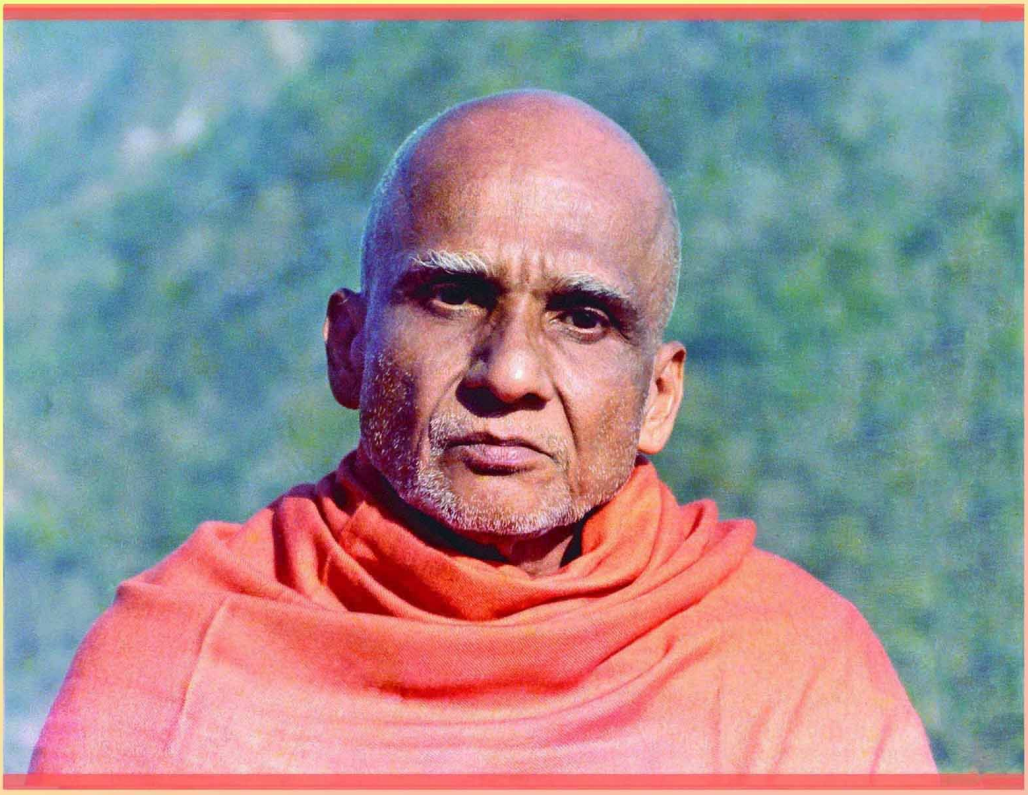
TRUE SPIRITUAL LIVING



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

TRUE SPIRITUAL LIVING

Swami Krishnananda

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We are delighted to bring out a new publication by Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj entitled 'True Spiritual Living'. This is a series of twenty-five discourses that Sri Swamiji Maharaj gave during December 1975 and January 1976 to provide practical guidelines for those who wish to tread the spiritual path. The Kathopanishad speaks about the difficulty in treading the spiritual path and also the absolute necessity of wise guidance of a teacher.

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata:
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti (Katha 1.3.14)

Arise, awake and having reached the great teachers, attain knowledge. Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross, hard to tread, thus the wise say.

In these discourses, Sri Swamiji Maharaj in his inimitable way guides the seekers to understand the path and helps them to unfold their inner potential by giving an in-depth analysis of the process of attaining Self-realisation. We propose to bring these discourses in two volumes. The first volume consisting of twelve illuminating discourses is being released on April 25th 2015, the sacred occasion of the 93rd birthday of Sri Swamiji Maharaj, and the second volume comprising thirteen discourses will be published later.

We hope that the earnest seekers and Sadhaks will be immensely benefitted from this book.

May the blessings of Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be ever upon all.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

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Chapter 1

SPIRITUALITY IS THE EXPANSION OF BEING

Spirituality is not a way of living in the sense of conducting oneself outwardly in relationship to other people, but rather it is a state of being—a term with which everyone is familiar, but the meaning of which is not clear to most people. Everybody has heard the words 'being' and 'doing'; and merely because we are familiar with the words 'God', 'freedom', 'immortality', etc., the meaning of these words is not necessarily clear.

Spirituality is a state of being. But a doubt will arise in the mind: Is it not also doing something? Is it only being? We have heard from many people that spirituality also implies intense unselfish activity; the more we become spiritual, the more is our capacity to work and the more we become capable of doing unselfish service, so that spirituality is also doing instead of merely being. Such doubt can come in the minds of people. Hence, how do we say that spirituality is a state of being, rather than doing?

This doubt arises because one is not clear as to the real meaning of 'being' or 'doing'. We are brought up from our very childhood in an atmosphere of social relationships, and we cannot get out of this prejudice. 'Prejudice' means an attitude which has entered into our very blood, and which influences our every thought, every feeling, and everything that we do in life. It is at the background of everything that we think and feel and act; that is called prejudice. It has no logical basis. A prejudiced person

cannot be logically converted into a new line of thinking, because already there is a predisposition to a particular way of thinking on account of the atmosphere in which one has been brought up.

Now, when I say prejudice, I do not mean merely the conditions in which we have been brought up in this particular life, because we had many lives in previous incarnations. We must have taken many births, and all the impressions of our thoughts, feelings and actions of millions and millions of births that we have taken add to the prejudice of our thinking, so that what we are thinking today is a cumulative effect of all that we have thought and felt and done in the many births through which we have passed. This prejudice has become a part of our nature. It is not merely a psychological function in the ordinary sense of the term; it is something that cannot be separated from our own skin. Our very existence is a prejudice.

This peculiar trait of ours has a meaning which is deeper than ordinary human conduct. The basis of this externalised, socialised attitude is the primary prejudice of the mind, which is called the concept of space, time and cause; this is our main prejudice. Prejudices such as, "I am an Indian," "I am a German," "I am a man," "I am a woman" are minor ones. But the major prejudice is: "I am in space and in time, and I am in a system of causal relation." This is a higher prejudice, and nobody can get out of it.

Whatever be the extent of our knowledge, whatever be the depth of our genius, we cannot get out of the idea that we are in space, we are in time, and things are connected in

some sort of a causal relation. Not only that—we have the idea that things are outside us.

Now, I am again coming to the point of the difference between being and doing. Why has this peculiar notion of there being a distinction between being and doing arisen? It is because you have a distinction between yourself and other people in the world. There is a distinction drawn between yourself and others. You are not I, and I am not you. This is something very simple to understand. Inasmuch as my existence—which is called 'my being'—is different from the being of other people, I have a necessity to develop a relationship with other people. This is called 'doing'. So, the necessity of doing arises on account of my not being one with others, and others not being one with me. If I am them, and they are me, the question of doing does not arise because there is nothing to be done.

But, it is not true. I am not them, and they are not me. We are all different people. You have a being of your own; you exist. And I have a being of my own; I exist. But my being is different from your being, isn't it? So, what is the connection between my being and your being? That connection is called action. That is why you do something, and I do something. So, we have the original doubt in the mind of there being a fundamental difference between being and doing. As long as we are different from one another, there shall be a difference between being and doing. We cannot get out of this notion.

This is also the reason for the philosophical distinction that people make between knowledge and activity—or in Sanskrit parlance, *jnana* and *karma*. There is a tremendous

philosophical fight about whether knowledge is superior or action is superior. All these difficulties have arisen on account of a fundamental error in understanding the human situation itself. The question of whether knowledge is superior or action is superior arises from another question: Am I one with you, or am I different from you? If I am different from you, really speaking, then action cannot be avoided; it is superior in its own way. But if there is some sort of a connection between you and me, what is that connection?

Now, you are sitting there, so many yards away from me. Do you see any connection between you and me? I can see no connection. There is no wire connecting you to me—no thread. Nothing is there. We are absolutely different from one another, and there is not even a little connection between you and me.

If that were the case, it would be very difficult to live in this world because, on one side, we have a compulsive feeling that there is some connection between ourselves and others, and on the other side, we cannot see any connection. That is why we are fighting with people. Every day you fight with me, and I fight with you. I disagree with you, and you disagree with me. I do not like you, and you do not like me. Why does this situation arise? It is because you cannot see any connection with me, and I cannot see any connection with you. It cannot be seen. Well, it is a very practical truth. What is the connection? You are sitting there. What link is there between you and me? Absolutely nothing! So, I can do anything to you, and you can do anything to me. This is called war, battle, social tension.

And this cannot stop as long as we have a feeling that we are not connected among ourselves.

But there is another peculiar trait in us which makes us feel that it cannot be like that. Why do I feel sympathy for you? Why do I feel pity for you? Why do I feel like speaking to you? Why do I feel like helping you? Why do I feel like having some kind of social relationship with you if there is absolutely no connection between you and me? Do you understand? Anything that is not really connected with another thing cannot have sympathy for that thing. Sympathy means connection. It is not merely a psychological word; it is also a philosophical word. Sympathy means relationship, en rapport, some kind of invisible connection. Even if you are far, far away—one thousand miles away from me—you can have a relationship with me. You can think of me; and sometimes thoughts establish a greater relation than even physical relations.

So, on one side we have got a feeling that without some sort of relationship with others, we cannot exist. On the other side we have a feeling: "What connection do you have with me? I am an independent person. I will go anywhere I like." Sometimes people speak like that. "What have I to do with you? What do you think I am?" This is the quarrelsome attitude of people. When you are angry, you speak like that, isn't it? "What do you think I am? I will do this and that. I will go from this place!" You say anything that you like. This is the outcome of the other side of your nature, which makes you wrongly think that you have no connection with people. If you have a real connection with

people, you will not speak like that; but sometimes you have a feeling that there is no connection.

On the other side, you feel miserable when you are absolutely alone. If I lock you up in a room for three years where you cannot see any human face, you will feel very unhappy. "I have no friends. I cannot see anybody. It is as if I am in a jail." Why do you feel like that? If you have absolutely no connection with people, you must be happy when you are absolutely alone. But that is not true; you will be miserable. You go to the shop, you go to the market, you go to the cinema; you go to all sorts of people to establish relationships, making it appear that you cannot exist without relationships.

So, human life is a tension between two aspects which pull us from two different directions. On one side we feel that we are independent people, and that is the reason why we sometimes become selfish. Selfishness is due to the occasional feeling that we are independent, with no connection to other people, so we can exploit others or even destroy them. "I am independent. Why should I not destroy other people? I have no connection with them." But sometimes we feel that it is very wrong, that we should not do that. We have a humanitarian feeling, a feeling of brotherhood and unity with people. This double attitude of our nature is the cause of our sorrow.

Why is it that we have a double attitude? Sometimes we feel that we are different, and therefore, we can get angry. Sometimes we feel we are one, and therefore, we feel a sense of affection. The reason is simple. Again I am coming to the original point of the distinction between being and doing,

which has arisen out of the central natural prejudice of our being in space and time, and of having a causal relationship of things. Are we in space? Are we in time? If we are in space, it means that we are disconnected from others, because space is nothing but a way of disconnecting one thing from another thing. It is because of space that you appear to be different from me. Otherwise, what is the distinction? If there is no space between us, we will merge into one, isn't it? But space prevents us from merging. So space is the primary devil, we can say, which has created this distinction of thought, feeling, action, etc.

The attempt at being spiritual is the effort of the deepest reality of our nature to come to manifestation, and to overcome this prejudice of our being in space, time, and causal relationship. That we are in space, time and cause is an error of thought. If that had been the ultimate truth of things, all the problems of life would have been finished in a minute—each one would have thought that anything can be done by anyone. There would be no need for rule, law, regulation, government or anything of the kind.

Any kind of system, any kind of methodology or organisation is an indication that things are not really disconnected in space and time. Why do we want a government? Why do we want a system of working at all? Why should there be any kind of organisation if everything is disconnected? Organisation is the bringing together of factors which are apparently different. But if they are really different, we cannot bring them together, so all our effort would be a failure. Everything would be meaningless in this life. But that is not what our heart speaks. It says there is

some unity among things. We always speak of organisation and methodology, of working, of system, law and order, rule, and so on. Why are we speaking about these things if everything is disconnected?

Thus, the whole of human life is a drama of two scenes: being and doing. Being is what we are. Doing is what we try to manifest in order that this being may become more and more complete. Why do we do anything? Why do we act? Why do we work? Why do we perform any function? Why do we establish a relationship with anything in the world—people or other things? It is because our being is limited. There is a Prof. Jack 'being', and an Elizabeth 'being', and so on—small beings—and they feel so finite and miserable.

We want to expand our being, which we are trying to do by connecting ourselves with other beings—this being, that being, and hundreds of beings. If many beings join together, it looks as if the being has become very large. That is why we feel happy when we are in the midst of many friends and well-wishers, and we have a feeling that if there is a world government without any national armies, we will be very happy, perhaps. Why should there be many nations and many armies? Let there be only one government for the whole world. Then we feel more secure. We feel that way because we have a sensation of having united many beings into a larger unity, whereas now we feel we are limited beings.

Therefore, even our doing or our action is only a need felt for expanding our being. Thus, ultimately, being is the truth, not doing, because our doing is only for the sake of being. Our present being is insufficient. It is limited. It is

physical. It is only in one place, cut off from other people, other beings, by space, time, etc. We want to expand that being, but we are doing it in an inadequate manner. Merely because we shake hands with people, merely because we take tea with people at the same table, merely because we speak to people in a conference, it does not mean that our being has become large. However much we may try to sit together with thousands of people and have a friendly attitude towards them, still they are they, and we are we. One day or other, we will fight. Why? This is an artificial method of bringing about the largeness of being, or the unity of people. How can we become one with that person? We can sit on his lap, we can sit on his head—even then, we are different from that person, isn't it?

That is why mere sociological, political, economic and external methods of unity have failed, right from historical times. All the great empires have fallen, including the Roman, the Greek, the Assyrian and the Babylonian empires. Everything has gone to dust because these were all erroneous methods attempted by people, with a pious motive no doubt, for bringing about a unity which cannot happen merely by piling up particulars.

The joining of people into a social unity is only a grouping of particulars into a heap, and that is not real unity. What we are trying to have is a single being, ultimately. All our beings should join together into a single being, like a single ocean having all the drops within it. We cannot see many drops in the ocean. Though there are many drops, they are all one only. The whole ocean is ultimately only one drop. It is a big drop, but it contains

small drops that we cannot separate. But, if we join many stones or sand particles together, we cannot call it a single unity. Each sand particle is different from other sand particles. So, our joining together socially, politically, economically and externally is something like trying to join millions of sand particles together. They will never join. Sand particles are different from one another in spite of their being in one basket.

Therefore, spirituality—now I am coming to the original point—spirituality is not mere social relationship, though many people think it is also a part of spirituality. Spirituality can manifest itself as social relationship later on, but it is not identical with it. Spirituality is the consciousness of being. In Sanskrit we call it *sat*; *sat* means Pure Being. It is not limited being, because anything that is limited is unhappy. That is why we want to become more rich and more powerful. How much richness do we want? We want the whole of Brazil; we want the whole of South America; we want the whole of both Americas. We want the whole world, the sky, sun, moon, stars—and even then we are not happy. Why is it that we have such desires? We want to expand our power to unlimitedness; we want to expand our wealth to unlimitedness; we want to expand our being to unlimitedness. Until that is achieved, we will not be happy. So, man is unhappy. Man is unhappy because of his limited being.

Spirituality, to again come to the point, is the expansion of being. And whatever we do as an action is also a part of being. It is meant for expanding being. That is why they say karma yoga is a yoga by itself for attaining God-realisation.

You will be wondering what the connection between karma and God is. The connection is simple. Every kind of relationship with others is an attempt of the soul to come to a unity of being in a largeness which expands to entire infinitude. This Supreme Being is called God. We call God the Supreme Being because there is only one Being. And all beings put together, many people sitting together, are not one being—just as, in the analogy mentioned earlier, many sand particles put together do not make one sand particle. We merge in the Being of God as all drops merge in the ocean.

Therefore, in our attempt at being a spiritual being, we are not trying to establish an externalised relationship with things, because externality is abolished in the Infinite. In the Infinite, there is no externality. It is universality, so we must make a distinction between universality and externality. All our activities are externalised; therefore, whatever be the apparent success of our externalised actions, ultimately they are a failure unless they are charged with a spiritual consciousness which is the consciousness of the real unity of Being. It is a single Being that is working, ultimately. That is what our religions tell us. It is God working.

When we say God works, it does not mean that somebody else is working. We also have a wrong notion of God, that God means somebody else. We make a distinction between God, world and man. That is, again, due to the prejudice of space, time and cause. Why do we think that God is in the heavens and outside us? It is because of space. We bring a spatial distinction even

between us and God. The concept of God transcends the idea of space, time and cause. That is the real Being, inseparable from our being, and inseparable from the beings of other people also, so that there can be only one Being. This consciousness of the totality of Being—not merely an aggregate of particulars, but the real merger of Being—is the aim of spirituality. This consciousness has to be manifest in our action.

Two days back, a visitor came to me and asked, "Swamiji, you are working so much. Are you not disturbed and distracted in your meditations?"

I said, "I am not working. If I am working, I will be distracted."

I asked him one question: "Here is a table. What do you see? Is this a desk or is it wood? What is it?"

He said, "It is a desk."

I said, "I say it is wood, because 'desk' is only a name that you give to a particular position of wood. The position of wood is not a thing by itself, so you cannot say that there is such a thing as a desk. Only wood is there; the wood placed in a particular context is called a desk. Can you call a context or a position as a thing by itself? No. I can place the same wood in another position, and it becomes a cot. In a third position, it becomes a chair, doesn't it? So there is no such thing as chair, no such thing as table, no such thing as desk; there is only wood. I am also, in my own humble way, trying to see that no such thing as work exists. It is only consciousness that exists, just as only wood exists behind the table."

He said, "It is very difficult to understand these things."

I said, "It is very difficult. What can I do? But once you become habituated to this way of thinking, all your activity becomes a manifestation of your being. You yourself are moving in your actions, like the ocean moving through the waves. So you are not doing something external to you and, therefore, karma cannot bind you. That karma which will not bind you is called karma yoga. When you yourself are the action, how can it bind you? You do not bind your own self. If you have so many confusions in your head—that your action is something outside you, proceeding from you through space and time, in respect of somebody else—then it will react upon you. That is called the nemesis of karma. That is binding karma."

It is very difficult, therefore, to even conceive what real spirituality is. I have only given an idea of it. It is impossible to maintain a consciousness of what spirituality is. Even the idea of it is impossible to entertain in the mind, let alone to practise it. It will not enter the heads of people. But once it becomes a part of our natural way of thinking, we become supermen from that very moment. This is the aim of our life.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIFFICULTY IN FOLLOWING THE SPIRITUAL PATH

It is very important to remember what I told you yesterday because it concerns the basic principles of spiritual life, what we call the theorem of the entire structure of our life's aspirations, from which follow many consequences. These consequences are the activities of life, the hopes of mankind, the troubles of people, and the tensions of every individual. All blessed things follow automatically from the nature of life.

The point I tried to bring out is that all action is a tendency towards the expansion of being. There is no such thing as activity, really speaking; it is only an effort of being to expand itself. So, the false distinction made between being and doing has to be overcome. There is no such thing as a distinction between being and doing. There is no doing; it is only being moving within itself for its own sake, for its own expansion and intensity. Our activities in life are the attempts we make to come in contact with external realities for the purpose of the expansion of our finite being. This is the essence of what I mentioned yesterday.

So far, everything looks fine. It looks philosophical. But there are dangerous aspects of this movement of consciousness in its relationship with other persons and things. Our relationship with people and things outside is like a double-edged sword; it can cut both ways. It is like fire; it can cook our food or burn our house. It is like

water—without which we cannot live, but which can destroy us if we drown in it. So is the relationship with persons and things. It is a wonderful thing to philosophically conceive, but dangerous when it is misconceived and misapplied.

Yesterday I gave you only the philosophical side—the metaphysical, or rather the spiritual aspect of our relationship with persons and things outside. You learned that activities are also relationships, and all relationships are movements of being in its universal expanse for Self-realisation, or realisation of its Self.

Today we may dwell upon the other aspect of this feature of human life called relationship—namely, the erroneous movements of relationship, not merely the grand philosophical aspects of it. When a human relationship becomes philosophical, it becomes karma yoga. When it becomes unphilosophical, it becomes passion, desire, a source of bondage. The same movement—as I mentioned, the same fire, the same water, the same sword, the same knife—can work both ways. When our relationship with things outside is philosophically motivated and intelligently directed with a conscious purpose present in the mind always, never missed at any moment of time, it becomes yoga. All activity is yoga. All relationship is good relationship. Everything is fine and grand and beautiful in this majestic creation of God.

But, in this majestic creation of God also is Satan. There is Mara. This is a peculiar thing that we cannot understand: how error crept into the grand structure of God's creation. What is evil? Though there is ultimately no such thing as

evil, a person caught up in a peculiar movement of consciousness cannot realise that there is an erroneous movement of consciousness. We cannot detect mistakes when we get identified with the mistakes. A judge cannot examine a case if he is himself involved in the case. He must be a witness of the case; only then can he pass the correct judgment. If we ourselves are involved in the mistake, we cannot detect the mistake. We cannot know what mistakes we are committing because we have identified our consciousness with the mistake itself. We have become the embodiment of blunder; we are embodiments of mistake. How can we know that we are committing mistakes? Who is to know this when we ourselves are that?

Therefore, a Guru is necessary. We cannot know our mistakes. When we do a wrong, who will tell us that we are doing a wrong? We cannot know it, because we have identified ourselves with it. Sometimes the Guru's grace, sometimes God's blessings come and enlighten us, illumine us. Our meritorious deeds done in the previous lives come and awaken us. When everything goes wrong, the intellect can detect that something is wrong; but if the intellect itself goes wrong, then who will detect the mistake? That is our pitiable condition. So, again I emphasise the need for a Guru. When we are on the wrong path, who will find out that we are on the wrong path? A Guru is necessary.

When consciousness establishes relationship with other persons and things, which is normally called social relationship, it can go on the right path or it can go on the wrong path. When it goes on the right path, it is called humanitarianism, humanism, charitableness, philanthropy,

karma yoga, and so many beautiful things that everybody holds in high esteem. But when it goes on the wrong path, it is called egoism, passion, anger and greed. Our relationship with other persons and things can be exploited for our individual pleasure, satisfaction, and not necessarily for the good of other people. We can also serve people only for our own satisfaction, though outwardly it may look that we are philanthropic. Even good deeds can be misapplied for bad purposes. The devil can come in the garb of a great saint. All these are not impossible.

The spiritual path is called the razor's edge for this very reason. In the Upanishads, the term *kshurasya dhara*, or the razor's edge, is used, which means two things. The spiritual path is a razor's edge in two ways. It is sharp and cutting—as dangerous as the edge of a razor. If we go a little wrong, it will cut our nose. It is like handling thousands of volts of live wire. If we are working with high-voltage tension wires and are good engineers, we shall be careful; but if we are a little blunderous, we know the consequences. The spiritual path is like a high-voltage wire. It can spotlight our whole life with a blaze of illumination or it can burn us to ashes. It can do both things.

One of the admirers of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa once came to him and said, "You touched Vivekananda; why don't you touch me also? You gave him cosmic consciousness by touch. What mistake have I committed? Why should I not also be touched?" Sri Ramakrishna said nothing. He kept quiet. But this man went on insisting and asking this question again and again: "Why don't you touch me? Why don't you touch me?"

One day Sri Ramakrishna said, "You fellow, you want me to touch you? Come here, I will touch you. You will become ashes just now!"

"Oh no!" he said, and ran away from there. "Don't touch me! Don't touch me! Don't touch me!"

The idea is that there is no use merely being touched by a high-tension wire unless we are good conductors of that force. If we are good conductors, we will pass that force through us. We will receive it properly. Otherwise, it will be like passing thousands of volts through a small filament of an electric bulb that can bear only 220 volts. It will simply fuse in a second and burst. Nothing will be left of it. Our scriptures tell us that nobody should try to practise yoga unless proper preparation has already been made by way of discipline. In the raja yoga of Patanjali, the terms *yama* and *niyama* are used. In Vedantic terminology, *sadhana chatushtaya* and such other terms are used, the details of which are given in yoga texts and philosophical treatises.

When our relationship with things gets twisted, it returns to us like a boomerang instead of expanding itself into universality. This wrong twisting of consciousness, making it turn back upon us, is karma; it is not karma yoga. When it has a tendency to expand into universality, it becomes karma yoga. When it turns back upon us to bind us, it becomes karma, action.

Why should certain relationships turn back upon us, and why should certain others expand into universality? The reason is simple. The motive behind our relationship is the important factor. Why do we have any relationship with people and things? What is the intention behind it? Why do

we speak to people? Why do we want to see anybody? Why do we want to do any work in this world? We should put these questions to ourselves. Let answers come from the deepest conscience of our being. "Why do I do so many things from morning to evening? What is the purpose? Why do I serve people? Why do I talk to people? Why do I do anything at all?" It is difficult to get answers to these questions.

We ourselves will not be able to answer these questions easily, because we may have wrong answers given by a bad friend who is sitting inside. We have a good friend, and also a bad friend. Both are inside us. Sometimes the wrong friend speaks and tells us, "My dear friend, what you are doing is very nice. Go ahead." He wants us to fall into a pit. But at other times the good friend speaks, "No! This is not all right. Your motive is not pure. The intention is not pious, and what you are deeply thinking in your subconscious is different from what appears on your conscious level."

Occasionally, the bad friend catches hold of the throat of the good friend and says, "Keep quiet! Don't speak. When I speak, you don't speak." The good friend says, "All right. Do whatever you like." Then we hear only the voice of the bad friend, and we start shouting the glory of our own individual personality, and start announcing our importance and asserting the rectitude of everything that we do, and find fault with everybody else in the world. "If anything is wrong, it is somebody else's mistake. It is not mine. I have not made any mistake. All mistakes are made by somebody else. That person is wrong. That man is

harassing me. He is selfish, and I am unselfish. I am good, and that person is bad." This is our activity, directed by the advice given by the bad friend. But when the good friend gets the upper hand, he speaks. "No! If there is any mistake, it is your mistake because you have not been able to adjust your mind and consciousness properly with the setup of things."

The setup of things is nothing but a particular stage of the evolution of the world; and we are a part of the world. Therefore, at any given level or stage of evolution, we are obliged to follow the law or rule of that particular stage of evolution. Yesterday, I mentioned this point to someone that when we go to Rome, we should be Romans. It is an old saying, which means to say that we cannot apply the law of one realm to another realm to which we do not really belong and in which we are not placed. When we are in the physical level, the physical laws apply to us. When we are in the social level, the social laws apply to us. When we are in the psychological level, the psychological laws apply to us. When we are in the spiritual level, the spiritual laws apply. But we cannot apply the law of one realm to another realm while we are not placed harmoniously in that realm; otherwise, there will be misplacement of values, and chaos will take place.

In the basic principles of Indian culture especially, this necessity to adjust oneself with a particular level of life is insisted upon. We use the famous complex terms known as dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Material values, economic values, vital values, ethical values and spiritual values are all important. We cannot say, "I am a lover of God and I care a

hoot for this world of matter." Such talk and such feelings are misplaced. There are misplaced religionists and enthusiastic seekers who do not understand themselves properly and say, "I care only for God, and not for man and the world." There are other people who say, "I don't care for God. I care only for man and the world." Both these are on the wrong path because the God that we are seeking is not a God outside the world, and the world which we are seeing and the people in whose midst we are staying are not outside God. Neither are people and the world outside God, nor is God outside people and the world. It is easy to make this simple mistake of bifurcating the visible from the invisible and vice versa.

Desires, passions, anger, greed, etc., are erroneous movements of the mind. The reason behind them is having a misplaced emphasis on certain aspects of life, while ignoring other aspects that are equally important. We do not know where we stand. We have a wrong assessment of our own knowledge, power, capacity, etc.

If, in a war, the general of the army has no proper understanding of the power of his own men and no comparative knowledge of the power of his enemy, there is a great doubt whether he will win victory in the war. It is no use simply going ahead into the battlefield thinking, "I shall win victory in the war." Merely because we are rushing into the battlefield, it does not mean that we will win victory. We must take into consideration many aspects of the battle into which we are entering: firstly, our own powers, our own associates, our equipment, etc., and the corresponding powers of the opposite side. We are facing the whole world

in our spiritual attempts. Whose power is greater, the world's power or our power? If we have even the slightest feeling that the world is more powerful than us, and we cannot face it, then our duty would be to rise to the level of the world and then face it, rather than to go headlong and then get defeated by the world.

Many seekers of Truth fail. All *sadhakas* are basically good, but they are not always very wise. A good person need not be a wise person, and may make mistakes in spite of his goodness. Though the intention is pious and the heart is good and pure, the intelligence is lacking, and so he receives a kick from the world. The result is a frustration of feeling, a reversion to the original mode of living, a sense of hopelessness of all pursuits, and coming to a conclusion that perhaps nothing is worthwhile and no good is going to come out from this attempt. There is nothing wrong with the attempt, but we have wrongly manifested that attempt. *Viveka*, or understanding, is supposed to be the first prerequisite of spiritual pursuits.

Again I come to the point of a Guru. Who can have understanding in this world? Who can have such wisdom? We are all muddle-headed people, confused and confounded. We get irritated, upset, and are disturbed by sights, sounds and events taking place around us. If something happens in a distant country, we can be disturbed here though we are not concerned with it, because of a peculiar psychological feeling that arises in us—again, by misplaced values. Understanding of a pure nature, with all the pros and cons duly considered, and the consequences also duly weighed, is very essential: "If I do

this thing or take this particular step, what will be the consequence?"

There are some people who think, "I will go to the forest and meditate from tomorrow onwards. I don't want to see anybody's face. I will search for God in the jungle." Very good idea! Nobody can say it is wrong. But what are the consequences? If tomorrow we go and sit in the jungle, will God come tomorrow? Will God come immediately? Well, God may come or God may not come. If He comes, it will be for a reason; and if He does not come, it will also be for a reason. That reason should be clear before us.

Whole-hearted devotion to God is unthinkable. Nobody's heart can be wholly turned to God, though we may sometimes think that it is so. Again we are making the mistake of not taking into consideration our subconscious mind. Consciously, we may be thinking of God wholly, perhaps. Just now, who is thinking of anything but God? But yet, it is not true that our entire personality is steeped in God even now, notwithstanding the fact that we are hearing about God and thinking about Him consciously, because our personality is not merely the conscious level. Psychologists tell us that our conscious personality is the smallest part of our personality. The larger parts are buried deep. So, unless and until the larger part, the subconscious or unconscious, is brought to the conscious level and made a part of our conscious activity, it cannot be said that our whole personality is involved in any activity. None of our activities are connected with the whole of our being. Always only a partial aspect of our being works in any one of our activities. The whole of us never goes into action. Very

rarely do we act wholly. But unless the whole thing comes out, the Whole Thing will not come to us. God is the Whole, and we are asking for the Whole, and so the whole of us must go there. It is the whole asking for the Whole, and not only a fragment of our being.

When we mistake a fragment for the whole, passions arise in our minds. In the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says that the lowest kind of knowledge is that which regards a finite as the Infinite; it mistakes one thing for everything. That is called attachment. When we think that one thing is everything, it is called attachment; when that is intensified it becomes passion, when obstructed it becomes anger, and when defeated it becomes frustration. All things follow from this basic mistake of regarding one thing as everything.

For a miser, money is everything. But money is only one thing. Then how does he regard one thing as everything? Very strange! Fame or power is also one thing, but there are people who regard it as everything. That is a mistake. There are many other objects in the world which can attract our attention wholly, as if they are all things, but they are not all things. So *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*—intense desire or passion, anger, greed, etc.—follow from the basic mistake of regarding one thing as everything. This is mentioned precisely in a very short form in the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Sri Krishna says that this is the grossest, lowest and worst form of knowledge where one regards one thing as everything and clings to it. This is called attachment.

A higher form of knowledge is where we do not regard one thing as everything, but we regard other things as equally important as this thing; and one thing is also related to every other thing. Everything is equally good. One thing is connected with other things. We become a more expanded social personality.

But the highest kind of knowledge is that which does not even relate one thing with another thing, but regards existence as an Indivisible Being. Here, there is no question of relating one thing with another thing because such things do not exist.

Thus, the lowest knowledge is finitude of consciousness, clinging to only one thing as if it is all things. The higher knowledge is a relativity of things, where we bring all things into consideration in our thoughts, actions and feelings, but yet multiplicity consciousness persists; we regard one thing as different from another thing. The highest knowledge is the indivisibility of consciousness, where it has no need to move at all for any purpose; everything that it needs is here and now.

Thus, what I told you today is a sort of commentary on what I said yesterday, which again would emphasise the difficulty in following the spiritual path. Rare indeed is the person who can contain this idea in the mind, maintain it for a long time, make it a part of his or her personality, and live according to this idea. Very difficult! That person is a wonder indeed!

The Upanishads as well as the Bhagavadgita tell us that all this is a miracle. That we can hear such things is a miracle; that we can appreciate such things is a miracle; that

we will be able to stick to this principle is a miracle; that we will be able to practise it is a greater miracle: *āścaryavat paśyati kaścid enam āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ, āścaryavac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti śrutvāpyenaṁ veda na caiva kaścit* (Gita 2.29). But Bhagavan Sri Krishna has given a last warning. With all this hearing, finally, we will find it is difficult—very, very difficult. It will not enter the head: "I understood, but it is not going deep."

Why is it not going deep? It is because proper effort is not made. We have to brood upon it every day. Our understanding has to sink into feeling. Our difficulty is that feelings are going one way, and our understanding is going another way. We understand everything, but we cannot feel it. Our feelings are moving in another direction altogether. Meditation is the act of fusing the understanding with feeling, of getting the understanding absorbed into the feeling. The union of the understanding with feeling is called intuition.

Chapter 3

BEING UTTERLY SPIRITUAL IN OUR ASPIRATIONS

A little that is done correctly is far better than much that is done incorrectly. We are often used to thinking in terms of magnitude—of quantity, rather than quality—even in our spiritual practice. We are satisfied with feeling: "I am doing *japa* for three hours every day." We are concerned only with the three hours, and not with the quality of the *japa*. If we say, "I have been living in seclusion for fifteen years," we are thinking more of the fifteen years than of what we have been doing during those fifteen years. "The whole world knows me as an important yogi." It is a great satisfaction, no doubt. But this is not a spiritual feeling because spirituality is a state of quality, not quantity.

But we live in a world of quantity. Whatever we see in this world is a quantity before us. Our body itself is a quantity, our personality is a quantity, society is a quantity, money is a quantity, and self-respect in regard to this body and personality is a quantity. We do not know what quality is. The quality of spiritual practice enhances and increases in intensity as we gradually free ourselves from the entanglements of consciousness.

Yesterday we were considering the two aspects of a tension that we may be having in our subconscious personalities: the relationship that we have with the external world, and the feelings that we have in our own inner being. Truly speaking, we neither have a clear idea

about our relationship with people and things outside, nor do we have any clear idea about the reason why certain feelings arise in our own minds. Everything seems to happen beyond our control. Nothing is in our control—not even our own minds, thoughts and feelings.

To be generous towards other people, to be charitable, is a virtue; and to have a desire and passion within is not a virtue. This is what we have been told since our birth. But why is it a virtue to be kind to people, to be charitable, to be philanthropic, and to be considerate? Why is it an evil to have desires and passion inside? We cling to these notions as a dogma mostly, as a hereditary wealth that we have garnered and kept safe to be worshipped for all time, without being clear in our own minds. We live in a world of tradition, routine, and hearsay. Sometimes this tradition goes so deep into our personal life that it becomes a kind of logic by itself, and the logic is so strong that it will not bear criticism of any kind or modification of any sort.

We are pulled from two directions—the world of human society and the world of nature from outside—and the urges from within us which sometimes look all right and sometimes do not look all right. This is called tension. The laws of human society are often not in consonance with the desires of the human being. Now, who is right: our desires or the laws of society? If our desires are wrong and the laws of society are right, as reasonable persons we must be able to calm down our desires—unless, of course, we are totally unreasonable persons. But if we think that society is wrong and we are right, then there should be a justification for this feeling of ours.

But we cannot justify either the laws of the human world outside or our feelings within. Sometimes we hang on that side, and at other times we hang on this side. We are always in a condition of dubious ambivalence, and most of our time is spent in clearing doubts rather than doing something positive. Sometimes a large part of our life is spent in clearing misconceptions and prejudiced feelings, doubts and difficulties, problems and tensions, etc. It is something like spending all our time in dusting the room, sweeping it, painting it; but when are we going to live in it? All our time has been spent only in building, cleaning, painting; now we have got a few years more left, and those years are not enough for us to enjoy the consequences of all our work.

Many of us are self-made spiritual seekers. Self-made Gurus are also there, and this is one of the drawbacks from the point of view of an honest spiritual effort. The great spiritual tradition of the ancient masters cannot be simply brushed aside as meaningless. In India we have a great system, called the *gurukula vasa* system, where students lived for several years with a Guru under his personal guidance. That system is held in esteem even now, though it is not working as it was in earlier days.

Spiritual problems are not like the problems of the world. They are very unique in their nature. They are wound up with our very existence and, therefore, they are very serious matters. The problems of the world are not so much wound up with ourselves. They are extraneous to us and, therefore, we can to some extent obviate these external difficulties in life. We have financial difficulties, legal

problems, social tensions, troubles from enemies, and so on. But these are minor matters compared to spiritual problems, because spiritual problems are the stresses felt in one's own consciousness. As I mentioned yesterday, the problems of consciousness cannot be solved, because the one who is to solve the problems is himself involved in the problems.

There is a story in the Mahabharata. Indra, the king of the gods, attacked Vritra, the chief of the demons. This demon was very strong. He could assume any shape, any form, and enter into any realm of existence. When Indra hurled his fatal weapon against this demon Vritra, he entered the earth and was invisible. Then Indra hurled the weapon inside the earth, so that the earth itself would break, and with that the demon would also go. But then the demon entered the higher realm, the principle of water, which is subtler than the earth. The weapon of Indra entered even the water principle. Then the demon entered the fire principle. There also the weapon pursued him. Then he entered the air principle, and the weapon of Indra pursued him there. Then Vritra entered the ether principle, and there also the weapon would not leave him. Wherever he went in all the elemental realms, this weapon pursued him. Where was the place for the demon to stay? He was caught from all sides, so what did the demon do? He entered the mind of Indra. How can we hurl a weapon against our own mind? When Vritra entered the mind of Indra, Indra got confused, confounded, and lost consciousness. He was not at all aware as to what to do.

This is what has happened to us. Vritra has entered our minds. The spiritual seeker is Indra, and he is hurling his weapon of austerity, sadhana, *tapasya*, *japa*, meditation, etc., against the devil of the forces which are contrary to spiritual realisation. But these forces are Vritra himself, and as our personality is wound up with the vast physical nature, the forces of nature can take refuge in our own intellect and mind. When Indra's mind was confused, what was his fate? Nobody could rescue him. He could not think; the mind stopped thinking. The matter was over.

Then his Guru came to his help. Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods, understood what had happened to the king of the gods: "Oh! He is in a great predicament. He is lying unconscious, as it were, possessed by the evil force." Brihaspati chanted the Rathantara Saman mantra from the Veda, which lit up the mind of Indra like a brilliant sun and drove out the evil force. Indra regained consciousness and said, "Oh! I have been possessed by the very enemy whom I was attacking with my weapon." Self-consciousness came to Indra by the power of the mantra chanted by the Guru, Brihaspati.

Then what was to be done? This weapon could not be used against the evil force in that condition. Because the force had entered the subjective personality of Indra, objective weapons would not work here. When objective instruments cannot work, what other instruments can we use? All instruments are objective. There is no such thing as a subjective instrument because when it becomes subjective, it ceases to be an instrument.

This is the difficulty of the practice of yoga. We can do *japa*, we can go to temples, we can go to Rameswaram, we can take a bath in the ocean. These are all objective instruments that we are using to drive the devil out. But what instrument will we use when he has sat in our own mind? This is the crucial point in the practice of yoga. That is the occasion when the grace of God has to work, the Guru's power has to work, and the force of the good deeds that we did in our previous lives has to work.

A time comes in the life of a spiritual aspirant when everything becomes hopelessly difficult. If yoga practice had been so simple and easy, by this time, after so many millions of years of God's creation of this world, the majority of people would have attained God, and there would be nobody in this world. It is such a difficult thing, almost impossible, that towards the end of the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna in his Visvarupa says, "Nothing on earth can enable you to see Me in this form. Not even if you stand on your head for your whole life can you see Me like this." *Na vedayajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ, evaṁrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke draṣṭuṁ tvadanyena kurupravīra* (Gita 11.48): "Not all the charities that you do, not all the good deeds that you perform, not all the austerities, not all the studies, not anything that you are in a position to do can enable you to see Me in this form."

The point is that since God, the Absolute, is a universal subject, objective instruments cannot be applied in realising that Reality, though objective instruments can be used as a preparatory means, as an accessory, as a contributory factor. We can use the religious symbols and practices such

as ritual, pilgrimage, study of scripture, personal austerity, chanting of the divine name, and so on, for cleansing the personality and preparing ourselves for the reception of the divine grace, but the last stroke that we have to deal is the most difficult performance on our part. It is what is called 'putting on the switch'. That is the most difficult thing, and there it is that we come a cropper because it is something like climbing on our own shoulders. We cannot climb on our own shoulders, but that is the feat that we have to perform towards the end of the practice of yoga.

Gaudapada, a great master, says this yoga is called *asparsa* yoga: the yoga of non-contact. We do not come in contact with anything. Yoga is generally defined as contact with Reality, coming in union with something, and so on. But this master says it is not a union with something. It is not a contact of something with something else because there are no two things, so what will come in union with what, or with what will we come in contact?

These are all tentatively applicable and meaningful definitions, but ultimately they are to be transcended. When we enter the borderland of the universal, the question of contact ceases. And one day or the other we have to come to this borderland—if not today, then tomorrow. At that time, we will have no help from anybody. Not the whole world can help us, and even the aid of an external Guru becomes inadequate at that point. But before reaching that stage, we have to prepare ourselves properly so that we may not have a setback. It is said by John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* that even at the entrance to heaven there may be a small passage leading to

hell. We are just at the portals of heaven, but there is a pit into which we can fall, and we can go to hell from there itself. The boat may sink even if it is just near the other bank of the river. We have crossed the major part of the river, but just when we are about to touch the other shore, we will be inside the water. This is possible. Similarly, great masters and yogis can also sink unless proper precaution is taken.

The precaution needed is that we have to be utterly spiritual in our aspirations. We should not be partially spiritual. We should not have a half-hearted devotion to God. But it is impossible to have a whole-hearted devotion to God as long as man is man. We have our own weaknesses and prejudices, as I mentioned yesterday. We cannot help thinking in terms of other people, other things, the world, and values, etc. They are part of our own blood, veins and bones. How can we get out of these prejudices? Even the best philosophical mind cannot escape this difficulty of having to assert the personality one day or the other, and reaping the consequences thereof.

To continue the trend of the ideas I placed before you yesterday, we have a dual pull by which we have been caught, and we are always placed in the midst of a tension. We are between the horns of a dilemma. On the one side, there is the pull of social values, social etiquette, social ethics and social laws; without relating ourselves with these, life itself would become impossible in our physical personalities. On the other side, there is the pull of our desires and passions which we have repressed with great force. Unless a reconciliation is brought about by us, with

effort, between these two forces, we would not be in a healthy state of mind. Before we sit for meditation, we have to be mentally healthy because even if we are consciously meditating in the meditation hall, we may not be meditating subconsciously.

The elephant takes a nice bath in the Ganga, and then it throws mud on its body. This is called an elephant's bath: take a nice bath, and afterwards throw mud on one's body. So after all our conscious meditations, the subconscious impulses will throw dust and mud on us. We will be highly distressed in spite of all our conscious meditations because the subconscious impulses have not been brought out. The secret desires are still lying like coiled-up snakes, ready to hiss and bite.

We look all right to ourselves, and also look all right in the eyes of people, on account of an adjustment that we are shrewdly making on both sides, according to the need of the circumstances. We know from which side the pressure is more. When we take a bath in the ocean and the waves are dashing on us, we sink down into the waves. Similarly, we try to sink down into the pressure and allow the pressure to pass over our heads, and then come up to the surface once again to do whatever we have been doing earlier. Sometimes the pressure from our desires is very intense, and sometimes the pressure from the outside world and society is intense; and merely because we are making an adjustment by dexterously turning ourselves either side, it does not mean that we have conquered these impulses. A shrewd adjustment does not mean sublimation. It is not mastery over these impulses.

We should not be slaves of either a social pressure from outside or an urge of passion from within. These two forces coming from outside as well as from within are one single force, as I tried to say yesterday. They are not two different things. Because the universe is inside us as well as outside us, the macrocosm and the microcosm both meet in our personalities; and if yoga is the practice of balance, equanimity, it follows that the striking of a balance between the outer needs and the inner pressures also is called for.

We go into our rooms or hide ourselves in caves due to fear from society. Why do we fear society so much? Sometimes when the inner forces, urges, passions, desires, are very violent—when they become uncontrollable—we may plunge into the midst of society, not with an intention of conquering these urges, but to forget them. There are people who, when they get very angry, go for a long walk. Well, it is one of the ways of forgetting the trouble that is in our head. But that is not a solution, because we have not found out why we have got angry. Or somebody has insulted us in public, and we cannot bear it. We get fed up, take a ticket to Haridwar and say, "I'll come after three days." What is the use? The anger is boiling from inside. We have only forgotten the devil that is before us, the tiger that is yawning to eat us up.

We cannot face the questions and problems of life reasonably and adequately. This is a truth that we have to accept. It is partly because we have not sufficient understanding in our own selves, maybe due to the egoism of our personalities, the *rajasic* and *tamasic prarabdha*

karmas that are obstructing us; and we are not humble enough to sit before a Guru. Who is our Guru? Nobody.

If you have no Guru, at least have some friends of an equal character. It does not mean that one is the Guru of the other; they are friends who have an equal aspiration, and they can discuss matters between themselves and be of mutual help in their spiritual practices, as students do in schools and colleges. They do not always go to the professor or teacher. They sit together and converse, discuss, and solve problems. One may be able to help the other. When you cannot find a single Guru or a master who can guide you, you have such collaboration of forces among yourselves as brother seekers with a common aspiration.

Beware of your own self more than of anybody else. If you have any enemy in this world, it is your own self. You can be misled by your own self. *Ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.5), says the Bhagavadgita: Your own self is your friend, and your own self is also your enemy. I will let you know what that 'self' is another time: how you can be your own friend, and also how you can be your own enemy. Be humble and simple, and receptive to the teaching. Do not be under the impression that you know everything. You may learn a little truth from even a small child. The babbling of a child may contain an element of truth, and the declaration or proclamation of a genius may contain an element of error. Both things are possible.

So to conclude today, let us try not to have a double personality in ourselves—opposing the external world of human society on one side, and confronting the inner

passion from the other side. Let us have a single personality, an open personality, which is a friend of both sides and not something caught up between the two forces, in such a way that we may be the meeting point of these two forces in a friendly manner. We are the friends of the world and of human society outside, and also friends of the aspirations from within. This is a point which leads us into the major question of the relationship between spiritual life and earthly life—a very difficult question, the one question of all religions and all mystical approaches, on which we have to bestow a little thought later on.

Chapter 4

WITHDRAWING FROM OBJECTS OF SENSE

Spiritual life is the intensive and systematic disentanglement of oneself from the clutches of unspiritual forces, all which arise from what we call the consciousness of externality. This is what is called Vritra, to whom I made reference yesterday from the Mahabharata. The consciousness of externality is the consciousness of space, time and objectivity. It is this that is harassing us every day—night and day, from birth to death. This is also called the trouble arising from sense perception, due to which we say the senses have to be controlled, and so on. The senses, their activity, the outward projection of the mind, the consciousness of space, time and objects—all these ultimately mean one and the same thing; and yoga, spiritual life, is only a consistent effort that we put forth to gain independence—freedom from these tangles in which we are caught.

We are caught not only in one way, but in every way—not from one side, but from all sides. We are in the midst of a very powerful net that has been spread before us: above us, below us, to the right and to the left, to the front and to the rear, and all around. Like a small fly that is caught in the spider's web unable to free itself, similarly we are caught up in the network of external relations, which also include the relation with this body, because this body is also an external object. Externality does not mean 'outside this body', as we are likely to take it to mean. The body is not so important a

substance or a centre as we imagine it to be. It is as important as anything else in this world, but to give it an exclusive importance, to regard this body as of primary importance, greater importance than we attach to other bodies, is called selfishness. That is worse than being caught up in the network of externality. We have gone deep, deeper and deepest—far below a possibility of easy extrication. We have sunk ourselves into the heart of matter and become one with it.

Something worse than that has also happened. We have not merely got ourselves absorbed in matter and become the body, due to which we call 'I' this body; but we have done something more serious than this. Serious it is, no doubt, to get identified with this body; a great blunder it is to imagine ourselves to be this body, but we have committed an even greater blunder. What is it? We have come out of this body in an artificial manner, not in a natural way. This coming out of our consciousness from this body in an unnatural way is called sense perception.

Sense perception is not natural knowledge. It is unnatural, distorted, erroneous, binding, misleading; that is called *samsara*. Like a light ray passing through a prism and getting split up into different aspects of its constituents, consciousness appears to have passed through the prism of this bodily individuality and got spilt up into the rays of sensory activity. The indivisibility of consciousness has been split up into the divisibility of sensory activity and perception.

The great scriptures tell us that there has been a gradual descent of the supreme state of consciousness. Speaking the

language of Indian Vedanta, there has been a concretisation of the Absolute into the will of Ishvara, then to Hiranyagarbha and to Virat, the cosmic animating consciousness of the physical universe. But up to this level, it is only a metaphysical descent. We may even call it a spiritual descent—a drama of the Absolute, a free play of consciousness with full consciousness of its independence and freedom. It is a joy up to this level.

But there has been a further descent into bondage. The great drama of the Virat in this form of the vast multiplicity of creation, which it is playing in its own self-immanence and transcendence, in its own majesty and glory and beauty and grandeur—this wonderful drama has become a pitiable plight by a peculiar feature that crept into the consciousness. This is a mystery for all, and perhaps it will remain a mystery forever.

The split-up rays of the universal Virat Consciousness asserted themselves as individuals, isolated from other individuals. It is like a ray of the sun isolating itself from other rays of the sun, each ray asserting itself independently, with apparently no connection with the other rays. This is the beginning of what we call earthly bondage, *samsara*, the fall of Satan from the Garden of Eden into the hell of torture. This is the symbol of all religions representing the fall of man from the angelic condition of his proximity to God.

There has been a descent into the individual consciousness of this personality. Individuality does not mean merely the individuality of consciousness. Consciousness, which was originally universal, became split

up. We may think that even a split-up part of it should be consciousness only, because even a spark of fire is fire. Well, it is naturally so. It had to be like that. But, a peculiar state of affairs compelled consciousness to imagine itself to be matter. It has never become matter, because one thing cannot become another thing. 'A' is 'A'. 'A' cannot become 'B'. But the intensified affirmation of consciousness as an isolated individual brought about the effect in the form of what we call the body—a concretisation of consciousness.

This is very unnatural, untrue to the right state of affairs. There was a struggle of consciousness to regain its lost independence. When something toxic or foreign enters the body, there is a war of the entire body to throw that matter out of the system. There is a struggle of every cell of the body to throw out that toxic matter. If a little particle of sand enters the eye, the entire eyeball starts struggling to throw it out by exuding liquid, etc.

The lost independence of consciousness cannot always be in that condition. In the Aitareya Upanishad, we have a description of this fall in cryptic language. Symbolically, the Upanishad tells us that the soul began to cry. It did not cry with a mouth. There was no mouth. It was only an agony that it felt: "Oh! What has happened!" The isolation of the part from the whole is the greatest agony conceivable. It is like death; it is veritable death, and death caught hold of consciousness. That is the beginning of mortality, and that is the beginning of hunger and thirst, and the writhing of oneself in a sorrow indescribable in any language. All this description is symbolic, very difficult to explain. The effect

cannot explain the cause, and we are trying to understand the nature of the cause from where we have fallen.

We can only say, in the language of the Upanishads, that this fall ended in a sort of makeshift between the condition into which the consciousness fell and the longing which it cherished in its own self. It is like the League of Nations. Internally we are at war with one another, but we sit at a single table and talk on world peace. The League of Nations failed. It never worked well, and it does not exist any more.

Likewise, consciousness had no other alternative than to reconcile itself with the fall, at the same time not forgetting that it is impossible for it to continue in that fallen condition. We are in a prison, and we cannot escape from it, but yet we cannot be happy in the prison. So the necessity to be inside the prison and the need to get out of the prison is a conflict in the mind. The prisoner is never happy inside; on one side he is compelled to be there, and on the other side he wants to get out. What a pity!

Consciousness asserted itself as this concretised individuality, and started making good use of the situation, making the best out of what had happened. "It is better to rule in hell than serve in heaven," is a saying from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The devil speaks: "What to do? I cannot do anything else. It is okay; I will rule in hell rather than serve in heaven." So we are trying to rule in hell, rather than serve in heaven. That is what we are doing. There has been a reconciliation with the fall: "All right. I have fallen, and I shall be happy in the fall itself."

But, no. How long can we be happy in this untrue state of affairs? How long can we find happiness in crying and weeping and sobbing and beating our breast? Even beating one's breast is a source of joy—otherwise, why do we beat our breast? Even striking our head on the ground in grief is a state of joy. But how long can we hit our head like that? There must be an end for it.

Now, we have tried to make the best of the situation: "I shall be happy in hell itself, because I cannot get out of it." What is hell? The entry of consciousness into this body is the fall. But how can we be happy? Happiness—even a jot, even a modicum of happiness—cannot be had unless the universal is reflected, even in a very, very distorted manner. Even the least form of joy that we have in this world is a consequence of a reflection of the universal in that particular condition, though in a very muddled and distorted manner.

So, what does the individual do now, in this state of fall? "I shall create an artificial universality in order that I may get happiness, though it is artificial." All our happiness in this world is artificial, not true. Therefore, even when we are happy, we are subtly sorrowing. We are smiling outside and grieving inside; this is our life. When I can laugh outside, I can also weep inside. This is man, this is woman, this is everybody. We are all laughing outside and weeping inside—everyone, without exception. But even when we weep inside, we want to laugh outside because mere weeping is not possible. It is very difficult to get on with mere weeping. So let there be a little laughing—outside, at least. This is our life in this world.

How can we laugh when we are actually weeping? We create this laughing by projecting ourselves sensorily into a condition of counterfeit universality, which is called love of objects and attachment to things. When we are attached to a particular object, we are a little happy. Otherwise, why do we get attached? Why do we love an object, unless it brings us joy? But how does it bring us joy? Why is it that love for an object brings us joy? Do you know the reason?

It is because we have artificially expanded our individuality into a little touch of universality. When we exceed the bodily limitation, even by an inch, we are touching the border of the universal. The universal is very large; we have not gone so far, but at least we have gone one millimetre outside the body. We have exceeded the limitation of our body by loving something outside the body; and that little gaze of the universal, a little peep of it, a little touch, a little hint, the slightest indication that we are prepared to go out of our body and exceed the limitation of our body, even if it be by love of something which is there outside—that gives us joy. That is why love of objects gives us happiness. Why does it give us happiness? Because of an apparent reflection of the universal. "Why is it called 'the universal'?" you may ask me. "How is it the universal?"

I have already given the definition of the universal. The universal does not necessarily mean the Supreme or the Absolute Universal. Even a tendency towards it can be regarded as a universal, just as a student studying in the third standard is called a student undergoing education, and an Oxford post-graduate is also undergoing education. Whatever be the class in which we are reading, we are

regarded as undergoing education. Likewise, we are moving towards the universal even if we have taken only half a step, or even less than that. Badrinath is 160 miles from here, but even if we take one step in that direction, it is a movement towards Badrinath. Badrinath is so far, but we have taken a step towards it. We have moved only two inches, but yet we are happy. "I am moving towards Badrinath. That is my destination." Likewise, the consciousness feels joy. "I am moving towards the universal, though I have clung only to one object which I regard as dear and near and lovable."

Now, while there is some meaning in this, there is also an absurdity in it. Because of the meaning in it, we are happy; because of the absurdity in it, we are bound by it. What is the meaning behind it which gives us the joy? The meaning is the movement of consciousness towards the universal, because it is the indication that consciousness is exceeding the limitation of the body. Therefore, we are happy. But what is the absurdity in it? What is wrong about it? We are not really moving towards the universal.

What is the difference between plus one and minus one? Both are one. Plus ten and minus ten—are they identical? Both are ten. I have plus one hundred rupees, or minus one hundred rupees; are both identical? Can we say both are equal, on a par, because both include the word 'hundred'? The minus hundred is far away from plus hundred; we know it very well.

Likewise, this universality that we are trying to achieve by contact with objects is a movement in the minus direction, not in the plus direction. Therefore, we are entirely wrong, and we are going to be caught and punished

for it one day or the other. The minus looks like a plus merely because the word 'hundred' is mentioned. When I say 'minus one hundred', at least I utter the word 'hundred'. But we forget that there is a 'minus' also with it. Hundred—wonderful! But it is *minus,* do not forget!

Likewise, this universality that we wrongly try to achieve by sensory contact with objects is a blunder—and a very terrible blunder. But the soul has no other alternative: "I have fallen. Let me be happy. I will rule in hell. Here I am, ruling in hell." We are happy somehow or the other, and this is the happiness that we have. This is the mistake that consciousness has made—a blunder worse than entering into the body—by moving out of the body into the objects of sense, establishing relationships with things, and complicating these relationships by scientific logic which is created by the senses themselves for their own satisfaction. Even the devil has a logic of its own.

Yoga is the process of awakening consciousness to its true aim, true purpose, and so this sort of universality will not do. This sort of happiness is no happiness. This so-called satisfaction, so-called freedom, this apparent independence that we seem to have in this world is no independence, no joy, no freedom, nothing! It is a terrible deception. Yoga is the very, very difficult art of bringing the consciousness back from this meandering through the objects of sense, bringing it back to the body once again—from where it has gone out through space and time into the objects.

Even if it is brought back to the body, it is not a complete achievement, because that is also a fall. Though

we have not gained health, at least we are free from disease for the time being. The temperature has come to normal; it is not 105. It is coming to 98.4, but yet we are in bed. We cannot get up, we cannot go out. We are not healthy, not normal really, though clinically it appears that we are normal because the temperature has come to 98.4. This is what we are trying to do by abstraction of the senses from objects by the practice of *yama* and *niyama,* as the great sage Patanjali says. By the practice of *yama* especially, we bring the temperature to normal, 98.4; otherwise, it is 105. It is terrible! Now we have a 105 temperature—we are in fever, completely out of order—because we are thinking everything 'outside'. All that we think is external. So we are in a state of fever, completely gone out of gear.

The practice of the *yamas* and *niyamas* brings the mind back to the source from where it has gone out, and after it is brought back to the source of individuality, the system of yoga tells us it has to be roused up to its original condition by *asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana,* etc. So while *yama* and *niyama* are the processes by which we withdraw our externalised movements into the source from where these movements started, by the other practices of *asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana,* etc., we rise up—vertically, as it were—to the Absolute, gradually. It is a very difficult process of yoga: from the bodily encasement, we rise up stage by stage. In the system of Patanjali, especially, all these stages are very beautifully described.

Even when we come to the state of perfect concentration of mind on the ideal of the universal which is

to be attained, from where we have fallen, the attainment is not complete. Patanjali tells us that even after the *dhyana* state is attained, there are various stages—*savitarka, nirvitarka, savichara, nirvichara, sananda, sasmita,* and so on. Even in samadhi there are so many stages. All this is terrifying even to hear.

Thus, the system of yoga is a wonderful art of regaining spiritual health, returning to our Supreme Father, from where we have fallen by a mistake. We abstract ourselves from the externalised consciousness of space, time and objects and our attachment to objects, and come back to our own source, entering into the consciousness of the Virat. Then what will happen to us? God only knows; we need not bother about it. Such is the Great Whole before us. This is the destination of the journey of the soul on earth.

Chapter 5

FREEING OURSELVES FROM ENTANGLEMENTS

When we are walking in a thick jungle, it is possible that our clothes may get caught in a thorny bush, and many thorns may be pulling us from different directions. What do we do then? We stop and very slowly try to remove the thorns, one by one. We do not pull our clothes by force, lest they should tear. Perhaps we will remove the smaller thorns first because their prick is milder; and we will try to remove the bigger thorns that have gone deep later on, gradually, stage by stage. This is exactly what to do in the practice of yoga.

Our entanglements are manifold. Our consciousness that has lodged itself in this body is entangled in many types of relationship—some mild, some intense, some proximate, some remote, some visible, some invisible, and so on. The entanglements are umpteen, inconceivable to the ordinary mind of the human being. The disentanglement of personal consciousness from its involvements and multifarious connections with the external atmosphere is done with great caution, not in a hurry. Every step that we take in yoga is a very cautious step, and the step should be taken in such a way that it need not be retraced.

In the practice of yoga, there is no point in being in a hurry. God is not going to run away. He is always there, though we may see Him tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, and not necessarily just now. Also, we will not

be successful if we are in a great hurry, because hurry is caused by a lack of proper understanding of the prevailing conditions.

I mentioned sometime earlier that correct understanding is the initial prerequisite of the practice of yoga. *Viveka* is proper knowledge of the entire conditions and circumstances of the case. Just as in a medical examination or a legal procedure all the circumstances have to be known thoroughly before any step is taken in rectifying the issue, so is the case with yoga. Perhaps the rule applies more to yoga than to any other issue.

The entanglements of consciousness are such that they cannot easily be made objects of investigation because, as I pointed out a number of times, the involvement is not an object of consciousness; it is a part of consciousness itself. The involvement becomes a part of us. We are ourselves an embodiment of the involvements and, therefore, we cannot investigate into the nature of these involvements. When a person is angry, he becomes an embodiment of anger. Therefore, there is no question of investigating into the causes of anger when we are already in a fit of rage. We do not examine the conditions of anger, and then get angry. We are already possessed by a devil, and when we are possessed by such a state, our whole personality is lodged, sunk in that condition, and there is nobody to find out the causes thereof. Whatever be the condition we are in, that becomes a part of our nature. Therefore, disentanglement of ourselves from that condition becomes a practical impossibility. That is why the practice of yoga is so difficult.

Whether it is an intense passion or desire, an ambition, or anger—any sort of intense form of relationship, whatever be its character—it becomes a difficult problem. Everything is a difficult problem for us when it becomes deep, intense and very involved; and all the questions of life, when they are pushed to their logical limits, become unanswerable. Such is the hardship in the practice of yoga that in ancient times students, disciples, seekers, had to undergo a very severe process of discipline under a master.

Such severity is associated with the discipline that most people would be regarded as unfit for the practice of yoga. The severity is intolerable. It comes as a great pain in the beginning, though its result later on is a great joy. We have only to read the lives of great saints and seekers of the past, whether of the East or the West, to know the difficulties involved in spiritual practice. It is like peeling our own skin, as I mentioned. It is like removing our own flesh, as it were, or breaking our bones. Who would be prepared to do that?

It is not a diversion or a hobby that we are embarking upon when we take to the life spiritual or the practice of yoga. We cannot expect pleasure, satisfaction, joy or delight at the very outset. What we get in the beginning is a poisonous reaction, a painful repercussion, something very difficult to understand—something that will give us a kick, throw us out and tell us, "Don't come near me again!" This is yoga.

But our modern disciples are made of a peculiar texture. They are accustomed to a push-button life. Everything has to happen immediately, instantaneously, now or never. "God must be seen just now, or I don't want Him."

Everything has to be subjected to scientific observation, logical deduction and scrutiny in the empirical sense of the term. This is a tremendous prejudice into which we are born, which we are unable to get rid of.

All our learning, all our prejudice, may have to be cast out to the winds when we become students of true spiritual life. All our qualifications become dust or dirt, a meaningless accretion grown on our personality, because our learning becomes a part of our pride, a part of our egoism which has given us social status, which itself is an unwanted growth like a mushroom on our personality. That which has given us status in social life is anti-spiritual because if it has come from our external relationship with human society, it cannot be regarded as important. And if our education has a value only in human society, and if it is useless when we are absolutely alone, it cannot be regarded as learning, knowledge, or as important.

When we are faced by a ferocious tiger in a jungle, how is our learning going to help us? We may have an Oxford Ph.D, but what is the use when a lion is standing before us with a yawning mouth? We cannot tell the lion, "I have a Ph.D, sir. Don't come near me!" He will care a hoot for our Ph.D; he will swallow us immediately. In any catastrophic condition, our learning will not help us. The wrath of nature cares not for our education. Even social anger, which sometimes comes to the surface, does not care for our education. Hunger and thirst, sleep, passion and anger—all these care not for our education, whatever be our learning.

We have got small weaknesses which loom large in our life, and which control the entire activity of our social existence. Here we will find that whatever we have learnt is meaningless. What have we learnt? We have learnt nothing. We have only counted the items of the different material presentations in our physical life. We have only acquainted ourselves with the outer connections and relationship of things, which we call scientific knowledge; but that is not the wisdom of life.

That which can help us when we are absolutely alone and when we are in utter danger is real learning. We are in utter danger, perhaps our life itself is in danger, and we are absolutely alone. There is nobody around us; at that time, what will help us? That is our knowledge and our learning, and nothing else can be regarded as learning. In the practice of yoga, the usual learning of the world will be of no use, because whatever we have studied has a utilitarian value in the sense of physical and social relationship, but it has no spiritual significance. That which is spiritually significant is that which is connected with our soul, and not with our body or its social connections.

The practice of yoga is an endeavour of the soul, and not merely of the sense organs or even our psychological constitution. It has nothing to do with what we regard as meaningful and valuable in our ordinary walk of life. So when we step into the realm of yoga, we are new persons altogether. We are reborn, as it were, into a new setup of things, and we cast out our old, out-dated, worn-out knowledge and learning, prejudice, ego, importance, status,

etc., and become humble in the presence of the master who is going to initiate us into the technique of yoga.

The disciple is no more an independent individual. The first condition of discipleship is surrender to the Guru, which means to say he has abolished his individuality, cast out his learning and intellectual curiosity, and become a receptacle for the entry of the wisdom of the Guru. For this purpose, one has to be prepared to undergo the necessary disciplines in the practice of yoga.

While the whole of the practice of yoga may be regarded as a discipline by itself, there are certain preliminary disciplines which have to be regarded as equally important, as important as even samadhi, for God-realisation. No step in the practice of yoga can be regarded as unimportant, just as no rung of a ladder can be regarded as unnecessary. The lowest rung in a ladder is as important as the highest, because we have to climb on every rung of the ladder. We cannot say, "It is so low. I am concerned only with the top." That would be a foolish argument. In every step, at every stage, even the most initial and beginning step, we will find that this step or stage is very important.

So, it is necessary to start with the outermost entanglement of our nature, and gradually go into the internal steps, as has been suggested by masters such as Sage Patanjali in their sutras, to which I made reference yesterday. Our outermost entanglement is social, and then come the personal entanglements; higher than that is the entanglement with physical nature; lastly, there are inscrutable entanglements which are trans-empirical, which

are supernatural, to which we have to stretch our arms later on. We should not suddenly try to jump to the skies, as if everything could be achieved in a single moment. Though the aspiration might be regarded as very pious and holy, that cannot be regarded as a part of wisdom. Everything in nature grows gradually. The child grows slowly and gradually in the womb of the mother. The tree grows gradually from a seed. Food is digested in the stomach gradually, slowly, systematically, methodically. Everything takes its own time, and there is a meaning in the time anything takes for working out its purpose.

So, the outermost of our entanglements is the first consideration. Many a time, as I mentioned, we cannot know what our entanglements are. We are so very complacent, generally speaking, that we regard ourselves as spotless in our character and perfectly okay in every sense of the term. This is one of the weaknesses of our personality. We regard ourselves as free from all blemish, fault, and defect—morally, intellectually, and spiritually. We have to be very dispassionate in our analysis, we have to be thoroughgoing, and we have to be true to our own conscience. That is very important.

Our conscience is our master. Our deepest conscience will tell us what we are. We can know to some extent what we are, what our weaknesses are, what we are thinking in our mind subtly, covertly, without the knowledge of other people. These are our entanglements, which connect us with society in an artificial manner.

Our adjustments, makeshifts and behaviours in society are not our true nature, because our true nature cannot be

exposed on account of the laws operating in human society—rightly or wrongly. This is what psychoanalysts call the superego curbing the ego of the individual and creating tension. The pressure of society upon us becomes the cause of our psychological disease, and if the pressure continues for a long time, we will become mentally ill. We have got urges within us, and society would not tolerate these urges, for its own reasons. As I mentioned, sometimes it is right and sometimes it is wrong to curb our urges. Whatever it is, we have to be very wise in dealing with human society.

We cannot say, "I have nothing to do with human society because I am a seeker of yoga. I have nothing to do with this world because I am a student of yoga." This, again, is not a correct position or a true state of affairs. We are dependent on human society to some extent. Sometimes the dependence is very intense, very wide, and very deep. Sometimes it is not so, but it is there. Our connection with other people can be political, social, communal, or something similar with different shades of meaning, but these relationships or connections have to be thoroughly investigated.

That we cannot bear a word of insult shows that we are dependent on human society. If an ass brays before us, we are not bothered. We do not know why it is braying. It may be calling us an idiot, but we are not bothered, because we do not understand what it says. Even if it really calls us an idiot and we know what it is saying, we are not bothered. These are very interesting features of our psychological nature. If we are walking on the street and a stranger calls us an idiot, we would not bother so much. Because he does

not know who we are, and we do not know who he is, we would not take it very seriously. But if a known person calls us an idiot in the midst of people who are known to us, that will make a greater difference to us because we are dependent upon the opinion that other people have about us. This is social dependence—a serious matter indeed.

A major part of our life is constituted of this. Though we look independent, we are not independent. We are dependent on silly features of life; otherwise, we would not be craving for name and fame. Now, name and fame need not necessarily mean worldwide renown. It can be a desire to be called a good person or to be known as a good person, even in the smallest vicinity of our village. Not only that, we are dependent on society for other reasons as well, as is known to everyone. My dependence on society may not be of the same nature as your dependence on it, because individual characteristics differ. Therefore, each person has to make a personal investigation into his or her own nature and its relationship with human society.

Love and hatred are the essential social features of personal relationship with the outer world. As I mentioned, the canons of yoga, known as the principles of *yama*—*ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha,* which are very important things to remember—prescribe recipes for attaining gradual independence from human society. This has to be done very gradually, and then it is possible for us to sit alone for meditation, do *japa,* do *svadhyaya,* etc., because what we are generally trying to do is to assume this independence that we have already attained over the external world and human society. We close ourselves in a

room, sit in a meditation hall, a temple, a church or a cloister, and begin to meditate on the Supreme Being, do *japa*, etc., under the impression that this is the only thing that is left to be done because everything else has already been done. But that is not so. If that were the case, there would be no chance for a fall. The initial stages have not been transcended; they have only been forgotten. They have been kicked out with force, and that is not a proper thing to do.

"Are we susceptible to anger?" is a question that we have to put to our own self. That we have not got angry for several days does not mean that we are not susceptible. That we have not been subject to any kind of intense desire, passion or ambition for months together does not mean that we are not vulnerable in these areas. It is necessary to make a thorough diagnosis of the inner seeds of these possibilities. "Am I susceptible? If I am placed under favourable conditions, would these passions manifest themselves or not?"

Many a time we are virtuous merely because we cannot help being virtuous. That is not virtue, because it is a condition of being pressurised. We can practise austerity when we cannot get anything because the conditions of enjoyment are not available and, therefore, we are in a state of compulsive austerity or *tapas*. If we cannot get a blanket, we have to suffer the cold, and it is not called *tapas*. We cannot get a blanket and, therefore, we are tolerating the cold. Do we call it *tapas*? No, because it is not a concentration of mind or an endurance that we are voluntarily practising of our own accord.

Yoga is the voluntary practice that we take upon ourselves. It is not something that is thrust upon us by anybody else. Many a time, when we live in monasteries we feel as if yoga is thrust upon us. Many people are unhappy when they go to convents or monasteries of any kind. In the beginning, they go there under the impression that they will be happy. Later on, the conditions of these institutions become a kind of harassment, the reason being that the people are not prepared for the disciplines. When we are not prepared for a condition of living and it is thrust upon us, it becomes a source of sorrow. Therefore, it is essential to know that our practice is voluntary, and we do it of our own accord.

Even the call of God may become a source of pain, and mostly an unprepared individual may take it as the greatest sorrow that can befall him because the call of God is a call of renunciation of all false values, and false values are the only values that we have in the world. So, when these values are to be renounced for the sake of That which we are seeking in the heart of our hearts, it looks as if we are about to die—as if we are in the jaws of death.

Hence, to repeat again, there should be no haste in the practice of yoga. There should be a very cautious movement in the proper direction under the guidance of an expert. The involvements have to be gradually undone without forcing ourselves to do anything against our will, because anything that is done against one's will may, one day or the other, become a source of revolt from one's own self. We may revolt against our own self if we are in an

unprepared condition and things have been done against our will or wish.

The principles of *yama—ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha*—may be regarded as universal prerequisites of yoga, of all religions, of all mystical approaches and of all sincere efforts of anyone towards a godly life, because the canons of the *yamas* are only prescriptions for rectifying the essential weaknesses of human nature. There are many weaknesses, but all these are ultimately connected with certain essential weaknesses, and these have to be set right. They have to be overcome.

Many of our illnesses may be boiled down to a few fundamental illnesses, as homeopathic physicians tell us that all the diseases are born out of a single disease. They try to root out that single disease in order that the manifestations thereof also are automatically removed. Likewise, in the practice of yoga, we will find that when we are able to discover or detect the sources of our trouble, the manifestations thereof also go spontaneously because the cause is removed. Patanjali, in a very wise aphorism, has stated that we have only very few weaknesses, but they are very serious weaknesses; and they are dealt with in a very scientific and effective manner by practice of the *yamas*.

Of all these canons, five in number—*ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha—ahimsa, satya* and *brahmacharya* are more important than the others. These are words with which everyone is familiar, and because they are very familiar, we are likely to treat them with contempt. Too much familiarity breeds contempt. "Oh, I have seen him so many times." Whatever be the importance of a

person, that importance goes on diminishing if we see that person daily. We do not care even for the sunrise, because we see it every day. "I have seen this sun so many times. Every day he is coming, unwanted." This is what we would like to think of even these essentials like the virtues known as *ahimsa, satya, brahmacharya*.

Many a time we take for granted these simple shibboleths or slogans of yoga, thinking they have little meaning to great seekers that we consider ourselves to be. It is not so. They are not mere slogans or shibboleths. They are scientific recipes for the illness of human nature; and unless this disease is removed, we cannot enter into the healthy path of yoga. Yoga is positive health; it is not merely a removal of disease. The *yamas* first remove the disease. Unless the disease is gone, how can we be healthy? What we can do in a state of perfect health, we cannot do in a condition of disease.

So before we try to do what we are supposed to do in a state of health, we try to diagnose our illness and remove it. That is the ethical discipline of the *yamas*, or the moral culture that it involves. This aspect of yoga is very important, much abused, much misunderstood, and much neglected, but it is the foundation of the entire edifice. The whole building is resting upon it, and we cannot have a beautiful structure on a shaky foundation. We are more concerned with the structure, the beauty and the grandeur of the building than with the foundation, even though we know the importance of the foundation. About this we have to think more deeply.

Chapter 6

THE ROYAL VIRTUES OF AHIMSA AND BRAHMACHARYA

The proper disposition on our part in regard to others is called *ahimsa*, and the improper disposition of ours in regard to others is *himsa*. The proper disposition of ours in regard to our own selves is *brahmacharya*, and the improper disposition of ours in regard to our own selves is the lack of it. So, *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya* may be regarded as the royal virtues, the basic fundamentals, the basic foundational values of not only yoga practice but also of all successful life in this world. It is the inability on our part to understand these essentials that makes for failure in life, mostly speaking, and also for failure in the practice of yoga.

It is very essential that we should give due regard to other people, because other people are also people. They are not stones, they are not animals, they are not trees, they are not dogs, they are not servants; they are as valuable and important as ourselves. This is the philosophy of *ahimsa*, truly speaking. What is the philosophy of *ahimsa*? It is that others are like me only. Whatever is of meaning to me has to be of meaning to others also; and whatever would be improper for me might be improper for others also. To regard others as dirt is the essence of *himsa*. But others are not dirt.

How is it possible to regard others as subservient to ourselves in any matter whatsoever? It happens because the

'otherness' of people is a peculiar twist of our minds. There is no such thing as otherness, really speaking. If people around us can be regarded by us as 'others' in a contemptuous sense, they can also treat us as an 'other' in a similar manner. *Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret* (Mahabharata 5.15.17) is a very famous sentence of the Mahabharata, which is supposed to be the essence of the canon of dharma, or virtue: What is not good for me would also not be good for others because others are like me in every respect; therefore, whatever is not good for me cannot be meted out by me to others.

There is a very important factor that we miss in our attitude towards other people, and it is that subconsciously, or even unconsciously, we are apt to feel that we are superior to other people. We may not be able to argue this logically and philosophically, because it is an absurd feeling. But not all feelings are logical. Many of them are illogical, and they would not stand reason or ratiocinative investigation. The essence of feeling is illogicality or sometimes super-logicality, but it is not logicality because it will supersede all logic and put down all logic by a kick which is more forceful than our understanding. This feeling creeps into us in many ways: "I am, somehow or other, more important than other people." We cannot openly say this or openly declare this, or even openly justify it in any way; nevertheless, we can feel it privately and put on an attitude which is in consonance with this illogical feeling.

"I must be comfortable, and I cannot bear any kind of discomfort" is the basic urge of individual nature; and if my altruistic attitude, my very generous disposition towards

others is going to cause discomfort, pain or harm to me, then I would be thrice hesitant to be charitable to others. "Is my charitable disposition to other people going to cause pain to me? No." Nobody likes pain because gaining pleasure, comfort and satisfaction is the ultimate aim of all our activities, behaviours and forms of conduct. But this is a great confusion that has entered our mind. It is a mess that we are making in our daily conduct.

The height of stupidity would be to regard others as less important than one's own self in any manner whatsoever. Place yourself in the position of that other person, and think through that person's mind. Then you would know the importance of that person. Even a dog does not feel that it is less important than others. Enter into the mind of a dog for a few minutes, think as the dog thinks, and see what its attitude to things is. What does it think about you?

This is a very difficult art. Charitable disposition does not mean giving money, food, clothes, etc., to other people. It is the capacity to enter into the feelings of others that is called charity. If this capacity is lacking, we are not charitable persons. Even if a person is in a fit of rage against us, we must be in a position to understand why that person has run into that rage, instead of retaliating or wreaking vengeance upon that person, which is what we generally are inclined to do at that moment. 'Tit for tat' is our philosophy.

Any kind of attitude which would be inconsonant with what we regard as proper to our own selves would be unjustifiable from the point of view of yoga practice. Even a criticism is a kind of *himsa* because criticism is another

form of asserting our superiority over other people. This sense of superiority of oneself can come into play in many ways.

In the eyes of God, at least, there should be some sense and meaning present in all the things of the world. Perhaps, absolutely meaningless things cannot exist. A whole and entire untruth cannot bear sustenance. There must be an element of truth even in what we call untruth; else, it would not be there at all. Even appearances are impossible unless they are impregnated with reality. There cannot be an illusion unless there is a background of substance behind it. Even an illusion cannot just appear. Total illusions are impossibilities.

So, in the endeavour we call the practice of yoga, we try our best to free ourselves from the wrong movements of our consciousness in the direction of the 'false universal' to which I made reference the other day, which is attachment and aversion in respect of objects, and bring ourselves back to the position of a reconciliation with the true universal. The true universal is not disposed favourably or unfavourably in respect of anyone. That is the very meaning of the word 'universal'. It is commonly valid for everyone and everything; that is universality in its essential nature. And so, in our attempt at taking a step in the direction of the true universal, which is the practice of yoga, we have to conduct ourselves in a manner consonant with the step that we are taking. We cannot be rogues outside and saints inside. There should be a harmony of our nature outwardly as well as inwardly. How can we act in a manner

which is inconsistent with the nature of the universal and try at the same time to meditate on the universal?

To exploit others in any manner whatsoever, to treat others as servants or subsidiaries to one's own self, to look upon others as instruments for one's own satisfaction, in any manner whatsoever, would be an insult to the dignity of others. They have as much dignity as we ourselves have, and that would be an insult to the universal itself because it is present equally in every person and every thing of the world. We will realise, when we actually practise it, that this is the most difficult of all forms of righteousness or virtue.

Resentment is deep-rooted in us. We always resent the attitudes of others, and we cannot bear the remarks made by others; we cannot agree with the opinions of others, and we always agree to differ. This is, in our faulty opinion, a great virtue of ours, but it is the ruin of all people.

How can we have cooperation from the world when we resent the world? Our resentment may not be consciously felt outside. Your dislike for me may not be visible outside, but there are subtle systems inside the world which can feel your resentment in respect of me. There are what we may call invisible radar systems placed by God Himself. Something will start saying, "This person does not like me," though he may be speaking very smilingly and beautifully to me. You may be even worshipping me and adoring me from outside, but the radar system inside will work: "This person hates me."

Even an atom will be able to feel our attitude towards it. Even an atom—which is usually regarded as inorganic, lifeless, incapable of thinking—can feel our attitude towards

it. Even a plant can feel our attitude towards it. "This man is coming to chop off my head with an axe!" The plant can feel it even before we cut it. Sir J.C. Bose made tremendous researches in this field of biology. Even a plant can know what our intention is when we are approaching it, even before we have touched it. Not merely that, even inorganic substances are not really inorganic substances; they only appear to be so. They are masquerading as inorganic, but they are not really so.

So, our attitudes will be felt everywhere, dear friends. There is no such thing as a secret feeling of ours. There is no secrecy in this world where everything reverberates with a tremendous noise in the ether of this vast universe. It is futile on our part, therefore, to entertain secret feelings of resentment and hatred towards anything in this world. In Hindi, there is a humorous saying which means: "Take the name of Ram in the mouth, and keep a knife under the armpit." This is what we are doing. We have a subtle psychological knife in our armpit, ready for attack when the time for it comes, and we are always a warrior. This warrior-hood will not work in a system where cooperation is necessary.

We expect cooperation from others, but would not like to cooperate with others. The universe works on a system of collaboration and cooperation. *Parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* (Gita 3.11). This is, as the Bhagavadgita puts it, the original ordinance passed by Brahma, the Creator, to all his subjects: "Mutually cooperate among yourselves in your deeds, and attain blessedness." This is the original constitution of the

cosmos, but we want to violate it at every moment of time. The yoga system tells us this is a great blunder. We cannot ask for blessedness and do what is contrary to its achievement.

Ahimsa is the most misunderstood of canons and principles of virtue. Volumes and volumes have been written on this subject, and yet the question cannot be said to have been satisfactorily answered. Every situation is a new situation, and every individual case has to be treated in an individual manner. We cannot have a general recipe for the whole of humanity for all times, for every circumstance and condition. Wisdom has to be exercised. But the essence of the matter is, "Treat humanity as an end in itself, and not as a means to an end," as the great philosopher Immanuel Kant said many years back. This is the essence of morality. Mankind is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself. Everything is an end in itself whether it is human or subhuman, or whatever it is. To treat anything in this world as an end in itself is the essence of virtue, and this will also clinch the question of *ahimsa*.

Otherwise, what will happen? There will be an equal resentment from those sources in regard to which we have shown resentment. There will be disturbance of our mind caused by the resentment produced as a reaction from those sources in respect of which we have behaved improperly. This is why Patanjali is very cautious about avoiding all these unnecessary disturbances before stepping into the higher realms of yoga. Therefore, he places *ahimsa* as the first of virtues because psychological disturbance is a greater disturbance than any other conceivable disturbance.

Subtle disturbances will be there. Animosity will prevail around us, and it can pounce upon us in some form or other and disturb and impede our progress in yoga. So, as I mentioned, *ahimsa* is a sort of justifiable and proper attitude that we have to develop in respect of others, and *brahmacharya* is a similar attitude that we have to adopt in respect of our own selves because lack of *brahmacharya* is an insult to one's own self, as *himsa* is an insult to others.

You are a very valuable individual. You are not a nobody. Just as you have to treat other people as though they are equally valuable as yourself in the principle of *ahimsa*, you also have to treat yourself as very valuable. You are also a great treasure. You are not dirt, because you are a person like anybody else. You are also very meaningful, as meaningful as others, so how can you insult yourself? To insult one's own self is a misuse of one's powers, which are supposed to be utilised for a nobler purpose.

Brahmacharya is as difficult to understand as *ahimsa*. Therefore, we are likely to spend all our time in trying to understand these things and not be able to practise them because the energies of our bodies and our minds are mostly out of our control, and they start leading us in a wrong direction instead of our being able to direct them in the proper way for the intended purpose. Mostly our energies go amok, hither and thither, in any way, in any direction that is available. They are like a river whose bunds have been broken; it is trying to find its way in any manner whatsoever by destroying things, washing away villages and killing people. It does not care; it simply wants to find an

outlet for its further movement. The same applies to our energies.

Our energies are equally distributed in our personality. It is an equidistribution of energy in our body that makes us look beautiful. A beautiful personality, even a beautiful body, is the result of an equidistribution of energy throughout the body. If it is concentrated in some part, that would be a capitalist attitude of the body which will not be tolerated by the other parts of the body. As we know, children are very beautiful. Small babies look beautiful; but when we grow older and older, we become uglier and uglier in our facial expressions and our entire physical contour. Why is it? What has happened to us? Why do we look shrunken and stupid later on? The reason is that there is a misdirection of energy, whereas in a baby it is equally distributed throughout the body.

When we see a small child, we feel happy to look at it. We keep it on our lap and kiss it. It may be anybody's child; it makes no difference to us. We like children because there is a beauty in their personality, and there is an absence of egoism in their mind. It is these two things that attract us to children: they have no egoism, and their body is beautiful. Perhaps the beauty of their body is a result of the absence of egoism. The more we are egoistic, the more we look ugly—a very important matter to remember.

The ego is the principle of centralisation of energy. It does not allow decentralisation of force in the body, and so the parts of the body and the entire personality, from whom the energies or powers have been withdrawn by this centralising principle, lose their feeling of cooperation with

the whole personality. They resent this kind of attitude of the ego, and then it is that they look ugly. They are not beautiful any more. Why? It is because they have lost the cooperation of the centre and, therefore, they too do not feel like cooperating with the centre.

A beautiful person is either a child or a saint, because in a child there is no ego and there is equidistribution of energy throughout the body, and the same is the case with a saint or a great sage. He is also very attractive, very magnetic in his personality, very powerful, and looks beautiful. A great master of yoga, a great sage or a saint is as beautiful as a child, and so we are attracted to him. People run to him even from distant places. Why? It is because there is a tremendous power in him, which is the outcome of his harmony with the real source of power in the universe. Children are taken care of by nature itself. Gods themselves protect children, but they do not protect egoists. They run away: "Oh! These are very big people. We do not want them!"

I am reminded of a story that I heard from a friend. It is not written in any book. It appears that once upon a time, Lord Sri Krishna was having lunch in Dwaraka, and Rukmini, the queen, was serving food. In the middle of the meal, Krishna got up and took up a stick. Rukmini was surprised. "What has happened to you? In the middle of the meal you get up and hold a stick, as if you want to beat me! Who is your enemy here?"

Sri Krishna said nothing, closed his eyes for a few seconds, then put the stick away and sat for his food once

again. She asked him, "What is the matter? What is wrong?"

Sri Krishna said, "Nothing is wrong. About a hundred miles from this place a pedestrian, a poor man, is carrying a load on his head, and robbers attacked him. I thought I would protect him, so I took up the stick. But before I took up the stick, that pedestrian gave a slap to the robber. So I thought, 'Let him take care of himself. Why should I go there?' Then I put my stick back."

It is also said that as long as Draupadi was holding her sari with one hand, no help came. Because she had some strength of her own, why should any help come? When she threw up both her arms and cried before God, help rushed to her as if by magic.

Now, all these are stories, no doubt, but they are of great spiritual meaning from the point of view of yoga. We need not fear anyone in this world if God is helping us, but nobody can protect us if God is against us. The forces of nature are nothing but the fingers of God operating. They are not outside God or different from God. Our egoism is a violation of the law of God, which is also a violation of the law of nature. Lack of *brahmacharya* is one such violation, as is *himsa*. Any kind of insult to a creation of God is intolerable to God. And what is insult? It is nothing but a violation of a law that is operating; that is called 'insult'—a lack of understanding of the operative principles.

As *himsa* is wrong, the lack of *brahmacharya* also is wrong. We have to guard ourselves from outside as well as from inside so that we may be harmonious within and without because this is the call of yoga, the requisite of

yoga. We are required to be harmonious with everything—outside as well as inside. So before we try for higher harmonies of a spiritual nature, the yoga system prescribes ethical harmonies, moral equilibriums, by means of the practice of *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya*.

As I pointed out, these things are very difficult for us to understand thoroughly, because we have very peculiar traditional notions given to us right from our childhood by our parents, by our society, etc. But they are scientific principles, not merely dogmas or stories told to us. These are great imperatives and necessities in life. One who practices *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya* thoroughly will know one's own strength, and it need not be told by others. The strength will be such that our thoughts will materialise immediately. Our words will become true, our wishes will be fulfilled, and nothing will stand before us. We will be undaunted heroes. This is the power that *brahmacharya* bestows upon us, because *brahmacharya* is the art of the equalisation of the force of this psychophysical personality in such a way that our personality stands in unison with the forces of nature outside—as a consequence of which, the forces of nature enter into us.

These forces do not enter us now because we repel them by our egocentric individuality. The egocentricity of our personality is a repelling attitude that we are adopting every moment of our life. We become hard like flint and, therefore, the forces of nature do not enter us. The sustaining powers of nature are removed from us, so that we become helpless, weak in every sense—bodily, mentally, morally, even spiritually. We start crying that there is no

help, and we are in a miserable condition. Why is there no help? It is because we do not want help. We imagine that we are very powerful ourselves. Why do we want help from anybody? The imagination that we are well off and very powerful is due to our ego and, therefore, the world outside will not help us afterwards. People will not like us. Nature will resent us. Perhaps God Himself may ignore us.

Ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham (Gita 4.11), says the Bhagavadgita: "As is your attitude towards Me, so is My attitude towards you." If we do not want God, perhaps He may also not want us. If we throw Him out, He may also throw us out. If we are egoistic, He may also assert Himself in His own way and teach us a lesson. We should not become Duryodhanas, Hiranyakashipus or Ravanas with an uncompromising ego, which is an insult to the whole creation of God because creation has no ego, and nature has no ego. It is man that has ego.

So, the abolition of the ego is the final intention of the practice of these virtues of *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya,* etc.; and by actual effort put forth in this direction, you can yourself see the result of it. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it," as they say. Do it, and see what result follows—how happy you will be, how fearless you will be, how strong you will be, how capable you will be, and how self-satisfied you will be, needing nothing from outside. Why should you need anything else from outside when the world is behind you to help you? But the world will be at your beck and call only if you are in harmony with it. If you are disharmonious with it, if your connection with the

powerhouse is cut off, then you are in a very bad condition, no doubt—no power, no help, no strength whatsoever.

Ahimsa and *brahmacharya* are the essential ethical foundations of yoga. Practising them not merely because of a social mandate but as a spiritual necessity will make us superhuman beings even in a few days. It may not take many months and years to achieve this result, because a step taken in the direction of Truth should produce immediate results. Truth is immediate; it is not a mediate object. This is the reason behind the great emphasis laid by Sage Patanjali on the practice of these principles, the *yamas*—of which, as I mentioned, the most important are *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya*.

Chapter 7

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ALONE

It is very difficult to have a clear conception of one's purpose in life, and this is precisely the factor that goes to make for success in yoga. A hotchpotch mind is unfit for yoga. We are not dabbling in some confused activity when we take to spiritual life. There cannot be a more serious enterprise than taking to the spiritual path. While it is difficult to understand what it actually means, it is very easy to misunderstand it, misapply it, misconstrue it, and go headlong in a direction which one can mistake for the right move that one has to make.

A sincere disciple, a seeker, one day put a question to me: "If I have to enter the Absolute today, what sadhana should I practise?" While I appreciated the question very much, I also felt the seriousness that is involved in not only the question itself, but the background of the entire thought process in this connection. My answer to this question was at once: "You have to melt into liquid and become one with everything. This is the sadhana that you have to do if you want to enter the Absolute today." But who is prepared to melt into liquid? We are hard as flint. Even flint is not as hard as we are. Our attachments are very severe; even iron chains are not as strong as our attachments. But we are self-deluded people, under the notion that we have no attachments. We are immersed in a quagmire, but are under the notion that we are walking along a beaten track which takes us straight to God.

The main sadhana to enter the kingdom of God is detachment—freedom from attachment. Nothing else is necessary. But freedom from attachment is something unknown to us. The great Patanjali propounds, in his yoga aphorisms, a gradual process of detachment from externals. Attachment is nothing but connection with externals, and we are connected in a thousand ways with externals. Our attachments are not in respect of one or two things, or a few things only. We are tethered with a network of multifarious relationships. A few of these are known to us consciously in our mind every day, but many of these are not known to us.

One of the essential conditions the seeker of yoga is called upon to bear in mind is *ekantavasa*, or sequestration, solitude. These days, wrong notions are driven into people's minds by inexperienced teachers who say that we can be in the midst of a city and yet practise sadhana. Though this goes on very well and sounds fine as a theory and a doctrine, it is a total impossibility when we actually try to practise it. The ancient masters who said that solitude is necessary were not fools. Though in the end, in the consummation, it may be possible for us to find a solitary forest in the thick of New York City, consummation should not be identified with the beginning. That would be like putting the cart before the horse.

In this connection, I am reminded of a very homely analogy of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Fire consumes ghee. Any amount of ghee that we pour on fire will be burnt by the fire. Yes, this is a great truth, a fact known to everyone. But suppose we pour a mound of ghee over a spark of fire; will it burn the ghee? The fire itself will be

extinguished. The fire should first become a huge conflagration. Then we can pour the entire fuel of the world into it, and it shall burn it to ashes. Our fire of aspiration will then be capable—only then, and not before—to burn all the dirt and dust of this world even if it is thrown upon it in huge heaps. But when we are only a struggling spark who has not been able to take even the first step in yoga, if the whole weight of the world is to sit upon us, what will happen? We cannot face it. We will be crushed to dust.

Hence, we should not, at the very outset, at the beginning itself, make the mistake of thinking that we are masters, that we can face the world. Even an Arjuna could not face the Kaurava forces. They were terrible powers. The world is not so simple as it appears to be. It is a fierce opponent before us, capable of turning us upside down at once if we are not careful about it.

Sri Aurobindo, the great yogi, was fond of saying that there are three processes in the practice of yoga: withdrawal, immersion, and rising up. These were his concepts of the three processes in the practice of yoga. In the beginning, we cannot immerse ourselves in God, though that is our final intention. We should not think, "I shall be in the middle of attractions, oppositions, etc., and then immerse myself in my spiritual objective." In the beginning, abstraction, withdrawal, renunciation is necessary. Though withdrawal is not the ultimate aim of yoga, it is a very necessary part of yoga. Isolation is done even in medical treatment, though it does not mean that we have to be isolated forever, throughout our life. The

purpose of isolation is to cure us of our illness, and when we are healthy, well, we can move among others.

The mind is accustomed to enjoyments through the senses. Enjoyment is what we are asking for and seeking every moment of our lives. We want pleasure, satisfaction, and we do not want any kind of pain or opposition. Our senses and our mind are used to an easy-going life, where we always yield to even the least pressure from the lower instincts within us. We take advantage of even the first opportunity that is given to us for enjoyment. If there is an opportunity for indulgence, we shall be the first to take advantage of that situation. We shall not stop to think, "Is it necessary for me? Why should I go to it? Is it necessary, or unnecessary?" We think pleasures are never unnecessary; they are always necessary, and any amount of pleasure would be welcome. We will never say there is a surfeit of pleasure; such a thing can never happen. There has never been a time when we felt that satisfactions have gone beyond their limit, because they can never go beyond their limit. We have been brought up in such an atmosphere. We are born in such a condition, and we live through it.

How will it be possible for us to be renunciates, to withdraw ourselves from externals, when externals themselves are a part of our life? We live in a world of externals. We are externalised bodies, busybodies. Externality is the texture of our life. *Parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ* (Katha 2.1.1), says the Kathopanishad. The Creator Himself projected the senses outwardly, as it were, so that they can never think anything except in external terms. Our thoughts are externalised, perceptions are

externalised, judgments are externalised, enjoyments are externalised. There is nothing else in this world except externality. The whole world of creation is a scene of externalisation, becoming more and more intense, and more and more complicated and involved; this is called *samsara*. But yoga is the reverse process, a movement along the return current.

The first thing that we have to do, therefore, is to find time to be alone. We were not born into this world with friends, with husbands, wives and children, with bank balances or relations of any kind. We were born naked, without a strip of cloth on our body, and with none to call our own; and this is also the very condition in which we leave the world. It is only in the middle that we make a lot of fuss under the notion that the whole world is ours. As we came, so we go. The truth is revealed when we are born, and also when we go. The untruth is in the middle, when we are completely muddled in our heads.

A great thinker and mystic once put it in a beautiful style: The path spiritual is the flight of the alone to the Alone. It is not a multitude going to God. Such a thing is unthinkable. Very important it is to remember that we are alone in this world even now. Even today, even at this very moment, we are alone.

We should not be under the impression we have got many friends around us. This is a false notion. The so-called friends and relations that we have around us in the form of human beings and possessions of various kinds are a false environment created around us to delude us and dupe us into the wrong path. These possessions, friends,

relations, etc., are not going to help us when we are in a critical moment or in time of danger, because our relationship to people is artificial. Anything that is artificial will not last long. Our connection with other people in this world is not genuine, not natural, not organic; and, therefore, it cannot work when the time for it comes. Why is it so? It is because, to put it in a very philosophical jargon, the connection of a subject with an object is makeshift. It is a contrivance brought about for sensory perception and a false feeling of fulfilment, and for bringing about a sense of satisfaction to the ego-ridden individuality.

A subject cannot be connected to an object, because there is no means of connection. We have heard in logic that 'A' cannot be 'B', and 'A' cannot be connected to 'B' in any manner whatsoever; and if there is a means of connecting 'A' to 'B', 'B' ceases to be 'B'; it will become a part of 'A'. The very fact that we regard other people as 'others' shows that they are unrelated to us essentially. Otherwise, why do we regard them as others? Otherness is the feature which disconnects everything from everything else, and yet we are under the impression that we are all one total of friendliness, brotherhood, etc.

There are peculiar features in us, in every one of us, which can be manifest at any moment of time, and which can upset and destroy even the best friendship and relationship. I can behave with you, just now, in such an ugly manner that you would not like to see my face from tomorrow onwards. With all the regard that you have for me, I can behave with you in such an unwanted manner that you would not see me again. But, these things are not

known to people; and even if they are known, they do not want to reveal them outside, for the purpose of what they call 'getting on in the world'. There is no such thing as real friendship in this world. It is a misnomer. But we are caught in this net of a wrong notion, a foolish belief that the world will support us, help us, and that we have many things at our beck and call. Yoga wants to put an end to this false belief, and call a spade a spade, as they say.

The truth as it is must come out. The disease has to be dug out from its roots, and there is no use saying, "Everything is okay, everything is all right. The patient is improving." He is not improving. We are making a false statement. He is preparing for his departure, though we say he is improving. This is what we are speaking about in regard to everything in this world, including our own selves. We are bred and brought up under false conditions, and falsity has become a part of our nature. We do not know what truth is, and we do not want truth, because truth is the most bitter thing in the world. Yoga looks like a very bitter, most unwanted, terrifying something when we actually try to understand what it is, because our sweet milk-and-honey relationships seem to vanish into the winds the moment we step into this so-called bitter atmosphere of yoga. But this bitterness is necessary because it is the bitterness of medicine that is going to cure our illness, our disease.

Why does it look bitter, while it is going to do good later on? This is because it is apparently the opposite of the false notions of satisfaction implanted in the ego in our so-called bodily individuality. Here is a simple question: Can

you sit absolutely alone in your own room for one single day without speaking to anybody, without seeing anyone's face? For only one day, do not see anybody's face, and do not speak to any person. Just see your condition. You will be like a fish out of water. It is a horror to be like that. The next day you will look half-crazy because the whole day you have not seen anybody or talked to any person. This shows what we are made of, what our substance really is. We are hollow, with no real substance of our own. If we have a substance of our own, we will be happier the more alone we are. This is the test of progress in spirituality: Do we feel happy when we are alone, or do we feel miserable?

Our real nature is Aloneness in a very, very special sense. It is not a physical aloneness that we are speaking of, though that too has some meaning, after all, at a particular stage. It is a kind of aloneness which increases in intensity and expansiveness as we go on proceeding further and further in the practice of yoga. In the beginning, it is a small aloneness, almost identifiable with our physical bodily aloneness to which I made reference when I said that you should try to be alone in your room; but that is not the real meaning of Aloneness. It has a deeper psychological connotation, and finally a very profound spiritual meaning.

God is the Supreme Aloneness, properly speaking. He has no friends. God has no assistants, no secretaries, no army, no police; He has nothing to call His own. The Supreme Aloneness is God Himself, but His Aloneness is different from the aloneness we can think of in our minds. Because God is everything, we can call that everythingness a kind of Aloneness in a very specialised sense, which is not

easy for us to understand. But that universal supremacy of Aloneness is reflected in our daily lives and calls for recognition every day, every moment of our time.

When we are disgusted with things, sometimes we like to be alone. Oftentimes it looks that we are fed up with things, for various reasons. Then we do not want to speak to people. Our real nature comes out at that time. If we have lost everything, we do not want to speak to people at that time. Our real nature becomes manifest if we hear that something catastrophic has happened and our relatives have died in an accident, all our property has gone, and whatever we regard as ours has been taken away by powers which are beyond our control. Then we do not want to speak to people. We would like to shut ourselves in a room and cry. That shutting ourselves up in a room and crying is our essential nature, ultimately. That is what is going to happen to us one day. When we were born, we cried; and when we go, we will also cry. In the middle, we smile as if everything is beautiful.

Now, this peculiar thing that I am speaking of, this aloneness, is something very important to think of and very essential for us to understand. As I mentioned some days back, in the practice of yoga there is an attempt at gradual extrication from involvements, beginning with externals first and moving internally later on. Hence, it is mentioned in the Bhagavadgita *viviktasevī laghvāśī yatavākkāyamānasaḥ* (Gita 18.52): "Resort to secluded places." This resorting to a secluded place is the first thing in yoga, and everything comes afterwards. Sitting in a

posture practising *pranayama* and meditation come later on. First we have to find ourselves in a state of aloneness.

Initially this can be done by trying to find time to be alone at least for an hour every day, without speaking to people. Can you be alone at least for one hour in a day? This is the least that one can expect of you. Take a determination; make a vow: "For one hour in a day, I shall not speak to people." But if you are tempted to speak to people, then at least close your door so that nobody will come in and there is no chance of speaking. For one hour in a day, you will not open your door. You will be inside your room, and nobody will enter your room at that time. You may be wondering, "What will I do during that one hour?" Let it be anything. Maybe, in the beginning, you will not be able to do anything. Let it be so. You do nothing; you will only be looking at the watch to see when this one hour will be over. Even if that happens to you, it does not matter; do not open the door for one hour.

Many a time when you do *japa,* you go on seeing how much of the *mala* is completed, because you are fed up with it. You are tired. For one hour in a day, do not open the door; be alone, read the Gita, read the Sermon on the Mount, read the Dhammapada, read the Bhagavata, read the Ramayana, or do whatever you like. You may even sing and dance if you like, but do not open the door. Gradually, you will be accustomed to this kind of living alone for one hour. Then, later on, you can do something positive and substantial during that one hour instead of merely waiting for the one hour to pass. You can chant a mantra or a divine name—loudly, not mentally. Sing the divine name

for one hour, or loudly recite the verses of the Bhagavadgita. Something noble can be put into practice during this time. Gradually, the time should be increased. Usually, it is accepted that when you can be alone for three hours continuously, you can be said to have mastered this technique of aloneness to an appreciable extent; and when you can sit in one posture for three hours continuously, you are said to have attained what is called *asana jaya*—that is, perfection in *asana*.

If you can sit in one posture for three hours continuously, that is perfection. If you can be alone for three hours continuously, it is a great achievement. All this is nothing but physical isolation. There is very little of the spiritual element in it, because even if you are alone for an hour or two hours or three hours, your mind may be wandering to the shops and thinking of all sorts of things. Even if that is the case, be physically alone for one hour, two hours, three hours.

After you learn to be alone physically, you have to try to be psychologically alone. That is the next step in yoga. Psychological aloneness is a more difficult technique than physical aloneness. You can lock yourself in your room, shut your door and be physically alone, but you cannot lock the room of your mind—at least, that is very difficult. You cannot keep the mind in a closet and tell it not to see anybody, not to speak to anyone, and so on. The mind will not listen to this advice. Though physical sequestration, isolation, solitude, may be practicable to some extent, mental solitude is almost an impossibility for many people. And it is mental solitude that we are finally seeking through

the habituation to physical aloneness or solitude in the beginning.

From the state of physical detachment, you come to a state of mental detachment. As I said, yoga is essentially freedom from attachments; and in the beginning, it has to take the form of physical detachment, though that is not the true yoga. Physical detachment is not sufficient because you can be mentally attached, and that is worse. But, how can you come to a state of mental detachment? As I gave the example the other day of freeing your cloth from the clutches of thorns in a jungle, this personality, which is mind and body combined, has to be freed from the clutches of attachment gradually—first through physical detachment, and then psychological detachment.

So, in the beginning it is necessary to be free from the atmosphere of physical temptations, attractions, attachments, etc. Do not live in places where you will be physically tempted, physically attracted, side-tracked or seduced. Such physical atmospheres should be avoided. This is the least that one can do, because that is absolutely essential before the higher art of freedom from mental attachments can be attempted.

Why do you go to ashrams? You go to monasteries, cathedrals, nunneries, and so on. What is the purpose? The purpose is to make yourself physically incapable of getting tempted or side-tracked into unwanted channels, because the atmosphere and conditions of a monastery or a monastic atmosphere are such that you are physically prevented from going the wrong way, though mentally you may be indulging. Nobody can control the mind. Mentally,

you may be doing the worst things, but yet, physically you are completely restricted from your movements along the directions of indulgence. But a protracted limitation placed upon moving physically in the wrong direction will be highly contributory to the more important practice that you have to embark upon—namely, the freedom of the mind from thinking of objects and attaching itself to objects.

Chapter 8

PSYCHOLOGICAL NON-ATTACHMENT

Physical solitude is to be followed up with psychological non-attachment, which is really the commencement of true yoga. In fact, when we are psychologically detached in an effective manner, physical seclusion may not be necessary. This is a slightly advanced stage where the physical environment does not very much influence the condition of the mind because the mind has studied the world more deeply now and is able to look at it with a proper vision and in a correct perspective. Earlier, the vision was distorted, and there was a series of wrong impressions which the world created in the mind, due to which there was a chance of getting attached to various things, to objects of the world. Inasmuch as the mind is the principle factor determining our life in every way, whatever its condition is, that is our condition also. Mind is man, man is mind.

We are asked to live in physical seclusion to enable the mind to train itself properly, because in a confused physical atmosphere or a chaotic environment, it would be difficult for the mind to adjust itself to the required disciplinary procedures as demanded in the practice of yoga. It is necessary that we should, as far as possible, live in conditions which are not too obstructive, hampering, or opposing—or even tempting. *Balavān indriya grāmo vidvāṁsam api karṣati* (Bhagavata 9.19.17): Not even the wisest man can say that he has controlled the senses, because the senses have their own tactics, and like a

whirlwind they can act when the conditions are favourable. While they appear to be good friends, they can act as the worst enemies under given conditions.

We are misconstruing the very relationship we have with the senses by imagining that they are our friends, and that they give us correct reports about things outside us. They give us wrong reports, mislead us, and tell us lies, which we take for the whole truth and get immersed in a mess of error after error, piled one over the other.

While we are in seclusion, we also have to get guidance from a spiritual master. It is impossible to get tired of repeating this necessity for a Guru in the practice of yoga. Except, perhaps, in the last stage of consummation, we are always in need of a guide because we are treading a very precipitous path, and we are entering into regions of which we have absolutely no foreknowledge.

Every stage of life in our ascent is a strange land whose conditions may look frightening and quite unsuited to our temperament and to what we have been accustomed earlier. When experiences come to us, they may come as surprises. In fact, every important or meaningful experience in life is a surprise to us. While there are no surprises in the world where everything is natural and normal, to us all these look as surprises because we have not been accustomed to them. We are used to living in a cocoon of our own personal imagination and prejudiced ideas, and when truth reveals itself gradually, every degree of this revelation of truth comes as a wonder, a miracle, a surprise, etc. We have to be guarded in these conditions. Otherwise, we would not

know who is standing before us, and what is happening to us.

Sometimes, when we are seated in a railway train, the train will be going backward. We do not know what is happening. We intend that the train go forward. It is going backward for some purpose, though that is a part of its forward movement. Likewise, there can be a retracement of our steps or even an apparent fall, which may look very startling to a sensitive seeker. All these have to be borne with fortitude, understanding, and with guidance from the preceptor that has to come to us from time to time. Either we have to be with our parents or with our Guru. It is no use standing alone on our legs; otherwise, life will be a danger.

We have physical sequestration, such as in holy atmospheres like Badrinath, Kedarnath, or in a temple or a monastery, an ashram, etc. In such atmospheres of solitude, we have to ponder over the aim of life, the purpose for which we have taken to such a life and, if necessary, write down in a private diary the various steps that we may have to take and the different troubles that may befall us. It is unwise to think that in seclusion we are always safe. Though seclusion is a necessity and it is supposed to be a protection from our involvement in unwanted environments, these environments can project themselves even in solitude because undesirable environments are not always physical or external. They are only certain situations that are created externally by a susceptibility of our internal character, and as long as this susceptibility is there, the danger can be anywhere—even in the holy of holies of a

temple. As medical men tell us, disease is a susceptibility to certain intrusions of external force. These forces are always there; sometimes we are impervious to them, and at other times we are susceptible. When we are susceptible, we get into the clutches of these undesirable forces.

There is no use merely living in physical solitude while there are unfulfilled desires. Bereavements, frustrations, demotions in office, etc., cannot be regarded as preconditions for the practice of yoga, and it would be a great blunder to think so. There cannot be a greater positivity of approach than the spiritual life and, therefore, any such negative condition cannot be a qualification for the practice of yoga. The inability to get the requisite type of enjoyment and comfort may drive a person to spiritual life, but these negative conditions are frustrations and would not be a qualification; rather, it would be a disqualification.

Taking to a path that is spiritual is a positive yearning of the soul for a higher attainment because it is satisfied fully with all the lower types of experience, having understood them thoroughly, threadbare, and not because it could not take advantage of the comforts and facilities that the lower experiences would give us. We must be capable of taking advantage of all the lower facilities of life, and yet renounce them voluntarily. It should not be that circumstances are unfavourable for a comfortable life. Otherwise, there would be a sense of defeatism in the heart, an inferiority complex creeping into us, and a sorrow which may be deep-rooted even without our knowing that it is there.

We may be looking small in the eyes of people on account of a deficiency in our personality, which may drive us to a path that is Godly or spiritual; but that would have a reaction because of the sense of inadequacy felt in our own self. A smallness or an inferiority that made us feel sorry and unhappy may react upon us by creating conditions favourable for the enjoyment of the very things which we could not get earlier. Anything that we want, we must get. This is a law of nature. And if we deeply want a thing, it must come to us. But wanting a thing and not getting it would not be a spiritual condition because that condition would seek fulfilment one day or the other, and it is these conditions that come as obstacles in the path of yoga.

There are stories in the Puranas, the epics, etc., that even great sages had obstacles of a peculiar nature, coming not only from the external world here, but even from celestial realms. All these oppositions that one has to face in spiritual life are nothing but the reactions objectively set up by our susceptibility to pleasure or physical enjoyment, egoistic satisfaction, sensory contact, etc. So, while we are in physical solitude, we are not always free from danger. Sometimes, we may be in a greater danger there than in a public atmosphere. That is why in some of the scriptures dealing with the subject of renunciation, we are told that a person who leads an absolutely isolated life should not live in a village for more than three days or in a town for more than five days. All these precautions are given because there is a possibility of attachment or familiarity with the atmosphere. When we are familiar with conditions outside us, we try to find occasions for taking advantage of that

familiarity and utilising it for our personal satisfactions—physical, sensory, egoistic, etc.

It is useless, especially for a youngster, a beginner or a novitiate, to live absolutely alone without proper guidance from a superior; otherwise, he will fall with a thud and break his legs. In the initial stages of living in physical solitude it is necessary to live in the company of a group of people. If not, we should have a Guru who would be a sort of protection around us. Rather, it would be a mutual protection provided among one another by co-disciples or co-seekers. And in this physical solitude, we have to cultivate the art of psychological non-attachment, because the purpose of physical solitude is to train the mind for the practice of higher yoga.

Psychological non-attachment is a difficult thing, because while social pressure and social law and regulations can prevent physical contacts with unwanted centres or objects, nobody can prevent our mind from thinking; and our thoughts are our personality. What constitutes our strength or our weakness is the way in which we think. The physical conditions are not our strengths, and also they are not our weaknesses. What is in our mind, that is what we really are; that is our strength, and that is also our weakness.

It is, therefore, very futile on the part of anyone to think that one can lead a life of internal attachment while there can be an outward detachment. Bhagavan Sri Krishna warns us against this in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. While all our physical organs may be detached from objects of sense, the internal senses may be

in contact with objects, setting up a reactionary force with a more violent contact with objects than we would have entered into merely by physical contact.

Psychological contact is worse than physical contact because the mind shakes up the entire personality and churns the bloodstream of our body. Bhishma speaks to Yudhishthira in the Santiparva of the Mahabharata, wherein he says that the moment the mind thinks of a sensual object, the entire bloodstream is affected—a thing that we are unaware of. It is similar to the way milk curdles by a touch of acid; there is a breaking up of the indivisibility of the milk. The strength of the milk goes, and it is no longer milk at all. It becomes curd, and it cannot be converted back into milk. So also, an intense thought of a sensual object is like acid poured into the bloodstream of our body. It breaks up the indivisibility and the health of the blood, and the energy of the blood is isolated from the blood like butter coming out of milk due to curdling. The vitality of our system is isolated from the bloodstream, and this vitality that is so cut off from the blood is forcefully diverted or directed towards the object which the mind has been craving. We know what happens when vitality is diverted to an object. We become weak mentally and physically; and even as curd cannot be converted back into milk, so also the energy that is lost is lost forever.

It is no use, therefore, believing that our thinking of sense objects is harmless. The Upanishads say that poison is not poison; it is the thought of sense objects that is the poison. Why? Snake poison can destroy only one life, but the poison of sense contact or sense thought can destroy

several lives. It can cause repeated births through the cycle of metempsychosis.

All these have to be brought into the mind in seclusion, and the causes of attachment should be discovered. A thorough diagnosis of the case has to be made. The causes of attachment are misconceptions that we have in regard to things of the world. We have a wrong notion about things, and therefore, we are attached to them. We do not understand things properly; therefore, we are made to cling to objects.

There are many things that can attract us—hundreds and thousands of things and conditions—but as far as spiritual practice is concerned, one has to be very cautious about three important prongs of human desire, which are the subjects of study in psychology and psychoanalysis, and are also mentioned in the Upanishads as the *eshanas. Vitteshana, putreshana* and *lokeshana* are the terms used in the Upanishads.

Interestingly enough, these subjects are studied by the Western psychoanalysts Freud, Adler and Jung. These are our weaknesses. These are the weak spots in human nature, and the moment these weak spots are touched, the personality comes out like a hissing snake. We always take great care to keep these weak spots covered; we put on an artificial personality which is itself a kind of disease, on account of which we are never happy at any moment of our life.

We have what we call a sense of self-respect, which is inseparable from our individual being. We have a sense of importance. This is *lokeshana,* or love for good name and

fame, and it materialises itself into love of power later on when it gets intensified. Even an idiot has a sense of self-respect. This is the precise character of the ego. It is an attachment to the body that we regard as self-respect. What is our importance? If we analyse ourselves carefully and remove the fibres of our being individually, we will find that there is nothing inside us which can be considered of real importance. Whatever is of importance in us has come from somewhere else. The great words of Sri Swami Vivekananda come to my mind. In a lecture he said, "If there is anything worthy in me, it belongs to Sri Ramakrishna. If there is anything wrong, that is mine." Well, this is a tremendous attitude of humility and wisdom, which is unknown to us.

Really speaking, an individual personality has no importance of its own. The importance that it assumes, or that it appears to have, comes from the element of universality that is inherent in it. This is not known to anyone. It cannot be known because the ego repels a consciousness of the presence of even that element of the universal in itself. We resent the universal so intensely that we would not even like to think about it, because even to allow a thought of it is to reduce the importance of the ego, which is very painful to us. We are important, and sometimes it looks that our importance is not recognised or known to people. Then we try to publicise it by various means, and the ego knows the ways by which it can announce itself or advertise its importance.

To free oneself from this evil of false self-respect, which has really no substance in it, masters of yoga and teachers

of spiritual life tell us that we should live under conditions of humility. We should live a very simple life so that the ego may not swell up unnecessarily. When sitting in an audience, we should occupy the last seat, not the front seat. We may even sit near the shoes. Even if we are geniuses, it makes no difference.

I was reminded of the goodness of the late Dr. K. S. Krishnan, formerly the director of the National Physical Laboratories in New Delhi. He was a very famous man, a great personality in the field of science in India, perhaps even in the international field. He came here once with some other friends, looking very simple, wearing a *dhoti*. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had asked people to place a chair for him in *satsang*. One of the *brahmacharis* was sweeping and putting a *dhari*, and he put a chair there saying, "This is for Dr. Krishnan." Dr. Krishnan happened to come there, and nobody knew who he was. By chance, Dr. Krishnan came and sat on that chair. Immediately the *brahmachari* said, "Hey! This is for Dr. Krishnan. You should not sit here."

"Oh, I see. Sorry!" Dr. Krishnan said. He got up and sat down on the floor.

Then Swami Sivanadaji Maharaj came, and said, "Hey, you are sitting on the floor! Sit on the chair."

"No, it's all right," he said.

"No! No!" Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj pulled him up and made him sit on the chair, and then all looked up. This is the same man! The *brahmachari* felt so ashamed. Anyone else would have given a retort or shown a sign of

resentment, but Dr. Krishnan did not though he was an important personality, really speaking.

The greatness of a person does not depend upon outward publicity or even on recognition by others. One's greatness is a self-sufficient qualification which is self-existent and can shine by itself, like the sun in the sky. It is absence of real importance that makes us feel that we are small, and we get annoyed when we are not recognised. The more is our *vidya*, the more also is our *vinaya*. The greater is our knowledge and wisdom, the deeper is our sense of humility. The bigger we become inwardly, the smaller we look outside in the eyes of people, so that when we are the largest inside, we may look almost nothing to the public eye. This is very important to remember. The characteristics of a true spiritual life are the other side of ego-centricity of any kind. *Lokeshana*—love of name, fame and power, and self-affirmation of any kind—is contrary to true spiritual aspiration. The superiority complex is a bane on human nature. This has to be avoided.

There are other features which are our weaknesses, which we have to look into later on.

Chapter 9

HANDLING DESIRES

We were considering the aspects of psychological non-attachment as the first effort that one has to make while living in seclusion for the purpose of the practice of yoga. This is almost fifty percent of what one has to do in adequately fortifying oneself against onslaughts by the forces of nature—outside, as well as inside. The vulnerable parts of the human personality are the most dangerous enemies in the path of the spirit, which set up reactions and stimulate their counterparts in the world outside.

Everything in us is connected by a string with everything else in the world. All that is outside in the world of creation is connected with us by subtle appurtenances. So, whichever spot that becomes predominantly strong within us stimulates its corresponding part in the world outside and draws its counterpart towards itself. This activity of the mind is called indulgence, which it does through the senses, which are its instruments of action.

Many a time, we are likely to be under the impression that our troubles come from the world outside, and so we go to distant places like jungles, forests and cloisters. There are also occasions when we feel that our troubles do not always come from the world outside, that they are all inside us, and so it is necessary that we do a very thoroughgoing psychoanalysis of our own selves, irrespective of what is happening in the world outside. Both of these are partial truths; they do not represent the entire truth.

It is to a certain extent true, of course, that our troubles do not necessarily originate in the world outside. Many of our problems are internal, and a proper internal adjustment of ourselves may solve many of our difficulties. But the world is also a source of trouble in the sense that it is connected with us and we cannot simply isolate it from our personalities or our individual lives.

So is the case with ourselves. We cannot say from where the trouble arises—whether it is from inside us, or from outside us—because the trouble arises simultaneously from both sides, inasmuch as both the internal centre and its external counterpart are connected by subtle artifices which we cannot easily understand.

Thus, again we come to the conclusion that there is something tremendously difficult about the practice of yoga. Though we are always prone to a one-sided approach, we cannot be one-sided at any time. It is difficult for the human mind to consider both sides of an issue, due to the weakness of its nature. Either we hang on something outside or we hibernate in our own minds. This happens to us not only in our daily activities, but also in our religious attitudes. We are either too extrovert or too introvert, and neither of these natures can be regarded as ultimately desirable or successful. We must have a comprehensive view and take a joint action, as it were, from within as well as from without.

While it is necessary for us to find out what our weaknesses are, at the same time we have also to recognise which things around us may be in a position to stimulate these weaknesses into activity. We have to subdue our

passions and inordinate urges within—not only by inward analysis, philosophical contemplation, and company of the wise, saints and sages, etc., but also by keeping physically away from those counterparts of these inner urges which can stimulate us into activity in spite of our *satsangas*, studies, *japas,* meditations, etc. So, there is a necessity to perform a double action at the same time: inwardly, be wary, cautious, vigilant, self-introspective, and pure to the extent possible; but outwardly be guarded. Hence, seclusion is one aspect of the matter, and self-analysis is its other side.

This process has to continue every day. As our great guide Patanjali puts it, success is quick in the case of those seekers who are persistent in their practice and do not break the practice by discontinuing it even for a day, and keep up the intensity of the practice in the same manner as they entertained it in their hearts at the commencement of a fit of renunciation and the love for God in their lives. All this is easily said but very difficult to practise because while we may be wise, the forces of the world, also equally wise, are capable of circumventing every one of our precautions, and sometime harnessing the very means of our protection as instruments of their action.

The very caution that we have taken may become an instrument of our indulgence and fall. In other words, even our friends may turn against us and become enemies. The conducive atmosphere that we are thinking of in our mind may become an obstructing atmosphere. We have only to study the personal lives of sincere seekers who live in far-off places, away from towns and cities; their thoughts, feelings, and emotions are to be studied. We will find that it is a very

complicated tale and not always a happy one to hear, so there should be no wonder if after years of practise, no tangible result has followed.

Our desires have various stages and forms of manifestation, and they are very wise, like snakes. They know how to act when the time for action comes, and they know how to withdraw themselves when it is time for them to withdraw. *Prasupta, tanu, vicchinna* and *udara* are supposed to be the four conditions of desire.

If circumstances are unfavourable, the desires will be sleeping. Suppose you are in Gangotri or Uttarakashi with no proper clothes, no woollen blankets, no financial resources, and nothing to set you into action in the direction of fulfilling your wishes. You would be undergoing a kind of compulsive austerity, and for a time it will look like you are on the spiritual path, practising penance for the sake of God-realisation. But beware! The desires are sleeping. A sleeping person is not a dead person. So, when there is a latency of desires in Gangotri, etc., it does not mean that they are destroyed, because they are lying in ambush to catch you at the earliest opportunity that may be provided to them.

Desires which are sleeping may become causes of mental ill-health. There can be a manifestation of peculiar complexes of behaviour—susceptibility to sudden rage or anger at the least provocation, and desire for silly things which a normal person would regard as meaningless. We think it is foolish to desire a pencil; but a person whose desires have slept for years and could not reveal themselves even a little due to unfavourable conditions would find a

tremendous joy if even a pencil is presented to him. A fountain pen is, of course, heaven. Why? Because the desires have been starved. They are hungry like lions, ready to devour anything that comes near them. A hungry lion is a dangerous animal even if it is unable to get up because it has been starved for days.

Therefore, it is essential that we should not play jokes with God or the system of yoga by merely running to cold, remote regions, bathing in icy water, and not seeing the face of human beings. This may continue for years, but that is not the whole story. There is something more about it.

The *prasupta* condition is the sleeping condition of a desire. We cannot know that the desires are sleeping, except by the complexes that we manifest in our lives; and unless we are good psychologists, we cannot know what these complexes are because they would look like normal behaviour to us. It would be unnatural behaviour in the eyes of a very shrewd observer, or even to a normal person, in the worldly sense; but to one's own self, it may look like very healthy behaviour. Irascibility is one of the features found in people who have forcefully subdued their desires for a long time. They immediately get angry by even the smallest thing, and make wry faces and retort in a manner in which even a person in the world would not indulge.

Sometimes, the desires become thin. They are not sleeping; they are awake, but they are thin, like a fine silken thread—as, for example, when we descend from Gangotri to Rishikesh but stay in an ashram. The desire is slowly awakening: "Oh! I have come to Rishikesh. This atmosphere is more congenial than in Gangotri, but my

desires cannot be fulfilled because I am in an ashram." The desires are like weakened snakes that have been starved for many days and are slowly trying to move, wriggle out of their hole and find an opportunity to fulfil themselves. But they cannot, due to the restrictions of the atmosphere in which one lives.

When we fast voluntarily on *ekadashi,* for example, the desire for food is thin. It is not destroyed, because we have the satisfaction that tomorrow we will have a good meal. That satisfaction is itself a strength to bear the pain of today's fasting; otherwise, if we are not sure that we will get food for even ten days, then it will be a horror. Very difficult is this mind to understand.

You may have no money in your hand just now, but you have the satisfaction that you have plenty in the bank. It can be in a bank thousands of miles away, but the mere feeling that it is yours can give you a healthy satisfaction when it is not in your hand. On the other hand, if I throw millions of government dollars on your lap, you cannot be happy, because it does not really belong to you and you cannot use it. You may be a cashier in a bank; what is the use? Counting, counting, for nothing! It is not yours. You will be cursing yourself even if you are touching millions of rupees or dollars. On the other hand, you are happy even if nothing is in your hand, even if it is thousands of miles away, merely because of the feeling that it is yours. Subtle is the behaviour of the mind.

The mind can, therefore, satisfy itself by various means. Our attempt at a sublimation of desires would not always be fruitful, because who is to control or subjugate the

mind? There is no doctor for it. It is the mind itself that has to rectify itself by an internal adjustment of its constitution. The mind is the patient, and the mind is the doctor. This is something difficult to conceive. How can the doctor and the patient be the same? But this is the situation. There is a peculiar feature in the mind which can act as a regulator for another feature of the very same mind which is to be regulated. In common language it is sometimes called the higher mind controlling the lower mind, etc.

Thinness of desire is an occasional device which the mind may adopt for the sake of making it appear that the desires are not there, while this subtle connection in the form of that thinned form of desire, thinned shape of desire, can swell it into inflated action the moment opportunities arise or suitable conditions are provided.

At other times, desires are intermittent; they come and they go. This is called *vicchinna avastha*, while the thinned form is called *tanu avastha*. Today you are angry, and tomorrow you are in a very pleasant mood. You have seen husband and wife quarrelling. They will not talk to each other, but they do not really hate each other. Even if they put on the appearance of disagreement, anger and a mood of rejection, as it happens among members in a family, it does not mean that they hate one another. They have tremendous ties of attachment which can manifest at other times, under different conditions. It is a subtlety of love which gets suppressed by a fit of displeasure, at which moment it may look that the desire has gone or the love is absent, but it is pushed underneath. It is not absent, and tomorrow it will come up. It is possible that today you may

be very affectionate, tomorrow you may be quite the contrary, and the day after tomorrow you will be something else.

Thus, it is possible for a person to behave in different ways under different conditions of pressure, appearing to be one thing now and another thing afterwards. This is the intermittent condition of human desire, which takes shapes suitable to the conditions prevailing outside—because the purpose of the mind is to keep itself safe, secure, by hook or by crook. If desire should not be manifest, the mind will not manifest it. If the manifestation of a desire is harmful to its maintenance, to its security, it is good not to manifest it. The mind will manifest only those features which are necessary for its security at that moment; and at another moment, other features will manifest themselves, whatever they be, for the purpose of its maintenance and security at that time. And when every condition to manifest the desire is fulfilled, it can fully manifest. That is called *udara avastha*. Then, it will come like a roaring flood and swallow us.

Prasupta, tanu, vicchinna, udara are the four conditions of desire mentioned by Patanjali; and we are always in one or the other of these conditions. It does not mean that we have controlled the desires, or subjugated or sublimated them—nothing of the kind, because the moods that manifest in daily life will indicate they are still there.

What is to be done, then? There are various methods suggested by teachers of yoga as well as the scriptures. One of the methods is to live in a positive atmosphere even though there may be a rumbling of desires from within—

for example, in the vicinity of a Guru. It is difficult for unholy desires to manifest themselves in the proximity of a spiritual master; and a continued living with him—for years together, for instance—may make it so impossible for the desires to reveal themselves that they have no other alternative than to give up all hopes.

Not only that, the proximity with a great sage or a spiritual master produces a positive effect of its own. It is like the light and warmth of the sun, which destroys all infectious germs and purifies the whole atmosphere. We feel, sometimes, as if everything is all right in the presence of a great man. When we are away from him, all things may look to be at sixes and sevens; but in the presence of that great man, our questions are answered, emotions are subdued, desires are silent, and holy aspirations manifest themselves in his presence—as it sometimes happens inside a temple, even. When we witness a grand worship in sacred temple, we are roused into a holy emotion at that moment. We strike our cheeks, prostrate before the deity, and sing songs in ecstasy. For the time being, we forget everything that is earthly, carnal, physical, and undesirable.

A spiritual emotion is roused in the presence of a deity in a temple or in the presence of a spiritual master. While this is, perhaps, a very desirable method that can be suggested in the case of everyone, it may not be practicable for all people to be always witnessing holy worships in temples or to be in the presence of a master. They have various difficulties of their own in their personal lives. The alternative method then suggested is to take to holy study for a protracted period—as, for example, a Bhagavata

saptaha or a *purascharana* of a mantra, which takes all our time so that we have no time to think anything else. Our desires are kept in subjugation for such a long time that they become very weak, and the positive influence exerted on them by the *purascharana* of the mantra or the holy reading, called the *svadhyaya*, may sublimate them, may liquefy them and rarefy them to such an extent that they get either tuned to our holy aspirations or are made to vanish altogether.

People who cannot always be under the direct guidance of a spiritual master would do well to take to mantra *purascharana* or holy study for a few hours of the day, not merely for a few minutes, so that the thoughts that are generated in the mind at that time would have the influence of a check upon undesirable emotions rising up, and purify the emotions gradually, though this process may take a very long time. But when there is no other alternative, this has to be done.

Study of such great scriptures like the Srimad Bhagavata, the Bhagavadgita, the Ramayana of Valmiki or Tulsidas, whatever it be, as a regular *sadhana*, and not merely a random reading as in a library, would also create internal conditions by which the grace or blessings of these holy authors of these scriptures would descend upon the seeker. When we read the Srimad Bhagavata, we are in a subtle internal contact with the great author Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. After all, thoughts are inseparable from the personality who has projected these thoughts. We are in communion with Vyasa himself in some way when we study the glorious recitations of the Mahabharata or the

Srimad Bhagavata. We are in communion with the great sublime feelings of Valmiki when we read the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana, for example. We are in tune with Christ's tremendous spiritual force when we read the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, etc. When we read such holy texts such as *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas Kempis, we are in tune with that forceful love of God which the holy author enshrined in his own heart.

Study of these scriptures, therefore, is not merely a means of gathering information on spiritual matters, but a positive technique of transmuting one's emotions into those conditions of thought and life, of which these authors of the scriptures were embodiments. And when we do *purascharana* of a mantra, a similar effect takes place. The blessing of the *rishi* who discovered the mantra is upon us, the grace of the *devata* who is the deity of that mantra is upon us, and the alchemic effect produced by the *chandas* of the mantra which we are reciting is also a highly contributory factor. *Rishi, chandas* and *devata* are associated with a mantra. Thus, *svadhyaya* of scriptures and *japa* of mantras, resorted to in a very consistent, austere manner as a *sadhana,* would be a safeguard against possible difficulties on the spiritual path.

Chapter 10

PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

We are inwardly connected with everything in the world, but outwardly it appears that we are disconnected from all things. If we are really disconnected from things, we cannot have desire for things; but if we are connected with everything, then also we cannot have desire for anything. So, desire seems to be a kind of unscientific attitude of the mind which cannot be justified either way. If we are really disconnected, we cannot have anything, so why should we desire anything? But if we are really connected to everything, where is the point in desiring anything?

Then, what is desire? It is something very interesting and, therefore, it eludes the grasp of understanding. The pressure of the connectedness of ourselves with all things within, exerted upon our apparent disconnectedness with things outside, is the reason behind desire. It is, therefore, a contradiction. Desire is a great contradiction. It is a conflict in our personality, and so it is an unsolved problem for all times. It is a great enigma, a mystery. Nobody can understand what it is, why it is there, and what its purpose is. But if we try to go deep into its makeup, we will find that it is caused by this peculiar relationship between our inward connection with things and our outward disconnection from things.

Outwardly, we are not connected to anything. What physical connection have we got with things of the world? Everything is scattered hither and thither, unrelated,

unconnected, with nothing meaningful cementing the objects or things. I am sitting here, and you are sitting there; what is our connection? There is absolutely no connection. This is one side of the issue. The other side of the matter is that we are really connected—subtly, inwardly, by invisible threads. This inward invisible connectedness of ours with everything in the world presses hard upon our outward life in the world of the society of things; and it is that pressure that expresses itself outwardly as desire for things.

We long for the objects of the world, though outwardly they are apparently not connected with us. This longing is due to an inward feature not visible to the physical eyes but, as I said, this inward feature comes in conflict with the outer conditions. That is why there can be desire at all. If there is no such contradiction or conflict, there is no point in desiring anything. To repeat: if we are disconnected from things, there cannot be desire; if we are connected with things, then also there cannot be desire. So, desire is something which we cannot understand, and yet we are under its grip. We are pressed hard by it, and we are like puppets dancing to the tune of these peculiar pressures which have taken possession of us completely.

We have a double nature, and it is this that makes us inscrutable beings—inscrutable to others, and inscrutable to our own selves also. We are phenomenal, temporal, outwardly transient, but inwardly perpetual, permanent, eternal. So, there is an impact of the eternal on the temporal, and vice versa; this is human life. This is the cause of our joys, and also the cause of our sorrows. We are

joyful because of the eternity present within us, and grieved because of the temporality seeping into our veins. The temporal chaos of outward society, with which we are unable to reconcile ourselves with any amount of understanding and scientific effort, is the cause of our sorrow; but inwardly there is something which speaks in a different language altogether. Though we cannot see it, that is our real nature. That something is not seen does not diminish its importance.

Therefore, there is a great task before the yogi, the seeker of Reality, one who seeks to live a spiritual life. We are on the verge of a battle of the Mahabharata. This Mahabharata is nothing but the fight between the eternal and the temporal, and often it appears that success is not clear before one's eyes, and we do not know which side will win. The power of the temporal can sometimes push back the urge of the eternal.

It is said that Karna, with his physical force, could push the weighty chariot of Arjuna at least a few yards back, to the surprise of everyone. Such was his physical strength. But that was only an apparent success. His downfall was imminent. There can be an apparent defeat of the spiritual sense temporarily, on account of the force of temporal circumstances in which our bodily individuality is involved. It may look that God Himself is dead, or is defeated, at least, but this is only an apparent defeat and a false feeling of frustration. The success of the Kauravas was not a real success, though it looked as if they were successful in the beginning. It was a preparation for their total destruction.

The power of the temporal world of space, time and causality is a real power indeed. The power of diversity, the power of disconnectedness, and the power of social irreconcilability and tension—all this is a power, no doubt, and we cannot face it easily. But the power of the eternal is greater, though it works very, very slowly, notwithstanding it is firm in its steps.

The effort of the spiritual seeker in his practice of yoga is tremendous indeed. One would be startled at the amount of effort that may be required in achieving even a limited success on the path. It is most difficult to understand and even more difficult to practise because the knot, which is called *granthi* in Sanskrit, by which our personalities are tied up to the eternal on one side and the temporal on the other side, is hard to break.

We are friends of both God and the devil. This is our difficulty, and this is also our weakness. But, this state of affairs cannot continue for long, as we see that mankind cannot continue in this circumstance of the present day for a long time. There is an intense struggle and effort put forth by people everywhere in the world for some sort of reconciliation, but the reconciliation is not forthcoming. All the international organisations of human society have failed, and there is apparently no chance of their achieving any success even in the future because of a mistaken notion, on the basis of which these organisations have been formed. We cannot have a real unity among mankind if we assume or take for granted that mankind is diversely distributed, with no apparent connection between one another. But this is our basic assumption: the East is East and the West is

West, and the twain shall never meet. If that is the case, then there is no hope.

But we have hope as our support. We live on account of hope. We breathe today on account of a hope for a better future. If there was no hope at all, we would perish today itself. So, again there is a contradiction between our social life and our personal efforts. We try and try and try, but achieve nothing. Why? Because the effort that we put forth for bringing about a reconciliation in our lives with other people, and the various methods we are embarking upon for bringing about a unity of mankind, is a tendency of the basic unity in which we are rooted essentially—the nature of the eternal, from which we are inseparable. That is why we are working for universal brotherhood and universal love—one mankind, one world government, and so on. We hold conferences everywhere to bring about an understanding among people, a collaboration of ideas, and some sort of a unity to the extent possible.

But why do we attempt this if unity is not visible in outward life? If you and I are absolutely disconnected, why should there be conferences? What is the purpose of organisations? Where is the meaning in any kind of effort for cooperation? This meaning is hiddenly speaking from within us in a language we cannot understand; but that being our essential nature, we also cannot turn a deaf ear to it. We are struggling to listen to it, even with our deaf ears. But on the other side, the world of diversity presses upon us very hard and insists upon individual selfishness, and a necessity for warfare for the sake of the protection of the ego.

Now, this is not merely a social problem, but a spiritual problem—the problem of the seeker and the yogi—which will face him with a ferocity which he cannot encounter unless he is well prepared right from the beginning. What does the yogi or the seeker do under such circumstances? What is his aim, ultimately? What is the purpose for which we are working? What is yoga? It is the great art of supreme reconciliation whereby the temporal and the eternal do not any more fight with each other, but appear as one and the same thing. Our personalities do not seem to be divided between the eternal and the temporal. We become embodiments of a dual aspect of the single Absolute. That is the nature of a superman, which we are aiming at in the practice of yoga.

Thus, in silent seclusion, in a calm atmosphere, we deliberate and ponder over these problems of life, and inwardly compose ourselves for the purpose of this arduous task that is before us. It is necessary that, as is the case with a scientist working in a laboratory, we have to find time to be alone, to work with our own inner laboratory. We should not be busybodies. A scientist cannot be running about in the marketplace throughout the day and achieve what he wants to achieve through his observations and experiments in a laboratory. It requires complete isolation. When a physicist studies things through a powerful microscope, he will not be thinking of the world outside. He will not be even aware of things around him. Such will be his concentration, because such is his interest; such is the intensity of the problem before him, as it is very complex.

It is imperative that the seeker of Truth, the practicant of yoga, should find time to be alone for a few hours of the day for the purpose of this analytic effort—which is yoga, precisely. For this, we have to be seated in a comfortable posture. We cannot practise yoga walking on the road, just as we cannot have our lunch or dinner walking on the streets; we have to be seated at a table or in a comfortable posture. Well, we can eat our food even while walking on the road, but the body will not receive that food because it has not been taken in a manner that is acceptable to the human system. While we can chant the divine name and do *japa* even while walking on the road, and it is quite good, as far as it goes, that will not be sufficient because its intensity is inadequate. Inasmuch as this is a very serious practice, it requires a seated posture and utter isolation, wherein the body and the mind come together in collaboration for a single purpose.

Now, it is accepted that all this is, no doubt, a difficult thing for the busy industrialist or the commercialist, the office-goer or the labourer. But it all depends upon the value that we give to what we regard as the aim of our life. Where there is no interest, there cannot be consistent effort; and we cannot have interest in anything unless we recognise value in that thing. So, it all depends finally upon what we regard as our primary value in life. If it is making money that is our value, well, we make money and spend our life in amassing wealth. There are people who amass gold and silver, and die without enjoying it. There are people who have other sets of values, such as name, fame, power, authority. After their death, they would like to have

a tablet fixed on their tomb: "Here is a hero!" He has gone, nobody knows where, but even after death he wants name and fame.

Thus, it is essential to recognise what the ultimate value of our life is, and not be confused in our mind. A confused mind cannot practise yoga. What is it that we want? That will determine the program of our life, which is nothing but a chain of efforts that we make towards the achievement of that ultimate value of our life. We have already decided that this is the final aim of life, and everything that we do should be consistent with the achievement of it, a preparation for its achievement, and our daily routine will only be a link in this long chain of our life's program. What do we do from morning to evening? That is a small link in this long chain. Many links make a chain, and our daily routine, therefore, should naturally be consistent with the achievement of our ultimate aim. How can we have a daily routine which is inconsistent with the purpose of our life? All this has to be clarified in the mind. Everything that we do should be brought into relationship with the aim of our life. This is what we can call the healthy attitude of the mind. Anything that we are obliged to do, any attitude that we are compelled to put forth in our life, has to be brought into relation with the purpose of our existence. This is an integration of values.

Then, the mind will concentrate. It will not get distracted. Why does the mind get distracted? It feels a disconnection between the aim of life that we have set before ourselves, and the activities in which it is engaged in its daily life. My aim of life is one thing, and what I do every

day is another thing. There is a tension, and the mind cannot concentrate on the aim of life because it is engaged in something else. But is it really something else? This is what is to be decided first. If it is something else, how would we be engaged in it?

Here again, we lack proper analysis and understanding. We are confused always, from beginning to end. We are muddle-headed people. Clarity is unknown to us. How can we say that we are engaged in doing something which is unconnected with what we regard as good for us? This is very strange. Are we going to deliberately kill ourselves? We will find that we will not engage ourselves in any activity which is not going to bring us some good or the other. There is something valuable in that particular direction of work in which we are engaged; otherwise, we will not engage in that work. But it is very difficult to see this meaning in our attitudes and activities.

Often we are fired up with a tremendous idealism of spirit, but the idealism is so tremendous, so high-soaring, that we may not be able to properly assess the immediate values of the circumstances in which we are placed and the activities in which we are engaged. Wisdom of life is a difficult thing to achieve. The values of our immediate surroundings have to be reconciled with the characteristic of the ultimate aim of life. This is precisely the thing that we have to do in our seated posture before we start meditating, because what are we going to meditate upon unless things are clear before the mind? There will be a perpetual struggle within, a revolt from the mind against irreconcilable attitudes which are harassing us from inside as well as from

outside; and when there is such a pressure exerted upon us, how can there be meditation? So, it is essential that there should be a very harmonious bringing together of our values of life, and it should be clear to us before we sit for meditation that, "Everything is well. All is fine. I have understood what is around me, what is ahead of me, and what the connection between these two is." If this is not clear, we will fail.

There is that essential tension, the subject with which I commenced today, between our inward nature and our outward conditions of life, which is the cause of desire. All difficulties can be said to arise from desire. Inasmuch as desire is such a difficult thing to understand on account of its peculiar character, our difficulties are also something difficult to understand. So we cannot solve our difficulties. Everything is difficult because, basically, there is a mix-up of values. This confused relation between the outer conditions of life and the object of the inward aspiration should be clarified completely.

This is the main task of philosophy, or philosophical analysis. *Sankhya* precedes yoga, knowledge precedes all effort, and philosophy is the basis of all ethical endeavour and psychological analysis. This is the philosophy and the ethical background of the actual practise of yoga, which will immediately take effect if the preparation that has been made is sufficient. If the gunpowder is dry enough, it will immediately catch fire. If it is wet, it will not. Likewise, if the preparation is adequate, if the understanding is clear, if we have no complaints to make, and if our adjustments are properly made, then meditation, which is the real meaning

of yoga, will not be difficult for us. Like an arrow running towards its target, the mind will go to the object of meditation. There will be no distraction. Distraction is caused by the feeling that there are valuable objects outside, irrespective of the fact that our aim of life is something else, on which we are trying to meditate. So, we have not brought about a reconciliation between the outer objects of sense discretely present in the world and our aim of life, which we say is God, the Absolute, and so on.

There is a philosophical misconception in our minds, and as long as this misconception is there, yoga cannot be practised. This is part of the reason why the Bhagavadgita warns us that yoga has to be based on *sankhya,* which is called *buddhi* yoga in the language of the Bhagavadgita, which means the yoga of understanding.

Now we come to the actual essence of yoga practice, which consists of the outward preparations for meditation and the inward processes of meditation, which later on become a single effort of a total harmony of ourselves with the entire existence. This is the final stroke that we deal upon the problem of life as a whole.

Chapter 11

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA PRACTICE

Either we seek God fully or we do not seek Him at all. There is no halfway. This is an important aspect of our spiritual efforts, which we have to bear in mind. Most of us would like to have a small percentage of God in our lives, because one hundred percent of God is possibly not something that the mind can accommodate in itself. But it is very unfortunate that God will not allow Himself to be partitioned in that way. He would withdraw Himself completely if we try to belittle Him or try to take advantage of His grace upon us by exploiting it for baser motives, whose fulfilment the mind is subtly seeking—sometimes at the expense of God, and at other times by utilising God as an instrument for that purpose. This is a very serious aspect which one has to consider.

It is difficult for the mind to accept the greatness of God because the mind has its own yardstick of measuring greatness, and its measuring rod is of this world. It belongs to this world, so everything, even God, has to be measured with the values that are associated with the things of the world. What will it bring to us? This is the question, which is a commercial attitude. We are all business people in the sense that we expect something. "What will it bring to me? What is the profit that I gain by going to God, praying to God, meditating on God, or even accepting that He exists? What do I gain by saying that God exists? Let Him exist or not exist; what does it matter to me? It matters to me

because it may bring some advantage to me, so it is better that He exists."

Someone said, "If God does not exist, we have to create Him for our purposes," because without the existence of such a being, some of the difficulties of our lives do not seem to be solved. So like an 'x' in an equation, we create a God—a non-entity for the time being—which will be helpful to us in our earthly joys, which we seek much more than God Himself.

This is not a joke; this is a matter-of-fact experience which we have to concede if we are dispassionate in our own self-analysis. We are not so much lovers of God as we appear to be on the surface, because to love God wholly is to die, almost, to the life of the world; and nothing can be more fearful than death. While we are not speaking of physical death here, it is something worse than that. Even physical death will not be so horrible as the death that we are expected to pass through for the sake of God. There are more painful forms of death than physical death—that is, the death of our ego and personality as a whole, which is more terrifying than even the annihilation of the body.

Now, all these are the repelling aspects of yoga which will turn us away from it when the whole truth about it is presented before us. "Good bye!" would be our final word to this wholesome advice, which would be the advice of Bhagavan Sri Krishna to a man like Duryodhana—which will be so bitter, unpalatable, repelling, and most unwelcome. Even God can be an enemy of man. *Ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.5): The Self can be our enemy. This is most surprising, indeed. How can it be? But that can be.

The Atman, or the Self, can be our enemy in the sense that the demands of the higher degree of reality are unpalatable to the lower levels in which we are living. Our immediate needs look sweeter than the requisitions of a wider realm of truth.

The more we think of and ponder over the details of the practice of yoga, not merely the outer introductions to it, we would find that we are unfit for it. Not even the best man can say that he is ready for it or prepared for it, truly speaking. We have subtle weaknesses, every one of us, and these subtle weaknesses are kept buried inside us without our knowing what to do with them.

But how long can we go on thinking: "What to do with them, what to do with them?" Something has to be done with them. Finally, what we do is we reconcile ourselves with them, because they seem to be more friendly than God Himself. This is the attitude of Dhritarashtra: "Well, my dear Lord Krishna, what you say is correct, what Bhishma said is correct, what Drona said is correct; but after all, what my son says, I must agree with." This is what finally Dhritarashtra says and does. "Whatever anybody may say, let Parasurama say or the sages say, it is all very beautiful. I agree with it, but"—a great 'but' indeed—"my son, after all, is my son." And so Duryodhana's words are final. Secretly they are effectuated, overriding all that wonderful advice of the masters, incarnations and sages. This is what everyone does, and one cannot help it. Finally, we have to okay our inner impulses which go hand in hand with our bodily needs and the impetuous callings of the senses.

It is embracing fire, as they say, to practise yoga. Who would embrace fire? But that is what it is. It is not drinking milk or bathing oneself in honey. It is the most arduous of conceivable endeavours on the part of the human being. It is because we are not prepared for this ordeal that yoga becomes difficult for us. The whole point is that we are not prepared, so how can it be practicable? The practice comes afterwards, the preparation precedes it.

Up to this time we have been discussing the great canons of discipline and ethics—the principles of *yama* in their philosophical and psychological aspects, which are the preparations. They are not nothings or nobodies; they are everything. In fact, we will realise that when they are well understood and properly undergone, they are a major part of the success in our practice. The strength of the foundation is not in any way less important than the beauty of the edifice that is raised upon it; but we are always apt to forget that a foundation is necessary. We are always likely to keep an eye on the grandeur of the building on the top, the beauty thereof, and the comforts we can get out of it by living in it, rather than paying due attention to the technicalities involved in laying the foundation. What is the use of digging? Our idea is to raise the walls high, but what we do is go down by digging. Why do we go down when our idea is to go up?

Sometimes, it looks that our aims are not going to be fulfilled by the practices that are enjoined upon us in the name of yoga and spirituality. Mankind of today is, truly speaking, unfit for spiritual life. It is no use merely camouflaging or advertising; all this humdrum talk in the

name of God and religion would finally end up in the dirt and dust. One has to be very, very cautious and unselfish in such matters because we are playing with God. Even playing with a snake is not as dangerous. Either we honestly say that it is not for us, or we take to it whole-heartedly. Why play a joke with Him, show our teeth before Him, and mock Him? This is not a proper attitude on the part of anyone who is genuinely honest. But this is precisely our problem.

The difficulty, then, is in an incapacity to understand and appreciate one's own inner motives. There is an element of hypocrisy in every person. This cannot be avoided because hypocrisy rules the world; otherwise, the world would go to the dogs. If truth triumphs, there will be no world afterwards. That the world continues shows that truth is not triumphing, because the world is made up of hypocritical nets which are the names that we give to artificial makeshifts of relations which we project forth in the external world in our daily routines, in our smiles, and in our round table conferences. All this will not work with God, though it may work with man because we can deceive man by various artifices. But no artifice will work with God; nobody can deceive Him. He is the only person who cannot be deceived, and everyone else can be deceived. But we are trying to deceive Him only! This is very strange and, therefore, the boomerang comes upon us like a bolt from the blue; and here we are what we are.

But it is never too late to mend, as the proverb goes. Even now it is not bad enough. Things are quite all right. We can set things right even now. While nobody can be as

fierce as God, nobody can be as kind as God. While the blow He gives can simply smash us to smithereens, at the same time the blessings He can pour upon us can make us an emperor of emperors. Sometimes devotes call Him father and mother, judge, parent, grandfather, support, law and love combined. He is law and love both; the strictness of law and the lenience of love are both present in God.

So it is not impossible for us, even at this critical hour of ours, to make peace with God. And He can be easily conciliated. Sometimes we call Him Asutosh, 'very quickly pleased', because it is easy to please truth. We cannot please untruth so easily. As truth is the ultimate nature of things, we can please anything by a resort to the true nature of things. If I understand you properly in your essential being, I can pocket you; but if I cannot understand you, then it is difficult to reconcile myself with you.

The practice of yoga is the supreme effort that one is called upon to put forth—not as a so-called religious attitude of a monastic order, nor as a much-misunderstood and abused spiritual sense connected with an other-worldly experience of a paradise, but as an indispensable scientific and logical attitude called upon every person on account of the very law of one's own being, which no one can violate. The practice of yoga is the fulfilment of the law of our own being. How can we escape it? No one can.

With this introduction, which is practically the entire philosophical background and the psychological implication of the preparations for the practice of yoga, we take it for granted that we are honest with God and honest with our own selves, and take to the life spiritual in its real

meaning and connotation. One should not be tired of emphasising that the life spiritual is not the duty merely of a *sannyasin* or a monastic disciple, but it is the law of the being of every person; and if we cannot understand this much, we have only to say that we need a re-education altogether, right from the beginning.

The life spiritual is not the prerogative of any religious mendicant. It is not a prescription of Hinduism, or any kind of 'ism', for the matter of that. It is the science of life, and anyone who is alive has to be awake to this need that we call the attitude that is spiritual; and the implementation of it in life is called yoga. Such a broad meaning it has, and so necessary it is for the very existence of everyone.

Now we come to the actual thing that has to be done. I may only recapitulate what I was trying to hint at for the past few days: that every one of us, if we are true to the ideal that we are pursuing, and honest with ourselves, has to find time to think about it; and that all this requires a little of aloneness in our personal lives. It is no use being too busy with things unconcerned with our lives.

First of all, it is necessary to make a distinction between what is necessary and what is unnecessary. Often, even unnecessary things look necessary, so this is the time for us to exercise our *viveka,* or the power of discrimination. Is everything necessary that we call necessary, ordinarily speaking? We want four coats and five wristwatches, ten transistors, a huge bungalow, and millions of dollars in the bank. Can we call all these necessities of life? One who has these will say they are necessities, but this is a bungled way of thinking because we cannot call them necessities. A

necessity is that without which we cannot exist; and if we can exist appreciably without untold discomfort with the facilities that are provided to us, with that we have to be content. Contentment is a great virtue of a spiritual seeker. *Yadṛcchālābhasantuṣaḥ* (Gita 4.22), says the Bhagavadgita: We have to be content and satisfied with whatever comes without too much of exertion—though a little of exertion, of course, is unavoidable. The exertion should not outweigh the benefit that accrues from it, because our exertion should be more in line with our spiritual attunement with God than in line with the acquisition of material goods and physical comforts—in regard to which, we should not exceed the limits.

It is necessary that we live a very simple life because the need for living a simple life arises on account of a simple logic of life: we are not supposed to enjoy what we have not earned with the sweat of our brow. If we have not earned it with our effort, we cannot enjoy it. This is not merely a social law or an economic law, but a spiritual law. We are not supposed to enjoy anything which we have not honestly earned with our personal effort, whatever be the nature of that effort. It may be physical, it may be social, it may be intellectual, it may be something else. Are we convinced from the recesses of our heart that the facilities of life that we are enjoying are the real outcome of the effort that we have put forth, or are they the consequences of some sort of exploitation? If that is the case, it is undesirable.

Exploitation is not the law of life, and it will not succeed. Though in the beginning it may appear to succeed for some time, later on it will produce a tremendous

reaction; and that reaction will be so painful that we will not be able to bear it. If we keep this in mind, we will find that our efforts are so little that we can enjoy only very little in this life. How much effort are we putting forth for enjoying the facilities of life? Let everyone weigh the efforts that they put forth. Let us see: What have I done from morning to evening to deserve the comforts of life? We cannot ask for any facility even from God unless we have done something for it, paid a price for it.

If this essential factor of spiritual economy, we may call it, is not borne in mind, there will be a reaction in the form of rebirth, and there will be no God-realisation. Rebirth is the outcome of having enjoyed things which we do not really deserve, which do not belong to us. We cannot take more than what we have given; this is the law of life. We have to give as much as we take from the world; otherwise, we cannot take it, and if we try to take more than what we have given, rebirth is the result. No yoga can help us.

Therefore, simplicity of life is called for. We have to be as simple as possible in our lives. He who is low fears no fall. Climb not too high under the impression that you are powerful. And so, it is better to give more and take less, and have a greater credit thereby, than take more and give less and deserve the discredit of the debit that would be struck against us in our life's balance sheet.

These are not unconnected aspects of the practice of yoga, but are very much connected. We always think that yoga means sitting in a posture, breathing deeply, and thinking something. This is not yoga, though that may be a part of the misconstrued idea we have of the higher reaches

of yoga. In the practice of yoga, we are not doing something silently in our rooms; we are interfering with the powers of the world. This we should not forget. The practice of yoga is not a silent working of some peculiar technique inside one's room. We are operating upon the powers of the world when we are practising yoga. It is like a telephone operator: though he may be sitting in a small room, he has connections with so many things. Or, it is something like the operator of a central powerhouse which has connections with innumerable centres outside. We are operating upon the switchboard of the cosmos when we enter into the practice of yoga. All these things are difficult for most people to imagine. We only think in terms of a little deep breathing, and standing on the head for a few minutes, and chanting something. All this little practice that we do in our own misconstrued way will not shake even a hair of this world.

Truly speaking, in the true sense of the term, yoga is that imponderable activity of our mind by which it tries to associate itself with every centre of power in the world. It is not merely something that is happening within our own body, because what is within our body is subtly connected with everything else in the world. Even if we are merely trying to rouse certain powers within our own body, there will be a simultaneous rising of the counterparts of these powers in the world outside; and if we cannot be equal to the nature of the powers that are roused thus in the outside world, there will be a fall in the practice of yoga. Many people even go crazy because they cannot face the powers that are roused thus.

Hence, an utter dispassionate attitude and an abolition of all unwanted cravings inside should be regarded as a great necessity before we sit for *pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana,* etc. We need not worry too much about these things called *asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana*; they are such simple things when the prerequisites are properly fulfilled.

All the time is taken in manufacturing the matchstick, and striking the match takes only a few seconds. Then why are we bothering about striking the match? That is a simple affair: we simply strike it. But how much time have we taken to manufacture it? This we forget, and we are worrying only about striking the match, which is called meditation. There is no difficulty about it; it is the most simple of things, but the difficulty is in preparing oneself for it, making oneself ready for it, and in understanding what it really means.

Having said all this and understood this much, we take whole-heartedly to this great call of life called yoga. It is the great call of life, the call of God, the call of Eternity, the call of the Infinite, the call of the Ultimate Reality, which we cannot resist, and which we should not try to resist. When we try to listen to this supreme call, every other sound of the world is shut out. We become impervious to the entry of external forces which appear to go counter to this supreme call; and then it is that we are firmly seated in an *asana*. Even to sit in one posture is difficult because of the fickleness of the mind. Fickleness of mind has much to do with the inability to sit in one posture.

A *rajasic* and *tamasic* mind—filled with desire, and agitated with frustrated feelings within—cannot sit in one posture. Even this much we cannot do. We cannot sit even in an *asana,* let alone do other things. Ask anyone to sit quietly for three hours. It is not possible. He will get up and go away after a few minutes. What is wrong? The whole body is agitated: the nerves, the muscles, even the bones are shaking, and he cannot sit. Very strange! We cannot even sit quietly, and we are thinking of meditating on God!

All this is because we have a disturbed mind; we should not forget this. It is not that there is something wrong with our body. We may be a healthy person, but something is wrong with our mind. We are thinking a hundred things in our mind—and in a very chaotic manner, not in a consistent way. The whole thing is a hotchpotch in the head; therefore, we cannot sit quietly without a sense of uneasiness.

Even sitting in one *asana,* or posture, is a great achievement. It is not an ordinary thing. It is wonderful if we can sit in one posture for three hours continuously. We may go to *satsang* and see how many people sit continuously from beginning to end, without getting up and going out. They get up and go out, as if something is wrong with them; or they look this way, that way, do something, touch something, say something. It is horrible, really speaking. Why do they speak, why do they look this way, that way, touch this and touch that, do this and do that, get up, and go in and go out? What is wrong? And where is the question of the practise of yoga? It is all

nonsense, if even a little of this initial practise cannot be done.

That is, we are totally unprepared, and this sort of attitude is not good for us. Otherwise, we will die in this very condition of sorrow. We would have achieved nothing, got nothing either from this world or from the other world. We started showing a sort of disinterest in the things of the world under the notion that the heavens will descend upon us but the heavens are not coming, and we have left the world. So we are caught in the middle, and we are more wretched than the man of the world, if that is to be our fate.

Therefore, let there be an honest effort to fully prepare oneself for this great ordeal. Though it may look like an ordeal in the beginning, it is a movement towards the greatest of joys conceivable. Let us be prepared for this, and let us be confident that success, when this preparation is properly done, is bound to come, and not in the distant future.

Chapter 12

ASSESSING OURSELVES

As it was pointed out some time back, it is not merely the conditions of our mind that tell upon the nature of the success that we achieve in our efforts, but also the nature of the atmosphere in which we are living. Both these factors are to be taken into consideration. There is an old saying: "Tell me the books that you read and the company that you keep. I shall tell you what you are." This is a very wise saying, full of meaning.

What is in your bedroom? From that we can find out what sort of person you are. Search through your bedroom. What is on your bed? What is around? What pictures are you hanging on the walls? What books are you keeping? What is on the shelf? What is in the almirah? All these will be an indication of the nature of your mind and the nature of your involvements.

From the point of view of spiritual life or the spirit that we are, these things are not silly or unimportant, because there is nothing insignificant in this world. Every little thing is taken into consideration in a very appropriate manner. To God, at least, there is nothing unimportant; and the way spiritual is the way of God. So, every little bit of thought, feeling, action and atmosphere is a matter for deep consideration because as a little finger held before the eyes can obstruct the huge sun from being perceived, or as a minute sand particle can irritate the eye and prevent us from seeing anything, a so-called insignificant event, a so-

called unimportant thing, something not cognisable by the public eye, can become a terrific obstacle on our path. Even the smallest thing can assume a large proportion when the time for it comes. A little incident can separate close friends, and even an international war can take place on account of a little incident that happened somewhere, in a corner of the world. Hence, there is nothing unimportant or meaningless if we deeply consider these aspects of our life.

A spiritual seeker is a person who takes everything very seriously; he does not cut jokes with anything. And the most serious thing for him is his own personal life and his connections with things, even if they are inanimate. The things that are around us need not necessarily be animate in order to disturb us. It is not merely human beings that can disturb us; even inanimate, inorganic substances can disturb us, because money itself is an inorganic substance. Can it not disturb our mind? So, the atmosphere in which we are living is not necessarily merely a human atmosphere; it is anything and everything.

In the Svetasvatara Upanishad, and to a certain extent in the Bhagavadgita also, we are given some sort of an advice as to what kind of an atmosphere we have to select for the purpose of the practice of yoga. It should be free from every kind of distraction. The place for our stay, for our lodgement, for our practice, should be completely free from avoidable distractions. And what are the distractions? Anything that can stimulate the submerged desires.

It is not that we are free from desires when we are in a lonely place. Even inside the holiest of temples, the desires

can work. But the things around may not be such as to be capable of digging up the inner feelings within us. There are objects outside which can evoke certain feelings and reactions from within us. Though the feelings are always there—the condition of our mind does not change essentially, even if we physically move from one place to another—yet, nevertheless, there is a possibility of their getting accelerated or accentuated and pronounced, and made to manifest themselves concretely outside by objects of sense.

An object of sense is anything that we can see with our eyes, a sound that we can hear, something that we can touch, something that we can smell or taste, and so on. These objects can rouse up the hidden feelings of even a distant past. Impressions created in our minds by experiences of twenty or thirty years back can be roused up into action by a counterpart in the world outside. Everything is inside us in the form of a subtle groove, like the groove of a gramophone plate or like the impression formed on a photographic film. It can be duplicated, triplicated, and so on. It can be replayed at any time. It is waiting for an opportunity.

The purpose of the spiritual seeker is not to give an opportunity for these grooves to get relayed into action or the films within to be duplicated, etc. They have to be kept unused for a long time. Now, to keep a thing unused is not necessarily to destroy it. It can be there for a very long time without actively disturbing us. The purpose of seclusion is not so much an attempt at dealing a sudden death blow to our old impressions, which is an impossibility, but at

mitigating the intensity of these feelings within, and making us pass at least a little time in peace. This peace is tentative and is not real peace, because as long as enemies are lying hidden within, ready for action at any time, we cannot be said to be really in peace. Yet, when the enemy is not taking action, it is a kind of peace.

In the place of sequestration to which the yoga student resorts, many types of effort may have to be put forth. It is not merely a stereotyped routine of action that will help us much because, while we are under the impression that the enemy is not visible in front, he can strike us from behind.

There is nothing visible in front of us, so we go headlong on the path with the notion that everything is clear. The path is open; there is no problem, no difficulty. But the difficulties are created by certain placements of forces of nature which are spread out everywhere, and they are not always in front of us—physically speaking, at least. The forces which we have to confront in the practice of yoga are in all ten directions. They cannot be said to be only in front of us so that we can see them with our open eyes; and we cannot say that just because they are not visible in front, they are not there at all. An all-round action has to be taken in the practice of yoga. All the avenues have to be blocked, so that there is no chance of an entry of these inimical forces at any time. How many passes and bypasses are there through which these forces can gain an ingress into us? These have to be known first.

There is no use taking a sudden step because, as we have learnt earlier, taking the active step is not the real problem. The problem is equipping ourselves with all the

necessities for taking that step, and that takes all the time—almost the major part of one's life. But that is not a loss of time or a waste of energy. It is a necessity, because when we have properly strengthened ourselves and we are confident of our strength, then to take the needed step would be very easy.

What are the avenues or the channels through which inimical forces can attack us? Broadly speaking, these are the senses, though this is not a complete answer to the question because there is more to be said about these things. But generally, for practical purposes, we can say that the channels of approach for every kind of force are the channels of the senses. The mind has hidden potentialities, which can be roused into activity through these avenues called the senses. The mind acts through the senses. Sometimes it can take direct action also, but it does so very rarely. Mostly it acts through the senses. It waits for an opportunity for the senses to act; and the senses act when they find an object which can stimulate them into action. Any sight can stimulate us into manifesting a hidden mental potentiality, and so on in respect of the other sense organs also.

So, the student of yoga chooses to live in such a place or atmosphere where objects are not in the immediate vicinity to rouse the senses into action. This step that the yogi takes in the beginning is, no doubt, not a solution to his problems because, as we know very well, the submerged desires of the mind are not going to keep quiet for long merely because they have no opportunity to express themselves. Yet, this is one necessary step. What is to be

done with these submerged desires when they are not actively working, we shall see later on. The system of yoga prescribes methods for dealing with them in an effective manner.

To live in a place of isolation for a long time requires some sort of strength. A very weak person cannot live in isolation. The weakness of our personality is mostly due to our dependence on many factors outside, especially social factors, without which we seem to be incapable of conducting ourselves in our life, or of even existing. We have many needs of our body and mind, and these needs cannot be provided for if there is no proper social atmosphere. That is why most people cannot live in seclusion. We cannot get even a cup of tea in seclusion, not to speak of other things. It is a horrible state of affairs to contemplate the condition of a mind that has been starved for a very long time, which will feel as if heaven has come upon it even if the least satisfaction is provided to it. A drowning person is ready to catch even a straw that is floating on the surface of the water, though he knows that the straw cannot save him.

There is a starvation of the mind and the senses when we live in seclusion; and a famished personality is not always a healthy personality. So, in the beginning it will look that we are deteriorating and becoming a little neurotic, and these peculiar features which can be projected outside on account of the starvation of the mind and the senses can make us look awkward within ourselves. This awkwardness may put us out of order if proper guidance

from a spiritual adept to utilise this condition for a better purpose is not forthcoming.

If positive spiritual guidance is not forthcoming, pure, forced and wilful isolation would be of no use. Beginners, novitiates, youngsters would be taking a very foolish step if they imagine that they should go into jungles or forests in the very beginning itself, and search for God in the woods by a withdrawal of themselves from social contact and a starvation of the mind and the senses. They will go crazy, because they have no positive spiritual guidance.

After cleansing the personality through austerity, a form of which is isolation, seclusion, etc., the personality has to be filled with positivity. It is an absence of this positivity of approach that creates the sense of vacuum often seen in spiritual life. We feel as if we are empty inside; and a vacuum is a dangerous place, because anything can enter it. We are under the impression that the vacuum will be filled by God, but that is not always the case. Even the devil can occupy that vacuum, and mostly that is what happens. God will not come.

In the Puranas there is the story of Amrita Manthana, the churning of the ocean for the purpose of the immortal nectar of the celestials. Nectar did not come. What came was poison—deadly, and frightening, darkening, repelling, which can drive us out of our senses. Such was the thing that came out when the gods churned the ocean to obtain an immortal ambrosia. No ambrosia came. And when we are churning the whole of existence in our spiritual practices for the sake of the nectar of immortality, that immortality will not come. Something the opposite of it will

come, and then what will happen to us? We will be finished forever. We will be swept off the ground, and it will look as if we are in a state worse than the one in which we were even in earthly life, in a worldly life.

The retracing of steps from the spiritual direction that one has taken earlier is a common feature among spiritual seekers. They turn back upon the very same condition of life which they were leading earlier. Sometimes they fall even further down. The earlier state would have been better, because the facilities of austere living provided in a solitary place had not been taken advantage of by doing something positive.

Here, we have to also draw a line of caution. We must be very wise in choosing the kind of seclusion intended for our type of mind. Everyone is not on the same level of evolution. If a person comes from Delhi and stays in the Sivananda Ashram, it is a kind of seclusion for him, but he may not be prepared to live in Badrinath; that will be an unsuitable type of seclusion for a person living in Chandni Chowk or Connaught Place. So there is also a difference in the kind of seclusion, on account of the degree of its intensity.

Even in Delhi itself, if we go to the suburbs, that will be a seclusion for a person who lives in Chandni Chowk. If we are in the middle of the city of Bombay, to go to the outskirts of Greater Bombay is a seclusion. But that is not as secluded as living in Gangotri, which is something quite different.

The extent or the intensity of seclusion that one can tolerate, and would be essential for a person, should be

judged by oneself, if possible, by self-analysis. One should not take extreme steps. Extremes are dangerous and would immediately bring about an undesirable retaliation.

Therefore, the seclusion chosen should be in the proper intensity, and not be of an extreme type. Even the Buddha failed in his extreme *tapas,* and he came down to what he called the Middle Path, or the Madhyama Marga, the via media, the golden mean of approach. We should not go to extremes. An extreme is that step which the body and the mind in the present condition cannot bear. That step should not be taken.

Our intention is not merely to die or perish. A soldier does not enter the battlefield in order to die; that is not his intention. The purpose is to win victory in the war. Similarly, we do not go on the spiritual path to perish. That is not the purpose. We go to win victory, and we can win victory only if we know all the tactics and techniques of warfare. We must be well trained in soldiery, in the art of battle, we must have the suitable equipments, we must be healthy enough, and we must have greater strength than the strength of the enemy. This is very important; otherwise, victory will be far.

Now, to judge whether we have greater strength than the strength of the enemy is also a difficult thing. We require guidance here again. And to know this, we must first know who is our enemy. Then only we can know whether our strength is greater or not. We should not think that the entire creation is before us to press us down into a state of defeat. The whole of creation is not being confronted at once. We are gradually rising from the

immediate atmosphere to a larger expanse, until the whole world is taken into consideration.

The immediate concerns of life are what we have to confront. 'Confronting' means solving a problem, not merely facing it with the power of will to crush it. We are not going to cut the Gordian knot, but untie it gradually. Our problems are knots, ties heaped up one over the other, and we cannot simply crush them, because knowledge is not merely an expression of brute force but a very intelligent extrication of oneself from involvements.

The nature of knowledge is very peculiar; and the practice of yoga is a rise from one stage of knowledge to another stage. Every stage in the practice of yoga is a state or stage of knowledge, understanding, and conscious experience. It is not a brute activity, it is not an unconscious dealing, and it is not something that we do unawares. Every step is a conscious step, intelligently taken, and it is nothing but a movement of our mind in a *sattvic* condition. Yoga is a *sattvic* activity of the mind when it is already freed from *rajas* and *tamas*.

Right from the very beginning we have to be cautious, and not allow ourselves to be fired up with any unnecessary enthusiasm. Sometimes a kind of jubilation which is bereft of understanding enters us. That is improper. Mere enthusiasm will not succeed. Understanding is to be there behind it because, while enthusiasm and a sense of confidence within are absolutely essential, the enthusiasm should not be of a foolish sort. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," we are told. Angels are afraid of going there, and fools are rushing into it. We should not take such steps.

There is a foolishness on our part, an unintelligent enthusiasm sometimes, with which we are fired up. Because of this it is that we are failing in our attempt—not only in the practice of yoga, but in every other walk of life. Even in secular fields, we lack proper understanding and capacity of adjustment. We always go to the extreme in our thoughts, feelings, and deeds.

Thus, we again come to the point that the first thing that we have to do is to understand where we are standing. Where do I stand today? What is my physical strength? What is my moral strength? What is my intellectual capacity? What is my capacity to understand my relationship with other people? And what are the reactions that are likely to be set up by any step that I take, even the first step? If reactions are set up, what further step I am going to take—without getting defeated, of course—to set them right? These are intelligent analyses which should precede our direct practice of yoga, commencing with *asana, pranayama*, and so forth.

Chapter 13

SITTING FOR MEDITATION

The first and foremost immediate practical step—the striking of the iron while it is hot, as they say—is to be seated in an erect posture for the purpose of the practice of yoga. The sitting posture is regarded as most conducive and necessary because in order to adjust the mind and concentrate it on the ideal of our quest, the body also has to be set in order.

The position of the body has to be decided in the beginning. What are the positions of the body? We can be standing, sitting or lying down. Experts in yoga have pointed out that the seated posture is best because when we are standing, the mind cannot concentrate wholly on its objective as the standing posture requires the attention of the mind on the body to some extent. Sometimes we may not be conscious that we are standing, especially when we are engaged in conversation or are gazing attentively at something. But whether we are aware of it or not, a part of the mind is keeping the body in position. Holding the body in a consistent way is made possible on account of the cooperation of a part of the mind. It may be only a reflex or subconscious action, but a part of the mind is given to the work of enabling us to stand erect and, therefore, the whole of the mind cannot be given for concentration, meditation, and so on. The standing posture is not good because if we become too absorbed in concentration, we could fall down on account of the mind not being able to keep the body in

position. If we lie down, we may go to sleep. There is a chance of getting into a state of unawareness while we are lying down.

So, there is no alternative; we have to be seated. This seated posture should be comfortable because the purpose of being seated is not merely sitting. The purpose is to make the mind wholly attentive, or at least attentive in a large measure, to the ideal of our quest. If we are seated in an uncomfortable or painful position, then the mind will be thinking of that pain. If a person who is not used to sitting in *padmasana* forces himself or herself to sit in *padmasana*, there will be pain in the joints, an awkward feeling in the muscles, and the attention will be on the muscle pain rather than on the object of the quest. *Sthira sukham āsanam* (Y.S. 2.46), says Patanjali. '*Asana*' does not mean *padmasana, sukhasana* or any particular *asana*; it is any posture that is very comfortable.

This comfortable posture should be such that it does not disturb the free flow of our breath. Many things are connected, one with the other, in our system. The muscles, the nerves and the vital force are immediately connected with one another, and they are indirectly connected with the mind. They exert a sympathetic influence upon the mental activity, and our main purpose is to train the mind in the art of meditation. Therefore, there should be a strengthening of the position right from the beginning—as, for instance, when constructing a building engineers give enough attention to the foundation. The laying of the foundation of a building is a very important part of the construction. It is not something unimportant or

unnecessary. Hence, from the very beginning, we have to be cautious. It is no use taking a hundred steps at a time, not knowing the consequences thereof. Take only one step at a time.

First of all, before you start meditating or chanting anything, find out whether you are able to sit. Are you able to sit quietly, comfortably, for at least fifteen minutes continuously without shaking your body, without stretching your legs, without feeling pain, without feeling any signs of unnaturalness in your pose? This has to be checked at the very beginning.

Choose an appropriate posture. Do not try to do something impossible. People who are not used to sitting on the floor with crossed legs, who are accustomed to sitting only on chairs, may find it very hard to comfortably bend their legs. So for them, the advice is that they sit in such posture as would be nearest to the prescribed postures without causing undue pain, stress or awkwardness. In the beginning, we may even use a chair with a backrest to keep the spine as erect as possible. Later on, it must be improved gradually until we are able to fold our legs and sit erect.

Why is it said that we must fold our legs rather than stretching them out? It is related to the operation of the energy in the body. The purpose of locking up the legs and the hands in a seated posture is directly connected with the meditative techniques, and is not merely a whim or fancy. The reason is that energy is likely to leak out through the extremities of the body, through the fingers and toes especially. The extremities of the body are the nerve endings, and energy goes out through them because they

are delicate. If they are left open, stretched forward, it is likely that the energy that we conserve in an act of concentration of mind may not be able to circulate within our system—which is our intention, ultimately. The energy may escape on account of the pressure exerted on the body.

Every form of energy tries to escape the centre of concentration—as, for example, soda in a bottle tries to escape, but cannot because the bottle is so thick. So the moment we open the top, it bursts out with a hissing noise. The same applies to any kind of energy. Why do children jump and dance and run about here and there, while adults do not? We do not see elderly men running about; they go very slowly, whereas a small child jumps. If we ask a child to go out and see somebody, it will run and jump and skip because it has bottled-up energy, whereas an adult has not so much energy. This bottled-up energy wants to escape. When energy gets concentrated it must find an avenue of escape, in some way or the other.

Much more does this fact become evident in a deliberate attempt at the conservation of energy in concentration and meditation. The moment we begin to deeply concentrate and wholly fix our attention on anything, all the energy of the body gets focused on that point on which we are concentrating. There is a withdrawal of all the energy of the body, and the senses also cease to function, to some extent. When we are deeply concentrating on something, the eyes will not see, the ears will not hear, and so on. Even loud noises will not be heard. We may be gazing without seeing anything, on account of

the withdrawal of the mind. There is a focusing of all the energy on a particular point.

But this is something quite unnatural for the distracted mind of the workaday world. The mind does not know what concentration is. It has never been taught the value of it, the purpose of it, or even the method of doing it. Now, suddenly, we are starting this technique, to which the mind is unaccustomed, so it wriggles out of this condition; the mind wants to get out of the clutches of this act of concentration, and finds some way of stopping it. Then we feel some sort of fatigue, awkwardness, unhappiness or tension inside, on account of which we may stop the concentration.

It is also possible that the energy will leak out. Now, the way in which the energy leaks out of the system is multifarious, about which we shall see in some detail a little later on. It has many ways of leaking out, but the simplest and perhaps the grossest way in which this can happen is by the extremities of the body coming in contact with the atmosphere. We know that in the winter, the wind blows very strongly. That is, from a place of intense pressure the wind blows in the direction of that centre where the pressure is less. It moves towards hot places from cold places. Likewise, the energy may leak out of our system on account of the pressure it feels inside, and it may move in the direction of that area where the pressure is less. The pressure in the system is more; the pressure outside is less. So, naturally, it will go out, and it will go out through the extremities—through the fingers and toes. Therefore, the student of yoga locks up the fingers and toes. The toes

touch the body, and are not allowed to be exposed to the atmosphere outside. This is why we are advised to sit in a posture with our legs locked up.

Of course, the best *asana* is *padmasana*, which is said to be the king of meditative postures. But if sitting in *padmasana* is not practicable, we can have easier postures such as the one in which we are all seated now, for example. We are all sitting in one posture. When we sit in this posture, we are allowing our toes to touch the bare ground. This is why we are asked to be seated on a non-conductor of electricity.

When the system of yoga was propounded in ancient days, they used to sit on dry grass, a special form of holy grass in India called *darbha* or *kusa*. *Asanas* or seats made of this grass were used. We can also use other types of seats, such as dry wood, but that would be very hard, so we cover it with a cloth, a cushion. The idea behind this is that we are seated on something which will not drive our energy down to the earth, because the earth is a conductor of electricity. We will get a shock if we stand on the ground and touch an electric wire. This is why we should not sit directly on the earth. Have a seat—a cotton seat is all right—and sit in this posture with locked-up legs, not allowing the toes to touch the ground. Sit in *padmasana* if possible, and lock up the hands—like we see in portraits of Buddha, for example, seated in meditation. Some people lock their fingers. There are various postures of this type.

We should sit erect. If we sit in a crouched position with our back hunched, or if there is any kind of distortion of the body, there will also be a kind of distorted feeling in

our mind; we will feel a sense of uneasiness. The purpose of this physical posture is to enable us to gradually forget that we have a body. The consciousness that we have a body increases by the physical pain that is felt, or by any kind of illness that is in the body. A very healthy person does not know that he or she has a body. It is only a sick person who always feels that there is a body. A jubilant, healthy body will not be conscious of itself. That is the sign of good health. In yoga, the purpose is to ultimately rouse the consciousness out of attachment to the body for a different aim altogether. Now the consciousness is tied to the body in such a vehement, impetuous way that it is almost unthinkable how we can extricate it. The consciousness or the mind has become one with the body, and it is the body for all practical purposes. We and the body are one. We *are* the body; this is what has happened to us.

This is a very unfortunate state of affairs. We have regarded our body as ourselves, as there is nothing else that we can think of as being ourselves. It is a Herculean task to loosen the contact of consciousness with the body. No one should think that it is a simple matter. It is like peeling off our skin. Who would like to peel off their skin? It is horrible. But this is exactly what will happen. When we try to extricate our mind or consciousness from the body even a little, we will feel a shock. We will feel a creeping sensation like ants crawling through our nerves, and there will be tremors, perspiration, and similar uncomfortable sensations. We will feel this even when we are merely sitting for a long time without concentrating, without thinking anything in the mind. Try this, and see what

happens. For one hour continuously, sit in one erect posture without thinking anything. Do not meditate, do not do *japa*—only sit. You will find a creeping sensation, a subtle feeling inside, as if some sort of wave-like motion is going on inside the nervous system. That is the sensation created by the movement of the pranas. The point is very clear, and there is no need to expatiate upon it further.

Be seated in one posture. It is advised by teachers of yoga that we must face the east or the north because of the magnetic influences of these directions. The sunrise is the cause of a magnetic force in the eastern direction, and the North Pole is said to be the centre of a magnetic force which runs from north to south. Hence, these two directions are regarded as very helpful in generating psychic electricity within us in the act of concentration or meditation. Face the east or the north, and be seated in one posture with the head, neck and spine erect. Keeping the head, neck and spine erect is difficult in the beginning; you will feel pain in the spine. So, in the earliest of stages, you may have a backrest. Use a cushion, or sit near a wall. That will help in the beginning to keep the spine erect. Whatever is helpful to you in this practice can be resorted to.

Now, having comfortably seated ourselves in this posture, what follows? What are we going to do by sitting like this? Here starts the real investigative activity, which is the beginning of yoga. Our mind starts working, and it starts working in a very comprehensive manner.

Many have suggested that before we actually start thinking on any particular issue of yoga, it is better that we take a deep breath. Many types of *pranayama* are

prescribed, but we need not go into all these details because they have one purpose ultimately—to harmonise the flow of the breath. Just as all the *asanas*, or the physical exercises which hatha yoga prescribes, have one purpose ultimately, which is to keep the body in a perfect single chosen position, the purpose of the different breathing exercises is to finally systematise the process of breathing, instead of breathing heavily as we do when we are running or are exhausted, etc. The more we are composed, the slower is the process of our breathing. It is only in a disturbed condition that we heave the breath. So, when we are seated in a posture, the best thing would be to take a very slow, deep breath, and slowly exhale, as slowly as possible. This, continued for a few minutes, coupled with Om chanting in a sonorous, mild tone, will prepare the mind for its further work.

But if our mind is disturbed for any reason, we can neither take a deep breath very slowly, nor chant Om with peace. This is another essential factor. If we are agitated for some reason, we should not sit for meditation; that is not the time for sitting. Every one of us has occasion to get disturbed in the mind. Something happens either within us or outside us which puts us out of gear, and we are unhappy. We are morose and moody, and do not know what to do. At that time, there is no use sitting in a posture or regulating the breath. That is why there is the very cautious advice that we must be adequately established in the practice of the *yamas.* It is because there is no practice of the *yamas* that this disturbance comes. Why are we moody, melancholy and dejected? What is the matter with

us? Something is wrong in our way of thinking. We have not been able to adjust ourselves properly with society, or with our desires, and so on. These all come under the *yamas*. We have not laid the foundation properly, and now we are sitting in *asana*. We are not ready for the *asana* itself. This is a very important thing to remember. Are we agitated, frustrated? This is a question we must put to ourselves.

Also, it is proper or advisable to review whether the mind has any deep attachment to anything—something which compels us to pay attention to it. Mild attach-ments do not matter; there may be many like that. But, is there any deep-rooted attachment which is inseparable from our normal emotional feeling? Everyone has some attachment or the other, and if there is something very severe and inescapable, that has to be dealt with in an effective manner. What prevents us from concentrating the mind on things spiritual is attachment to something or the other in this world.

What is attachment? It is nothing but the concentration of the mind on something. And now, we are here only to concentrate the mind on something; that is the very purpose of yoga. But what is it that we are trying to concentrate upon? We have got some peculiar idealistic notion of what we have to meditate or concentrate upon, for which we are sitting in the name of yoga. But the mind has already concentrated itself on something else, different from what we are conceiving as the object of concentration, and so there is a tussle between an idealistic picture that has

been placed before the mind in the name of yoga and a realistic attachment with which it is very much concerned.

Now, this is a very serious matter for the students of yoga, for people who live a spiritual life. This is so serious that we cannot simply close our eyes to it, because if deep-rooted attachments are not dealt with in a proper way and the requisite attention is not paid to them, we force our will to concentrate on something else in the name of yoga, and it will be harmful to the system. It will violate our personality, insult our mind, and cause various complexes and illnesses—physical as well as mental.

Therefore, after you are well seated, review in your mind if you have any strong emotions inside, either of intense affection or intense resentment, because either of these is dangerous. If you find that it is hopeless—the mind is so much agitated on account of this attachment or resentment that it is no use sitting for meditation—well, stop your meditation for the time being: "My dear friend, enough for this day. Today I am not going to meditate. I am very much upset."

What to do now? Again comes the need for a psychological analysis. A deeply upset person cannot conduct a psychological analysis, and so you must do this analysis with the guidance of a superior. If you have not got a Guru, at least talk to somebody who is more advanced than you. He is not your Guru, but you can consult him: "Something is very seriously wrong with me. What can I do?" He may give some advice. Two heads are better than one, as it is said. So, if you do not have a Guru, some such collaboration from your co-brothers on the path will be

helpful because you cannot analyse yourself when you are completely out of order due to deep attachments or anger, etc.

The love of God is the deathblow to all our earthly emotions, and a deathblow is the severest of blows. Nobody can tolerate it. It is an awful pain; we cannot bear it. Though we use the word 'love' like a honeyed term, the love of God is a terrific thing. Here is an occasion, an instance where love, which ordinarily is a source of joy, becomes a source of sorrow and repulsion—and is painful, as if it is venom. The love of God is not, at the outset, a source of joy. It is an axe that we deal at the root of all our joys. This is the reason why most of us cannot take to a serious practice of meditation. A daily review of the mind, a constant assessment of the conditions of the mind, a regular check-up of what is going on in the mind—even in a subtle, invisible manner—would be necessary before taking to actual practice of *pratyahara* or *dharana.*

Chapter 14

FINDING TIME TO SIT ALONE

It is taken for granted that I am speaking to those who are one hundred percent concerned and dedicated to what should be regarded as the ultimate purpose of life. We are not discussing what usually goes by the name of an ordinary good life or a virtuous life according to public opinion, or a so-called righteousness that keeps us going in the world. This is a very serious subject that we are discussing, almost a life-and-death matter for those who can realise its importance.

It is difficult to bring into one's mind its seriousness on account of the inveterate sluggishness of human thinking. The sheep that are being driven to the butcher shop have no idea what is going to happen to them. They eat well, become fat, and bleat in the usual manner, not knowing that they are heading towards their doom. Such is the fate of the majority of mankind. But some may be awakened: "My fate is terrible!" And then it is that one begins to do whatever is possible under the circumstances. We have to be very, very cautious, and forethought should be our watchword.

There is an old, humorous story about forethought—how we have to connect one event with another event and realise that something is going to happen in the future; it may even be in the far-off future. It appears that an ancient king was fond of rearing monkeys. That was his hobby, his diversion. He used to collect all varieties of monkeys, and

feed and maintain them in his palace. In the palace, there was also a flock of sheep. It appears that one of the sheep used to run into the palace kitchen every day and try to snatch some eatable, and the cook would drive it away by giving it a clout on the head. Every day this sheep would rush into the kitchen, and the cook would beat it with a stick.

The leader of the monkeys in the palace observed this phenomenon. It summoned all its brethren and said, "My dear brethren, we are in danger! We have to quit this palace immediately. Our life itself is going to be in serious danger."

All the monkeys asked, "What is this danger? We are taken care of so beautifully, fed so well. We have no botheration or worry about food—which we may have if we are in the forest. What is the trouble? What is the danger?"

Then the leader said, "Listen to me. There is a sheep here which runs into the kitchen of the king every day and gets a beating from the cook; and it is so foolish that in spite of the beating, it still goes there every day. Now, one day the cook will get so angry with it, he will beat it with a piece of burning firewood. In his anger, he will not know what he is beating it with; he will simply strike it with a firebrand. Then, what will happen? The wool of the sheep will catch fire. In panic it will run hither and thither, and enter the stable where the king's horses are tied. There is dry grass in the stable, which will catch fire. The fire will burn the horses, which are so dear to the king. They will be scalded, burnt because of the fire. Then, a report will go to the king:

'Oh, Lord! Your horses are all half dead. Their skin is burnt off!'

"The king will say, 'They are very costly horses, and they are so necessary for me. Now, all their skin is burnt! What is the remedy for this?'"

The leader monkey said, "My dear children, there is only one remedy: the fat of monkeys. Now you know the danger."

The monkeys replied, "Old man, you have no understanding. Foolishly you are thinking something, concocting something out of nothing. All this is a vain thought in your head. We are well taken care of here by the king. We shall not leave this place. If you want to go, you go."

The leader said, "All right. I have given my advice. I am quitting." That very day the leader monkey left the palace, and whatever he predicted happened. All the monkeys were boiled, and their fat was taken and smeared over the burnt horses.

This is a story given in our fables to illustrate forethought. It has no apparent meaning; from one thing we are connecting another thing. But forethought is also the capacity to connect causes with effects, and effects with causes. Pigheadedness cannot be regarded as wisdom. Seekers of Truth though we may be, our sympathy for living the life of Truth may be only on the lips, because we are well fed in the palace of the king. What is the trouble? We have got our daily meal, our clothes, our house, our friends, and every sort of comfort. Where comes the need for living a life of Truth in a peculiar, far-fetched manner,

in the Upanishadic sense? This is what these small monkeys told the leader monkey: "Why are you blabbering all these things, while everything is wonderful in this world?"

But, you do not know; the day will come when you will be boiled, cooked by the fire of time, and the same fate of the monkeys will be the fate of mankind. Before that happens, would it not be wisdom on the part of farsighted persons to look into aspects which would be practicable in freeing oneself from this possible danger? Danger is everywhere. We are living in a world of danger from every side. That we are not harassed with the thought of death or destruction every moment does not mean that it is away from us.

When the queen of King Aja, a great emperor of the solar race in India, died due to an accident, the king wept and beat his breast. He went to his preceptor, Vasishtha, and said, "Oh! My queen is dead. I am feeling that life itself is worthless. What is your advice?"

Vasishtha gave a very short reply. *Maraṇaṁ prakṛtiḥ śarīriṇāṁ vikṛtirjīvitamucyate budhaiḥ* (Raghuvamsa 8. 87): "Your highness, that you are subject to death is no wonder; that you are living is a wonder." This is all he said. This is what Buddha also said—that the apparent security of life is an illusion. Everything is insecure in this world, and that is the truth of the matter. This is not merely Buddha's statement or discovery, or the wisdom of Vasishtha, but also the conclusion of great stalwarts in modern science. We do not know science, we do not know philosophy, we do not know anything—nor do we want to know them, because we are happy.

But, this happiness is itself going to be our foe. The comfort and joy which is apparently around us is going to be the cause of our own ruin, because this joy is not real. The circumstances of life, which make us feel that everything is all right for the time being, are subject to dissection, disunion and disintegration. Whatever experience we have in life is the outcome of our personal relationship with certain conditions prevailing in the world outside. These conditions are not permanent, and they cannot be permanent. Every cell of the body changes; every moment, the entire structure of our body is subject to transformation. There is a perpetual vehement movement of every atom of this body, as is the case with every object in the world. Everything revolves, rotates, vehemently moves, for a purpose which no one can understand. Even an apparently inorganic and static stone is constituted of minute particles which are vehemently active inside it. There is no such thing as a static object in this world. Everything is ferociously moving for some purpose which you or I cannot understand.

Now, our experiences are brought about by certain associations of the conditions of our body with the conditions of things outside. Sometimes, the frequency or intensity of the conditions of the world outside goes beyond the capacity of our body to receive its impact. Then, we cannot know what is happening outside. We cannot know that there is such a thing called heaven, for instance. We cannot see celestials with our eyes, because the celestial realm or the heaven that we have heard of is a condition of

living, a set of circumstances whose frequency is far more intense than what our bodily conditions can bear or receive.

To give a gross example, our eardrums cannot receive the waves sent from broadcasting stations. If the BBC is transmitting something, we cannot hear it although these waves from the broadcasting station are impinging upon our eardrums, because our eardrums have no such receptive capacity. They are very gross. We have the capacity to receive only certain types of influence. The influence should be neither below nor above our present condition. The body will not receive what is grosser or what is subtler than its condition. And so, we are in a peculiar, temporary state of affairs where we are compelled to mistake a transient or fleeting set of circumstances for the entire reality.

That is why we are happy in this world—very, very foolishly indeed; and the student of yoga sees this with his piercing eye. *Duhkḥam eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ* (Y.S. 2.15), says Patanjali: For a person of understanding, everything is sorrow in this world. There is no joy, because this joy is a phenomenon which is falsely projected by passing conditions, which should not be mistaken for everything.

I mention all this because we, as seekers of Truth or students of yoga, should not take to yoga as a diversion, a hobby, or a kind of game like tennis or football which we play in the evening when the day's work is over. We are not playing tennis or football here. This is, as I said, a life-and-death matter for those who can realise their real condition. But we are often so pigheaded that we cannot realise our own condition. It is this thick-headedness that makes us

appear very comfortable and happy in the world. A subtle mind, such as that of a student of yoga, will realise what is ahead, and it will be very cautious of even tomorrow.

When we take to the practice of yoga, we take to a very, very serious subject, which cannot be compared with anything else in this world. The seriousness of the issue should drive us into a very meticulous observation of the disciplines of yoga. As the Upanishad tells us, not all the treasures of this earth put together can be equal to this knowledge. We should not impart this knowledge to undeserving persons, and we should not sell it for even the treasures of the whole world. Such is the worth, value, importance and necessity of this knowledge.

Knowing this very well, it is high time for us to take to serious practice, which calls for whole-hearted attention paid to this subject, for which, as we considered, we have to find time every day to sit quietly and deliberate upon the various factors that are necessary for the practice. The first thing is, therefore, to find time; and our greatest of diseases is that we cannot find time. We have no time for anything because we have been caught up in the movement of a hurricane or a whirlwind which we call life in this world. This hurricane is driving us in the direction in which it moves, and we seem to have no control over its movement and no say in this matter; but it is up to us to gain confidence in ourselves and exert our will in the proper direction to find time. If we want to find time, we can find time; but if we do not want to find time, we cannot find time. Where there is a will, there is a way.

The activities of our daily life should be so adjusted, proportioned and allotted in the requisite manner that we should not allow our mind to engage itself in questions, issues or matters which are not really connected with this serious subject that we are considering, this question that we are trying to answer. It is necessary, therefore, to have a daily routine chalked out very carefully, each for oneself, right from the time we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed. What are our daily items of routine? Is there any item which is unnecessary and which we can forego? If it is totally unnecessary, it should be given up, and the time saved thus should be utilised for a better purpose concerned with this aim of ours. Time can be saved either by giving up unnecessary activity or by quickening the process of necessary activities. There are many things which are quite necessary, and we cannot give them up because they have to be done for one reason or the other. But we can bestow so much concentration on these necessary items that we might be able to do them more quickly because time is short, and we do not know what will happen to us tomorrow.

Gṛhīta iva keśeṣu mṛtyunā dharmamācaret (Hitopadesha 1.3), says an old Sanskrit adage. We must practise the path of righteousness, pursue the aim of our life, with such ardour, anxiety and intensity as would be necessitated if death were to come and catch our throat. If death comes and tells us that it is here, what will we think in our mind at that time? With what intensity will we think of God, and what would be the ardour with which we will cry for salvation?

In some of our scriptures, other humorous examples are given. If our hair catches fire, we will run to dip it in water or find some other way to put it out. And with what force we will run, with what anxiety! We will not think anything else at that time—not of food, clothing, or anything else. Or, if we are drowning in water and are gasping for a little breath, what will be our feeling at that time? Such, they say, is to be the ardour of our aspiration, the intensity of our concentration, and the necessity we feel for the practice of yoga.

This is only an introduction to the simple thing that I wish to say—that is, we must find time to sit alone for at least a short time every day. 'Alone' means absolutely alone, with no one around us, and nothing else to think in our mind—no engagements whatsoever, except the one thing that is before us.

This time that we choose may be either early in the morning or late in the evening before we go to bed. In the middle of the day, we are busy; well, it is accepted. We have many things to do in this world, so we cannot sit for a long time in the middle of the day. We have to assume and accept that we are beginners. We are not advanced students, so we cannot be full-time seekers in an intensified form. At least twice in a day we must be able to sit. The moment we get up from the bed, we should not run to have a cup of tea. That is not the thing to think in our mind, at least for a few minutes—let it be even for fifteen minutes. We should get up from the bed, and not come out of the room at once. We should let the first thought be the noblest of thoughts, the most sublime of ideas, the entertaining of

which will be strong enough to give us enough energy to work throughout the day in a proper manner, without indulging in errors, in falsehood, or in any kind of unwanted behaviour.

In the same way should the day also end. Before going to bed, we should allow at least thirty minutes to concentrate and meditate on these essentials of life. They are the essentials; the other things are only preparatory for these essentials to manifest and work themselves out in our life. A day should come when we will be able to give more and more time for these essentials by cutting unwanted work and non-essentials from our life so that, God willing, we shall be wholly dedicated to a life of godliness.

This does not mean an abandonment of earthly values, as many people mistakenly imagine, but a transmutation, transformation and sublimation of all earthly values so that in our turning towards God, we have not isolated ourselves from the world or given up anything of the world, but have only absorbed everything into ourselves and become larger bodies, bigger persons, and more significant individuals now than we were earlier.

Chapter 15

OBSTACLES IN THE PRACTICE OF YOGA

Many a time, even though the preparations are well contemplated and the processes have been well thought out, when we actually come to the forefront of the task, we find that it is a terrible thing that is before us. This is what happened to Arjuna, as described in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. It was all a grand preparation for the practice of yoga, a glorious proclamation of the war of the spirit that was to take place, and a tremendous contemplation in all its intricacies had been worked out. But when the forces were confronted in the field of battle, it was enough to give a shock to Arjuna's entire personality. Now, Arjuna represents everyone in the world. Everyone is an Arjuna—an individual, a seeker, a soldier in the battlefield of spiritual practice.

All our preparations go in vain when we actually confront the terror that is in front of us. When we are in our room, we can say, "When I go to the jungle and meet the lion, I will draw my spear and give it a clout on its head!" But when the lion opens its mouth in front of us we say, "Oh God! This lion is not the one that I thought of in my room. This is something different!" We run for our lives.

All our preparations go to the winds because the idealistic preparation, though honestly entertained within oneself, is merely a thought process, and it is a little different when the very same thing is connected with the

realistic pattern of the world. The world is not merely an individual idea, though the idea of the individual has something to do with the objects of the world.

In the practice of yoga, we should not be one-sided. We should neither lean too much on the side of our own thoughts and feelings to the exclusion of the facts of the outside world, nor should we lean too much on the world outside, completely ignorant of what is happening to us within our own selves. The subject and the object have to be correlated in the practice of yoga. As a matter of fact, the universal is nothing but such a correlation. The universal is neither a subject nor an object; it is both things blended in such a manner that no individual can imagine what it is.

So, in the beginning of yoga, at the very outset, when we are seated and put forth effort to contemplate, we will find that we are at sea. What is that on which we have to contemplate? Then doubts arise in the mind. One of the greatest dangers to the spiritual quest is doubts of various types. One of the doubts is: "Am I properly prepared for this task ahead of me?" There may be a suspicion from inside which tells us that perhaps we are not up to the task: "I have made a mistake." This thought occurs to the minds of seekers within a short time after they have severed themselves from relationships with what they regarded as bondage in the world—it may be home, state and chattel, or whatever it is.

A second doubt may arise in the mind: "Is the technique that I am adopting in my practice all right? Or is there something wrong in the technique? Is it capable of piercing through to Truth?" A third doubt may come: "Is

the master who has initiated me competent? Or should I have gone to a better one, a more competent one, a more advanced one?"

But the greatest of doubts is something different. This was the doubt of Arjuna. He had three doubts in his mind, which he expressed to Lord Sri Krishna, and this threefold doubt comes to every seeker of Truth. One of the doubts is: "Will I succeed? I am a single person, and the problems before me seem to be so vast. Have I the courage and the power to face these problems?" Sri Krishna was queried by Arjuna: "What is the guarantee that we will win victory? Perhaps the other side may win victory. Then what is the purpose? What is the good of all this?"

Secondly, a very subtle social sense of ethics enters the mind: "What will happen to my wife? What about my children who are not settled? What about the opprobrium that will be cast upon me? Am I a selfish person who is seeking individual salvation while the whole world is in agony and sorrow?"

The third doubt of Arjuna was: "We will be creating chaos in the world by entering into this war. The consequence of this battle will be a terrible chaos and confusion throughout human society. Also, is it worthwhile to break traditions, uproot temples of sacred worship and defy all the rules and regulations of human society which are held in high, sacred esteem—the bonds of affection among people?" These doubts do not come on the very first day. They come after a few months, and they are enough to shake a person from the root.

These doubts arise because the initial enthusiasm which has driven the seeker to the path of yoga has not been backed with sufficient understanding. We are mostly emotional people. Every one of us has an emotion; and when emotion gains an upper hand, we get into a mood and take steps which on sober occasions we would have hesitated to take. When we hear a powerful discourse by an experienced mahatma on the nature of God or the glory of spiritual salvation, we can be fired up with the zeal of leaving everything, throwing away all things, and getting out of bondage. Because this is a spiritual enthusiasm, we should regard it as good. But it is not merely goodness that counts in this world; there are other things which have to be combined with goodness. Goodness is one of the features and characters of human nature, but there are other characters which should not be ignored, because they are equally important.

We have a body; we are biological individuals, and the body has its own urges. We have a subconscious layer of the mind which will have its own say at one time or the other but which, for the time being, has been buried underneath by the pressure of the conscious activity of the mind. And there is what is called the social sense in a human being, which is a very strong bond, but which can be submerged by emotions of a different type when they gain an upper hand.

There is nothing unimportant within us; everything is important when it comes up to the surface and demands recognition. We cannot say hunger is unimportant, thirst is unimportant, sleep is unimportant. We cannot say that

human affections are unimportant. Well, they may all look meaningless from the point of view of spiritual aspiration, but they are not unimportant from their own point of view. It is necessary, therefore, to judge things from their own point of view, and not from some other standpoint altogether which may be irrelevant from the point of view of those instincts, urges and demands of our own nature. These things are not facts with which people are unfamiliar, but even the most rational mind can be stirred to emotion when it is evoked by certain means. Even a scientific mind can weep and cry due to an emotion which can be stirred up by certain conditions. It cannot be said that we are always a hundred percent rational.

But it also does not mean that we will not exert our reason, our rationality. That sometimes also comes and demands recognition, irrespective of our emotional enthusiasm. Therefore, a lot of time may have to be spent in a calculated preparation for this arduous task, which is the drawing up of a statistical balance sheet, we may say, of every function and every factor in our complicated personality. We are not simple persons; we are very complicated beings. We are made up of as many complications as there can be in the world. Because we are a miniature of the cosmos, we have within us all the wonders and miracles and problems that the world can have; and we cannot merely ignore these existences within us.

I have been repeatedly saying that inside factors are as important as outside factors because the powers that are within can stir up the powers that are without; and these are what are called the obstacles in the practice of yoga.

What we call the obstacles in meditation are only the counterparts of inner forces that are stirred up externally. Therefore, we must be able to realise in our own selves, to an appreciable extent, what are the powers within us, and what are the forces that are likely to be worked up into activity when we exert a pressure upon them or force them to take a particular direction of activity.

At present, the mind is accustomed to confused action because we give it a free hand, a long rope; and because it can move in any way, doing anything it likes at any time, we are slaves of the mind. But when we take to the practice of yoga, we do not wish to be slaves of the mind. We wish to control it; therefore, we exert a pressure upon it by the force of will, which is called concentration, and compel it to move in a particular direction—not in the directions it likes, or in those directions in which it used to move previously. Then it will revolt; it will resent our pressure upon it. It all depends on which side will win—whether the pressure we exert upon it is stronger, or its resentment is stronger. If we are consistently putting pressure upon it with sufficient intelligence, knowing the weaknesses of the mind and also its powers, then we may succeed. But, sometimes, our understanding of it may not be adequate to the task. Then it will react with such vehemence that it can upset all our efforts. It can break our pot and throw down our milk, and make everything higgledy-piggledy. Then what will happen? We will start weeping, and we will be put out of order in our emotions, in our feelings. We will not sleep, we will not eat, we will not talk; we cannot take a step forward, and we cannot take a step backward.

This is likely to be the fate of even an enthusiast on the path of yoga. Therefore, the practice should be very gradual, with sufficient clarity of mind in respect of every step that is taken. It is better that we take steps very slowly, rather than take quick steps or jumps. Oftentimes, it would be advisable to repeat the same step again and again rather than take the next step, to see that we are well placed and our first step is firmly fixed. If today we have been taking recourse to a particular method of adjusting the mind to a certain set of thoughts, the same technique may be adopted for a few days instead of advancing further. This is in order to see that whatever has been done has been done properly and has been successful, and has not been done with haste. It is only when pressure is put upon us that our real nature comes out. Otherwise, everything looks very beautiful. Somebody should exert some pressure upon us; then we see what we are. We will resent it, because nobody likes pressure. Any kind of pressure is a tendency to put down the ego in a certain measure; and the mind has its own ego. It is the ego itself. Therefore, careful steps have to be taken and a proper, chalked-out routine for a few days or a few months ahead is to be prepared. This routine must be followed with tenacity, because it is consistent practice that will bring success. A correct practice that is not consistently undertaken will not bring success.

Sa tu dīrghakāla nairantarya satkāra āsevitaḥ dṛḍhabhūmiḥ (Y.S. 1.14), says Patanjali. This is a very wise statement in the Yoga Sutras. The practice should be continued for a very long time without remission of effort, without break in the practice. This means to say, it has to be

continued every day. We should not miss it even one day. Even if we are moving in a train, we must sit and see that the practice is not broken. *Satkāra āsevitaḥ* is the other appellation that Patanjali uses: We must have great love for it. We are not taking to yoga because the Guru has told us to, or the scripture has declared it, or some pressure has been brought upon us by outside factors. We like it, and we have voluntarily taken to it. We have affection for it; it is dear to us. It is like a mother and a father to us. It is everything to us. Such is yoga, which is going to protect us like a parent, and take care of us as if we are its children.

Yoga is not merely an abstract thinking. It is a stirring up of forces in the universe, which will protect us at all times. Divine forces are roused into action by the practice of yoga, and these forces will act like milch cows which will yield the necessary sustenance for us. Nobody can take care of us with such complete and comprehensive caution as the powers roused in the practice of yoga. These powers are not merely persons, though persons in this world can be used as instruments by these forces. Ultimately, we will realise there are no persons in this world, there are only forces. Even these persons seated before me are not really persons but are only forces. We have a wrong notion that persons are in front of us. There is no such thing as a person or a thing in this world. Everything is a centre of energy, and it is these energies, these centres of force that we are trying to rouse up into a comprehensive action by an all-round technique that we adopt in the practice of yoga. Glorious is the practice, indispensable it is to every human being, and vigilance is its watchword.

Chapter 16

THE SPIRITUAL CONNOTATION OF THE PRACTICE OF POSTURE, OR ASANA

The problem of yoga practice is a single and concentrated problem, right from the beginning until the end. It is that elusive something which we call the object of our quest. The whole of life is an effort at obtaining, acquiring, possessing, enjoying, or becoming one with what we seek. Now, this is the precise foundation of not merely yoga, but of every kind of effort anywhere in the world. How are we going to possess the object of our quest? Difficulties in the practice of yoga, or difficulties in achieving any kind of success in the world, arise on account of not knowing the method and the means of properly contacting the object of the quest and coming in union with it for the satisfaction that one seeks through such a union. The object of the quest of yoga is similar to any other object of a quest in secular life as far as the difficulty in acquiring it or possessing it is concerned, though the nature of the object is quite different in different cases.

How will we possess anything? We have a very unclear notion of possession, search, enjoyment, and so on. We are born with an unclear notion about all things, and we die with an unclear notion about all things; therefore, all our struggle and effort throughout life is based on a misconception about things in general. A misconception about one thing is equivalent to a misconception about any other thing, because there is only one object of our quest. If

there is any object of our quest other than the one which we have in front of our mind's eye, it will present before us a similar problem because the problem is a scientific one; it is not a social problem or even an ordinary psychological problem in the academic sense.

It is very difficult to be precise in the understanding of things because the mind is always in a hurry to acquire the object of its quest, and it is not enough if we are merely seeking an object and are in a hurry about it. It is also necessary to properly acquire a knowledge of the means thereof. This means, or the method of acquiring or possessing the object of our quest, is directly concerned with our relationship with that object, and there is nothing more difficult to understand than this peculiar thing called relationship. But we may ignorantly imagine that the relationship is very clear, that there is nothing difficult about it. "I am related to this person. He is my brother." What is the difficulty? The relationship is very clear. "This is my father, this is my sister, this is my brother-in-law, this is my boss, this is my peon." What is our problem about knowing the relationship?

But this is a child's answer to a very scientific problem, and unless this question is clearly answered in one's own mind, the object of the quest will not come near us. It will recede like the horizon. The more we approach the horizon, the further it recedes from us. We will never touch the horizon, whatever be the effort we make in running towards it. The Upanishad says that the object of the quest runs away from that person who does not understand it properly. This is very strange. The object of our quest runs

away from us, instead of coming near us, if we do not understand it and have a wrong notion about it. And, unfortunately, we have a wrong notion about it.

What is our notion about a thing, an object? I have attempted to give some idea about this sometime earlier. Our idea is that everything is disconnected. We have an ambivalent attitude, as I mentioned previously, which means to say that we have a double personality in ourselves which emphasises one thing at one time and another thing at another time. We both like and dislike a thing at the same time. This is called psychological tension. We may wonder how is it possible to like and dislike a thing at the same time, but this is exactly what our attitude towards things is. That is why sometimes we look all right, and sometimes we do not look all right.

To recall to your memory what I mentioned sometime back, this double attitude of ours towards objects is born of a peculiar structure of our personality. There are two realms of being implanted in us—the eternal and the temporal. These two realms are working simultaneously in us, and there is a war going on, as it were, between these two values of the two realms. This is, to repeat again, the Mahabharata war taking place everywhere—inside me, inside you, inside everyone, everywhere in creation. The battle between the eternal and the temporal is called the epic war of the Mahabharata. In Puranic language, it is sometimes called the war between the gods and the demons.

The pressure of diversity and the pressure of unity are two aspects which work simultaneously in us, and in

everyone and everything in the world. The senses—the eyes, ears, nose, and all the apparatus of perception—insist on a diversity of things because unless there is diversity, there is no such thing as seeing, hearing, etc. Because the senses have an egoism of their own and want to assert themselves and keep their position intact, they affirm a diversity of things. Otherwise, they will have no status, because they have no function to perform when there is no diversity. They will die out. But who would like to die out? Everybody would like to live as long as possible. So the senses maintain their position by hook or by crook.

Thus, the assertion of diversity is the primary activity of the senses; and we are wedded to the senses. We are living in a sensory world. We are slaves of the eyes, ears, nose, etc. We are not the masters thereof. Whatever the eyes say, we believe. The eyes say, "There is a wall." I say, "Yes, there is a wall." What a slavish mind I have got! Merely because the eyes tell me that there is a wall, I say, "Yes, there is a wall." That means I am a servant of the eyes, not the master. My finger touches something: "Oh, there is a desk." I say, "Yes, I agree. There is a desk." That means I am a slave of the sense of touch. Why should I believe this sense? Because the sensations from my fingers and the perception from my eyes work together to deceive me, I agree with them and say, "Very good! There is a desk."

Hence, my intelligence is only this much. Whatever be my rationality, understanding, it is a slavish rationality, very culpable and unbecoming of the dignity of the soul of man, of which he boasts so much. We are in a sensory world throughout, root and branch, and so we assert

diversity. Who can say there is no desk? Every sensible man will say there is a desk; and if I say there is no desk, you will call me a fool, an insane person whose brain is out of order. That is what you will think because everybody lives in a sensory world, and the sensory appreciation of things is regarded as the highest of rationality. This is one side of our problem.

We do not know the consequence of this acquiescing ourselves to the reports of the senses. What is the consequence? We have taken for granted that there is diversity in the world; otherwise, we will not say that there is a desk, there is a man, there is this, that, and so on. Therefore, all our philosophy has finally ended in an inviolable decree that there are sense objects, and one object has no connection with the other.

Why is it that we are pulled towards an object? Who is it that pulls us, if there is no connection between us and the object? We have already decreed that there is no connection of one thing with another thing by agreeing with our senses that everything is discrete, that there is diversity in the world. But, now we have to answer another question: Who is it that pulls us towards an object? It is not the object, because the object has no connection with us. Already we have declared that there is a discrete or isolated existence of one thing unconnected with the other. There cannot be a pull of one thing in respect of another if everything is disconnected. Now we have to answer this question: Why is there a pull? Why I am pulled towards you, and you are pulled towards me? Why is *A* pulled towards *B*, *B* towards *A*, etc.? Why is there talk of collaboration, universal

brotherhood and organisation? Why should there be such a thing as symmetry of action and methodology of approach? Why should there be anything like this in a world of absolutely disconnected things?

This means there is another thing speaking from within us. The senses say: "Everything is different, and one thing has no connection with another thing. Therefore, we will assert the diversity of things." But something else says: "It is not so. We have a connection with things. Therefore, I shall not leave you in peace. I shall pull you towards it." We are caught between the devil and the deep sea. This is called love and hatred. We are in the middle, listening to one voice at certain times and the other voice at other times.

The practice of yoga is a masterstroke which is dealt at the root of this problem, and no other educational technique, or even all the qualifications of the best educational institutions, will be able to solve this mystery. We have been in this dilemma for ages, and even today we are in the same difficulty. We love a thing and hate a thing at the same time, because we have two aspects in us—the aspect of unity which calls for love, and the aspect of diversity which urges us to disregard the unity aspect. So, there is affirmation of egoism and expression of anger, wrath, and a tendency to battle when we lean too much upon the diversity aspect of things; and there is a great feeling for oneness of mankind, unity of things, etc., when we listen to the other aspect in us. Are we to go on like this forever, drifting with the wind that blows as it pleases? Or have we a say in this matter?

The yoga technique is the method of gaining control over these various forces, which up to this time had sway over us and made us their subjects. The yogi is not a subject of anybody; he is a master. He does not wish to be a slave of forces, and he is awakened to the consciousness that his connection with things is such that he need not be a slave for all times. He has a place in the parliament of the cosmos, as it were, and he is not merely a subjected slave of this universal government. Or, we may say, he has a place, a voice, in the government of the universe. To this fact, he is awakened by the knowledge of yoga. He is not merely a puppet in the hands of forces over which he has no control.

These two aspects are brought together into focus even in the preliminary steps of yoga, and not merely in the advanced stages, because unless this point is made the pivot of activity in the practice of yoga, we may miss our aim and go astray. One of the most important factors to remember in this connection is that our aim is very clear. We know the direction in which we have to move, and there is no use or need to ask others. The direction has been pointed out already, and the aim is clear before our mind.

We have a personality which is complicated in nature on account of this peculiar thing that I mentioned, which is that we have what we call the soul or consciousness, which asserts the indivisibility of its character, and we also have a biological personality which seeks objective satisfaction in the world of space and time, and regards itself as a helpless tool in this world of diversity. We are slaves from the point of view of the body, but masters from the point of view of the soul.

So, are we masters or slaves? This is very peculiar; we have got two aspects combined in us. There is, therefore, the necessity to rise from bodily subjectivity to the mastery of the soul, stage by stage, in the practice of yoga. Even the first step—the *asana,* the position or the posture—is a preparation for this mastery that we have to gain in the practice of yoga. The *padmasana* or *sukhasana* or some such posture that we assume in the practice of yoga is itself a very great step, and not an ordinary step that we have taken, because the stability of the body at once stabilises the biological forces of our personality.

Earlier I mentioned that we are not persons or bodies, we are centres of force. We are not Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so, as we are imagining. This is a wrong notion of things. We are only centres of force, energies circling, rotating and revolving in a particular manner, whirling in a particular direction for a purpose. We are like eddies in the ocean of power.

This is something our present state of mind cannot understand. We think that we are Rama, Krishna, Gopala, Govinda, Jack or John, but we are really something else. We are centres of energy, forces. What we call *chapatti* is only a heap of particles of wheat flour spread in a particular manner, and we have given it the name *chapatti* because it has assumed that shape. There is no such thing as *chapatti*; it is only small grains of flour held together by some means. Similarly, a building is nothing but a conglomeration of small units called bricks, but we do not call it a heap of bricks; we call it a building. We have given it another name altogether, such as 'palace' or '*mahal*', but really it is a heap

of bricks or small stones kept one over the other. We can as well say that it is a pattern of small bricks, instead of saying that it is a palace.

We are made up of such small elements—microbes, cells, atoms, centres of force and energy. We are neither men nor women. All these are false notions into which we have been born and with which we are brought up; and due to this prejudiced thinking, we are caught up in what we call *samsara.*

We are only particular centres of energy, and this *asana* practice, to come to the point, is a first step that we take to attune ourselves to the atmospheric condition of the forces outside, so that the condition of the forces which constitute this bodily personality is set in harmony with the very same forces which are external to us. It is as if a small drop or a wave in the ocean tries to tune itself with the vast ocean of which this small wave is made. If the wave concentrates itself on its own little localised individuality, it forgets that it belongs to the ocean, that it is a child of the ocean. It thinks, "I am a small particle of water." Yoga is this small particle awakening itself to the consciousness: "Oh, I am the entire ocean." It is really that! It is not gaining any new knowledge or making a new discovery; it has forgotten that it itself is the ocean. Such a terrific thing it is, but it looks like a small drop because of its self-affirmation.

Thus, yoga is a gradual, systematised technique of overcoming the prejudice of self-affirmation—the egoistic assertion of the bodily individuality—towards which, the next step is *asana.* The confused movements of the body, the chaotic postures we assume, are put into a proper order,

and we refuse to be chaotic any more. We make a determination to be systematic from today onwards. The first system, which we considered earlier, was that of the social harmony we establish by the practice of the *yamas—ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha*. Now from the social aspect we come to the personal aspect of this discipline, by which we refuse to give undue credit to the affirmations of the body's clamouring for satisfaction. With applied educational psychology, we reduce the pressure of the ego upon the body and allow ourselves to get harmonised with a larger and larger approach to things—which is, in other words, a growing into wider and wider forms of unselfishness.

The more we advance in the practice of yoga, the more we become unselfish—which means to say, we get into the realm of a wider self. It does not mean that we are losing our self. Unselfishness is not a loss of self. It is a transcendence of the lower self in gaining mastery through the higher self. So, 'unself' means no self; or, in the present context, it means gaining mastery over the lower self by the higher self. When we rise to the higher self, we need not think of the lower one, because the lower one is already included in the higher. All the values that we find in the lower self are found in the higher self, in a transmuted and rarefied form. Thus, we come to the recognition of the importance of the practice of posture, or *asana*, in the practice of yoga, which spiritual connotation I have tried to place before you today.

Chapter 17

PRANAYAMA, THE ART OF BREATHING HARMONIOUSLY

To be seated in a perfect posture is the first step, as we have already seen. After you are settled in the posture, which is itself an important achievement, take a deep breath. This should be a spontaneous process. The inhalation or the taking in of a deep breath should be effortless, almost automatic. The disturbance to which we are usually accustomed, either in the mind or in the nerves, causes heavy breathing, and heaving the breath in such an unnatural manner disturbs natural thinking. The breathing becomes disturbed when the mind gets disturbed, and vice versa. Frustrated feelings, tensions of any kind, also disturb the breathing process. Therefore, it is necessary to bring together the factors of breathing and thinking in a beautiful manner. A deep, spontaneous inhalation, and a correspondingly spontaneous exhalation, practised for a few minutes, will prepare one for the further steps.

It is also necessary that we should have no engagements in the mind, at least for the next one or two hours while we are thus seated. It is useless to sit either for *japa* or meditation when there is some engagement to follow immediately, because the practice of yoga is a great spiritual worship that we are performing. It is an honour that we are bestowing upon the great divinity within us. Yoga is not a business, which means to say, it is not like the other activities of life. It is not one of the activities at all. As a

matter of fact, it is something that we do when all activities have ceased on account of their fulfilment. This is important to remember. Activities have to cease on account of their fulfilment, not on account of a defeatist mentality or a frustrated feeling. Therefore, when practising yoga we should feel that whatever is to be done has been done, and whatever is yet to be done does not immediately follow, so that the mind is not in a state of engagement of any kind.

An absolutely free mind is essential. Very few of us are free in our mind. We frequently look at our wristwatch, which is a disease of modern times. Wherever we are, we look at our wristwatch. One medical man has given a very beautiful indication of the possibility of a heart attack by observing how many times a person looks at his watch. From that we can determine whether a person is in tension; and a person in tension is subject to a heart attack. Why do we go on looking at our wristwatch every now and then? What is wrong with us? It means our nerves are tense and we are uneasy inside. There should be no tension of any kind. For that, we must know what tension is.

It is very easy to say that there should be no tension, but what do we actually mean by this word? It is a feeling in the mind which has a connection with the nerves. The mind, the pranas and the nerves are all connected together like intimate brothers, and if one is disturbed, the other also gets disturbed. The nerves can disturb the prana, the prana can disturb the mind, and so on; and the disturbed mind can disturb the prana, and the prana can disturb the nerves, etc. Tension is a kind of feeling which is connected with the prana, the nerves and even the muscles, and it acts upon the

digestive system, the respiratory tract, the circulatory system, and all sorts of activities in our body. So, when we are in a state of tension, everything is in an unnatural condition. This is what is called a state of emergency, something brought about for a particular necessity that has arisen, and then the body is ready to take action. But it is not supposed to continue for a long time. The practice of yoga is, as I mentioned, the beautiful flower coming out as a consequence of the fulfilment of action, and it is impossible to equate yoga with any kind of activity. We live in a world of work, but yoga is not a work.

What is yoga, then? We cannot think except in terms of action, and if yoga is not an action, what is it? Yoga is a state of being. It is not a state of working or urging oneself to activity towards an ulterior end. Is there a difference between action and being? Yes, there is a tremendous difference. An action is motivated by a feeling towards the fulfilment of an ulterior end, and it is not an end itself. We do not engage in action for the sake of the action itself, but for a purpose to be fulfilled through this process called action. Being is not a means to an end. While action is a means to some end, being is an end in itself. Thus, yoga is an end. This is something most people do not know.

Though we use the word 'practice' in connection with yoga, it is only a way of expressing oneself because it is not an ordinary kind of practice, like a legal practice or a medical practice, etc. It is a different kind of practice that we call yoga. Yoga is a tendency towards fulfilment of 'being' in larger and larger measures. Even now we are a state of being. I am a being and you are a being, because our

essential nature is a sort of existence. But it is incomplete existence, unfulfilled being and, therefore, it is a restless state of being. Though we are existing, that existence of ours at present has become a sort of condition subject to transformation so that, very unfortunately indeed, our being has become almost a kind of activity.

Being cannot be an activity. It is a misnomer. But our individual being, the psychophysical individuality or personality, is so incomplete, so unfulfilled in every way, so full of craving for this fulfilment which it is lacking, that it has got involved in a state of what is called becoming, not being. Philosophers say this is a world of becoming—*samsara*. '*Samsara*' is the Sanskrit word for 'becoming'. It is always tending towards something else, urging us for more and more of everything. As an old saying goes, man never 'is', he is always 'to be'. We never are; we are yet to be. We have not yet become what we want to become, and this mix-up of thought and feeling between the concepts of 'becoming' and 'being' is the source of our tension.

Every person is in a state of tension because there is a tug of war going on between the unfulfilled ideal that is ahead and the present state of being. What is required is the reconciliation of the character of the ideal that is not yet realised with our realistic condition at present. The reality is something, and the ideal is another thing; this is our fate. We are always fond of achieving something which is not yet with us. That is why we are working. Otherwise, why should we work? Our activity is an indication that we are moving towards an ideal which we want to achieve, attain, possess, enjoy, and so on.

We are restless because happiness is a condition of the present, and not of the future. We cannot be happy merely on account of a concept of the future. It is either now, or it is not at all. But our mind is always thinking of a future fulfilment. So, how can we be happy today? And inasmuch as a future ideal is always ahead, like the horizon, it is never realised. Therefore, we can never be happy; neither today nor tomorrow can we be happy. We are always unhappy. The world is a vale of tears, a reservoir of sorrows, on account of this apparent impossibility of reconciling the future ideal with the present realistic state of affairs.

I am mentioning all this to give an idea of what tension is, of which we have to be free to an appreciable extent before we sit for yoga. This tension can be released—though not wholly, at least in an appreciable measure—through an intelligent analysis of the whole situation. It is not always necessary that the ideal should be in our possession just now. A student is studying to obtain a degree in a college or a university, which is, of course, an ideal before him, a future, but it need not create tension. That would be undesirable. Though on a psychological analysis it is true that he has not yet attained what he is aspiring for, wisdom requires that though the ideal is not yet possessed and has not become a present, it can be reconciled with the present realism by having a healthy hope. The child takes nine months to come out of the womb of the mother. Does it mean that the mother should be always in a state of tension, worrying when the baby will come? That is not desirable. It is known very well that it will take nine months. We sow a seed in the field and expect a crop, but should we be in a

state of tension, worrying when the crop will come? We know that it will take some time, perhaps months. When we cook our food we light the fire, boil water and put rice into it. Should we be in a state of tension, worrying when it will be cooked?

Therefore, our ideals, future possibilities and achievements need not necessarily create tension or anxiety in our minds, because we have the confidence that the future is going to be ours. This is an art by itself. This, in general, is by way of an introductory analysis of the nature of tension, of which we have to be free. If we are in a state of tension, we cannot think healthily, speak healthily, or do anything in a healthy manner. We will be in a state of tremor in the nerves, the muscles and the entire body.

The point is that when we sit for yoga—it may be *japa*, meditation or even a concentrated form of sacred study, called *svadhyaya*—we should not have any kind of engagement which will press us in another direction. For example, if we have to catch a train in half an hour, we cannot sit for *japa*. Because in half an hour the train will whistle, a consistent and whole-hearted sitting for meditation would not be advisable at that time. There should be a sufficient gap between the commitment or the engagement that is to follow and the practice for which we are sitting.

Now, various types of *pranayama* are prescribed in systems of yoga, about which we need not bother much, just as there is no use bestowing too much thought on the multiple and complex yoga *asanas* in the practice of the yoga of the spirit, because all these physical exercises called

yoga *asanas*, *bandhas*, *mudras*, etc., are expected to be preparations for training the body to be seated in a particular posture. They have a necessity in the sense that they train our muscles and nerves so that we may be settled in a particular chosen posture. The same is the case with *pranayama*. The *pranayama* by itself is not yoga, but it is a prescription for bringing a sort of harmony in breathing. We take either very short or very long breaths, due to the condition of the mind and the exertions that we put forth through the body. It is very difficult to draw a line of distinction between the thought process and the breathing process because the process of breathing and the process of thinking go together always. This is why some teachers of yoga have emphasised the aspect of *pranayama* as an advisable precedent to the higher step of thought adjustment in yoga. Others have thought otherwise, maintaining that it is proper to regularise the thought processes first, and then allow the pranas or the breathing process to take care of itself of its own accord. These are two schools of thought, which emphasise this side or that side. There is truth in either side, and we cannot say that one is right and the other is wrong. The proper thing for us would be to strike a middle course, take a via media, and give due respect to the art of thinking systematically as well as to the art of breathing harmoniously.

Alternate breathing, called *sukha purvaka pranayama*, is generally prescribed. But though the system of Patanjali also prescribes alternate breathing, the aim is not this; alternate breathing is a preparation for something else. That something else, which is the aim of *pranayama*, is what is

called *kumbhaka*—that is, the retention of the breath. Now, the moment we think of the retention of the breath we are likely to imagine a condition of suffocation, but that is not the intention. We are not to be suffocated. The retention of the breath should be spontaneous on account of a concentrated attention of the mind, into which we occasionally get drawn. A person walking on a wire in a circus holds his breath, or when we cross a high precipice by walking on a narrow trail, we hold our breath. When an archer shoots an arrow, he holds his breath. He does not do alternate breathing at that time; there is a spontaneous stopping of the breath. Even when we see a cobra suddenly dropping in front of us, we automatically hold our breath.

Anything that requires attention of the mind also calls for retention of the breath. That means to say, an undistracted mind is harmonious with retention of the breath. We are breathing because we are distracted; it comes to that, finally. It is because our mind is distracted that we are breathing; otherwise, we will not breathe. Patanjali specifically mentions in one sutra that breathing is a great obstacle in yoga. We will be surprised because we live by breathing, and Patanjali calls it an obstacle. It is an obstacle because it is an unnatural condition that has arisen in us, because our whole personality is unnatural. We are not natural beings. The more we understand our predicament today—physically, socially, biologically—the more we will be surprised, and in a state of consternation as to our smallness and the humble position that we occupy in the realm of Truth.

There is a sort of agitation in our body—that is to say, in our whole personality. This agitation has to be subdued, but not suppressed. The intention of *pranayama* is not to suppress the breath. Yoga is not a suppression or repression of anything—not repression of the desires, not repression of the breathing, not repression of the thoughts. The words 'repression' and 'suppression' should not be used, as the connotations thereof have no relevance to yoga. Yoga is sublimation, which is again a difficult thing for ordinary minds to understand. Even the process of *pranayama* should be a sublimation, and not a suppression, of the process of breathing. We are not asked to hold our throat or our nose so that we may not breathe.

Sublimation means a healthy transformation. It is a growth, and not a decomposition, destruction or fall of any kind. An adult grows from childhood or adolescence, but an adult does not lose anything by becoming an adult. The adult does not think, "I have lost my childhood, I have lost my adolescence, so I am a loser." The adult is not a loser by not being a child or an adolescent, because that lower condition has been absorbed into the higher condition of the adult. Growth is, therefore, a good example of the sublimation of lower conditions, and both *pranayama* and the stages of yoga which come later on are processes of sublimation. In fact, every stage of yoga—not merely *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, and so on—is one of sublimation. Right from *yama*, *niyama*, and so on, it is a process of sublimation, boiling, purifying, and making us into gold from the condition of ore—by which nothing is lost, but something wonderful is gained. A sense of elevation,

buoyancy of spirit, health, lightness, etc., will be the symptoms of success in the art of sublimation. We will feel like running, rather than slowly walking. Lightness and buoyancy are the symptoms of health, which are a freedom that we feel in the entire system, and are not a suffocation in any part of the body, the pranas or the mind.

Thus, the prescriptions by way of *pranayama* and so on are intended to make us grow into a condition of health, where there is a gradual removal of all that is toxic in our system. That which is toxic is not a part of our essential nature. What we are necessarily, and in our essence, is the determining factor of true health; and that which is extraneous to our true nature is what we call toxic. Any element that has entered into us as a foreign factor, not belonging to our nature, will be the cause of distraction.

In the previous discourse I gave an indication that this extraneous matter is the element of diversity interfering with the principle of unity. Essentially, there is an indivisible something in us, whose expansion into infinitude we are seeking through yoga; but the factor of diversity interferes with it constantly and pulls us externally through the organs of sense, making us attracted to certain things and repulsed by other things. These factors cause distraction both in breathing and in thinking, and they have to be carefully obviated.

Chapter 18

THE POWER OF YOGA IS IN OURSELVES

Continued practice of *asana*, and a systemised effort at methodical breathing, create in oneself a new kind of power and energy which otherwise gets dissipated by the naturally distracted condition of the body. A regularised practice of even a simple physical posture, the meditative pose, and a normal healthy practice of breathing, will create a tendency in the powers of the body to unite themselves together into a new kind of force which attracts things towards itself. A gradual capacity to exert influence on one's atmosphere rises automatically in oneself. Our personality becomes a centre of attraction. It is not that we dress ourselves, groom ourselves or wear any kind of make-up, but certain changes that take place within the body create an internal atmosphere which attracts everything that is around oneself.

This capacity has various other aspects also, namely, the ability to withstand the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and psychological opposites such as joy and sorrow. We will not be suddenly roused into happiness, nor will we sink into grief even if the worst thing happens. The body, in collaboration with the mind, will be able to bear everything in the world. That fortitude is a kind of strength which gets newly generated in oneself. Even if by chance we fall sick, we will recover quickly and not be incapacitated for a long time. A new kind of capacity to rejuvenate oneself arises in the system, though there may be

a sudden failing of health for various reasons and we may have fever, headache, and so on.

This strength is not ordinary strength. It is the strength of the tendency to the unity of powers. It is not the strength that we ordinarily think of in the world, such as social strength, political strength, the strength of one's public status, the temporary strength gained by eating a good meal, and so on. This is another kind of strength altogether, which will keep us sane and stable even in an atmosphere of conflict, dissention and tension. Even if we are placed in an atmosphere of severe conflict, we will not be affected by it. We will be able to understand, rather than react. The capacity to withstand the impulse to react is one of the consequences, one of the results that follow from the continuous practice of *asana* and *pranayama*. We become a little different from other people, and the difference is precisely in our capacity to turn to a centrality of our being, rather than towards objects of sense.

The greater is the tendency to the acquisition of this knowledge, the greater also is the power, because real power is the same as knowledge. Knowledge is power. Where there is knowledge, power has to be. But, this knowledge is not book learning. It is not an academic qualification. It is a knowledge which is identical with being, about which we have discussed a few aspects previously. Knowledge associated with being is also power, because power is only another name for the expression of being, while the common man's notion of power is that it is an artificial contact with the facilities and instruments of action. The power to wield instruments of action is not real

power, because when the instruments are withdrawn, the power also goes. If we have a gun, we seem to have a power with us, and when the gun is not there, we have no power. But the power of yoga is not of that kind. We do not require a gun or a knife or a sword in our hand. Yoga is power that is manifest by our own being, and that power cannot be snatched away from us.

The manifestation of this power can also be felt personally in one's own self, and not merely by others. In a beautiful aphorism, Patanjali mentions the consequences of self-control. *Rūpa lāvaṇya bala vajra saṁhananatvāni kāyasaṁpat* (Y.S. 3.47): The personality assumes a lustre. There is a new kind of light emanating from our eyes, which can influence the atmosphere outside. Even a violent person may become calm in our presence because of a new kind of vibration that we spread around us. Any kind of doubt or conflict may get cleared up in our presence because doubts and conflicts are the children of the weddedness to diversity, and wherever there is a power that is born of the sense of unity, there cannot be doubt, conflict or tension.

There is a peculiar kind of beauty, not the beauty which the senses see when they are excited due to their selfishness, but a real beauty which is capable of acting like a magnet. We will be beautiful even if we have no clothes to wear. Even if we have not taken a bath, that beauty will not vanish, whereas we are under the impression that beauty increases by our clothes and appearance, and is brought about by artificial appurtenances. The beauty that is injected into the personality by the practice of yoga is a

natural concomitance of the essential nature of our being, and it will be there always. Some of the yoga scriptures go to the extent of saying that even the celestials are drawn towards us due to the grandeur of our personality—celestials, not merely people of the world.

The word *lavanya* which Patanjali uses means there is a tenderness of our personality, together with a strength of our being. There is a beautiful combination of strength and tenderness in our personality. We are unshakeable. The logic of the world and the treasures of the earth cannot shake us easily, and the power of fortitude sustains us at all times. We become indomitable in our thinking and in our actions. Our decisions become firm, and we need not go on scratching our head to come to a conclusion about important issues. Things become clear at once on the very face of their appearance. But, at the same time, we become very tender, with the ability to feel the feelings of others, which is a great virtue indeed, on account of which we do not react to various atmospheres.

The virtue of the yogi is understanding, rather than retaliation or wreaking vengeance or reaction of any kind. He does not get stirred up by stimuli from the outside world. He is not a slave; he is a master. A peculiar softness of nature gets combined with the hardness of power. *Vajrādapi kaṭhorāṇi mṛduni kusumādapi* (Uttaramacarita 3.23): Yogis are harder than a diamond and softer than a lotus petal. We cannot do anything to them, such strong people they are, but nobody can be as soft as they are. That is *lavanya* combined with *bala*. *Rūpa lāvaṇya bala*: Beauty, magnificence, a magnetic personality, strength—all these

gradually follow as a necessary result of our sustained effort at bringing together the powers of our personality, which are dissipated by sensory activity, egoistic affirmation and desires of various kinds. It is to put them down that we take to the practice of yoga.

We have not come to that stage of yoga where our consciousness gets identified with the powers of the world. We are still in the lower stage of the attempt to sit in a single posture and breathe normally in a sustained, harmonious manner. But these simple practices, continued for a protracted period, will bring about their own result because even the first step in yoga is yoga itself. *Jijñāsur api yogasya śabdabrahmātivartate* (Gita 6.44): Even an aspiration to know God is such a virtue that it surpasses all other charitable deeds in the world, because the desire to know God is to be regarded as the fruit of immense virtues accumulated in previous lives. Nobody can desire God unless it is the flowering of immense past effort of many lives through which one has lived.

Thus, we are enthused by this great solacing feature in our life called yoga, which many of the scriptures refer to as more compassionate and dearer than a mother. The most loving person in the world is one's own mother; and this yoga will take care of us more than a mother. Wherever we are and whenever we are in trouble, our mother keeps a kind eye upon us, but yoga will keep a kinder eye, and it will see that we do not come to difficulty of any kind. This yoga is not a person that is taking care of us from outside, such as a mother; it is something that is happening within ourselves. *Na devā yaṣṭim ādāya rakṣanti paśupālavat*

(Mahabharata 5.35.33): When the higher powers make up their minds to take care of us, they do not protect us like a shepherd with a stick in his hand, going after his sheep. This is because these divine powers are not persons who are wandering outside in the world like soldiers. They are powers within ourselves which, when they are awakened, begin to guard us because we have bestowed thought upon them.

These powers—and whatever we seek, in fact—are in ourselves. One of the greatest miraculous discoveries of the philosophy of yoga is that whatever we seek is in ourselves. It is not outside, because there is no such thing as 'outside'. The concept of outside is an illusion that is created by a peculiar structural defect in the activity of the mind. Just as there is a false outsidedness in dream while there is actually no such thing, there is no such thing as externality even in the waking world. Do we not see a vast external world in dream, something disconnected from us? But is it really disconnected? We know very well how the vast world that we see in dream is connected with us and the externality of that so-called world is a falsity created by a peculiar movement of the mind. In the same way, this externality keeps us cut off from the world of nature.

The world is not outside us, because the very idea or notion of outside is an erroneous effect produced by a kink in the mind; therefore, yoga again and again points out that the only thing that we have to do is to set right the mind—*yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ* (Y.S. 1.2). There is nothing else that is to be done, except to set right the mind. We are trying to set right the world instead of setting right the

mind, as if something is wrong with the world. What is wrong is in our head, in our mind, in our way of thinking, in the movement of what we call the psychological apparatus in ourselves. That which has made us feel that we are in a world of externalised space and time has to be set right. Yoga does not, therefore, concern itself with setting right the world or covering the whole earth with gold sheets, and so on, because all these things are not necessary. What is necessary is to remove that disharmony between ourselves and the world, or the universe, on account of which we are not only miserable in our own selves and in our personal lives, but we also have wrong notions about other people and the other things in the world.

This mind, which is a mischief-maker, has created such havoc that it has produced in us a perpetual wrong notion about our own selves and a consequent wrong notion about everything else. We think something is wrong with us and something is wrong with everybody else in the world. All this is due to the absorption of our mind in a peculiar un-understandable feature called the notion of diversity. It is very difficult to understand what it means. The mind survives only by creating this confusion. If everything becomes clear, the mind cannot exist. There are many people in the world who somehow or other get on by creating a state of confusion. They create such confusion that it becomes a source of strength for them. They do not allow others to think correctly by either shouting loudly or bringing about such a state of affairs that people's minds are side-tracked and they cannot think about the actual problem on hand. Many politicians do that, and the mind is

a master politician. It has simply thrown everything into a state of confusion.

Not only has the mind done that, but it has also created a feeling in everybody that what it has done is right and that this is the only correct state of affairs. So, there is no chance of our even retracing our steps from this confused condition, because we have already assumed that the steps that we are taking and the condition in which we are is perfectly all right. If there is a state of confusion and we are convinced that this state of confusion is the right thing and the proper state of affairs, this is what is called 'confusion worse confounded' and, therefore, there is no remedy for this illness of the mind except an internal rearrangement of the pattern of thinking itself. We have heard this sutra *yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ*: Yoga is the procedure adopted in restraining the modifications of the mind. All this is only a kind of slogan for us. We go on reading it a thousand times, but it makes no sense because neither can we know what the mind is, what *vrittis* are, what 'the modifications of the mind' means, or how they can be controlled. All these things are beyond the grasp of ordinary people, and when we come to the actual serious practice of it, we will be repelled by it because it looks terrifying.

In the beginning, yoga is terrifying. It is a fearful object, very painful. But that pain and terror are on account of our inability to adjust ourselves with it. *Yat tadagre viṣam iva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam, tat sukhaṁ sāttvikaṁ proktam ātmabuddhiprasādajam* (Gita 18.37): The happiness or bliss that yoga brings is that which gives ultimate satisfaction to the reason and the soul, and which looks

bitter in the beginning but nectar-like in the end. This is real, pure and unmixed happiness. It is very unpalatable in the beginning; otherwise, everybody would have taken to a serious practice of it. It is unpalatable because it is repulsive to the desires of the senses, and we live in a world of the senses. We are slaves of the senses. There is nothing before us except a sensory world; therefore, anything that is a little different from what the senses regard as valuable or pleasurable is bitter, unfavourable, and undesirable. This is why very few people can take to yoga practice. *Manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye* (Gita 7.3): Among thousands of people, one may take to this path; and even among those who have taken to the practice, very few succeed in it. Merely because we have filed a petition for an election, it does not mean that we will be elected. Very difficult it is! It requires hard effort.

The hard effort is precisely the regularity of practice. Whatever be the extent of our understanding of the practice, let it be regular. In all successful endeavours, regularity is the most essential feature. Even if nothing else is possible, at least sitting alone in a fixed posture or *asana* must be possible. Will at least this not be possible? The mind and the body will both get adjusted to this discipline that we are imposing upon them. Seatedness in a posture for a period of time is a great discipline because the mind is averse to every kind of discipline. Any kind of system is disliked by the mind. The mind always likes confusion, and the even least discipline that we introduce into it produces a resentment and a reaction. It will not allow us to sit in one posture for even ten minutes. We will change our posture,

and look this way or that way. Even when we walk on the road, we want to see all the shops. We have nothing to purchase from the shops, but we look at them. This is a distraction of the mind.

It has already been mentioned that for this aim of success that we are seeking through our practice, a conducive atmosphere is necessary. An ashram is of such a nature because distractive forces are absent and facilities for the practice are available; and here we are in such an atmosphere. What is required now is a determination, a power of thinking, and a decision that has to be made by one's own self.

But, as making this decision is not easy for a mind which is used to pleasures and comforts, distractions and diversions, etc., easier methods of practice should be taken resort to in the beginning, rather than severe methods. We must be able to find out what kind of practice or what aspect of yoga will be suitable to the present condition of our body and mind, and be firm in that for a considerable period of time. Then we will find that, like the gradual ripening of a fruit, there will be a strengthening of the personality from within and a maturity of the whole being from inside, gradually expressing itself and manifesting itself outside. The ripening of the fruit commences from the inside and takes a lot of time to be seen from the outside, so many seekers may be dejected or feel a sense of melancholy because the ripening is not visible outside. They may say, "I have been doing so many things for so many months and years, but there are no results." We cannot always know whether there are any results at all because even when

success is apparent, it will not always or strongly be visible outside—until, of course, it reaches the highest level.

Therefore, patience is one of the watchwords in yoga. We should not have a sense of diffidence. We may remember the great advice of the Bhagavadgita. *Karmaṇyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana* (Gita 2.47): Do not go on checking whether the fruit is coming or not. The fruit will be taken care of automatically. We do our duty of the practice from the bottom of our hearts, with the best of our knowledge, with the greatest discipline possible, and the fruit will come in due time.

Chapter 19

HAVING A SYSTEMATISED DAILY ROUTINE

In Patanjali's Yoga System the stages of physical posture, or *asana*, and of *pranayama* go together with a system of personal discipline called the *niyamas*. In our personal conduct and daily activity, there should be a method and a procedure—which means to say, everything should have its own time. One of the essentials contributing to success is the method of working and the procedure of behaviour and conduct. One must know what to say at what time, in what manner, what to eat when, in what quantity and quality, and so on—which applies to the body, the speech and the thoughts. This is the discipline of the three essential factors which are employed in our daily life: our body, our speech, and our thoughts. Everything should have its own time, its own quantity and quality.

The daily procedure should not vary, because the system, whatever be the nature of that system, is a reflection of perfection. Perfection is the greatest of systems, and inasmuch as yoga is a movement towards the highest perfection that is available anywhere, the practice, even in the lower stages, should also reflect this character. Even our time for going for a walk, such a simple thing as it is, may be a disciplined process. It is said that this was the case with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. He used to go for a walk at six o'clock, and everybody used to set their watch to it because it was exactly at the stroke of six. He never

went five minutes earlier or five minutes later. Six o'clock meant six o'clock, and he went out for a walk.

This is only one of the features of systematisation in one's life, because a system also reduces the burden of work and the feeling that there are a lot of things to do. The feeling that we have a lot to do is mostly due to chaotic behaviour because of no system in working. We do anything at any time. We meet any person at any time, and say anything that comes to mind. This is the reason why we often feel that there is some strain in our head. The strain is due to the fact that the mind is unable to adjust itself to sudden changes of circumstance. But, if we are already prepared because we know what is to be done at what time, the strain will not be felt. The stresses and strains that we feel in our life—which have to be avoided in yoga, of course—are mostly due to unmethodical speaking, thinking and working. This systematic method is called *niyama*, which has to be coupled with *asana* and *pranayama,* the initial stages of yoga.

The body and the environment should be kept in such a condition that one feels spirited within oneself, uplifted in feelings, and light in one's personality. What is to be done to achieve this is an individual choice, each for oneself. The strain that we feel in life is a combined effect of thought, speech and action. The three go together, and work simultaneously. We cannot say which one preponderates at what time. The mind feels the strain of life when it is discontented for any reason whatsoever. Contentment is something which most people do not know, because it is often dissatisfaction which goads us into action. We are

dissatisfied and, therefore, we work, but that should not be the motivating force for work. Are we working because we are dissatisfied? On the other hand, the reverse should be the case. We should work because we are satisfied. As a matter of fact, that work alone can be called healthy which is motivated by satisfaction.

His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj said that we should be satisfied with what we have and dissatisfied with what we are. Generally, we are satisfied with what we are and dissatisfied with what we have, which should not be the case. We should be grieving because we have not achieved perfection. We are little bodies, small personalities, almost nobodies before the might of the universe, and our effort should be to gradually approximate ourselves inwardly and outwardly to the extent possible towards the perfection that we are seeking; and that has nothing to do with what we have in the form of material possession, etc. The internal feeling of satisfaction and contentment comes on account of an understanding. It cannot come by mere force of will.

The nature or the trait which always complains against circumstances outside is that which brings about discontentment. Is there anyone who has no complaint? There is no one. Everyone has a complaint. But, this is not a virtue. It is a defect in our makeup. We have always to remember a wise old adage that much of what we complain about will diminish in quantity and quality if we think of our capacities and our correct relationship with things. We want certain things to be a certain way, and they are not like that—so, we complain. But why should we expect

something to be the way in which we think it should be? We think that our way of thinking is correct, which need not necessarily be so. Or, even supposing that our way of thinking is correct but something is not in consonance with our way of thinking and, therefore, there is a source for complaint, our duty is to change it, if we can. Then, there is no complaint. But if we cannot change it, well, the matter is clear; then also there is no complaint. Either we change it or we cannot change it. If we cannot change it, there is no complaint. If we change it, there is no complaint. Then why are we complaining? This is a confused way of thinking. The old philosopher's saying which I was referring to is: "Give me the will to change what I can, the courage to bear what I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference." But we have no wisdom to know the difference, and that is why we are suffering.

Yoga tells us to be contented and not make complaints since we are not going to be the gainer by complaining; we are only going to be the loser thereby. We should not embark upon anything which is not going to bring any benefit either to ourselves or to others. It is this psychologically, verbally and physically disciplined purified nature that can actually practise the austerity of yoga. A muddled head cannot practise yoga, and a busybody cannot practise yoga, because all distractions are contrary to the requirements of yoga.

These peculiar traits to which we have been making reference are the outcome of what is called *rajas*, or an unduly activated personality that is beyond limit. There is no composure in ourselves because there is no belief or

trust in the truth that there is in our own selves the seed of what we are ultimately seeking. The seed is in ourselves, and the vast universe of objects through which we seek satisfaction is only a ramification of this seed that is within us. We are a centre in which the universal values are rooted, and everyone is such a centre. Therefore, it is said that Reality is that which has its centre everywhere but its circumference nowhere. It has no limitation; therefore, it has no circumference. But every point is a centre of the universe, and therefore, the centre of the universe is everywhere. Every atom of the world is a centre of the universe and has as much capacity to reveal Truth as any other point in the world.

It is an absence of this knowledge that makes us discontented and distracted, and makes it impossible for us to compose ourselves. All things are finally to converge upon oneself, instead of one's being a centre of centrifugal forces from which energies shoot off in diverse directions like rays of the sun. The purpose is to withdraw these rays and make them converge upon the centre, so that a time will come when the powers of nature will begin to vibrate through our body. The world, which is so vast and unimaginable and frightening, is not really as vast and frightening as it appears to be, because its tentacles are rooted in our own bodily selves. In one sense, we may say, the strings which operate the movements of the objects outside like puppets are connected to the various centres in our own body. This is why yoga scriptures and masters tell us that the *brahmanda* is in the *pindanda*—the macrocosm is in the microcosm. To give an analogy of how the

macrocosm can be in the microcosm, the whole banyan tree, which is very big, vast and expansive, is in a tiny seed. Such an enormous tree, so weighty and expansive, is in that tiny seed. How is it possible? This wondrous universe is within us; this is what yoga tells us. That which strikes us with awe and astonishment, that which we regard as most miraculous and unimaginable in might and magnificence, all that is within us. The Chhandogya Upanishad says that all the vast space, with all the raining clouds and the shining suns, is within us.

The yogi, therefore, is not concerned with the world outside, because all the worlds are inside him. He does not run about here and there like a busybody, setting things right and putting things in order. There is no need to do any such thing. He can put everything in order within himself and, correspondingly, everything outside will also be set in order. This is a very essential point to remember in yoga practice. The yogi is not concerned with the outside world, because the outside world can be operated from within, and it is connected with him even in the minutest of details. The world is not connected with him merely in a general way, but it is connected even in the details. Every atom of the universe is connected with the cells of the body. We can imagine what powers we have, what capacities are hidden within us, and what our potentialities are.

Einstein's equation $E=mc^2$ says that an enormous amount of energy is contained in even the smallest quantity of matter. We know the power of the atom bomb—how it can devastate large areas, though it is so small. If one atom can contain so much energy, what is the energy of all the

atoms in our body? So why do we look like small monkeys when there is so much strength within us? We can simply blow away the mountains, if we want; but we cannot digest even one glass of milk, so much is our weakness. This is because we have become exiles from our own realm. We have been banished like culprits from our own kingdom, and we have lost our heritage. We are not citizens of the very land to which we belong. This is really a wonder. We regard the world, which is our mother, as a stranger and, therefore, our mother feels sorry for our state of affairs. The energy that is to come to us from the whole creation outside is cut off from the energy of our body on account of the egoistic affirmations with which we have identified ourselves.

The Yoga System is the final blow that is dealt at the root of this egocentric personality. To lay this final stroke upon the centre of the problem, so much of preparation is made—like a huge ceremony, celebration or function which may take place for one hour, but for which we go on making preparations for a month. For one month we work for a celebration that will take place for only one hour. Likewise, some great function is to take place in the form of yoga meditation, and for that so much preparation is being made. It is the glorious consummation that is called meditation, towards which we are moving; and the beauty of the function, and the perfection thereof, depend upon the meticulous care that we take in the preparations we make for it. There is no use laying too much stress merely on the achievement—only the function, only the dinner or the lunch that is to be given that day. Well, that is

important enough, but how much effort is to be put forth for it!

The *niyamas* mentioned by Patanjali are, generally speaking, the necessary disciplines of body, speech and mind. We are averse to discipline because we have been brought up in an atmosphere of enjoyment of the senses and too much social contact. This is how we have been brought up by our parents, by our teachers, by our friends; and this education, this culture, this civilisation, which has gone into our blood, makes it impossible for us to follow any system or any kind of discipline. It is, therefore, necessary to awaken ourselves into the seriousness of the matter. We should forget the past as it is never too late to mend, and earnestly take to this practice.

Purity of body, speech and mind is emphasised by Patanjali, which he refers to in a single word, *saucha*, which includes pure thoughts, pure words, pure diet, pure physical contact, and pure sensory activity. We should not see anything that is disturbing, we should not hear anything that is disturbing, and so on. Nothing that is going to defeat our purpose should become the object of the senses, the body should not come in contact with things which are going to stir up passions within us, and we should not speak what is not going to affect either ourselves or others in a positive manner; and the mind, of course, the supreme factor of all, is to be kept in perfect control. The Bhagavadgita gives a beautiful description of this discipline, called *manasika*, *vachika* and *kayika tapas*, which will bring us the needed satisfaction, contentment, *santosha*, without which *tapas,* or austerity, is not possible—all which are

brought together in what is called *kriya* yoga. *Kriya* yoga, according to Patanjali, is this combination of some of the principles of the *niyamas*.

To make it possible and easy for us, the system also prescribes certain advantageous practices such as the study of holy scriptures, and a perpetual remembrance of the presence of God. The practice of the presence of God is ultimately the key to success. *Sā hānistanmahacchidra sā cāndhajaḍamūḍhatā, yanmuhūrtaṁ kṣaṇaṁ vāpi vāsudevaṁ na cintayet.* (Pandava Gita 70) says the Pandava Gita, which means that all sorrows befall us, calamities come upon us, everything becomes difficult and the entire horizon looks dark before us as if there is no hope at all, the moment we forget the existence of God. One of the main teachings of the Sufi school of mysticism is that what we call *samsara*, or the life of earthly bondage, is not merely the world that we see outside. *Samsara* is not merely this world in which we are living, *samsara* is a name given to the forgetfulness of God. The moment we forget the existence of God, we are in *samsara*. Merely because we are living in a world of trees and mountains, it does not mean that we are in *samsara*. *Samsara* is an entanglement of consciousness, and it is not merely the physical location of our body in the astronomical wonder of this world.

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali regards *saucha, santosha, tapas, svadhyaya,* and *Ishvara pranidhana*, as he calls it, as a combined necessity to bring about an order in our life. This can be applied with the necessary intensity, each one for oneself, according to one's own conditions of living, strength of mind, and so on. But what it finally means in

essence is that there should be a stipulated method of thinking, speaking and acting. We must know what we will do at what time, and then we will see that success is not far off even in the ordinary life of this world, not merely in the spiritual field, because method or system is the way by which we focus our energies, and wherever there is a focusing of energy, there is strength—just as a focused beam of the sun's rays can burn things, while the sun's dissipated rays cannot.

It is, therefore, necessary to have a systematised daily routine. We must know when we will get up in the morning, what we will do after getting up, whom we will see, how much work we will do and in what manner, at what time—including even such minute details as bathing, walking, meals, the time of going to sleep, what we do before going to sleep, what should be around us and what should not be there. All this should be at our fingertips. This is method, this is system, this is *niyama*; and when this system is introduced into our life, we become ready for the higher practice. Each succeeding step becomes easy of approach and practice when the preceding step is firmly placed.

Again, we are to remember that we should not take an advanced step unless the earlier step is well placed. Hurry and too much enthusiasm are not called for. What is required is a pure, dispassionate understanding of our strengths as well as our weaknesses. Whatever our weaknesses are, they must be overcome by the strengths that we have. One has to be very dispassionate about this because we are going to open our hearts before the Truth of

all truths—the Great Reality before us—and nothing can be hidden from its eyes. Thus is the preliminary introductory remark which the great Sage Patanjali makes for the glorious destination ahead of us.

Chapter 20

UNFOLDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGA

The Yoga System is described as the process of controlling the mind. A doubt may arise: What is this peculiar thing that we call control of the mind, and what do we gain by controlling the mind? This doubt arises because our problems are not apparently in our minds; they are outside in the world. We have economic problems, social problems, political problems, family problems. Since there are all these terrifying features in the world outside, what is the point in ignoring these realities of life, closing one's eyes in a room and thinking something under the notion that the mind is being controlled and everything will be all right? How can everything be all right by merely controlling the mind? This is a doubt that can occasionally arise even in an advanced seeker, a well-equipped student of yoga.

What is the connection between our thinking process and the realities of the world outside? If there is no connection, this yoga process is useless, it is a waste of time, because no one thinks for a moment that the troubles of life are inside the mind. If that is the case, then we can keep quiet and worry about ourselves privately in our rooms, and not concern ourselves with the world outside. But the entire problem is outside. Our fears are from the external world. We do not fear anything from inside us; the fears that somebody may attack us, somebody may rob us of our property, something that we need from the world may not come, something unwanted may pounce upon us, and so

on, come from outside. If that is the case, what is this great principle *yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ* (Y.S. 1.2) that Sage Patanjali lays down?

The crucial question is this: What is the connection between thought and reality? As far as we are concerned, reality is the whole universe, the world outside. If yoga is a discipline of the mental processes and is the ultimate duty that one may be called upon to do, there must be some secret relevance of this internal process called yoga to the vast reality of the external cosmos.

Previously, we were trying to discover indications that there is some such connection between us and the world. We were trying to observe that the vast stretches of the cosmos, with all their intricacies and internal complicated structure—the variety of grandeur and magnificence of all this vast universe outside—is subtly connected with all that we are made of in our own personalities. Whatever be the extent of the world or the largeness of creation, this mystifying universe before us has its roots in ourselves. The strings of the cosmos appear to be operated from within, and a proper adjustment of the various constituents of one's personality would be tantamount to establishing a harmony with everything in the world, in all creation. Inasmuch as we are intimately related to the remotest parts of the world, and there is nothing anywhere with which we are not related, it would be wisdom on our part to find everything in our own selves—to discover the secrets of nature within our own bodies, as it were. This is a masterstroke of the yoga genius.

Ordinarily, man is prone to run about in search of the secrets of nature, as scientists generally do. They have long telescopes and powerful microscopes through which they want to probe into the mysteries of nature by observing things through their eyes and other senses. That means to say, there is a feeling in the mind of man that the secrets of nature are outside, and to discover these secrets we require external instruments such as a microscope or a telescope, etc. No one has the least idea that these secrets are hidden in our own selves. This is a discovery of yoga psychology.

We can be silently seated in an apparently isolated corner of the world and yet be connected with everything in creation without moving about in motorcars or airplanes. To be connected with things of the world, we need not fly in airplanes. We can be seated even in a bathroom in our house and be connected with everything in the world. This is a great secret which no one knows, and this secret is the secret of yoga. Otherwise, what is the point in merely restraining the processes of the mind—the *vrittis*, as they are called? Why are we bothered about these *vrittis*? We can let them do whatever they like, as if they are not our problems. Our problems are hunger and thirst, poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, tension, warfare, and whatnot—and if these are our problems, where comes the need for having to do anything with our mental processes? So, there is a necessity to entirely reverse the attitude we have towards things in general. We have to bring about what may be called a Copernican revolution.

Copernicus discovered that the earth moves around the sun, instead of the old idea that the sun is moving around

the earth. The tables were turned completely. This sort of revolution—Copernican, we may call it—is brought about by yoga. We were under the notion that all the troubles come from people outside, from the world external to us—just as, once upon a time people thought that the sun is moving around the earth. Now, a revolution has taken place. We find out that the sun is not moving around the earth, the earth is moving around the sun. This we are not able to understand because we are on the earth and we are moving with the earth, so we cannot know that there is any motion at all. Likewise, we cannot know that the problems are inside us, because we are moving with the problems—even as we are moving with the earth on which we are seated.

There are no such things as problems, because problems are not things by themselves. It is not a material substance that we call a problem. We cannot see it with our eyes. It is a state of affairs, we may say, brought about by a misjudgment of things in our minds and a maladjustment of values, a disharmonious arrangement of ourselves with things external. These are the problems, the difficulties, the pains, the sorrows of life.

Yoga, therefore, tries to go to the root of the matter to dig out the very base of the disease within us. The problems of life are not going to be solved unless we go deep into the problems to discover the ultimate cause thereof, and not merely the immediate cause. The ultimate cause discovered by yoga is a peculiar maladjustment of the subject with the object—the *drashta* with the *drisya*, to put it in Sanskrit: the seer with the seen. "I, as the seer, the observer, the subject,

find it difficult to suitably adjust myself with what I see outside—the *drisya*, the object world, including every thing and every person. I cannot properly adjust myself with people around me, with the things outside me, with the whole world external to me. What is my problem? What is my difficulty?" This is a question we may put to our own self. "Why am I not able to adjust myself with people outside? I speak so nicely to people, I take tea with people with great joy, with a smiling face, and I have a friendly attitude towards all things. What is wrong with me? How am I the source of my own problems?"

This question takes us further, deep into what we are made of. In our apparent external life of waking consciousness we appear to be in harmony with others, but this is not the truth of the matter. We are seated here, a group of people in this room, and apparently there is no conflict among ourselves. No one can imagine that one is in conflict with another in this small group seated here. But there is a conflict, if we go deep into the matter. Everyone is in a state of tension even now, at this very moment, which has been suppressed by your conscious effort to listen what I am saying just now. Your conscious activity at this present moment represses the major part of your personality and makes it appear that everything is well adjusted with the environment. What you have adjusted with the environment at present is merely a fraction of your conscious mind. Yoga psychology endeavours to study the whole personality of man, not merely the conscious mind or, much worse, a fraction of it.

What is maladjusted with the world outside is not merely our conscious mind, but our total personality. Our whole personality is out of order. It is not in a state of balance; and this has to be set right, which is the purpose of yoga. Now, this aim cannot be achieved merely by scratching the surface of the mind, which is mostly what we do even in our efforts to do very good deeds and virtuous acts in life. Most of our valuable and praiseworthy deeds in life are only surface acts on a conscious level, and this level cannot be regarded as a major part of what we are. The larger portion of our personality is hidden beneath the operation of the conscious level with which we are mostly engaged.

You cannot know your own self, I cannot know my own self, and no one can know one's own self, because we mistake knowing for merely a conscious activity of the mind. The knowledge process is identified with what we call a conscious activity of the mind. When I am aware of an object, I am under the impression, wrongly, that my entire personality is tuned to that object in this act of knowing; but what is tuned is merely a part of the conscious mind, working through the sense organs. You may ask me, "Why is it that aways only a part of the mind is working, and not the whole mind?" It is because the mind is a very shrewd politician, as it were, which knows how to work its ways. It will not bring out its deeper motives always, lest they be defeated. We know very well that we cannot go on shouting our motives in the streets, because if we expose all our deep-seated feelings and motives, intentions, etc., we cannot live in this world of

human society. So, even in the conscious level, there are many repressive activities going on voluntarily. We consciously repress many of our feelings and motives. There may be certain things of which you are quite aware which you may not like to tell me, what to speak of the other layers of which you are not aware at all.

When the mind is conscious of an object or deals with a particular object, it takes out from its resources only those aspects and features of its structure which are necessary for the fulfilment of the chosen purpose at that given moment of time. What is my present purpose? I will take out only that much as is necessary for this particular purpose. We may have a large storeroom containing many things, and we will not take out everything every day. We will take out only half a kilo of pulse or one kilo of rice, etc., because that is what is needed for the day. There may be many other things in the storeroom, but we are not worried about them because there is no purpose in looking into those things, the purpose being something else. Likewise, the mind, in being conscious of an object and in dealing with that object, lays emphasis only on the specific character of the particular purpose or aim in view at that given moment of time, and everything else is shoved into limbo. It is not bothered about the other things that are there, because they are not necessary. This is what we are doing every day—or rather, every hour, every moment of time. Our whole personality will not show itself, because it should not show itself for its own welfare. The mind knows this very well.

This is the main illness of man. A peculiar reservoir of maladjustments is inside, and that is covered over with a

camouflage of apparent adjustment and harmony outside. So, while we are deep-seatedly disharmonious with everything, we openly and overtly appear to be harmonious with all things. Therefore, there seems to be a sort of satisfaction and success in outward life, while there is dissatisfaction and disharmony inside. And life being short, we may die in this very condition of a tremendous potentiality for disharmony within us, without having achieved anything substantial in life.

This latency for disharmony that is within us pursues us even after death. This is the cause of rebirth. We are reborn into embodiment in successive lives because we carry with us, in spite of shedding the physical body, the potentialities of which we are made—the psychological stuff which we really are. As long as our deep-rooted, deep-seated potentialities are not brought to the conscious level and made a part of our conscious nature, our transmigratory process of rebirth cannot end.

Hence, yoga psychology works to some extent, though not entirely, along the lines of modern psychoanalysis. Whatever is inside should be brought out; otherwise, we cannot be free from tension. But, for various reasons, no one would like to bring out everything that is inside; therefore, no one can be psychologically healthy in a perfect manner. Then, what is the solution? Like psychoanalysis, yoga prescribes various methods of sublimating these deeper impulses, not by repressing or suppressing them, or even by substituting something else for them, but by a very slow process of growth. This done, what happens is that the stuff out of which we are made—the personality of ours that

we are speaking of—gets decentralised, as it were, into its components, and gets adjusted with the pattern of facts outside in the world. That is what we mean by harmony with nature.

The affirmation of the ego is the centralising principle within us, on account of which particles of matter are brought into a particular form or shape by a centripetal force, and hardened into an instrument of action. That instrument is called this body. For example, the nucleus of an atom—the proton or the neutron, or whatever we may call it—pulls the electrons around it towards itself by its central electric action, and compels them to move around it in a particular pattern so that it looks like an atom. Similarly, this proton called the ego within us, this centralising principle, draws sustenance from the constituents of nature outside, pulls particles of matter from the five elements towards itself, and arranges them in a particular pattern of what is called this body; and this process will continue endlessly as long as this centralising principle, the ego, continues to exist. Therefore, the purpose of yoga is to break this fortress of the ego—*asmita*, as it is called in Sanskrit.

The ego is a very subtle principle which is the ruling power of what we call the psychological process within us. It is the king, the emperor, the chief directive force. *Asmita*, which is translated as the ego, is not merely the vanity or the vainglorious attitude that we put forth in public life. That is only a cruder form of it. In the sense of yoga psychology, the *asmita*, or the ego, is a subtle feeling of 'I-ness', or 'I am-ness', as we may call it. The very sensation or

feeling 'I am' is called the ego. 'I am an officer', 'I am an emperor', 'I am a king', 'I am Julius Caesar' are cruder forms of it. Yoga is concerned with even the subtlest aspect of it, the mere feeling 'I am'. This 'I am-ness', the sense of individual 'be-ness', is called ego. That is *asmita* in yoga psychology. In Sanskrit, *asmi* means 'I am', and *asmita* means 'I am-ness'. How subtle it is!

This *asmita* is the cause, ultimately, of isolating us from all creation outside, making it falsely appear that we are disconnected from things outside, and that all the problems and difficulties are in the outside world and not in us. *Asmita* is the cause of the problems. *Ahaṃkāra vaśād āpad ahaṃkārād durādhayaḥ*, says the Yoga Vasishtha. The great sage speaks to Rama: "All your *apat*—all your calamity or catastrophe in this life—is due to *asmita*, this feeling of 'I am'." Because I am, it follows that others also are. Well, now the trouble has started; the fire has been set ablaze. If 'you' are, 'others' also must be, and therefore, the need arises to establish a connection with others. This is society, this is *samsara*. Because you are, it follows that others must be; and if others are, it also follows that you have a connection with them in some way. You cannot understand this connection with others because the connection is internal rather than external, and the internal connection cannot be known because the *asmita*, the ego, works through the senses, which can act only externally. So our idea of relationship or connection is external, spatio-temporal, causally related, and nothing of the internal relations is known to us. But relations are really internal, and the external relationship is only a temporary shape or

form taken by this internal set of relations. To solve the problems of life, therefore, we have to deal with the internal relations, and not merely their outer aspects.

Thus, coming to the point with which we started, the need for control of the mind, or *cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ*, arises because of our entire personality being involved with everything in the world, and because of this ego principle within us being the seed form of all the activities that will be projected in the future, including all thought processes, etc. Whatever we think and feel, whatever we propose to do in the form of our daily activities, whatever our aspirations are, whatever we were in the past and are in the present and shall be in the future, everything is in this ego in a miniature form. Therefore, the old saying once again comes to our memory: Know thyself. When we know ourselves, we have known everything because the entire past, present and future is hidden inside us. Even the unimaginable past and the remotest future possibilities are all potentially present in ourselves. Hence, to know one's own self is, in other words, to become omniscient, to know one's own self is to know the whole creation, and to know one's own real difficulties is to know everyone's difficulties.

Thus comes about the need for controlling the mind. As we have already observed, this psychological process of controlling ourselves, harmonising ourselves through yoga techniques, is not merely a so-called internal activity of ours because, though for the purpose of expressing ourselves, for the sake of convenience in language we may speak of yoga as an internal process, it is really a cosmic process. It is so because our so-called internality, our apparent

individuality, is really connected with all things everywhere. Therefore, to touch anything anywhere is to touch everything everywhere.

The world 'outside' and we 'within' are only ways of expression. There is neither a within nor a without. And so, when we speak of a subject in relation to an object outside, we are speaking in the language of the ego; otherwise, there is no subject and there is no object in the language of our own usual day-to-day customs, manners, etc. To think a thought is to simultaneously think an object, and to think an object is at once to imply all the relations of this object with everything anywhere. Thus, we can imagine the importance of a thought because it immediately stirs up powers and forces which are everywhere in the world. Therefore, while rightly directed thoughts can bring about immediate miraculous success, wrongly directly thoughts can bring about a reverse consequence. We can create a heaven or a hell at once, with the power of our thinking. This capacity, this potentiality, this power, this latency hidden within an individual is discovered by the psychology of yoga; and this has to be unfolded, brought to the surface of consciousness, and made a reality of our day-to-day experience.

Chapter 21

MIND CONTROL IS SELF-CONTROL

We were discussing the modifications of the mind, known as the *vrittis*, and these it is that yoga endeavours to control and master. The modifications of the mind are not objects of either perception or cognition. They cannot be observed as we observe objects of the world, because the mind is not an object and, therefore, its modifications are also not objects which can be seen, sensed or known in the ordinary way. This is the reason why self-control is difficult.

Control or restraint, as we understand it, is the exercise of a power upon something which is external to us. We never know what it is to influence or control our own selves, as such a thing is unthinkable. How can we control our own selves? We are not different from ourselves. It is tautology to speak of oneself controlling oneself, because the act of control requires a distinction between the controller and the controlled. Otherwise, what is control, and what does yoga actually mean by saying that there should be self-control, or control of the modifications of the mind? Here is the difficulty of the practice of yoga. It is terrible, when we think of it. The whole process of yoga is nothing but a series of processes of self-control from the lower stage to the higher. Inasmuch as there are various connotations and meanings of the self, and stages of its manifestation, there are various stages of the process of the control of the self, or the mind. Consequently, there is a

need to understand the whole technique in an appropriate manner.

People speak of control of the mind, control of the *vrittis* and so on, as if they are going to control servants or subordinates, etc. All this is not such a simple affair as it appears to be. The control of the mind is not at all like controlling one's servant, or like a boss exerting pressure upon his subordinates. It is a great feat of acrobatics, as it were, a circus feat not possible for the ordinary person, because what yoga means by saying that the modifications of the mind have to be controlled is that an unusual technique has to be adopted in this effort. It is unusual because the modifications, or *vrittis*, of the mind are not capable of observation. They cannot be observed because the observer has identified himself with the modifications themselves. The one who has to control the mind has become one with the mind.

We are psychic personalities, as they say, which means to say that the mind has assumed the form of our personality. We are the mind, and we make no distinction between ourselves and the mind, though we generally say, "I am thinking. These are my ideas, my thought, my feelings" and so on, as if thought, feeling, etc., are outside us. These are only ways of expression. Our feeling is us only. Our feeling is not outside us, external to us or different from us. Therefore, we cannot do anything with it, because we cannot do anything with our own selves.

Then, what happens? The control of the mind is an act of concentration of the mind. It is not an ordinary act in the sense of a work that we perform in the outside world. Yoga

is not a work. For want of a precise linguistic expression, we have to use terms like 'effort', 'endeavour', 'activity', etc., even in regard to the practice of yoga. But these are limitations of language. We cannot convey the exact meaning by speaking in words, because words have a limitation. What is the limitation of language? Language is expressed in sentences, and a sentence is made up of the subjective aspect and the objective aspect. The predicate of a sentence implies an object with which the subject is connected, and the meaning of the subject gets modified by an adjectival influence exerted by the object. In a sentence, the subject and the object get connected by what is called a copula. 'This is a desk' is a sentence. 'This' is the subject, 'is' is the verb or copula, and 'desk' is the object, and so is the case with every such sentence. We use this type of expression, this sort of language, in defining even trans-empirical realities, transcendental truths which cannot be bifurcated into the subject and the object and, therefore, all our definitions of Reality fall short of the Ideal. Likewise, the psychological depth of the efforts known as the practice of yoga is beyond the comprehension of ordinary expression in language.

The *vrittis*, or the modifications of the mind, have to be controlled, says the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The stages of yoga beyond *asana* and *pranayama* are very difficult. Though *asana* itself is a difficult thing, and *prayanama* is also difficult, what follows is more difficult because the bodily posture known as the *asana*, whatever the difficulty of it be, is somehow or other involved in the world of objects. The body is an object of sense, and so we can deal

with the body in the same way as we deal with objects in the world so that it may not give us a lot of trouble. We may understand the various methods of physical posture, because understanding an object is not as difficult as understanding the subject. The same applies to *pranayama*. Though *pranayama* is internal to the body, no doubt, and is more difficult to practise than *asana*, *mudra*, *bandha*, and so on, nevertheless it is something which is palpable in a physical manner, and so we may succeed to a large extent even in the practice of *pranayama.*

But after that, what happens? After we ground ourselves sufficiently in *asana* and *pranayama*, what happens to us? That is very difficult because the further stages are wholly psychological, and are not physical in any sense at all; and because the stages beyond *asana* and *pranayama* are purely psychological, it implies that what we have to deal with in these higher stages is the mind itself. As was already pointed out, since the mind has got identified with our own personality, and vice versa, we cannot deal with the mind as we deal with the body or even with the pranas. We cannot do anything with the mind, though something can be done with the body by way of postures, and with the pranas by way of *pranayama.*

Nothing can be done with the mind, because there is no such thing as 'doing' where what is involved is the mind itself. Consciousness, which is our essential nature, animates the modifications of the mind in such a manner that we cannot know which is the modification of the mind, and which is us. By way of analogy, the instance of a heated iron ball is given. When a ball of iron is heated until it

becomes red hot, we cannot see the iron; we can only see the fire. When we touch a heated iron ball, it may burn us, and we think the iron ball has burnt us. What has burnt us is the fire, not the iron ball, but we mix up one with the other. The fire has penetrated every particle of iron in that ball and assumed the form of the iron ball or, conversely, we may say the iron ball has assumed the form of fire. We do not know which is the fire and which is the iron ball—even though the iron ball cannot be the fire, and the fire cannot be the iron ball. Similarly, consciousness cannot be the modifications of the mind, and the modifications of the mind cannot be consciousness, because consciousness has no modifications; it is indivisible eternity. Then, what is it that is modified? What do we mean by *vrittis*, or processes of the mind?

There is a transient process taking place within our personality, and that process gets identified with consciousness. That is what we mean by saying that *vrittis* are animated by consciousness. Inasmuch as our essential nature is consciousness, we are consciousness; but when we are identified with the *vrittis*, we become the *vrittis*, we are the *vrittis*. Therefore, what we think is 'me' thinking, not somebody else thinking. We can imagine the difficulty of the whole circumstance, and where we stand. When the policeman himself has become the thief, how will he detect the thief? He himself is the culprit, and he is also the policeman. The judge has also become the client, which is a very difficult situation indeed. We cannot understand what to do now.

All this is to give an idea of the difficulty of yoga. It is terrific, repelling, most offensive for the ego-ridden individuality. If it had been so simple, the world would be overflowing with yogis; but that is not possible. Sometimes it looks humanly impossible. We have to become superhuman in order to become real students of yoga. An ordinary human being cannot become a student of yoga, because we cannot even understand it. It will not enter our heads because what we have to deal with is ourselves, and that is the problem. But we cannot deal with ourselves in any manner because all our actions are processes, and there is no process involved in this dealing because yoga is not a process, merely because of the fact that what is to be dealt with is ourselves.

Thus, the achievement in yoga becomes a sort of awakening rather than an activity. When we wake up from sleep, we are not performing an action or engaging ourselves in any kind of work. We are not doing anything at all when we wake up from sleep, and yet there is such a tremendous difference because of our achievement of entering a new world altogether when we wake up from sleep. The achievement called 'waking up from sleep' is not the result of an action. This is why Acharya Sankara tirelessly hammers upon the idea that liberation is not an action, and it cannot be achieved by any kind of action. The reason behind his extraordinary proclamation is that what is to be achieved is so intimately connected with us that any activity of our personality cannot touch it; and moksha is nothing but an awakening into a wider reality which is already planted in us and is not external to us.

All activity is an externalised movement of consciousness towards an object outside. But here the object is our own self, and therefore, there cannot be such a movement of our consciousness. Here, again, is the reason why ordinary activity is of no use. Not the greatest of virtuous deeds can make us fit to visualise the Cosmic Form, says the Bhagavadgita towards the end of the Eleventh Chapter. *Na vedayajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ, evaṁrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke draṣṭuṁ tvadanyena kurupravīra* (Gita 11.48): Whatever be the virtuous deed that we do in this world, that would be unsuited and inadequate for this purpose. Even the most terrific form of ordinary austerity, even the breaking of our heads by the greatest of philanthropic deeds and services in the world—all these put together cannot be adequate for the purpose. This is because all these wonderful deeds in the world that we are speaking of are things of the world, but we are something different from the world. Why are we different from the world? It is because the world is a name that we give to the externalisation of consciousness, but we cannot be so externalised inasmuch as we are indivisible. Indivisibility means universality. All these are words for the novitiate, meaning nothing ultimately, but they convey such a tremendous significance that even a mere thought bestowed upon their true meaning is enough to shake us up from our very roots.

So, the Yoga System tells us that the control of the modifications of the mind is to be effected with great caution. Why do they say all this is so difficult and compare

it to a razor's edge, the path of a sword, the path of fish, the path of birds in the air, and so on? These are only analogies to give an idea of the difficulty of understanding the whole procedure and putting this understanding into practice. Thus, we come to the conclusion that yoga is a process of awakening, rather than an activity in an empirical sense. It is not a work that we perform. And what is this awakening? How is this brought about? The answer is, by control of the mind.

But, we have been talking about the very same thing as being an almost impossibility before us. Now yoga answers this entire question. Most of the higher truths are explained only by analogy, comparison, imagery, and not by logic or scientific analysis. Sometimes stories give a better understanding of a thing than a logical, precise, analytical deduction of it. The Yoga Vasishtha is a scripture which has concluded that analogical stories are a better means of conveying the nature of Reality than logical arguments, because logical arguments are infected with the defect of logic itself. The defect of logic initially requires a dissection of the subject and the predicate, and then it endeavours to join the predicate with the subject by a synthesis. We break the leg of a man so that we may join the parts of the leg together by medical means. Such is the thing that we generally do even in the best of logical deductions. But the nature of Truth is such that it is incapable of being approached in this manner. It requires a purification of the self, which is the means of self-awakening; and this purificatory process is analogous to a gradual rise of the

soul from one stage of self-identification to another stage of self-identification.

The whole of life is nothing but an awareness of selfhood. If we properly and deeply think over the matter, we will realise that there is no such thing as an object in this world; there is only a self. Even that which we call an object is a part of our self in the sense that we associate that object with ourselves and make it a part of ourselves, and the moment it becomes a part of ourselves even in a social sense, it becomes a social self and it is not any more an object. The family is a self, though it is constituted of external members. It is because it is a self that we are so much attached to the members thereof. It may not be the real Self, because it is involved in space, time and causality; but in spite of the fact that it is not the true Self because it is not indivisible, it is a self. Otherwise, why are we related to it? Why are we thinking about it? Why are we concerned with it? Why are we attached to it? We have a national self, and because of the existence of such a self, we identify ourselves with a nationality. We identify ourselves with a creed or a cult or even a language group, and we identify ourselves with the human species. We are very much concerned with humanity, much more than we are concerned with anything else in the world. Is it not so? This is also a kind of selfhood. Whatever we are doing is for man only, as if God has created only man and there is nothing else in the world but man—though it is not true. Why are we so worried about mankind and not about animals—lions, tigers, snakes, scorpions—as if they are not existing?

This is a peculiar isolation of ourselves by identification with another kind of self altogether, namely, the species.

There is no such thing as a self getting connected with an object, ultimately speaking, because the moment the self gets connected with an object, the object ceases to be an object. It becomes a part of the Self itself. This is why it is said that what we love is the Self only. There is no such thing as love of an object, because the moment we love an object, that object ceases to be an object; it becomes the Self. It is the Self that we are loving even in the so-called object. The great sage Yajnavalkya has proclaimed that no love is possible where the Self is absent. *Ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.5): It is for the sake of the Self that we are loving things. It is not merely for the sake of the Self that we are loving things; we are loving only the Self, and nothing else. And when we extend our selfhood, what we are doing is not the action of love for an object outside, but for only another form of the Self. If we are utterly selfish, we love only the bodily self, only this physical body. If we are more altruistic and civilised, we become a family self, a social self, a political self, an international self, a human self. We may become even a world self. But it is, after all, the Self. There is nothing but that.

The whole point is that there is nothing but the Self anywhere, in one form or another. Whether it is a counterfeit self or the real Self, that is a different question, but it is a self. Counterfeit currency notes may look like genuine currency notes. Though they are counterfeit notes, they are passed for genuine notes; otherwise, they have no

value. Likewise, even if we create an artificial self, it is to be valued as the Self; otherwise, it has no sense.

Thus, yoga takes us to the root of the whole matter, and wishes to disillusion us of all our prejudices and old notions of things, so that we may know what it is to control the mind. To control the mind and to control the self are the same thing. Mind control is self-control. *Citta nirodhaḥ* is *ātma vinigrahaḥ*; they are identical. Inasmuch as it is difficult to understand what the self is, what the mind is, what its modifications are, yoga practice becomes difficult; and, therefore, with a tenacity of purpose and an incisive understanding, we have to take to the various prescriptions given by the Yoga Shastra in a methodical manner.

Chapter 22

ABHYASA AND VAIRAGYA: THE SPIRIT OF PRACTICE AND DISPASSION

Previously we have discussed the details of the various postures known as the *asanas*, and the methods of *pranayama*, or breathing. We have seen the importance of these practices and their vital connection with the entire practice of yoga.

In the practice of yoga, there is no item that can be regarded as unimportant or even as less important than another in the particular place which it occupies. Even a peon in an office is an important person in his own place, and we cannot say that he is less important than others. This comparison of one thing with another is always odious. The ethical and moral disciplines, the physical and physiological techniques, and the breathing processes are all methods of inner education for the complete mastery which one has to achieve, and this mastery is yoga.

As we proceed further and further, we seem to be entering into newer and newer and stranger and stranger lands, perspectives and vistas—unknown and unthinkable before, and more inclusive than what was seen earlier. The higher stages may look frightening when we are in a lower stage and are not yet ready for the next step. Nothing is frightening in this world unless, of course, we make a wrong comparison of one thing with another. Therefore, the advice in yoga is that no step should be taken for which we are not entirely prepared in our whole being. One may

be intellectually prepared but morally and emotionally unprepared; that is a disqualification. One may be emotionally ready but intellectually turbid; again, that is a disqualification. It is necessary that our feelings, emotions, and moral nature should go hand in hand with our understanding or intellectual appreciation.

Most people in the world are one-sided in their personality. Either they are too sentimental, emotional or traditional, trying to tread the beaten path already laid before them, or they are ultra-rationalistic, the so-called scientific minds, with not even the least touch of feeling or emotion. Our personality is neither wholly rationalistic nor entirely affective or emotional; it is a combination of both. It is a false distinction that we draw between understanding and feeling that makes us imperfect personalities. Which part of our body is unimportant, non-essential? Likewise, which aspect of the psychological function can be regarded as non-essential? The feeling or the emotion is the motive power for every action—the dynamo that supplies the power—and the intellect is the channel through which this power is directed in a requisite manner, so we cannot say that any one aspect is less important or more important.

The common mistake that we can make in the practice of yoga is that we are lopsided in our approach, because lopsidedness is ingrained in our personality. We do not take a whole view of things at any time; we cannot do that, due to a peculiar weakness of our own minds. This weakness of the mind by which we take a lopsided view of things is due to laying too much stress on sensory activity. As we observed, we are too much a slave of the senses, and

the senses are never complete or totally focused in any direction; they are one-sided. When the eyes are active, the ears do not function. When the ears are active, the eyes do not function, and so on. It is very difficult to find an occasion when all the five senses are alert and concentrated; and inasmuch as the mind and the intellect are wedded to the senses almost entirely, it is seen that our approach to things is one-sided in the sense that we move along the lines of the reports supplied to us through the senses. The system of yoga lays down a kind of discipline that compels us to take a total view of things—not only of ourselves as individuals or personalities, but also of things outside with which we are apparently connected.

Yoga is the rise of the whole towards a larger whole. *Pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam*, says the Upanishad. Everywhere there is a sense of fullness. Even an atom is a completeness by itself; it is not a part of anything. We may say an atom is a part of a molecule, but that is only a way of expression. An atom, by itself, is complete, self-sufficient—like a solar system. Everything, even a cell in the body, is self-complete, though many cells make up the larger body. Similarly, every stage in yoga is a complete step, a full-fledged activity of the mind in that particular stage or level.

Hence, the first and foremost precaution that we have to take here is to see that our understanding and emotion do not move in different directions. Sometimes they even move in opposite directions, which should not be the case. While the intellect may be vehemently denying something on a scientific basis, the emotion may be affirming the very same thing, contradicting what the intellect is asserting.

Many students of yoga are sufficiently prepared intellectually but are not prepared emotionally and, therefore, they have little success. The emotions are driven towards things which the intellect vehemently denies in its own way, and it is no use when the intellect works in one manner and the emotion works in another manner.

How are we to find out if our understanding and feeling go together? This is a great and difficult task before us, because many of us are incapable of making a subtle analysis of our nature. We are born idlers, psychologically speaking. We are idle, and therefore, we cannot exert our minds. We are prone to doing the least action in the least time possible. We do not want to exert because exertion or effort is always regarded as a kind of pain. This is a kind of tradition into which we have been born. But, there is no use merely moving in a slipshod manner when the matter is very serious. It is very serious indeed because this is the battle of life, and we know how serious a battle is. If a person is half-sleepy and unintelligent, incapable of judging things properly, what good will it do for the army if he is made a general or a commander-in-chief? The battle inwardly fought is more serious than all the battles in the world throughout history.

Towards the end of the Mahabharata there is an incident where Yudhishthira, the Pandava king, having won victory in the Mahabharata war and having been crowned emperor with all glory, pomp and éclat, started crying and weeping. Why was he crying? He was responsible for the whole war—in one sense, at least—and through the thick of the battle he had moved with his

brothers and his army, and won the war with great difficulty. Everyone regarded it as a righteous war. It was not unrighteous; otherwise, there would be no point in struggling so much. Now he had been crowned king, the whole country was so joyous and jubilant over this happy event, and this man was crying! What had happened to him?

Sri Krishna, who was sitting near him, asked, "Why are you crying?"

The weeping Yudhishthira replied, "What is the good of all these things that I have now? I have killed all my brethren, and I have a blood-stained kingdom. All my kith and kin, my dear ones, have gone. My grandfather and my Guru are no more. What for is this kingdom? Why have I come here? And why am I here as a king?"

Then Sri Krishna turned to Yudhishthira and said, "My dear friend, I am very sorry for your state of mind. You are under the impression that you have fought a battle, engaged yourself in a very vehement war and killed many people; but you have not fought any battle or won any victory. The battle is still to be fought and the victory is still to be won because now a battle is going on in your own mind, and that is indeed a more serious battle compared to the outer battle that you apparently fought, for which you are crying. Neither have you destroyed your enemies, nor have you won victory. Your enemies are still inside you, and victory has not yet been won. You are weeping because your enemies are working inside you."

The yogi takes, therefore, a very serious view of everything. There is nothing simple, unimportant or

insignificant which the yogi can take as a sort of diversion or hobby. There is no diversion for the yogi, and he has no hobby. Whatever he does is a very serious thing indeed. Even if it is an act of sweeping the floor, it is not a joke for him, because every thought and every action are vitally connected with what he is.

There are many secrets which are not open to our minds. Only yesterday while reading a book I came across a very interesting passage, which made me smile. It was a passage from Rousseau, the great thinker: "Why are you searching for the cause of evil? You are he." And the sentence goes on: "You are responsible not only for the evil that you have done and are doing, but also for the evil that you are suffering from." This is something horrible. We are also responsible for the evils we are suffering from, not merely for what we are doing. Yes. Rousseau opened up a psychological Pandora's box when he made this statement, because we are very cosy under our blankets of comfortable thinking, due to which we think that the sufferings that we are undergoing are not our own making, that they are thrust upon us by others. We think, "Somebody is stupid; therefore, I am suffering." This is not true. No stupid man can cause suffering to us unless we are equally stupid, because the world is made up of such stuff as cannot brook violation of the principles of law even in the least degree. Experience is the essence of this law which works in the universe, and no experience will come to us, impinge upon us or become our own unless we have a part to play in the drama of that experience.

This is the reason why the yogi takes everything very seriously and never complains about circumstances, conditions, persons, things, and so on, outside him, because for him there is no such thing as 'outside'. He is in a very tremendous expanded atmosphere where everything seems to be connected with him, and with this attitude it is that he takes to a persistent practice of the higher stages of yoga, which come after the necessary mastery of oneself through *asana* and systematised breathing.

These stages cannot be compartmentalised because it is not that one thing comes after another, as if one thing is disconnected from the other. We cannot say which stage ends where, and which stage begins where. There is an interconnection of one with the other. It does not mean that for some years we practise *yama*, then after some years *niyama*, and then after some years *asana*, *pranayama*, etc. It is not like that. They are all intermingled, like the working of the physiological system in our body. We cannot say which works first and which works afterwards. The alimentary canal, the respiratory system, the circulatory system, the heart and the head are all working simultaneously, though they are apparently different from one another. We cannot say the head thinks first and the heart comes afterwards. Everything is always. Similarly, the stages of yoga are stages only for the purpose of logical distinction, and they are not a chronological order that is laid before us. With this grounding, the yogi takes up the task of what he has to do next.

It was told that the yogi has to control the mind, which is what we have been discussing. He has to subdue the

vrittis, the modifications of the mind. How is this done? We also found out that this is a difficult job, because the *vrittis* get identified with ourselves and we are the ones with the *vrittis*, and this posed a great problem indeed before us. But, the recipe given to us by Sage Patanjali is that though it looks formidable in the beginning, it becomes easy by constant practice. Even such a simple act as walking was a very difficult thing when we were babies, and we fell down many times and injured our knees; but now we can run, take part in a race, and not even be conscious that we have legs when we are running, while in earlier days we were very conscious of our legs and fell down. Practice makes perfect.

A repeated assertion of a chosen technique is called for. The control of the mind is effected by a spirit of renunciation and a tenacity of practice, says Patanjali: *abhyāsa vairāgyābhyāṁ tannirodhaḥ* (Y.S. 1.12). The *nirodha*, or the discipline or inhibition of the modifications of the mind, is effected by two consistent efforts: the spirit of dispassion, and persistent practice. The effort of the mind to repeatedly think the same thing again and again, and not allow itself to think anything other than what it has chosen for its ideal, may be regarded as practice for the purpose of yoga.

A deep, whole-souled concentration or absorption of the mind on a given subject, object or concept works wonders. It brings about a miracle by itself. The mind is connected to objects; we have already seen this through our analysis. There is no object anywhere in this world which is not connected with the mind of the individual who thinks

it. Hence, repeated thought of a particular object—here, the chosen one for the purpose of yoga—stirs up those capacities and powers within us which bring the object or the ideal in proximity to us by abolishing the distinction between the subject and the object that is brought about by the factors of space and time. A thing that is far off, in the distant stars, is impossible of achievement or acquisition, ordinarily speaking. This is why we cannot easily acquire the distant stars or even something that is on a different continent. It is so far from us; it is ten thousand miles away. How we can get it, is a difficulty. But there is no ten thousand miles for the mind, because the mind can overcome the barrier of space and time; and by repeated concentration on what it wishes to achieve, acquire, possess or experience, it can materialise that object at the spot where the yogi is seated. This gives an idea of the nature of the practice and its consequences.

Everything in the world is, generally speaking, everywhere. The world is not in dearth of things; it is never poor. Its resources are illimitable, and so anything can be materialised at any time. But this materialisation will take place only if the mind is non-spatially connected with the object it seeks. What makes it difficult for us to achieve anything, possess anything or experience anything directly is the spatial distance between us and the object. We have to abolish this spatial distinction, and this is the purpose of the practice.

But, simultaneously, Patanjali says that this kind of effort at abolishing spatial distance between us and the object is impossible unless we have another qualification,

called *vairagya*. *Vairagya* does not mean putting on a single cloth. It means a spirit of understanding the true nature of things, on account of which the mind ceases from attaching itself to particular things of the world, knowing very well that every particular object in the world is included in that which it seeks. That which the yogi seeks is so large and universal in its compass that the little things of the world to which the mind is usually attached are in it in a transmuted form. When this knowledge arises, when there is this discrimination—this ability to correctly understand the relationship of any particular object in the world with that which one is seeking in yoga—there is automatic dispassion. The absence of passion is dispassion; the absence of *raga* is *viraga*. The condition of *viraga* is *vairagya*. *Vairagya* and *abhyasa* should go together.

But *vairagya* is the most difficult thing to understand. It is one of the things which will not enter our heads easily, and it is one of those things which we very much misinterpret, misconstrue, and mispractise. We may be very seriously attached inwardly, but we may be glorious renunciates outside—again, due to the fact that the understanding is not going hand in hand with the emotion or the feeling. The reason why we cannot be inwardly detached is because our understanding is not friendly with our feelings. Whatever be our reason, the emotion cares not for it—because, as a great man said, "The heart has a reason which reason does not know." The heart has its own reasons. The heart says, "Why do you want your own reasons? Throw them aside. I don't want your rationality. Kick it out." If this is the condition, the emotions will refute

all the assertions of understanding. Intellectual *vairagya* is no *vairagya*, because the feeling of detachment is more an emotional condition which touches the vital being in us rather than merely an outward activity of logical judgment.

The condition of *vairagya* is generally defined as 'not to need an object'. We should not be in need of that object. Not that we cannot get it, or we are exerting not to think about it, and so on—that is not the case. We have no necessity for it.

We have no necessity for it because of various reasons. One reason is that the object is an illusion, like water in a mirage. It does not exist and, therefore, it is meaningless to desire it. Why do we crave for water in a mirage? Or if we try to strike an arrow through a rainbow, we will not be able to do it because the rainbow is not really there. It is only an optical illusion. So, when we realise that the thing is itself not there and we are under a misconception about it, and we are very thoroughly convinced about this, then, of course, we will not get attached to it. One of the ways there can be detachment from objects is that we know they are an illusion, like the motion-picture shows in a theatre. We are not attached to the pictures that are seen on the screen because we know they are not there, that they are only shadows that are cast on the screen. But if we are not able to realise that the pictures are an illusion, then the emotion will run towards them.

While the discovery of the illusory character of an object may be a factor in stirring a spirit of detachment within us, the spirit of detachment can also come by knowing that what we already have includes the object

towards which the senses are moving. If we have a million dollars, one dollar is already included in it, and we need not run after one dollar, because we already have a million. That is one way. Or we can think that it is not a dollar at all, that it is only a deceptive picture that is kept before us. Then also the mind will not go there.

How are we to practise *vairagya*? Very difficult is this demand of the Yoga System. And because of the difficulty of this aspect of yoga, the other aspect, namely practice, also becomes difficult because they go together, like two wings of a bird. The bird of yoga flies with the two wings of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, and if one wing is off, how will it fly with the other wing? There is no *vairagya* without *abhyasa*, and no *abhyasa* without *vairagya*—practice and dispassion. This is also emphasised in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. "How can this turbulent mind be controlled? Is it possible at all?" asks Arjuna. *Abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate* (Gita 6.35), replies Bhagavan Sri Krishna: "Yes, it is possible by *abhyasa* and *vairagya*."

Therefore, we have to walk with two legs, as it were. We cannot walk merely with one leg. These two legs with which we walk the path of yoga are *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. In the system of Patanjali this is sometimes regarded as the whole of yoga, and if we are well established in this double attitude of the consciousness of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, we are already rooted in yoga.

Chapter 23

A SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THINGS

Dispassion has been regarded as an indispensable prerequisite of yoga. A spirit of renunciation and a feeling of a final worthlessness of all things may sometimes take possession of us either due to our understanding by a careful observation of the nature of things, or by a sudden kick that we receive from nature. Either way, a spirit of renunciation can arise in our minds.

Very intelligent, scientific analysis will reveal that there is something wrong with the world, and it is not as it appears on the surface. Also, when there is a catastrophe and a loss of everything that one holds as dear and worthwhile in life, then also there is a feeling that everything is useless. Something becomes useless only in comparison with something else which we regard as useful. There cannot be a total uselessness of everything, because such a feeling is comparative.

Whatever be the nature of the renunciation which takes possession of us, yoga insists that it should be positive; and the idea of positivity is that it should not be capable of reversion into the old groove of thinking. If there is a catastrophic revolution and a loss of everything material, there can be a sudden urge for religious devotions. This urge cannot be regarded as a positive aspiration, because it can cease to operate later on when conditions favourable for a comfortable life are provided. When those things, the loss of which became the cause of a spirit of renunciation

within, come back to us after some time, the renunciation which was the effect thereof may come to an end, and therefore, that is not a genuine spirit of renunciation.

There are, as it is said, three kinds of dispassion. There is the disgust that we feel for everything when a dead man is cremated. We feel that it is something horrible that a man has gone like that suddenly, and we do not know where he has gone. He has gone to the winds, most unexpectedly. He is cremated, buried, thrown away, cast aside as if he is nothing. We think, "What a pity! This is life. This may be my fate too." This kind of feeling is a sort of *vairagya* arising in the mind when it sees such things. It is called *smasana vairagya*. *Smasana* means cremation ground. When we see a cremation ground, we feel a sense of disgust. But when we come back to our house, fifty percent of that feeling goes. We have forgotten what we have seen in the cremation ground; the ashes and the flames are out of sight, and we are once again in a cosy homely atmosphere which tells us, "My dear friend, after all, things are not so bad." After few days the *smasana vairagya* has gone and we are once again in the same old pleasurable, comfortable, happy way of thinking. This is not *vairagya*; this is not dispassion. It is not spiritual, and it is not going to help us in the practice of yoga.

Another kind of dispassion is called *abhava vairagya*. Because we cannot get a thing, we have a dispassion for it. If we are on Mount Everest, we may not get milk, so we say, "Well, I don't take milk." This is a great renunciation indeed when it is because we cannot get it! But when we can get it, naturally we will want it. Therefore, this is also

not positive, not spiritual, and it cannot be called renunciation, dispassion, or *vairagya*. It is *abhava vairagya.*

The third kind is called *prasava vairagya*. A woman feels disgust when she bears a child. "Oh, what a horror it is!" Life itself is meaningless for her due to the agony of the travail, and she makes up her mind that such a sorry state of affairs may not be repeated. But it is temporary, like the other *vairagyas*, because when the pain goes, the idea that there has been pain also goes, and once again the mind gets into the earlier ways of thinking of those conditions of life which provide the usual comforts, pleasures, etc.

These are all quite different from what yoga requires of us. Dispassion, which is the great requisite of yoga, is not any one of these, but something different altogether. *Dṛṣṭa anuśravika viṣaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkārasaṁjña vairāgyam* (Y.S. 1.15), says Patanjali in his famous aphorism. *Vairagya* is not *abhava vairagya*, *smasana vairagya* or *prasava vairagya*. What is it that we are required to practise and make our own? It is an entirely spiritual attitude towards things. *Vitrishna* is the word used in this aphorism. *Trishna* is craving, a lust for pleasure, a hunger for satisfaction, a thirst that we feel inside due to the lack of comfortable objects. The object itself is not of primary importance here; the attitude towards the object is of greater importance. The greed for gold may be present in the mind of a thief or a miser, but a child has no greed for gold even if it sees a gold ornament, because it cannot perceive the value of gold. Gold is gold whether it is in the presence of a child, a monkey, a miser or a thief. It is the same object; it has not changed its character, and its value is the same. The value of

the gold is not diminished merely because it is placed in front of a baby, but the attitude of a baby towards it is different from that of a miser, a thief, and so on.

While the nature of the object exerts an influence upon the mind, no doubt, and it is necessary that we are free from atmospheres which are infested with such objects of attraction, it is more important to remember that yoga is an internal adjustment with the existing condition of things. Yoga does not aim at transformation of the world, because such a thing is not necessary. What is necessary is a self-adjustment with the order of things. In a famous mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad it is said, *yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyaḥ* (Isa Up. 8): The great wisdom of the Creator projected the universe in the manner in which it ought to be, and it does not need a modification or an amendment of the act. The act of God is not subject to amendment. It has been very wisely constituted by Him, and it is futile on the part of any human being or group of people to think that the acts of God can be amended by our little efforts. He has permanently fixed the order of things, and if we accept the wisdom of God, we have also to accept the correctness of this order with which He has manifested this universe.

So, what is wrong with the world then, about which we are so much complaining? What is wrong is that we are not able to recognise this order that is present in things. The order is trans-empirical; it is beyond the perception of the senses. The organisation of the universe instituted by God is not capable of human understanding and, therefore, we misconstrue the whole order and imagine that there is

chaos, that God has created confusion and a tremendous ugliness, a resource of evil, pain, suffering, and everything that is unwanted. This is all the wisdom of God; He could not find anything better. We are complaining against the very discomfiture of God that is unwarrantedly imagined by us. But the Upanishad has proclaimed that everything is perfectly in order and our like or dislike for a thing does not affect the thing very seriously, but it affects us.

To reiterate, yoga aims at an individual transfor-mation necessary for an adjustment with the cosmic order of things. The cosmic order will not change. The cosmos is the body of the Virat, as the Vedanta tells us, and there is no need for a change in it. But there is a need for change somewhere else, in what is called *jiva srishti*, not in *Ishvara srishti*. These are all technical jargons of Vedanta. The meaning is that the creation of God needs no change, but the creation of the individual needs change. The creation of God does not need change because God is omniscient, and He has wisely construed everything in the manner it ought to be. He has placed everything in the very place where it ought to be, in the condition in which it has to be; but the individual cannot comprehend this mystery because no individual can be omniscient, and no one who is not omniscient can understand the perfection of God's creation.

If the ugliness, the stupidity and the evil of this world are really there as we imagine it, it should be there always. But we have the epic illustration of the Viratsvarupa, for example, described in the Bhagavadgita, and no ugliness was seen when the Virat was manifest. Arjuna could not see

dung or drains and sewage. Where had it gone? Had it vanished altogether? All this stupidity of the world is not there in that perfection, but that perfection is inclusive of this stupidity, this ugliness. It is not somewhere far away. What Arjuna was made to visualise was the very same thing that we are seeing with our eyes. He was not seeing something else, far off in the distant heavens. The same drains and dustbins that we detest so much were there; but they were not dustbins. They were something else, because they were arranged in the pattern of universal perfection which could be seen with a new eye altogether, not with the fleshy eyes. The eye of perfection saw only perfection. But if this stupidity of the world is really there, then even after we reach God, we will still see that horror. Then there will be no point in practising yoga or even in God-realisation, because the horror will continue for all time. The point is that this is a mistake in perception.

Thus *vairagya*, or dispassion, is a tendency of the mind to adjust itself with the natural order of things, and when this attitude is appreciably effected, there is also a simultaneous feeling of mental health, which is the proper attitude towards things. An improper attitude is mental illness. Love and hatred are illnesses of the mind. We are very fond of the word 'love'. We think it is a great, gorgeous, divine blessing upon us, but it is not so. It is also an affection of the mind because where there is no object, there can be no love; and as we are again and again told that objects do not really exist as they appear to our senses, then love also cannot exist in the way in which it is manifest because what is love, if there is no object of love? All

emotional movements, whether in the form of like or dislike, cease on account of a self-completion and a self-sufficiency felt within by a manifestation of spiritual awareness. This is the *vitrishna* which Patanjali speaks of. We have no desire for things because we have now understood things in a better way.

Why we do not have a desire for things is a very vast subject for us to contemplate. Why is it that there should be no desire for objects? Why are we so much condemning desire for objects? What is wrong if we desire things? What is the precise mistake that we are committing in loving things, hating things, or desiring things in this way or that way? What is the matter? The matter is simple. It is against the constitution of things. It is unscientific because the order of things, the nature of the universe as it is, is such that everything is arranged in an organic connectedness. This system is called the Virat. When an organic connectedness of things becomes the content of consciousness, this is the experience of the Virat. What do we mean by this connectedness? It is a realisation that there cannot be objects and, therefore, there cannot be subjects. There cannot be causes and, therefore, there cannot be effects, and vice versa. In a mutual interrelation of things, we cannot say which is the cause and which is the effect, which is the object and which is the subject, who is the lover and who is the loved. We cannot say anything. The idea of externality, isolation, separatedness is the cause of attachment, which is the principle of desire, passion, etc.; and inasmuch as any desire for a thing is an affirmation of there being no such organic connectedness among things,

desire is contrary to Truth and, therefore, it is not desirable. Desire itself is not desirable.

We should develop an inward feeling of 'enough with things'. A sense of enough, of satiety, should arise in us, not because we do not have things, not because we cannot get things, not because there is a threat from outside, but because we ourselves do not feel a need for things; we have enough of things. Either we have enough of everything, or we have seen that desire itself is not a proper attitude or a correct form of understanding. In such works as the Panchadasi, the famous Vedanta text, we are told that a great sage, a man of wisdom, feels that he has no desire. An emperor who has the whole earth under his control also may have no desire. The emperor has no desire because there is nothing to desire. When the whole earth is his, what is he going to desire? Whatever he wants is under his control. The sage, the *jnanin*, also has no desire, but for a different reason altogether. Both the emperor and the sage have satiety, surfeit, a feeling of 'enough with things', though for different reasons. The point made out in this analogy is that, rightly or wrongly, we cannot have freedom from desires as long as there are covetable objects in the world, whether we can actually possess them or not. The covetable objects should not be there at all.

But they are there, so what are we going to do with them? The objects should either be wholly possessed by us, as is the case with an emperor ruling the whole earth, or they have to become part of our own nature, as is the case with a sage of wisdom. Otherwise, we cannot be free from desires.

Dispassion can also be caused by a scientific, logical investigation conducted into the nature of things as, for example, a physicist would do through a microscope. "This is a lump of gold. Very beautiful! I would like to have it. Let me observe it properly through a microscope." He goes on observing it, but he cannot see gold when he sees it through a microscope. He finds that whatever is inside the stone is also inside the gold, and it appears to be gold because of a rearrangement of the very same constituents which form the object called stone.

In the Panchadasi, we have very detailed expositions. Towards the end of the Sixth Chapter the great author says that various causes of *vairagya* are there, but whatever be the cause or the reason behind the rise of *vairagya*, it should be spiritually oriented—which means to say, there should not be a necessity to retrace our steps. Many honest and sincere seekers on the path of yoga fail in their attempts on account of a misjudgment of themselves. While we are very shrewd in judging others, we are not so clever in judging our own selves. We are very lenient towards ourselves, and very hard upon others, which is very unfortunate. The point is, we have to be hard on ourselves and a little lenient on others, but we are not. The yogi is very severe upon himself, though he may be very kind towards others. He may be very charitable towards other people, but not so charitable towards himself. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a great example of this. "Give, give, give, and it shall be given" was his philosophy, as was the case with Jesus Christ. In my life, at least, I have seen only one person who was a follower of the philosophy of

giving, and it was Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. I have never seen any other mahatma or a saint of this type, someone who would give things and feel that he loses nothing by giving. There is always a fear that by giving, we lose. "If I give five dollars, I have lost five dollars." That is not so, my dear friend. We do not lose, we gain something. What we do not know is that when there is an apparent debit of five dollars here, there is a credit of five thousand dollars somewhere else—in another, superior bank altogether, in which we have an account. Man, with his foolish, stupid brain, cannot understand this.

"Give, give, give, and it shall be given unto you, pressed and overflowing." What is the meaning of this? The meaning is that man's understanding is inadequate to the task. Man is born and brought up in a set of conditions which insist on selfishness of behaviour and comfort of the body, glory, name, fame, power, authority, and whatnot. All these are the doom of yoga. The greater we ascend on the ladder of yoga, the smaller we look in the eyes of people, and finally we may look like nobody at all when we are a master. But nobody wishes to be looked upon as a small fry by people.

Thus, the ethics of yoga and the psychology of yoga are something super-natural, super-mundane; and the demands of yoga practice, therefore, also seem to be very exacting. When one steps onto the ladder of yoga, one will be repelled by its requisitions—not because it is really hard or exacting, but because it is unintelligible to the uninitiated mind. Therefore, to live with a Guru for a sufficient length

of time, until one is well grounded in an understanding of what is one's true aim in life, is called for.

Chapter 24

THE DESIRELESSNESS AND JOY OF THE ATMAN

We were discussing the discipline of dispassion, wherein the mind is purified and enabled to return to its essential nature. The *vairagya*, or the spirit of renunciation that yoga speaks of, is a very subtle attitude of consciousness, and it is not merely any kind of outward conduct or behaviour. It is not an abandonment of things in the pure physical sense, though a safe distance from attractive physical objects may be conducive to this internal discipline of dispassion. But mere physical distance from objects of sense is not what is meant here, because the desire of the mind can connect it with its objects even under conditions in which they are physically remote and out of reach. Physical distance does not prevent the mind from desiring and, therefore, a mere physical isolation is not the entire meaning of renunciation. It is an inward transformation that has to take place, by which consciousness—or in its more pronounced form, the mind—does not relate it to its objects.

The object of sense can be physical or conceptual, and one can be attached to a conceptual object even though there may be no physical object. As far as attachment is concerned, it makes not much difference whether its object is physical or purely psychological, because inward reveries of the mind are as dangerous as outward possessive attitudes. But most students of yoga do not go deep into this peculiar feature of dispassion; they follow a traditional

attitude of renunciation, which simply means a monastic life—life in a monastery or a convent, etc. That is not what is ultimately required of us. We may live in a monastery or a convent, but it is no use if the mind is hankering for enjoyment. The mind can be in the thick of enjoyment even there, and this craving of the mind is what binds us and makes us take rebirth. We are not renunciates merely because we are living in a monastery, because the conditions of bondage and those factors that will bring about rebirth are still present in our mind. It is not the physical object of sense that causes rebirth. It is a mental potentiality, a predisposition of the mind towards something, that causes rebirth.

The mind can inwardly harbour an abundance of pleasurable feelings, and feel happy. We can be inwardly happy by enjoying a psychological object. There is not always a need for a physical object. The senses can get excited by even the thought of the object of sense, and it is this excitement that causes pleasure, not the object. So, whenever the nerves or the senses are stimulated, there is a sensation of pleasure. It may be that the physical proximity of an external object stirs the nerves and the senses in this manner, and we hanker after a physical object of sense merely because it acts as an instrument in stirring up the nerves and the senses. The pleasure is not caused by the object; it is the stirring of the feelings, sensations and nerves that is the source of pleasure. This is very important to remember. We are happy because of a stimulation of the bodily organism, and not because of the presence or the absence of the object.

We mix up things, and in a confused attitude imagine that the joy comes from the object we are thinking of, loving, or are attached to. What actually happens is that an inward stimulation takes place, and this stimulation can be brought about merely by thought, even if the object is a thousand miles away. We can merely think of that object and the corresponding sense will be stimulated, and a similar type of joy and pleasure will be felt within us. Psychologists and psychoanalysts can tell us the details of this peculiar character of the mind. It is the mind that creates an atmosphere of satisfaction and joy by a rearrangement of its own constituents; and merely because an external circumstance helps in the arrangement of its psychological constitution, it does not mean that the joy comes only from the object. The point is that merely because we are away from physical objects of sense, it does not mean that we are in a state of renunciation. Yoga does not prescribe this sort of renunciation. What it expects of us is a healthy attitude of our consciousness towards things. It does not expect us to brood over objects of sense.

Mostly, our renunciation is compelled, it is forced upon us by outward conditions, and this is a dangerous type of life that one can live, at least from the point of view of psychological health. Any kind of undue pressure exerted upon us is contrary to the requirement of yoga, because every stage of yoga is a spontaneity and a voluntary enterprise on the part of the seeker. Wherever there is an absence of spontaneity of action, there is a drudgery felt within. We enjoy a work when we do it of our own accord, but we dislike a work when it is forced upon us by our boss.

We can walk ten miles if it is our wish to walk as a sort of diversion or recreation, but we will not walk even one furlong if we are sent on a duty. We will say we cannot walk so much, and go by car or scooter. Therefore, voluntary and spontaneous aspiration is called for in yoga.

When the teacher Patanjali lays great emphasis on the requisite of *vairagya*, or renunciation, he intends to convey to us the message that bondage, from which yoga tries to free us, is not merely in a physical location of objects of sense, but is a connection of consciousness with these locations of objects and an appreciation by the mind of the characters of these objects. We cannot enjoy an object unless we appreciate it, and this appreciation is the recognition by the mind of certain characters or values in the object which the mind itself is lacking.

The love that we feel towards an object is an indication that those features which we see in the object of our attraction are absent in us, and we try to make good the lack by a psychological connection that we establish inwardly between ourselves and the object. It looks as if we become whole when the counterpart that we lack is provided to us; but this is a mistake that the mind is making, because what we lack is something unintelligible to us. The love of objects of sense is an experiment that the mind makes in trying to find out what it is lacking, and the short life that we have in this world is spent in mere experimentation. Can we love an object eternally, for all times, from birth to death? That is not possible. We jump from one thing to another thing. Today this is desirable, tomorrow another thing is desirable; and what was

desirable yesterday does not look desirable today because, by experiment, the mind has found that the object which attracted it yesterday is inadequate today. So, it tries to experiment with another object, and it fails there also, so it goes to a third object. But with all its experiments, it finds that it cannot find or acquire what it lacks, because the mind is incapable of knowing what it really lacks.

What we lack, what the mind is in need of, is not a temporary stimulation of the senses or the nerves. What it is in need of is not any kind of physical object. It is in need of something else, which it is trying to discover in the objects of the world. But, no one has found the object of one's ultimate quest in anything of the senses, because the shortcoming of the mind is of such a nature that it cannot be made good by anything that is finite. There is an infinite shortcoming in the mind and, therefore, finite objects cannot bring it satisfaction. When there is an awakening into this fact, it tries to discover the causes of its failure and take to right methods by which it can gain what it has really lost and what it really seeks. But the mind is wedded to the senses. It always plays second fiddle to the tune of the senses, so even in its investigations into the causes of its failure, it takes the advice of the senses only, because it has no other advisors except the senses.

Hence, in a life of renunciation, in a life of monastic discipline, etc., what the mind is trying to do is to act independently for its own self and discover the remedies for its sorrow. But in the act of this discovery of the causes of its sorrow, it once again takes the aid of the senses and, therefore, it comes a cropper. The senses begin to tell the

very same thing that they conveyed to it earlier, and we once again begin to interpret the causes of our suffering in this world in terms of the objects of the world; and then there is a possibility of our entering into a muddle, which is a state of mental confusion.

This is what is described in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, in which condition on one side we feel that we are in need of light, advice and guidance from a higher power, a greater source of wisdom, but on the other side we cling to our own views and stick to our guns, as Arjuna did. He was seeking advice from Bhagavan Sri Krishna, but he was also arguing on behalf of his own feelings and opinions, as if they were right. In this confused state, the mind can get into an entangled situation where outwardly it may appear to be engaging itself in a pious adventure of the practice of yoga, devotion to God, and so on, but unfortunately it can become totally sidetracked due to following the guidance of the senses. It can imagine that it is moving in the right direction, though it is moving in the opposite direction.

All this is a precaution that masters of yoga, adepts, give us so that we may not get caught up by the very same forces from which we try to gain freedom, because freedom is an inward adjustment of consciousness towards the natural order of things, as we were discussing in the previous session. Our harmony with the universe is real freedom, and the absence of it is bondage; and to cling to objects—whether outwardly in their physical form or inwardly by way of mere conceptual thinking—would be, once again, bondage. Inward reveries are more dangerous than outward clinging, because the inner desires of the mind, by

which it subtly enjoys the pleasures of sense, can be more vehement than outward clinging. The Bhagavadgita tells us that even if we are physically away from objects of sense, the taste for objects will not leave us. *Rasavarjam* means that even if we are free from everything, we are not free from the taste for things; and it is this taste for things that catches us. 'Taste' means the feeling of pleasure in an object of sense and the belief that the object of sense can bring us pleasure. This taste is present in the mind in a very subtle form—like a highly potentised homeopathic dose, invisible indeed, but very powerful—and it can grossen itself into actual action when outward conditions become favourable. Once again, we repeat that any kind of diverting the mind from objects of sense is not the remedy for its cravings, because it cannot forget that there are objects of pleasure.

The yoga process is a process of education, which means to say, a gradual enlightenment, an awakening into the daylight of knowledge, and not merely groping in the night of darkness. Though it may be that we are moving from one place to another place in that dark night, shifting the position of the body in darkness is not a solution. The solution is the rising of the sun.

This is why Patanjali says: *dṛṣṭa anuśravika viṣaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkārasaṁjña vairāgyaṁ* (Y.S. 1.15). *Vairagya*, or the spirit of renunciation, is a mastery that we gain over the objects of sense, and is not merely a forgetful attitude of the mind in respect of the objects of sense. What are the objects of sense? *Drishta* and *anusravika* are the words used. That which is seen, and that which is heard about—both these are objects. We can cling to objects

which are seen with our eyes, and also cling to things which are only heard about by our mind. When we see a thing directly, physically, of course the mind will begin to read a tremendous attractive significance in the object, and jump upon it. Not merely that, even by hearing of the glories of an object of sense, the mind can become restless and ask for its possession—like the joys of heaven, for instance, as the celestials in Indraloka are said to be enjoying pleasures far superior to the pleasures of the earthly senses.

Our senses can be worn out by repeated enjoyment. We may get exhausted, we may fall sick, we may enter into old age, we may die; but the scriptures tell us that the pleasures of the celestials—the *devatas*, the gods in the heavens, in paradise—are qualitatively more intense. Their senses do not get exhausted, they do not become worn out, they do not become old and they will not die, and so our mind can crave for such things also. "Oh! Such things are there. Why should I not go there?" This is a desire that arises in the mind by merely hearing about things which we have not seen with our eyes; and when we actually see them, of course we are completely put out of order. All the ratiocinations of the intellect cease, and the best brains stop functioning when an object of sense is presented directly. No brain will work at that time; the brain stops.

What is *vairagya* then, which yoga speaks of? It is a *vitrishnata,* a feeling of inward desirelessness towards everything that is seen or capable of being seen, and everything that is heard of through the scriptures or from other sources. In one of the writings of Acharya Sankara, his definition of *vairagya* is terrifying. He says that even the

pleasures of Brahmaloka are to be despised by a desireless mind, as they are mere dirt which have no essence in them. But who can imagine what the pleasures of Brahmaloka are? They are not like the pleasures of the celestials. They are far superior to even Indra's pleasures, because that is the description of the subtlest condition of *sattvic* enjoyment. Even this is an enjoyment only, though this enjoyment is effected not through the physical senses, not even by an ordinary psychological process, but by a subtle instrument called the *anandamaya kosa*. They say that in Brahmaloka the physical body is not there, and not even the ordinary subtle body is there; there is a subtler-still body which is comparable only with what we call the causal body in us. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Sanatsujata, Narada and such others are said to be living there. These are all unthinkable. These pleasures also are not to be coveted in comparison with a still greater joy, which is identical with the Self.

The joy of the Atman, the Supreme Self, reflects itself in all these manifestations right from the delight of Brahma, the Creator, down to the grossest physical object of sense, in various degrees. What is giving us joy, pleasure, is the Atman present in things. We are happy wherever the Atman is manifest. Where the Atman is not manifest, we cannot feel joy. Even in the grossest object of sense, the Atman is manifest. That is why it attracts us. It is a great wonder how the Atman can manifest itself in an object of sense. Is it possible? Yes, it is possible, and it is because of this mystery that is revealed through the objects that the senses run after them. The Atman is not an object, of

course, and yet it is capable of getting revealed in some degree through the objects.

The Atman is a symmetry of perfection, a well-arranged pattern which reflects completeness; and wherever this arrangement of completeness, pattern or symmetry is visible, the mind begins to feel that its object is present. Anything that is symmetrical attracts us, and anything that is confused or chaotic does not attract us. Symmetry is also a very difficult thing to understand. It is not merely geometrical symmetry that we are speaking of here, though that also has an element of this superior form of symmetry.

Completeness, or an absence of any kind of want, is the character of the Atman. There are many features in the Atman, not merely symmetry. It is difficult to explain the qualities that are discoverable in the Atman. There is exuberance and buoyancy, force and symmetry, perfection, and freshness. The object of sense looks fresher and fresher every day. The more we see it, the more we like to see it. It does not look old. We do not feel that we have seen it a hundred times. Every day we would like to see it as many times as possible, because freshness is one of the characters of the Atman. We cannot know what this freshness is. It is not the freshness of a ripe fruit, like an apple; it is something that pulls our whole being.

For example, every day, the sun rises in a beautiful manner. We are happy to see the rise of the sun, and we never feel that it is a dull sun that has been rising for centuries. Every day it is fresh, invigorating, and exciting. The capacity to excite us into a tremendous activity

through every part of our body, senses and mind is the capacity of the Atman; and wherever such inordinate capacity to stir the total personality is seen, upon that the mind focuses, and goes toward it.

But, the mind forgets that what attracts it is not this vehicle called the physical object, but something that is revealed through it due to a peculiar placement of that object in a certain atmosphere, in comparison with a peculiar and particular condition of our own mind in a certain stage of evolution. Attraction is impossible unless both the object and our own mind cooperate. The object has to be placed in a proper context, it must reveal certain characters, and those characters and that context should be the very same thing that our mind is lacking at that particular time. Then we are attracted by it. That is why we cannot be attracted by the same thing always, because the mind changes when we advance in age or in experience.

Knowing all these things, the *viveki*, or the man of discrimination, gets disillusioned: "This is the state of affairs. I am very sorry. I was totally mistaken." *Pariṇāma tāpa saṁskāra duḥkaiḥ guṇavṛtti virodhāt ca duḥkham eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ* (Y.S. 2.15). For certain reasons which are to be explained, the whole world is full of pain only. It is not a place of beautiful enjoyment or an occasion for exciting pleasures. There is something very terrible about things, and this sutra that I quoted just now tells us what it is.

Chapter 25

WHOLE-SOULED LOVE OF GOD

There are three stages of the feeling for God, according to Sage Patanjali—the mild, the middling, and the intense. It is only the intense feeling for God that finally succeeds, not the middling or the mild. Almost every religious person has a mild feeling for God, and this feeling accepts the existence of God as the supreme reality, but it also accepts the reality of the world and of people around. When an equal reality is accorded to the world, to human society, and to things in general, as much as to God, that love of God becomes very mild. This is because a fraction of the mind believes in the existence of God and feels that it is proper to love God, but another fraction of the mind goes to the world and feels that it is also proper to love the world and that there is something valuable in the world. There is also a fraction working for the values that are human, personal, social, etc. Like a stream of water which is divided into different channels, the mind channelises itself into various streams of movement—one stream alone touching the concept or feeling for God, and the other streams going somewhere else. This means that though some part of the personality feels for God, the whole of the personality does not feel for God. We have given one third of the mind to God, sometimes even less than that. But this will not succeed, says the discipline of yoga.

Sometimes we have experiences in the world which awaken us into a different kind of feeling altogether, a

feeling that things are not what they appear to be. There seems to be something peculiar about things, different from what we take them to be in our daily activities. Though it looks as if the world is all right and people are all right, they seem to be all right only for some time, and not for all times. This fact enters our mind occasionally, on certain conditions of experience such as when we are frustrated, defeated or done a bad turn, as we say, which makes us feel a kind of resentment towards everything which we originally felt to be worthwhile. We may resent even a friend whom we regarded as an alter ego up to this time. This resentment, which must come to the mind of everyone one day or the other, will shake up the feelings that one has for the world and for people, and then it is that those feelings, which were externally diverted, withdraw themselves and prepare for a different movement altogether. Then, the feelings get intensified.

This is a very strange state of affairs in our mind, namely, that the feelings can hibernate like frogs sitting inside a hole, not doing anything—neither coming out nor moving inside. When we are frustrated, defeated in our purposes, disillusioned about things in the world, our feelings for the world withdraw themselves. We cannot love the world, because it has given us a kick. Then what happens to the feelings which were regarding the world as of great value? These feelings come back to their source, as if the waters of a stream are pushed back to the main current of the river. This pushing back of the force of the main current, which was channelising itself in different directions, only increases the potentiality within, but it does

not move it in the required direction. Here the feelings get intensified, no doubt. They become more powerful than they were earlier, and they must find an outlet for their expression. Not finding an outlet, they struggle inside and begin to search for an outlet. In this condition, our feeling for something that is not visible, though one may not be quite clear as to what it is, becomes strong; and if the pressure which has brought the feeling back to its source continues for a long time, it can break its barriers, and perhaps move in the direction of God.

How the love of God arises in the mind is difficult to explain. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways. Not even great philosophers can satisfactorily explain how the love of God arises in the mind of a person. Sometimes, these divine feelings arise by apparently silly and meaningless occurrences in life. A word that is uttered against our wish is sufficient to turn us away from everything in the world. Though it may look like a small affair, that is the last straw on the camel's back; it was all that was needed. A camel can bear a lot of load, and its back will not break easily. But when it has been loaded to the maximum, it is said that even a straw added to it will break its back. How can a straw break the back of a camel? It was the last thing, which is why it breaks. Similarly, even a small thing that occurs—even the tiniest event in the world, one word that is spoken—can put us out completely because that was the last thing that we expected, and it has come. Even if we were prepared for it inwardly, we were not consciously prepared for it, because nobody is prepared for unhappy things in the world.

Even frustrations can sometimes drive people to God. Though that is not the normal way, it is not impossible. Loss, bereavement, destruction, and a sense of hopelessness in regard to everything may drive a person to God. And when God calls us, He can bring about such a catastrophic situation. It is not that He will always call us very smilingly. In a wrathful mood, He can crush us down and then force us back to Himself. That is one of the ways in which God works.

Many a time, we need such methods of turning back to God because we will not listen to a word of good advice. "My dear friend, what is there in this world? You must love God, and meditate on God throughout the day." This is good advice, but who will listen to it? We will say, "This man is chattering something stupid. We have heard this so many times." Then the rod comes. "You will not listen to this advice?" The rod of God gives such a blow that it breaks down everything that is worthwhile in this world. Everything goes—father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, whatever it is. God does not care for what we hug as dear to us. The wrath of God can come like a flood of the ocean which devastates everything, and He does not care what our feelings are.

But very rarely does God take such action. If anyone can give a long rope, it is God; and perhaps, He gives the longest rope. *Sama, dana, bheda, danda* are the four methods of action in every field of life. A very polite, sweet and gentle advice which is perfectly positive in nature is given first. This is what the world does to us, what good people do to us, what God does to us. "This is the proper

thing for you," say people, says the world, and so does God advise.

If our mind is not prepared to listen to this advice—such as the advice given in the Vedas and the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita, for instance—which is wholly constructive, positive and complete, there are what are known as the *arthavadas,* or the statements of the scriptures, which say, "If you go to God, you will get everything." So there is a temptation behind it: "All the wonders, all the beauties, all the joys, all the powers, omnipotence, etc., will be at your beck and call if you go to God. You will not lose anything but will gain everything, so why do you cling to these things of the earth when more things are there, ready to receive you with open arms?" This is *dana*, temptation. We are told, "Something wonderful is coming, so do not go to anything else."

If we do not listen to this, the eyes of nature's anger open themselves: "You will not listen to me? Do you know what I can do to you?" Occasionally a threat comes. Nothing happens, of course, but a warning is given. If we do not learn by good advice, we will learn by pain. This is only a word of warning that is conveyed.

But man is made of such stuff that nothing will work. He cares not even for warnings, and thinks, "Oh, this warning has come so many times." Then, when everything fails, there is *danda*. *Danda* means punishment. God punishes us by bringing about a total revolution of conditions, which can be anything, and we do not know what sort of a revolution He will bring about. It can be personal, physical, psychological, social, political, or

anything. It can even be an earthquake, a thunderstorm, a flood or a cataclysm, whatever it is. Then, the mind turns to God merely because of pressure forcefully exerted from every corner. If we read the lives of saints, whether of the East or of the West, we will learn why people's minds turn to God.

Anything and everything can be a cause of the mind turning to God. Even a cat or a rat can be a cause. A wisp of wind or the mildest stroke of misfortune can turn us to God. The point of all these illustrations is that yoga requires a whole-souled direction of the mind to God. *Tīvra saṁvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21), says the sutra of Patanjali: Realisation of God becomes possible only when the feeling for God becomes most intense. If it is mild or middling, it will not be a success.

Now, what is meant by 'intense feeling for God'? What does it mean? Have we, at any time, felt an intense feeling for God? The word *tivra*, or intense, has a special meaning. It means almost the same thing that the word *ananya* signifies in the Kathopanishad and the Bhagavadgita. *Ananya-prokte gatir atra nāsti* (Katha Up. 1.2.8), says the Kathopanishad. *Ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate* (Gita 9.22), says the Bhagavadgita. *Ananya* means one who is not devoted to any other. This is said to be the most purified form of divine devotion. Devotion is divine love, and love becomes intense when it has only one object before it. If it has two objects, the love cannot be called intense. Has our feeling only one object before it, or has it more than one object? If it has two objects or three objects, then the love or feeling is mild. If it has hundreds

or thousands of objects, it is very poor indeed; it cannot get even a pass mark. But if it has only one object, it is said to be intense. It can apply even to earthly love if there is only a single object—such as money, for example. For a miser or a greedy millionaire, making money is an object, and for the whole day and night he will be thinking only of the means of acquiring more and more wealth. There are others who work for name, fame, status in society, power, authority, and so on. If this is the only aim that is before the mind and it cannot think anything else—it does not want to take breakfast or lunch or even to sleep, and says it will work only for this—then it is whole-souled feeling for an object. Why should we sleep and why should we have breakfast or lunch, when the mind is after something else? We will not feel hunger at that time. It is not that we are fasting; the feeling of hunger itself is absent. We do not need anything at that time because we are filled with something else.

Although it is possible to conceive a singleness of purpose in earthly loves or worldly affections, it is not possible to conceive what it means spiritually because these things are not known to us, and we have not seen them. We cannot, therefore, even imagine them. We have seen earthly objects, and so we can understand what it means to have whole-souled love for one object only. But what does it mean to have whole-souled love for God? This is difficult for the mind to conceive for the simple reason that God is not an object in the sense that He is not outside us and, therefore, we cannot love Him in the ordinary sense of earthly affection, etc.

The *bhakti* scriptures, treatises dealing with divine love, speak of *apara bhakti* and *para bhakti*—or, as they say, *gauna bhakti* and *ragatmika bhakti*, and so on. *Gauna bhakti,* or *apara bhakti*, means devotion or love that requires accessories, instruments. We require some apparatus to stir our affection or love. If the apparatus or instrument is absent, it will not work. For example, there are some musicians who cannot sing unless there is an instrument. They want a harmonium, a violin, a veena or some other instrument because without it, their singing is not beautiful. But, an exuberance can take possession of oneself, and then we start singing even without an instrument, and we can dance even without a tune accompanying us. Devotees speak of *ragatmika bhakti,* or *para bhakti,* as the real form of devotion or love, which does not require any accompaniment. It does not care even for moral and ethical codes of society, and it breaks all boundaries of human convention. To tell you the truth, it has not even shame. We may call it shameless, if we like. Such is whole-souled love. A person becomes shameless when the love becomes whole-souled. Whether it is in the world or in the realm of spirit, he acts in the same way. This is when the taste for the object inundates the personality wholly.

Raga means a taste, a tinging of the whole personality with the character of the object which is loved. We assume the characteristics of the object. We become the object that we love. We go on thinking about it, and we become that. We forget that we are so-and-so. We are the very same thing that we are wanting. This is *ragatmika bhakti*. This

happened to the *gopis*. If we read the Rasapanchadhyayi in the Tenth Skanda of the Srimad Bhagavata, we will learn what it is. They were not *gopis* or persons; they themselves were Krishnas. The object of their love was they themselves. The distinction between the lover and the loved is abolished in *ragatmika bhakti,* or *para bhakti*, in whole-souled love. One *gopi* started killing Putana, another *gopi* started destroying Vrikasura, a third *gopi* started playing the flute, and so on, as if they themselves were Krishnas.

In the highest form of love, we become that which we love. There is no love there, as a matter of fact, because in ordinary language 'love' means the movement of our emotions towards something outside, but when we ourselves have become that object, where is the movement of our affection? We have gone mad; that is all. All great devotees were mad people, God-intoxicated. We become mad when we are possessed by a single feeling, whether it is temporal or spiritual.

Now, such a kind of *tivrata,* or intensity of devotion, ardour for the practice of yoga or the realisation of God, seems to be called for. How many of us are fit for it, is difficult to imagine. A little thought bestowed upon this subject will also reveal why we are not getting anything, in spite of our crying for days and months and years. We are deceived, unfortunately. Though we cannot adequately know the causes of this deception, it goes without saying that there is a sort of deception in which we seem to be entangled; and this deception comes into play when the object of our quest is kept out of sight by the presentation

of something else which is made to appear equally good or even better. This is what happens to everyone.

The object of our quest has been kept out of sight completely; it is not in front of us. Not merely that, we are not allowed to even think that it is kept out of sight. We are brainwashed thoroughly, so that everything looks all right. We go on muttering the same formula that has been given to us by the world, and we will do this until the body drops. Thus, two catastrophes can befall us as spiritual seekers. That we can forget our aim is bad enough, but something worse can happen. We can remember something contrary to it, and take it as our objective. It is no wonder that no one can practise yoga, and no one can love God.

Though the Yoga System insists upon this requisite of *tīvra saṁvegānām āsannaḥ*, the effort of the mind cannot bring about this kind of intensity. We are placed in a state of quandary whenever we think about this matter. Whole-souled love of God cannot come by human effort. Human effort is inadequate for the purpose, because it would be something like attempting to carry burning coals with a piece of straw. We cannot do it. Even the great master Acharya Sankara did not properly answer this question when he himself raised this point in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras. How does knowledge arise in the *jiva*? It is not by human effort, because effort towards knowledge is possible only when there is knowledge, and we are asking how knowledge arises. How can the love of God arise in a person? It cannot arise by effort, because who can have the energy to put forth such effort as to invoke the power of God which can rouse such a

feeling for God? So, the great Advaitin Sankara himself says—apparently contrary to his own doctrine, we may say—that it is *Ishvara-anugraha*. *Īśvarānugrahādeva puṁsām advaitavāsanā* (Avadhuta Gita 1.1), says Dattatreya in his Avadhuta Gita: The feeling for the unity of things arises due to the grace of God. *Īśvarānugrahādeva*—only by that, and by no other way. It is very difficult to understand what all this means.

Thus, while from one side it looks as though hard effort is necessary, on the other side it appears that we have to be passively receptive to the ingress of divine grace, always awaiting the call, and yearning for that light and blessing which can come upon us at any time. Whatever be the means by which such a love of God can rise in ourselves, this is indispensable and there is no other alternative. *Nānyaḥ panthā vidyat'yanāya* (Svet. Up. 3.8): There is no other alternative for us. No other path can be seen; there is no other way out. This is a must for each and every person. When that intensity of feeling arises, miraculous experiences automatically follow, which is the glorious consummation of yoga.

Appendix

TWENTY-ONE PRACTICAL HINTS ON SADHANA

1. First of all, there should be a clear conception of the Aim of one's life.
2. The Aim should be such that it should not be subject to subsequent change of opinion or transcendence by some other thought, feeling or experience. It means, the Aim should be ultimate, and there should be nothing beyond that.
3. It will be clear that, since the ultimate Aim is single, and set clearly before one's mind, everything else in the world becomes an instrument, an auxiliary or an accessory to the fulfilment of this Aim.
4. It is possible to make the mistake of thinking that only certain things in the world are aids in the realisation of one's Aim of life, and that others are obstacles. But this is not true because everything in the world is interconnected and it is not possible to divide the necessary from the unnecessary, the good from the bad, and so on, except in a purely relative sense. The so-called unnecessary or useless items are those whose subtle connection with our central purpose in life is not clear to our minds. This happens when our minds are carried away by sudden emotions or spurts of enthusiasm.
5. All this would mean that it is not advisable or practicable to ignore any aspect of life totally, as if it is completely irrelevant to the purpose of one's life. But

here begins the difficulty in the practice of sadhana, because it is not humanly possible to consider every aspect of a situation when one tries to understand it.

6. The solution is the training which one has to receive under a competent Teacher, who alone can suggest methods of entertaining such a comprehensive vision of things, which is the precondition of a true spiritual life, or a life of higher meditation.
7. There are economic and material needs as well as vital longings of the human nature which have to be paid their due at the proper time and in proper proportions, not with the intention of acquiring comfort and satisfaction for one's self, but with a view to the sublimation of all personal desires or urges, whether physical, vital or psychological. An utter ignorance of this fact may prove to be a sort of hindrance to one's further practice on the path of sadhana.
8. It is, of course, necessary that one should live a life of reasonable seclusion under the guidance of a Master until such time when one can stand on one's own legs and think independently, without help from anyone.
9. But, one should, now and then, test one's ability to counteract one's reactions to the atmosphere even when one is in the midst of intractable and irreconcilable surroundings. Seclusion should not mean a kind of self-hypnotism or hibernation and an incapacity to face the atmosphere around.
10. It should also not mean that one should be incapable of living in seclusion, alone to oneself, when the occasion for it comes. In short, the ideal should be the

achievement of an equanimous attitude to circumstances, whether one is alone to oneself or one is in the midst of an irreconcilable social atmosphere.

11. While in seclusion, the mind should not be allowed to go back to the circumstances of one's family life, official career or to problems which are likely to disturb the concentration of the mind on God, because the pressure of these earlier experiences may sometimes prove itself to be greater in intensity than one's love of God.
12. It is impossible to concentrate on God unless one has a firm conviction and faith that whatever one expects in this world can also be had from God; nay, much more than all these things which the world has as its treasures and values.
13. It is difficult to have the vision of one's Aim of life when the mind goes out of meditation to whatever it longs for in the world. Hence, a deep study of the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, the Srimad Bhagavata, and such other scriptures is necessary to drive into the mind the conviction about the Supremacy of God.
14. Study or *svadhyaya*, *japa* of mantras, and meditation are the three main aspects of spiritual practice.
15. *Svadhyaya* does not mean study of any book that one may find anywhere at any time. It means a continued and regular study, daily, of selected holy texts, or even a single text, from among those that have been suggested above. A study in this manner, done at a fixed time, every day, for a fixed duration, will bring the expected result.
16. The *japa* of the mantra should, in the beginning, be

done out loud so that the mind may not go here and there towards different things. The loud chant of the mantra will bring the mind back to the point of concentration. Later on, the *japa* can be done by moving the lips but without making any sound. In the end, the *japa* can be only mental, provided that the mind does not wander during the mental *japa*.

17. A convenient duration, say, half an hour or one hour, should be set up at different times, so that the daily sadhana should be for at least three hours a day. As days pass, it can be increased according to one's capacity.
18. During *japa*, the mind should think of the meaning of the mantra, surrendering oneself to the Deity of the mantra, and finally, communing oneself with that great Deity. Effort should be put forth to entertain this deep feeling during *japa*, every day.
19. Meditation can be either combined with *japa*, or it can be independent of *japa*. Meditation with *japa* means the mental repetition of the mantra and also, at the same time, meditating deeply on the meaning of the mantra, as mentioned above.
20. Meditation without *japa* is a higher stage, where the mind gets so absorbed in the thought of God, surrender to God, and union with God that in this meditation, *japa* automatically stops. This is the highest state of meditation.
21. Throughout one's sadhana, it is necessary to feel one's oneness with the universe and with God.