in our mind regarding the goal that we wish to achieve in life will also suggest, at the same time, the appurtenances that we have to gather in this life for the purpose of the achievement. When we wish to build a house, we

draw a plan first. We do not suddenly order some cement and bricks, thinking that a house has to be built but not knowing what sort of material, and its quantity and quality, would be required. If we build a house, we have a plan first; an architectural drawing is prepared, and then on the basis of this plan we contemplate the further requirements of the project—the quantity of the material, the nature of the material, the personnel who have to work, the expenses that we have to incur, and such other relative factors.

Something like that is this great building of the edifice of our own life. We cannot live a satisfactory life in this world unless it is planned properly. An unplanned life cannot be called a life at all. It is just existence. And the plan of life would be the shape that our life would take, in all its details, in light of the goal towards which our life is directed. The nature of the building that we are required to build will depend upon what it is that we want to do in that building. Is it going to be a factory, a chapel, a temple, residential quarters, a hostel or a hospital? What is it going to be? The purpose for which the building is meant will also decide the nature of the plan and all that follows in the project.

Likewise, the purpose for which we are living in this world will also decide the way in which we have to live in the world. How should we live? This question can be answered by putting another question: Why are we living? What is the purpose of our being here at all? The purpose of our life will

tell us the way in which we have to live. When we know the way in which we are expected to live in light of the purpose that is to be achieved, this will also decide the details of every aspect such as the social, the physical, the psychological, the ethical, and the spiritual.

Our needs in life are the details of our life. Many a time it appears that we are involved in a big conspectus of unintelligible relations and needs which cannot be tabulated in a list. What do you want? If you put a question to a person, he will not be able to give an answer immediately. He will be simply drowned in the question itself. This feeling that we are getting drowned in the nature of this question arises because the mind is not clear as to the circumstances of its own life. The main difficulty is that we do not know why we are living here, and every other difficulty follows from this difficulty.

People have many ideas about this. "I work because I have to take care of my family. I have to take care of my family because it is recorded in the scriptures that it is one's duty to take care of one's family." Here the matter ends. The whole question is answered by this little statement, "I have to serve my family, I have to take care of my husband, my wife, my children. I have to work for my nation, my country. I have to work for humanity, my brethren. I live for this purpose." This is a simple, obvious and offhand answer that can come out from anyone's mind, but this is an untrained answer. This answer

comes from a mind which has not been educated properly in the art of existence. It is a prosaic mind, not a poetic one.

This training that the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy conducts for the benefit of people is only to introduce a sort of educational discipline into the minds of people, and not merely to thrust some wisdom from outside, which cannot be done. It is a sort of properly gearing the mind and enabling it to move along the required track by making it possible for it to condition its own operations in light of the direction in which it is moving. We are all moving in one direction, in some direction. The world moves in one direction, and everything that is within the world also is moving in some direction. This is perhaps what is meant by the term "evolution". Evolution is the direction in which the world, and everything that is in the world, takes. Though it is known that there is some sort of a direction in the movement of the world and its contents, it is not known what this direction is. Philosophers of evolution merely mention that there is evolution, and that there is a movement from one species to another, with a larger organisational setup in the more advanced species. This is some sort of statement in regard to the direction which the world is taking. But where does the evolution stop? Where does it end?

Latterly, there were many evolutionist philosophers in the West who contemplated the possibilities of the direction in which the world is

moving. In India, people declared that the world is moving towards God, that man exists for the sake of the realisation of God. But it was not so easily declared in the West because doubt and wonder were the beginnings of philosophy there, and not so much intuition and vision as we seem to be having as the background of philosophical disquisitions in India. The *darshana* of India is a vision of Truth. But Greek philosophy or German philosophy did not begin with an intuition of the values of life, but rather with a scepticism, a doubting of every possibility and eventuality, and also, in the case of Greek philosophy particularly, it began with the wonder of the world. There seems to be a miraculous secret operating behind the systematic movements of nature.

Evolutionary doctrines, which are not the subject of our discussion now, seem to indicate that the world is taking a direction, and it is not merely moving blindly. It is not true that the world is blind or is blindfolded. It is an intelligent something. The way in which the world very dexterously manufactures beautiful flowers in the Valley of Flowers in the Himalayas, the way in which almost unrecognised butterflies are carrying artistic patterns on their bodies, the way in which the planets are moving around the Sun systematically, correct to the second, the way in which the parts of the body are miraculously collaborating among themselves, and such other countless, endless instances of mysterious intelligences operating

behind the events of nature seem to prove that the world is not blind. It is not an ignorant, inert mass. The mathematics of how the Earth moves around the Sun and rotates on its axis is more precise than the intelligence of the best mathematician in the world. It is with such precision, such exactness—not exactness to the minute, not to the second, but even to the hundredth or thousandth fraction of a second. It was seen that all these things cannot be explained if we are living in an unintelligent, meaningless, blind world. This intelligence, which manifests itself in the progressive evolution of the species of various types, seems to be working for a great purpose, which is secretly hidden but sometimes, under special circumstances, manifests itself even before our own eyes.

Thus, a great need seems to be pressing upon the mind of every person in the world to educate himself or herself in the direction of a learning which will enlighten the mind as to what this direction is. Academicians have called this sort of learning as philosophy. Especially Plato considered philosophy as an indispensable science of life—indispensable because no one can forego it, no one can avoid it, no one can feel it is unnecessary. It is the only necessary discipline for every person in the world. People such as Plato felt that philosophy is the supreme science, the art of awakening the mind of man to the destiny of the universe. This awakening, this discipline which may be regarded as the essence of true education and culture, will

also direct the daily routine of our life. Otherwise, our daily routine will go on changing according to the whims and fancies of our mind, emotions, the frustrations of life, and the like.

So I come back to the point that there is a necessity to maintain a daily routine which will be consonant with the purpose for which we are working among the daily activities in which we are engaged. We are not engaging ourselves in the enterprises of life for nothing. We are neither working for humanity, nor for our father or mother, nor for anybody in this world. We are working for the fulfilment of the purpose of the universe, which looks like something which involves our relationship with our father, mother, relations, friends, and so on. All these relationships appear to be part and parcel of our duty in life on account of the fact that fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, etc., are involved in, included in, this great evolutionary urge of the universe.

Yet, it has to be remembered that this principle purpose is not merely a relativistic attendance in respect of our outward connections, but is an onward or upward movement. We do not know whether it is onward or upward, or whether it is neither or both. It is this central purpose which should form the substance of education. If this essential content or core of education is missed, education becomes a corpse which has the structure of the human body but it is worth nothing, fit for cremation or burial.

The educated person is a happy person; this is what Socrates said, and anyone can say. But education today makes one miserable, for reasons which each educated person knows. The world begins to present itself as a true reality after our education is over. Until then we are small saplings, knowing nothing of the world. When our educational career is over, we find ourselves in hot water because the world then looks at us in its true colours, which were hidden from view on account of our immersion in books, and also because of our happy dependence on people who took care of us, whom we regarded as our sole support, and we had no worries of any kind. When our education is over, those who helped us with our education tell us, "Now you stand on your own legs." Then we find our legs are weak, and we cannot stand, because strength has not been imparted to our limbs by the education that we have been given. This is unfortunate, and all ministers of education are crying hoarse on this point, finding no solution to it. But a solution has to be found.

Thus, seekers of Truth, practicants of yoga, and those who are dedicated to spiritual living are expected to awaken themselves to this great point, namely, a persistent maintenance of the consciousness of the purpose for which one exists and lives and does anything in the world. This enables seekers to maintain a daily routine.

When you get up in the morning, what are you supposed to do? What is your occupation going to

be throughout the day today, for instance, from morning till evening? Though your present occupation today will have some connection with your empirical association in society, it has to be grounded finally in the purpose for which this empirical association exists and persists.

You have empirical calls and social requirements which insistently call your attention every day. Yet, notwithstanding this, the immediate requirement is finally rooted in another requirement, which conditions this immediate requirement. An empirical necessity is conditioned by a transcendent necessity. Heaven conditions the Earth. It is said that all that happens in the world has happened first in the heavens, and then it has descended into the world. We belong to all the realms, not merely to this Earth. Therefore, any manifestation of a particular event in the physical realm is said to be a descent into a grosser form of a subtle occurrence which has already taken place in ethereal form in the higher realms. As medical people say, diseases occur inside first, and then they manifest themselves outside. The fruit ripens inside first, and it ripens outside later on. Thus, the central core behind the urges for any activity or performance in life is something transcendent, and then when it descends into this visible world, it appears outside as an empirical occurrence in space and time.

With these associated ideas, you will be able to chalk out a program of your life and a program of

your day. The program of the day, of any particular day, is one link in the chain of the great development of your own life. What you wish to achieve in your life is to be achieved in part, in some proportion, in one particular day. If the whole of your life can be regarded as a big body, every day is a cell or a part of this body. Hence, whatever you do today and whatever you do any day will bear an inextricable connection towards the fulfilment of the final purpose.

Every day you take a bath, you go to sleep, you take meals, you go for a walk, you relax in various ways, you study books, and you have many other occupations. All these are intended to maintain social and personal health, which is the aim behind all these variegated activities. And this immediate requirement and necessity of yours has again a purpose behind it which is superior to it, transcendent to it, and beyond it. So the highest one conditions the immediately following one, and the immediately following one conditions the next following one and, finally, even the little minute things in the world are conditioned by the will of God. Towards this end we are moving, and this would give you an idea of the nature of the daily routine.

The spiritual diary of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is perhaps, to my knowledge, the first time a prescription of this type has been given by a great adept in yoga. A self-checking is what is made possible by the maintenance of this spiritual diary.

If you have seen the type of diary that is prescribed here by the founder of this institution, you will be able to chalk out a similar, equivalent diary for your own purpose, suited to your own predilections and the way in which you are living, etc.

You know how carefully business people maintain accounts. Every day they are conscious of what transactions have taken place, and every day they close their accounts with a clear idea of the financial position: Is it an asset or is it a liability? If it is an asset, how has it come, and if it is a liability, how has it come? The nature of the assets or the liabilities of a particular day, which are compiled during the close of the accounts in the evening, will determine what has to be done the following day. How careful people are in the field of politics and in the field of business! Such is the caution that one has to exert by an assessment of one's performances during a particular day.

As it is important to note the nature of the thought that occurs to you early in the morning, it is also essential to guard yourself about the thought that goes with your mind at the end of the day. A noble, sublime thought should be carried with the mind when it goes to sleep. The future depends on the present, is often said. The last thought determines the future life, say the scriptures. Often the last thought of today may be really the last thought. We may not wake up tomorrow. And if we wake up tomorrow, well, God be thanked for it.

Continue this process in this manner by

conducting yourself in this disciplined way, struggling and striving your best to see that the basic or fundamental thought persists through the details of thought which are connected with your daily duties. It is true that many of you may have to perform many types of duty due to the kind of occupation with which you are connected. It is not only one form of work that you have to do; the form, the type, the kind may go on changing almost every hour in the case of a person who is very busy in many enterprises. Yet, with all these busy involvements, a seriously concerned person should be able to find time to withdraw himself or herself every day for a maximum period of time. I have used the words "maximum period of time" without saying whether it is one hour, two hours or three hours, because it depends upon the quality of the thought, rather than the quantity of time.

The quality of your withdrawal and your concentration on the great purpose of life should be so intense that it should be able to overwhelm any kind of impact that may tell upon your system due to contact with your social existence in the world. Due to your existence in this world and the way in which you are living, influences impinge upon you every moment of time; they dash upon you every moment, almost, like waves in the ocean. But the quality of your withdrawal, not the quantity, should be so intense that it should be able to withstand the onslaught of these dashing waves in the ocean of life. It is up to every one of you to find out what

amount of time may have to be allotted for this purpose of constructively guarding yourself against the onslaughts and vicissitudes of outward life. It is not that everyone has to sit and meditate for three hours. If it is an advanced and strong mind, even a few minutes of withdrawal would be sufficient.

But who has got such a strong mind? So you may have to conduct yourself in this way for a more protracted time, preferably in the morning when you have not yet commenced the duties of the day, and also in the evening when you have retired from the day's work. It is hard for the common man to maintain an equilibrium of thinking in the midst of heavy duties which come like a flood upon one's mind. But gradual practice and persistent effort will give you such strength that you will never forget the basic factor which underlies the outward movements of life's names and forms.

Today I have principally concerned myself with this necessity on the part of every one of you to maintain a self-checking diary. You may call it a spiritual diary or any kind of diary, for the matter of that. You have many weaknesses, and these are dangerous things. The enemy can enter into the fortress of your sadhana by the ingress of these weaknesses, and so they have to be guarded with a powerful sentry, with an army of competent personnel, with tremendous discrimination, study, and *satsanga* with great saints and sages, etc. If you are not strong enough, if you have not got enough strength in your own self, then you align yourself

with a strong power. Likewise, when you feel that you are not in a position to guard the avenues of your weaknesses, then you have to be in the company of a great person. That is alignment, as it is called in politics. You get aligned with a powerful source, and then have no fear from enemies who are likely to attack you through these weaknesses in your personality. This alignment should be with a great person, a Guru preferably; otherwise, you should have such strength that you can yourself face all these eventualities.

You have to be sincerely conscious of the weaknesses of your mind and your emotions. You should not imagine that you have no weaknesses and no desires. This kind of patting oneself on the back will do no good. You can get on in life, but you cannot get on finally because these weaknesses are like deep sores in one's own soul. What is the good of imagining that there are no weaknesses? Who is benefited by that? This is a kind of self-deception, and also a deception of the public. Well, it can go on for some time, but it will not help you for a long time.

The acceptance of a weakness is not a weakness in itself. Many times you do not want to accept that you have a weakness, thinking that it itself is a weakness—which is not so, because thereby you try to find a recipe for this weakness. It is like the acceptance of an illness. If there is a chronic illness, what is the good of hiding it? The exposure of this illness will be a good avenue for finding a remedy

or medicine for it. Many a time you yourself may be able to find a remedy for your weaknesses; but sometimes, though not always, this requires the assistance of a competent Master.

Deep meditation on God is the final medicine for weaknesses of every type. God is the greatest Guru: Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshwara. We are born with human weaknesses, which are the specific characteristics of the species of man. Every man has a weakness which is common to every other man. It is not the weakness of this person or that person; it is a weakness of humanity as such. This cannot be overcome by human means only. A human weakness cannot be remedied by human means. It requires a superhuman means, and this superhuman means is *japa*, meditation, *svadhaya*, among many other things.

Satsanga is the supreme way. Of all the great advantages of spiritual life, satsanga stands supreme, and everything comes afterwards. Nothing can compare to the company of a great man. All other things that you do come afterwards. The protection that you have, the satisfaction that you feel and the energy that enters into you in the company of a great personality surpasses every other advantage that may accrue to you by your own personal sadhana. So wherever there is an opportunity to have satsanga, it should not be missed. As long as possible this should continue, and you should hunt for opportunities to have

satsanga.

Added to it is *japa*. With sincere meditation and prayers to God to illumine your mind, humbly surrender yourself before the Great Almighty and offer your supplication to this Great Being: "I am at your feet. Help me." And help shall descend through the Guru, or descend directly through any miraculous source from the great Creator who has millions of eyes and who sees you every minute, inwardly and outwardly.

Thus, life is blessed. It is not a curse, as many under difficult circumstances may imagine. The kingdom of heaven is a blessed area, and we are in it.

May God's grace and blessings go with you all!