

# YOGA AS A UNIVERSAL SCIENCE



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## **ABOUT THIS EDITION**

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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Patanjali is a great name in India's scriptural lore. He was a mighty sage.

"Yoga" is a much misunderstood and abused term these days. Yoga, let it be understood, is a sacred word. It signifies both the means and the end. It is the aim of human existence. It is to live Yoga that one is born. By a stroke of mysterious misfortune, man has fallen from heaven, is separated from God. The "why" of this is a divine secret. Yoga, rightly practised, promises to restore the lost Kingdom to man, assures him to reunite him with the Ultimate Reality, once again.

It will be clear how Yoga is not just bending and stretching the limbs in various postures. Yoga is not ringing the bell or beating cymbals, not staring at a candle or looking at a dot on the wall. Not that these processes are without significance, but they are preliminary, all too preliminary aids, rather starting points in the long, long march of the student of Yoga in his quest of Reality.

Yoga is not merely a practice, or a set of practices, but the whole science of life itself. We are living muted lives. Yoga offers the whole life. Yoga promises to cure all our diseases—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual—all of them. Yoga promises perfection. Yoga promises perennial bliss shorn of all misery.

The worldly enjoyments of the human being are tainted with two major defects. Firstly, all earthly joys are fleeting, temporary in nature. Secondly, every enjoyment is mixed

simultaneously with a measure of misery. Now, Yoga guarantees, at the end of the journey, perpetual bliss totally unmixed with sorrow. Is it not worthwhile? In fact, all human striving, knowingly or unknowingly, is directed only towards the state of perpetual and unending bliss. The basic aim of all human endeavour is the same, though the effort is often directed along mistaken channels resulting in wrong results.

We need not search here and there for *Gurus* and God-men to give us right guidance in the matter of the meaning of the word Yoga. The Lord Krishna, other than whom it is difficult to imagine a greater authority, gives a number of definitions in His loveable spiritual classic, “The Bhagavad-Gita.” The whole of the Gita is God’s teaching to man, telling him the means to regain the lost Kingdom, expounding all the intricacies of the spiritual journey, the return journey to the Universal Being. In this sacred book, the word Yoga is defined in a number of places from different angles. There are some unambiguous and straight definitions such as “*Yogah karmasu kausalam*—Yoga is skill in action” (II, 50) and “*Samatvam yoga Uchyate*—Evenness of mind is called Yoga” (II, 48). Patanjali himself defines Yoga as “*Chitta-vritti-nirodhah*”, or control of the modifications of the mind-stuff. These definitions of Sri Krishna and Patanjali are various guidelines to the means for attaining the ultimate end of Yoga which is the eternal establishment in lasting perfection. But there is one classic definition of Yoga in the Gita which is perhaps the most comprehensive of all definitions, because it defines Yoga by the end sought to be achieved through practice. The means

may be different, but the end is the same. And this end, this universal goal of human aspiration, is to attain perennial bliss, to secure release from the pain of empirical entanglement. So, Sri Krishna gives us this remarkable definition in Chapter VI, Verse 23, where He says that Yoga is “*Duhkhasamyoga-viyogam*” or “severance from union with pain.” That is the last word on the subject. What is Yoga? Yoga is that which relieves the individual of all his misery, for all time. Yoga is that which separates man from pain and installs him in his own Infinitude.

For the sake of convenience and clarity of understanding, we generally speak of different methods of the Yoga approach to life's problems. The better known methods are Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. While the emphasis is laid on different aspects of Yoga in these methods, Yoga is basically the same, viz., inner purification and progressive elimination of the ego clouding the Truth shining within. In the working out of this Yoga process, there is much common ground as between the different teachings of Yoga. Physical health, ethical discipline, concentration, selflessness, development of a universal outlook—these are common to all the systems of Yoga. While Patanjali's system lays stress on control of the mind as the kingpin of the dynamics of spiritual evolution, it encompasses not merely mind control, but the entire gamut of the spiritual ascent. Patanjali's Yoga is not a secret system for exclusive practice by recluses living in mountain caves. If that were so, its value would become minimal. No. The Yoga of Patanjali is meant for everyone, in much the same way as the Bhagavad

Gita. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the Gita are universal scriptures, dealing with the Science of Life, the Science of Reality, and no one is outside its purview. It is an all-inclusive science, meant for everyone's practical living. As such, the Yoga Sutras is a priceless scripture. It is not merely the Culture of India, but the entire human race, which is indebted to Patanjali for his generous gift of this remarkable science designed to restore to man his Divine Heritage, his forgotten identity.

In the pages that follow, Swami Krishnananda expounds Patanjali's Yoga Sutras with a refreshingly new approach. The reference to the Sanskrit language and to the Sutras is kept to the minimum. This is to avoid inconvenience to the readers, to most of whom the original Sutras will just be so much Greek and Latin. The result is that the student is led uninterruptedly, step by step, from the most basic enunciation of man's present predicament to the ultimate stage of the highest attainment. We do not know if there is any other free-flowing elucidation of Patanjali's Yoga similar to the one contained in the following chapters. This apart, what distinguishes the present work is the deeply philosophical approach to the whole subject. Swami Krishnananda, whose first love is metaphysical philosophy, keeps discussion on this theme to the minimum, expounds and elucidates philosophical questions only to the extent necessary for the practitioner. The stress from beginning to end is on spiritual practice, spiritual discipline, on the culturing of the individual, on solid spiritual evolution towards the achievement of integral perfection. After going through this book, the



reader is quite naturally made to feel that all the finer distinctions between Yoga and Vedanta and the other systems of philosophy are peripheral and that the core of spirituality lies in its actual living in one's own life. The great Master, Swami Sivananda, always emphasised spirituality as a matter of direct and practical experience. "An ounce of practice is better than tons of theory" is a maxim which went well with Swami Sivananda, and which now goes equally well with Swami Krishnananda, his illustrious disciple.

In fact, the present volume is the outcome of a series of extempore lectures given by the Swamiji to the Fourth Batch of trainees under the three-month' Yoga Course run by the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of the Divine Life Society. The verbatim transcription of Swamiji's taped lectures has been subjected to minimum, essential editing so as to leave the free flow of Swamiji's discourses unimpaired.

The series of discourses given by Swami Krishnananda to the First Batch and Second Batch of trainees have already been published by the society under the titles, "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Yoga", and "The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgita." The present volume, it is hoped, will be received by the world of spiritual seekers with the same enthusiasm with which the earlier volumes were welcomed.

The Divine Life Society is deeply grateful to Sri N. Ananthanarayanan, a learned and silent soul on the path of Yoga himself, who has taken immense care in editing the manuscript of this book, and without whose labour of love

this publication would have perhaps not seen the light of day.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

## **Chapter 1**

### **GOD, MAN AND THE UNIVERSE**

While people, the world over, are generally acquainted with the word 'Yoga', there are perhaps as many ideas and definitions of Yoga as there are minds in the world. It is often said that there is a world under every hat. Each person has his own conception of what Yoga is, sometimes overemphasised, sometimes under-estimated, sometimes misconstrued, and oftentimes deliberately misrepresented for reasons or motives of one's own. But, seekers of what they call 'Perfection' would do well to take things seriously, and not dabble with the subject as a sociological problem, or something that will win wealth, name and fame. Yoga is something which is dear to all. Nothing can be dearer to man than Yoga, if one can know what it really means. It is not merely a subject that one may choose for one's studies, as in a college, for the purpose of a pass or a degree. It is a system which we are to accommodate into our own personal and practical day-to-day life as an art, by which we shall place ourselves in a greater proximity to that great ideal of all life than is the circumstance or situation of ours today, at this hour.

#### **What is Yoga?**

There is a glib definition of Yoga as 'union', an offhand description of it with which we are all familiar. But it is not easily known as to what this union is about, and who is going to be united with what. And what for is this union, is also a kind of doubt that will occur to our minds. Firstly, it

may not be clear as to what are the items that are to be united in this union called Yoga. The second thing: Why should one struggle to have this union? What does one gain out of this? What is the purpose and what is the mystery behind it? These difficulties, psychologically, may present themselves, all of which have to be cleared at the very outset.

The system of Yoga is a practice, and this practice is nothing but the conduct of our life in our day-to-day manoeuvring of facts, in the light of the nature of things, or we may say, in the light of the structure of the universe. We cannot behave in a way which is irrelevant to the nature of things, because we are in the world, and not outside the world. Hence, the system or principle that is operating behind the world, or the universe, will expect us to respect the law which is reigning supreme in the world, or the universe, and anyone who is adamant enough to turn a deaf ear to the cause of the law of life would be penalised by the law, by an automatic working of the rule of the universe. The system of the universe is so automatic and spontaneous that it does not require an operator independent of it. In a way, we may say that the universe works like a large computer system. It works of its own accord. Reaction is set to action automatically, without any person operating this machine. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. This is something known to everyone in the physical and mathematical realms. This is so, because of the arrangement of things which we call the universe. And we should not forget that we are not outside this universe. Neither are we outside human society, nor are we outside

the world or this planet earth or this astronomical cosmos. Inasmuch as we are inseparably related to this large atmosphere called human society, the world, and the universe, our conduct should be in consonance with the way in which this atmosphere works. Thus, it may be said that Yoga is that necessary conduct of the personality or the individuality of anyone which abides by the requisition of the law of the universe. Many a time we go wrong in our outlook of life, in our judgement of things, and in our behaviour in society, due to the fact that we have no knowledge adequately of the way in which the universe is working, and therefore we do not know what is our precise relation to the universe. It follows naturally from this ignorance of ours that our conduct in life can be an aberration from the requirements of the laws or rules of the universe.

### **Knowledge Should Precede Practice**

The first and foremost thing that would be required of us, as students of Yoga, would be not to jump suddenly into certain techniques of practice, because the practice is only a necessary consequence of the knowledge of, or insight into, the structure of things. If knowledge is lacking, the practice can go wrong. Hence, it is often emphasised in philosophical circles that ethics is based on metaphysics. Ethics, here, means anything that is practical, not necessarily what is called social morality or personal behaviour in the usual sense of the term. Philosophically speaking, ethics is any kind of practical requirement on the part of the individual in the light of the structure of the

cosmos. And the knowledge of the structure of the cosmos can be said to be metaphysics. And what follows from it automatically as a demand on our natural behaviour is the ethics thereof. Yoga, therefore, is a part of ethics in this generalised sense. So, before we know what this practical aspect of Yoga is, we would like to know with advantage how this practice comes about at all under the nature of things. We have heard it said many a time that Yoga is based on the Samkhya, which means to say, in another language, that ethics is based on metaphysics, that action is based on knowledge. We cannot move an inch unless we know how to move, where to move, and also why to move. These questions have to be clarified in our consciousness before we take any step in any direction, whether it be Yoga, or otherwise.

‘Samkhya’ is a general term technically employed in the ancient language of the philosophies of India, to represent knowledge of Reality, acquaintance with the make-up or structure of things in general. What is this world made of? What do we mean by the universe, and what is our position here? If we know the placement of ours in the atmosphere of things, we would know what to do under a given condition. We need not be told that we should practise Yoga. We ourselves will know that it is necessary, because of the very nature of the circumstances. We need not be told that we should eat food; hunger will tell us that we should eat. A particular circumstance which is clear to our mind will also tell us at the same time what we should do under the circumstance. So, to go on dinning into the ears of people that they should do Yoga is not necessary. What

is necessary is to enlighten them on the nature of the circumstance under which they are living.

### **Samkhya—The Wisdom of Life**

People are ignorant; that is the main disease of humanity. Ignorance has been a sort of bliss, because it has been bringing a wrong type of satisfaction by which one is ruled by the conviction that everything is fine and nothing is wrong anywhere. Education is the primary requirement of humanity. What we lack is not money or buildings or lands so much as education. We may think that we are educated people, but ours is an education which helps in getting on with things, somehow, by a kind of adjustment from day to day. A knowledge of getting-on is not the same as the wisdom of life. The wisdom of life is designated as the Samkhya. We may be under the impression that Samkhya is some sort of a doctrine propounded by an ancient sage, called Kapila, in a series of aphorisms, called *sutras*, collectively forming one of the systems of philosophy well known in India. This may be so. The Samkhya is this, of course. But, it is not necessary to take Samkhya in this restricted sense only, though Samkhya is also the system propounded by the sage Kapila. For instance, the word Samkhya occurs in scriptures other than the one pertaining to the traditional system going by that name. It finds a place in texts which may be said to be anterior to the system promulgated by Kapila. The word occurs in the Manu Smriti, in the Mahabharata and in the Bhagavad Gita where the term Samkhya is used in a broader sense, and not merely in the restricted meaning

that may be associated with the classical system of Kapila. The Samkhya of Kapila is a clear-cut mathematical procedure of defining things according to the vision which must have propelled the sage under the conditions of his times.

However, our interest is practical, and not merely theoretical. We are more concerned with living a good life, a better life, than with knowing many things. We need not go much into the abyss of the technicalities of the metaphysical Samkhya at present. We may do well to understand that it generally means a knowledge of things as they are, and as they ought to be, as a logical consequence that must follow from the implications of our own experiences. What we know as philosophy is only an implication that follows spontaneously from an observation of the facts of experience. If we have enough time and patience to go deep into our daily experiences, we will realise that there is something beneath the surface movements of life that we call experience. Generally, we are dashed hither and thither by the waves of our daily activities, due to which we are left with neither the time nor the capacity to read between the lines in respect of our daily life. The general pattern of the universe presented to us by the ancient adepts is such that it seems to be a large family of integrated contents. The universe is full of citizens or inhabitants; not necessarily living beings like us, but even other elements which we may regard from our own point of view as non-living and inanimate. The great scriptures of Yoga envisage a universe which is larger than what we see with our naked eyes. The universe is not merely what we



see, though it includes this also. We look up to the skies, and all around and we see something. This is our physical universe, where we have the solar system, the sun and the moon and the stars, and the vast sky, inaccessible to ordinary sensory perception. We see all around us many things—people, animals, plants, hills and so on.

### **The Universe and Our Place in It**

The vision of India has gone deeper than what is available to the naked eyes and has proclaimed the truth that there are planes, or levels of manifestation, of what is known as the universe. This physical structure around us is one plane, a particular density, we may say. It does not, however, mean that there are many universes, but only that there are many levels or degrees of density through which the universe reveals itself to experience by a graduated arrangement of itself. These levels, these degrees or planes of density, are called Lokas: Bhu-Loka, Bhuvar-Loka, Svar-Loka, Mahar-Loka, Jana-Loka, Tapo-Loka and Satya-Loka. These are supposed to be levels above the physical plane we are accustomed to, ranging beyond the ken of ordinary perception, invisible to the eye, such that we cannot even think what they could be. We are also told that there are levels below the earth or the physical level, and they are known as Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatala and Patala. There are about fourteen planes. Well, there can be more than fourteen, also. These are roughly calculated stages, visualised by the ancient seers, of the degrees of experience through which one has to pass in the evolution of oneself. These planes of existence, or Lokas, are stages

through which everyone has to pass. It is possible that we have already passed through some of the lower levels. We have taken for granted that we have come to the physical level by rising above the lower levels through ages of experience, by transformation. The biological and physical sciences today are fond of insisting on what is called the evolution of life, a movement from matter to life and mind, and from mind to intellect or the human reason, in which state we are today. This is something akin, in a way, to the doctrine of a series in the levels of experience. We are on the human level. It does not mean that the human universe is the entire universe, because there are lower levels and there are also levels above. There is a necessity, therefore, for us to evolve further from the state of man; and many have held that we have to become supermen.

The term 'superman' is a description associated with the possibilities ahead of us, superior to our present state of experience. It is not possible for us to rest content here. We are thoroughly dissatisfied with everything, because this is not our permanent home. The earth is not our permanent habitat, because we are in a process of rising up. We are moving further and further ahead. As we have already come from lower levels to the human level, we have to go further on to the more advanced, subtler and more pervasive levels—the levels of the angels, gods, celestials and so on. We hear of them in the scriptures. An indication of these experiences is given to us in the Taittiriya Upanishad, for instance, where we are told that above men are the Pitris, above the Pitris are the Gandharvas. Then we have the Devas, or the gods, or the angels, then the ruler of

the angels called Indra, then the Guru or the preceptor of the gods, called Brihaspati, the great repository of wisdom. Beyond that stage is the Creator. Such details of the existence of higher realms of experience are available in scriptures of this kind not only in India, but also in other countries. So, we can imagine what our position here is. We cannot be happy in this world. This is certain, because happiness is nothing but an automatic consequence of the attainment of perfection. The more we move towards perfection, the more are we happy. And perfection seems to be far away from us in the light of this little analysis that we have in the Upanishad. If we have to advance through various planes that are above this physical human level, we cannot be happy here forever. Nothing can satisfy us. Not the possession of the whole world, the emperorship of this whole earth, can satisfy us, for reasons quite obvious and clear to everyone. We cannot have satisfaction here, because we cannot be perfect here. We cannot be perfect here, because we have not completed the stages of our evolution. We are on a lower level, yet.

### **The Evolutionary Process**

These ideas have something to do with the knowledge of the structure of things, Samkhya. This knowledge will make us wake up a little to the situation in which we are today, and we would then be anxious to know what would be our future, and what we could do under the circumstances here to improve ourselves in the direction of our movement or ascent higher. Why should we not take to the practice of Yoga, if Yoga means the effort to evolve into

the higher realms of living, towards the final attainment of ultimate perfection, which alone can make us satisfied fully? Who on earth can forego the practice of Yoga if this is the state of affairs, and why should anybody tell us that we should do Yoga? It would be clear like daylight to everyone, once the knowledge of the structure of things is gained.

The practice of Yoga is not what is important; it is the need that one feels for the practice of Yoga that is important. That comes first, and the practice follows afterwards. If we do not feel the need at all, whence comes the practice? We do not feel the need, because we are totally ignorant. We are living in a fool's paradise, under the impression that everything is fine, when, in fact, everything is dead wrong. The universe is moving rapidly, like a fast running railway train, towards its destination, and we are as if sealed in this vehicle, this moving train. We cannot keep quiet. We have to move with the train that moves, because we are in it; we are in the universe that moves, and we have to move. So, we are not stable, independent indivisible isolated beings as we appear to ourselves. We are not self-identified individualities. Rather, we are masses of a process; we are bundles of a movement. This is because of the fact that we cannot be stable, self-identified indivisibilities in an evolving universe. Therefore, great thinkers like Gautama Buddha were tirelessly telling us that we could not touch the same water in a river, the next moment. Every second we are touching new water in a flowing river. Likewise, when we are touching our own body, after a few minutes, perhaps, we are touching

something different. It is not the thing that we saw, or was there, a few minutes before. When a train is moving, we see new objects every second, because it is passing through areas not covered already.

The universe is moving, and this unavoidable movement of the universe is called evolution. Whether or not it is the evolution as described by Darwin or Lamarck or the Upanishads, it makes no difference. There is such a thing called evolution, which is another name for the necessity felt by the finite to move towards the infinite. Nothing finite can rest content with its own self. Nobody likes limitations of any kind. We do not like bondage. We resent it whole-heartedly. We do not like any kind of restriction imposed upon us by anything from outside. This is the cause behind the struggle for freedom, because we are limited in every way. The body is a limitation. My existence here is limited by the existence of people outside in the world, and there are other limitations of a social and political nature, about which we are not happy. Because, who likes to be limited, restricted, bound in a prison, as it were? We want to be free birds. We want to have a say of our own in everything. This is not possible in this world. The real freedom that the soul is asking for is unavailable in this finite world of finite individualities and limited patterns of experience.

We are too much enmeshed in prejudices psychologically, and even rationally. Even as there are emotional and sentimental prejudices, we have intellectual and rational prejudices. They may all look highly reasonable things, but they can be self-assertions of

personality. They look reasonable, because the mind and the reason have been tied up by knots to such ways of thinking; and they are called the idols of the cave and idols of various other types mentioned by a learned man of England, Francis Bacon, by which what he means is a prejudice of the mind and a stereotyped movement of the way of thinking into which we are born from our childhood. Our parents have told us something and our schoolmasters and professors have said something else. The society tells us yet another thing. We are born in a particular nation, which has its own ways and modes of thinking, and its own ideologies according to which it has to work. These are the ways in which we get brain-washed right from childhood. We have to de-condition ourselves if we have to practise Yoga. Any kind of a conditioned mind is unfit for this purpose. We should shed all these preconditions and notions that we are such-and-such, and this and that, that we are particular religionists, that we are Hindus or Christians or Muslims, that we are monks or householders, or even that we are men or women. These are the prejudices which are hard-boiled things, and they cannot leave us easily. They are a part and parcel of our consciousness. Existence is the same as consciousness, and our prejudiced existence has become one with our consciousness, so that we cannot even detect that we have any prejudice in our minds. Everything looks fine, and we seem to be spotless in our ideas and ideologies. That is why we have been told again and again that a teacher is necessary here on the path.

The mind is enmeshed in various types of inborn traits which are not necessarily compatible with the nature of things. This universe, this world, this large atmosphere around us, is not constituted of bits of matter or isolated units that have no connection with one another. 'Universe' is a very appropriate word to signify this atmosphere. It is the opposite of chaos. Chaos is a confused medley of particulars which have their own ways and move in their own directions, having absolutely no relation with one another. But, 'universe' is a word which signifies arrangement of things, and order in that arrangement, where the particulars are characterised not merely by external connections, but also by an internal relation. The definition of what an internal relation is, as, distinguished from an external connection, can be illustrated by an example. People forming the body of parliament in a country have a connection with one another, because they form one corporate whole called the parliament. They have naturally a relationship with one another, but this relationship of the units constituting the body of parliament can be broken any day by various methods of political manoeuvring about which everyone knows so well. Thus, there is no real internal relationship of the members of parliament as between themselves. A man may resign his post as a member of parliament. Even when he functions as a member, internally he is not related to anyone. He is an independent person. Here, the connection of them all with the parliament is an external connection. An internal relationship is an inviolable connection, whereas an

external connection is such that it can be snapped if necessity arises.

Our relationship to the universe is not like the relationship of the members of a parliament or a corporate body. Our relationship to the universe is internal, inviolable, inexorable and eternal; it cannot die. We are related to the universe for ever and ever, and we can never sever this relationship at any time. Well, we may consider the limbs of the body as inviolably related to the body, but even this organic connection of the limbs of the body to the structure called the body is of an inferior type. This is so, because a part of the body can be severed. We can cut off the arm of a person, or any other limb of a person, by amputation, and the relationship of this part to the body will cease, but with no amputation and under no circumstances can we sever our relationship with this world or the universe. No amputation is possible here. No kind of severance of relationship of the particulars or individuals is possible under any circumstance in respect of this vast universe. We are eternally related to it since ages, and in the scheme of evolution, if we have risen to this level of humanity by rising from the bottom, we did exist before we were human beings. The prior existence of the individual in other bodies or other species of beings is proved automatically by the fact of the evolution of things, and this fact also proves post-existence for the individual.

Evolution is a fact, and mankind is certainly not the ultimate pinnacle of the process of evolution. If there has been evolution from lower levels to the present level, then it also has to be there from the present level to even higher



levels. We did exist centuries and aeons before, and we will continue to exist aeons hence also. We are eternal units of this large structure called the universe. We are not citizens of this world at all. We belong neither to Orissa nor to Madras. What puny, petty ideas we have got in our minds! I am a Maharashtrian, I am a Punjabi, a TAMILIAN, a KERALITE... and so on! How low have we come! How shameful is our existence when we think of these little things as our real marks of identification! In truth, we seem to belong to a large structure, a universe which is behind us and ahead of us through various realms of being. Even while we try to conceive of this structure, we will have consternation every moment of time. We will be looking around on all sides trying to figure out where we are standing at all. "Am I of this world? Am I in this world? Am I in a world at all or am I somewhere else?"—Faced with these questions, one is bound to be shocked; one will not be able to say anything. Such would be one's wonder and consternation at this little insight into the nature of the universe and one's own relationship to it. So, this little picture of the structure of things or the nature of the universe may be regarded as a preface or an introduction to certain other details that we may have to know about the universe itself.

### **Purusha and Prakriti-Nature of the Original Split in Brahman**

It is true that the large structure of the universe is so vast that it extends behind us in the lower levels and it stretches ahead of us into the higher reaches of evolution.

But, there are minute details associated with the analysis we have made, about which also we should know something, in order that we may be left with no doubts in our minds about the practice of Yoga. Before we step into the realm of Yogic practice, we should be free from every kind of intellectual doubt and emotional tension. These two things should be cast out like devils. Intellectual doubts and emotional tensions are our greatest enemies in our spiritual pursuit. All doubts must be cleared either by studies, or by resorting to advice from one's own teacher, or both. That this vast universe was once a large mass, indivisible and undifferentiated in its nature, is something that every religion tells us. The Bible, the Upanishads, why, even modern science—all tell the same thing, practically—that the universe was one indistinguishable undivided mass of matter. Science tells us that it was an atom. The universe was an atom originally, and it split into two, or it became four. It became eight, it became sixteen, it became thirty two, sixty four, endlessly millionfold, unthinkably multifarious and multitudinous, as it is now. This is what modern physics will tell us. In the beginning was the word, says the Bible. So is the proclamation of the Upanishads and the Vedas, and every scripture practically. Biology tells us that there was one cell originally. We were originally a single cell or a mono cell or a uni-cell. And this one cell split into two to give us a bi-cell, or splits into four to give us a quarter-cell, and so on. I met a physician in Bombay, a great expert. He told me, "Swamiji, today medical science is coming to the very same conclusions which the Upanishads proclaimed thousands of years back. The universe was one

or started with one single undivided being. We also say the same thing now. One single unit of individual, a little drop, or perhaps something smaller than a drop, something more minute than what we may call a cell—this is the origin of the large body of the human being.” And the doctor told me that if this little cell was minutely analysed scientifically it could tell us how long the body evolving from it would live, the experiences it would pass through, and every other detail till the death of the individual. It all has been decided in this little cell. And what else does the Upanishad tell us! The great Will of the Supreme Being is the original determinant of all the individuals of the universe. Even a sparrow cannot fall without the will of God; a leaf cannot move without the will of the Supreme. We cannot eat a thing unless it is permitted by the Law of the Cosmos. Now, this seems to be the origin of things, a single undivided unity which, as our masters tell us and scriptures proclaim, somehow appeared to have divided itself into two. It has not really split itself into two because if it had really become two and hundred and so on, it cannot become one again, and there would be no chance of our reaching God. But, the fact of the possibility of attaining liberation and the chance of attaining God just at this moment should be adequate proof of there not being a real split; and the Vedanta philosophy goes so far as to say that the split is something of the nature of the split that takes place in dream. There is a bifurcation, a modification, a multiplication into individualities and particularities in the dream world. But, it does not really take place; because, when we wake up from dream, the particulars get absorbed into the unity of

our mind as if they had never existed at all, notwithstanding the fact that we saw the particulars. So, this is a distinguishing feature of the Vedanta philosophy, which makes a departure from the other doctrines by emphasising that if there had been a real bifurcation or division in the original unity, there would be no chance of liberation of the individuals. In that case, we would be always divided from God.

We cannot even think of unity if the idea of unity had not been implanted in our minds. A finite which is really finite, cannot think of the infinite. The idea of the infinite cannot arise in the finite brain, because the two are contradictions. But the idea of the infinite does arise in our mind, and we cry to break the boundaries of the finitude and reach an endlessness of being horizontally as well as in quality. So, it may be true that God did not cease to be God when He created the world. He is still the same God that He was, and He shall be the same God in future too. God is eternal. He is not a changing substance, or an object that ceases to be itself in becoming an effect. This is a highly intricate and interesting philosophical point. This universe, that was one and that is one, does appear as a multitude, but not suddenly. It becomes two at first. This becoming of the one into two is what the Samkhya refers to as *purusha* and *prakriti*, consciousness and its object, the spirit within and the world outside. The original bifurcation or division is of the one being into the seer and the seen, the subject and the object. The one becomes two, as we may say. There was a state of being which was there prior even to this division of the one into the seer and the seen, namely, a

consciousness of Being. We have to stretch our imagination to feel what this state would be like, because even the awareness that one is, is a kind of limitation on absoluteness. The state of absoluteness is not even the self-awareness or consciousness of one's being, the feeling "I am", but something transcendent to it, far beyond it. Subsequently, it is the state of "I am"—ness; *Aham Asmi*, as the Upanishad puts it. Posterior to this universal self-awareness is the division of the one into the twofold so-called realities of consciousness and its object, *purusha* and *prakriti*. The Samkhya, in its classical form, talks much of these two principles—*purusha* and *prakriti*. There are only two things in this universe. Nothing else. Consciousness and what is not consciousness. There cannot be anything else. There is a perceiver and there is the perceived. This is classical Samkhya, of which the practical implementation is supposed to be Yoga.

## Chapter 2

### MAN'S SEPARATION FROM GOD

The stages of Yoga, as a practice, are actually in direct correspondence with the stages marked by the descent of the soul from God, which now become, in the reverse direction, the stages of the ascent of the soul to God or the Supreme Reality. This is the reason why we should have a philosophical background of the structure of the universe, and the nature of this descent and ascent, before we actually take to a serious study of the practical techniques of Yoga.

#### **The Triad of Adhyatma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva**

The whole of our experience in this universe is made up of two aspects, namely, *purusha* and *prakriti*, consciousness and matter, the seer and what is seen. The Yoga texts tell us that our experience, as constituted of the seer and the seen, is what can be called in Sanskrit *vyavaharika satta*. It means empirical experience. It is empirical, *vyavaharik* or of practical utility, because, though it is workable and seems to be the only reality available to us, it is not the whole of reality. The aspect of the seer and the aspect of the seen, the consciousness aspect and the object aspect, the *purusha* aspect and the *prakriti* aspect, are often designated in the ancient texts as the *adhyatma* and the *adhibhuta*. The *adhyatma* is the inward perceiving, seeing consciousness; lodged with the individuality of the seer. The *adhibhuta* is the universe of objects, or what appears as the material expanse before us. The classical Samkhya, as propounded by the sage Kapila, confines itself to these two categories,

*purusha* and *prakriti*, and does not feel the necessity for anything else. But the Yoga texts are not all based entirely on the Samkhya as propounded by Kapila. There is a modification, an improvement rather, of the concept of Samkhya in other texts such as the Manu Smriti, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads. A deeper analysis of this circumstance of there being the *purusha* and the *prakriti* as the only possible realities in experience leads the Upanishads particularly, and also the Bhagavad Gita, to proclaim by way of implication, the necessity to accept a third principle which may be called the *adhidaiva*, or the superintending Divinity, transcending the subject and the object, *purusha* and *prakriti*, because the connection between the seer and the seen cannot be explained merely by the seer and the seen. The subject relates itself to the object and *vice versa*, in the awareness of the object. This relationship is inexplicable on the assumption that there are two isolated realities, the seer and the seen. Two demarcated principles cannot come in contact with each other and cannot know each other. The possibility of the perception or awareness of something as an object outside by the consciousness within can be accounted for only by the presence of something that is there as a connecting link between the subject and the object. This is invisible to the limited eyes. But, logical deduction requires or demands the presence of such a principle, without which it is not possible to explain how we are aware of the existence of the world at all.

How can anyone know that there is something outside, something that is totally cut off from the one that beholds

that thing? That things are not entirely severed from the seer of the things implies again that there is a link between the seer and the seen, which is something transcending both the seer and the seen. So, beyond the *adhyatma* and the *adhibhuta*, there is the *adhidaiva*. The one infinite Being or the *adhidaiva* appears as the two, namely, *purusha* and *prakriti*, or the *adhyatma* and the *adhibhuta*, the subject and the object. But it remains yet as a unity. God does not become the world as milk becomes curd, because once the milk becomes curd, it cannot become milk again. There is no internal transformation of the Supreme Being into the world. If that had taken place really, there would be no possibility of the world returning to God, in the same way as there is no chance of curd returning to milk. Such a transformation has not taken place in God, and it cannot take place, inasmuch as the Supreme Being is indivisible, and indivisibility cannot undergo transformation of any kind. Thus, the unitary aspect of the Supreme Being is maintained in spite of its apparent division into the seer and the seen, the subject and the object. Thus, behind the diversity of experience, there is the unity of a transcendental principle which persists in spite of the multiplicity and the duality of existence. So, there is a tripartite creation, we may say, over and above the dual concept of creation which we considered earlier. On the one side we have the universe which is the *adhibhuta*, on the other side there is the *adhyatma*, the viewer, the beholder of the whole universe, and above these two, we have the connecting link, the transcendental. We may call it the Divinity, we may call it the Devata, we may call it God,



we may call it the Angel or the Spirit of the Cosmos. Plato, for instance, speaks about there being a superintending archetype, as he calls it, transcending the world of opinion, sensory perception and mental cognition. Two things cannot relate to each other unless a third thing is there. This third thing was called by Plato as metaphysics. And, in Indian philosophical parlance, we generally designate this third principle as the Devata or the Divinity.

Generally, people think that in the religions of India there are many gods, resulting in a sort of polytheism. This is a thorough misconception of the philosophical foundation of India. There are not many gods. The many gods are the manifold levels through which the one Supreme Being manifests Itself by different densities of descent, becoming grosser and grosser, coming further and further down, for the purpose of maintaining the relationship between the subject and the object. As there are several levels of descent, it appears as if there are many gods, but they all are but different levels of the one supreme connecting Principle. Several levels of manifestation of one and the same thing cannot be regarded as many things; so, there are not many gods. This wrong idea of many gods should be brushed aside from the mind. There is only one God and this superintending Principle is the Adhi Devata, the very, very essential Reality without which no experience can be accounted for.

### **Tanmatras—The Basic Building Bricks of Creation**

The Yoga philosophy tells us that the objective side is to be visualised as constituted of five subtle forces. These

forces are termed *tanmatras*. ‘*tanmatra*’ is a Sanskrit word meaning the basic essential building brick of any substance in this world. As electric energy is supposed to be the foundational reality of all physical objects according to modern science, *tanmatras* are regarded as the basic foundational essences of all objects. Perhaps, they can be equated with what we call today the electrical continuum of the cosmos. Now, again, we have to remember that this fivefold classification of the foundational force does not imply that there are five different forces. Even as the many superintending divine principles do not mean that there are many gods, and the manifoldness is only an appearance of the levels of descent, likewise, this appearance of five forces constituting all things is because of the five senses that we have, the five senses by which we perceive objects. Corresponding to the faculty or sensation of hearing, we have a *tanmatra* of *sabda* or sound. Sound is the object of the sense of hearing. Unless this object is present, hearing is not possible. We have only five senses of cognition or knowledge, and so, we have to conceive the object also in a fivefold manner. Perhaps, if we had one thousand senses, we would have imagined that there were one thousand foundational principles. Corresponding to the sensation of touch or tangibility, there is the *tanmatra* of what in Sanskrit goes by the name of *sparsa*. *Sparsa* is tangibility. There is a corresponding outside principle, called *sparsa*, which causes this sensation of touch. Corresponding to the sensation of sight there is the objective principle of *rupa*., or colour. Similarly corresponding to the sensation of taste, there is the liquid form of things, called *rasa*, or things that

contain this liquid essence in some percentage or proportion. Then, finally, is the sensation of smell which requires a solid substance from which the smell can emanate. This solid substance, or principle, is called the *tanmatra* of *gandha*. So, the five senses of cognition correspond to the five basic objective elements known as the *tanmatras*—*sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*.

The objects that we see with our eyes, namely, those which are hard, substantial and solid are constituted of a further intensified density or formation of these five basic elements obtained by mixing them in certain proportions by permutation and combination. This mixture of the basic principles—*sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*—is supposed to be the reason behind the formation of the five gross elements known as ether, air, fire, water and earth. These are known in Sanskrit as *akasa*, *vayu*, *agni*, *jal* or *aap*, and *prithvi*. We have only these things in the world. We may cast our eyes all around and we will see only these things and nothing else. The variety we see in this world is only the variety of the formation of individualities basically constituted of these five elements, which again are the outer manifestations of the basic principles of *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*. Thus we come down to the lowest material level, called the earth.

### **A Flaw in the Western Theory of Evolution**

Let us now consider what is called the doctrine of evolution as propounded by the West especially. The Western outlook of life does not consider the aspects of reality which we have analysed up to the level of the earth.

The Western theory of evolution starts from the lowest material level, from which there is a rise into larger and larger organisms manifesting life, mind and intellect, which can be seen in plants, animals and human beings respectively. Now, the Western education which has been imparted to us may make us think that we are advancing from a lower level to a higher level. We are always told that there is an ascent, and therefore an improvement, from matter to life, from life to mind, and from mind to intellect. Man is always supposed to be the pinnacle or summit of creation. We are superior to animals in every way, animals are superior to plants, and plants are superior to inorganic matter. This is the way we generally think. Rather, this is the way we are made to think, as we are repeatedly told about it by our educational syllabi. But, this is not true wholly. It does not mean that we are moving towards Reality if we are rising from matter to life, life to mind, and mind to intellect or the reason of man. Why it is not really an improvement can be known only to the subtle thinking to which a little hint is given in an Upanishad known as the Aitareya Upanishad. The subtlety of this idea is almost unparalleled and cannot be easily found in other systems of thought.

This can be illustrated by an example. Number two is more than number one; three is more than two; four is more than three; five is more than four. If we have two dollars, naturally we are richer than the one who has only one dollar, and so on. So, if we have five dollars, we will feel that we are richer than the one who has four, three, two or one, merely because five is the larger number. But, minus

two is not larger than plus one. Minus two is less than plus one, though two is larger than one, ordinarily speaking. Mere quantitative measurement is not the only criterion in our judgement here, in this process of analysis. There is a kind of reflection, as it were. And there is this characteristic about a reflection that it removes the reality from its base into an opposite direction, and so, the more we go away in the direction of the reflection, the more also may be said to be the distance that we maintain from the original reality.

An important point is made out by certain thinkers in the West, like Henri Bergson, for instance. Bergson is very sure that animals are nearer to Reality than man, for important reasons which may not occur to the minds of people ordinarily. The instincts of the animals are nearer to truth than the reasons of man, because the reasons of man are laboured, are mathematically calculated with tremendous effort, whereas animals have sudden responses, albeit those responses may be blurred and not clarified. This instinct of the animals, however dim, is supposed to be nearer to Reality than the clarity of the so-called intellect of man. There is this instinctive sensation in the lower creatures which is not available to man. Even dogs and cats have a peculiar sense of contact with Reality, which sense is not accessible to us. There are, it is said, very minute insects, like the snails, living some three or four kilometres below the level of the ocean waters, a depth which moonlight may not reach and sunlight may not touch. These insects there, crawling at the base of the ocean, might not have seen even the light of day. Such insects are now discovered to be guided by the waxing and the waning

moon, moving in the sky, two hundred thousand miles away from the surface of the earth. We are very dull in our brains, compared to all these sensations which the snails feel and the ants feel and the honey bees feel. Even when the rainy season is one month away, the ants know that the rains are to come; whereas, we cannot know even if it is to rain tomorrow, unless we go to the meteorological department. Even there, something goes wrong oftentimes. Even the plants know what vibrations are around them. The great discoveries of Sir J.C. Bose are a standing refutation of our old belief that plants do not feel, do not think, and know nothing.

### **The Deeper Implications of Man's Fall from Heaven**

The Aitareya Upanishad tells us that there has taken place a kind of catastrophe when individuality asserted itself. This, in my opinion, is the same as the fall mentioned in the Genesis of the Bible. The fall is nothing but a catastrophic isolation from the Supreme brought about by an affirmation of egoism. The isolation is bad enough. But, something worse seems to have taken place, by which we cannot even know the fact of the isolation. The point that is made out in the doctrine of the isolation of the individual from the whole may make us feel oftentimes that the part is at least qualitatively the same as the whole. One grain of sugar is qualitatively the same as the mountain of sugar. One drop of the Ganges river is the same as the whole river qualitatively. A little bit of the ocean is the same as the whole ocean qualitatively. So, are we qualitatively the same as the Supreme Being, though we are a little jot or a fraction

thereof? This is not so. While it is true that we are isolated parts or cut-off parts from the Universal Being, it is not true that we are qualitatively the same as That. We are not little gods thinking here. It is not so. We do not have that godly or divine thinking in our minds even in the smallest fraction, notwithstanding the enunciation of the scriptures that we are isolated parts of the whole. A sudden reversal of perception has taken place, which is the unfortunate thing that has happened to everyone. The reversal is difficult to understand. We have been exiled from the Garden of Eden, thrown out from the realm of Godhood, banished totally from the angelic status which we were occupying in Brahma-Loka. We have been ousted out completely from our original status. We are now away from our home.

Now, normally, when a member of a family is away from home, he does not cease to be a human being. He is still the same, though he is not in the family. But, here, we have ceased to be, in quality, the thing that we were originally. Otherwise, we would be thinking like God in our little fractional bodies. It has not been possible for us. This situation is very enigmatically and very picturesquely and very rapidly mentioned in the Aitareya Upanishad. Hunger and thirst possessed the individual the moment his isolation from the Supreme took place, says the Upanishad. This hunger and thirst, at first of a philosophical nature, condensed itself into the well-known hunger and thirst, the gross hunger and thirst we are acquainted with in our daily life. There was an agony, an anguish, indescribable in human language. The loss of all the property that we have in the world may not be such an agonising experience to us

as the loss of our contact with the Supreme Being. The latter agony is indescribable; our heart will be rent asunder even by the thought of it if we were to know what it is. We are in the most wretched of conditions considering this description that is available to us in the Upanishad. We are the most miserable of individuals.

God has punished us in two ways. It is said in the Bible that a flaming sword is kept so that Adam and Eve may not enter the Garden of Eden. The flaming sword is there, no doubt, so that we cannot think of God at all. This inability on our part to think of the Whole, of which we are a part, is called *avarana*, the complete veil that has been cast over us. The veil is bad enough. That we cannot think of what the Truth is, is bad enough. But the worse misfortune is that we are thinking what is not there. It is like a person who has gone mad, and at the same time, is possessed by a devil! Madness is bad enough, and on top of it, a devil also has possessed the person afflicted with madness. So, on the one hand, there is a total forgetfulness of our relationship to the Whole. This is *avarana*. On the other hand, there is what is called *vikshepa*, or the distractedness of consciousness, which projects itself vehemently outward in space and time, and sees Reality as if it is outside consciousness. The wholeness, or the integrality of the cosmic structure, is made to appear as an object external to the sense-organs of the individuals. One commentator on a passage of this Upanishad tells us that this reversal can be described as something similar to the reversal that we see in the reflection of our own body in a mirror. There, our right appears as the left, and our left appears as the right.



Similarly, because of the reversal that has taken place on our separation from the Supreme, what is inside appears as being outside. The universe, the world, is not outside us; it is impossible that the nature of things can be external to consciousness. But, what is it that we see with our eyes except externals? Only externality, and nothing but that.

### **The Anatomy of Human Desire**

This isolation of the part from the whole is the beginning of the individuality of things. It may be plant, it may be animal, it may be man, and it may be even the so-called angels in heaven. Any consciousness of one's being separate from what one sees is called the individual sense or *asmita* or self-sense. Grossly put, it is what we know as *ahamkara* or egoism. The sense of one's own existence as apart from other things is called egoism, basically, philosophically, or in the language of Yoga and Samkhya. The isolation from the Supreme is accompanied simultaneously with the reversal of perception, which means to say, that the universe appears as an outside object; and the universe appears as an object which is material, that is, bereft of consciousness. The wall does not seem to have any consciousness, and everything that is external is divested of intelligence, because intelligence cannot see intelligence. It can only be inferred as existing. What we see outside is only an appearance of the body or a movement of it, but the actual seeing principle cannot be seen. Because, the seer cannot be seen. The presence of the seer in me can only be inferred by the manifestations of it. The objective world appears as an external something, and therefore,

there is a necessity felt inside in one's own consciousness to regain that unity which has been lost. Because truth always triumphs, reality asserts itself. And the reality is that the world is not outside us. The truth is that the world is not outside us. This circumstance of the universe being outside us, or our being outside the universe, is a false situation. So, we want to rectify this mistake by coming in contact with everything, grabbing all things, and making them our own! The desire to possess property, and to grab things to the largest extent possible, is basically a desire to get united with the Almighty. The desire to possess is a desire to unite. But, because of the reversal that has taken place, this union is not possible. The reflection cannot unite itself with the original, because the two are basically, qualitatively, different. So, despite all our desires to come in contact with things, we do not really come in contact with them. So, every desire is frustrated in the end. We go on sorrowing in spite of our efforts to possess things. Desires are condemned because of this error involved in the attempt to fulfil a desire, though there is a basic piety behind the manifestation of every desire. Every desire is holy in the sense that it is fundamentally a wish to unite oneself with all things. But, there is also the devilish aspect behind it, namely, that it is trying to come physically in contact with the object for its satisfaction, in space and in time, which is an impossibility.

The reflection cannot be decorated in order to beautify the original. This is an image that occurs in a great passage of Acharya Sankara in one of his works. If a person wants to decorate himself and put on a necklace, or put a mark on

his forehead, he looks at his face in a mirror. But he does not put the necklace on the image in the mirror; he puts it on himself. The moment his original self is decorated, the image is automatically decorated. He has no need to decorate the image or beautify it again, in addition to the effort on his part to beautify himself. Now, all our desires are attempts at beautifying, decorating or possessing the reflections, ignoring the original. Because, the original is not an externality, and our desires ordinarily are desires for those objects which are external to ourselves. Here lies the basic mistake in our attempts at the fulfilment of desires. So, while there is some sort of a significance in the manifestation of every desire which is worthwhile, while there is a divinity aspect in every desire, the opposite of it also is simultaneously present, which makes it very difficult to understand the justification or otherwise for the fulfilment of any desire. It requires great caution to understand where we are moving, and what is the basic reason behind our movements. Thus, in the isolation of the individual from the cosmic forces, there is an automatic reversal of perspective, a reversal in the process of the part perceiving the whole. The part does not see the whole properly. The object does not retain its originality when it is beheld by the subject in space and in time. There is a distortion that automatically takes place, and a misguided representation of the objects happens, when the isolated individuals begin to judge things outside. So, we cannot judge anything correctly from an individual standpoint, because this judgement of any individual in respect of the objects outside is based on the reversal process that has

already taken place. And unless the individual places himself in the position of the original Supreme Being, his judgements may not be correct always.

### **The Apparatus of Perception: The Three States and the Five Sheaths**

The descent has not ended here. We have to become worse still. The more we consider our predicament in the world, the more will we start crying and weeping. We have not merely been banished from the great realm of the Brahma-Loka, the Garden of Eden; we have not merely been twisted in our brains by the reversal process of perception. Something worse still has taken place. We are going down and down into farther and farther extensions, away from the Ultimate Reality. What has happened? The movement outside in space and in time is a mistake in our evaluation of things. Today, people think that going to the moon or the Mars is a great achievement. It is not. Very, very sorry is the state of affairs. While the moon is good enough and the Mars is quite all right, the desire to move outwardly for the purpose of knowing what the moon is or the Mars is, is a mistake on our part. We cannot know anything by moving like this outwardly. Because, outwardness is not the real nature of things. Externality or objectivity is not their true nature. So, to move towards an object, moon or whatever it is, externally through space, is a misdirected attitude of our consciousness. Yoga tells us that to know a thing, one has to *be* the thing, and not merely look at the thing. And one cannot *be* the moon, as we all know very well. And what is the use of running to it? It

does not make us wiser in any manner. The ancient wisdom moves in a direction, perhaps quite the opposite of the way in which modern mind works in these days. Yoga is not a contact physically with anything. It is a union of being with Being.

So, this isolation, attended with a reversal of perception, causes certain difficulties in us, just as one disease, if neglected and not cured promptly, makes room for another disease. First it is a little constipation, and then a little headache, then temperature, and then more complications one after another! The result is that one becomes a chronic case, because a little difficulty was neglected in the beginning. In the same way, first it is an isolation of man from the Supreme; then there is a reversal of perception by which the universe appears as an external object. Now, this perception of the universe as an external object requires a certain apparatus of perception. So, the individual manufactures certain instruments. These are the sense-organs and the psychological structures within us—the mind, the reason, the ego, the subconscious, the unconscious and so on. Also, as a person who has received a tremendous blow on his head may lose his sensation for the time being, and not know what has happened to him, the individual is given a terrific blow the moment there is a severance of himself from the Whole. And so, there is a sudden unconsciousness. He falls as it were, not knowing what has happened. This is the first catastrophe, a swoon into which we fall by the blow struck on us by the very act of separation. Then, this sleeping gradually turns into a swoonish perception, which is like a dream observation of

things. The man who is in swoon slowly wakes up and sees things hazily, but not clearly. And later on, he begins to see clearly, but wrongly. The waking state starts.

The three states—sleep, dream and waking—are the three houses, the three citadels, of the isolated consciousness, says the Aitareya Upanishad. These are the three cities of the three demons mentioned in the Puranas as the Tripuras—one made of gold, one made of silver, and one made of iron. We go round and round as if we are seated in a merry-go-round. We rotate through these three experiences of sleeping, dreaming and waking. No other experience is possible. These three states are the modified conditions of the individual consciousness. They are capable of a further division into what are usually known as the sheaths, or the *koshas*, in the language of the Vedanta. The dark, causal, sleepy condition is known as the *anandamaya kosha*. Then, the externalised faculty of intelligence manifest out of it as a tendril growing out of the seed, is called the intellect. Simultaneously manifest with it is egoism, the mind that thinks, the *prana* that operates, and the body that is seen. So, the causal condition is called the *anandamaya kosha*; the intellect is the *vijnanamaya kosha*; the mind is the *manomaya kosha*; the vital body inside is the *pranamaya kosha*; and the physical body is the *annamaya kosha*, the food sheath as we call it.

### **The Urge to Regain the Lost Kingdom and the Way It Manifests**

This is the descent that has taken place. We have come to the body. We look at the body as a very hard and solid

substance. We have dropped from the skies; and we have come down lower and lower; firstly separating ourselves, then looking outside, then manufacturing the three states of consciousness, then the five sheaths. Even that does not seem to be enough for us; we are not satisfied. We go down further still. What we call organisational life, the social life, is a further movement. An individual cannot be resting himself in the individuality merely. He feels the urge to connect himself with the other individuals. It is not enough if one has merely entered into this body. It does not mean that everything is over. Because, the finitude of individual existence is totally sorrow-striking, the encasement of consciousness within the walls of the body is so very intolerable that the finite being, in his intense restlessness caused by this lodgement in the body, struggles to get out of this finitude. The prisoner wishes to get out of the prison at the earliest opportunity, by any means available, by all means available. And what are the means available to us when we are in this body? To this finitude, the individual tries to expand this finitude itself through adding many finitudes together and increasing the quantity of the finitude, giving it an appearance of a larger dimension. The finite being expands himself, as it were; he delimits himself, as it were, by adding on to his own finitude other finitudes. One is not sufficient; we add one more, and it becomes two. Two is not adequate, another one to make three, and so on. We go on adding finitudes under the impression that many finitudes in an aggregate make a sort of infinite. But, the infinite is not an aggregate of finitudes. So, here again, we are a failure. That is why the rich man is not happy. The

person who exercises authority in society, socially or politically, is not happy either. No one becomes happy by making a collection of aggregates of finitudes, physically or psychologically. Because, the finite being remains finite in spite of the multiplication of the units of finitude. The relationship of one finite being with another finite being is called social relation. It may be with another human being or with any other thing in the world. Any kind of external relation is a society formation. And we find that we cannot exist without this. Thus we have come rolling, down and down, to this level of a social consciousness, which has precipitated further into what is called political consciousness, the last level into which we have fallen, the most artificial of organisations that we can think of.

Now, the whole purpose of Yoga practice is to regain the lost kingdom. First of all, we have to know where our kingdom is. We have been thrown further and further, down and down, away from the centre of our being. The system of Patanjali, particularly, is very scientific and very logical. And the great teacher takes his stand on the lowest of realities because educational psychology requires that a teacher or a student should take the lowest standpoint first, and not go to the higher ones when the lower ones have not been properly investigated into, studied and transcended. Yoga is a gradual transcendence, and not an abnegation of realities. Yoga does not require one to renounce realities, but to transcend lower realities for the purpose of gaining the higher. So many a time we think that Yoga means *sannyasa*, and we equate *sannyasa* with a throwing out of physical particulars, a renouncing of homesteads and



chattel, father and mother and job, and sitting somewhere. This is not Yoga, because Yoga is not a giving up of things, but a giving up of wrong notions about things, and about the world as a whole. The essence of renunciation or *sannyasa*, monkhood or nunhood is not a renunciation of objects, but the renunciation of the objectness or the externality of the objects. It is the renunciation of the idea that the objects are outside us. That is *sannyasa*. Merely to move from one place to another and think that we have renounced something is a mistake because even if we move geographically, physically, from one place to another, the object of our supposed renunciation still remains outside our perception; we still think of it as an external thing, we still have a judgement or an opinion over it, and the renunciation of it has not taken place.

Yoga requires of us a renunciation, no doubt. Patanjali says that *vairagya* and *abhyasa* should go together. The Bhagavad Gita also says the same thing. *Vairagya* means renunciation, abnegation, *tyaga* or relinquishment. *Abhyasa* is positive practice. But, relinquishment or abandonment or abnegation or renunciation of what? That has to be made clear first. The great gospel of the Bhagavad Gita is a standing message to all seekers of Yoga, wherein is hammered into our minds the necessity to understand what renunciation is, what *asakti* is. It is attachment to things that is to be renounced, and not the things as such, though there are various physical methods and social needs that may have to be abided by for the purpose of achieving this true renunciation. But, basically, it is an absence of taste for things which is called renunciation, and not an absence of

the physical proximity of objects. If taste remains, true renunciation has not taken place, even if the objects are left physically far behind. Here, the problem is a problem of consciousness. The whole of Yoga or philosophy is a study of consciousness ultimately. And, the problem does not leave us merely because the senses have been severed from their contact with the physical nature of their objects.

## **Chapter 3**

### **THE MIND AND ITS FUNCTIONS**

It is often said that Yoga is control of the mind, and people struggle to restrain their minds in the name of Yoga meditation, and find that it is a difficult task, if not an impossible one. The reason behind this difficulty is that the mind is inseparable from the meditator. And it will not yield to any threat or admonition, if it cannot appreciate, or understand, the significance behind the teaching that it is worthwhile restraining oneself. The mind is not easily convinced that it is good to restrain itself. Why should the mind be controlled at all? Where comes the necessity, and why should people struggle to restrain the functions of the mind? Why should Yoga be equated with control of the mind? Why should Yoga not be something else? Unless this point is made clear, the effort at mind-control will not be successful. Without clear thinking, any effort in any direction will be a failure in the end.

Why should we control the mind? Let us put this question to our own selves. We will not easily get an answer. The answer will come forth if we study the structure of the universe, the nature of things. We observed in the last two chapters that the universe is not merely a vast expanse of inter-related particulars, but a completeness in itself, from which we, as individuals, cannot isolate ourselves. Yet, we see the world as something outside us, though the world is not really outside us. The universe so-called is not an external object. Yet, we persist and contend that the universe is outside us. This contention, this

persistence, this self-affirmation in us, which vehemently persuades us to believe that the world is outside, is called the mind. The mind is not a substance. It is not a particle. It is not like a sand particle inside the body, it is not even a jot of any visible substance. It is nothing but a process of self-affirmation. The mind is therefore difficult to understand. The reason why we cannot understand it is that all processes of our understanding are connected with objects external to our understanding. Whenever we exercise our understanding, it is in respect of something external to understanding. We do not try to understand understanding itself. That is not our attempt, and that is beyond even our imagination. Thus, mind cannot be known by the mind, because the mind knows only that which is outside the mind. So, the effort to know one's own mind becomes a failure, because the subject that knows requires an object that is outside it, in order that knowledge may be possible. There is no such thing as the subject knowing itself. We have never come across a situation where the subject knows itself as its own object of study. This is the cause behind our inability to know our own selves.

### **What Is the Mind?**

Our insistence that the world or the universe is outside us is called the mind. It is a kind of conscious insistence. It cannot be called a thing. It is a procedure of the consciousness by which it asserts that the world is outside. This assertion takes the form of an individual, localised existence, called the personality, whose centre of affirmation is called the mind. We may call the mind also

by some other name, such as the psychic organ. The word 'mind', especially in the psychology of the West, is used to signify a general operation of the psyche inside, including understanding, willing and feeling. The word 'mind' is a general term in Western psychology, but in the psychology of Yoga, a more detailed analysis has been made. 'Mind' is not a proper English translation of what the Yoga calls '*chitta*', especially in the system of Patanjali. The entire mind-stuff is called *chitta*. It is better to use the word 'psyche' instead of the word 'mind', because the former denotes a larger composite structure than the single function indicated by the word 'mind'. Mind is that which thinks in an indeterminate manner; the intellect is that which thinks in a determinate manner; the ego is that which asserts the individuality of one's own self. There are other functions of the psyche such as memory, often associated with the subconscious level. It is impossible for anyone to be aware that something is outside, unless there is an isolated thinking or an individualising principle, known in the Vedanta psychology as the *antahkarana*, and in the Yoga psychology of Patanjali as *chitta*. *Antahkarana* is a Sanskrit term, which literally translated into English, would mean, "the internal organ". That is perhaps the best way we can put it in English. The internal organ, by which we cognise or perceive things outside, is the *antahkarana*. The same thing is called *chitta* in Yoga psychology. We need not pay much attention to the peculiar distinguishing factors or features or connotations associated with these words in the different schools of thought. But, it is important to remember that a psychic function inwardly as

an individualising principle is necessary in order to assert that the world is outside or that anything is outside.

### **Why Should the Mind Be Controlled?**

We have seen before that really things are not outside. As such, our persistence that things are outside poses a big mystery. Obviously, the functions of the mind are a blunder. What we call the mind is clearly a miscalculated affirmation. A terrible catastrophe has befallen us in the shape of our persisting in an error which is contrary to the truths of the universe. If the universe or the world is not really outside us, and if we are not seeing nothing but seeing externality, we are surely in a world of blunders. We are perpetually committing mistakes after mistakes, with the result that our entire life may be regarded as a heap or a mountain of mistakes, all mistakes being the consequences of our original self-affirmation called variously as the mind, the *chitta*, and the *antahkarana*. It is easy enough to appreciate why the mind is to be controlled. The mind is to be controlled because it is the essence of mischief-making, because it is the root cause of all the troubles in life. The mind is the central mischief in the individual personality. It is the great dacoit, as Acharya Sankara calls it, the thief who robs us of all wealth and makes us paupers, looking beggarly in the eyes of all people. Why should the mind be controlled? Why should there be a need felt to restrain the *antahkarana*? Because the mind is the principle of mistakenly asserting the existence of an externality which is really not there. The nature of things is such that the mind's functions, as they are being carried on now, are uncalled

for, unwarranted, and thoroughly erroneous. We do not see things as they are, and therefore, we cannot act also correctly, inasmuch as action is preceded by thought, and thought is a mistaken movement of ourselves.

Here comes Yoga with a great message to us. Our life being a movement in the wrong direction, landing us in repeated problems and rebirths, it is necessary to station ourselves in the true position in which we essentially are, and not lose our own selves. Loss of self is the greatest of losses. We have lost ourselves in imagining that we are not the thing that we actually are in relation to the nature of the universe. We have lost ourselves in imagining that we are isolated persons—men, women and children, and many other things—in relation to the nature of the universe. In order that we may be freed from this turmoil or sorrow called *samsara*, or life in this empirical world, Yoga comes as a rescue, as a message of hope and solace, telling us that there is no hope for humanity, that there is no chance of peace prevailing anywhere, if self-restraint is not going to be the law of life. Self-restraint, in a way, is the same as mind restraint, because we are practically the same as the mind. We do not make much of a difference between self-restraint and restraint of the mind because for us *jivas*, empirical individuals, the mind itself is the sorrow. What we are, as we appear now, is just the mind operating. The need for self-control, or control of the mind, arises on account of the need for perfection, which is the goal of everyone. We do not wish to be suffering like this. Our final ambition, aspiration or desire is redress of grief and attainment of freedom, which we have not seen with our

eyes in this world. None has seen really what freedom is. Everyone is bound in one way or the other. When we imagine that we have got out of a bondage and entered a state of freedom, actually we have entered into another kind of bondage in the name of freedom, a fact which we will realise sometime later. There is no such thing as real freedom in this world, because freedom is the same as attunement with the state of ultimate perfection, or at least, a degree of perfection. If we are far away from even the least percentage of what perfection can be, and our ideals and ideologies in life pursue a phantasm, we cannot hope to have peace in this world by any amount of technological progress. People today are carried away by gadgets and instruments, and researches in the field of externalised technology. This is not an achievement. If by science is meant the logical knowledge of the nature of things, science is wonderful: it is unavoidable in life. But, if by science is meant technological inventions, setting up of factories and industrial organisation, science is a bane on human life. It will not help us, because it carries us further away from the centre of reality, and compels us to affirm more and more that the world is outside us, rather than the fact that we are inseparable from the world.

The science of Yoga, therefore, is a psychology of a philosophical nature. The very introduction of the system of Yoga by Patanjali is by way of an instruction that the mind has to be controlled—*Yogas chitta-vritti-nirodhah*. Patanjali does not go into the details of the philosophical background of the necessity to control the mind, the background that comes in Samkhya and Vedanta. Yoga is



control of the mind, restraint of the mind-stuff. Yoga is *chitta-vritti-nirodhah*. The moment we hear this, we begin to get excited. Yoga is control of the mind. Therefore, we have to control ourselves. We begin to close our eyes, hold our nose, and become nervous and tense in our system! That is an unfortunate result that often follows from an over-enthusiasm, emotionally aroused in ourselves by hearing the very word 'Yoga'. We should not be stirred up into an emotion just because we listen to the word Yoga mentioned by somebody. A calm and sober understanding is Yoga. Yoga is not emotion. It is not stirring oneself into any kind of made-up or artificial individuality. A calm Chief Justice in a court does not get roused up into an emotion; rather, he begins to understand the circumstances. Emotion is not possible where wisdom prevails. The mind has to be controlled. It has to be done intelligently. Emotion has no part in it.

Yoga is *chitta-vritti-nirodhah*, and Yoga is indispensable and unavoidable for every person, because everyone is in the same condition. Everyone is a part of the vast creation. Even those who do not know what Yoga is, and do not practise it, and have no idea about it, are essentially intended for this great movement called Yoga, towards the goal that is the goal of everyone. Yoga is control of the mind, and the mind is to be controlled because it is the principle of isolation in a false manner. It is the mind, it is the *chitta*, it is the *antahkarana* or the internal organ, that makes us falsely believe that we are individuals, with a physical independence of our own, isolated from the vast structure of creation. Therefore,

control of the mind is necessary; it is unavoidable under the circumstances. If one understands one's position and knows where one stands, he must also know what is the step that he has to take to place himself in the correct position under the system of the universe. Having known something about the nature of things and the structure of the world, and having come to know consequently that the mind is the mischief-maker and the isolating principle in our own so-called individualities, we come to a conclusion that it is absolutely essential to tune the mind back to the structure of things, and abolish this isolatedness of ours as individuals, and that union of the so-called isolated finitude has to be effected with the original infinitude. This union is called Yoga.

### **Yoga Is Resting in One's Own True Nature**

We have heard that Yoga is union, but many a time, we do not know the objects which are to be united. Now we know what 'union' actually means in the language of Yoga proper. It is a complete transcendence of our finitude. A separatist tendency persists in us, and Yoga is nothing but overcoming the barriers of this individuality by entering into the oceanic expanse of our true nature, which is also the nature of everybody. When the mind is restrained in this manner, *chitta-vritti-nirodhah* is effected. This false feeling that we are different from others, that things are constituted of isolated particularities, leaves us; and we get established in our essential nature, which is the community of existence in all things, and not an isolated individuality.

This establishment of one's own self in one's own true nature, in universal character, is the aim of Yoga.

*Yogas chitta-vritti-nirodhah. Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam.* In two verses, in two *sutras*, Patanjali gives the whole of Yoga. What is Yoga? Yoga is *chitta-vritti-nirodhah*—the restraint of the mind-stuff. What happens when the mind-stuff is restrained? *Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam.* The seer establishes himself in his own Self. The seer means the conscious subjectivity in us. This so-called subjectivity of consciousness ceases to be a subjectivity any more, because the subject has no meaning if there is no object outside. Subject and object are correlated terms, one hanging on the other for their subsistence. If the outside does not exist, there is no inside, and vice versa. So, when the person who has restrained the mind-stuff has realised that the things are not outside himself, the object ceases to be, and with it, the inside also goes. So, no more is there such a thing as subjectivity or individuality for that person. It does not exist any more. Thus, from the restraint of the mind, or the control of the mind, follows a re-installation of one's own self in one's own true nature.

Here again, we have to strike a note of caution as to what is "one's own true nature". Many a time we are likely to mistake the meaning of this phrase, "establishment of one's self in one's own Self". We have an inveterate habit of thinking that we are sons and daughters of some parents. We cannot forget this. We are also inveterately affirming that we are men and women, that we are in a body. We cannot forget this also, whatever be the Yoga we might

practise. So, what is the sort of establishment in one's Self that one is going to achieve or attain with this sort of a persisting malady in one's own thinking? If one is a man or a woman, a son or a daughter, a rich man or a poor man, he cannot get out of the corresponding idea which limits his vision. What sort of Yoga can anybody practise in such a situation? A little bit of brushing of the brain is necessary to free ourselves from at least the grosser misconceptions in which we are involved. There are subtler misconceptions and grosser misconceptions. While the subtler ones are the more powerful ones, and they have to be tackled at the appropriate time, the grosser ones at least should be given up initially. But, we are prepared for neither. We are hard-boiled persons, persisting somehow or the other in our own preconceived notions, and set attitudes and relationships. We are friends to some, and enemies to others; we are related to some in some ways, to others in other ways. This is most unfortunate, because such wrong attitudes come in the way of our regarding ourselves as real students of Yoga.

The grosser problems of ours, and the lesser or the subtler ones, are classified in the psychology of Yoga, especially in the Sutras of Patanjali. Because of the fact that these great men are used to thinking in lofty terms, they use philosophical expressions to designate the problems of life. Patanjali, in his Sutras, uses a very pertinent term, significant in psychology, to make a distinction between the subtler problems and the grosser problems of the individuals in general. These problems of ours are all mental problems. All our difficulties are psychological, finally; and what is psychology, but a study of the functions

of the mind. And the functions of the mind are called *vriddis* in Yoga psychology. So, Patanjali tells us that our problems are only *vriddis*, functions of the mind. The grosser *vriddis* are to be distinguished from the subtler ones, which are more philosophical and metaphysical in their nature. So, Patanjali classifies all *vriddis* into two categories—the *klishta vriddis* and the *aklishta vriddis*. *Klishta* is that which gives pain; *aklishta* is that which does not give pain. *Klishta* is a word meaning pain, suffering, sorrow. A *klishta vriddi* is a function of the mind which gives perpetual sorrow every day, and an *aklishta vriddi* is a function of the mind which does not directly pain, but is there like a chronic illness. There is a clear distinction between acute illness and chronic illness. An acute disease suddenly jumps upon a person, bringing with it an intense pain or high fever, whereas a chronic illness is like eczema. It is there all the time troubling the person, but the person does not mind it, because he is now accustomed to it. Constipation, eczema, and certain other chronic illnesses persist in many people; and yet, it is the acute diseases like intense temperature or splitting headache that are immediately attended to, because the latter are highly agonising. Likewise, we have acute psychological problems and chronic psychological problems—the *klishta vriddis* and the *aklishta vriddis* respectively.

### **The Klishta Vriddis or the Agonising Functions of the Mind**

Let us consider the *vriddis* of love and hatred. They are really painful indeed. By love, we are pained. By hatred also,

we are pained. Whoever entertains love and hatred knows how much painful both these things are. Any man with a little jot of common sense will know what suffering is brought upon oneself by the fact of loving anything or hating anything. We are perpetually restless, because we like something or dislike something. We are grief-stricken by loving something, and we are equally grief stricken by hating something else. These are our daily problems, and all our problems are only this, that we like something or dislike something. This like-dislike is one of the items brought under the category of *klishta vrittis* by Patanjali—this *raga-dvesha*, rising from ignorance ultimately. We cannot love or hate a thing, unless we are shrouded in ignorance about the nature of things. When we love something or hate something, we do not understand that thing. So, a lack of proper understanding of anything is the reason behind our liking it or not liking it. Likes and dislikes are unwarranted, misplaced and totally miscalculated attitudes of ours, especially when we like or dislike a thing with our emotions attached.

A philosophical liking and disliking is one thing, and emotional liking and disliking is quite another thing; the latter is much worse. What are called *klishta vrittis* are practically all emotional in their nature. Our feelings are attached to them. When we like or dislike a thing, we do not philosophically like or dislike it, but we like it or dislike it emotionally. Our feelings are roused, we are stirred in our personality. Any intense like or intense dislike is called passion, something that simply throws us out of gear, like a whirlwind or a tempest or a cyclone. That is called passion.

It could be anger, it could be intense like, it could be intense dislike, it could be intense hatred of any kind. Inasmuch as likes and dislikes, *raga* and *dvesha*, arise due to a misunderstanding of the nature of the objects of like or dislike, ignorance forms the base of *raga* and *dvesha*. *Avidya*, non-intellection or nescience, is the root of likes and dislikes.

First, we do not understand anything. Then we fly into a passion of like or dislike. But, midway between these, there is a subtle thief who creates the problems that we call like and dislike. That is self-affirmation, *asmita*. This *asmita* or self-affirmation is a highly political mischief-maker. In the political field, there are certain peculiar mischievous elements, who may not belong to either of the opposing parties. But they can still create problems for both the parties. Likewise is this peculiar thing called *asmita*. One does not know to which party it belongs, but it is the greatest devil that one can imagine. When we try to discover it, it is not there. It is like searching for darkness with the help of a torchlight. If we want to know where darkness is, we have to use our light of understanding, and when the light of understanding is thrown on it, it vanishes. Even so, this self-affirmation is something which is there, but when we try to know where it is and what it is, we cannot know it. It vanishes. So, this self-sense, the affirmation of oneself as an isolated individual, which follows immediately the ignorance of the nature of things, is an indeterminable, so-called something—*anirvachaniya* as the Vedanta calls it, an existence which is indescribable, indeterminable, and unthinkable also. From where does

this arise? How is it that we have come to affirm ourselves as something quite different from what we really are? We cannot know this, because trying to know this is like attempting to see the darkness with the help of a torch. We cannot see it, because light is there. But, when the light goes, it is there.

Thus, Patanjali tells us that there is a peculiar, indescribable element, called self-sense. This is the consciousness of oneself as a separate entity. This is the same as Adam and Eve becoming conscious that they are naked. This is the metaphysical evil of the philosophers, the original sin which theology speaks of and which breeds every other sin, the grandparent of all other troubles and whose first children are *raga* and *dvesha*, or like and dislike. Cain and Abel, the children of Adam and Eve, are no other than *raga* and *dvesha*, like and dislike, love and hatred. These great stories of creation and Genesis are highly philosophical and spiritual in their nature. From a lack of understanding of the nature of things, ignorance or nescience or *avidya* arises—this self-sense, this consciousness of individuality, this personality-consciousness which takes the shape of the feeling of ‘I am’, the feeling of being somebody or someone different from others totally. This ‘I am’ is quite different from the ‘I-am-That-I-am’, which the Genesis speaks of. The ‘I-am-That-I-am’ is a highly cosmical affirmation; and it is quite different from the ‘I am’—ness we are acquainted with in our daily life, and which relates to our physical body, and which is the individualised essence of our own personalities. Because I am, everything else also is. Where there is the subject,



there is also the object. It follows at once. There is no need to argue separately the existence of an object outside; it follows automatically. If I am, something else also must be. That something is the object. Because there is the object outside myself, I must have an attitude towards it of this nature or that nature. There cannot be an undecided factor called the object in front of me. I have to think something about it. It is either myself or not myself. It is not myself, because I see it outside myself. That is why I call it an object. And so, if it is not myself, I cannot like it. Hatred of the object is engendered automatically by the very fact of the affirmation of it being outside myself. Anything that is not myself is my enemy. This is the basic affirmation of all individuals.

However, it is not an unadulterated hatred that preponderates in our lives. There is something very, very peculiar about the object which is not myself. It is an appearance, as another individuality in space and time, outside myself, of the very same thing of which I am also an appearance. This is very unfortunate, and at the same time, very interesting and dramatic indeed—inasmuch as that which I call the object outside in space and time is an offshoot, as it were, an appearance, of that one thing, of which I am also a similar appearance. The subject and the object being thus co-related, I have also a basic love for the object. I cannot wholly hate it. So, there is no such thing as hundred per cent hatred for anything, nor can there be hundred per cent love for anything. We cannot love anything hundred per cent, nor can we hate anything hundred per cent. We can have only a mixture of both. This

is *samsara*, the terrible mire into which we have been thrown, worse than even the worst of concentration camps. We are tortured in a way that is worse than the treatment meted out to prisoners in camps of the above kind. We are pulled in two directions simultaneously. On one side we cannot hate, on the other side we cannot love. Inasmuch as the object appears as something outside us, we cannot love it. But inasmuch as basically it is not really outside us, we cannot wholly hate it either. So, love and hatred continue to form an admixture of two contrary attitudes of ours, making us a laughing-stock in the eyes of our own selves. We have to mock at our own selves due to this illness into which we have landed ourselves, where we cannot think fully either this way or that way.

Such is love and hatred, *raga* and *dvesha*, arising from a self-sense, which in turn evolves out of a lack of understanding. Because I am an individual, I am that and nothing else. I have to preserve that individuality. I love it intensely. Nothing can be loved so much as one's own self. No love can equal one's own love for one's own self. Self-love is the greatest of loves, and here 'self' stands for bodily individuality. Nothing else is seen in an individual. So, love of life and fear of death follow as a natural corollary to this love of bodily individuality. We dread death, because we love life. Dread of death is the same as love of life. They are not two different things. One means the same as the other thing.

Thus is this chain action following from an original mistake, a blunder, an ignorance of the true nature of our relationship with things. *Avidya* breeds self-sense, which

breeds love and hatred, which breeds clinging to this bodily individuality and a hatred for the very thought of the destruction of this body. *Avidya*, *asmita*, *raga*, *dvesha* and *abhinivesha*: this is a broad fivefold classification of the painful *vruttis*—*klishtas*, as Patanjali calls them—which are the grosser difficulties or the grosser problems in life, because we feel them every day. Everyone knows that everyone is in this condition. Because this condition, this sequential suffering, is so obvious and clear like daylight, and so gross and prosaic, the *vruttis* involved are called *klishta vruttis*, painful, agonising functions of the mind.

### **The Aklishta Vruttis or Non-pain-causing Functions of the Mind**

There is something very important for us to remember here where we enter into a greater philosophical realm than before. The painful *vruttis* are brought about by certain structural defects in our own selves. There are certain organic defects in our personality which become the causative factors behind the painful *vruttis* mentioned earlier, just as a group of dacoits may unleash certain violent elements and work havoc in society, while themselves remaining as the main string-pullers behind the screen. They may not be visible outside. The havoc-workers are seen, no doubt, in public, but they are moved to action by certain forces which are not visible. These latter forces lie behind the screen. Likewise there are certain forces which cause the mischief which we see in front of us as our sorrows, as our pains. These invisible causative factors behind our difficulties in life are the *aklishta vruttis* or the

non-pain-causing functions of the mind. They are non-pain-causing, because we do not feel the pain that they cause. But they are of greater danger than the so-called pain-causing ones. A direct attack is one thing; and inwardly maintained or inwardly sustained hatred is quite another thing. The painful *vruttis* directly attack us every day, and in a way, we know that they are there. The next thing is to know what to do with them when we confront them in daily life. But, the other *vruttis*, the *aklishta vruttis* are not directly seen. We cannot even know that they exist. It is like a creeping cancer in the system, whose existence is not detected easily even by physicians. We get to know that there is a cancerous growth only when it pains. When it has just started at the root, when it is working surreptitiously at the base, it is not easily noticed. Likewise, there is a cancerous growth in our own basic structure, an organic defect, as we may call it. This is the *aklishta vrutti*, or the so-called non-painful function of the mind. Even as five different items are mentioned by Patanjali in the category of pain-causing functions, five others are mentioned by him as non-painful ones. The Sanskrit terms that he uses are *pramana*, *Viparyaya*, *Vikalpa*, *Nidra* and *Smriti*.

*Pramana* is direct perception. *Viparyaya* is wrong perception. Or, we may say that *pramana* is right perception and *viparyaya* is wrong perception. *Vikalpa* is doubt, oscillation of the mind. *Nidra* is sleep, torpidity. And *smriti* is memory or remembrance of past occurrences. All these are functions of the mind only. The mind works in different ways when these processes take place. It may be very surprising that even right perception is regarded by

Patanjali as an undesirable *vritti*. Patanjali clubs even the so-called right perception or epistemological cognition of things as an undesirable function of the mind, which has to be curbed. This is like considering even a good man as undesirable at times. It is very difficult to understand how it can be! Why is it that even a normal person should be regarded as undesirable? What is wrong when I see a building in front of me, which is really there? What is wrong? What is wrong if I am convinced that it is daytime when it is really daytime and not midnight? All these come under right perceptions, and why should they be regarded as something contrary to Yoga? What is wrong? We cannot understand! We cannot easily understand what actually is in the mind of Patanjali. But we will know what is in his mind and we will appreciate what he says, if we can recollect some of our earlier observations.

Likewise are doubt and wrong perception. We do not see things properly. Something appears as something else. When there is cataract in the eyes, one moon is seen as two moons; a distant object appears as something else. Again, we see water in a mirage, when water is not actually there; we see a snake in the rope. To people suffering from jaundice, sweets taste bitter. So many other examples can be given of erroneous cognition and perception. All these are mental functions. In sleep also, the mind is there, though like a coiled snake. A snake that is in a corner, winding itself up, does not cease to be a snake. It is very much there. If we touch it, we will know what it is. The modifications of the mind are wound up for the night, and that is sleep. Or, it is like a court case that is adjourned to be heard the next

day. That is sleep. A sleeping rogue is a rogue only. He will not become a saint, merely because he is sleeping. Even so, the mind may be sleeping; yet it is the mind. It is nothing but that. So, Patanjali is very cautious. He says that sleep is a function of the mind. It is a trick of the mind. It is a kind of manoeuvring which the mind conducts for its own purposes. And then, memory. The mind sees and it remembers: "Yesterday, I saw this. Yesterday, this happened; the day before yesterday, something else." Memory also is a function of the mind. These functions of the mind do not cause us daily sorrow. That is why we are not even aware that these functions are taking place. We are not always aware that there is a process going on in the mind. When there is a building in front of me, I am just aware that there is a building in front. I do not make an analysis to know that there is a building in front. It is a spontaneous perception which is at once clear. All *aklishta vrittis* are of a similar nature. We are not aware of these mental perceptions, because they do not prick us like needles every moment, as the *klishta vrittis* do. So, it is necessary to exercise a greater caution in our understanding of the non-painful *vrittis* than in the case of the painful ones.

## Chapter 4

### PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS ON YOGA PRACTICE

The modifications of the mind called the non-painful ones are somewhat like organic defects, and the others known as the painful ones are somewhat like functional disorders, the latter following from the former. A functional disorder can be a direct consequence of an organic defect. There is a basic structural malady in the very process of our knowledge, so that what we know has no direct correspondence to reality. This world is called an empirical existence, a transiency of process, phenomena rather than noumena. These descriptions of the world and the world-experience are common to most of the philosophers in the world. We are not living in a world of reality. Our cognitions and perceptions are false representations, and not correct perceptions, of Reality. Patanjali holds that what usually goes by the name of *pramana*, or right knowledge, also is, in the end, a misrepresentation of Truth, due to a particular form of the modification of the mind. And when the mind is to be restrained in Yoga, every modification is to be restrained, even if it be in the form of what we may call practically right perception. It is right only from our point of view, but not from the true point of view of Reality as such. Our knowledge is right, only because it is workable in the world of phenomena. It has a utilitarian value, but it is not ultimately valid when it is made to stand the test of perfection. The other processes of the mind, such as logical

deduction and induction, inference, and other well-known methods of right knowledge in this world, proceed from perception. Perception through the senses is the principal avenue of knowledge for us. Everything else is a result that follows from sensory perception. Thus, logic, whether it is inductive or deductive, also cannot be regarded as finally valid and capable of giving us the knowledge of Truth, since it hangs on perception. And perception is through the senses, and senses do not represent Reality. So, all perceptions, whatever be their nature, and all modifications of the mind are, in essence, psychic transformations. And, inasmuch as Yoga is the inhibition of the very stuff of the mind, even our knowledge of the world outside has to be made subject to transformation by means of the practice of Yoga.

### **Yoga Is Not an Individual Affair**

The knowledge that we acquire, through the senses, of the world outside, is conditioned by the very structure of the world, of which we are also a part. And conditioned knowledge cannot be regarded as finally valid in an unconditional manner. This defective perception of the human individual, or any other individual for the matter of that, breeds the pains in the form of the *klishta vrittis*. Our sorrows are caused by our erroneous notions. When we wrongly perceive, wrongly think, and wrongly understand, the consequences thereof have to be borne by us, because our joys and sorrows are practically the way in which the mind reacts to circumstances outside. Action and reaction, psychologically, are the joys and sorrows of life. Hence,



when we enter into the realm of the practice of Yoga, we have to be doubly cautious about any mistake creeping into the very technique of practice, because of the prejudice already in us, in the form of our individualities, and a persistent notion which will not leave us till the day of doom, vehemently asserting that the world is outside of us and that the object of knowledge is totally cut off from the subject. This misconception that Yoga is an individual affair, and that it has nothing to do with the outside world or human society, is the basis for other doubts arising in the minds of novices in Yoga practice. It is surprising that even the so-called adepts in Yoga carry this misrepresentation in their heads, and social well-being and the world's future are dissociated from the values entertained by them in connection with the practice of Yoga.

The practice of Yoga, surely, is not an individual affair. It is not some individual sitting in a corner, doing something in the name of Yoga. Individual existence itself is a misnomer. It is a falsity to the core, and if with this false affirmation one takes to the practice of Yoga, one could well imagine the result that would follow. Nothing will come of it. One will be wasting one's time. Thus it is that thousands of people who may be engaged in the practice of Yoga may be in a state of despair, in a mood of dejection, having achieved nothing and entered into greater and greater mental difficulties. It has been hammered into our minds again and again by ancient masters that unless there are the essential prerequisites with which one has to be equipped, one should not take seriously to Yoga. An impure mind, ridden over with gross desires and prejudices

galore, should not touch even the border of Yoga. Otherwise, it will burst open like a dynamite which is handled by a person who knows not what it is. While Yoga is the solace to the whole of mankind, and there is no other panacea for the ills of life, it can also prove to be a dangerous thing if it is not handled properly. We may go crazy or become mad or gain nothing in the end, if our enthusiasm in the line of Yoga is misdirected and prejudiced and rooted in old desires, which persist even when we enter the 'Temple of God'.

The metaphysical foundations of Yoga are as important as the actual technique or the actual practice of Yoga. That is why the Yoga practice is always based on the Samkhya of Kapila or on the Vedanta. A person who has no knowledge of the philosophical basis of Yoga would be performing a mechanical routine of practice. As a machine moves, the individual may move, thinking that Yoga is being done. Inasmuch as the universe is one whole, and is not capable of being partitioned into individuals, there cannot be such a thing called individual practice of Yoga. The moment one enters into the realm of Yoga, one enters into an oceanic expanse, where one can recognise all the friends and brothers of the world. The greatest service that one can do to humanity, to the world, or to the universe as a whole, is to enter into Yoga; and we cannot isolate social welfare or the world's good from Yoga meditation. They are one and the same, rather. The dedication to Yoga is the greatest of all services one can render, because one enters here, or at least attempts to enter, into the heart of things, instead of merely working on the surface, superficially, in the name of

social service. The world will not change merely because we have a notion about it, and on the basis of that notion, tackle its problems. No problem of the world has been solved even to this day. They are there, because one cannot even understand how these problems have arisen. They have arisen as the result of a total misconception in the minds of individuals.

### **Yoga—A State of Inward Being, Rather than Outward Doing**

And so, if, Yoga means union, naturally it should be a union with that which is in its own status, and not with that which is made into an appearance of somebody's cognition or perception. This is a very subtle point, difficult to comprehend. The significance behind it is exceedingly hard to appreciate. This is because we have not been accustomed to think in this manner. We have been told by teachers, and the popular books on Yoga, the commonplace routines which we have to pass through when we become religious or devoted or inclined towards Yoga. But then, inasmuch as true Yoga is an internal adjustment rather than an external practice, it requires greater effort on one's own part than in the usual routine affairs of life. Yoga is more a state of being rather than outward doing. Any amount of external doing may not be Yoga at all. Because one will be the same person inwardly with no difference whatsoever, if one's outlook of life has not changed. If the mind persists in thinking in the same old manner there would be no progress made. Honesty in one's own heart is essential. We should not be self-deceptive individuals. Oftentimes people take to Yoga

because they want to become teachers of Yoga. It is an insult to Yoga, rather than an appreciation of the glory of Yoga, to learn it only so that one may teach it. For, then it looks as if Yoga is intended to be an instrument for one's way of life, rather than for an inward transformation of the spirit. In the language of religion, we may say that Yoga is the art by which we have a vision of God. It is nothing if one teaches Yoga in society. One may teach it or not teach it. That is a different subject altogether. The vision of God, the cognition of the Ultimate Reality, union with the Absolute finally, is the aim of Yoga. If this aspiration is inwardly absent, the practice of Yoga becomes a mere mockery and a waste. The point that Patanjali makes out in telling us that even the so-called right perceptions are wrong perceptions should awaken us from our slumber. But what do we do in our Yoga? Our practices are rooted in the wrong perceptions only. We cannot get over the old psychological prejudices concerning the externality of things. To get over these prejudices inwardly, there is a need to purify one's mind. Gross debris in which the mind may be sunk has to be cleared, for which many methods are suggested by the ancient adepts. These are: humble service of the Master or Guru, humility of conduct, an inward capacity to assess one's own position in life, not over-estimating oneself in any manner, and a clarity which is free from the desires that are consequent upon the wrong perception of the world as an object outside.

## Vairagya and Its True Implication

The last-mentioned characteristic is indicated by Patanjali in one word, namely, *vairagya*. Unless one is endowed with this glorious strength known as *vairagya*, *abhyasa* or practice of Yoga is not possible. One cannot attach oneself to the Absolute unless one practises non-attachment to the false values of life. Herein we have to strike a note of caution. Non-attachment, or rather detachment, from the false values of life may again be misrepresented due to the notion that we are entertaining in our life. *Vairagya*, or detachment from the false values, does not mean a physical closure of one's eyes to the existence of things. This has been very clearly indicated in such scriptures as the Bhagavad Gita and affiliated texts. Our problem is not the existence of things. Our problem is the nature of our notion about the existence of things. Unless our current wrong notion about the existence of the things of the world, or the world as a whole, is transformed, a physical disassociation from objects may not help us much. Patanjali defines *vairagya* in a most psychological manner. *Vairagya* has nothing to do with our view of the so-called *sannyasa*. It has nothing to do with entering into monasteries or chapels or nunneries. No outward exhibition in conduct is indicated in *vairagya*. *Vairagya* simply means an absence of sensory taste in respect of things. The taste for things is called desire. An absence of desires is called *vairagya*. *Raga* is desire or attachment, and *vairagya* is the opposite of it. The taste for things, the desire for objects, is to be sublimated in a higher perception. Our problems are our desires, not the existence of objects;

because, the things will be there always. They were there even before we were born in this world, and even if we are not to be here, they will continue to be. The taste for things arises on account of a wrong knowledge of things. We love a thing or hate a thing, because we do not understand anything. The taste for objects, the desire for things, arises on account of a first miscalculation of our position in the universe, and a consequent miscalculation of our relationship to the objects outside. All this amounts to saying finally that desires melt away spontaneously when understanding arises.

The great confusion in the mind of Arjuna, described in the First Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, was considered by Sri Krishna as the consequence of an absence of understanding, an absence of *samkhya-buddhi*, a point that is made out in the Second Chapter. We lack *samkhya-buddhi*, or right understanding. We cannot see things as they are, and so, we have wrong attitudes towards them. We cling to them or try to run away from them. There is no necessity to cling to things, and there is no necessity also to run away from things. Both these are unwarranted attitudes of ours in the context of objects as they really are. Everything is as we ourselves are. The world is a kingdom of ends. The Atman is the Reality of all objects in the world. There is a supreme subjectivity present in all things. Nothing is an object here. Everyone is a subject with a status of his own. Inasmuch as everything is an end in itself, and not a means to something else, nobody can be exploited in this world as an instrument of somebody else. Therefore, no one is an object. Hence, no one can be taken

in an utilitarian sense as a thing for the satisfaction of oneself—a satisfaction that may arise either by love or by hatred.

A complete absence of taste for things seen, heard, or even imagined in the mind, is defined as *vairagya*. *Drishtanusravika-vishaya-vitrishnasya vasikara-samjna vairagyam*: this is the aphorism (I-15) of Patanjali. We see things and we hear things. We see this world of objects, very beautiful indeed, very attractive oftentimes, and sometimes repulsive also. We hear also of the glories of heaven, the paradise, the Garden of Eden, Indra-Loka. One would wish to go there and enjoy life. That is a desire arising from things heard only and not seen. Desires also arise from objects seen, which is our practical experience. When there is an absence of taste for things seen or heard or thought of in the mind, on account of the recognition of the true circumstance of all things in their inter-relationship with the whole universe, desire ceases. One becomes a master. Mastery over the mind is mastery over desires.

In a sense, we may say that the mind is only desires. Desires constitute the mind. The loves and hatreds of life constitute the warp and woof of the mind. When these loves and hatreds are transcended, the mind is overcome automatically. As threads constitute the cloth, desires constitute the mind. Desires and mind are not two different things. Hence, any kind of a religious attitude is not Yoga; because, Yoga is not religion at all. Yoga is a systematic, scientific approach to things as they are. It has nothing to do with Hinduism or Christianity or any other 'ism'. Yoga

is like mathematics or logic, which is not Hindu or Muslim or Christian. Yoga is a perfect scientific outlook which is expected of every individual situated in this cosmos. It is necessary to develop this outlook, this capacity to understand, rather than jump into a routine of practice unintelligently. If this is not done, all one's time will be taken up in the effort to understand the technique of practice. And years of such practice may bring no palpable result, if it is misdirected at the base by a wrong understanding. We are not here to fulfil desires. The aim of life is not the satisfaction of the senses or the pampering of one's ego. We are here as trainees in a large school or institution of education. We do not enrol in an educational institution for the purpose of satisfying our desires. This life, this existence of ours on earth, is a training ground for every one of us. We are like boys in a school, undergoing a process of right education, under the guidance of the Supreme Being Himself.

### **Vrittis—The Fundamental Source of Life's Difficulties**

*Vairagya* and *abhyasa* are the two essential words with which we have to be acquainted when we study Patanjali's Yoga. *Vairagya* is defined in many ways, translated in many ways. Renunciation, self-abnegation, and abandonment of the temporary values of life are usually associated with the term *vairagya*. To be in a state of Yoga is, in a way, to behold the objects of the world as God Himself beholds them. If one sees things as God sees, one is in a state of Yoga. It is very difficult to understand what could be that state, though one may be able to appreciate that it is the



state of total impersonality of awareness of things, inseparable from oneself. The whole universe is considered as the body of God in almost all the religions. And one does not look upon one's own body as an object of attraction. So, one should develop an impersonality of outlook in respect of things which appear to be outside on account of their so-called location in space and time. God has no space, and no time also. So, to look at things as God beholds them would be to transcend space and time. This technique—of overcoming the limitations of space and time is meditation, *dhyana*. It leads to *samadhi*, which is the pinnacle of Yoga.

In the beginning, this transcendence of space and time cannot be achieved. Teachers of Yoga tell us that, even in the practice of *vairagya* or renunciation, there are stages. One cannot suddenly jump to the summit of *vairagya* at once. The absence of taste for things is not easily practicable. The taste remains, even when one may be physically away from the objects of attraction. We love objects, though we may not see them with our eyes. Achievement of *vairagya* is possible only through a gradual conducting of oneself on right lines. One should seat himself in a composed manner and should conduct this analysis. In the beginning, it appears that the problems are outside in the world. "The people around me are my difficulties": so says any person complaining about circumstances. Nobody would accept that one's own self is the source of the problems. So, this is the initial result that will follow from an analysis of the problems of life. But later on, if one is a little more philosophical and dispassionate in his analysis, he will realise that it is not the persons and

things outside, but rather his own relationship with those persons and things which constitute his problem. Because, the experiences in life, whether pleasurable or otherwise, are brought about by relationships among things. If there is no kind of a relationship between the subject and the object, there would be no experience of the object. So, the experience of pleasure or pain, the feeling of problems, is due to a particular type of relationship that subsists between oneself and others. So, from the grossest stage of complaining against other persons and things as the source of our difficulties, we rise a little higher to the recognition of a more subtle reason behind our difficulties, namely, spatial and temporal relationship. The persons and things are not really the problem; our relationship with them is the problem. It is not a properly adjusted relationship. There is a maladjustment in that relationship. So, this knowledge is a little superior compared to the earlier feeling that things as such are the source of our difficulty. But, what are relationships, but psychological operations. One's relationship with another is nothing but the mental operation of the former in respect of the latter. So, life's difficulty arises due to the mental operations of this person or that person, of this thing or that thing.

To recapitulate: The things of the world are not the source of our difficulty; they are not the problem. The relationship to things is the source, and the relationship is nothing but the mental activity. We now come to the very root of the matter. The *vriddhis* of the mind are the problem behind all the difficulties in one's adjustment in life. Until the operations of the mind are restrained and directed in

the right channel, there is the possibility of wrong adjustments with others and the consequential problems. The mind is the source of all troubles. So, *vairagya* has to be achieved by stages of self-reflection and self-analysis.

What is *vairagya*? What is renunciation? Renunciation does not mean a renunciation of persons and things, because they are not the sources of the trouble. The sources of the trouble are wrong relationships; and renunciation means the renunciation of these wrong relationships. And what are relationships, but attitudes of the mind, actually speaking? So, *vairagya* is a mental condition. It is not a physical activity. It is not something that one does outwardly in society. It is, rather, what one thinks in one's mind. The thought is the act. What man thinks, that he is. So, the complete mastery which Patanjali speaks of, in his Sutra in respect of *vairagya*, is a graduated process of attainment, and one has to go on with this practice daily, hourly, without any remission.

### **Vairagya and Abhyasa Should Go Together**

The *sutra* (I-12) of Patanjali says that *vairagya* and *abhyasa* should go together: *Abhyasa-vairagyabhyam tannirodhah*. The modifications of the mind, whether painful or non-painful, are controlled by *vairagya* and *abhyasa*. Because, these modifications of the mind, painful and non-painful, are the cause of all the misrepresentations in life, which we call *samsara*. *Abhyasa* and *vairagya* go together, and often we feel that they cannot be separated, one from the other. A persistent effort in the direction of the detachment of oneself from all false values in life is the

essence of spiritual practice, or *abhyasa*, though it has a more positive side also. Here, as in the medical treatment of an illness a twofold process is involved, namely, the removal of the illness and the helping of the growth of positive health. The medicines that are administered to a sick person have two purposes to fulfil, namely, to remove the disease and also to improve the health. A concentration of our attention, our consciousness, on the Reality in its own status, may be *abhyasa* or true practice. But, it is accompanied also by detachment from the falsity of notions, of perceptions. The two have to go together, in the same way as we walk with both the legs and not with only one! As the bird flies with its two wings and not with only one wing, the two processes are to proceed simultaneously. This is an essential requirement. At one and the same time, we must withdraw ourselves from the false relationships that we have developed in relation to things, and also direct our consciousness to concentrate on the nature of Reality. But these are questions of detail which have to be sorted out in the presence of a Guru. Because, a general instruction about every little bit of detail in Yoga cannot be given to the masses. We can give only an outline about the general process or the *samanya dharma* of Yoga, but the *visesha dharma* or the particular details will vary from individual to individual. There are personal difficulties which each individual may feel, which each seeker may have in himself or herself, besides the general problems of life which are common to all. So, we are discussing mostly the general aspects of Yoga, not the details. The details are not to be taught in public and cannot also be read in a book, because

they are purely personal and they vary with each individual. In this matter, proper instruction has to be given individually or isolatedly, in respect of each case, just as a physician administers drugs to each individual patient separately. Because, in the practice of *vairagya*, and also in positive spiritual practice or *abhyasa*, the techniques naturally have to vary, according to the physical condition, and also the psychological state, of the seeker concerned.

### **Yoga Demands Our Whole Life**

A very important caution is given again by Patanjali in his *sutra*. We cannot practise Yoga in a slipshod manner, with a half-hearted attitude. Yoga demands a dedicated spirit on the part of the seeker. It calls for a complete surrender of the individual personality to the great purpose to be achieved through Yoga. It is not possible to give half of one's life to Yoga and half to something else. Yoga demands our whole life and not just a part of our life. There need be no fear that to be wholly devoted to Yoga implies running away from family circumstances and severance of oneself from the usual duties of life. This mistake again has to be removed from the mind by a correct understanding of what *vairagya* is. Yoga encompasses our whole life and not a part of our life, because whenever we have an attitude towards anything, it is a whole attitude and not merely a partial attitude. Our outlook of life is a total encounter of consciousness in respect of things in general. The outlook may be complete, and has to be complete, though this complete outlook may require us to perform various functions in respect of the particular object about which we

have this total outlook. The various duties of life are part and parcel of our total outlook of life. As such, we cannot run away from them; we cannot cut them off.

So, we have to understand clearly and carefully what it means to say that Yoga is a total dedication, a whole-souled surrender, and a complete attitude. Everyone has a view of things in general. In that sense, everyone has a philosophy. Nobody is a non-philosopher. A person's attitude towards things in general, the world over, is his philosophy; and he conducts his activities on the basis of this outlook that he has about things in general. So, in that sense, it may be said that he has always a total outlook. And in Yoga, this total outlook should be in consonance with the true nature of things. This is philosophical analysis again.

Every day the practice has to be undergone, nay, every moment of time. Patanjali says: *Dirgha-kala-nairantarya...* One gets established in Yoga by hard, unremitting practice, for a long time conducted. All the time, the mind must be in it. All the time the seeker must be aware of the fact that he is a student of Yoga and must remain in a state of Yoga. As a matter of fact, what is the gospel of the Bhagavad Gita but this great teaching that one has to be perpetually in a state of Yoga, even when one is doing the least of actions in life? That is Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is not worship in temples or doing something some time only during the day. Karma Yoga is maintaining the right mental attitude behind every kind of activity, even the least of them. So, the outlook or the attitude wherein lies true Yoga is to be a perpetual mental affair. It has to be carried on for a protracted period. What is protracted period? Throughout

life, *Dirgha-kala* means a long time, and Yoga practice has to be carried on for a long time, till the last breath of one's life. And when it is carried on like this continuously, every day, it should be without remission of effort, which means to say, that there should be no break in the practice and no severance of oneself from the right internal outlook. There should be no split or gap in this continuous process that is Yoga.

### **Yoga Should Be Practised with Zeal and Love**

And then, the most important of all pieces of advice which come to us from the great adept Patanjali is that we should have a true love for Yoga. One practises Yoga, not because one wants to become a teacher or gain fame, but because one wishes to achieve perfection. Yoga is considered by the ancient masters as far, far superior in affection to thousands of fathers and mothers. Yoga protects us when we protect Yoga. Yoga loves us when we love Yoga. What is the meaning of loving Yoga? Yoga is not a person; it is not a thing. It is not something existent. How can one love it? Yoga is not abstract thinking. It is an outlook, an attitude that we establish with reference to all things, everywhere. All things become friendly. Love of Yoga is not love of the word called 'Yoga'. It is not even a notion in our mind. It is inseparable from the existence of things. Thought is being, and being is thought, finally. Love is the same as the object which we love, and vice versa. The two cannot be separated. The Yogi becomes a lover of all beings—*sarva bhuta hite ratah*—and all beings love him. "*Sarva diso balim asmai haranti*" says the Upanishad. The

student of Yoga has to love all beings as his own self, as it were—nay, more than his own self. And then, all beings love him. This is because world experience is a question of action and reaction. Whatever attitude we project towards things, that attitude is meted out to us in return. Whatever we think of others, that will be thought of about us also. Whatever we do to others, will be done to us. Whatever be our notion about others outside, that will be the notion others will have about us also. This is very interesting and very important to note. So, Yoga is to be practised with tremendous zeal and a feeling of intense love surpassing all other temporal loves in this world, a love which swallows up every other love. It is not to be one of the loves, one among the many. No. It is to be the only love that the seeker can have. When the seeker loves Yoga, that love embraces and encompasses everything. Because, everything is in Yoga. That is why Patanjali says that Yoga is to be practised with a deep sense of affection for it, as if it were one's mother or father. And when we conduct ourselves in Yoga in this manner, we will be established in it. For a long time, we have to practise it with unremitting effort and great love. These are the preliminary instructions of the great Yoga teacher Patanjali.

It would be in the interest of all seekers of Yoga to go slowly, and not in a hurry. Each step should be a considered step, and one should not walk on slippery ground. The student of Yoga should not feel the necessity, later on, to retrace his steps because of any mistake that he might commit early in the practice. It is better to go slow, take time to reach the succeeding step, rather than hurry and



then retrace one's steps to correct a mistake or to avoid the committal of a mistake.

### **Internal Purification through Karma, Upasana and Jnana**

The essential Yogic practice is meditation. But to reach this state, one has to pass through various purificatory, earlier stages. Teachers of Yoga and Vedanta have been untiringly telling us that the heights of Yoga are reached only as the fruit of sustained effort in the direction of internal purification, which has to be achieved through service and worship. We are often told that *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* are the three stages of spiritual attainment. These are familiar terms—*karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* or service, worship and wisdom. We are unable to free ourselves totally from selfishness in our day-to-day life. We have some selfishness always. A subtle selfishness is there even in the most advanced spiritual personalities. It can be got over only by exercising an unselfish attitude towards other people, which is easily called service. Unselfish service is regarded as the essential prerequisite in the purificatory processes necessary for the final practice of Yoga. This unselfish service to others is very important; and one should not imagine that one is in a higher state, so that one can get out of this necessity to practise selfless service. Service does not necessarily mean providing physical amenities to people, though that also is a part of service. A charitable disposition towards others is the essence of service. Charity of feeling is the greatest of charities. Giving donations of some dollars is not necessarily charity. That is only an outward expression of one's internal recognition of

the value of people outside. The discovery of great spiritual value in all things in the world is the essence of the serviceful outlook of life. We do not serve people because they are inferior to us, or because they are beggars and we are rich. That is not the reason why we do service. Service is the outcome of our feeling that the great aspiration that is throbbing in our heart is also present in other hearts. Social circumstances might have converted the other people into what they are, but that is not their essential being. The charitable feeling, which is the essence of service, arises on account of a recognition of Divinity in all things, rather than on account of the discovery that others are poor fellows, beggars on the road, and unwanted units in society. There is no putting on of a superior attitude in unselfish service. We do not become important men because we do service. It would be a blunder to think so. Perhaps, one who is capable of doing the highest service regards himself as the humblest of people. He is the last and the least, and not the first. These are again subtle points which one has to be able to appreciate in one's own self, by careful examination of oneself daily.

A prayer for the welfare of all beings from the bottom of one's heart is also a great service. This is one of the greatest forms of service that one can do. Prayer can work miracles and wonders which even the most powerful productions of atoms cannot achieve, cannot do. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of" is the great oracle of a poet. To pray for the welfare of all beings is the greatest of services, and we can reduce the pains of people by invoking the miraculous intervention of divine hands. Here, in the

offering of prayer, we have to see to it that it arises from our deepest feelings in the heart and not merely from the lips that utter: "O Lord! Help us." Lip prayer is not prayer. Unless these cries come from our soul, they cannot be regarded as real prayers.

It is very difficult to know where our soul is. We have lost our soul! We are only shells of personalities, broken pieces and flints of individuals. We are not essences. Our essences have been dried up by our wanderings in the desert of life, in search of pleasures which we cannot have. So, great masters like Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj were untiringly insisting on the necessity for service, which has to be understood in its proper connotation. By this means we can free ourselves and live the life of a St. Francis of Assisi, or a Jesus Christ, or a Buddha. It is a matter for surprise that such persons should have existed in the world at all. They personify the complete abnegation of one's very being itself in the interest of the welfare of all. Such abnegation consummates itself in the seeing of God in all things. Thus, it is the recognition of divinity in things, and a participation in the life of people, by an inward attunement of our feelings with them, which may help us in outward service. The inward feeling is most important, and a mind thus purified becomes fit for the worship of God. An impure mind cannot adore God. That is why *karma* or selfless service becomes necessary to purify the mind and make it fit for *upasana* or the worship of God.

## **Chapter 5**

### **OBSTACLES IN YOGA PRACTICE AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM**

There are two sides to the practice of Yoga, upon which the student has to bestow sufficient attention. One is the method of practice, which has to be followed with meticulous care. The other is the obstacles that one may have to face on the way for totally different reasons. While the practice of a positive nature is important enough, a consciousness of the impediments on the way is equally important. It is not enough if one knows one's own capacities and strength; one should also know what are the difficulties that one may have to confront or face due to various circumstances, difficulties which may present themselves in various colours as one advances on the Yoga path, stage by stage. It is a known fact that there is a marked difference between the mental attitudes of a student of Yoga, and of a prosaic individual with worldly instincts and whims. While everyone in the world has a programme and a routine of daily life, the programme of a student of Yoga has a marked distinction. He has to adjust himself to a new law altogether, a law of self-integration, we may say, which is Yoga essentially, as distinguished from the usual, sentimental, social, emotional and practical adjustments which one makes during the day-to-day routines of the workaday world. Thus, there is an attempt on the part of the Yoga student to accommodate himself to a law which is wider and more integrating than the systems of living with which one is acquainted in ordinary life. So, when a positive

attempt is made to strike a new note in one's internal conduct, and not merely in outward behaviour, a kind of physiological change takes place in one's body, as a result of the mental change that is brought about. An ordinary mental change, an ordinary change of thought, does not affect the body. It is a little change only, and as such, is too weak to have a vital connection with the physiological function. But, an intense concentration of mind on a new outlook altogether has a positive impact on the whole body, which the body may not be able to bear sometimes. This may cause illness of various types, which an ordinary man in the world may not encounter. While there can be many reasons for falling ill, especially in the case of a serious student of Yoga, one of the reasons is this inability of the body to adjust itself suddenly to a very strong thought which is quite different from the usual thoughts of individuals that we are familiar with.

### **Moderation of Conduct Is Yoga**

Considering this difficulty that one may have to face in the practice of Yoga, scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita warn us to be a little bit moderate in our approach and not go to extremes. Because, when the seeker takes to Yoga, he is likely to be stirred up into an emotion of holiness and religiosity, which may lead him to think of such items of exceptional practice as fasting, reducing one's sleep, eating less, not talking, and so on. While all these practices are very advantageous, and perhaps necessary, they should not be resorted to all at once, in an extreme measure. Moderation is a greater virtue than complete abstention.

Complete abstention may not be so difficult as moderation. Moderation is more difficult. For instance, to speak in a moderate and acceptable manner poses a greater difficulty for a person than to observe complete *mauna*, or silence. Yoga is, a moderation of conduct and an internal adjustment. It is not an extreme step that one takes, though sometimes an individual seeker goes to extremes unavoidably due to his very nature. The moment we think of spirituality, religion, God or Yoga, we are likely to be stirred internally by certain feelings which are just the opposite of the individual feelings of day-to-day life. That is why we run to monasteries and sequestered places. No human individual can escape this eventuality of being stirred inside in a holy manner, which may look like something extreme to the poor body which is not used to these conditions of thinking and feeling.

### **Physical Illness**

In the system of Patanjali's Yoga, in one of the *sutras*, the great author says that obstacles may have to be faced by the student of Yoga; and he mentions many obstacles. The first one that he mentions is 'illness', physical illness. One has to guard oneself against this possibility. That health is very important does not require much of an emphasis. If the health of the Yoga student fails and he collapses physically, nothing can be done. Everything fails in one second. So, he should not be too enthusiastic in running after the spirit to the neglect of the body. This is because the body is an unavoidable accompaniment of the spirit, as long as the latter has to work through the individuality in

this empirical world. St. Francis of Assisi used to call the body as Brother Ass. Well, it may be an ass; yet, it is a brother all right. We cannot avoid it, because, it is our brother. Like an ass, it will carry some load; so let it be. We have to live with it.

We must bestow sufficient thought on the various problems that we have to face in Yoga. This is very necessary. The difficulties that we may have to encounter are not confined only to those mentioned in the Sutras of Patanjali. Patanjali draws our attention only to the general, philosophical sides of the difficulties. We may come across personal and petty difficulties, every day, which we must tackle with intelligence, aided by the guidance of a Guru. The Sutras of Patanjali alone will not be sufficient to provide all the guidance that we require when we go deep into Yoga practice. But, broadly speaking, Patanjali has given us an idea as to the nature of the problems we are most likely to face.

### **Dullness of Spirit**

Physical illness apart, the Yoga student may face, in the course of his practice, a sort of lethargy, a certain dullness of spirit. His enthusiasm cools down after some time. While he might have started on the Yoga course with an intense longing to catch something higher, later on, this burning desire-fire slowly comes down in its intensity, because of a reaction that is set up by the other constituents of his personality. Of the three properties of *prakriti*, it is *sattva* that stirs up in a person an aspiration for divine living. While the aspiration is good and very praiseworthy, one

cannot ignore the presence of the other two properties, namely, *rajas* and *tamas*, which will not always keep quiet. If one pays too much attention to one side, the other aspects of the personality which are ignored will have their own say, one day or the other. It will not be correct to strike a comparison between these properties. It cannot be said that something is good and something else is bad, though usually we say that *tamas* is bad, and that *sattva* and *rajas* are good. In truth, the three properties of *prakriti* are neither good nor bad, but appear to be useful or not useful under different conditions of one's life. Our body has all the three properties in it. It is mainly *tamasic*. We may say that it is heavy like a log. Therefore it is very weighty, and its characteristic is, principally, fixity. And *rajas* is something well known as an active nature causing distraction, a desire to run about and do something or the other at all times. Everyone has all these urges inside. While we all have a spark of a longing for a higher kind of living, we also have a desire to be very active in human society, doing something for ourselves and for others. And there is also the lethargic attitude. So, these urges, when they are not properly attended to, sometimes come to the surface of one's life and bring about a reaction of a melancholy nature, of a moody nature. This is something known to every person. Even when we take to such small simple routines like chanting of the Divine Name with a rosary, it does not mean that every day we will be concentrating the mind in the same way. Sometimes the *maala* might drop from the hand in a mood of sleepiness and we might get fed up. Who can do *japa* for three hours, four hours, five hours? Though it may be the



Name of God, for the glorification of the Almighty, yet the mind will refuse; because, it has got other things inside than merely this urge for God-realisation. So, Patanjali tells us that there is a dullness of the entire constitution that may prevail sometimes, about which also one has to be cautious.

### **Doubts and the Need for a Guru**

Then comes another problem, a difficulty which is of a psychological nature, mentioned by Patanjali in the Sutras. Doubt is in the mind. This is a very terrible problem which many seekers are faced with. It looks as if the majority of seekers have this difficulty. "Am I right? Or am I a foolish person, wasting my time in doing something under the impression that some great thing will come about? Perhaps I am entirely mistaken. Perhaps this teacher is not the right sort or, maybe, I am not the proper person to do this. I am unfit at the present moment." Hundreds of doubts of this nature will assail the mind, and under desperate conditions, the seeker may doubt even the existence of God Himself. He may go to such extremes. People curse God Himself when they have great problems and sufferings. Then they give up every spiritual practice. There is a snap in their *sadhana* automatically. Anybody can get angry with the Almighty. And when that happens, everything goes wrong. Now, this eventuality is occasioned by doubts, which creep ever so slowly into the mind, as the result of insufficient education and training under a proper teacher. In such a case, the seeker must have been jumping into Yoga suddenly, without guidance.

In ancient times, the system of teaching was through the programme called “Gurukulavasa”, a system altogether different from the one followed in our schools these days. The Guru or the teacher, the guide or the master, is expected to know every little detail of the mind of the student, because only then can he teach that which is appropriate under the circumstances. And if the student goes astray, the Guru will know what has happened to him and what is the remedy for it. But these days, in modern times, circumstances being different, this system does not seem to work. Therefore, there is not much of an advantage accruing even from a serious study of Yoga or the so-called practice of it. It has mostly become an academic affair or a joke, practically.

So, when there is something serious working in our minds and we are intent upon achieving something palpable, in spite of all the oppositions that may come upon us, when we desire to transform ourselves into a nobler type of existence, we have to see that these doubts do not assail our mind. Therefore, even today, in this most modern of times, the necessity for a Guru cannot be avoided. Because, no one is so wise as to know everything about the future. All problems are new when they come. They take a new shape when they appear before our eyes. They may be old problems, but when they come before us, they look new. And we will not know what to do with them. So, we require a superior to guide us. Correct guidance is an unavoidable requisite in the path of Yoga. It should be very clear to our mind that we have chosen the path, and we know what to do, and we know whom to refer to in case of

difficulties. Everything must be clear to the mind and there should be no doubt. It is, therefore, impossible to take seriously to Yoga meditations when any kind of doubt exists in the mind. There can be metaphysical doubts, there can be personal doubts, there can be doubts concerning the day-to-day adjustments in life. Misconceptions cannot be removed by a study of books, because the books cannot speak to us and answer to our questions. Book knowledge is knowledge, no doubt, but it looks like dead knowledge, whereas the seeker wants living, vital answers to his poignant queries that arise freshly from his heart, now and then, almost every day. So, the need for a teacher cannot be gainsaid, and one should not be under the impression that he can stand on his own legs in the Yoga path. No one can do that, unless one is a blessed master, come like an incarnation. That is a different matter. Usually, it is not possible. Before a person takes to Yoga practice, he should question himself: "Have I got any doubt in my mind in regard to the course that I have taken in the name of spirituality? If doubts are there, he must get them cleared immediately. Even if it takes months to get the doubts cleared, it does not matter. He must see to it that there is no doubt in the mind. Everything should be clear like daylight. Then he will make progress.

Other difficulties are also mentioned in the Sutras of Patanjali. An indifference of attitude comes in even after everything seems to be clear. Complacency sets in. The seeker sometimes tells himself: "After all, I have made some progress. If today I do not sit for meditation, what does it matter? I shall do it tomorrow. Today I am a little busy."

Some questions will arise in the mind, and the mind itself will give answers. In the Mahabharata, there is a great episode called the Sanatsujatiya, where a great master, Sanatsujata, gives this immortal advice to Dhritarashtra, that there can be nothing worse for a man than neglect of duty. *Pramada*: this is the word used in Patanjali's *sutra* to signify neglect of duty. And our duty being the practice of Yoga, neglect of it is worse than death, or *mrityu*. Yes, it is worse than death. Every day we have to resort to Yoga as we resort to our breakfast or lunch or supper. We have to love it as our own mother or father, brother or sister. There is nothing so dear to us as our Yoga. Yoga is not an abstract thought. It is a living, vital, substantial existence, and to think of it as an abstract thought is also a doubt in the mind, which has to be removed. Yoga is not an idea in the head. It is a name that we give to a concrete, substantial manifestation of the Absolute Itself, with which we have to unite ourselves, by gradual stages. So, there should be no step-motherly attitude towards Yoga. Every day, the time devoted to the practice should be almost the same. The allotted time should not be diminished. It is better to diminish the time for other activities than for meditation, for meditation is the seeker's central vocation. But the instincts inside, which have not been properly attended to or sublimated or fulfilled, may create unforeseen difficulties and speak like angels or sometimes threaten like devils. All these are possible, and we have to know who is in front of us when a voice speaks or an object presents itself before us.

## Sleep and the Need for Occasional Rest

When the seeker sits to meditate or do *japa* or even to study or think, he may feel sleepy. Sleep is very essential for the health of the body. Yes. And one should not cut short his sleep beyond a certain limit, so that it may not trouble him when he is at his worship or prayer. If the seeker unduly scissoring off his sleep in the night, by getting up very early at about 2 o'clock or 1 o'clock, then it will have an adverse impact on him in his meditation. He will not be able to concentrate properly. He will have a little bit of a creeping sensation in the nerves in the head, as if ants are crawling, and he will feel miserable and wretched, and he will like to close his meditation as early as possible. It is not the quantity of time that we devote which is important, as the quality of concentration, which cannot be there if the mind is not prepared. And if the mind is not happy, how can it be applied? So, if we have not given to the mind what it requires, it cannot be happy; and if it is not happy, it cannot be ready also. So, like a wise psychologist or a psychoanalyst or a school master, we have to teach the mind the lessons which it will be able to accommodate itself to and appreciate from the level in which it is. Also, if there is a mood of laziness or sleepiness, the seeker may admonish himself thus: "What for have I seriously taken to Yoga? What is the intention behind? If my intentions were holy, pious and clear enough, what makes me now close my eyes to my goal and lessen the intensity of my longing for it?"

The theory of Yoga may sometimes look very simple, but when the seeker actually sits for practice, he will find it

not so easy. The beginner cannot independently live a life of Yoga, at least for some time. That is why he is asked to keep the company or *satsanga* of like-minded people. They can then have a group discussion among themselves. People of similar aspiration may have a sitting, a chat—or, maybe, a discussion. In addition to this mutual exchange of ideas that the Yoga students may have, among themselves as friends and co-students, for their own benefit and necessity, they can also have a time set apart for study. Yoga does not always mean meditation with closed eyes. It means many things that are contributory to it ultimately. A little bit of study also is very necessary. Perhaps it may also have to be maintained as a necessary routine always. Some amount of reference to a text on Yoga may be required to brush up the mind into higher thoughts. Otherwise, we cannot always entertain noble thoughts. It is not easy to accommodate in the mind lofty thoughts of God always, throughout the day. That is impracticable. So, we take to various methods of practice in order to accommodate the mind to this habit of lofty thinking. Discussion with good people, friends, is a help, and is something like a secondary *satsanga*. Also helpful is a study of great texts on Yoga, given by great masters, incarnations, prophets and divinities of the past.

If the student finds that there is something seriously wrong with himself, and he does not know what has happened, and it is not possible for him to study or talk to anybody or even meditate, he may even close his practice for three days. It does not matter. Because, he may have to recover himself first, when he has fallen due to some

exhaustion or incapacity of some kind. If a soldier acquires some sort of incapacity in the battlefield, it does not mean that he is permanently incapacitated and cannot fight. On the other hand, the wounded soldier is taken away from the battlefield, and given some treatment and rest, until he recoups himself and makes himself ready. Similarly, in the battlefield of life, in this war called Yoga, it is possible that one gets exhausted and is not able to fight every day, every moment, unremittingly. Though Patanjali teaches that the practice of Yoga should be unremitting, unceasing, that there should be effort without any break, we have to use some discretion. A war may be continuous, but when the soldier is incapacitated, naturally, that day he cannot fight. He has to take rest, which means that that rest also is a part of the fighting process. Even so, rest is a part of the practice of Yoga itself. Here again, a Guru is necessary to guide the student, as to when to rest and when to step up practice.

### **The Devil's Whisper**

Then comes the devil's whisper. It comes in a very advanced stage. The devil does not speak to the student when he is in the beginning stage. The devil is just not bothered about the beginner. But, when there is a fear that the Yoga student is actually going to upset the plans of the lower nature, by his interference with its externalising activity, some reaction is set up. There is no such thing as the devil, ultimately. It is only a common term used in theological texts. There is no man sitting somewhere as the devil. It is only a kind of automatic reaction that is set up from the lower nature, when the Yoga student attempts to

go above it. To give an example: When a person tries to move with the current of the river, he does not feel any difficulty, because the current carries him easily and far. But, when the same person swims across or goes against the current, he experiences difficulty. The current then opposes him vehemently, or even tries to drown him, because he is trying to cross it, or go against its movement. The usual movement of nature is externality, outward contact with objects of sense, satisfaction of the instincts and urges by physical possessions and enjoyments of various types, including egoistic satisfactions. Now, inasmuch as there is a necessity to understand the great mistake involved in these sorts of satisfactions, and to rise up gradually to the level of a larger integration for a higher universal comprehension, any step that the Yoga student may take in this direction may look like a step against the ordinary laws of nature. Of course, it does not mean that the seeker is going to work against nature. But, it may appear as if he is interfering with nature, because of a little initial non-adjustment, resulting from extreme methods. Reactions from nature arise when the seeker resorts to extreme steps. It is not the fault of nature entirely. Even when the seeker has to overcome the instinctive urges of the personality which move in the direction of external objects, this has to be done with great caution, like a physician driving a needle into the flesh of the patient very gradually, slowly, so that the patient may not even know that an injection is being given. One does not thrust a knife into the flesh in the name of an injection.



## **The Necessity for Caution and Circumspection in the Practice of Yoga**

The Yoga student should not be too wise. This is a very important thing to note. Also, he should exercise his wisdom in a wise manner. Unwisely applied wisdom ceases to be wisdom. So, wisdom has to be wisely applied. This is a specialisation in the art of Yoga practice, and falls within the area of responsibility of the Guru. The student cannot understand what this method means. When he has gone wrong, he will not know till he feels the pinch. Only when he gets a kick, he will know that something has gone wrong. Otherwise, he will not know what the mistake is that he has committed. The desires of the mind, and the urges of the personality in general, are the activities of the outward nature that compel our attention in Yoga. We can flow with this current of the outward nature or we can oppose the current. Yoga tells us to be very cautious and adopt a *via media*. It tells us that neither have we to flow with the current of nature entirely, nor oppose it directly. Both these extremes are unwarranted, because they will immediately make us a cynosure in the eyes of *prakriti*. It is better to live unnoticed than become an object of attraction to everybody; because an object of attraction always gets into some trouble. Whereas, an unnoticed person somehow gets on happily in life. Therefore, even in the practice of Yoga, the student should live in the midst of *prakriti*'s activities in an unnoticed manner, and not make her suddenly conscious of his activities by shouting aloud, "I am a Yoga student!" *Prakriti* does not like shouts of this kind. The reactions of nature, if they are strong, may bring about a

reversal of the practice. An internal desire may burn the senses. Desires, which the student tries to run away from in the name of Yoga, desires sensory as well as egoistic, violent urges, may press him forward in the reverse direction; and these reactionary urges may be stronger than the corresponding urges manifesting in a normal person in the usual course. Bottled-up energy is always stronger than the energy that is given a little bit of freedom. Let it be noted that Yoga is not bottling up of energy, but a wise utilisation of it. If water is allowed to build up in a dam without being released, the dam will burst. Dams are not built so that they may burst. They are built for optimum utilisation of the available water resources. But, if the waters are not so utilised, and are just allowed to build up inside the dam, the dam will burst, and the waters will ravage the land.

The activities of nature being external in space and time, and we being a part of nature, we are automatically involved in those activities, and we cannot easily curb our external urges. They have to be controlled only gradually. The stages of Yoga are therefore gradual ones in Patanjali's system. There are, in all, eight stages. The student can devise more stages as per his need, and in consultation with his Guru. He can have a hundred stages for his own practical purposes. Whenever a desire arises in the mind, we immediately throw a counter-bolt against it in the name of Yoga. We condemn it as an enemy. Generally, religions condemn all desires. Every religion is against normal human desires. This is a mistake if the attitude to desires is a total opposition. Even when we meet an enemy, directly opposing the enemy is not wisdom. To conquer the enemy,

we need to manoeuvre in a highly dextrous, well thought-out manner, and in order that our manoeuvres may be successful, they have to be executed in a very imperceptible manner, very much like the moves of a political agent or an expert general in the army. Yoga is like the activity in a battlefield. And we do not go to the war field only to get defeated and killed. That is not the intention. The intention is to win victory in the war. We do not practise Yoga only to become shame-faced. That is not the intention. We go to achieve something, and unless we know all the minor details of the problems that would be set up by the agents of the opposite party, which in this case is *prakriti*, and unless we know the wise methods to be adopted in adjusting ourselves to these tactics of nature, we will be a failure. So, it is better to take many days and many months in the preparation for the battle of Yoga or the practice of Yoga than suddenly jump into the meditation stage, which, at least according to Patanjali, is one of the last stages. Many a time we live under the impression that we are advanced students, and that the initial steps are not for us. This, again, is an overestimation of oneself. The world is too strong for everybody. We should not underestimate the strength of the world. We should know how large the world is, how powerful nature is, and what a tremendous energy the five elements called earth, water, fire, air and ether hold within themselves! Why, even the prejudices of human society are strong enough to oppose us, if we take an unwise step in Yoga.

## Illusions and Delusions

Patanjali mentions another difficulty likely to be encountered by the student of Yoga. This is the perception of illusions. The practitioner of Yoga may be under the impression that he has had God-vision in his meditation, that he is seeing celestial light, that angels are speaking into his ears, and that he is smelling the Parijata flower of Indra's garden. All these ideas may be in his mind, and these are called illusions. These are illusions, because they are not divine visions and divine perceptions, though they may look like something unusual and super-normal. Most of the colours or sounds which people see or hear in intense concentration are the result of a pressure that is exerted upon the *prana*, either by *pranayama* or by concentration. If we press our eyes very hard, we will see in them colours. Even if somebody gives a blow on one's head, one will see some colours. We cannot call them divine colours. They are the result of some pressure exerted on the *prana*. The pressure can be exerted either by a hit or a blow, or by stopping the breath in *kumbhaka*, or even by a mere psychological effort of concentration of the mind on something. When such a thing happens, one immediately begins to see the colours of the *pranas*, and sometimes hear a subtle vibration, which goes by the name of *anahata nada*. If these result from one's effort in concentration, to that extent, they are praiseworthy. But they are not to be taken for divine perceptions. So, *bhranti-darsana* or perception of illusions, and mistaking them for reality, also is a mistake that the seeker should guard himself against in Yoga *sadhana*.

Now, there are other *bhrantis* or illusions, which sometimes begin to take possession of the seeker. He begins to feel that he is an incarnation itself, and that his only duty is to save the world from hell. Many sincere seekers begin to feel that they are here in this world only to save mankind from perdition, and they leave their own Yoga practice. They have learnt the Upanishads, studied the Bhagavad Gita, practised Yoga. Everything is okay and nothing is left except the saviour's activity! So, they take up the responsibility of a prophet or an incarnation, and strive to save mankind from hell, and themselves enter into hell afterwards! The Yoga seeker intent on his success in Yoga should not succumb to such false notions about being here to save mankind. Nothing of the kind is his duty. And if that is his duty, he will know it as clearly as sunlight. There will be no doubts in the mind. Such a high clarity there will be, if God commissions a person to this great responsibility of saving mankind. Therefore, the ordinary Yoga seeker should not imagine that saving mankind is his duty. He is a very small weakling, a fly as it were. These misplaced ideas should not arise in his mind. The wrong egoistic feeling that one is a great master of Yoga, or a saviour of humanity, should be given up totally.

The next difficulty that Patanjali mentions is the incapacity of the mind to concentrate upon the ideal, or the object chosen. However much one may try to concentrate, the mind will not stick to the object of concentration. It will think something else. Like a small ball of mercury which cannot be held in the hand, or something very fishy which cannot be grasped, which eludes the contact of the hand,

the mind will slip out of control, and however much one may struggle, it will not concentrate. It is like a wild bull which will gore us to death, rather than accept our admonitions or teachings. The mind can become wild in such a way as to turn into an anti-social manifestation, outwardly as well as inwardly. A very terrible situation it is, when the mind becomes wild! It can make one go crazy. Many people actually become insane on the Yoga path, due to extreme pressure exerted upon themselves, either deliberately or by compulsion of outer circumstances. So, the Yoga student has to proceed very slowly and very cautiously.

The last difficulty that Patanjali mentions is this. Even if the Yoga student gets at the point of concentration, he cannot settle the mind on it for a long time: "Yes, I caught the point of concentration, but I cannot fix the mind on it for a long time!" This is a common complaint. The mind immediately comes back. By gradual effort, a daily sitting, and various other methods, the mind will gradually gain the capacity to concentrate for increasingly longer periods.

Even if it takes ten births to reach God, it does not matter. The intelligent Yoga student should not retrace his steps and fall back. He should go slowly. There are secondary difficulties mentioned by Patanjali, other than the primary obstacles already referred to. A mood of despair is considered by the great Yoga teacher as a secondary effect produced by the practice, when that practice goes a little wrong somewhere. This melancholy mood or mood of despair can supervene even after years of practice, and not necessarily in the initial stages. "What is

there? I have done enough. I am fed up with it.” The mind will speak in these terms, perhaps after years of practice. “All the prayers have gone waste; meditations have been without any kind of benefit to me. I have lost this world and I have lost that also. What is the good of all this?” The mind will tell like this one day or the other, and the seeker will not speak, because of the grief in his heart that he has lost everything. This grief is an obstacle. This grief is a stage which every great master has passed through. We are told that even great thinkers and persistent students like Buddha were, at one stage, in a state of sorrow and grief that they had achieved nothing. We read in the biography of Buddha that even a day before the moment of illumination, he had no indication that anything would come about at all. He had decided that death was the only thing to embrace. The result of all this suffering in the name of Yoga is destruction and loss of everything. These moods may enter the mind—melancholy moods, dejectedness, and a sour Sunday face, a castor-oil face as Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say. This is *duhkha* and *daurmanasya*—sorrow and dejection. Whenever such moods manifest, the earnest seeker should cautiously survive the moods, and not succumb to them.

The other secondary obstacles mentioned by Patanjali are of a different nature. He considers breathing itself as an obstacle. Ordinary students will not be able to understand what all this means. Why should breathing be a difficulty? We cannot live without it at all. But, it must be noted that Patanjali speaks of breathing as a difficulty, only in the case of the advanced Yoga student who is in a lofty state of perception. Patanjali regards the inhalation and exhalation

process as an impediment in Yoga, because the alternate breathing causes a sympathetic reaction upon the breathing itself, resulting in oscillation of thought. One cannot consistently think one continuous thought like a flow, unremittingly, because of the alternate breathing. And, therefore, *pranayama* is prescribed as a requisite of Yoga practice, *pranayama* meaning suspension of the breath and a prevention of the normal alternate breathing. Suspension of the breath is supposed to lead directly to fixity of mind, concentration of consciousness, and freedom from the oscillation of thought, freedom from the movement of the mind towards objects of sense. One day or the other, as the result of persistent Yoga practice, this breathing process will get merged in the thought process, and the Yogi's vital energy will become one with his psychological being. All that is his personality will get concentrated in a centre of consciousness. There will be no alternate breathing at that time. That is called the *samadhi* state, a state which is the final one.

Tremor of the body is also mentioned as a secondary obstacle by Patanjali. Perhaps, in intense concentration, this will be the first thing that the Yoga student will notice. The other obstacles may not be immediately experienced. The various difficulties mentioned in the Yoga Sastras will not be confronted at once. Within a few minutes of real concentration, the student will feel a jerk in his body. He will have a tremor, a tremor which is something akin to a little electric shock—like the sensation felt on contact with a mild live wire of low voltage. A similar sensation will be felt when the mind is really concentrated. The student will feel



a shake-up of the system for a second, as if somebody has pushed him with a finger. This jerk is considered an obstacle only in a philosophical sense. Really, one need not bother about it, and it is not going to harm very much. It is only a suggestion, inwardly coming, that the mind is concentrated. Why should the jerk come? Why should the body have this tremor? Because the *prana* is given a notice by the mind that it is going to adopt a new attitude altogether, quite different from the one which it used to adopt earlier. The mind tells the *prana*. The moment this message from the mind reaches the *prana*, a reaction is set up by the *prana* in answer to the message of the mind, and that reaction is the jerk that the Yoga student feels. So, it is a good thing, because, at least the mind is speaking something worthwhile to the *prana*.

## Chapter 6

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGA

Yoga is *chitta-vritti-nirodhah*, restraint of the mind-stuff or the psychological apparatus inside, generally known as the mind. The different ways of controlling the mind, or restraining the *chitta*, constitute the whole procedure of Yoga. We have tried to understand, in the preceding chapters, the reasons why the mind has to be controlled. In the process, we have analysed, in some depth, the whole background of the subject of mind control. This introductory approach to the philosophical background of the practice of Yoga is necessary, because oftentimes we are unable to convince ourselves that control of the mind is the most advantageous of all efforts. We also see that conviction driven into our feelings is of primary importance for the successful building up of the practice of Yoga, just as the firm fixing of pillars in the ground is of vital importance for the raising of an edifice on them. We have to be planted firmly on the ground of unshakeable conviction as to the necessity and the value of Yoga. We should have no vacillating doubt in the mind. Having grounded ourselves firmly enough in this conviction, in this feeling that Yoga is unavoidable in the course of the life of any individual, the methods of practice should now attract our attention in the manner required.

#### What Is the Mind?

How to control the mind? What is meant by the restraint of the mind-stuff? We saw earlier that the mind is

inseparable from its functions, *vrittis* as they are called. The way in which our whole being reacts to the atmosphere outside is a *vritti*, primarily speaking. We react to the entire world outside with the totality of our being. This reaction is the central *vritti*, or the psychic operation in us. For the purpose of the practice of Yoga, we have to understand the mind as it is in itself, and not as we find it sometimes inadequately described in various schools of psychology. The mind is not something outside us, nor is it different from us. I am my mind and my mind is I. The body and the mind are not just inter-related, but they are an organic stuff, forming a complete whole. Psychologists have tried to analyse the relationship between the mind and body, under the impression that they are two different things. They are not. To get a clear idea as to what the mind is in its relation to the body, we can only cite an analogy, a comparison. There is an iceberg in the ocean. Its hard crest is visible on the surface. When we go deeper and deeper, the substance looks thinner and thinner. At the base, it is all liquid. But the liquid portion at the base and the solid portion on top cannot be compartmentalised into two separate objects. There can be no watertight separation of the one from the other. There is only a gradual disappearance of the one into the other. Gradually the liquid becomes solid. The other way round, the solid top portion leads us down into the liquid base. In other words, the solid is only a certain density of the liquid, and that too very gradually formed, so that we cannot know where the solid begins and the liquid ends. Somewhat similar is the relationship between the mind and the body. For our practical purposes, we may

compare the mind to the liquid, and the body to the solid. The mind that is liquid has become the solid that is the body. And just as there can be no demarcation of a rigid type between the liquid and the solid portions of an iceberg, no distinguishing line can be clearly drawn between the mind and the body. The mind and the body are a total whole that is the individuality, of which the mind is one aspect and the body another.

Now, our reaction to the universe, the world or the atmosphere outside is something very interesting. It is the answer that we, as the total completeness of our personality, give to the great theory of the cosmos from outside. This answer of ours is known through our sense-organs, through which, or in terms of which, we operate as individuals. The operations of the mind are, therefore, our operations. So, to say 'my mind' would not be a proper expression. The mind is not something that the individual possesses, like an object. 'My mind' and 'my body' are mere expressions, and incorrect expressions. The individual is not outside the mind. He is the mind. He is just that.

The *vruttis*, or the operations of the mind, are the way in which the individual beholds the world, or interprets things in general. The two types of *vruttis*, the pain-giving and the non-pain-giving, have been referred to earlier. These *vruttis*, whether pain-giving or otherwise, are not only the way in which we look at things, but also the way in which we evaluate or interpret things. The looking is the non-painful *vrutti*, and the interpreting is the painful *vrutti*. The interpretation is something like a judgement that we pass on that which we have already beheld in a particular

manner. The beholding of the world outside by the individual concerned is in detail, and differs from individual to individual, though in general all human beings may be said to look at things in a similar manner. The general outlook is the non-painful *vritti*. The particular outlook is the painful *vritti*. A bundle, with a lot of wealth in it, in the form of gold or silver or currency, may be placed in front of many people. And all persons will look at it in the same way, and everybody will know that it is a valuable bundle, that within it is a lot of wealth. This is the general perception. If a thousand-dollar bill is kept in front of a person, everyone will know that it is a thousand-dollar bill. It is a non-painful *vritti*. But the painful one is that which proceeds from the person who owns it, or a person who may want to own it, rightly or wrongly. The mere beholding of the value in a generalised manner may be said to be the non-painful *vritti*. But a particular interpretation of the object in terms of one's own self with a touch of love or hatred, like or dislike, in respect of it, is the other kind of *vritti*, namely, the painful one. Now, Patanjali has made it clear that all these *vrittis* are, after all, modifications of the mind in respect of a thing that is regarded as existing outside oneself in space and time, and with which a personal relationship is established.

### **The Psychology of Yoga vis-à-vis the Psychology of Vedanta**

Here, a very interesting and subtle distinction has to be drawn between the definition of the objects according to the psychology of Yoga and Samkhya, and according to the

psychology of a well-known philosophy called the Vedanta. The whole point or crux of the matter is in the interpretation of the meaning of the words 'subject' and 'object'. The beholder is the subject, and that which is seen or beheld is the object. The definitions of subject and object in the Yoga psychology differ from the corresponding definitions in the metaphysical system of the Vedanta, though ultimately, they land themselves upon a common point of interest. Because, as we proceed further with the aphorisms of Patanjali, we find that he goes on stressing the point, again and again, that the bondage of the individual is in the identification of consciousness with the objects, and liberation lies in the isolation of consciousness from the objects. This is something peculiar that we note in the system of Patanjali, which is based on the classical Samkhya. The whole endeavour in this system of Yoga particularly is towards the achievement of an isolation of the spirit, called the *purusha*, from matter, called *prakriti*. The philosophy of Samkhya, upon which is based the Yoga of Patanjali, conceives of the existence of spirit and matter as two distinct elements. Spirit and matter are sometimes regarded as even eternal in themselves, independently existing in their own right, with no vital connection between the two. As per this view, consciousness and the object can never be united, because, consciousness is pure subject, and the object is just the opposite of it.

The bondage of consciousness is the object of our study. What is this bondage? According to Yoga psychology, bondage is the illusory assumption, or imagination rather, on the part of spirit or consciousness, that it has the

characteristics of the object, of *prakriti* or matter or something which is just the opposite of itself. All movements in nature belong to *prakriti*, and not to *purusha*. We may call it evolution, we may call it externality, we may call it name and form. These are but different nomenclatures that we may adopt in the defining of a thing that is sensed or even thought by the mind. These constitute the whole world panorama, or, in modern philosophical language, we may say matter-stuff. This matter-stuff is the area of operation of *prakriti*. And this matter-stuff is different from consciousness. Somehow, in an unintelligible manner, *prakriti* and *purusha* come together. There is a juxtaposition of matter and consciousness. This juxtaposition is the source of perception, and everything follows from it. How does this union of the object with the subject that is consciousness take place? This is explained by an example in the Samkhya philosophy, the example of the crystal and the flower. A pure crystal has no colour of its own, but when a coloured object such as a red flower is brought near this pure crystal; it gets reflected in the crystal, and it can be so reflected that the whole crystal may appear red. When that happens, we may not even know that there is a crystal at all. The crystalhood of the crystal has ceased for the time being, and it appears like a red object. This is on account of the absorption of the colour of the flower by the crystal which is, in itself, in its pristine purity, colourless. Now, is there a real connection between the crystal and the flower? There is absolutely no connection. The colour has not affected the crystal in any manner. The crystal has not become impure,

even a little bit, by the appearance of the colour within itself. It can regain its appearance of purity the moment the flower is taken away from the crystal. The crystal never was contaminated or affected or infected in any manner. But, when the reflection takes place, it appears as if the subject has ceased to exist for the time being; there is only the redness, the flower. Such is the situation of world-perception, says Samkhya. In the above instance, the bondage of the crystal is nothing but the false imagination that it is the flower. It never became the flower. It never really acquired even the colour of the flower. Because of the reflection, it imagines that it has become the flower. What is freedom for the crystal? The crystal regains its freedom when it is again separated from the flower. Then it assumes its pristine purity of colourless transparency and establishes its consciousness in its own self, not allowing it to project itself externally in the form of the imagination that it is something other than itself, in this case, the object flower. So, what is Yoga? It is the isolation of consciousness from matter, the subject from the object.

In the metaphysics of the Vedanta, the same phenomenon is explained in a slightly different manner. The Vedanta accepts this analysis of the Samkhya as perfectly right, but affirms that the individual is only an assumed form of consciousness, and not the real essence thereof. While it is true that there is a necessity to differentiate the externality that has crept into the subjectivity of consciousness, the object can never become the subject. This is the opening sentence in Sankara's great commentary on the Brahma Sutras. The subject can never



become the object; the object can never become the subject. Sankara starts saying this at the very commencement of this commentary on the Brahma Sutras. Yet, there is an insistence in the Vedanta philosophy that the subject is the same as the object ultimately, and in their union lies the freedom of the soul. This assertion is made from a different angle of vision altogether, from a different perspective of the very same circumstance or situation. While the subject can never become the object, and therefore, they have to be separated—in this, the Yoga is right, and Vedanta also accepts this—there is something else, in addition, for Vedanta to say. And that additional assertion is this, namely, that the subject is basically the same as the object. It is not essentially different. This similarity between the subject and the object, or the essentiality of both in their core, is the reason why there is such an attraction between the two. The infinite is present in the subjects, and it is the very same infinite that appears in all the objects of the world. So, the infinite calls the infinite, as it were, when one pulls the other.

Thus, whatever be the philosophical or metaphysical background of Yoga or Vedanta, both the systems of philosophy agree that the mind has to be controlled, for a reason which is obvious to every person. The mind is the externalised activity of consciousness, the empirical movement of the individual, the spatio-temporal involvement of individuality. This is a great sorrow for everyone, for everything, for consciousness proper which is the stuff of all things. Now, how to withdraw the mind from the objects, or rather, how to educate the mind so that it

may understand its true relationship with things outside? There is a famous saying in the Yoga-Vasishtha, which is an instruction given by the great sage Vasishtha to his student Rama: “*Dvau krumuu chitta nasasya, yoga jnanam cha Raghav...*”. The sage says: “There are two ways of controlling the mind. Either sever its connection with all things, or establish a connection of it with everything.” These are the two ways by which one can control the mind. It is easy to understand something about the benefits that would follow from the withdrawal of the mind from all things. But, it is not so easy to know the advantage of connecting the mind to everything. The result, however is the same in either case.

There is an anecdote about Acharya Sankara which is relevant here. It is said that Acharya Sankara was in his *kutir*, and the door was bolted from within. One of his disciples came and knocked. “Who is that?” asked the Master. “I” was the answer. “Oh I! Either reduce it to zero or expand it to infinity!” retorted the Master from within. This ‘I’ in every individual should either be reduced to zero or expanded to infinity. Either way it is good. In the one method, the modifications of the mind are restrained by a negative withdrawal of its operations from everything that appears as external. The other method involves the philosophical visualisation of the mind’s basic identity with all things. The earlier method, namely, the restraint of the mind-stuff, is the main instruction according to Patanjali.

## Mind Control through Pranayama

Students of Yoga know very well that the movement of the *prana* has something to do with the mind, that the mind and the *prana* are inter-related in some way, and as such, *pranayama* helps control of the mind. Even as the mind and the body cannot be separated into watertight compartments, the *prana* and the mind also cannot be so isolated. In a way, we may say, that the *prana* is just the movement of the mind. It is the flow of the mind in a particular direction. It is the energy of thought that operates in an externalised manner. It is the direction of the individuality in terms of externality. That is the *prana*. In other words, the force with which the mind moves outwardly is *prana*, truly speaking. *Prana* is only a force. When a dam bursts and the water rushes forth, the water moves with a force. This force with which the water moves may be compared to the *prana*, and the water itself to the mind. Now, this force of the water cannot be separated from the water itself, though it cannot be said that the force is the water. Logically, they are two different things. Yet, practically they cannot be separated. Only a theoretical or a logical distinction can be drawn between the force of the water and the water. Likewise, a distinction can be drawn between the *prana* and the mind also. But really, they are the same. To control the water, one has to control its force. Even so, to control the mind, one has to control *prana* which is its force. “*Pranaspundaha nirodhah*” is one of the methods of restraint of the mind.

Why does *prana* move with such a force or velocity? Why does the water move? The water moves, because the

sluice gate is open in the dam. There is a passage open for the water, and therefore, it rushes. So also, *prana* moves outwardly, because it has found an avenue of expression, an outlet of expression. This avenue, this outlet, should be blocked, and then the force will be contained. The avenues are the senses. They are the apertures through which the power of the mind rushes out in the form of the *prana* externally. Thus, we have an inter-relationship between the mind, the *prana* and the senses. The channels of the senses are the passages through which the energy of the mind rushes out as the *prana* in terms of the objects outside. So, when we try to restrain the mind in the practice of Yoga, we may have to take a number of all-round steps, and not just one step. The senses, the *prana* and the mind form one group, and they are so friendly with one another, that it is impossible to restrain one without also putting down the powers of the others. It is something like catching a gang of dacoits or thieves. We cannot catch only one of the gang and feel mighty pleased that everything is okay. Because, there are the others, who are the associates of the captured thief, and who are still free to play havoc.

### **Importance of a Congenial Atmosphere**

Inasmuch as the senses move in terms of the objects outside, their vehemence depends upon the nature of the objects, the proximity of the objects, and such other considerations. Therefore, the practice of Yoga in the form of mind control may have to take into consideration the atmosphere in which one lives. In the exercise of mind control, we thus gradually move from the inward points of

the mind to its relationships outside, even into the society externally, so that it is a very vast affair, and not merely a single act of just stopping the breath, or thinking of a single object. That is why the practice of Yoga is supposed to be commenced in a proper external atmosphere, in a right environment, though essentially it is a mental operation finally. As far as possible, one should not physically place oneself in an atmosphere either of temptation or of violent hatred. There are things which we hate for reasons of our own, and also there are things which violently attract us, again for reasons of our own. It is wisdom on everyone's part, therefore, not to place oneself too much in the midst of those things which will pull one's mind violently, either positively in the form of love, or negatively in the form of hatred. One should therefore try to go to sequestered places, as far as possible. It does not mean that physical isolation is a remedy for the desires of the mind. Just as a drug or a medicine acts better on the body when the body is cleansed by prior fasting, control of the mind becomes a little easier when it is not physically placed in an atmosphere of untoward attraction or repulsion.

We have already seen that the way in which the mind acts upon the object is the *vrutti*. And the *vrutti* differs from person to person, because a particular object may not evoke a uniform reaction in the case of all individuals. So, finally, there is individual detail involved in the control of the mind, though, generally speaking, we may say that all objects are to be weaned away from mental operation. The mind has been accustomed to imagine that there is great value in its connection with objects. It has been educated

into this system of thinking. Otherwise, it will not be thinking of anything at all. The first and foremost duty of a student of Yoga in this connection would, therefore, be to educate the mind with regard to its proper relationship with the objects.

What is the reason behind the mind thinking of an object? The reason is a certain pleasure that accrues to the body, the senses and the mind also, from the so-called contact of itself with that object. In one aphorism, Patanjali tells us that here is a great misconception on the part of the mind that some pleasure comes from the object. The mind is deluded when it thinks that joy is the consequence of contact with the object. It is deluded, because the consequence of the mental contact with an object is not pleasure, according to the author of the Yoga Sutras. Not only the consequence that follows subsequently, but even the imagination that there is a pleasure in the object at the moment of contact is a misconception. The mind may say: "Even if there is some pain following the contact with the object, what about the present satisfaction? Why not suffer the chaff though it is unworthy, and have a kernel of satisfaction, a kernel of joy, even if it be for a moment?" But then, even this momentary satisfaction at the time of contact is not a real satisfaction: it is a delusion. This is told us very interestingly. The joy that appears to arise in the mind at the time of its contact with an object is due to the operation of *prakriti* in a very mischievous manner. When we come to know how this mischief is worked by the *gunas* or the properties of *prakriti*, we realise to our surprise that we are not living in a world of joy at all.

## The Play of the Gunas

There are three modes or *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* brings about an equilibrium of the forces of which *prakriti* is constituted. *Rajas* distracts this equilibrium; and *tamas* overpowers the other two properties, namely, *sattva* and *rajas*, so that there is a sort of unconsciousness when *tamas* prevails. We are unconscious when we are asleep. In sleep, *tamas* is predominant; *rajas* and *sattva* are overpowered completely. When we are busily working or thinking something outside, we are in *rajas*. When we are happy, a little of *sattva* operates in us. Now, what is this little happiness? This remains to be explained. In *tamas*, there is of course no experience at all. So, we have very little to say about it. We are concerned with experience, whether it is a desirable one or an undesirable one, painful or pleasurable. Inasmuch as in *tamas* there seems to be no experience whatsoever, we have nothing to say about it practically. It is a totally unworthy state. In *rajas*, the mind is disturbed, and thrown out of its balance. In this condition, the mind is charged with the force of consciousness. We have already stated that the mind is the way in which consciousness moves outside in terms of objects. The *purusha* is beholding itself, as it were, in the *prakriti*, the object outside. So, when the mind is disturbed by the activity of the *rajas* of *prakriti*, on account of which it moves towards the object, it is followed by the consciousness of the *purusha*. This is something which requires a little bit of imagination to understand. When a force is ejected out, it is also charged with an intelligence which makes it aware that it is moving.

This force that is aware that it is moving towards an object is the mind, though the awareness does not belong to the force. The mind is not consciousness, *prakriti* is not *purusha*, as the Yoga tells us. But we, somehow or the other, get into a muddle, and consciousness thinks that it is the force and there is a pulling out of oneself outside oneself, an alienation, an aberration, a moving away of self from itself to the object. The *purusha* becomes the non-*purusha* for the time being.

Joy is the condition of the *purusha*. Joy is nothing but illumination of the *purusha* in itself, resting itself in itself, and not getting pulled in the direction of something outside. But, every desire is a pull externally. So, when a desire manifests itself, which is the reason for the movement of the mind in terms of objects outside, the *purusha* ceases to be itself for the time being. Nothing can be worse for one than to cease to be what one is. It is a loss of self-consciousness. The subject forgets itself and becomes the object, as it were, for the time being. For the time being, the crystal becomes the flower, as it were. The subject becomes the object of love as it were and clings to the object as if he were that. Now the sorrow that attends upon the movement of a desire in terms of an object is nothing but this loss of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is joy; the loss of it is sorrow. The *purusha* becoming the *prakriti* is the sorrow of *samsara*, and that explains all desires, everything that we do here. So, *rajas* works a havoc by completely overpowering the self-consciousness of the *purusha* and compelling it to move towards the object, which is apparently there outside, and



making the *purusha* feel its presence in the object. This is what happens to us when we love anything intensely. We find that we are there, and we have lost ourselves completely here. So we cling to things. This is a great mistake and very easily detected.

### **The Real Source of Joy in the Fulfilment of Desire**

The joy that follows from the satisfaction of a desire is not the result of the contact of consciousness with the object, but the result of the return of consciousness to itself, under certain circumstances which prevail on the fulfilment of a desire. The essence of the matter is that the mind is under an illusion when it imagines that it is necessary to move towards an object for gaining a satisfaction of some kind. Satisfaction does not come from this contact. To give a gross example: The relief that we feel by scratching the itching skin is not the result of scratching merely, though it may appear that scratching gives some relief and joy. The relief comes due to the movement of blood to that part of the skin which, somehow or the other, was previously bereft of that blood supply on account of the malady of the skin. The activity of scratching is not the cause of the satisfaction; the movement of blood is the cause. Something like this happens in the mind itching for objects of sense. The satisfaction that one gets by means of contact with a sense object is something like the satisfaction that one gets by scratching the itch. The scratching does not bring the relief. Likewise, the contact of the mind with the object does not bring the joy. The joy is due to a resting of consciousness in itself, due to *purusha* resting in itself, as a

consequence of the cessation of this activity of coming in contact with the external object.

The *gunas* of *prakriti*, therefore, have a great role to play in this movement of the mind towards objects and involving the *purusha* in a sorrowful experience. There is a sort of anxiety in the mind before it comes in contact with a desired object. And anxiety cannot be equated with any joy. There is anxiety even at the time of the so-called satisfaction by means of contact. That anxiety also cannot be equated with real joy. There is anxiety of a worse type after the satisfaction is over. So there are sorrows—before, in the middle, and afterwards. A man who runs after wealth wants to make a lot of money. In the beginning, he is anxious about the ways and means he has to adopt in amassing wealth. So, at that time, he is very unhappy. When he possesses the wealth, he is anxious: “How will I keep it safe? How may I not be robbed of it? How long will I keep it and how long will it be with me?” This is the anxiety. The man is not happy even when the wealth is there with him. Restless is the mind of rich people for reasons they only know. When the wealth is gone, man is in hell almost. “Where is the joy in this world?” asks Patanjali, “Neither in the beginning, nor in the middle, nor in the end.” “*Parinama-tapa-samskara-dukhair guna-vritti-virodhaccha duhkham-eva sarvam vivekinah*”: This is the *sutra* (II-15) of Patanjali. Due to the consequence that follows, Parinama, the agony that is there attending upon every type of experience in the contact of the mind with objects, is *tapa*. And the impressions of desires getting accentuated again and again and wanting a repetition of the

act, cause further agony, which is *samskara duhkha*. And lastly, due to the subjection of consciousness to the operations of the *gunas* of *prakriti*, due to its becoming a slave to the operations of *prakriti*, it ceases to be a free entity. How can slavishness be identified with satisfaction or freedom? For all these reasons, for a person of discrimination, the whole world is sorrow only. There is no joy anywhere. Therefore, tell the mind: “My dear mind! Do not be misguided. Do not be in a state of illusion. Do not get deluded by the notion that this world of objects is going to give you any joy. If the world is not going to give you any joy, why do you think of the world?” The mind will then understand: “My thought of the world itself is senseless and has no meaning. No joy can accrue from anything outside, by any means of contact.” All contacts are wombs of pain—this is a famous saying. And the mind’s thought of an object is nothing but a contact. Therefore it follows that it is necessary to withdraw the mind from all contacts with things. This is a little bit of education to the mind.

### **The Role of the Guru in Vital Education**

Nothing is more effective than education. Nothing need be told afterwards. If a person is properly educated, he will know what to do. It is lack of sufficient education that makes one feel that he requires instruction from outside. On the other hand, when a person is himself illumined, he needs no instruction, because he knows what to do. So, before trying to do anything in the direction of control of the mind, we have to be educated in the direction of proper understanding. This is what this *sutra* seeks to achieve in a

little way by a little admonition. But, even after we have known all this, even after we have an understanding of our situation intellectually, our instincts will have their own say once again. This is because the instincts are more vitally connected with the stuff of the mind than the ratiocinating faculty. However much we may argue intellectually and be convinced about the truth of things, our feelings will not yield like that so easily. A philosopher knows to some extent the nature of the universe, but that knowledge does not help him in his daily life, because his feelings have not been influenced adequately by his analysis, philosophically done. The instincts are very strong, and whatever may be one's acumen acquired by a scholarly education, it does not help when it comes to the question of practice in daily life. For this purpose, a vital education has to be imparted to the mind, apart from merely an academic or an intellectual education. Such a vital education was very effectively imparted to students in the ancient Gurukulavasa, in the Gurukula system of education. In the modern systems of education, this vital education is not there. We have intellectual education, but nothing by way of a vital, emotional education imparted to the very stuff of the individual, with the result that the stuff of the individual has remained the same as it was before. It has not been affected in any manner. The outlook of life does not change after getting educated in a college. The individual remains the same even after that. But, in the Gurukula educational system, the outlook change was effected. The student became a different person altogether when he came out after a period of training under a master. Today, we have

no personal relationship between the student and the teacher. There is a sort of commercial relationship, which is almost the death of education. Even that relationship is now snapping. There seems to be no relationship at all between the student and the teacher these days. The whole framework is crumbling and we do not know where we are heading towards. But, in earlier days, the teacher was like a father to the student. The Guru, the teacher, the instructor or the professor was also a parent who had the welfare of the student in his mind. Which professor has the welfare of his student in his mind today? The teacher of today does not care a bit for the student. So, the soulful contact of the teacher with the student, which was available in ancient days, being lost these days, we are in an unfortunate condition. We find it very difficult to get on.

The influence of the teacher on the student is very important. The instruction that the student receives from a teacher verbally is one thing. Perhaps the student can have that instruction even from other sources, in schools and colleges. But, the benefit of the influence of the teacher cannot be gained from other sources. When the Guru speaks to the disciple, when the Yoga teacher instructs the student of Yoga, the soul of the Guru or the teacher makes an immediate impact on the mind of the disciple. This is because the teacher of Yoga is not just an ordinary person. He is not just another Tom, Dick or Harry. He is an exceptional person, exceptional in every way. The Yoga teacher is not an ordinary human being. He is one who has passed through the various stages of Yoga training and acquired the competency to teach on account of his own

personal practice. This is very important. Unless one has himself practised Yoga, he cannot teach Yoga. It is neither possible nor desirable to read one book and then start teaching. It is the very practice of Yoga which is the strength of the Yoga teacher, which gives him the confidence to communicate vitally with the student. When this is done, a rapprochement is established between the will of the teacher and the will of the student, because of a mutual agreement of ideas and ideologies between the two. The student surrenders himself to the teacher, wholly and solely, and the teacher takes on the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the soul of the student, and not merely his intellect. This is another very important factor which helps the student of Yoga in his practice of mind control.

## Chapter 7

### WORSHIP OF ISVARA

The nature of one's aspiration for the ultimate realisation through Yoga is perhaps the most important conditioning factor in the practice. This is clearly stressed by Patanjali in one of his *sutras*. If the aspiration is lukewarm and not intense enough, there would be a corresponding dampening of the speed with which one progresses towards the realisation of the goal. The greatest *sadhana* or practice is the longing of the soul for God, the pressure which one feels from within one's self in the direction of the supreme attainment. To cite an analogy: In the case of a river, the greater the force of the waters of the river, the quicker does the river reach its destination. But, if the same river mellows and moves stagnantly and reluctantly, as it were, it will reach its end only after a long period. In the same way; quick success in the practice of Yoga can be had only if the aspiration is intense and burning inside. "*Tivra-samveganam asannah*": Quick is the result of Yoga, immediate is the realisation, if the 'samvega', or the aspiration of the soul, is very strong and burningly intense. The word used in the *sutra* is 'samvega', a term which has its own peculiar significance. The words we normally use such as desire, longing, aspiration and devotion are inadequate to express what is implied in the term 'samvega'. We have to stretch our imagination a little bit to understand the significance of the meaning hidden in the word 'samvega'. It is a shaking up of the whole personality of ours from top to bottom, by the very roots, as

it were, where our personality gets devastated by the urge of the spirit for ultimate perfection. *Samvega* is truly devastating. 'Devastating' is the only word which brings out the meaning of the term '*samvega*'. When *samvega* arises in us for the great perfection, it breaks our personality to pieces, shatters us to shreds. It is difficult to translate this word *samvega*, but its implied meaning should by now be reasonably clear. It is not the little devotion that we try to show to God in our daily routines of practice. It is not the so-called religiosity of approach. It is something unthinkable, an anguish of the spirit, a surge of the soul, raining of the entire personality out of its essence. We are never in this position at any time of our life. Such *samvega* never takes possession of us. We may be devoted people, but even then, our devotion is mostly half-hearted, reluctant and lukewarm. Such lukewarm devotion cannot bring in success, and certainly not quick success.

Even in *samvega*, Patanjali mentions three degrees—*mridu*, *madhya* and *adhimatra*. Soft aspiration is *mridu*, middling; a little more intense than that is *madhya*; but, flaming like a conflagration of fire and unquenchable in its intensity is the aspiration called *adhimatra vairagya* and *adhimatra samvega*. People in our present-day world cannot imagine what this sort of *samvega* could be. A person who does not feel the need for God cannot ask for Him, and a need is felt only when the world cracks under one's feet, and not before that. A time comes in everyone's life when such an experience is encountered. No one can escape this situation. It may be today; it may be tomorrow.



And until that eventuality occurs, our soul will not actually cry from its bottom for that which it actually longs for.

### **The Concept of Ishvara—A Pragmatic Necessity**

One of the suggestions given again by Patanjali in regard to this *samvega* or deep aspiration is worship of God or Isvara. The concept of Isvara is peculiar to the system of Patanjali. While we are all quite familiar with this term, Isvara, as denoting God, there is a peculiarity in the connotation of the word 'Isvara' as used in the system of Patanjali. While we are all familiar with the theological or religious concept of God, a purely pragmatic conception governs the idea behind Isvara in the system of Patanjali. It is pragmatic, because it is utilitarian, and it is regarded as an essentiality for the purpose of concentration of the mind. So, the reason why the concept of Isvara is introduced in the system of Yoga is that the mind requires some object to hang upon. Just as we require a peg to hang our coat, we require some target to fix our mind because what can the mind think of if it has no object?

Now, what are the objects that are usually available to the mind's perceptions and cognitions? The objects are nothing but the things which the senses perceive and which are manifestations of *prakriti*, isolated bits of matter, scattered hither and thither, and it is difficult for the mind to take any one of them as the supreme ideal of concentration. The ideal chosen for the purpose of practising meditation should be such that it will draw our attention wholly, and invoke our devotion and love. The love that is stirred up in our heart by our ideal is the power

that will drive us towards that ideal, which is the object of love. We cannot take a pencil or a fountain pen and love it whole-heartedly as our dear brother or dear something because we cannot see so much value in a pencil or a pen as to make it an object of our utter devotion and love. The argument will hold good not only in the case of a pencil or a pen, but also in respect of all objects of this world. That is why the concept of Isvara has been necessarily introduced by Patanjali as an ideal to be imagined and accepted for the purpose of concentration of mind in Yoga. The ideal presented here is such that it is free from the afflictions and the limitations that characterise the individual *purusha* or the *jiva* and the *prakriti* with all its diversities.

We cannot concentrate on any human being. We cannot love a person wholly, because every person has a limitation. We begin to see defects. While we may be drawn towards any particular person or thing, for the time being, under certain circumstances, for reasons of our own, this pull cannot continue for a long time because it will be there only as long as the emotions overwhelm us for their particular purpose. But, when this purpose is fulfilled, we will begin to see defects in the person or the object, rather than the beauty that we saw earlier. Because, the beauty and the value were seen only temporarily on account of the preponderance of a particular emotion. When that subsides on account of the satisfaction of its designs, then the usual sensory and mental activity begins to see the limitation or the finite in persons and things.

So, Patanjali thinks that no human being can be an object of adoration, ultimately. We must therefore have a

concept of personality which is supreme in its very nature—a Supreme Person who is not an ordinary human person, and who is free from the afflictions consequent upon the operations of *karma*. Neither sorrow nor joy affects that person. The *karma phala* or the nemesis of action does not affect that person. Not merely that. That person is omniscient all-knowing. The need to place before the seeker such a concept of Isvara arose because it was difficult to explain how action produced reaction, how justice was possible in this world. Because of the limitations of the personality of every individual in the form of selfishness, one cannot be expected to do justice to one's own self. For example, one would not like to punish one's own self in the name of justice. And one would like to reward oneself even under circumstances where one is not actually deserving. So, the law of action or the law of *karma* cannot operate where the agents of action only are present, and nobody else is there as a superintending principle, superior to the agents who are responsible for the activities or *karmas*. Good is to be rewarded, and that which is not good is to be punished. This cannot be done by the agent himself, in much the same way as a client cannot be the judge. So, the one to reward actions cannot be any of the *purushas*, any of the individuals, because each one is an agent of action. It cannot also be *prakriti*, because *prakriti* is unconscious. There has to be something quite different from these finite *purushas* or individuals and the unconscious *prakriti*; that third thing which is inevitable under the consequences of logical thinking has been

designated as Isvara. This Isvara is no other than God, for all practical purposes.

In this way, the principle of God or Isvara has been introduced into the system of the Yoga of Patanjali under the pressure of necessity, under the pressure of a logical requirement. It is a requirement, because it is only on such a perfected individual as the Isvara that the mind can easily concentrate itself as a source of its own satisfaction. Apart from this pragmatic necessity felt for the concept of God in Yoga, there is the usual theological attitude, which is that with which we are all familiar. God is not merely a hook on which we can all hang our coats. He is not merely an instrument that can work out our purpose. He is not a servant. God is not a tool or a lever that we use sometimes, during our practice, for working out a purpose, quite different from Isvara Himself. The theological concept of God or the highest religious concept is different from this pragmatic notion of Yoga. The highest concept of God requires God to be recognised as the goal, rather than as a means. While God is a fit object of concentration, He is also the goal of aspiration and attainment, which point is not emphasised in the classical system of Patanjali, but can be combined adequately and suitably for our own practical purposes.

It all depends upon what we mean by God. Every person has his or her own definition of it. One of the definitions is a necessity of logic. "If God were not there, we will have to invent one," said one philosopher. Because we cannot get on without Him, we will have to choose one God, just as we choose a prime minister or a president. The

necessity is so pressing and so stringent that we cannot live in this world without such a supreme existence. But this is a mood of philosophy and logic, and not a need felt by the soul. The soul asking for God is a different matter altogether; it is asking for its own Supreme Ideal from which it cannot separate itself. In our daily practice, *upasana* or the worship of God may play a very important role. *Karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* are generally accepted to be the stages of ascent of the aspiration of the student.

### **Mind Control: A Graduated Process through Karma, Upasana and Jnana**

The mind is difficult to control. Therefore, a very discreet and tactful technique has to be adopted in its restraint. One cannot hit the mind and control it, just as one cannot strike a wild bull and control it, or even ride a horse when it is unwilling to accept one as its rider. On the other hand, just as the animal tamer controls a lion or an elephant, a tiger or a wild bull, by means which are identical with a graduated process, the mind has to be restrained gradually. In doing this, the student must take note of the fact that the mind has got its own desires, and that no desire of the mind can be turned a deaf ear to. True, the mind has to be controlled, has to be sublimated, has to be destroyed. This is the ideal and the goal, no doubt, but it cannot be done at one stroke, even as we cannot control the body ignoring the fact that it has hunger and thirst and a desire to sleep. The body cries clamorously and affirms its existence violently when it is hungry, thirsty or sleepy. When it does that, we cannot say, “You devil, you body! I

do not care for you. You are an obstacle in my Yoga practice. I cannot feed you, I cannot quench your thirst and I will not allow you to sleep.” This kind of attitude towards the body will be a ruin of the spiritual aspiration itself because the body is so intimately connected with the mind, and the mind with the spirit, that none of these can be regarded as an absolutely non-essential item. The need for each phase of experience has to be attended to with great wisdom, under the guidance of the preceptor. As is the case with hunger, thirst and sleep, so is the case with every other desire, which has its object either internally or externally. We have social requirements. We have psychological longings. Which of these can be regarded as unimportant, notwithstanding the fact that we are asking for God-realisation? Therefore, we have to disentangle ourselves slowly from these tentacles, which connect us with the external things and internal limitations of our finitude. It is for this purpose that *sadhanas* known as *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* are prescribed.

*Karma* is the attitude of servicefulness, the practice of *seva*, the surrender of one's ego in the interests of a larger area of action known as human society. *Upasana* is a higher state than *karma*. When the mind is sufficiently purified by service, the seeker is ushered into an arena of divine worship. The Guru requires to be served, attended to, and followed implicitly for a protracted period, as a necessary training, indispensable in the case of every student. In ancient days, the service of the Guru was carried on for years together, and sometimes even for a lifetime. The blessing of the Guru was regarded as divine grace itself.

When the Guru is satisfied that the mind of the student has been purified sufficiently, he introduces the latter to the methods of concentration. Concentration in Yoga means the adaptation of the mental atmosphere to the atmosphere of reality, again by gradual stages. Meditation or concentration is the attempt of the mind to unite itself with its concept of reality at any given moment of time. As the concept of reality changes and goes on expanding and improving itself as one progresses higher and higher in the practice, so does *upasana* also get intensified gradually.

What is our concept of reality at present? Each one may have his own answer to this question. Anything that is unavoidable in our life is a reality for us. We cannot say that the Creator who is beyond the seven heavens is the only Reality and everything else is unreal. As a theoretical assertion this may sound all right, but Yoga is not a theory. It is intense practice. So, anything without which we cannot get on is our reality, even if it be the silliest thing that one can think of in one's mind. A reality is that which, to us, is an indispensable necessity under a given circumstance at a given moment of time. It cannot be ignored. It has to be taken into account and paid its due, even if that reality be a devil. One cannot get out of the situation merely by calling the reality a devil. When the devil ceases to be a reality, when it becomes an unreality, that is a different matter altogether. But it does not become that. All the little agonies and anxieties and pinpricks of our life are all our realities. They are not unrealities, and we should not try to get away with the illusory notion that they can be ignored completely. That is why it is only gradually that the mind is

led in *upasana* from the lowest concept of God to the higher concepts.

In the Bhagavad Gita, reference is made to various types of worships and sacrifices, where the great Master tells us that, in the earlier stages of *tamas*, we have a very poor conception of perfection and God. And when *rajas* begins to preponderate, we have a better perception; and in *sattva* alone we have a perfect conception of God. There are people who worship stones, trees, snakes and totems, imaginary hobgoblins and all sorts of spirits, which are supposed to be pervading the atmosphere. We may be tempted to laugh at these animistic notions of religion and deity as inadequate, but they cannot be laughed at so easily. Because, when the mind is capable accepting only that idea of deity, it can unite itself only with that and with nothing else. The education of the mind is a gradual process. It is carried on, it is conducted, gradually. And, as we go deeper and deeper in this educational career, we have broader and broader conceptions of our involvements in life, and our concepts of reality also get enlarged slowly. At a very early stage itself, we will not be able to meditate on the Father in Heaven as the creator, preserver and destroyer. This is not possible. Who can think of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva while yet a spiritual neophyte? This is not possible. It is hard for the mind to entertain such thoughts. In the early stages, we have only such poor titbits of notions of a deity that is somewhere in front of us, like a human being, almost like us, in height and girth and capacity. This is our idea of God. Let it be. Even then it is an acceptable concept, provided we regard this deity as something superior to us. In Patanjali's



system, he gives suggestions for different types of concentration. These include concentration even on human beings of a superior nature, contemplation on whom will purify the mind in some way.

### **Love of God and the Role of Rituals in Its Development**

Worship of God is carried on through various methods, which are elaborated in the Bhakti Yoga system of practice. How to express our love towards any person? This does not require a large commentary. Everyone knows it so well. When we love a person immensely, we would do a thousand things to manifest that love. If an emperor comes to visit our cottage, how do we greet him? We begin to think of his arrival and make preparations even one month before his actual arrival. We are stimulated inside in an anxiety of joy, and we put forth our best efforts to satisfy the august visitor. Such should be our love for God, where, in each and every detail, we try to satisfy God. Love does not require an object finally. It is self-satisfying and self-complete. Finally, in the long run, love has no object in front of it. It itself is its object. When we do worship of sun with a candle-light or the waving of a camphor flame, we are not going to illumine the sun in any way and make it happy on that account. Nor is the ocean going to be satisfied by our doing *abhisheka* to it with water. Our devotion is primarily a subjective requirement for self-transformation. We can cite an analogy. A very rich man comes to us with millions of dollars in his pocket. When comes to us, we give him a cup of tea. It does not mean that he is need of it. The need of the person is a different matter.

Our offer tea to him is an expression of our respect, regard and affection for him though that little cup of tea, by itself, may mean nothing to him, the rich man that he is. Likewise, we show our regard, love and respect to people even by a mere folding of the hand, which means nothing in essence finally. But it means everything. Everyone knows the value of a '*namaste*'.

So, the love that we cherish for God and the worship that we conduct in respect of Him are to be carried on through rituals in the beginning. One may say that ritual is nonsense. It is not. It is a very essential pillar or leg of the huge edifice of religion. It cannot be said that the leg is unimportant in the human body. The legs are very important, because it is on our legs that we stand. The pillars are important. It cannot be said that pillars are not the building. When the pillars go, the building falls. The ritualistic part of religion is the pillar of the structure of religious practice. It is as important as the feet on which we stand. True, the feet are not the only important limbs of our body; but, their importance cannot be ignored.

In the beginning, religion begins with ritual. It is the case with every religion in the world, and with every form of religion, from the lowest form of religion to the highest form. A ritual or a performance represents an attitude, a conduct, expressed outside in action. We may offer a leaf or pour a drop of water on a piece of stone considering that piece of stone as our God. There begins religion. The stone is not God, but our feeling of the presence of a higher power in it is our God. These are psychological aspects of religion—these rituals in all the various forms that we see in

temples and in churches, for instance. The devotee kneels down; he looks up; he folds his hands; he bows his head down and he offers a deeply felt prayer through words of utter affection and agonised feeling of devotion. This he does by ritualistic worships, offerings and sacraments. While religion starts with ritual, and ritual is an indispensable, unavoidable part of religious devotion, religion rises higher, where the external materials used in ritual lose their importance gradually, and the devotee begins to manifest his devotion to God with lesser accompaniments of material apparatus. In the beginning it looks as if we require a cart-load of material to worship God, and even that stage is an essential stage. When people perform *yajnas* or sacrifices, or large temple worships, considerable material is gathered and much money is spent also. That is important enough. But gradually, one rises higher, and one feels that the spending of so much ritualistic material is not, after all, necessary in religion, and one can get on with a few items of worship. It may be just one joss-stick or a piece of camphor or a little *bael* leaf, or a leaf of *tulasi* or the holy basil. Why, even one spoon of the holy Ganga water offered on the *linga* of Siva may be as satisfying to Him as an ocean of milk that may be poured over the same *linga* as part of a larger ritualistic worship.

Even higher than this worship with a token offering, like a leaf or a flower representing the heart's love, is the worship through the Name of God. Taking on the Name of God does not require even the little drop of water or milk or honey. It does not require even a leaf or a flower. No, it does not require any material for its fulfilment. Nothing is

required from the outside world for the purpose of this kind of worship of God. Here, the mind itself is the apparatus or the instrument of worship, and the thing that is offered at the lotus feet of the Lord is also the mind. The greatest devotion is revealed in acts of mental worship.

In this way, there is a gradual movement in the history of religious practice in India, beginning from the Vedic ceremonialism proceeding to the ignorant contemplations in the Aranyakas, and ending with the pure metaphysical meditations of the Upanishads. In the beginning, external material is necessary for worship. Later on one's own self is sufficient for worship. One's own mind is adequate. In the final stage of worship, the soul of the devotee itself performs the worship by offering itself, by surrendering itself, in an intimate union of itself with its Beloved. A chanting of the Name of God, known as *japa*, is often considered as one of the best forms of divine worship, and it is also accompanied by studies of holy scriptures, and musical recitations of songs in praise of God and His glory, the type of *satsanga* that is usually conducted in many of the *ashrams* in India.

### **Progressively Enlarging Concepts of God**

For a long time, God remains only as an outside reality for us. He is an outside reality for most of us, perhaps for every one of us. It is not possible for us to imagine His omnipresence as it would be required under the precepts of the higher texts and admonitions of Yoga. Whatever be the advancement in our religious practice, or in our visualisation of God, or in our concept of God, He still

remains outside us. He is outside us per force, because we are not able to forget that we are finite individuals. We are puny individuals, small men and women moving on earth. How can we avoid the notion that God is superior to us, transcendent to us, above us, above the world itself? So, often we look up to the skies when we pray to God. This is a mood in us which we cannot avoid. We do not bury our heads when we pray. We look up in a holy mood of devotion of spirit. The looking up is a psychological gesture of the spirit which regards the transcendence of God as an unavoidable feature in the worship of God. While the transcendence of God does not necessarily warrant a looking up to the skies with physical eyes, it is a gesture, a necessity of the psyche in us, which finds it absolutely essential to manifest its inward moods of the transcendence of God by external gestures of this kind.

In the beginning, our Deity or God appears to be a small individual, almost like a human being, with two ears and two eyes. He may be more brilliant and may be invested with great powers as we can conceive of. But, as we advance in the path of devotion, the concept of God enlarges itself to encompass a large personality, not just like an ordinary human being, but a vast individual pervading the whole universe as the creator, preserver and destroyer. He is the Father mentioned in the Bible; He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Still, He is above us. But, a flooding phase of religion takes possession of us when we come to the logical limit of religious notions, when we are transported inwardly by the very thought of God. This transporting, enrapturing and enlivening or, sometimes,

agonising devotional attitude or mood arises in us, when even for a split second, we are able to entertain in our minds a correct notion of the all-pervading nature of God. Such a notion does not enter us always. Always we are lukewarm, cold in our spirits. But sometimes, in some rare, rare moments of our practice, occasionally, during the day, we may be stirred up into this mood of the overmastering ideal of the omnipresence of Divinity, in which context we ourselves do not seem to be anywhere at all. When God is, we are not.

In the beginning, we are rid of the notion of God Himself, and appear to affirm only our own selves and the world in front of us. God does not come into the picture. We feel that He may not be there; and even if He is there, we do not want Him. We have no need for Him. That may be the crudest or physical attitude of the mind, the idea of the rank materialist. Then, we begin to feel a necessity for something superior to us, something higher than us. And, as such a thing that is superior to us cannot be seen with the eyes, we entertain an idea of it in our mind as a concept, as a notion. It thus remains abstract in the earlier stages. At least, it appears to be abstract. And, therefore, at this stage, the feeling that the world is more concrete and real than the abstract idea of God still persists. And doubts arise in the mind: "Am I pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp?" These doubts are dangerous, as Patanjali warns us in one *sutra*. The stage in our practice where God may appear to be an idea is unavoidable for us. But, the idea is not just an abstract, evaporating vapour, as it were, that exudes from our mind. It is a harder reality than the so-called solidness or

concreteness of things, a fact which we will realise later on in our spiritual journey. Ideas are more powerful than solid objects, and they are more real than material things, though we cannot know them to be so in the early stages of our spiritual practice. The idea of God is not merely a thought arising in our finite mind, but a precedent concept which is the pre-condition of even the idea of the world outside. So, these and other ways are the means of worship of God, by which we can concentrate the mind on a higher ideal.

### **How to Concentrate**

Ways and means by which the mind can be concentrated are almost infinite in number. One of the methods is *Ishvara-pranidhana*, worship of God, surrender of oneself to God, dedication of oneself to one's great Deity. This is done through a devotion, which is to be *samvega* or overmastering and taking possession of the spiritual seeker wholly and entirely, root and branch. But, the predilections of the mind being various, we may have to feed the mind with different methods of concentration, as we feed our body with different kinds of diet every day. Though diet is our main objective, we change the inner detail of the diet to suit the mind and the body. Likewise, the forms of concentration may have to be adapted to the particular needs of the moods of the mind at any time, and the student of Yoga must know whether he is an emotional type, an active type, a psychic type, or a rational type. Whatever be one's mood, whatever be one's general trend of thinking, that should be one's way. And so, the Yoga student should try to adopt all means available, and not

give to the mind only one uniform diet. For instance, there are people who are devoted to the chanting of the Divine Name. It does not mean that they should not read scriptures or sing songs by way of glorifying God. One may even dance in ecstasy; sometimes one feels like that. Again, the student of Yoga may seek the company of holy saints and sages. He may attend *satsanga* and discourses. He may even go on a pilgrimage. Sometimes, even that is felt as a necessity under certain moods. Every mood has to be attended to carefully. Every blessed method available and practicable has to be adopted in the restraint of the mind. Whatever attracts our attention and makes us feel that it is something grand and glorious and desirable may be regarded as our object of concentration. *Yathabhimata-dhyanad va*—As you deem it proper, so may it be concentrated upon. Very generous is this instruction of Patanjali. He does not tie us down to any stereotyped technique of tradition. While he has suggested many methods, finally he says, “*Yathecchasi tatha kuru.*” Whatever is to your liking, follow that—that is what it means.

However, we have to be cautious enough to remember that concentration means fixing of the mind on anything to the exclusion of every other thought. The object that is chosen is not so important as the method that is adopted. The purpose of concentration and meditation is essentially the freedom of the mind from its finitude and attachment to the body, and the idea that objects exist outside. This is the essential point to be remembered. And for achieving



this purpose, we employ various means or techniques of concentration.

The mind is like a web that is knit together by warp and woof, as in a fabric. The existence of the mind is the same as the function of the mind in terms of a notion of externality of things. The mind exists only by being fed by the idea that objects exist outside. So, it is a big complex; it is a tension that we call the mind. A tense state of affairs in which the consciousness is involved, a kind of whirl in which the consciousness is caught up, is the mind. And so, it is like a knot in some way. It is not a thing. It is not a substance. Ultimately, the mind is not different from consciousness. It is like a concentration of the waters of the ocean in a particular spot, driven there by a great force, creating a whirl in a particular manner. This whirl of consciousness at a particular spot, in space and in time, is the mind. And we have to disentangle ourselves from this whirl with great caution. Concentration of the mind is the hammering of a particular idea into the mind, as we try to break through the whirl by hitting it violently by some means. Concentration on any idea or ideal, external or internal, breaks this knot of the mind, and then we know what is behind the mind automatically. The purpose of concentration is to break through the bubble of the mind, which covers the inner eye, like the cataract which obstructs the vision and makes one see things as they are not. That is why concentration is advised even on such little things as a candle flame or a rose flower or even a dot on the wall.

The Yoga student may wonder how these things will help him. The dot on the wall is certainly not God. How

does it help then? It helps, because it has a psychological effect. It does not matter what it is that one is taking as the object of concentration. The point is that one should not think of anything else. The mind exists as a finite centre of experience by imagining externality, and it can be overcome, subdued and transcended or transformed only by assuring ourselves that in the concentration that we practise, the idea or the notion of externality is completely avoided. When we think of the dot on the wall, if we think of it with deep concentration, then we cannot even see the wall outside the dot. Those who are familiar with the Mahabharata know the story of the tournament arranged by Acharya Drona for the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The test of concentration which Dronacharya arranged for those boys was like this. There was a tree with many branches. In one fine twig, he hung a wooden bird. The eye of the bird was looking like a black spot, and that eye was to be shot by the arrow. So he asked the boys: "Concentrate yourself on the eye of that bird and hit it. Look! What do you see?" "Well," one said, "I see a bird sitting on the tree." Dronacharya said, "You are unfit. You are not able to concentrate." Then he asked another, "What do you see?" "I see the bird sitting on the branch." "No, you are not able to concentrate." Then he asked Yudhishtira, "What do you see?" "I see only the eye." "No. No good," he said. He asked Arjuna. Arjuna said, "I see only the black spot. I see nothing else." "Yes, you are the man" said Dronacharya. "Hit it!" Arjuna's concentration was so intense that he could see only the black spot. He could not see even the eye of the bird there, let alone the bird and the tree and the

people around. That was Arjuna. But when we sit for concentration, we begin to see not only the object of concentration, but also all sorts of things. Now, that is not proper concentration. The idea behind concentration, to repeat again, is that we should not have any idea of externality. Keeping this essential requirement in mind, we may choose any object for our meditation, right from the smallest pebble on the bank of the Ganga to the great notion of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva or the Supreme Creator, Preserver and Destroyer.

## Chapter 8

### GETTING IN TUNE WITH THE UNIVERSE

In one of the *sutras* of Patanjali, we are told that God is Pranava or Omkara, by which significant symbol God's presence, Isvara's existence, can be invoked in meditation—*Tasya vachakah pranavah*. The great mystical symbol Om is well known in all religious circles and mystical organisations. It is known as Omkara, generally speaking; otherwise, as Pranava. We chant Om in the beginning, as well as towards the conclusion, of any worship, *satsanga* or prayer meeting. This is considered auspicious. Omkara, we are told, is the best connotation of God's characteristics, and God is most effectively invoked in this divine symbol or mark.

One has to be able to appreciate the deep meaning hidden behind the symbol Pranava in order that one may utilise it successfully in meditation. God is omnipresence, all-pervading completeness. And a name of God, therefore, should have some similarity to the nature of God Himself. A name designates a form. In India, particularly, the name of a person is supposed to be a description of the characteristics of that person. The idea is that a name is a word-symbol or a sound-symbol of a form which it connotes or denotes. So much so, the utterance of a word or a name brings into one's consciousness or mind the form which it is supposed to indicate or designate. Every particular form, personality or thing in this world has a name attached to it. Besides name and form, we also have an idea of the form. So, we have these three components of

internal cognition and external perception, namely, sound, idea and form.

The name designates a form. Every finite object has a name corresponding to it in this world, and therefore, the name also is finite in its descriptive capacity. We may carry this name and form relationship to its logical limits and bring to our consciousness the supreme idea of a universal name to connote the universal form. God is universal existence, or we may say, the universal form for all practical purposes of our conception. Whatever may be our notion of God, it has to be acceded that the term God signifies something which is everywhere, infinite and unbounded. Therefore, to designate such a mighty Being which is infinite, without limits of space or time, we must have a word-symbol which absorbs into itself every other language-symbol or word-symbol available in the world.

### **A Complete Symbol to Connote the Universal Form**

There are letters in the alphabet in every language. And these letters are uttered by the functioning of certain parts of the sound-box or the vocal organ. When a particular letter is uttered, some part of the sound-box begins to vibrate, and the particular sound corresponding to that letter is produced. When a particular word or name is uttered, the sound so produced by the vocal organ is supposed to connote the object corresponding to that name. God being universality, His name also should have a universal comprehensiveness. This is the idea behind the teaching that Om is the name of God.

The recitation or the chanting or the pronunciation of Om involves such an operation of the vocal organ that the whole apparatus is set in motion. This is something which has to be examined carefully, each for oneself, either experimentally or by inward investigative perception. Right from the root up to the topmost and outermost part of the vocal organ, everything begins to vibrate when Om is chanted. Hence, Om can thus be regarded as a sound which includes every other sound. And, language is nothing but sound. Hence, in a sense, every language is invoked when Om is chanted. Whether it is Sanskrit, English or Arabic, it makes no difference. Inasmuch as all languages are only expressions of certain sounds or sound formulations, and inasmuch as sound production is complete in the utterance of Om, we may safely say that Om is a complete symbol, a super-linguistic symbol, as it were, which does not belong to any language. Om belongs neither to Sanskrit nor to any other tongue. It is an impersonal vibration that is set up by the sound-box or the vocal organ within us. Hence, the completeness that characterises the production of this impersonal sound called Om is what makes it the most appropriate designation of God, the Universality. When we chant Om, we ourselves will feel a kind of transformation taking place within us; but, to experience this, we should chant Om with a concentrated feeling and not like a mechanical routine.

### **Om Chanting and Its Benefits**

The scriptures dealing with the subject of *nada* tell us that there are many varieties in the pronunciation or chant

of Om. Upanishads, such as the Prasna Upanishad, speak of three types of intonation in the chanting of Om, as a mantra or as an invocation of Divinity—the short, the middling and the elongated. The different types of chanting of Om produce different effects, too. The Upanishad goes to the extent of telling us that a continued practice of this recitation of Om, as a *sadhana* by itself, can take the seeker to higher regions, even up to Brahma-Loka itself. The short modulation of Om is somewhat like this: “O..m, O..m, O..m.” The middling chant is a little longer: “O....m, O....m, O....m.” The elongated chant of Om, known as the Dhirga Pranava, is longer still: “O.....m, O.....m, O.....m.” In any of these chants, the sound can be seen to taper off gradually into thinner and thinner vibrations. It is the recognition of a system of Yoga, called Nada Yoga, that the sound actually starts from the region of the navel, where it has its root, and gradually rises up into more and more audible forms, until it is expressed through the physical sound-box and the lips, the tongue, and the mouth. These various stages of the manifestation or the development of sound, right from the navel onwards, are known in Sanskrit as *para*, *pasyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*. *Para* is a soundless seed, as it were, the very possibility of the production of sound. *Pasyanti* is a little more pronounced. And the more intensified form is *madhyama*; and the audible manifestation of it is *vaikhari*. Often, these stages are identified, in the cosmical context, with the four metaphysical realities advanced in the Vedanta Philosophy, namely Brahma, Isvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat. We may

identify the four stages of sound with other quartets also of the cosmological process.

When we chant Om in the proper manner, we set up an all-comprehensive, all-inclusive vibration in our system. By chanting Om, we do not create a jarring sound, but a harmonious sound which creeps into the entire nervous system slowly and soothingly. It is as if we smear all the ramifications of nerves with honey. In contrast, ordinary cries and shouts are distracting. The nerves are violently disturbed, kicked up, by cries and shouts which are *rajasic* in nature, whereas a very harmonious, all-inclusive sound like an Om chant, is *sattvic* in its nature. It sets up an all-inclusive vibration in the whole nervous system and in the *pranas* that flow through the nerves. It is almost like administering a gentle massage to the whole system of nerves and *pranas*. The *pranas* feel satisfied and one feels happy as a consequence. One has only to practise this Om chanting every day for ten or fifteen minutes to see what a difference it makes to one's well-being. The person who practises Om chanting regularly will soon become a calm, sober and controlled person.... automatically. He will not fly into a fit of rage, anger or outburst of any kind, because of the daily massage that he gives to the nerves and the *pranas* in a very, very affectionate manner through Om chanting. The harmonious vibration that is set up in the system has an effect upon the muscles, the nerves, and the *pranas*, and finally upon the mind itself—because, all these are interconnected.



## Setting Ourselves in Tune with the Cosmic Vibration

The Om that we speak of is not merely a sound in the ordinary sense. It is not some noise that we make. Om appears to be a sound only in its outermost expression, in its *vaikhari* form, but in its internal structure, it has a deeper relationship with things. The whole universe is vibration ultimately, and not made up of objects, segregated from one another. Modern science tells us today that the whole universe is energy. There are no objects. There are no brick walls. There is not even the sun, moon and stars. There is only a continuum of equilibrated, spread-out energy everywhere, a four-dimensional continuum, they say. What is all this but a vibration that they are speaking of? The universe originated from a vibration, The terms *nada*, *bindu* and *kala* which one hears of in Tantric and Hatha Yoga circles are only certain ways of mentioning the same process of the manifestation of this original impersonal vibration gradually solidifying itself, condensing more and more into concrete forms of visible objects, bodies and personalities. So, the universe is a vibration, and not a bundle of things, persons and objects. In the ultimate analysis, the universe does not exist at all as it appears to our eyes; because, ultimately, in the *samadhi* state, it vanishes like a dream. And great scientists today have gone even to that farthest limit of saying that the world is only a thought. It is not even a vibration in any externalised manner. The vibrations are only mathematical concepts. A terrifying conclusion, indeed, for a person who cannot understand what all these mean! Om is cosmic essentially, and it is not merely a sound produced through

the mouth. The so-called sound that the Yoga student manifests, through his vocal organs as the chant of Om, is only an attempt on his part to set himself in tune with the cosmic vibration that is already there, even before he was born into this world.

All Yoga is nothing but an endeavour, on our part, to set ourselves in tune with things as they really are. In Yoga, we do not try to modify things, or change things, in any way whatsoever. Everything is perfect and all right in itself. The creation of God is complete in every minute detail. It does not require any change. But, the change is required on our side, because we are distracted individuals, completely severed from this harmony of the Whole; and, divinity, spirituality, religion, Yoga, whatever they may call it, is nothing but the art of our self-attunement with this universal set-up of things. By the chant of Om, we put forth an effort to subdue the distractions of our mind and nerves and our entire personality. The whole personality of the individual normally tries to run away from Reality. We are every minute running away from God in our perceptions of things and in our desires especially. And this running away is visible in the interest that we take in the forms external, believing that everything is different from everything else, so that we have got particularised ideals and ideologies and interests in respect of different persons and things. This externalising habit of the mind is restrained gradually by various methods. And all these methods constitute Yoga. And one method, among the many, is the chanting of Om.

The universe includes us. We are not outside it. So, in our chant of Om, we try only to set up a vibration within

ourselves, at the root of our personality, a vibration corresponding to that which is already there in the universe outside, so that in a very accurate pronunciation of Om, deeply conducted with profound feeling, we become one with all things for a second, as it were. That is why we feel such a joy. Joy is the outcome of unity with objects, and when we are outside them, we are in grief. So, we feel a sensation of identity of ourselves with the subliminal realities at the back of all things by this profound and feelingful chant of Om that we have to conduct every day, for a protracted period, as a very regular *sadhana*, as a very essential part of our *sadhana*.

*Tasya vuchakuh pranavah:* This is a small *sutra* of Patanjali. It means that the designation of God or Isvara is Pranava or Om. In another *sutra*, Patanjali says: *Tajjapas tad-artha-bhavanam*. The contemplation of the meaning of Om is to follow the chant of Om. When we recite or chant Om, it does not mean that our mind will be remaining idle. No, it concentrates itself; it feels the presence of a harmony with the whole universe. One can do *japa* of Om itself in any of the forms mentioned. It is the highest of mantras, and all the mantras are included in Om: all languages themselves are inside Om. So, in one place, the great author says that when we go deep, very deep into the structure of sound, we may be able to know every language in the world, even the languages of animals and birds. These are all very difficult to achieve, but not impossible, if we are persistent and are able to go beneath the level of our outer, physical and psychic personality.

## **Concentration on an Object of Our Liking**

That concentration of the mind can be conducted, and has to be conducted in various ways, is a repeated instruction of Patanjali. One should not go on taking to one method only right from the beginning, because it is possible that the mind may get tired. So, as a very, very compassionate mother speaking to a child which does not want to go to school, and which resents any kind of educational step, Patanjali tells us that we may concentrate our mind on anything that we like, on anything that is pleasing to us, that attracts us. The object of concentration may be even a cow, the only property that a person may have, whose milk sustains him, without which he cannot exist. He goes on thinking of his cow. Even that cow is a fit object of concentration for him.

A devotee went to see Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and requested to be initiated into meditation. "What is it that you love most?" asked the great master. The devotee thought for a while and said finally: "Well, I have my granddaughter. I am always thinking of her." "Well, meditate on your granddaughter," advised Sri Ramakrishna, "There is nothing else that you can do at this time... For you, meditation on your granddaughter is a Yoga practice by itself." There is a lesson in this. To wrench oneself or try to wrench oneself from that in which one's mind is stuck, would be like trying to peel one's skin, which is not possible and which is not advisable also. The person who tries so may go crazy one day. So, one should not be too anxious about Yoga, and one should not try to be too pious a man or too holy a man, when his mind is not

prepared for that at the particular stage of evolution in which he may be. "Go slowly" is a good rule in Yoga practice.

*Sthiti-nibandhini*, says Patanjali. This is something very pertinent to the mental condition of a beginner in Yoga. When the mind is grossly concentrated or fixed upon some external object of perception for some reason or the other, a psycho-analytical study of this connection has to be conducted with the help of a teacher, and then the mind has to be withdrawn from that object gradually. It is not possible to run away suddenly from that which one loves deeply in one's heart. Otherwise, one might go mad. So, the Guru's instructions, advice, or personal guidance is again necessary here, when the Yoga practitioner is drowned, as it were, in a state of emotion, which he feels is something undesirable, but from which he cannot extricate himself.

If a person is fond of tea, it is better to drink tea than take to sudden austerities and say, "I drink only cow's milk." As long as the desire to drink tea is there, tea should not be cut off. It is better for the person to continue with tea for three months, or even one year, until he is able to understand that something better is there. Smoking is a wretched thing, but even smoking cannot be cut off suddenly. Many wretched things may be there in the world, but how can anyone run away from them when one is in them?

*Vishayavati va pravrittir utpanna manasah sthiti-nibandhini*: A very interesting instruction is contained in this *sutra* of Patanjali, an instruction which cannot be found in many other Yoga texts. Mind can be tied down to

concentration even by thinking of an object which a person loves most. That is the essence of the meaning of the above *sutra*. We do not enjoy the objects of the world in order that we may indulge in them forever. The purpose of enjoyment of things is to get control over them, and to transcend them finally. The idea behind any kind of relationship in this world is not to perpetuate that relationship, but to free oneself from that relationship through that relationship itself, like the action of a homeopathic medicine. That which is going to kill can also save, provided the drug is administered in the proper proportion and in a particular manner. In fact, the whole of the Tantra Sastra can be summed up in one sentence: "That which can make you fall, can also make you rise." But this is a very difficult thing to understand, and here again, comes the repeated injunction that the student of Yoga has to be with his Guru all the time.

The mind can be concentrated on that object which we adore as the most divine of things: *Vita-raga-vishayam va chittam*. When we think of great minds like Vyasa, Vasishtha, Krishna, Rama, Suka-Deva, or Dattatreya, our mind is transported into a mood of intense spirituality and holiness. The very remembrance of these great Masters brings our mind into concentration in the required manner. The emotions of the mind get stimulated in particular directions, depending upon the objects on which the mind may concentrate. The thought of a policeman may swing the mind in one direction, while the thought of a Chief Justice may sway it in another direction. Remembrance of Hitler and Gandhi may evoke totally

different moods in the mind. Different ideas stir up different types of emotion, on account of the association of those ideas with particular objects and their characteristics. This being so, if we think of great sages, or of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, or if we meditate on the Father in Heaven, the Almighty Creator, we will be shaken by our roots at the very thought of the Almighty. So, *Vita-raga-vishayam*. Any object that can stimulate in our feelings a concentration on desirelessness, consequent upon inclusiveness and holiness due to spirituality, will be an aid.

### **Concentration on Dream Experiences**

*Svapna-nidra-jnanalambanam va* is another *sutra* whose meaning is a little difficult to understand. We can concentrate on dream, or the effects of sleep, or anything that hangs upon them, says this *sutra* in a very pithy manner; and the meaning of the *sutra* will not be very clear merely by a grammatical translation. Literally speaking, we may take it as a sort of attempt at concentration on things which we saw in dream and which we liked most. A person might have become Emperor Akbar in dream. It is a very happy thing. At the time he dreamt, he must have felt very happy. That person can go on thinking, "I am Akbar! I am Akbar!" That thought might produce an elevation of spirit, and a certain concentration, because of the affection and love entertained for that particular status of emperor. Or, one might have had a vision, a superb and very absorbing vision. One might have seen his Guru in his dream. Or he might have seen his Deity, his Ishta Devata in dream. The happiness of the vision might continue to persist in the

waking state: “Oh, how happy I am! I saw my Deity, Ishta Devata, yesterday in my dream.” True, the dream is over, but one can collect one’s mind back. One can try to re-live the dream experience, so to say. “Yesterday what I dreamt was very beautiful. It was Lord Krishna. He appeared to me in such and such a way. Oh, how beautiful, how grand, how absorbing!” One can go on recapitulating. The mind will be happy. In this way, the objects that one sees in dream, which are pleasant to concentrate upon, can be taken as aids in one’s meditation in the waking state as well. But, the deeper, philosophical meaning of it all is that the whole world is a dream. The world should be thought of as a dream, and not as a real object. The world is as real as a dream, and as unreal as that. Is our dream world real or unreal? It is real as long as it is experienced, and it is unreal when it is not experienced. So is this world. It is comparable to the manifestations of the mind in dream. The space, time, causation and the particularities that one sees in the dream world, including oneself as the dream subject, are all the drama enacted by one’s own mind as a trick. Sometimes, one is pursued by a tiger in dream. The person runs and climbs a tree for fear of the pursuing tiger. This tiger is manufactured by the mind of the dreamer; the running process also is an action of the mind. The dream person who runs for fear of the tiger is a production of the mind. The tree which he climbs is also made by the mind only. Even the distance of space between the tiger and the tree is a creation of the mind of the dreamer. The whole dream is a mental complex. But yet, to the dreamer, the dream looks so real that in his dream, he cries in fear of the



terrific beast that pursues him. In fact he may fall down from the tree and break his leg in his dream. He may feel the consequent pain also. The dream is so vivid that even on waking up, he sees if his leg is all right. He looks at it again. It is all right, thank God. His leg is not really broken!

Similarly, in this world, time, space and objects are all productions of a single universal mind, and therefore, this world does not exist to that universal mind in the same way as the dream world does not exist for the dreamer. So, there is something superb and transcendent and beyond this world, on which we have to concentrate in order to wake up from this world-dream. We are still sleeping, compared to another waking which is cosmical or universal in its nature. Contemplation along these lines will help us a great deal in the Yoga Path.

### **A Medical Treatment to the Sickness of the Soul of Man**

The system of Patanjali is often called the Ashtanga Yoga. This is the usual name by which it is known. Ashtanga Yoga means the Yoga of eight limbs. *Yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—these are the eight limbs or eight stages of Patanjali's system. These classifications are very carefully done by the great author. It is not just a whim and fancy of his mind. One can imagine ten or twelve or fifteen stages or twenty stages. But why only eight? Patanjali has considered carefully the process of the evolution of the universe, and also our involvement in the various evolutionary stages, and thus concluded that eight would be a proper number of the stages of descent as well as ascent.

This is a highly scientific technique discovered by sage Patanjali; it is scientific and logical because it has a direct connection with our daily experiences in life. Every morning, when a person gets up from bed, there is one kind of waking from one kind of temporal dream in an individual capacity, but the person's waking experiences also are a kind of dream only. Our experiences constitute our bondage, and the freedom from bondage that we are after is nothing but freedom from certain experiences in the world. A good psychologist will know that we are involved in various stages in this world of experience. A person may be immersed in the waters of the Ganga, but when he descends into it, he descends touching the top layer of water first and the bottom layer last, though it may appear that he has sunk suddenly. If we have several petals of a rose flower kept one over the other, and if we pass a needle through them, the needle goes through them so quickly that it looks as if it does not take any time at all to pierce through. But, in truth, it does take some time. Surely, it does not go at once through all the petals. It goes through each of the petals one after another, though it looks as if it takes no time at all, due to the quickness of the action. Likewise, it may appear that we are drowned in *samsara* wholly, and everything is chaos and a confusion, and we do not know where we are standing. This is a layman's perception of things, just as a sick man may say that he is sick, while not knowing what his sickness is. But a very good biologist or a medical specialist will know that the man's sickness has come upon him gradually by stages, from cause to effect. One does not fall sick suddenly.

Sickness does not descend like a bolt from the blue. It is also a gradual manifestation. So, there is a difference between a specialised scientific approach to matters and a layman's crude approach. We are laypeople, crude men. We do not understand anything. We only cry that something is wrong, that everything is at sixes and sevens, that we are helpless. It is like the sick patient weeping: "I am sick, doctor. Help me. I don't know what has happened to me." An intelligent examination will prove that the patient has fallen ill slowly, gradually, stage by stage. Therefore, the treatment has to be of a similar character, a gradual purging of the toxic matters of the body, a systematic relieving of the patient's tension by medicines which the doctor knows how to administer, stage by stage, every day, for a protracted period.

So is the practice of Yoga. Yoga is, as it were, a highly medical treatment to the sickness of the soul of man, effectively administered by the master-physician Patanjali. We are not drowned suddenly in *samsara* in a chaotic manner, though it is no doubt true that we are drowned. We have come to this level of suffering slowly, gradually. There is a coming down from the universal to the particular individual form of ours, and a greater and further involvement of this particularised individuality of ours in social relationships, and attachments and aversions. The implications of this involvement are well known. We live in a society. We are family people. We have our father and mother. Each one of us is a husband or a wife, a son, a daughter or a sister. Each one is a boss or a subordinate, or a minister or a peon. The least of us is something in society.

Now, these ideas that everyone has about himself or herself in the mind are not unimportant things. An individual should not say that he is a spiritual seeker only and that he has nothing to do with these ideas. The idea that he is a son or a father cannot leave a person so easily, though he may be aspiring for God. So, the spiritual seeker should not be too enthusiastic and certainly not foolhardy. He should exercise his intelligence. How can a person forget that he is a son to his father? How can he forget other relationships? And there are so many of them. Likes and dislikes are there.

### **Our Relationship with Human Beings**

Our external social relationships have to be considered first, because above all problems, the social problems are the most predominant. We have other problems, no doubt. Perhaps they are very deep. But the social problems are immediate pinpricks which we feel every day and we have to get out of them. Every day, we see people. Well, we see trees also. We see buildings too. But trees and buildings do not trouble us. The immediate, palpable pain that we feel is from human beings, not even from tigers and lions, snakes and scorpions. The latter also can trouble us, but we do not bother about scorpions and snakes every day. We bother about human beings only. Our concern is with human beings primarily, though the world is not made up only of human beings. So, Patanjali takes his stand, first and foremost, in the circumstance in which the human being is placed, namely, the social circumstance. Our conduct, our attitude, our outlook, our duties and obligations—all these are included in the term “relationship with human beings.”

We should be able to move tactfully with people and adjust with them; otherwise, we will feel like fish out of water. The problem can arise in one of two ways. Either other people cannot adjust with us or we cannot adjust with the others. Anyhow, this would be a sorry state of affairs, a dread disease almost, requiring remedial action. The subject is a difficult one and is generally extensively discussed in the sociological sciences, in psychology and psycho-analysis, and even in political science. But, Patanjali has his own way of looking at things. For him, all these social problems boil down to a few categories.

Our reactions to things are our relationships. And our reactions evoke return reactions from people in a corresponding manner. The world is something like a complexity of the tit-for-tat attitude. Whatever we do to others, that will be done to us. We cannot escape this situation. Now, we have to be very carefully analytical about our social position first, before we take to Yoga. It is no use for anyone to say, "I have left everything, I have nobody, I am all for Yoga." One should not make such an abrupt statement like that. After all, it may not be true that a person has nobody to call his own. Somebody may be there—a friend, a relation. The Yoga student who says outwardly that he has nobody to worry about will be grieving inwardly about his old mother, or poor father, or thinking about his boss from whom he has run away due to some fear or misunderstanding. And then, everyone has other problems personally, connected with human society.

Patanjali tells us that human problems arising out of human relations can be called, in a way, the conduct which

people manifest among themselves by way of self-adjustment. The whole of human society is a large area of co-operation. Society is nothing but a co-operative complex. Otherwise, we do not call it a society. If in a place there is no amicable, intelligible, coordinating relationships between one another, we do not call that a social complex. It can only be described as a chaotic congregation of individuals. Whenever we form a society or an organisation of any kind, even if it be a small family by itself, there is inward co-operation and co-ordination, based on a kind of understanding among the members of that society or organisation. The understanding arises on account of a common aim that motivates the individuals forming the organisation, called the family or the society. If we have no common aim among ourselves, there cannot be any kind of amicable relationship, and we cannot form a society. We cannot be members of a single family if such understanding is absent. When we work together as friends, there is always a common purpose to serve. If three people have a common purpose, then the three of them become friends. If a hundred or a thousand people, or ten thousand people, have a common purpose, they become friends; why, they become a party, a society of some sort. Now, the whole humanity can be regarded as a society of this nature. The Yoga student should consider the whole of humanity as one single organisation for the purpose of framing his attitude towards others. Patanjali takes his stand on human relationships in general, which include the smaller forms of this relationship such as family relationship and communal

relationship. We need not separately mention them, because humanity includes everything.

What is our attitude towards another person? This we must try to understand within our mind every day. When I see a person, what do I think about him? We may not be analysing our mind in this way every day, because we are too busy with our daily routine of life. We run to the shop, or go to the office to type something, or we have to do this or that thing, and so we have no time to think in the above manner, namely, "What do I think about this man?" But, it is necessary to think that because even our little typing, or writing an address in our office, has something to do with our opinion about another person. It cannot be said that the latter is irrelevant. The relevance of it may be known later on, when the time for it comes. So, everything hangs on this, namely, "What is my general outlook to things around me? What is the opinion that I hold about people around me?" This is a type of analysis that we can conduct within ourselves. Do we hate something? Do we have a prejudice against anything? If so, we must make a note of it. "I curse this; I hate this; I would like to be rid of this person." When feelings like these arise in the student of Yoga, he must make a note. And he must ask himself, "Why do such emotions arise?"

## Chapter 9

### THE YAMAS—OUR ATTITUDE TO THE PEOPLE AROUND US

Yoga is a gradual development of personality by way of ascending different steps of self integration, achieved by the adjustment and adaptation of oneself with the environment in which one lives at any given moment of time. There is nothing unimportant, and nothing that can be neglected in this world, from the point of view of the student of Yoga. Everything that is visible to the eyes, everything with which we are connected, and everything which we can even think of in our mind, is of great value in some way or the other. The value of a thing depends upon the very fact that we are able to think of it in our mind. If it is absolutely valueless, it will not occur to our mind at all. So, every precept or object of conception is a matter which requires some attention. Objects present themselves before us, because they require attention on our part. If we do not bestow this attention on a certain object today, the same object of thought or object of sensory perception will compel our attention one day or the other. So, if we close our eyes in spite of objects being presented before us, they will have a say in this matter one day or the other, and no one can escape this world unless he has paid his debts totally to this world. So, the system of Patanjali proceeds very carefully, stage by stage. And these stages, as we saw earlier, are the well-known limbs of Yoga, or the *angas* as they are known—*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. We might have learnt much about these stages of Yoga by study



of books and listening to learned people, but it is very difficult to believe that anyone can have a complete grasp of the significance of these things because though they appear to be clear on reading the surface meaning of the *sutras* or statements, their significance is so deep and so comprehensive, that the more we think of them the more will be their relevance that we will realise in our own selves in respect of the various experiences, through which we have to pass in our life.

The *yamas* and the *niyamas* are regarded as the foundation of Yoga. Together they do not constitute just an ethical discipline, as people generally say. And whenever we listen to such terms as 'ethics' and 'morality', we think that they are all some children's talks about which we are well informed. We feel for sure that we know what ethics means, and what morality means, and that we need not go on listening to sermons on ethics and morality. This is what perhaps one would imagine in one's mind. But the *yamas* and *niyamas* that Patanjali speaks to us about are not merely ethics and morality. They are scientific requirements and logical stages; which are unavoidable in one's life, and we do not escape them merely by calling them ethical or moral. They are necessary requirements, because they are the means of self adjustment with the state of affairs in which we are placed at the present moment. Everyone sees a world outside and is obliged to maintain a sort of relationship with the environment or atmosphere, whatever be that atmosphere, whether it is perceptual or conceptual. Our attitude to the people around us is the

principal theme, or the principal subject, of the *yamas* so called.

*Ahimsa-satya-asteya-brahmacharya-aparigraha yamah:*  
The *sutra* which describes the process of self restraint, known as the *yamas*, touches upon five items of self-control. And Yoga is self control, to put it in one sentence. One of the stages of self control or Yoga is the practice of the *yamas*.

### **The Love-Hate Relationships**

Our attitude to people is classified by Patanjali under five heads, and perhaps, we have no other attitude to people except these five ways of self-expression. Either we love or hate; either we exploit or regard a person in his or her own status. The principal urges in man are mostly the deciding factors of the various types of attitude that he develops towards people. A person does not develop an attitude deliberately by thinking a hundred times every day. The attitudes of men towards others are spontaneous manifestations of themselves in regard to things. They are spontaneous, because of the fact that these human urges are powerful enough to have an upper hand in man's daily life. Man's personality is a bundle of these urges. All of us, human beings, are forces externalised, and other individualities are nothing but centres of externalised pressure. We are centres of stress, and these centres are the individualities. These stresses urge themselves forward for the experience of an externalised type, in the world of space and time. These urges forwarding themselves towards the

objects, in space and in time, manifest their forms in the way Patanjali describes in a *sutra* mentioned earlier.

The major urge in us is love or hatred. Everything else comes later on, as a consequence necessarily following. Principally, we either love or hate. There can be nothing else in us. While this is a broad division of our attitude towards things, there are sub-divisions of this urge; there are types of love and types of hatred. It is not a jutting out of ourselves in one direction only. We can have a variety of manifestations of love, and a variety of dislikes and hatreds. They are all summed up in the above *sutra*. The desire to exploit is natural as an instinct in every person. We wish to exploit the world in some way or the other. Exploitation means utilisation of something for our purpose. This we do every day, and we cannot avoid this situation, partly because of our own needs personally felt within ourselves, and partly because of some weakness in our understanding of the nature of things, we may say. The likes and dislikes tell upon us with such vehemence that we are, in a way we may say, bundles of likes and dislikes only, which clash between themselves and create a tension in our personality.

So, in another sense, we may say that we are centres of tension, in the same way as we noted earlier that we are centres of stress or pressure. We are always in a tension of some sort or the other. We are not so normal as to be free from every kind of impulse working towards externalisation in some way or the other. These externalising, tension-creating impulses have to be checked. This is the main intention behind the practice of the *yamas*. If a man is not able to check these impulses, he becomes a

puppet in the hands of these impulses, which drag him away from the centre, which is the *purusha* of the Samkhya, the realisation of which is called *kaivalya moksha* or the liberation of the spirit. Bondage is the movement of the *purusha* towards *prakriti*, and *kaivalya* or liberation or *moksha* is the centering of the *purusha* in His own Self. This is the essence of Samkhya and the essence of Yoga. And in every act of perception or cognition, in every process of love and hatred, the *purusha* moves towards *prakriti*, goes headlong towards its bondage. Therefore, it becomes very obvious that every love, and every hatred, is a movement contrary to the requirement of the spirit towards its liberation. Any sensible person will know how loves and hatreds are opposed to one's welfare on the basis of this great analysis philosophically made by the Samkhya and the Yoga. The *purusha* has to establish itself in its own being. That is the purpose of the practice of Yoga. And *samsara*, the so-called bondage, is the opposite circumstance of the *purusha*, by which it loses control over itself, gets liquified in its being as it were, and spreads itself around outwardly, in space and in time.

### **The Deeper Philosophical Meaning of Ahimsa**

Generally, the word *ahimsa*, which is a very well-known word, is glibly translated as non-injury and non-hurting. This is the dictionary meaning of the word *ahimsa*, and we are all acquainted with this literal meaning of the word. But, it has a deeper philosophical meaning, which is the one that we have to concentrate upon in our earnest studies of Yoga. We are not so much concerned with the dictionary

meaning. That is not very important. That is perhaps the outer shell of the connotation of the word. *Ahimsa* is a Sanskrit word, which offers a negative definition of a situation. The opposite of *himsa* is *ahimsa*. So, the word ‘*ahimsa*’ does not describe something positive. It tells us something negative. It tells us what we should not do, and does not tell us what we should do, perhaps with this idea that we will know what we should do, if we are told what we should not do!

We should not injure. This is the teaching which is available to us on the surface from the meaning of the word ‘*ahimsa*’. But, why should we not injure? One can raise a question within one’s own self: “What is the harm to me if I injure another? Why do you tell me ‘Don’t hurt, don’t inflict pain’? Should I follow this instruction merely because it is mentioned in a textbook?” Yoga is a science, and not merely an ethical teaching. To be told “Don’t hurt” is to be given an ethical instruction. But, to understand why it is important not to hurt is to understand its philosophical, metaphysical, spiritual significance. If a person knows the philosophy of the Samkhya or the Vedanta or even the foundations of the Yoga of Patanjali, he will himself be able to answer this question why he should not injure another. Many a time we are not able to answer this question ourselves. We get confused in our heads. We go by textbooks always,—the Gita says, or Patanjali says, or someone else says. But, what have we to say? This is a very hard thing for us to answer. Because, many a time, we are in conflict between opposite situations, where our personal interests are involved. Where our

interests are involved, we cannot make a judgement of things impartially. And why should this question arise at all, if our personal interests are not involved? So, it is a personal matter, and therefore, it becomes difficult to understand.

One does not hurt or injure impersonally. Hurting is the outcome of a personal attitude. Sometimes, it may look like a highly judicious or righteous attitude also. As the devil also can quote a scripture, even that which is contrary to one's well-being can appear as something in conformity with one's well-being. The attitude of injury is what is condemned in Yoga, and not merely the outer cloak under which it appears. *Ahimsa* or non-injury, which we are thinking of, is not a physical action. It is an attitude of the mind. The intention behind the performance of an action is the deciding factor in coming to a judgement whether a particular action violates the canon of *ahimsa* or not. This point is very important to remember. When a person engages himself in an action, what is his intention? That must be noted. What is the difference between a surgeon and an assassin? The difference is only in the intention, and not in the outer act. The outward acts are the same and cannot be differentiated. Both the surgeon and the assassin do much the same thing, but their intention is different, their motive is different, and they aim at different purposes altogether. So, the term '*ahimsa*', from the point of view of Yoga, has to be considered in the larger context of cosmical relationship of things, and not merely in a social, political, of even a personal sense.

Unless a person has a desire to exploit, he will not have a desire to injure anybody. So, the desire to exploit goes together with the desire to injure. Exploitation itself is an injury. It is perhaps the major injury that we inflict upon people. Because, it is a philosophical attitude finally. The desire to utilise someone, at the cost of that person, for one's own advantage, is the root of the further manifestation of it in the form of hurting, either verbally, psychologically or physically. But then, can we exploit anything in this world? Are we authorised to do that?

### **Overcoming the Desire to Exploit**

Two other canons, which follow in the above *sutra*, namely, *asteya* and *aparigraha*, touch upon this problem of exploitation. One cannot appropriate anything which does not really belong to him. *Asteya* is non-stealing. All these definitions have a negative connotation, and so, we have to read between the lines and see the positive attitude hidden behind them. Non-stealing, roughly speaking, may look like non-burglary or non-theft; but, people are not always burglars, and yet, they can be thieves. To be a thief, it is not always necessary to break the walls of somebody's house and take away his treasure-chest. Inwardly one can be a thief, in a different sense altogether. A thief is one who has the intention of using somebody for his purpose at the cost of the latter person. This is very important to remember. Even if one entertains this intention in the mind, it is a theft. Neither breaking of walls is involved here nor entering into somebody's house. And, exploitation also means the desire to possess more than what is actually

required under the exigencies of a given situation. If a person possesses more than what he is expected to possess, under the circumstances in which he is placed, that becomes theft. So, theft is a very difficult thing to understand unless we go very deep into its meaning. In a very general sense, most people in the world are thieves. Because, this desire to exploit is an instinct, a natural expression, in the majority of persons. It is the common weakness of man in general. As every person is selfish, every person also has this desire to exploit. The attitude of exploitation is nothing but the expression of this inherent selfishness in man. Under the system of Yoga, whose aim is the realisation of the *purusha*, which is infinite in its nature, whose intention therefore is the establishment of itself in the infinitude of its existence, these subtle manoeuvres of the mind in the form of exploitation and meting out injury to others appear to be totally out of point. They are just absurdities to the core. They carry no meaning whatsoever. And we need not even be told that they are undesirable things, just as when it is day, one need not be told that it is not night. It becomes obvious.

### **Striking a Balance between Outward Conduct and Inward Intention**

The *yamas* of Patanjali are not moral instructions. They are not even ethical disciplines in the ordinary social or political sense. They are scientific, logical, philosophical. The nature of the *purusha* is such that it cannot permit of attitudes of exploitation, even attitudes of love and hatred, because these are the outward manifestations of



consciousness in the direction of its own bondage. That is precisely why Patanjali emphasises the *yamas* as a very essential step in the practice of Yoga. Though the perfection in *yamas* can be attained only in the ultimate union with the *purusha*, an earnest beginning has to be made by every seeking soul in the conscious practice of the *yamas*. The philosophical requirement behind the practice of the *yamas* can be fully realised only in the end. In the earlier stages, it would not be possible. But, an endeavour has to be made, even in the earlier stages, to conform one's attitude and behaviour in daily life, and in society, to the requirements or canons of the *yamas* of Patanjali.

We can stop the movement of a watch either by holding the hands or the pointers, or holding the cog inside. The practice of the *yamas* in the advanced stages assumes the form of controlling the inner mechanism itself. But, the lower practice is something like holding the pointers of the clock, at which time the cog also stops functioning. It is only a tentative measure to stop the clock, and not a final remedy, because when the fingers are lifted from the pointers, the cog will move again. But, if the movement of the cog inside is arrested, then the other manifestations of the cog's movement also cease automatically. Likewise, in our practice of the *yamas*, we have to develop a double attitude of outward control as well as inward understanding. We should not hang only on one side. When we try to discipline ourselves inwardly, psychologically or philosophically, we should also adopt an external measure of self-control, by placing ourselves in such social circumstances, where we would not be

compelled to break this requirement of the canons. That is why usually a student of Yoga resorts to places and atmospheres, where he would not willy-nilly be compelled to break these disciplines. The sequestration to holy places, and resort to hilltops, monasteries, temples and forests is done with this intention only.

Even then, outward practice will not be highly or wholly successful if the mind is not agreeable to the practice. So, a philosophical discipline of the mind is very important, together with the outward practice of self-control by way of isolation of oneself in a suitable geographical atmosphere. It is difficult to say which comes first, and which comes second—outward control or inward understanding. Perhaps, they go together. The inward and the outward disciplines should be carried on simultaneously almost. So, one has to be vigilant at all times. Vigilance is Yoga. A balance has to be struck between our outward conduct and our inward intention. And so, one has to be very careful at all times to see that there is no rift, no contradiction, between our inward behaviour and the outward conduct we manifest in society. We should not be thinking something inside, doing another thing outside. The doing outside should have some meaning in connection with the intention that is in the mind. So, it becomes a little difficult for a beginner in the earlier stages to understand how he can live in this world at all.

A mere instruction from somebody will not be sufficient for the beginner, because nobody is prepared to receive instructions from somebody else. Every mind resents advice from other people, for reasons which are

personal, social, and also philosophical. Everybody has a self-respect and self esteem, which it is that dislikes any kind of advice from outside. But, it is different in the case of a person who has awakened himself to the need of listening to advice coming from higher realms with a larger sweep of inclusiveness, such as the advice coming from a master or a Guru, which cannot be regarded as an advice coming from outside. Because, the Guru is not a person who is outside. The Guru is a stature of consciousness, a transcendent status, which is above the disciple and not outside the disciple. The Guru is not a person standing outside the disciple, and so, the latter should not think that the *upadesha* or advice coming from the Guru is an instruction coming from an external source. But, these are again difficult things for the mind to grasp, because we have not been educated to think on these subtler lines. We have a very gross way of thinking, which is acceptable to our usual instinct of selfishness.

### **Respecting the Laws of Nature**

Every person in the world is as valuable as everyone else. This fact must be accepted first of all. We cannot imagine that somebody is inferior to us and is only a food for our instincts. No man is meat for another man. This is the fundamental instruction in Yoga, which explains the principle of *ahimsa* also, incidentally. No man is a servant of another man. This point should not be forgotten. And, therefore, one should not shout, “Hey, servant!” and all that. These shoutings have no meaning ultimately. One appears to obey the dictates of another person under the

pressure of circumstances, but that obedience does not emanate from the bottom of his heart. Everyone loves oneself and no one is prepared to bow down to the orders of another person, unless this order comes from a higher source. So, inasmuch as there is a sanctity in every individual, life is sacred. "You cannot kill" is the great teaching of the masters of religion, the prophets of spirituality. "Thou shalt not kill." Thou shalt not kill is a principal canon in all religions, because one would not like to be killed. Is it not true? If one would not like to be killed, another also would not like to be killed! Should we not understand this much of psychology? How could we imagine that another can be killed and we alone should be set free? This injudicious affirmation of oneself cannot brook acceptance from the laws of nature. Nature reacts to any interference with its balance of laws. And exploitation of any individual, in any manner whatsoever, which turns gross into palpable injury, will set up a reaction from natural sources, perhaps a reaction with a greater intensity, and the man who exploits and injures will be paid back in his own coin. He may have to take birth again to receive his punishment. Perhaps, he may have to be punished in this birth itself, if his action was very intense. So, the Yoga student should be careful not to break the laws of nature when his intention is something noble and sublime and superb, which is the realisation of Yoga. "Harm not any creature" is another way of saying "Break not the laws of nature."

What is nature, but an integration of values and a totality of lives, as a cosmopolitan society, where no one

belongs to another? Nothing is a property of any person. There is universal democracy, something far superior to our own limited notions of democracy. In a system of things where everything hangs on something else, everything is dependent on everything else, nothing is independent. Where nature is such a vast integration and completeness of interdependence of parts, no one is a master, no one is a servant. And, therefore, it follows that no one can love and no one can hate, because no one can possess and no one can be dispossessed. These are deeper truths, into which we are driven by the force of facts, by a study of the philosophical significance of these instructions of Patanjali on *ahimsa*, *satya* and other *yamas*. While the linguistic meanings and social bearings of these teachings are well known, the deeper aspects of these instructions are not visible to the eyes and are not apparent even to the mind ordinarily.

What is the deeper import of *ahimsa*? One has to be a friend of all. This is the meaning, the purport, of *ahimsa*—*Sarva bhuta hite ratah*, in the language of the Bhagavad Gita. A friend of all can hurt nobody, when he is intent on the welfare of all beings. As we would like that others should be our friends, the others also expect that we should be their friends. Broadly, here is a very interesting meaning hidden behind the great canon of *ahimsa*, which is translated everywhere as simply non-injury. Truthfulness is very simple and very easy to understand, because untruth is nothing but exploitation. Finally, all these hang upon the central attitude of exploitation of individuals by individuals. One would not utter a lie, unless one wishes to

exploit somebody. So, it is very clear as to why one should not utter a lie. If one person could utter a lie to another person, that other person also can utter a lie to the former. Why not? So, one will be in the same condition as the other, both having tried to deceive each other by their untrue behaviour.

### **Curbing the Tendency to Grab**

The other two complementary aspects of this instruction of Patanjali are *asteya* and *aparigraha*, namely, non-stealing and non-acceptance of articles or possessions which are not necessary for one's existence, to put it broadly. Because, while we are permitted to live in this world, while we have the sanction to exist in this world by the orders of nature, we do not have the sanction to accumulate goods which are not necessary for our sensible existence in this world. Otherwise, it becomes theft, because we will be depriving others of their needs by accumulating articles beyond, the requirements of our own individuality, under the circumstances in which we are placed in society. We cannot exploit individuals. It is very clear. And we cannot exploit the world also. We should not exploit God Himself, finally. Many a time our prayers to God assume the nature of exploitations only whenever we try to grab something from God. We should not grab anything from anybody, and we cannot expect from this world anything more than what we have given to the world as our share of service. The world is a system of mutual co-operative activity. If A cannot co-operate with B, B cannot be expected to co-operate with A. This is purely sense and

reason. Therefore, we cannot expect the world to co-operate with us, if we are not prepared to co-operate with it in a similar manner. Therefore, we cannot demand things from the world, which we have not given to it by way of co-operation, in one way or the other. One has to learn to co-operate with the world in every one of its stages of manifestation—socially, physically, psychologically, rationally, politically and spiritually—because, Yoga is a total union of oneself with the totality of things.

We have to be in tune with all the layers of nature, which makes it a little difficult for us to practise Yoga. The discipline of Yoga is a hard job, because it requires a great adjustment, a minute adjustment, an utterly precise adjustment, such as is required in the manufacture of a computer system or a robot or a subtle instrument. This requires extraordinary concentration. Else, anybody would be a Yogi in this world, if it had been so simple! The all-round aspect of this adjustment, the comprehensiveness of this Yoga attitude, makes it a difficult task for a layman to think of Yoga itself, though outwardly he may endeavour to move in its direction by external sacrifices and austerities of some kind or the other.

True, Yoga is a hard thing, until the mind is properly educated in this new science. Self control, as mentioned earlier, is Yoga. And some of its features are set out in the canons known as the *yamas*. The Yoga practitioner will find himself always in a difficult predicament in trying to practise any of these canons. They are not so easy as that. The Yoga student may think that he has understood everything, but he will not be able to put it into practice, for

reasons he should find out for himself. It is almost impossible to practise *ahimsa*, or *satya*, or *asteya*, or *aparigraha*, under normal circumstances, unless one strains oneself hard with some effort, especially in the earlier stages.

### **Yoga Is Not Renunciation**

Many times, Yoga is identified with renunciation. Yoga, they think, is to become a monk or a nun; Yoga means entering into a monastery or a nunnery or a chapel or a temple. It is something totally opposed to the normal life in the world. This is the way in which people usually understand Yoga these days, perhaps at all times. But here again, we have to strike a note of caution. Any kind of over-enthusiasm or over-estimation is not called for in Yoga practice. Yoga is a gradual ascent, and not a sudden jump. Nature evolves, and does not set up a revolution at any time. The growth of a tree is gradual, evolutionary and not revolutionary. There is no revolution anywhere in nature. So, the Yoga student cannot set up a revolution in himself thinking that he will overnight become a Yogi. Yoga is a gradual growth and maturing of one's personality by a systematic adjustment of oneself through every stage of its progress. And so, words like renunciation and relinquishment, monk and nun, are only certain slogans which carry no meaning finally. Slogans are not going to help anyone finally. One has to be very matter-of-fact here, and realistic to the core, and not foolishly be an idealist in an ethereal world. The world is not going to leave anyone so easily. It has already embraced us all. And the world's



embrace is like a bear's embrace, very hard. We are under the world's clutches, and to extricate ourselves from the clutches of this world-bear, intelligent practice is called for. That practice is Yoga.

Yoga does not mean renunciation, as renunciation is generally understood. Yoga does not mean entering into an order of monks or nuns, if by this is meant a relinquishment of the duties of the world and the ways of life as they are normally lived. Religions today are slowly crumbling down at the base, and everyone knows the fate of religions these days. And if one reads the history of religions, right from the ancient Palaeolithic age onwards, one will find that religion has had a hard time every now and then, and it has not always been successful, as it has been well demonstrated in the history of the church, for instance. Time was when the Pope was the king of the whole of Christendom. And every king of Europe was a slave, as it were, of the Pope. And the Pope's order was God's order, and the Church was the king, and the secular rulers were expected to obey the mandates of the clerical order issuing forth from Rome. It went on like this for some time, and only for some time, because history moves in the form of a cycle, and as the spokes of a wheel go on rotating, some spokes go up, some spokes come down.

### **Yoga Is Not Religion**

There was a time when religion held sway over everything else, but this did not live long. Because, oftentimes religions go to the extreme of affirming an other-worldly salvation of the soul and this emphasis,

which is often laid in religions on the other-worldliness of spiritual achievements, has been the cause of internal distress in the minds of individuals. This sort of religion is not a friend of the world, but an enemy of the world. It hates the world, condemns the world as a devil, as an evil, from which one has to run away as early as possible, because one's welfare is in the other world, and not in this world. Though the intention of religion was not, and is not, to proclaim a doctrine of this type, somehow it stumbled into this attitude, for a peculiar reason, which we have to study by going deep into the psychology of religious practice. But, Yoga is not religion. It is not any kind of religion that we are acquainted with in this world. It is not Hinduism; it is not Buddhism; it is not Christianity. It is a philosophical discipline. And philosophy is not Christianity; it is not Hinduism; it is not any religion whatsoever. A philosophical discipline is a scientific requirement of the individual in the context of his position in the whole universe. So, the mistake should not be committed of associating Yoga with religion. He who does that might become a reverend father in a church, but not a Yogi. He might end up as a pontiff in a huge monastery, but again he need not be a Yogi.

So, our minds should first of all be deconditioned from these prejudiced teachings and doctrines, into which we have been introduced from our childhood by the set-up of our society and our educational systems. There is no harm in taking time to understand what Yoga is, but there is great danger in misunderstanding it, and running to it suddenly under the impression that one has grasped it. Yoga is not

abandonment of anything. It is a positive tuning up of oneself with the realities of all things, and this tuning up has a subtle aspect to it, which aspect looks akin to abandonment of certain things and carries the contour of a renunciation of certain things. Here again, there is a difficulty which must be understood very well. Though Yoga practice is not an abandonment of anything, but only a union with all things, it may appear that this union with things calls for a kind of abandonment, a certain introduction of a new type or aspect of practice which will harass the mind oftentimes. The Yoga student does not know where he is standing, whether he is moving this way or moving that way. There is necessity to exercise a little bit of caution here. The *yamas* are the rock-bottom of the practice of Yoga, and if this rock-bottom will shake for any reason, the entire structure of practice may shake. So, one has to be careful.

The canons of the *yamas* include another very poignant instruction that one has to be continent. The word is '*brahmacharya*', a word which terrifies people usually, and which can make a person go mad by the very thought of it, unless its meaning is properly understood, especially as required by Yoga, and not as required by our fathers or mothers or the society of people. Yoga is not a social practice. We are not going to please people by our Yoga. It is an inward discipline, which is required of us under the system of nature as a whole, and we are to obey a law that is operating everywhere, and not merely a Hindu law, a Brahmin law, or a Christian law. Nothing of the kind.

Continence is a very cautious project of the individual in the direction of Yoga, about which we shall discuss later.

## Chapter 10

### BRAHMACHARYA—AN OUTLOOK OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Among the various items of self-restraint constituting the *yamas*, we have discussed in some detail the principles of *ahimsa*, *satya*, *aparigraha* and *asteya*, namely, non-injury, truthfulness, non-appropriation of properties not actually belonging to oneself, and avoidance of possessions not essential for one's life under the circumstances in which one is placed. Another, the last one among the *yamas*, is *brahmacharya*, which actually means the 'conduct of the Absolute'.

'Brahman' is the Supreme Being; 'Charya' is conduct, or behaviour. How God behaves—that is called *brahmacharya*, finally. It is a very difficult thing for us to understand, because we do not know how God behaves, how the Absolute conducts Itself. The attitude of the Supreme Being towards the universe and all beings is *brahmacharya*, and to the extent that we are able to participate in this attitude, it may be said that we are also following that canon. Our participation in the attitude of the Supreme Being may be infinitesimal, but there should be at least this 'tendency' towards holding the same attitude, the same outlook as that of the Lord. So, *brahmacharya* is an integrated outlook of consciousness, an attitude of the personality, and an interpretation of things. These are the essential basic principles of *brahmacharya*. And minus these principles, the term *brahmacharya* will yield only a chaotic meaning which will not help us much.

In the Anu-Gita of the Mahabharata, a similar broad and majestic interpretation of *brahmacharya* is given, as coming out from the mouth of Sri Krishna Himself, during his instructions to Arjuna. The idea behind this significant term *brahmacharya*, translated as the conduct of the Absolute, is that it is a gradual adjustment of the powers of one's personality towards larger and larger dimensions of impersonality, because, the Absolute or Brahman is the Supreme Impersonality conceivable and existent. There is no externality to the Absolute and, therefore, it cannot be pulled in any outward direction. It has no conscious relationship with anything, though it is related to everything in the world. It cannot be said that God is not related to the world, He is related even to the minutest of things; even to a grain of sand, God is related. Yet, in a way, He is not related to anything. The idea is that the attitude of the Supreme Spirit is of a generalised or universalised relationship with all things, free from particularised or specialised interpretations or evaluations in regard to any thing or any object.

### **How Our Energy Gets Diverted and Dissipated**

Whenever there is a specialised outlook in any particular direction, along the channel of an object or a group of objects, living or non-living, consciousness moves in that direction. No matter what our interest is in that direction, our mind moves. When the mind moves, the *prana* also moves. When the *prana* moves, the energy also moves. So, one follows the other. Our mental interest in any particular direction draws the power of the *prana* in that

very direction, and like a charge of electricity, our energies are diverted. Whenever we think of an object, especially when we do so with a particular interest, which process is called the *klishta vritti* in the language of Patanjali, we are drawn towards that object, a part of us goes to it. Any interest psychologically manifest in the direction of any particular object is a diversion of energy along that channel, and psychological or emotional interest is nothing but a way of transferring oneself, at least in part, if not in whole, to that particular centre wherein one's interest lies. So, in some measure, we cease to be ourselves for the time being when we admire something, love something, or are attracted towards something. Sometimes, we can be wholly lost to ourselves when the attraction is full and hundred-per-cent, as may happen when we are looking at a painting, or enjoying a beautiful landscape, or reading a piece of lofty literature. The object may be conceptual, visible or audible, it makes no difference; we get transferred. When we listen to an enrapturing melody, our being is transferred to the modulation of the voice which is the music or the melody. When we look at a beautiful form, a landscape, a painting or any other object, we are drawn in our consciousness, and we are drawn even in reading arresting literature. In all these processes of sensory or intellectual absorption, outside oneself, there is a channelising of force of which we are constituted and which forms our strength. As long as we do not sell ourselves to any outside object, do not participate in anything external, we stand by ourselves. Otherwise, in some percentage, we cease to be ourselves and become another. If one becomes another and does not

continue to be what oneself is, A becomes B for the time being, and there is a cessation of the characteristic of A. The subject becomes the object in its evaluation of the object as something in which it has to take interest for some purpose which is in its mind. This should not happen, holds Patanjali, in essence, because if this happens, the energy that is supposed to be conserved for the purpose of meditation on the universality of the *purusha* will be spent out in other directions, and to that extent, we will be losers of our strength. The fickleness of the mind or the absence of memory about which we often complain, the distraction to which the mind is heir to the jumping of the feelings from one centre to another—all these are attributable to the fluctuation of energy in our system. It is like the torrential Ganga moving in force with her waves dashing up and down and not resting stable as a limpid lake without movement. When our energies are in tumult, the impact of it is felt by the mind. We are shaken up in our whole system, because of the desire of the personality to move outside itself. As milk gradually becomes curd by an internal shaking of itself, the subject can turn into the object. And love of any kind is nothing but the transference of the subject into the object in some measure, be that object perceptible or merely conceptual. The very thought of the object disturbs the mind. This is mentioned in a famous passage by Bhishma in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata.

As we have noted earlier, the thought of an object is of two kinds, called the *aklishta vritti* and the *klishtha vritti* by Patanjali. We can think of an object through an *aklishta*



*vritti* or we can think of it through a *klishta vritti*. When we open our eyes and look at a large tree standing in front of us in the forest, an *aklishta vritti* is formed in the mind. It is a modification of the mind, because the mind has transformed itself into the form of the tree which we are beholding. But, it has not upset our emotion. It has not drawn our attention largely. We just look at it and are aware that there is a tree. To the extent that we are aware that there is some object outside us, the mind has transformed itself; it has ceased to be itself for the time being, though it has not caused us any sorrow. The tree has not attracted us or repelled us. But if we see a cobra with its hood raised, the modification of the mind at that time is not merely *aklishta*, it is not merely a gazing at an object without internal association of emotion, because the emotion acts at the sight of a snake, while it will not act in that manner when we look at a tree or a mountain. Even as there is a particular type of emotional reaction at the time of the perception of an object like a cobra, there is another type of reaction of a similar intensity when we look at things which are highly valuable from our point of view. It may be a large treasure-chest or something else which we think is worthwhile. So, anything we like or dislike evokes a *klishta vritti* in the mind. A thing in which we are not particularly interested either way evokes an *aklishta vritti* in the mind. For the purpose of Yoga, both these *vrittis* have to be subdued. Neither the *klishta* nor the *aklishta* is a desirable thing from the point of view of *mano-nirodha* or *chitta-vritti-nirodha*, which is Yoga.

The objects of the world speak in a language which we understand in our own way. They get transformed into a meaning when they enter into the mind of individuals; and each individual has his own or her own reading of any particular object. Every object sings a song and we listen to this music, but its meaning is different for different persons. For instance, the same word may convey different meanings to different persons because of the association of those persons in different ways with the particular context in which the word is uttered. All objects in the world speak to us in a psychological language or with a philosophical significance. But, the association of each one of us with them is such that it reads a specialised meaning in this generalised evoking of reaction from us by those objects. This particularised interpretation by each individual in answer to the general call of objects is his love or hatred. Objects of the world are not intended for being loved or for being hated. They exist as we also exist. Just as we do not evince any particular emotional love or hatred towards ourselves, and our loves and hatreds are only in regard to things outside ourselves, we can extend this logic to other objects also. No one assesses himself in terms of love and hatred. His assessment is in regard to other things, other persons. So, studying things in an impartial manner, we find that loves and hatreds are outside the scheme of things. They are not in the order of nature. They do not exist in nature at all. But for us, they only exist and nothing else! We are immersed in this tumultuous chaos, or the clamours of the senses and the mind, which go by the name of likes and dislikes.

## Conservation of Energy for Brahma-Sakshatkara

Here is the basic foundation of the great admonition by the Yoga teacher that we have to conserve energy. We generally understand *brahmacharya* to be celibacy, a very poor translation of the word, and a misdirected meaning also. By celibacy we mean abstinence from marriage, and we associate or identify celibacy with *brahmacharya* or continence in the light of the requirement of Yoga, especially as mentioned by Patanjali. But, nothing of the kind is *brahmacharya*. It is not non-marriage, and it is not celibacy in its popular meaning. A person who has not married need not necessarily be a *brahmacharin*. And a person who has married need not cease to be that. Because, what we have to be careful in noting in this context is the intention behind this instruction, and not merely the following of it in social parlance. The intention is the conservation of energy, and the directing of the whole of one's personality towards the great objective of universal consciousness. And the energy of the system is required for any kind of concentration, not merely for God-realisation or Brahma-Sakshatkara. We require energy even to solve a mathematical problem. Even to build a bridge across a large river, even to study the minute particles of nature in a physical research laboratory, one requires a tremendous concentration of mind. Even to walk on a wire in a circus requires concentration. So, wherever there is a necessity to hold one's breath and concentrate one's attention, as in walking on a very narrow passage, tremendous energy is required, concentration is necessary. A two-foot wide bridge without any protection on either side and spanning

a stream flowing in a deep gorge below—we know how we will walk on that bridge, holding our breath and thinking only of that narrow passage and nothing else. Certainly we will not be thinking any other distracting thought in our mind. Like that, the fixing of the mind on the great ideal of Yoga requires a complete surrender of oneself, in every part of one's being, in the form of concentration. This cannot be done, says Yoga, if we have other interests.

So, a lack of *brahmacharya* means nothing but the presence of interests other than the interest in Yoga. The distracting object may be anything. If we have got a strong interest in something which distracts our attention, the energy goes. Any kind of leakage of energy in any direction, caused by any object or any event or context, is a break in *brahmacharya*. A burst of anger is a break in *brahmacharya*, though one does not normally think so. No one condemns a man because he is angry. We may even think him to be a wonderful person in spite of his burst of anger, but the truth is that he has failed utterly in his *brahmacharya*. He is broken down totally. Because most people are tradition-bound, they go by the beaten track of social tradition and custom, and think that religion is nothing but what society sanctions. But, it is not like that. Religion is not merely the requirement demanded by a Hindu society or a Christian organisation. It has nothing to do with these things. What the universe expects us to manifest from our side, in respect of it, is the great religion of mankind, the religion of God or the religion of the universe. Nobody is going to save us, merely because we are religious in the eyes of the people. In that case, we may well

go to the dogs with all our religion. What will help us, what will guide us, what will take us by the hand and lead us along is the great law which we obey, in the manner in which we are required to obey it, under the circumstances of our relationship with all things in the universe. So, in every way, we have to conserve our energy without any kind of distraction.

### **The Individual—A Pressure Centre**

The philosophers, the mystics, the saints and the sages have made a thorough analysis of the energies of the human mind, the psycho-physical organism in all its completeness. It would appear that we are centres of pressure or stress. Every individual is such a centre, which seeks to break down this pressure, overcome this stress, by adopting some means which it thinks is the proper one under the circumstances. But, the understanding of the way in which this stress is to be removed depends upon one's own stage of evolution. Everyone knows that stress and strain are not good, but everyone does not know how to be free from them, because the causative factors of stresses and strains are not properly understood or analysed. We may know that we are sick, but we may not fully know why we are sick. And unless we know the cause behind our illness in the form of psychological stress and strain, distraction of attention, like and dislike, we will not be able to handle this subject properly. The so-called desires of man are the outer expressions of his personality to relieve itself from the stresses and strains in which it finds itself shackled. We are perpetually in a state of mental stress and nervous pressure

from childhood to doom, and the whole of our life is spent only in trying to find out ways and means of relieving ourselves of these stresses and strains, and we have our own way of doing it. The way in which we try to relieve ourselves of these stresses and strains—this way is called the expression of desires. What is called desire is the method we adopt to relieve ourselves of our tensions, nervous and psychological. So, each person tries his own method to relieve himself of his tension, according to the manner of his understanding. But, most of these ways are misdirected ways. They increase the tension on account of ignorance about the reason behind the arising of the stress or the strain.

### **Stresses and Strains—Their Cause and Cure**

The stress or the strain has arisen on account of a separation of the individual from Nature. The world has cast us out as exiles. We have been thrown outside the realm of Nature as unwanted children. Our internal desire, finally, is to unite ourselves with Nature which is our mother or our parent. The relief that we are seeking from our stresses and strains is ultimately a desire or longing to become one with our parent, from whom we have been cut off or isolated. Our desire is to possess everything. And the desire to possess is called love. What goes by the name of love of any kind in this world is a desire to possess things, which are considered as instruments capable of relieving us of our stresses and strains. Whether we are right in this interpretation of the situation or not is a different matter. But, just as a little bit of scratching of an eczema patch will

give the sufferer a little relief, a forgetfulness of the tension or the stress for the time being is imagined to be a way of relief from the stress itself. When a larger stress swoops down upon us, the lesser stress is forgotten. We are directed away from the lesser stress and the pain, we even forget it for the time being, when a larger stress or strain comes and sits on our head. Let us suppose that we have some worry and we are thinking about it. A larger worry comes and then we forget the lesser worry, because the higher thing has come. All our pains, sorrows and complaints vanish in a minute, in a trite, when we are about to be drowned in a river, for instance. We do not complain about anything at that time. Everything would seem to be all right if only we could be saved from possible drowning, because that is a problem larger than all the other little problems about which we are constantly complaining in life. So is the case with our asking for the fulfilment of our desires by contact with things.

### **The Havoc Wrought by the Externalising Senses**

In one of the *sutras*, Patanjali tells us that sensory contact with things is not the way of relieving tension caused by desires, because desires cannot be removed by any kind of sensory contact. Our desire is not for the contact. That is the whole point, though it appears that the senses tell us to come in contact with various things in the world for the relief of our tension. We are not asking for things. Nobody wants anything in this world finally. But, it appears as if we are wanting them, due to a mischievous interpretation given to these circumstances by our senses,

by externalising our internal anguish for a communion with all things. All loves, all desires, are urges for communion with things. While our urge within is a holy and pious impulse to come in union with all things, with Nature as a whole, this impulse is thrown in the direction of space and time and is externalised by the powers of the senses. What is the result? The longing of ours, which has its meaning in one direction, takes another shape because of its reflection through the senses. While our face is attached to our body, it looks as if it is outside us when we see it in the mirror. We are not outside ourselves, we are in ourselves. But, it appears as if we have gone out of ourselves, because of the presentation of the mirror in front of ourselves. The mischief is done by the mirror. Some such catastrophic activity takes place when our loves, likes, emotions and desires are cast into the mould of the senses. The senses have only one work to do, to externalise everything. So, even our desires are externalised, while really our desire is for something else. That is the reason why we are not satisfied; no matter what objects are given to us, we are always disillusioned in the end. Whatever be our possession, it is not going to satisfy us finally. Because we are asking for some particular thing, and we are given another thing by the dacoits of the senses. They are really thieves.

Very strange is this phenomenon that the mind spatialises itself and temporalises itself in its activity, when it affiliates itself to the activities of the senses, and its own desires for something which it has lost appear as desires for those things which are outside it. This is a highly significant



situation in which everyone is finding himself or herself, something which escapes one's notice always, a very dangerous circumstance about which we need not talk much, because it is so clear. And one need not be told again and again as to why the ways in which we try to fulfil our desires are not the proper ways. Firstly, there is a basic blunder in the very attitude of the mind in imagining that what it seeks through the fulfilment of desires lies outside it. The other blunder is, that in its movement towards the so-called external things, it has lost its energies. It has weakened itself. The Self, when it becomes the non-self, becomes a corpse, becomes dead. So, a person who has desires is a weakling. He has no strength at all. He has neither physical strength nor mental strength. The more the unfulfilled desires, the greater is the weakness of the body and the mind. One cannot walk even. One cannot digest food. One cannot think, cannot remember anything. This happens when there are too many desires unfulfilled. But, what to do under the circumstances?

### **Desire—A Metaphysical Evil**

As students of Yoga interested in the true welfare of our souls, we must be able to know what has really happened to us. We should not be wool-gathering, we should not be in a fool's paradise even in the name of religion or spirituality. Any kind of outward ritualistic movement of our personalities, even in the name of religion, is not going to save us, in the end, because this evil called desire is a metaphysical evil. It is not a social evil, it is not a physical evil. It is a metaphysical evil, as the philosophers call it. It is

a cosmic catastrophe, and therefore, it requires all the analytical capacity that we are capable of to know what has happened to us, and know how we can gradually wean ourselves away from this impulse that is dragging us out from ourselves in the direction of the objects of sense. This weaning oneself away from objects is done very gradually. The fulfilment of desires is not condemned in the religion of India especially, though it is well known that desires have to be completely extirpated one day or the other; because, they are bondage which tethers the soul to the body and its physical associations. The great system of social living and personal living inculcated in India, and accepted by other great philosophers in other countries also, is known as the Varnashrama system, a highly scientific analysis of the human situation and the desires of man and the needs of man at different times. We have various kinds of needs, though all needs may be called desires, and all desires may be called undesirable things in the end. Yet, when they are there as realities to the senses and the mind, and not lesser realities than our own bodies and our personalities, we have to tackle them with great caution. We have to interpret them as realistically as we interpret our own selves. The objects are as real as ourselves and as unreal as ourselves. To the extent that we are real, the things connected with us are also real. And to the extent that we are unreal, to the same extent, they are also unreal. The subject and the object evolve simultaneously. The evolution is not just individualistic and subjective. So, this system of Varnashrama is a systematic procedure to adjust ourselves and adapt ourselves to the circumstances of life,

horizontally in society, and vertically in our own personality. The horizontal adjustment is the Varna and the vertical adjustment is the Ashrama. We have to be complete in society, in our relationships with people, and we have to be complete in our own selves by a suitable harmonious alignment of the various layers of our personality. Such an adjustment is very effectively brought about by following the great canons of the Varna and the Ashrama.

### **Varnashrama—An Aid to Free Ourselves from the Grip of Nature**

People generally think that Varna means caste, but it is not that. It means a class. The principle of the classification of society is called the Varna-Dharma. It is a classification, not a 'castification'. To say that Varna means caste is to give it a wrong name and an erroneous interpretation. No man is complete in himself, and therefore, no man can be satisfied merely in his own self without the co-operation of other persons. Man is, among other things, intellect, will, emotion and energy. There are certain people with a tremendous physical capacity, but intellectually they are poor. There are others who are rationally and intellectually brilliant, but physically weak. The other two aspects, namely, emotion and will, are also distributed disproportionately among people. Everyone is not possessed of these characteristics in the same measure. Inasmuch as everyone's intention is the welfare of all human beings, the solidarity of mankind in general, it is necessary that we share among ourselves the commodities that we have. The commodities are not necessarily physical

ones; they can be psychological ones also. If one has great intellectual capacity and spiritual acumen, which are necessary for the welfare of society, but not other facilities, he will share the knowledge and wisdom and the directing intelligence that he has, with others, for the facilities which he does not have. The mutual co-operative activity of society—spiritually, administratively, economically and manually—forms the essence of the Varna system. The classification into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras is not a categorisation of people into superior and inferior types, into bosses and subordinates, but it is a classification of the functions of individuals according to their knowledge and capacities, for the purpose of a complete co-operative organisation of humankind, with a noble intention and purpose. This is one way in which we can be happy in this world. Otherwise, we will be in misery every day, every moment. The desires of ours are classified in this manner, and they are given an opportunity of permissible satisfaction, by a mutual co-operation horizontally in this manner.

There is the other side, namely, the vertical side, which is the subject of the Ashrama-Dharma, or duties pertaining to the different Ashramas, or stages of life. Just as we have totally misunderstood the meaning of the Varna system, we have also misunderstood the meaning of the Ashrama system. Just as we condemn the classification of Varna as caste distinction, we convert the classification of the stages of one's life by way of Ashrama, into a kind of dead routine of religion. Neither Varna nor Ashrama is a routine. Varnashrama is a vital participation in the processes of life,

externally as well as internally. Externally it goes by the name of Varna, and internally it goes by the name of Ashrama. The idea behind this is the fulfilment of the requirements of the human personality, in the way it would be required, for the purpose of a transcendence of all limitations, with the great goal of *moksha*, or liberation of the spirit, in mind. What a glorious psychological organisation this Varnashrama is! No item in this classification is unimportant, because nature catches us by the throat, with such a firm grip, that we cannot free ourselves from its compulsive pressure without the aid of the Varnashrama-Dharma. We are caught firmly by Nature socially, physically, vitally, psychologically, rationally and even spiritually. So, we have to free ourselves from these clutches or pressures by a gradual dissociation of ourselves from nature, as we untie its knots one by one.

If we tie a thread into a dozen knots, and then want to untie them and straighten out the thread, we do not go to the bottom knot first, but rather to the topmost one. The topmost knot is untied first, then the previous one or the eleventh knot, then the tenth, then the ninth and so on, till at last we come to the very first knot. We cannot touch the last knot in the very beginning. Similarly, in spiritual life, the first problem is treated last, and the last problem is taken up first. Because, the first is more subtle and more proximate to the realities of things than the later ones which are the evolutes of the causes. The effects have to be taken care of first, and the causes later on. So, outwardly as well as inwardly, these systems of organisation known as Varna and Ashrama, are procedures enjoined upon every

person, for untying the various knots of entanglement in life, engendered by one's needs which are social, physical, vital, emotional, intellectual and so on.

Such a vast involvement is associated with this little thing called *brahmacharya*, by the practice of which we do not merely put on a conduct personally and socially, but establish ourselves in a status of strength, where we are so tuned to things that our energies do not move at all in any direction, but are held up in such a way that there is no urge within ourselves to transfer our energies to outside things for the fulfilment of our desires. Desires have to be fulfilled, and also, they are not to be fulfilled. Both these statements are correct statements. But, the statements must be understood in their proper meaning. For instance, hunger has to be appeased, though hunger is a disease of the body, though it is a canker that eats into every man's vitals and compels him to remember always that he is a body. Can anything be worse than this that one should be made to feel always that one is a prisoner? One may be a captive in a prison, but why should one be made to think every day that one is a prisoner? But, that is precisely what hunger does. All the time it makes you remain body-conscious. Such an evil thing it is, but how can one get out of it? By meeting the demands of the body, while exercising very great caution simultaneously. That is why we put on clothes when we feel chilled; we go to sleep when we are tired; we eat a meal when we are hungry. We go for a walk and we do many things. Now, all these activities are so far removed from the goal of our life, as the north pole from the south, and yet they are taken as necessities. We may call

them necessary evils, if we like. They are evils, no doubt, but they are necessary evils. So, they have to be befriended first, in order that we may sever ourselves from them ultimately. The intention behind the practice of the canons of Varna and Ashrama in a graduated manner is not the indulgence of desires, but their graduated, scientific, systematised and cautious fulfilment in a measure that is permissible and required under the circumstances for the purpose of freeing oneself from them finally. So, we do not eat because we want to eat, but because it is necessary to reach a stage where we need not eat at all. There is, therefore, a deep background behind the psychology of the canons known as the *yamas* and a clear understanding of this background will help us to practise these canons better.

## Chapter 11

### INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINING OF ONE'S OWN SELF

We have been discussing the nature of the disciplines known as the *yamas* in the Yoga system of Patanjali, with a view to understanding, in a general way, their meaning and their practice. But, apart from the general information concerning the observance of these *yamas*, there are also particular details about it which vary from circumstance to circumstance, and from individual to individual. These details have to be gone into by each student or disciple with his teacher, who will offer personal guidance in the matter. The *yamas* are disciplines or restraints. 'Yama' is a Sanskrit word which means control, restraint, discipline. The other discipline which comes next is called the '*niyama*', which means observance of certain principles. Inasmuch as these principles concern the practice of regimented details, they are similar to the *yamas* as far as their importance is concerned, but there is a difference here in that the *niyamas* have a greater connection with the individual personally than the *yamas*, which have a particular reference to one's attitude towards, or relationship with, the society outside. While one's conduct in the context of human society is the principal theme of the *yamas*, the discipline of one's own self individually in a different manner is the subject of the *niyamas*.

The first of the *niyamas*, or the observances mentioned by Patanjali, is what in Sanskrit is called *saucha* or purity. Here again, we are likely to associate purity with the usual



meaning of it, its connotation as we are wont to understand in our life in human society. Just as the meaning of the *yamas* cannot be understood easily unless it is related to the great purpose of Yoga, the *niyamas* also cannot be grasped with their full meaning unless their relationship to the aim of Yoga is properly brought home to one's mind by self analysis. No discipline or practice has any sense or meaning unless it bears a connection with the purpose of Yoga. The aim that we are after, the great goal of life, should have some connection with our endeavour. We do nothing in this world unnecessarily. Everything has a connection with the purpose that we wish to achieve finally. So, if we are students of Yoga, the goal of Yoga should bear a connection or relevance to any practice we may engage in, whether it be *yama* or *niyama*.

### **The Deeper Significance of Saucha or Purity**

What we call purity is a peculiar attitude of ours with respect to all things related to us in the light of the great goal of Yoga. It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand what is purity and what is impurity. We have no doubt a standard imposed upon our minds by our social routines, but this does not necessarily explain the deeper significance of *saucha* as understood in Yogic practice. Any entanglement of consciousness in things or circumstances which have no constructive relationship with the goal of Yoga is to be regarded as an impurity. This is the essential meaning behind the term *saucha*. If we do not take bath for several days, our body starts emanating a stink, and we feel that we are bodily impure, inasmuch as the stink or

exudation of bad odour from the body on account of our not having bathed for several days is not in consonance with the principles of the maintenance of physical health; and health is regarded as the state of purity of the body. Inasmuch as health is considered as pure, anything that goes contrary to the maintenance of health is impure. Mostly, in orthodox circles, people understand by purity the cleanliness of the body. When we have taken bath and worn fresh clothes, we feel that we are pure. We feel that we can then enter a holy temple, and perform *puja*, and sit for our prayers, *japa* and meditation. This is a form of purity, and a necessary form of it.

By the word *saucha* or purity, however, the Yoga text does not signify taking bath, though it may include even that. Because, there can be, in us, impurities other than bodily impurities like perspiration and dirt. For, we are not merely the body. We are many other things besides. So, while it is necessary to keep the body clean, it is not enough to keep only that clean and keep other things unclean. While purity does mean cleanliness of the body, it does not mean only that, because of the fact that man is not merely the body, but other things also. And every aspect of his being should be kept clean, and not just the body. The analysis of the personality of man would reveal that, besides being the body, he is the *pranas* inside, the sense-organs, the mind, the intellect, and the various ramifications of these inner layers of his personality. Five *koshas* are mentioned in the Vedanta philosophy—the sheaths as they are called—the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya* *koshas*. These are the coats

or the shirts or the involucre that man's essential spirit is putting on. The personality of an individual consists, therefore, of layers of various densities, performing different functions, and entertaining different ideas and ideologies at different times, in the progress of evolution. So, while the body has to be kept pure, the *pranas*, the senses, the mind, the intellect—all these have to be kept pure too. Purity implies the freedom of oneself from everything which cannot be set in tune with, or set in harmony with, the ideal or the aim of Yoga.

Falling ill physically is not in consonance with the purpose of Yoga; the ill-health of the body affects every other thing that one aspires for in Yoga. Similarly, there can be illness of other vestures of our personality on account of toxic matters of different types growing like mushrooms. The velocity of the senses, in their movement towards objects of their own satisfaction, is also a toxic matter in the astral body. Patanjali does not go into all these minute details when he describes *saucha*. While we need not rack our heads too much in the analysis of all the minutiae involved in the observance of purity through the various vestures of the personality, we may in broad outline conclude that purity means the cleanliness of the body, the speech and the mind. In body, in speech and in mind, we have to be pure. People generally understand, by physical purity, not only a clean body, but also clean clothing, and a clean atmosphere. This physical purity is comparatively easy to maintain. Verbal purity is difficult, and more difficult still is mental purity or psychological purity. Mental purity is almost impossible for ordinary persons.

While one can be very clean in the physical body, one can be very ugly in one's speech, and very anti-social in one's utterances—something of a very hurtful and pain-giving toxin in human society. One can behave badly in human society in spite of being a very clean person physically and in household surroundings. Any kind of injury inflicted upon another by harsh speech is not called for in the context of the observance of *saucha* through speech.

*Ahimsa* is the supreme virtue, finally speaking. Everything comes under that. All other principles of *yama* and *niyama* fall under the shelter of this vast, comprehensive principle called *ahimsa*, a thing which is very hard to understand, but which is the most important of all canons or prescriptions or standards of behaviour. The words that we utter, the way in which we express ourselves verbally, should be positive, constructive, helpful, healthy, and absorbent rather than repellent. The Bhagavad Gita has some verses, in one of its chapters, which make a reference to physical purity, verbal purity and mental purity.

It is a little more difficult to understand what is mental purity. That is the final crown on the whole system of the practice of *saucha*. When there is mental purity, the other purities automatically follow. A clean thought is a virtue, nay, more than a virtue. It is a great treasure, a great possession, a great solace, a great strength and a source of energy to one's own self. But what is a clean thought? While we have made some sort of an analysis in regard to physical purity, physical cleanliness and verbal cleanliness, it will be a little more difficult to understand what is meant by

mental cleanliness. But, there should be no difficulty if we are able to judge the value of a thought in the light of the goal of Yoga. Is the thought consonant with the purpose of Yoga practice? Is it helpful, or contributory in some way, to the purpose or the fulfilment of Yoga, or is it a force that distracts attention and draws one's energy in unwanted directions? The greatest purity of the mind is reflected in its capacity to entertain the thought of the goal of Yoga. When one is deeply concentrating his mind on the great ideal of Yoga to the exclusion of every other thought, he has attained the highest mental purity, and any other extraneous thought would be a distraction from it, a deviation from the highest norm of psychological purity. But, this is the final definition of psychological purity. There are lesser definitions of it, all of which are equally important. Any contemplation mentally of an object or a situation, which is likely to draw the energy of the mind in a direction other than that of Yoga, may be regarded as an impure thought.

Usually, people regard mental impurity as a thought of desire. Any desire is regarded as mental impurity, generally speaking. But, this is a sweeping statement, and it is difficult to understand its real significance. Because, there are desires and desires of umpteen types. Some of them may be positive and helpful, some of them may be of a different nature. Here, one's discretion has to be used with an independent judgement of the whole circumstance, or the guidance of a teacher has to be obtained, where one's own judgement is very difficult to form. However, in essence, we may say that mental purity is that condition of the mind

where it is able to associate itself only with those conditions of living, which positively pave the way to the realisation of the goal gradually, step by step, stage by stage. And therefore there are stages of mental purity, which cannot be defined outright in bare logical terms, without reference to the circumstances through which one has to pass. There may be hundreds of stages of mental purity, and a higher stage will appear as a state of greater purity than a lesser one, the lower one will look impure in the light of the higher, the higher will look purer in the light of the lower. But, every stage may look impure, or every stage may look pure, from the way in which we look at it or the standpoint from which we judge it. Here again, we have a matter which is purely personal and individual, a matter which varies from circumstance to circumstance. A Guru's guidance is necessary here also for us to understand where we stand.

### **The Glory of Contentment**

When one is pure in mind, pure in speech and pure in body, there is a contentment arising from oneself. There is *santosha*. It is very essential that one should be happy under any circumstance. This is very important. If a person is weighed down heavily with some grief or sorrow, and he becomes melancholy and moody, and gets into a state of weeping and crying, and is not able to sleep because of the sorrow that is eating into his vitals, how could he do any meditation? How is it possible for him to practise *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*? Though it is well said and easily said that one has to be happy, it is not easy for people to be always happy. It is a very difficult thing. And we know very

well the reason why we cannot be happy always. The world is a terrible ogress. And, hard it is to live in this world; very problematic is the situation in which we find ourselves every day. How could we always smile, even when we are thrown into the hell or the pit of sorrow in life's mill which grinds relentlessly? But, there is a way whereby we can keep ourselves happy. That way is to keep the goal before our eyes. Finally, in the end, in the last resort, we shall succeed. We may now appear to be suffering, sorrow-ridden, and feeling helpless in every manner, but a day must come in the life of every one of us when we must succeed. Failure is not the goal of any person. The ultimate goal of life is success only. The whole universe is moving towards a great Cosmic Success. Any individual is a part of this cosmos, and therefore, he is also moving towards the achievement of a success par excellence, though it may appear that he may have to bear the brunt of tentatively confronting sorrows, and those sorrows have to be taken in their true spirit and judged against their true worth.

“Even this will pass away”: many of us have read a poem of this kind in our younger days. A king of Persia wrote on the signet of his ring: “Even this will pass away.” It is not a mere story-poem, but a great teaching to every one of us. Even the worst of things will pass away, and no one will always be in the same condition. One may be downtrodden, and may feel about to be crushed under the weight of this grinding mill of the world. Yet, no one can be ground completely. There is something in everyone which is imperishable. All these sorrows, whatever be the intensity of them, will pass away one day or the other. Even if they

are not likely to pass away in this life, they will pass away in another life. Why should anyone think that he is bound to achieve every blessed thing in this little span of physical existence which is nothing but a second, as it were, or even less than that, in the large expanse of the time process? The universe does not think as we think. Its time calculation is something very vast, and our little span of a hundred years or even less, is something which is almost a zero before the vast astronomical cosmic perspectives of time.

There is a story recounted by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in a humorous way. Narada was passing one day by the side of a garden, and the gardener asked the sage Narada: "Master, where are you going?" The great sage said, "I am going to Vaikuntha, the Lord's Heaven, to have His Darshan." "Oh! You are going to have Darshan of the Lord! Please ask Him when I shall attain liberation." He was a gardener planting various fruit trees. Narada said, "I shall certainly ask the Lord, and when I come back, I shall let you know what His answer is." So, Narada proceeded further and on the way, he met a farmer. The farmer put the same question: "Lord, O great sage, master, where are you going?" The sage said, "I am going to Vaikuntha, the Lord's abode." And the farmer also made a request similar to the gardener's: "Please ask the Lord when I shall attain liberation." Narada gave the same reply as before: "Yes. I shall come back to you with the Lord's answer." So, after several days or so Narada returned from Vaikuntha and he met this farmer. Immediately, the farmer asked very eagerly. "Did you meet the Lord?" "Yes, I met the Lord," replied Narada. "Did you ask Him about my liberation?"



“Yes, I asked.” “Did He give you the reply?” “Yes, He gave the reply.” “What was the reply?” “You will take another fifty years to attain liberation.” The farmer was very sorry to hear this. “I have been chanting God’s Name, I have been doing prayer, I have been meditating, I have been practising Yoga, day and night I am absorbed in God’s thought. Still I have to wait for fifty years! What a wretched thing!” He cursed himself. Narada passed on and met the gardener. The gardener asked, “What is the reply from the Lord?” “You will take as many thousands of years to reach God as there are leaves in this tree.” And Narada pointed to a nearby tree. The gardener’s joy knew no bounds. He was so happy. He jumped in ecstasy. “So, after all, I am fit!” His way of thinking was quite different from that of the farmer’s. The farmer cried because he had to wait for fifty years more, and this gardener was in joy, in ecstasy, was bursting with the love of God, because he got the reply from the great Master, the Supreme Being, that he was after all fit to gain salvation even if that salvation was to come after as many thousands of years as there were leaves in the nearby tree. The story goes that his ecstasy of joy was such that it burnt all his sins in an instant, and he had divine vision at that very moment, whereas that poor farmer with fifty years’ sorrows had no experience of the kind.

This is just an illustration given by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa to explain the human situation in general in regard to the love of God, practice of Yoga, and the way in which one can be contented even under conditions which may appear to be very poor, unsatisfying and terrific. Truth triumphs—*Satyameva jayate*. And if we tread the path of

truth even in a minute measure, to the extent that we do so, we are bound to succeed in this world. And if there be anyone who has a little bit of honest devotion directed to God-realisation, and the practice of Yoga in its essentiality, surely he is treading the path of truth, and therefore, he is bound to succeed to that extent. Nobody is destined to go to hell for ever and ever. Everybody is destined to reach the Supreme Absolute finally. The little sorrows, the pinpricks, the skirmishes through which we pass in life, are the effects of our previous actions. We have done something in the past, and the reactions come as thorns under our feet when we walk on the ground today. So, we should not be unnecessarily worrying over the little difficulties that we have in our life. They shall pass away, because they are reactions to our own actions. And when they exhaust themselves in their momentum, we will be free. So, we have reason to be happy, to be content, to be satisfied. *Yadrischalabha-santushtah*, as the Bhagavad Gita puts it. Let us be satisfied with whatever circumstances we are in. Let us be happy under any condition. Otherwise, we will be brooding over unnecessary things; the mind will be distracted, and we cannot concentrate. Yoga will not be for us afterwards. Inasmuch as one is a student of Yoga, contentment is necessary; one must be satisfied inside and one should not be a complaint-master. The Yoga student must not complain about anything. This is another *niyama* or discipline, an observance which is enjoined upon all students of Yoga, by Patanjali in his system.

## Tapas—Austerity of the Whole Personality

The third *niyama* is *tapas* or austerity. This is something very interesting to think of and to understand in its real significance. Austerity or *tapas* is, generally speaking, a kind of self-restraint. The Self, in any of its expressions, has the tendency, in its individual location, to move towards an object outside. We think of the things of senses. The mind contemplates objects. And for all practical purposes of our daily existence, we are only minds. When our mind is thinking of something outside, 'we' are thinking of something outside. So, the Self is drawn towards that object which is the object of contemplation of the mind. Now, energy leaks out in this way. Every thought of an object, as a reality external to oneself, is a channelisation of force or energy in that direction. The mind becomes weak, the personality is famished, gradually, by contemplating on objects outside. The more we think of the objects outside us, the weaker we become in our personality. And the more we are able to restrain the urge of the senses and the mind from contemplating outside things, the more is the energy that we conserve, the greater is the strength that we have, physically and mentally. *Tapas* is restraint of the senses and the mind essentially.

In order to help the control of the senses and the mind, we are sometimes asked to observe even physical austerities. Why do people resort to ashrams and monasteries? Why not stay in Delhi or in Hollywood? What is the point in going to a monastery? It is a physical means that one adopts towards the control of the senses and the mind, because the physical atmosphere also plays a part in

the matter of self control, though self-control does not mean merely a physical isolation of oneself. Physical isolation helps to a large extent, in many ways, in the control of oneself through the senses and the mind. The physical surroundings tell upon the mind. What we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears—these have an impact upon what we think and how we think. So, while physical surroundings are not the only things that matter here, while they are not the most important things, they have something to contribute to the restraint of the senses and the mind. Therefore, physical austerity or *tapas* may include living in isolated places, free from unnecessary sensory distractions. And positively, it may mean being in the company of wise people, sages and saints, as far as it is possible, as a contribution towards a higher form of austerity or *tapas* by way of sensory withdrawal and mental restraint.

The checking of the urge of the mind in the direction of the senses is *tapas* or austerity. *Tapas* is a Sanskrit word which means heat. The heat of strength or power or energy is generated and increased in our system by the restraint of the senses and the mind. We become cold when energy is leaked out. When a man is about to die, his legs become cold, his hands become cold, his body becomes chill, the bloodstream is withdrawn, and the *pranas* retract inwardly because of the power of the mind moving in a different way. Energy, when it is absent in the physical body, makes it feel chill. We become cold in every way when we lack the heat of *tapas*. The heat of *tapas* is something like electric energy. It cannot be said that electric current is hot, though

the same current can produce heat when channelised in a particular manner. Electric energy, by itself, is neither hot nor cold. It has no such characteristics. But, it is an energy which can become anything. It can heat, it can move, it can lift, it can do almost everything. So, the heat or energy which we conserve by the practice of *tapas* or austerity is such an impersonal energy which cannot be equated with heat or cold or any characteristic, though this energy can be utilised for the purposes of life which are variegated in their nature. Above all things, this energy becomes necessary for the concentration of the mind, because Yoga is nothing but concentration of mind and meditation of consciousness. The whole being of a person, the whole of his mind, intellect, feeling and spirit has to be channelised towards this supreme goal of Yoga.

Now, if there is a leakage of current at some point in the electric circuit, the voltage will fall. The electrical engineer will say, "There is a leakage somewhere, and so, there is a fall in the voltage." That can happen to us also. The voltage of our energy falls, when there is a leakage of energy in some direction, through some avenue of the senses. So, by physical, verbal, sensory and mental abstraction of oneself from external objects, one can conserve his energy. And by doing so, a person not only becomes healthy physically and mentally, but also becomes strong. A person who practises *tapas* has greater strength than the one who does not so practise and who wastes his strength by way of indulgence in multitudinous activities of life. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say: "*Tapas* is nothing but burning like fire with the heat of energy by the control of the senses." One

who performs *tapas* has a glow in his face, a lustre in his eyes, an aura around his personality, a strength in his speech, and a capacity in his body on account of the austerity that he performs. Every word that he speaks will have a tremendous force and will carry conviction. But for his *tapas*, the same word will be a cold word which may not fall into the ears of any person. *Tapas* is austerity of the whole personality-body, speech, senses and the mind. *Tapas* is one of the observances, or *niyamas*.

### **Svadyaya or Sacred Study**

Now, these three principles of *niyama* mentioned already, namely, *saucha*, *santosha*, and *tapas*—purity, contentment and austerity—are difficult of practice unless they are accompanied by certain easier practices. The principal items of *niyama* that we have already mentioned are difficult things. And as they are difficult, they have to be accompanied by certain other contributory practices, such as the study of sacred scriptures. When everything is impossible of practice, we can at least study a scripture. We can go on reciting loudly certain chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, we will feel inspired. We can read loudly certain chapters of the Dhammapada or the Sermon on the Mount or “The Imitation of Christ.” We can recite aloud the great songs of the Alvars and the Nayanars, the saints and the sages, the Bhaktas and the devotees. There are the writings of the Masters, the Yogis, and the adepts. We can study their inspired expositions and ourselves feel inspired. We can do *parayana* of the Srimad Bhagavata, the Vishnu Purana, the Mahabharata. We will be stimulated from

within in a superior way. That itself will be *tapas*. *Svadhyaya* itself is a great austerity, a great devotion, a worship, a meditation.

*Svadhyaya* is a religion by itself. There are some people who spend their whole life in *parayana* only. They neither know nor do any Yoga practice other than *parayana*. The spiritual seeker should go on reciting a sacred scripture every day, concentrating his mind on its meaning, absorbing his mind in it and becoming that almost. Because, when he cannot summon sublime thoughts to his mind independently by himself, he has to take the aid of the thoughts of the great people which are recorded in the scriptures. When he cannot think for himself, he can at least acquiesce in the nature of the thinking of other persons who are superior to him, thinking which can be communicated to him by their words, discourses and writings. *Svadhyaya* is not going to a library and reading anything that is there. That is a different thing altogether. *svadhyaya* is sacred study, a study of one's own self, '*sva-adhyaya*', or rather, a study of anything that is connected with the nature of one's own self, that is connected with the practice of austerity, connected with the goal of life, the aim of Yoga or God-realisation. It is sacred study that we call *svadhyaya* and not the reading of any book for the purpose of information merely. If one reads the Encyclopedia Britannica, it is not *svadhyaya*, though one may gather a lot of information from it. *Svadhyaya* is sacred study of a holy scripture imbued with and charged with divinity, because such a scripture is a record of the words of great incarnations, mighty sages. The chanting of mantras is also

regarded as a part of *svadhyaya*. *Japa* of Om, or of one's own *Ishta-mantra* into which one has been initiated by his Guru, is also regarded as a part of *svadhyaya*, in addition to the study of a scripture or a holy text. So, *japa* of a mantra or study of a holy scripture is *svadhyaya*, which one can resort to with benefit.

### **Ishvara Pranidhana or Self-surrender to God**

*Ishvara-pranidhana* is the fifth item mentioned under the *niyamas*. A daily prayer to God is a great *tapas* by itself. When we get up in the morning, we must offer a prayer from the bottom of our heart, from the depth of our soul, weeping and crying for God. It is a great meditation; it is a complete Yoga by itself. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Prayer is a tremendous power. It is an independent Yoga by itself and it does not require any other accessory to it. By mere prayer we can reach God, we can attain the great goal of Yoga, provided the heart prays and not merely the lips. Our prayers do not always come from the heart. The mass that is performed in the church, or the *puja* that is performed in the temple, is but a mere mechanical routine. People have to complete a routine, and they have to go to temple and church, but their mind is not there. Their heart does not melt, and when they pray, they neither cry nor weep. Therefore, their prayer cannot be called prayer. God listens to the prayer that comes from the soul of man and not to the prayer that emanates merely from his lips in so many words. So, *Ishvara-pranidhana* or self-surrender to God, implying prayer, worship,



dedication, and various other forms of worship, is regarded as one of the *niyamas*.

The observances—*saucha*, *santosha*, *tapas*, *svadhyaya* and *Isvara-pranidhana*—are personal practices of a religious nature, in the true sense of the term, and they have to go hand in hand with the *niyamas*—*ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya* and *aparigraha*—already mentioned. Thus, *yama* and *niyama* form the rock-bottom of the other stages of Yoga, and in this way, are the central forte, as it were, of Yoga practice. These *yamas* and *niyamas* are not moral or ethical sermons that are given by the Yoga teachers. They are scientific disciplines, unavoidable and inviolable under all circumstances. The stages of our attunement to the various evolutionary stages of *prakriti* are the stages of the practice of Yoga. Patanjali's system of *samyama*—concentration, meditation and *samadhi*—is nothing but the systematised technique of setting the various levels of individuality in tune with the various levels of the cosmos. That is why we say that Samkhya is the base of Yoga, and that a knowledge of the nature of *purusha* and *prakriti* is necessary for an understanding of the nature of the various stages of discipline in the system of Patanjali known as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*.

## Chapter 12

### YOGASANA AND PRANAYAMA

In the system of Yoga propounded by Patanjali, there is a gradual inward withdrawal and focussing of force for the purpose of achieving the universality of being, which is the establishment of the *purusha* in himself. This system starts with the *yamas* and the *niyamas* which are disciplines connected, firstly, with the externalised form of consciousness in its movements in terms of social relationships, and secondly, with the externalisation of the very same consciousness in its relationship to the body. Now, a further step in the line of this practice takes the form of the discipline of the body itself. This practice is called the *asana*. The Yoga *asanas* are so very well known, especially in these days, throughout the world practically, that they have almost tended to replace the purposes of Yoga proper, and many people imagine that the Yoga *asanas* are themselves the goal of Yoga. This misconstruing of the significance of the Yoga *asanas* is due to the excessive emphasis laid upon their practice, ignoring their more important utility in the internal discipline of the whole system for a nobler purpose. Yoga does not mean Yoga *asanas*, though Yoga *asanas* constitute a very important limb in the practice of Yoga. The necessity for this item of practice arises, because of our being vitally related to the bodily organism.

There are almost infinite relationships of consciousness in this world of space and time, and the primary form of the externalisation of consciousness is what is called the body-

consciousness. In a gradual descent from its universal state, consciousness has come down lower and lower, gravitating towards greater and greater densities of expression, until it has become very heavy, laden with matter, almost getting identified with matter itself. That is body consciousness. We cannot help feeling that we are the body. We are nothing but that, we are only that! This is a very unfortunate state, because it is the worst of the states into which consciousness has descended. In this state, consciousness has lodged itself in matter, identified itself with it, become matter itself; it has sold itself into the form of the body. The subject has become the object in a literal fashion. To make matters worse, it has moved further away from the consciousness of the body into the diverse social relationships. All these diseased conditions of consciousness, we may say, have to be taken into consideration in a hazy movement backwards towards the state universal, which is the primary, pristine Purusha. Inasmuch as the consciousness of the body is one of the levels of experience, one of the stages into which consciousness has descended, and one of the stages through which it has to pass in its ascent, the discipline of the body, of the muscular and the nervous systems, is necessary in a very important manner.

### **Difference Between Yogasanas and Physical Exercises**

The exercises which go by the name of Yoga *asanas* have attracted the attention of the people the world over for a very important reason. The outward games, especially of the western type, and the physical exercises have a marked

difference from the aim of the practice of the *asanas*. There is a tremendous difference between the intention behind the practice of the Yoga *asanas* and the playing of games like cricket and football. There is an externalisation of energy in ordinary games, whereas there is an internalisation of energy in Yoga *asanas*. One gets exhausted after playing games but one feels energised after a session of Yoga *asanas*. Strenuous physical exercise results in heavy breathing, perspiration and a rapid heart-beat; the breath gallops in external games. Nothing of the kind happens in the practice of Yoga *asanas*. On the other hand, after Yoga *asanas*, the breath is cooled down, calmed, and there is no violent beating of the heart as happens in the case of games, and there is neither perspiration nor exhaustion. There is a satisfaction, rather than a tiredness. These are some of the outer symptoms and indications which differentiate Yoga *asanas* from the games of ordinary type.

Apart from this difference, the Yoga *asanas* have spiritual connotation. Interpreted merely as another system of physical exercise, the Yoga *asanas* may not appear to have any connection with spirituality. But, in truth, everything connected with Yoga is somehow or the other related to the intention of the spirit finally. This is the peculiarity of the culture of India. Everything has some connection with the spirit, even the least ritual of worship, and the smallest gesture of adoration, or study or practice. Because the culture of India has one great aim before it, namely, to spiritualise every activity; and, in this light, no work in the world should be there bereft of the element of

the spirit. So, even the *asana* is a spiritual exercise, though one may not be able to easily understand how a physical exercise can be regarded as spiritual. *Asana* is spiritual, because of the intention behind its practice, the purpose for which it is done, and the effect it produces on the mind particularly. The Hatha Yoga system has an enumeration of many *asanas*—eighty four, mainly—all aiming at the bringing about of a flexibility in the various parts of the body, so that there may not be any kind of undue pressure exerted by any part or limb of the body causing pain, ache and discomfort. Instead of the body controlling us, we have to control it. Generally, we are controlled by the body, because it has its own idiosyncrasies and predilections. The body aches when we do not attend to it according to its requirements. But, if we have some sort of a restraint and control over the functions of the body, it yields to our requirements, especially when we want to be seated for a long time for meditation or *japa*.

### **Training for Continuous Sitting in One Posture**

The body cannot place itself in one particular posture for a long time. The body also cannot sit in one posture for a long time for a similar reason. Just as the mind is distracted due to its own desires, and therefore, cannot concentrate itself on any particular thing for a protracted period, the body too cannot sit in one posture, because it is fugitive, it is itching, it is restless. This restlessness of the body is caused by the restlessness of the *pranas*, which again is due to the restlessness of the mind. The body, the mind and the *pranas* are thus internally related, affecting

one another in such a way that if anything happens to one, it is felt by the others. Though the physical exercises known as the Yoga *asanas* run into a large number, the system of Patanjali pinpoints one particular exercise or Yoga *asana* for a particular purpose. Inasmuch as the purpose of Yoga *asanas* is the higher reach of Yoga and not the *asana* itself—the *asana* is not an end in itself, but a means to a higher purpose—many types of physical postures are not prescribed, though they may be admitted and acquiesced in and permitted for some time so that the body may finally accustom itself to being seated in one posture for a long time. There is no objection to the performance of many *asanas*. It is quite all right. But, the intention is not to go on doing them endlessly throughout one's life. The purpose is to discipline the body to such an extent that it can then sit in one posture only.

The definition of *asana* given by Patanjali is very impersonal and he does not give it any particular name such as *sarvangasana* or *sirshasana*. His definition of Yoga *asana* is psychological, rather than physical. Whatever posture is capable of yielding fixity of the system and is comfortable can be regarded as a suitable Yoga posture. This is a very generous definition of Yoga *asana* with a broad coverage. But, when Patanjali says, “comfortable posture”, it should be understood in its correct perspective. Many may regard the sleeping posture as the most comfortable, because when we are tired, we always lie down. But then, the comfort that is permitted by Patanjali is only in so far as it is in consonance with the requirement of Yoga, and sleep certainly cannot be regarded as one of

the requirements. And therefore, while “comfortable posture” is what he mentions, he does not necessarily mean a posture that will tend to loss of consciousness as in sleep. There are various positions which the body can assume. It can assume a standing position, a sitting position, or a lying down position. These are the three ways in which the body can be fixed. Now, inasmuch as Patanjali says that anything that is comfortable and conducive can be regarded as the necessary posture, we have to find out what is the best posture which will meet these requirements. It cannot be said that the standing posture is the comfortable one, because one cannot go on standing for a long time, inasmuch as the legs have to be supporting the whole body, and a part of the mind has to go to the legs in order that they may be able to support the body. If the mind is totally withdrawn from the legs, one may fall down. That is not the purpose of Yoga. So, the standing posture is certainly not suitable for meditation practice. The lying down posture is again not suitable, because one may slowly be induced to sleep. Therefore, neither standing nor lying down is suitable. It goes without saying that the only other thing left out is the seated posture. How to sit? Here, again, no details are given in the *sutra* of Patanjali.

### **Yogasana—An Aid to Concentration**

We have to read the meaning between the lines. *Sthira-sukham asanam* is the *sutra*—that which is fixed and is comfortable is the posture. Just as we have to bear in mind the final intention of Yoga in anything that we do in this world, we have to bear the very same thing in our mind

even in the practice of this posture. Concentration of the mind is the intention. Therefore, any seated posture which will help in the concentration of the mind should be regarded as that which is conducive and comfortable. It is a position comfortable for the practice of concentration, which is permitted in the light of the aim of Yoga, and not just a position of ordinary physical comfort. So, we are told that we have to be cautious in the selection of this physical seated posture, because the body is connected to the muscles, the muscles to the nerves, and the nerves to the mind; and so, whatever be the posture we choose for ourselves for the purpose of Yoga, it has to bear a relationship to the mind's purpose, which is meditation. Any kind of awkward position of the body such as the leaning position, would also have an effect upon the nerves and the muscles, and therefore indirectly upon the mind. A harmonisation or balancing of forces is Yoga finally, and any crookedness of the body, bending down or leaning backward or leaning sideways, would not be helpful in the bringing about of a harmony in the nervous system indirectly permitting the flow of the *pranas* in a harmonious manner. If we lean, bend or crouch, there will be a tendency to clogging of the *pranas* in the nervous system, and so we will feel the result of it in the form of some sort of a discomfort. Therefore, usually it is said that one should sit straight with the head, neck and spine in a straight line.



## Effortlessness in Asana Practice

Now, this prescription of the straight line position of the body should not make one feel discomfort again, because it is clearly mentioned that the posture should be a comfortable one. One should not be conscious that one is sitting with some effort. Effortless should be the practice of the *asana*. *Prayatna-saithilya* is a very important phrase or word that Patanjali uses in this connection. Effortless should be the *asana*. It should not be done with effort because then it does not serve the purpose. The Yoga student should not strain his nerves and get intensely conscious that he is sitting. The purpose of the meditation posture is to get rid of the consciousness of the body to the extent possible, not to intensify the body consciousness. The intention is not to be fixed in the idea of the body itself, but to be free from the idea of the body so that the balancing of the body will liberate, in some measure, the connection of the mind and the *pranas* and the body. It is common knowledge that whenever we are balanced, either physically or nervously or mentally, we are less conscious of the body. When there is a balancing of thought, we do not think that we have a body at all; this is especially so when we are perfectly healthy. Even children do not know that they have a body. They play, run about buoyantly, as if they are light spirits rather than heavy bodies. We become too much conscious of our body when we are ill and when there is something wrong somewhere in our system. If everything is perfectly all right and we are fully healthy, we may not be even aware that we are existing physically. But we are not always so healthy. We have some difficulty or

the other, and therefore, we are aware that we have a body. The idea that we are the body has to be removed by the introduction of a system of balance gradually. It begins with the *asana*.

So, while it is said that it has to be a seated posture with the spine straight, it does not mean that we should be conscious that the spine is straight. Usually, we never sit with the spine straight. We bend or kneel. Now, when we are told that we have to sit with the spine straight, and we try to sit straight, we become automatically conscious of our effort to sit straight. In the beginning, this consciousness cannot be avoided. But, there is a way in order that we may slowly get freed from this consciousness of our being in a posture. One may lean against a perpendicular wall. In the beginning this can be done and there is no objection. Because, when one leans against a perpendicular wall, one is to some extent seated straight, and there is no necessity to think that one is sitting like that. There is no conscious effort to sit straight while one sits leaning against a perpendicular wall. So, this can be continued for a long time, until one is able to be free from this need for a support like the wall; and it may take some months. Then one will feel relaxed and happy the moment one sits.

It is surprising how, even by sitting effortlessly in a comfortable posture, we feel a satisfaction from inside—from where it comes we cannot know. This satisfaction, this happiness, has come merely because of the balance. The balance that we speak of has some reference to the *sattva guna*. Wherever there is a balance of anything, there is

some sort of a reflection of *sattva* in some modicum. Because of the effortless seatedness of the body in a perfectly balanced way, there is a joy felt within on account of a sympathetic reaction of this balance, communicated to the nervous system and to the mind finally. The mind feels happy in an instant. Generally, when we sit like this for Yoga, we are told that we may choose one or two or three or four of the usually prescribed postures of Yoga, or the meditation poses, known as *padmasana*, *siddhasana*, *sukhasana* and so on. Here again, we have to remember that the posture should be effortless. It does not mean that we have to strain ourselves to sit in *padmasana* with ache in the joints and in the knees. We can have other *asanas* which may be more comfortable. The point to be borne in mind always is that we are not going to practise Yoga for the sake of the *asana*, but we are going to practise the *asana* for the sake of Yoga.

*Padma*, *siddha*, *sukha* and *svastika* are generally the four types of seated posture suggested in the Yoga system, together with the other prescription that the spine, the neck and the head should be straight. Also, the practitioner should not have any kind of difficulty in maintaining the balance. Gradually the effort that is necessary to be seated should be relaxed. In the beginning, some sort of an effort is necessary. We know it very well. At the very outset we cannot be effortless, but later on, we have to be effortless. When the acrobat climbs on a wire in a circus, a certain amount of effort is necessary to place oneself in that balance. But, later on, it becomes effortless. When one sits on a bicycle, a little bit of effort is necessary to place oneself

in balance. Afterwards the cycle carries the rider effortlessly. *Prayatnasaithilyata* is effortlessness of practice in the *asana*. There should not be the slightest effort. The practice should be spontaneous. One should not feel pain. One should not be eager to change the position or get up. That should not be the case. At least for an hour one should sit, and one can begin with a lesser duration, say, half an hour or fifteen minutes.

### **Psychical Fixation in the Practice of Asana**

There is another very important and interesting point that Patanjali mentions: *Ananta-samapattibhyam*. This is a term which has been interpreted in many ways by the commentators. '*Ananta-samapatti*' is a term which literally means the acquirement of a mood of infinitude. This is a peculiar thing. We do not know what it actually means. What is the mood of infinitude? This is the pure literal translation. There are some orthodox interpreters who say that Ananta means the mythological snake or the cosmic serpent which is supposed to support the whole world with its thousands of hoods, concentrating itself on the fact of there being a huge world on its head in such a way that it maintains its balance without the least movement. I remember an old lady telling me, when I was a small child, that earthquakes were caused by this great serpent changing the globe from one hood to another, whenever it got tired by keeping the whole earth on a particular hood for a long time. So, when a change took place, there was a shake. Well, this is a Puranic and mythological belief, and some commentators on this *sutra* of Patanjali tell us that '*ananta-*

*samapatti*' in this *sutra* means the feeling of that position of balance and fixity which the Mahashesha, the cosmic serpent, maintains while he supports the world or the earth on his hoods. But, the other meaning of the word '*ananta*' is infinitude or an unending expansion. '*Anta*' means limit, '*ananta*' means without limit. So, a limitlessness of attitude or mood is what is expected to be maintained. This seems to be a more rational meaning than the other mythological one. The idea of infinitude immediately brings about a fixity of the system. This seems to be like arguing in a circle sometimes, because the idea of infinitude cannot arise in the mind unless we are in a state of meditation; and we have not yet reached the state of meditation as we are still in the practice of *asana* only. The *asana* is for the sake of the attainment of that idea of infinitude which is presupposed already in the practice of the *asana*.

This is the difficulty in understanding the real meaning of Patanjali's instruction. However, tentatively, we can take it in this way that the infinitude suggested here is not the infinitude in its reality, but, a psychological concept of infinitude which we can entertain even now, even before we enter into the higher stages of meditation and *samyama*. We can have a psychological conception of endlessness. That is not a difficult thing for any one of us because to think of a limit to anything is to think of finitude. We think of the vast space or the horizon, beyond which we cannot extend our mind; and we will find that our mind will stop thinking further as it has nothing to think beyond that. We have gone to the farthest extent of the horizon, we think of the vast space, and we go on thinking of the space beyond

millions of light-years away, and the mind stops thinking. It has nothing to think. There are no objects outside. This is a kind of psychological assumption of infinitude. When we think in this manner, we are fixed psychically in some way. And the psychic infinitude introduced into the system by the adoption of this method produces a sympathetic vibration in the nerves, a vibration which is communicated to the muscles and the body. So we feel happy. So, these seem to be some of the suggestions given by Patanjali in the *sutra: Prayatna-saithilya ananta-samapattibhyam*.

Even a mere sitting, without any thought whatsoever, for days, or even months, will help one much. At the very outset, it will be difficult for anyone to concentrate, even to chant a name. The mind will not be agreeable to any kind of concentration in the beginning. So, let there be no thinking. Let the mind think anything it likes. Let it go on wandering in a hundred and one ways. The Yoga student should not bother, but let him be seated, just seated. That itself is a great achievement. Even sitting is a great thing. One cannot sit like that for a long time. One should not imagine that sitting for two hours or three hours is an ordinary thing. It is an achievement by itself. It is a great thing. And, therefore, one can legitimately feel some satisfaction if he is able to sit at least for an hour without changing his posture. Then, gradually, like a good friend speaking to a friend, he may speak to his mind, the sense organs and the *pranas* about the purpose for which he sits.

*Asana*, which is the seated posture, is the real beginning of Yoga proper. Here we enter into the true, real, proper court of Yoga, because man is essentially a body and it is

this idea that leaves him last. One may be rid of one's connections with human society, but one cannot rid oneself of the idea that one is a body. One may go away from the din and bustle of social life to the top of a mountain, or into a desert area, or inside a cave, but, one can never feel that one is not a body. It is a very difficult imposition upon us, and therefore, the practice of Yoga begins in right earnest, in its proper spirit, from the stage of *asana*.

### **What Is Body-Consciousness?**

The physical position maintained in the form of the *asana* is coupled with the activity of the senses. We must know a little bit of what we are inside, apart from the mere fact that we appear to be bodies. We are bodies as we appear to be on the surface, but the body itself is a very complicated structure. It is made up of little bits of many things, like a building which has layers of bricks placed one over the other, and many other things besides, like plastering and girders. Likewise, the body is not one whole, indivisible being. It is a complex structure of bits of matter and forces which pump in energy to move it in a particular direction for a specified purpose. The sense organs, such as the eyes and the ears, are inseparable from the body. We see with the eyes, we hear with the ears, we smell with the nose, and so on. In fact, the body seems to be a kind of vehicle employed or utilised by the senses for their activities. The senses cannot work except through the body. Now, the whole of what we call the body may be said to be a bundle of sensations. What is the body but sensations? The idea of the body, the notion that one is the body, is nothing but a

bundle of sensations grouped together into a heap in a concentrated form which goes by the name of the body. The sensations of colour, of sound, of smell, of taste and of touch, blending together in a concentrated focussing fashion, become body-consciousness.

So, body consciousness is a very difficult thing again to understand. We sometimes may doubt whether we have a body at all except a heap of sensations. Minus these sensations, there cannot be a body. There are thinkers who believe that there is no solidity of the body, that it is only an illusion presented before us in a powerful manner, that we are deluded into the belief that the body is a solid substance which we touch and feel, while it is only a bundle of electric energy. This is a very hard thing for us to understand and to accept, because we live in a very gross, prosaic world, where we have been brainwashed by the mind into the belief that the body is a hard substance, though theorists in physics, science and philosophy tell us that the so-called hardness is nothing but a sensation of touch. So, Yoga takes us further inwardly into a subtler realm of practice and concentration, whereby we accommodate ourselves to the doctrine of our being bundles of sensations, rather than heaps of physical matter or even chemical substances. We are not astronomical pieces of matter, we are not bundles of chemical compounds. We are forces inside which jet themselves outward with a vehemence unspeakable, and this velocity of the forces is what makes us unconscious of our relationship to the internal layers of our system. The force with which the energy within us moves outward in the direction of space and time is so uncontrollable and



impetuous that we are made unconscious of the connectedness of our personality to the higher layers of our being. We are like people caught in the current of a flooded river, or a river that has burst the bounds and is rushing forth with a tremendous speed, like the Ganga in spate. It damages everything, breaks villages, brings down houses and destroys people. It can go anywhere and do anything because of the speed with which it moves. The speed with which the energies of our system move outwardly in terms of objects in space and in time is such that we are unconscious of what is happening. We are given a blow on our head by the velocity of the forces with such intensity that we become unconscious of what we are, and of our relationship to the higher levels of our being, and we are helplessly driven in any direction in which the energies move. So, Yoga tells us that there is a necessity to restrain the force of these sensations, the powers of the senses which project themselves outwardly and drag the body in any direction they like. This practice which follows the seatedness of our body in a posture, an *asana*, is known as *pranayama* and *pratyahara*. To some extent, *pranayama* and *pratyahara* go together. The bringing of the energies back to their source is the purpose of *pranayama* and *pratyahara* so-called. Just as we have varieties of *asana* in the Hatha Yoga system, we have varieties of *pranayama* also. Hatha Yoga concerns itself principally with the practice of *asanas* and *pranayama*, and secondarily with meditation.

## Pranayama—Subduing the Vital Energy

*Pranayama* is the harmonisation of the breath or the vital force. *Prana* is the vital energy and the process of the subduing of its activities is known as *pranayama*. The *pranas* are the energies that propel themselves outwardly in terms of objects through the vehicle of the body, and they have a say of their own in the activity in which they are involved. They do not seek our permission. They do not ask us, “Where shall we move tomorrow?” They have already decided what to do and we have to accept the way in which they move. Thus, we carry on our activities in daily life as a matter of routine, helplessly driven, as it were, by the current of habit. But, to be subjected to a habit would be to be a slave of that habit. And Yoga is the mastery of the *pranas*, the senses and the mind, and the gaining of a freedom from the slavish subjection of ourselves to their activities. These are the technicalities of the discipline of the *prana*, and Patanjali has something to say about all these things. Here again, as in the case of the *asanas*, he does not go into the complicated technicalities of Hatha Yoga. He has some simple prescriptions, very psychological rather than physical, in their intention. The expulsion of the breath, the inhalation of the breath, and the retention of the breath are the three processes of breathing. We exhale, we inhale, or we retain. Nothing else can be done with the *pranas*. Here, one has to say something as to what *prana* is. *Prana* is not breath in its gross form. The air that we feel moving in and out through the nostrils cannot be identified with what is called the *prana*. While the air that is pumped out or sucked in by force in exhalation and inhalation is

inseparably connected with what we regard as the *prana*, the two are not identical with each other, just as an effect produced by electricity cannot be regarded as electricity itself, though one cannot be separated from the other. A particular activity in a given direction made possible by the power of electricity is not the same as electricity. Likewise is the *prana* different from what we call the breathing process. The breathing process, the breath that one can feel in the form of air moving through the nostrils and working through the lungs, is an outward indication of the internal movement of the forces of vitality called the *pranas*. *Prana* is vital energy. It is superior to air, superior even to the oxygen which activates the lungs. Therefore, the physiological activity of the body, the respiration, is to be regarded as an outward symptom of an internal activity of the *prana* and not as the activity of the *prana* itself. Because, in the system of psychological analysis conducted by Yoga, *prana* is situated in the astral body and not in the physical body.

There are three bodies—the physical, the astral, and the causal. The physical body is what we study in physiology, but the astral body is not a part of the physiological system; anatomy and physiology do not touch the astral body. The astral body is also known as the subtle body, and in Sanskrit, we call it the *sukshma sarira*, sometimes as the *linga sarira*. The *sukshma sarira* or the subtle body has many details within itself. The *pranas*, the senses, the mind, the intellect are all in the subtle body. We may say that the subtle body is only a name that we give to a conglomeration of all these things—intellect, mind, senses and *pranas*.

## The Several Functions of the Prana

The *prana* is energy movement. It is activity of the vital force and it works in many fashions. There are several functions of the *prana*, and because it has several functions to perform, it is given different names in accordance with the nature of its activity. Just as we can have different designations to a person in terms of the work that he performs, and just as the designation may change when the function changes, but the person remains the same irrespective of the changes in designation, the *prana* remains the same irrespective of its activities. But it has various activities. Among the many functions of *prana*, five are important. *Prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana* are the Sanskrit terms for the fivefold function of a single-bodied energy called the *prana*. *Prana* is a general term for the total energy of the system, and it is called by five different names when it performs five different functions. As the tradition goes, *prana* is seated in the heart—*Hridi Pranah*. *Gude apanah*: The *apana* is situated in the anus or the anal region. *Samano nabhimandale*: *Samana* is situated in the region of the navel. *Udanah kanthadesesyat*: The *udana* is situated in the area, or the region, of the throat. *Vyanah sarvasarirangah*: *Vyana* is an energy which moves throughout the body. Now, these activities of the *prana* are connected with the functions of the body so-called. The expulsion of the breath, or the exhalation of the breathing process, is conducted by the *prana*. When we breathe out, the *prana* comes out with force in some way. When we breathe in, the *apana* works. When functions such as digestion of the food that we eat are carried on, the *samana*

works in the centre of the navel. The deglutition or swallowing of anything that we eat is helped by the functions of the *udana* in the throat; *udana* is also said to be responsible for the final isolation or separation of the astral body from the physical body at the time of death. It is also said to be responsible for taking us to sleep when we are tired or exhausted. *Vyana* is that force which circulates throughout the body and is responsible for the movement of the blood-stream through the arteries and the veins, and also it is the power that moves the oxygen that we take in through the capillaries of the lungs. These names of the single *prana*, therefore, refer to the functions of the *prana*. Though, in the principal sense, we may say that it is one whole energy which ramifies itself like rays emanating from the sun in diverse directions, there are other functions of the *prana* which are of a minor character, and according to the nature of these minor functions, apart from the ones mentioned already, the *prana* assumes other names such as *naga*, *kurma*, *krikara*, *devadatta* and *dhananjaya*.

To summarise: *Prana* is an energy, something like an electric force, we may say, but situated in the astral system, in the *sukshma sarira*. The whole *prana*, in its totality, urges itself outwardly in space and time in the direction of objects of sense, and stimulates the sense objects. Even as we have the activities of the *prana* in five major forms, the activities of the mind are carried on through the five senses in terms of objects outside. Sight, hearing smelling, tasting and touching are the five sensations. These are called the organs of sensation or the Jnanendriyas, because they bring some information to us, they give us knowledge. We gain

conscious information from these five senses. Therefore we call them the *jnanendriyas* or the senses of knowledge. There are senses of activity which are called the *karmendriyas*. They are not identical with the senses of knowledge, because they are only functions in the form of a mere activity so-called, but they do not give us any additional knowledge. Grasping by the hand, locomotion by the feet, speaking through the tongue, and ejection through the genitals and through the anus are mainly the five activities of the set of organs called the *karmendriyas* or senses of action. So, we have ten senses in all, five of knowledge, and five of activity. We have the five forms of the functions of the *prana*, and the senses and the *pranas* work together in the daily activities of our life. The *pranayama* process has a particular reference to the process of breathing—exhalation, inhalation and retention known as *rechaka*, *puraka* and *kumbhaka*. We breathe out, breathe in, and retain the breath sometimes. Now, actually, by *pranayama* in its essential meaning, what we are expected to understand is retention, and not merely breathing out or breathing in. The purpose of *pranayama* is to retain the breath, and it can be retained after the exhalation or after the inhalation or suddenly without any consideration of the process of either exhalation or inhalation.

## Chapter 13

### MANAGEMENT AND CONQUEST OF DESIRES

The Yoga-Vasishtha says that *pranas* are distracted in various forms. And when they are highly distracted, it is not safe to resort to *pranayama*, especially with retention. There should be an appreciable calmness in emotions, and in the mind particularly, before any effort is made in *pranayama*. The *pranas* are very distracted, and sometimes very forceful in a particular direction, due to intense desire, worry, anxiety and emotional disturbances of various types. Where there is any waxing problem sitting in the mind, it would be dangerous to close the breath or do *pranayama*, because the mind and the *pranas* are related in an inseparable manner. Any kind of nervous or psychological frustration must be treated first, and the tension released to the extent necessary, before the breathing process is resorted to.

In the earliest of stages, the technical *pranayama* of the Yoga system will not be practicable. Only deep inhalation and deep exhalation will be possible. Most of us do not breathe in the proper manner. We breathe in and breathe out in a shallow way. There is no intensity either in inhalation or in exhalation. There is no sufficient intake of breath. The intake is not as much as is necessary for the health of the system. So, it would be proper to practise deep inhalation and deep exhalation. And this should be done in a well-ventilated place, and not in a closed room, because fresh air is necessary. Fresh air does not mean a cold blast, but a comfortable breeze. A little movement of air is

necessary to derive the benefit of this breathing exercise—deep inhalation and deep exhalation. This inhalation and exhalation itself is very conducive, not only to physical health, but also to mental peace.

### **Exhalation, Inhalation and Retention**

There are varieties of *pranayama* in the Hatha Yoga Sastra. But, all of them, as in the case of the *asanas* in the Hatha Yoga system, are only contributory in their effects; they are not the main intention behind the practice. The various methods of breathing known as *pranayama* are finally directed to a kind of mastery over the breathing process in an appreciable measure. The standard type of breathing is known as *sukha purvaka pranayama*. Perhaps this is what is in the mind of Patanjali when he speaks of *pranayama*, though he does not use this word *sukha purvaka*. Exhalation, inhalation and retention—*rechaka*, *puraka* and *kumbhaka*—are the three types of the *pranayama* process. In the beginning, there should be an expulsion of breath. The *sukha purvaka* describes that the right nostril should be closed with the thumb of the right hand, and then through the left nostril the breath should be let out. There should be a very slow, gradual, but deep exhalation, and then a calm, deep indrawn breath in the form of inhalation through the left nostril. There is no need of retention in the beginning. After the inhalation, the breath should be let out through the right nostril by releasing the thumb and holding the left nostril with the ring finger; and the same process should be continued in a reverse process once again, by inhalation through the right



nostril, and then exhalation through the left, and so on and so forth continuously. This is a more advanced form of breathing than the mere inhalation and exhalation through both the nostrils without holding the nostrils with the fingers. So, this may be said to be the second stage of the attempt. In the earlier stages, we do not hold the nostrils. We simply breathe in and breathe out slowly as an ordinary physical exercise. We may breathe through both the nostrils, or through one, as the case may be; but in the second stage, this improvement is made by alternate breathing without retention.

Then, in the third stage, we can consider the extent of the necessity to hold the breath, which holding is called *kumbhaka*. This should be done with great caution, and one should not jump into extremes, because while Yoga prescribes the retention of breath as a necessary prelude to the higher techniques, it is not the whole of Yoga, and to spend the whole of one's life in mere breathing processes would be like spending the whole of one's life in studying the grammar only, and not going further to literature and the purpose behind it. We may say that *pranayama* is the grammar of Yoga, but that is not the whole of Yoga. *pranayama* is an essential thing, but not the entire thing.

Three *pranayamas* are mentioned by Patanjali, and these are the *rechaka*, the *puraka* and the *kumbhaka*. The expulsion also is a *pranayama* process, the inhalation also is a process of the same kind, and retention is also that. But, the author of the Yoga Sutra seems to prefer a fourth type as we can gather from the way he speaks in his *sutra*. This type of *pranayama* is called the *kevala-kumbhaka*, a sudden

retention of the breath without attention being paid either to inhalation or to exhalation, as it happens for instance, when we do something which requires concentration of the mind. When we lift a heavy weight, for instance, the breath stops immediately. Or when we walk on a narrow bridge or a precipice, we walk with great caution lest we should fall, and we instinctively hold the breath for a while, and we do not think of the breath at that time. Perhaps we are not even aware that the breath is being held. We neither breathe in nor breathe out; we suddenly stop it. And this happens whenever we do anything which requires attention or concentration. So, *kevala-kumbhaka* seems to be that method whereby an automatic holding up of the breath takes place, due to the attention of the mind getting fixed on one particular object.

In the commentaries on the Yoga system, great details are mentioned—details such as the period of time for which we have to sit for the purpose of *pranayama*, the counting process for recording time for *kumbhaka*, *rechaka* and *puraka*, and so on. These detailed instructions are not necessary for the beginner wanting to practice elementary exercises in *pranayama*. They relate to highly technical *pranayama* exercises, which are neither practicable nor necessary for students in the beginning stage. However, we have to bear in mind that *prana* is a very important item and that we cannot ignore its existence. Our health, our strength, and to some extent, our peace of mind also, is dependent upon the nature of the *prana's* movements inside. Our strength is due to the harmonious movement of

the *pranas* and our weakness is due to their distracted movement or chaotic activity.

### **Prana and Mind**

Many times there has been a controversy as to whether *prana* influences the mind or the mind influences the *prana*. This is a futile controversy, because both are interdependent. We cannot say which influences what. They influence each other mutually. When the *pranas* are disturbed, the mind is also disturbed, and vice versa. So, it would be good and wise on our part to take into account the thinking process as well as the breathing process simultaneously. Raja Yogins have said that the calming down of the mind, especially in its emotional aspect, is more important than the holding of the breath merely. Calming down of the mind is of primary importance, because the mind is the internal mechanism behind the movement of the breath outside. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to the mental processes than their outward expression in the form of the movement of the *pranas*. When the mind is steadied, the *prana* settles down of its own accord in a proper manner. But, if the mind is unsteady and is disturbed for any reason, any amount of holding of breath may not help, though it may contribute somewhat towards the achievement of mental control. So, *pranayama* and *pratyahara* are twins, as it were, in this internal Yoga technique of self-control.

## The Pressure of Unfulfilled Desires

Regulation of the breath is necessary not only for purposes of mental concentration, but also for maintaining physical health. For the practice of Yoga, we should not be too much sick, though all of us, as human beings, are prone to illness of various kinds. While the health of the *prana* means the health of the body and the entire organism, the other factors which go to contribute to our ill-health should also be taken into account, and we should not place ourselves in such circumstances where we are likely to be drawn to ill-health in spite of our efforts. An unsanitary atmosphere, bad social conditions, and other types of tension of a similar nature may be factors which tend to ill-health. Physical ill-health is the first obstacle that harasses us in our attempt to practise Yoga. We wish to lie down and take rest. We have either headache or neck pain or joint pain; sometimes even temperature. We suffer from disturbances of this type caused by hundreds of ailments, all of which have to be taken into account in some manner.

The Yoga-Vasishtha has it that while the *pranas* are no doubt disturbed by physical or physiological disorders or chemical disturbances in the stomach, more properly they are disturbed by unfulfilled desires. It is dangerous to practise Yoga with desires inside, because they will burst forth like dynamite. It is true that there cannot be a human being with no desires at all in his mind. Such a thing is not possible; such a thing is unheard of. But, there should not be such desires as will violently disturb us. There should not be a gusto of internal impulse in any direction. Mild, normal desires are present in every person. No one can be

free from it. But, they are not harmful, because many a time we are not even aware that they are there, except when they actually manifest themselves in a grosser form, in a direction of fulfilment. All desires do not seek fulfilment at the same time. One by one they come, or one or two come at different times, according to the circumstance of each case. We have mild desires which have to be fulfilled because of the very nature of the body and the life we live in the world. But, there are tensions caused by other kinds of urges which are hard to fulfil, and the fulfilment of which may not be helpful also. Such emotions may rise due to physiological causes, or the social atmosphere in which we live, or reading literature of a type which may disturb the mind, or going to movies as it is the case these days. These emotions can upset the mind completely for days together, and it would be hard to bring this restless horse of a mind back to its resting place. So, if we are to be sincere in our efforts at the practice of true Yoga, we have to be socially sober and harmonised, and internally alert by means of *yama* and *niyama*, the canons of discipline.

The intention behind the practice of the process called *pranayama* is the restraint of the senses. The senses are the instruments by which the *prana* operates, in the direction of any particular object or goal in one's outward life, which is a means of satisfaction of the mind. The mind is the dynamo inside that generates the energy passing through the *prana*, which moves through the avenues of the senses, in the direction of particular objects of sense. That is why we have the wise instruction in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, where we are told that the senses cannot be

controlled unless the mind is controlled, and the mind cannot be controlled unless the intellect is disciplined, and the intellect cannot be restrained unless it is rooted in the heart. “*Indriyani paranyahur-indriyebhyah param manah, manasastu para buddhiryo buddheh paratastusah.*” In the Kathopanishad, the instruction goes into greater detail: “*Manasastu para buddhih buddheratma mahan parah; mahatah paramavyaktam avyaktat purushah parah; purushan na param kinchit-sa kashtha sa para gatih.*” We will enter into the meaning of this verse further on, when we discuss the nature of meditation. So, it comes to this that the senses have to be restrained in their unnecessary activities, by a control exerted over the *prana*, which again has to be achieved by subduing the mind to some extent. We cannot subdue the mind at one stroke. That is an attainment which comes to us in deep meditation, and not before. But, a preliminary attempt can be made as in medical treatment, where we employ certain methods to help improve the health, though the health is not improved wholly.

### **Necessity for the Guiding Hand of the Guru**

Each student of Yoga should be honest to himself or herself. Oftentimes, we cannot reveal our hearts to other people. Many times we cannot reveal our hearts to our Guru himself, because of diffidence, and sometimes because of the shame that we feel, or a weakness of a different type altogether which we cannot control, but of which we ourselves are afraid. Social circumstances in the world are such that many times we are forcefully converted

into derelicts psychologically. There is something to say about the social condition in which we are living. It has not always been a helpful master. Many a time it has punished people unjustly, due to its own laws not understanding human psychology. But, Yoga is not a social discipline. It is a psychological discipline, and more primarily, a spiritual discipline. A Guru is one to whom we can open our heart wholly, and there should be no kind of hesitation or reservation in his case. This is because the Guru is not just a person in the world; he is a superior individual who has risen over individuality to some extent, and therefore, he can accommodate any kind of psychological repercussions through which a student has to pass, because he himself has passed through all those stages, and they would not be repellent to him. No disease is repulsive to a doctor, because he is a person who is acquainted with all diseases, contagious, infectious, repulsive, whatever they may be. So is the case with mental tensions and impulses and desires.

We are many a time fired up with a love for God, for which reason we feel like renouncing the world in a formal manner. This happens when some light is shed on our mind, due to certain peculiar circumstances in our life, when we are awakened to a higher reality. But it does not mean that this flash of insight, which has created in us a spring of the spirit of renunciation, is the same as a control over our mind. When a large flood overwhelms the little streams that flow in their natural course, their very existence is not seen, but when the flood subsides, we can see these little streams in their true colours. Likewise, when a flood of inspiration overwhelms us in the form of a spirit

of renunciation or God-love, we may not be aware at all that we have any desire in our minds, because we are possessed at that time. And any person possessed by something cannot know what he is. But, the possession does not continue for long. No one can be possessed by anything throughout one's life. So, when the possession is no more, we are normal persons once again, and we then know what we are in our true colours.

So, again, we are in this peculiar situation where we need a guide. To imagine that we are masters is a foolhardy attitude. Not one can be so sure that he will be able to plant his feet firmly on the ground of the spirit. A day comes when we totter. So, guidance is necessary. In the restraint of the senses which is *pratyahara*, the withdrawal of the energies of the sense-activity, we have to be psychologically guarded and intellectually alert, though at the same time we may be spiritually aspiring. God's grace is the greatest strength, and there can be no greater strength than that. We will finally find that we have not got that strength to control the senses or to control the mind. At a stage, we feel helpless. In the beginning, we seem to have great powers. We can perform great feats of self-control. We can fast, we can observe vigil, and do *japa* and meditation, and do *svadhyaya* and everything. All seems to go well, until we are faced with that terrific whirlwind of counter-action from the powers of Nature which we will not be able to face, and here God only is our help. Who can face this world? It is a mighty demoness and our puny efforts will not stand the fury of the forces of the world.



## **Prayer—A Sure Source of Strength**

So, again we come to a point of importance we discussed earlier, namely, prayer. We must be in a prayerful mood of humble submission to the Almighty every moment of time. Let no one be under the impression that he is a Raja Yogi, and therefore not in need of God. That is a mistake. One cannot perform this feat of Yoga practice alone. God's grace is necessary. The greatest Yogis were humble and submissive in their attitude. Prayer works miracles, wonders; and a humility of attitude on our side will be a great asset to us. Every day we have to offer our prayers to the great Master, our Guru, and to the great Almighty who is our great benefactor and friend. And, by the sincere prayers that we offer to God, we invoke His benedictions, and God's actions are instantaneous. He will do the *sadhana* for us; in fact, He does the *sadhana*. All our activities are God's activities, finally speaking. We are like small children imagining that we are doing many things, while all these things are being done by somebody else for our sake. He is a kind parent. We should not forget His existence. Prayer to God every day is a sure source of strength to us in this arduous, adventurous task of the practice of Yoga, especially sense-control. So goes the technique.

## **Physical Isolation—Not a Solution to the Problem of Attraction**

The senses have to be withdrawn. The Yoga scriptures tell us that there are various stages of *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the senses. In the earlier stages, it may appear

that *pratyahara* or sense-control means the cutting off of the sense-organs from the respective objects. We place ourselves in a different atmosphere altogether, where the objects are not present. We go away from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, because of the fact that the objects that disturb our mind are in Cape Comorin. So, this is one stage, good enough, and perhaps necessary. We do not place ourselves physically in an atmosphere of disturbance. Any place that causes a vacillation of the mind, or a disturbance of the emotions, may be avoided by cleanly moving away from that place, and being away somewhere until the time this disturbance subsides. Because the presence of an object is sure to create a vibration in the senses, the *pranas* and the mind.

This moving away is not, however, a remedy for the difficulty of the senses. Because, the Bhagavad Gita has already warned us: *Vishaya yinivartante niraharasya dehinah, rasavarjam rasopyasya param drishtva nivartate*. When we are physically away from the objects of attraction, we are abstemious and starving, and in that sense we may say that we are self-controlled, but the taste for the objects has not left us, and it cannot go. Physical isolation of oneself from the location of an attraction is not a solution to the problem of that attraction, because one will have a liking for it in the mind, and one will wish it were there if it could be possible; and the mind is not happy that it has been severed physically from its loved object. While this physical isolation is a necessary process and a very beneficial one, it is not enough; and if one resorts to this practice only and to no other higher method in the

sublimation of the desires, there can be a violent tumult from inside, and it can lead to any kind of aberration, nervous and psychological.

Thus, sense-control, while it is an absolutely essential technique of practice, is also a very, very dangerous handling of things. Because, desires are not in the senses, they are in the mind. So sense-control means, at the same time, a sort of mental control. The mind is not outside us. To control the mind means to control one's own self. Mental control and sense-control finally mean self-control.

The mind is that impulse which arises from every part of our organism. When a river which is flowing has been blocked in its movement by a barrage or dam, it seeks an expression or outlet with a wholeness of its energy, and it is not just a part of the waters of the river that has this urge. The entire body of water is seeking expression, if possible and practicable, and if the dam bursts, there would be a wholesale devastating movement of the river from every part of it, and not from only one side of it. So it is what we call desire. Desire does not arise from any part of the body, and even when it looks that some sense organ has a particular desire, it is only one avenue of expression of a total impulsion from the whole of our organism, just as one little outlet of the dammed river may let out the waters in one direction only, notwithstanding the fact that the whole river is at its back with its push to force itself out through the aperture. So, even when it appears that it is only one sense organ that is active and the others are silent, we should not be under the false notion that the other senses are keeping quiet.

The senses are like experts in military science. In a battle, it is not as if all the soldiers will attack at the forefront at one stroke. There is a technique of attack. A part of the regiment will be active and the others will be quiet for a very important reason. It does not mean that the latter are sleeping. Likewise, when one sense is active and the other senses are inactive, it does not mean that the latter are sleeping and that we have nothing to do with them. They are inactive for a very important reason, as some soldiers in the battlefield may be inactive for reasons they only know. So, one should be cautious about all the sense organs, though it may appear that there is nothing wrong with some of them.

Though we may be troubled by one or two sense organs only, in truth, every sense organ is turbulent. Because of the wisdom that is there in the senses, they practise a technique of individualised channelisation of themselves, and not a wholesale attack, which they know will not succeed. But, whatever be the sense organ that works at a particular moment of time, the desire that propels it arises from the whole organism of the body. The whole system is desireful. It does not mean that only the eye has a desire or only the ear has a desire. It is not so. Whatever we are in our totality wells up with a desire for something. And that whole urge within us in the form of a desire, is leaked out through a particular aperture called the sense organ. Sometimes, all organs can also act at the same time. So, we are a bundle of desires, and we should not think that we are outside the desires. We should not imagine that the desires are concentrated only in the mind that is outside us or in the

senses that are external. The mind is not outside us. It is nothing perceptible as an object externally. The mind is only a name that we give to the externalised urge of ourselves in a wholesale fashion. Our own movement or impulsion externally is called the mind, and therefore, we are the mind. So, when it is said that the mind has desires, it is we who have the desires, it is I who have the desires. And the 'I' is not a dot in my personality. It is the whole thing that I am, from head to foot, in every fibre of my being and in every cell of my body. So, man is mind and mind is desire. And thus, the *pratyahara* process becomes a larger adventure on our part than a little effort that we think would be required to control our sense organs.

### **Relative Intensity of Various Desires and How to Meet Their Challenge**

If the question be asked of any person, "What desire do you have?", he will perhaps say, "Nothing." This is not true. The desires cannot manifest themselves when they need not manifest themselves. This is very important to remember. When they do not manifest themselves, it does not mean that they are not there. Why do they not manifest themselves? Because there is no necessity, for reasons of their own. Why should a person speak when he has no necessity to speak? He keeps quiet. He speaks only when it is necessary. Because a person does not speak, it does not mean that he is incapable of speaking. He speaks when it is required. So is the case with the senses. Why should they express themselves always, when they have other satisfactions in life? When one's whole personality is

engrossed in a particular type of satisfaction, there is no necessity to seek another kind of satisfaction, unless the particular kind of satisfaction in which one is engrossed finally turns out to be dissatisfying and not up to the mark. When a person has some kind of fulfilment in life and is happy about it, the other urges in him do not reveal themselves. Why should they? But, when the fulfilment which is appearing to satisfy him now does not come up to the mark, and turns out to be not really satisfying or not wholly satisfying, and some lacuna is found in it, he will slowly begin to have a vision of the presence of other avenues of satisfaction. And he will see a new light altogether, of the way in which satisfaction can be projected out in the world of space and time, by other techniques of approach.

So, every student of Yoga should be a great psychologist of his own mind. He must understand all these techniques of the mind and he must know how to deal with the mind at different times. When the mind is violent, what should be done? When it is sensible and reasonable in its asking, how to deal with it? And when it says nothing and is sleeping, what is one expected to do? There are three stages of desire. First, there is a very violent, tumultuous uproar and damaging clamour. At that time, what is one to do? It should be thought over. At other times, when the mind is very sensible and its requirement is justified, what is to be one's answer? In the third instance, the mind will say nothing. It will go to sleep. What is to be done then? These things are mentioned by Patanjali in a *sutra* where he says that the desires may be sleepy, they may manifest

themselves alternately like a current of electricity, not coming always in the same way, or they may be violent. At every one of these stages we have to find a method to be adopted, proper to the occasion. The sleeping enemy is sometimes more dangerous than the working enemy, because the former, in his sleep, is rejuvenated into further activity. The so-called impulse in us, called desire, is an intelligent urge. It is not a stupid impulse. Every desire is intelligent and knows how to fulfil itself by hook or by crook, by the adoption of various means. Now, every desire is not a devil, though every desire is capable of turning into a dangerous weapon when it can completely defeat our purpose. Hence, the necessary means of overcoming desires in different stages have to be thought over in the beginning itself: when a particular technique is adopted by the enemy, what is going to be my reaction to it? The student of Yoga must be a master of warfare, in a sense. He should know all the methods that he has to employ and others can also employ. When a particular weapon is wielded by the enemy, how to counteract it? We find various *astras* or missiles mentioned in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. There is the Narayanastra, there is Brahmastra, there is Varunastra, there is Mohanastra, and so many others. And, when a particular missile is launched by the enemy, we must know what is coming. We should not be under the impression that some friend is coming, and by timely detection of the nature of the thing that comes towards us, we will be in a position to counteract it and neutralise it with our own counter-missile. Otherwise, if we are not

alert, if we are wool-gathering, we will not know what is happening.

### **The Philosophy of Desires and Desire Fulfilment**

To some extent, we are required to know the structure of our mind. A philosophical education is necessary before a psychological education. The practice of Yoga comes afterwards. So, before the practice of Yoga begins, there is the need for psychological knowledge founded on a philosophical discipline. We should not suddenly jump into practice. Desires arise in the mind due to the very nature of our existence in the world, on account of the very circumstance of our life, and the relationship we bear to things outside. All desires are our longings for the lost spirit of ourselves. We are actually asking for our own selves. We are not asking for things.

It may be asked: "What is the meaning of saying, 'We are asking for ourselves'? It is very clear that we are asking for something else." This so-called something that we are asking for is only an instrument that we employ to rouse a kind of mood in our mind that will reflect a form of satisfaction in our own selves. This is a rather difficult idea to grasp. The world is visualised by us as a tool for our satisfaction; the world itself is not the source of our satisfaction. We cannot rouse ourselves into a mood of happiness merely in our own selves without the instrumentality of objects outside. The universal Self is the ultimate source of happiness for everyone. All joy is in this Being that is all-pervading. The almighty Absolute is the source of happiness, the embodiment of bliss; the thing that



we are seeking, and that which drags us in the direction of the so-called objects of sense. When we are asking for objects of sense, we are asking for God finally; a thing which we will not be able to appreciate at present in the psychological circumstance in which we are placed. Everywhere, God is speaking through every object. Perhaps, that is why the Kathopanishad tells us somewhere in one verse that the roads along which the chariot of this body is to be driven towards the goal are the objects of sense. The Upanishad tells us only this without giving much of a commentary thereon. The objects of the world are the roads along which we have to drive our organism for the attainment of Vishnu-Loka: *Tad-vishnoh paramam padam* (Abode of the Lord). The world is neither a friend nor an enemy; it is what it is. We have to understand this and not exploit this. The great source of joy is the Selfhood that is universal, but the universal Self has become an individualised self. That which is the infinite *purusha* has become a finite *jiva*. So, when one asks for the fulfilment of a particular wish or longing, one is asking for the infinitude of one's own self that is the Purusha. The *jiva*, the localised individuality, seeks expression through the objects of sense for the establishment of its own self in the *purusha*-hood of itself. It is the infinitude of the *purusha* that everyone is asking for, not the objects of the world. But, because infinitude is imperceptible and the world alone is perceptible, people run to that which is visible to the senses, and in the process, the invisible supernal urge for infinitude is completely ignored, and people know not if such an urge is really there at all!

## Difficulty of Sense-control and the Need for God's Grace

A little bit of understanding has to be exercised in the control of the senses. Philosophical discipline is necessary to train ourselves in the direction of this understanding. We should not be under the impression that it is easy to control the senses. Nobody has done it and it is not easy to do it. The senses are very terrible. We cannot control the senses by force of will. But they can be subdued to some extent, in the same way as a chronic illness can be controlled to some extent. Such illness cannot be eradicated totally, but it can be checked in its vehemence to some extent. The senses, too, can be subdued somewhat, but they can be completely conquered only in deep meditation, in *samyama*, in *samadhi*, and finally, in *kaivalya moksha*. Not before that.

As per the *pratyahara* technique mentioned in the Yoga Sastras, the withdrawal of the senses is attempted in many ways. The earliest and the grossest form of it is a physical isolation of oneself from tempting things. Then, having placed oneself in a suitable atmosphere, one has to ruminate or muse over the circumstances of perfect control over even the desire for sense objects and not merely over a perception of them. Even the taste for sense objects has to go. *Vairagya* or abandonment, relinquishment or renunciation, is an absence of desire. *Vairagya* or *viraga* means absence of *raga*. That means freedom from longing. Freedom from longing internally is called *vairagya* or renunciation. *Vairagya* is not just a physical dissociation from objects. But, how can we be free from longing for a thing, when we know that it can satisfy us in some way? We are muddled in our heads; and therefore, we are under the

impression that objects can satisfy us. So, intellectual education is necessary once again; a rational investigation is called for. We cannot subdue our desires unless we are assured that the desires are wholly fulfilled, either by actual extinguishing of them by providing them with their demands, or a sublimation of them by deep understanding. Here, God's grace is vitally important. God only can help us, not anybody else. *Daivi hyesha gunamayi mama maya duratyaya, mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te.* It is God's force or Sakti which manifests itself as desire. Who can stand before it? Not all our strength can be of any avail before God's Sakti. Hercules cannot stand before God's Sakti. The only way out for the spiritual seeker is to surrender himself to Him and say, "O God! Help me, I am helpless", and He will take care of the seeker.

### **Pratyahara in Patanjali's Yoga**

Patanjali does not go into larger details of the *pratyahara* process, but he gives us a very important definition. He says that *pratyahara* is that state where the senses appear to be one with the mind. They are no more outside the mind; they have become the mind itself as it were. The rays have been withdrawn by the sun and nothing emanates from him afterwards. The senses have assumed the *svarupa* or the form of the mind itself, as it were. That is *indriya pratyahara*.

The mind becomes weak, when a part of it goes out, just as the electric power-house can become weak in its content of voltage, if there are too many electric connections given beyond the permissible limit. Likewise, the mind can

become weak by connecting itself too much with things outside. But, when all the connections are cut off, the power-house meter shows a rise in voltage at once. Likewise, one can realise a rise in the voltage of strength in the mind, the moment the connections of the Indriyas with sense objects are severed completely. Just as in the case of a river whose movements are blocked by a dam, there is an immediate rise in the level of water, the level of energy rises in the mind, when the avenues of expression in the form of the senses are closed. This is the information available regarding *pratyahara* in Patanjali's Yoga, but the commentators go into some more details. One of the Rishis is supposed to have said that the highest form of sense-control is that state of mind when one is not able to see at all anything that is in front of him. A person in that state is not able to see anything even if he keeps his eyes open. Sometimes, it happens to us in ordinary life also. If our mind is engaged deeply in thinking something, we may be keeping our eyes open, but nonetheless will see nothing, even if a motorcar speeds by; and we will hear nothing, even if a gun-shot is fired nearby. This is because of the deep absorption of the mind in some particular thing. So, the highest achievement in *pratyahara* is that stage where, even when the senses are active, we are not able to visualise anything in front of us. This is the pinnacle of *pratyahara*, but to achieve this state, we have to keep proceeding by degrees.

## Chapter 14

### CONCENTRATION—ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

*Sva-vishayasamprayoge chitta-svarurpanukara  
ivendriyanam pratyaharah:* Such is the definition of *pratyahara* given in a *sutra* of Patanjali. Having detached themselves from their respective objects, and having assumed, as it were, the nature of the mind, when the senses stand in union with the psyche, it may be said that there is *pratyahara* or an abstraction of the senses. The senses not only move towards their objects, but identify themselves with the same, assume the form of those objects, become the objects as it were, losing their own self-identity for the time being. The subject becomes the object for all practical purposes. A wrenching oneself away from this false identification with that which one is not and a return to one's own self—for the time being, the mind—is the process of *pratyahara*. *pratyahara* means the opposite process.

“*Yada panchavatishtante jnanani manasa saha, buddhischa na vicheshtati tamahuh paramam gatim*”, says the Kathopanishad. The five senses and the intellect, together with the mind, stand steady, the intellect does not oscillate, and there is an integrated fixity of the total psyche, like the flame of a lamp which does not flicker in a windless place—such is the nature of this great achievement or attainment called *pratyahara*.

## The Nature of Samsara and the Working of Maya

The personality of the individual is distracted and weakened on account of the energy getting spent out by way of sensory perception and contact. When we divide our property among various persons, there is a diminution in the extent of the property, or rather, when we lend out to various persons in the world the wealth that we have, we are left with very little for ourselves. The economic strength of ours is diminished, because of the fact that we have lent out all our money or property to other people. But, suppose we get the money back, the property or the wealth that was lent out is received back, then, again we are in our original status. The economic strength of ours is re-established in its pristine completeness. Something like this happens when we cognise objects through the mind, perceive through the senses, and lose ourselves in this oceanic distraction of sense-perception. There is a tearing up of personality, as it were, when there is too much of attachment to things of the world, attachment working through the sense-organs and propelled by the force of the desires. Man loses himself and becomes another in every form of attachment. The whole principle of Yoga is this much—the return of the consciousness of the *purusha* to its own self. The more the *purusha* ramifies its rays towards objects or the forms of *prakriti* externally, the less it remains as the *purusha* and the more it appears to be the *prakriti*, having imbibed the characteristics of *prakriti*. *Purusha* becomes the *prakriti*, as it were. The subject becomes the object. Consciousness becomes matter. What can be worse than this? But, this is the essence of what we call *samsara*, the aberration or the

movement of the Self, away from itself, in the direction of what it is not. How can one become what one is not? It is logically an indefensible position; yet this is what happens. That is why they call it *maya*, a kind of delusive operation, an illusion that is cast before us, an appearance of that which cannot happen at all. Yet, this happens in some way. The whole thing is a mystery. This mystery is called *maya*. How can the subject become the object? How can *purusha* become *prakriti*? How can consciousness become matter? How can one become another person? But it has happened. This should not happen, and the great art of the return of the *purusha* to itself through the various stages of the entanglement of *purusha* in *prakriti* is the great Yoga, whether of Patanjali or of anybody else.

When the mind is very much agitated, disturbed for any reason, it is difficult for anyone to exercise discrimination. The reason fails when the emotions become wild. And to say that reason has to be exercised at that moment is to talk through the hat! It will not work, because the emotions become turbulent only when the reason fails. The reason has already failed, and if at that time one says “Exercise reason”, it is not possible. However, among many other techniques that we have to adopt to avoid this circumstance of failing utterly in this manner, Patanjali mentions that some sort of a *kumbhaka* may be of advantage when we are too much upset or disturbed by emotions of any kind. We have seen what *kumbhaka* is and what Patanjali means by *pranayama*. There is one particular *sutra* where he seems to tell us that distractions of the mind can be checked temporarily by the expulsion of the breath and retention of

the same outside, though this is neither a remedy for the activity of the mind nor a solution to the problem—*Pracchardana-vidharanabhyam va pranasya*. By an expulsion of the breath and a retention of the same outside after expulsion, the violent activity of the mind can be subdued—a procedure which one can experiment with in one's own daily life. When the breath is expelled and held, the mind ceases to think for a few seconds. Tensions are not relieved, of course, but they are held in abeyance. Their further growth or movement is restrained, just as the forward movement of wild animals is to a large extent restrained when they are controlled by a set of reins, though the wildness of the animals is not remedied merely by a check exercised upon them. Patanjali's *sutra* does not prescribe a medicine for this illness of the mind in the form of violent attachments, but suggests a kind of tentative application of a method which will, for the time being, hold the mind in check from moving further on into greater and greater forms of velocity.

Every type of *kumbhaka* is a help in the control of the mind. Because, the retention of the breath in *kumbhaka* has a direct impact upon the workings of the mind. *Prana* and mind are very intimately related to each other. That is why so much importance is given to *pranayama* in the Yoga Sastra. As we have noted earlier, whenever we try to concentrate our mind on any important subject or theme or activity, we hold our breath unconsciously—because, the movement of the *prana* and the movement of the mind are almost parallel, and they act like brothers born to a single parent. One is an internal mechanism of power, another is



the external application of it in the direction of the objects outside. We have already observed that the control of the senses should not be attempted with any excessive application of the force of will upon the senses and the mind. The whole of Yoga is an educational process; and education is not a force that is applied upon the mind, but a gradual remedying procedure. It is a growth into a healthy state of mind, into perfection finally. Thus, the impulsion of the mind working through the *pranas* and the senses has to be taken care of with great caution, by understanding and application of other methods, such as the study of scriptures and living with a group in an atmosphere which is comparatively free from unnecessary distractions.

### **Taking the Aid of Viveka**

There are things in this world which are not absolutely essential for our lives, and there are things which are unavoidable. The unavoidable follow us wherever we go, and it should not be very difficult for any seeker or student of Yoga to free himself from involvement in things which are not essential. The first and foremost thing that we have to do is to find out what are the essentials and the non-essentials in life. This is not an easy thing to do, though it may look very simple. Because the mind is a trickster, it is very cunning in its actions, and it knows how to manipulate its longings. Every desire, every longing, every passion appears to be a necessary thing when it takes the upper hand. But, *viveka sakti* or the power of discrimination, when it is properly applied, will tell us what are the things that are really essential and most unavoidable. Those things

that are even indirectly connected with our Yoga practice, and our minimum form of existence in the world, may be regarded as unavoidable. We cannot exist without them. Or, they are necessary in some way—socially, physically or psychologically—for helping us, aiding us for the time being, in the present state of affairs in our Yoga practices, though at a future date those so-called necessary things may become unnecessary. I may require a coat in winter. It does not mean that I require it always. Certain things are necessary under certain conditions and they are not necessary always. And we should not cling to them with greed. Often, we cannot distinguish between a luxury and a necessity. Every luxury looks like a necessity, because of the peculiar proclivity of the mind that is saturated with greed and covetousness of various types. That is why we come back once again to the point of the need for a good guide in Yoga. Because, without such a guide or a Guru, an immature man cannot know what is a luxury and what is a necessity; and he cannot know where he is side-tracked and led along the wrong way and given a false instruction that the path is the right one.

### **Living Faith in the Existence of God and in His Capacity to Help**

So, at the earliest stages of Yoga practice, if the student is sincere in his aspiration for Yoga, it is necessary that to the extent practicable under the conditions of his life, he should be away from such atmosphere which directly affects his peace of mind. Sometimes it will not be easy to apply this technique. A person who is working in an office,

where he is subjected to severe harassment by his boss, may like to leave that place and go elsewhere. This is easily said and done. But then, while it is true that this gentleman can move away from the troublesome place of his office, it is quite possible that he may be moving from the frying pan into the fire because even while he may gain something, he may lose something else. Circumstances of this type are galore in our life. We are not living under situations which are capable of compartmentalisation into airtight sections. Everything seeps into everything else. One thing seems to be connected with the other. And often it appears that we cannot take a bath in the ocean, after the waves subside. So, broadly speaking, these instructions are given to us that we may be away from things which are distracting and which are likely to cause emotional upheaval, create tension in the nerves and create social conflict. This is a very good admonition that is given to us by the elders. We should take the admonition seriously, though it may be hard when we actually try to live up to the advice, because life is not a straight-line movement along a beaten track. Oftentimes the movement called life is a winding process, with zigzag paths and blind alleys, various ups and downs, and with forces on the way which may directly oppose our further march. Difficult is life; it is not honey and milk. But, a sincerity in our heart, an honest longing to achieve the higher perfection in life, a love for God, we may say, has its own effect in spite of all the turmoils of life. Sincerity always pays, and it never suffers. Where our heart is wedded solemnly to this noble practice, this sublime endeavour of Yoga, we are sure to receive blessings from

the quarters of the world, from the angels in heaven, why, from God Himself.

The mind of man is sunk so deep in the forms of the objects of sense that it cannot awaken itself to a faith in the existence of God and the capacity of the angels in heaven to help man in his need. The whole world is a friend, and it is a beautiful organisation of compassion and merciful forces. A good man never suffers, though often it is said that he only suffers. It looks as if it is so, but it is not so. There is, in the earlier stages, an appearance of the thriving of evil in the world, but it is an appearance only. In the long stretch of duration called eternity, these few years of our suffering are like the wisp of a second. So, we are likely to convert a mole into a mountain, and a little sorrow that has descended upon our heads, in the form of the powers of nature impinging upon ourselves, into a veritable hell. All our sufferings in life are, to a large extent, the repercussions produced by what we have done in the past. So, we should not be taken aback by these little sorrows of life. We should always remember that these are processes of purgation, of purification, and that we shall not be in this condition always. Finally, the world is very just and the law of the universe is exceptionally friendly.

That is why at some place Patanjali himself mentions that one of the best means of training the mind, of controlling the *vruttis*, is contemplation on Isvara, *japa* of the mantra with a connotation of God's existence—*Tajjapas tad-artha-bhavanam*. But, apart from this inward affiliation of the seeking spirit with the higher powers of nature, a constant watch upon the disciple by a Guru is

necessary. Our intellect may fail one day or the other if we try to stand on our own legs, because the world is too big for a little individual.

### **Encountering the Powers of Nature**

The powers of Nature are too incomprehensible and too incredibly large for the little individual to encounter them, to face them. To succeed in such an encounter with Nature, one has to develop a strength equal to the powers of Nature, which is not an ordinary job. So, we may have to apply various methods in trying to restrain the mind and should not rest content with applying only one method; just as in military manoeuvres, they apply many techniques and not only one technique. If they did not do so, there might be a retrograde movement and perhaps a defeat. Just as Nature works in many ways, just as we take different types of diet on different days, it is necessary that the student of Yoga should also apply the techniques of restraint of the mind in as many ways as possible. We do not eat the same food every day, though we eat every day. We change the type of diet daily, because the body and the mind have their own idiosyncrasies. Somehow we have to transform this process of the practice of Yoga into a happy and joyous undertaking, rather than imagine that it is painful work imposed upon us as in a prison-house. We do not try to practise Yoga as if we are captives in a concentration camp and as if Yoga is a punishment meted out to us. No. It is something that we have undertaken of our own accord with wide-open eyes, with a knowledge of what it is, and how essential it is for our life.

The mind refuses to concentrate on any particular object, because it has not been convinced that the object chosen for the purpose of concentration is capable of bestowing upon it all the boons that it seeks. We have only heard people say that concentration is good. We have read this in many books. We have been hammering on this matter. But, our heart has a reason which reason does not know. The heart cannot always agree with the reason's judgement, because we are more hearts than reasons oftentimes. Our feelings gain the upper hand and put down the opinions of the reasons. Who can be really convinced at the bottom of one's heart that all that the world can give to a person is also there in the object of concentration? Who can believe this? How can one force oneself or persuade oneself to believe that all the wealth and the riches of creation can be acquired merely by an act of concentration on a dot on the wall, or on the flame of a candle, or a flower that is rosy, or any imagery that is conceivable? Though there is a kind of rationale behind this argument, and intellectually perhaps we are capable of being convinced that there is a point in this type of concentration that we are required to practise, yet, there is a dissatisfaction at the core of the heart—the world is so rich, so beautiful, grand and perfect. There are many things in this world which are exceedingly beautiful and worth possessing, having and enjoying. What good is this concentration? "I have been doing this concentration for years. I have been a fool, a wool-gathering individual. I have lost this world, I have lost the other world, and am in a helpless condition."—So saying, the mind weeps. We begin to cry inwardly that we

have been befooled, as it were, by the so-called advice to concentrate the mind on some point. There is a revolt and a rebellion from inside, and nothing can be worse than psychological revolution.

This may happen to any person because Yoga is a terror, though it is also a mother and a father. Nothing can be so beneficial as Yoga is, and nothing can be so terrific and frightening as Yoga is. This is the irony of the whole matter. It is not easy for a person to feel in one's own heart that a concentration on a form, whatever that form may be, inward or outward, is capable of bestowing the abundance of the riches of the world. Who does not wish to become a king, if it could be possible? Who does not wish to possess the whole world, if it were practicable? We know that it is not possible. So, like the fox in the story rejecting the sour grapes, we are likely to reject the world as not worth having, because we cannot have it. We all know this very well. We are not fit and we have not got the capacity to possess the treasures of the universe; we have not got the means to acquire the powers by which we can be the masters of the universe, of the world. We are defeatists, poor nothings trying to practise Yoga, for an end which also appears to be nothing. These difficulties will have to be faced one day or the other. In facing them, many have failed, have had a fall. With such a thud they had to break their heads. They would have been better without Yoga than with it. This is a sorry state of affairs. If it has come about in the lives of some, it can come about in the lives of others also. So, it is necessary once again to bring back to our own memory the necessity to go slowly, and see that we are really convinced

in our hearts that what we are doing is hundred per cent correct, and that we are on the right path. “Absolutely I have no doubt in my mind, and my practice is the one that I am expected to perform. I am treading the correct way, and the fact that I do not see any light in the horizon, the fact that I have no experience whatsoever even after years of practice, is not going to deter me from continuing the practice, because I already know that I have to pass through all these stages of oblivion, darkness and helplessness.”— Such should be the firm conviction of every Yoga student. Even when we are utterly helpless and seem to be falling down, we must be convinced that the so-called fall is only a part of the process of rising up. But, who can be convinced like this when one is actually falling? So, God save us and the Guru bless us! These are some of the cautions that have to be administered to the mind of a student of Yoga, if he is going to be sincere when he takes to its practice.

### **The Opposing Forces of Good and Evil**

All this happens, unfortunately for us though, because nature with all its powers, though ultimately a great friend, has its own fancies; and the powers of nature move in two directions, inwardly to the centre and outwardly in the direction of objects, to the periphery of things. In the Sixteenth Chapter, as also in certain other passages, the Bhagavad Gita speaks of the *daivi* and the *asuri sampat*: *Daivi-sampad-vimokshaya nibandhayasuri mata*. It is said that the *daivi sampat* is for the liberation of the soul and the *asuri sampat* is for the bondage of the soul. The *daivi sampat* is nothing but the cumulative force of the



movements of nature towards the centre of things, and the *asuri sampat* is the impulsion of nature towards space, time and objectivity. And we are caught up in the middle, between the devil and the deep sea. We are pulled in two directions. We are urged forward in the direction of space, time and objectivity on the one hand, while on the other, there is also an inward urge to move towards the centre of things. The difficulty arises on account of a conflict that often takes place between these two forces. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are nothing but the annals of these cosmic conflicts, through which every individual has to pass in the practice of Yoga. There is a place called Kurukshetra in this cosmos, where the rival powers dash against each other with daggers drawn, and we do not know who will win. Sometimes one side appears to win, and sometimes the other side, with no conclusive victory established on either side. But, it is said that truth triumphs—*Satyameva jayate*. And what is truth? Truth somehow seems to be a unitary comprehensiveness and an integration of things, a centrality of everything in the perfection of the Absolute. Any aspiration, any movement towards that centre should therefore be regarded as a movement towards truth, and therefore, that aspiration succeeds one day or the other—if not today, tomorrow. So, in the Mahabharata, the Pandavas had to succeed and not the Kauravas, not the forces that move towards things outside. Therefore we have to be happy even in hell itself in the thought that truth will triumph ultimately. And hell, for us, may take the form of these conflicts between the powers

within and the powers without. Slow and steady should be the march of the Yogi towards Perfection.

### **The Philosophy behind Dharana or Concentration**

These are some of the ideas that occur in the context of the practice of *pratyahara*, or the restraint of the senses and the mind, a difficult process indeed, a hard thing to achieve, but very, very important. Concentration of the mind on one thing is hard. It is a very difficult thing for the mind to accept that concentration on any one thing is going to be a real advantage to it. Many Yogis go on practising concentration and they seem to have achieved nothing. They themselves are not happy. They wander about hither and thither in search of things other than the object that they are expected to concentrate upon. The mind seeks some diversions, some satisfactions. Even a straw can appear as a support in a flood where one is sinking to his utter destruction. Even a little satisfaction is sufficient. It gives relief when everything has been lost. But, a thoroughgoing analysis of the psychology of *dharana* or concentration, or rather the philosophy behind it, should be able to convince the spiritual seeker that everything will be in his hands if only he will succeed even a little in concentration on anything. *dharana* is supposed to be a fixing of the attention of the mind on a particular thing, either externally or internally, a form outside or a concept inside. Both are good enough; both are permissible.

Here, the spiritual seeker may well ask: "But, why should I concentrate on a dot, on a flame, on a flower, on an image? What is the point behind it? Am I not aspiring

for *moksha*, *kaivalya*, establishment of myself in the Infinite Purusha, God-realisation? What is this concentration on a point? What is its relevance to God-realisation? When the mind cannot see any connection between this little, incipient, seed form of concentration and that great, grand ideal of liberation, or omnipotence and omnipresence, there will be a reluctance of the mind to concentrate. Why should a person stand for election, if he cannot see the relevance of the election to what is in his mind? The candidate knows that the sweating, and the sleepless nights that he spends in canvassing for his own election, will yield its fruit one day or the other, a thing that he is longing for in his mind. Otherwise, what is the good of merely sweating it out, if it has no connection at all with what one is aspiring for?

Is this concentration on something a kind of sweating unnecessarily? No. It has an internal relationship with the grand goal that we are aspiring for. The whole universe is an integrated completeness. Everything is connected with everything else. A little sand particle on the banks of the Ganga is connected with the stars in the heavens, with the solar system itself. The mighty sun who is ninety-three millions of miles away from us can know what is happening inside our kitchen. Inasmuch as the whole structure of creation is a totality and a completeness of the type of an organism, everything is connected with everything, even the little thing on which we may concentrate is connected with the great goal that we are aspiring for. *Moksha* in the Supreme Purusha is not unconnected with the point on which we might be concentrating, because everything

inward as well as outward is connected with everything in the cosmos. So, let us be happy. Let us rejoice and dance in ecstasy that we are touching the Supreme Perfection Itself in some modicum, even when we are touching the point on a wall through our concentration. Why should we not be happy if we know the art of being happy? Yoga is a movement from joy to joy, *ananda* to *ananda*, and not a movement from *duhkha* to *duhkha*, from sorrow to sorrow. Yoga is not a curse that has descended upon us. It is a great blessing that has been bestowed upon us by the very structure of things, by the nature of the world, by the very justice of God. So, let us seat ourselves in a posture—*Sthira-sukham asanam*—and persuade ourselves to the joyous conviction that the few minutes that we spend in the concentration of the mind is a tremendous gain; a great achievement, some credit that we are adding to the bank-balance of our life. *Nehabhikra-manasosti pratyavayo na vidyate*: There is no loss of effort, especially in the spiritual field. Every effort is a gain. Every penny that is put in the bank account is an addition to the balance, even if it be only one penny. It does not matter; something has been added, no matter how small an amount. Likewise, a noble effort is a noble effort after all, even if it be only a small effort, and it helps. It increases the strength of one's spiritual wealth.

The mind will revolt after some time. The mind is an imp, a monkey. It is distracted already. Humorously, people tell us that the mind is worse than a monkey. It can be compared, if at all, to a distracted monkey, which has drunk liquor, and in that inebriated condition, is stung by a scorpion and is possessed by a devil as well. One can

imagine how bad the human mind must be to deserve such a sort of comparison. But, there is some truth in it. Great masters have warned us that one may bind a wild elephant with a silken thread, one may swallow the waters of the ocean, or drink fire, but one cannot control the mind, because the mind is vehement in its impulse towards the objects outside in space and in time. It does not want anything other than this. So, by cajolment, by education, sometimes by pampering where it is essential, the mind has to be brought back to the point of concentration. *Viveka* is very essential. We have to exercise great discrimination, great reason. After days of concentration, the student of Yoga may find that his mind is dull, fatigued, exhausted, and not prepared to go further in concentration. In that case, he should take recourse to other aids in the control of the mind, like the study of elevating scriptures, or even a chat with friends on elevating spiritual topics. It is believed that one-fourth of our knowledge comes from our teacher, one-fourth from our own effort, one-fourth from our keeping company with colleagues and friends in the classroom, and one-fourth from the passage of time itself. So, discussion among friends is also good. Study, mutual discussion, consultation with one's Guru or teacher, and above all things, an utter sincerity of feeling will pave the way to success.

### **Breaking the Knot of the Mind**

*Desa-bandhas chittasya dharana*, says Patanjali. The tying of the mind to a particular spot is called concentration, and this spot can be anything. One need not

worry too much about the form of this spot. Any spot is good enough. In a great passage of the famous Panchadasi of Sage Vidyanaraya, the author tells us that even a spade, a pickaxe, a shovel, a tree and a stone can be taken as objects of meditation on Isvara, because it is Isvara who has taken all these forms. God, the perfect omnipotent, omniscient Being is manifest even in the lowest of matter, in the least of forms, in the worst of things. So, if we can invoke the perfection, the omnipotence and omnipresence of God in anything in which we have faith, be it a stone image or any other conceptual God, on that we can concentrate. It does not matter, because concentration is a process by which we break the knot of the mind, by which it is tied to a complexity of ideas, by involvement in space and time. The mind is nothing but a knot. It is not a hard substance that we can touch with our fingers. But, it is not a knot that we can see with our eyes either. It is a psychic knot, a kind of confusion as it were, a mess, and a point with which everything seems to be associated, and from which we cannot extricate even one item easily. A complete chaos is the mind. But, in spite of its being this, it is inwardly connected by prehensive forces with everything in the world. The mind, to define it in another way, is an urge towards space and time. When consciousness drives itself or propels itself in the direction of space and time, we call it the mind. There is no mind other than consciousness, finally. It does not exist. It is a kind of hybrid. We do not know from where it is born. It has neither father nor mother. It has somehow cropped up. The force or the vehemence with which consciousness tries to rush towards

externalised forms is what is called the mind. So restraint of the mind means the checking of this impulsion of consciousness to move outwardly in space and time. So, the concentration process or the fixing of the mind on something naturally checks this impulse, and instead of diversifying itself in various forms of space and time, the mind collects itself for the time being on one point. And concentration is a deathblow to the mind finally. The mind is nothing but an association of consciousness with forms, and this association is broken through by concentration, just as energy can be released by bombarding an atom. If an atom is bombarded with powerful rays of energy constantly and repeatedly, the so-called static atom opens up a terrific force that has been latent or hidden within it. The mind is the seed of the cosmic force. The whole universe is there inside the mind, though the mind looks like a small point. By a bombardment of the mind by means of repeated concentration, the cosmic energy is released, as it were, in the mind, and at once the Yoga practitioner feels an awakening of himself to the fact of his relationship with all things, in place of his previous thinking that he were just this body or something related to physical objects outside. A repeated practice has to be conducted every day and it should be without remission. *Tivra-samveganam asannah*. When the aspiration, the concentration, the effort, is very intense, success is immediate. And this practice has to be continued every day without break of effort, with a tremendous love, *satkarasevita*. Then it becomes *dridha-bhumi*; one gets established in the practice. So, the practice of concentration, *dharana* is a great boon, a blessing. It is

divine grace itself that has been bequeathed to us, and therefore, let us be happy.



## Chapter 15

### MEDITATION—THEORY AND PRACTICE (1)

Now we are in a field which is entirely practical, having covered a large ground in discussing the theoretical basis of Yoga, as propounded by sage Patanjali. Perhaps the most difficult part of any teaching is the practical part of it. *Dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—the last three stages of the eightfold Yoga—constitute the main Yoga, so to say. The discussions in the earlier chapters are but a prelude to this final leap that one has to take into the unknown, as it were. In the last chapter was expounded a few ideas concerning *dharana* or concentration, its meaning, its significance and its value. Students of Yoga generally take to meditation at once under the impression that Yoga means meditation. While the notion that meditation means Yoga is correct, yet, nevertheless, without a proper preparation of oneself for the adoption of this final technique of Yoga, it would be rather a tedium than a happy occupation of the mind. One of the tests that we can apply to our own selves when we sit for concentration or meditation, as to whether we are well prepared for it or not, is to see how we feel when we sit for concentration. Are we frightened? Do we get exhausted? Do we feel like getting up as early as possible and diverting our attention to some other activity? Do we sometimes feel that this practice known as concentration or meditation is a painful one from which one would very much wish to be free at the earliest hour? Or do we feel, on the other hand, that the more we sit and the more we concentrate, the better and the happier we are? Do we feel when we rise

from our concentration a greater energy, a better satisfaction, and a more comprehensive understanding of things? Or, do we rise up from our meditation with despondency, a spirit of defeatism, and a hopelessness of pursuit? These questions each aspirant may put to himself, and the answers that come would let him know where he stands.

### **Choosing the Point of Concentration**

Teachers of Yoga have hundreds of things to say about concentration. Each teacher will propagate his own technique—whatever he has studied, or whatever he has heard, or whatever he himself is doing as a practice. All these are methods, are valid techniques. Any method is good enough, provided it is resorted to in right earnest. The initial difficulty that the student will feel is the choosing of the particular point of concentration; whether it is to be internal or external is a question that will be raised in the mind. What should one concentrate upon, the outside or the inside? It will be difficult to decide this at once because both alternatives will look all right, and yet the student will be oscillating between the two alternatives. Even supposing he comes to a decision as to whether it should be the outside or the inside, he will not know how to conceive of it. What is he to think? Many say, “We think nothing when we concentrate.” It is a foolish statement. It is impossible not to think anything unless one is sleeping or one is in a state of supernal absorption in a high state of consciousness. A beginner cannot be in a state where no activity of the mind is there. It may look like no activity,

because of a total absorption of the mind on one thing. When it is moving fast in one direction, it may look that it is not doing anything, but it is doing work.

In order to avoid these difficulties of choosing the point of concentration and deciding upon its nature or characteristic, it has always been suggested that one should receive initiation. Initiation is the process by which the student is introduced into the very characteristic of concentration, together with a description of the nature of the object, perhaps even with a little bit of caution as to the difficulty that he may have to encounter on the way, the problems that he may have to face. Nobody generally, especially in the traditions of mysticism and Yoga, would take to Yoga or meditation independently by one's own self. Everyone receives commission or an initiation from a Master. All great men had their Gurus, though they themselves were great men. Initiation by a Guru is a requisite on this mysterious path which we call Yoga or meditation or spirituality or God-consciousness.

Any object is good enough, provided it is possible for us to visualise in that object all the values that we are seeking in life. The object as such is not what is important. What we see in that object is important. The visualisation of value in that object is what is of consequence, and not the mere substantiality of that object. What is in a person, or in anything in this world, except some material content constituted of the five elements—earth, air, fire, water and ether? Every person's body is constituted of these elements only, and every blessed thing is of this nature only. But then, do we not see difference? One person, to us, is of one

value, and another person is of another value. One thing is this, another thing is that. We have to read a meaning into the persons and things of the world for various reasons of our own. And it is the reading of this meaning or value into the person or the thing that is of consequence to us, and not the person or thing itself. Otherwise, nothing has any value in this world, unless we are able to see any value in them.

### **Visualisation of Value in the Object of Meditation or Worship**

Now, the visualisation of value in an object is again a difficulty. When we worship an image, conceptual or physical, we superimpose upon it all the characteristics of a transcendent being. Do we not often offer our obeisance to a photograph or to a portrait of some personality whom we consider as worthy of adoration? What is there in a photograph except paper and ink? Do we then prostrate ourselves before paper and ink? No. We visualise a meaning and a significance that is imbedded in the photograph, as it were, due to the operation of our psyche in a particular manner in the context of our relationship with that object. This is a very strange thing and very difficult to grasp. What is meaning, what is value, where is it located, nobody knows, whether it is in our head or whether it is in the object. We cannot say that it is in our head. We are not offering our obeisance to something in our head, we are seeing something outside. Nor is it true that it is really there outside. There is some peculiar intermixture of values. Here is the problem. However, people who take to religious practice, whatever be the form of it, find that it is the nature

of the spirit, the characteristic of their aspiration, to see God in some form. Every religion, even that which does not recognise much the value of idols and images, has some image before it. There is no religion without an idol. Only, the definition of the idol changes. Some worship a stone, some worship a picture, or a marble statue or a portrait, or even a kind of atmosphere which they create physically, where they offer prayers, viewing that atmosphere as the idol of their devotion. Whatever be the idol, the idol is a conceptual form that we superimpose on the physical atmosphere outside, as a necessity of the very structure of our mind in its religious aspiration. So we offer a prayer in a temple, in an auditorium, in a church or in a mosque, where our mind gathers itself into a force of invocation of a power which it feels as a Presence, transcending the image or the concept of the portrait, and yet animating it in some way, mysteriously, capable of being appreciated by the devotee only and not by anybody else. We begin to feel the pervasiveness of some force in the object of our adoration—a *murti* in a temple or anything else, as the case may be. We are not offering our prayers to any physical object. It is not a prayer or an adoration to a painting in a physical sense. It is a psychological atmosphere that we rouse within ourselves. Or, to put it better, a spiritual atmosphere rises under circumstances which are beyond the ken of psychology and logical science. Religion overcomes the limits of science and logic, and they have nothing to say about religion. They can say nothing, because they lie outside the purview of religion.

## **The Religious Spirit and the Inrush of the Soul towards the Absolute**

There is something in man that defies the definitions of science and logic. There is something in man that tells him that he is something more than a man, though he always regards himself as a man. There is sometimes a feeling in us that we are more than mere human beings, and this feeling in us rises to the surface when we are in a state of intense rapture caused by either great joy or sorrow. Great agony and unbounded satisfaction, both break the boundaries of our personality. At that time a person is no longer a man or a woman. He is something he himself cannot define. This spirit, which overwhelms individuality oftentimes, and breaks the bounds of the limitations of individuality, is a religious spirit. No man can define what religion is. Only he who is religious knows what religion is. It is neither a matter to be written in a book nor something to be gathered as a piece of information from libraries. Nobody, no one can define what sorrow is, and no one can say what joy is, unless one has felt it within one's own self. Lo! So is this religious spirit, which is the cause, or the cause of all causes, behind our efforts in life which urge us towards an effort for something which we cannot see in this world, yet can visualise in all the forms. People offer prayers to trees, stones, and even to the skies above, which apparently is an emptiness. They look up to an emptiness and pray to the mighty power which they feel as something which is there, whether or not they are going to see it with their eyes, or even conceive it in their mind ordinarily. Unless we are possessed with a true religious spirit, understanding

religion in its proper meaning, we will not be able to take to Yoga concentration or meditation with seriousness.

Meditation or concentration is not an experiment that we make with things. It is an inrush of the soul towards that, about the value of which it is fully convinced, and there is no necessity to conduct any kind of experimentation in regard to it. One who tries to experiment with Yoga will get nothing out of it, just as one cannot experiment with a person and see whether he is a good friend or not. One becomes the friend of another person by a means which is beyond the ordinary, empirical observation. We are directly pulled towards someone or something oftentimes, or repelled by factors which are not the results of our considered judgement many a time. We suddenly like a thing, or suddenly dislike a thing, not because we have come to a logical conclusion in regard to it by careful analysis, but something beyond this speaks which is not of this world. Such a spirit will possess us when we are real students of Yoga, especially when we are in the heightened stage of *dharana* or *dhyana*. These are very highly advanced stages and we should not be under the impression that we are always ready for it. We have to go deep into the precedent stages of Yoga threadbare and see where we stand as regards the requirement. We have tried to understand something about the true meaning of *yama*, *niyama* and the other stages that precede the stage which we are discussing now. We cannot be under the impression that everything is over and we have bypassed all these stages. No one can bypass them so easily, because there are tentacles which pull a man to the earth, whatever be his

greatness. Nobody can be so great as to defy the world wholly. So, every moment of time, even if we are sometimes having the feeling that we have fairly advanced in Yoga, even then, we must be very cautious to see whether we are well grounded in the earlier stages, in their proper meaning and significance.

We can take to any point as our object of concentration, because, every object is as good as every other object, inasmuch as everything is connected to everything else. If we know one thing, there is no need to know another thing. Such is the nature of things here. If we go deep into anything, we have gone to the depth of everything else. If we have touched one thing properly, we have touched all things. So, we can take to any form which we have judged for ourselves as the proper one for our purpose. Many a time, people take to concepts of God as their objects of concentration. This is the usual method which people adopt, though there are other psychic types who prefer purely impersonal forms of concentration such as a flame, a flower or a brilliant light. The necessity which people usually feel for entertaining a concept of God for the purpose of concentration is that somehow we believe in God. We cannot get away from this idea. There seems to be something about this. So, we are drawn to this concept willy-nilly, and whatever be our notion of this Omnipotence, that notion comes to the forefront as the object that we choose for the purpose of *dharana*. It does not matter here what our concept of God is. Whatever be our concept, that is good enough. The psychology, or the logic, of concentration applies equally to any form, whether



it is religious or otherwise. The idea of the Creator is the overmastering idea generally in religious practices, and we may lay special emphasis on this technique, inasmuch as this seems to be the predilection of all minds everywhere, to whatever religion they may belong. Who can gainsay that sometime or the other one feels drawn or pulled to some invisible presence, from which one seeks succour, when one is drowning in the flood of life? This spirit within us which seeks to overcome itself in a larger communion is the spirit of religion. This must guide us in our practices in Yoga. So, let us come to the point and decide that our concept of God is the object of our concentration in Yoga, because there is nothing else that we can do.

### **God and His Omnipresence**

The next question would be how we can properly conduct ourselves in our devotion to what we call God in our hearts. What is God? Whatever be our notion of the Creator of the universe, to whatever religious faith, we may belong, we would certainly conceive that the Creator is an omnipresence. And this acceptance of the preliminary character of the Supreme Creator is something common to every religious faith, and no one will say that God is only in one place. While this is the principal motif behind every religious faith, namely, the existence of God as the Supreme Creator, it is rather difficult for the mind to conceive this omnipresence. We can say that God is omnipresent, but we cannot imagine what it actually means. We may struggle to entertain this notion, but we will mostly fail because its implications are so devastating, and we will not be prepared

for it. We can only say that He is omnipresent and keep quiet. But we should not go deeper into its meaning or the results that would follow logically from our acceptance of this fact. However, we do not trouble our minds too much, and content ourselves with merely a notion of the omnipresence of God, together with His omniscience and omnipotence, and impose our factual concept of God with a relationship that it has to maintain in respect of this omnipresent God-Being. That which is omnipresent has also to be omniscient and omnipotent automatically. It follows, and has to follow. That which is everywhere is also in contact with everything, and therefore, It knows all things. So, it follows that the omnipresent is also omniscient. Inasmuch as It knows everything, root and branch, It has control over everything, and therefore, It is omnipotent. So, God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Sarvantaryami, Sarvajna, Sarvasaktiman is God.

If God is everywhere, He is in everything also. Therefore, we can take anything as a symbol of His omnipresence. This is what pulls us towards an image or a form or a concept, or whatever it is. That which is everywhere is in every particular thing also. If it is in every particular thing, anything is good enough for us for our concentration. Every form is a face or a finger of God Himself. So, the Yoga student can well be happy that he is meditating on God Himself, the Great Creator, though he has only a little image in front of him. It does not matter. Because even this little image is a part of His omnipresence. The student should convince himself deeply as regards this

great value that he superimposes on the object of his meditation. That is necessary.

If every form is capable of enshrining His omnipresence, and there cannot be many Creators for the world, every form is as good as every other form. And, therefore, there cannot be isolated religious faiths that are differentiated at their bottom. So, every religious difference is an irreligious attitude. It cannot be called religion. It is a travesty of religion. Such a travesty is seen in our life, when religion becomes sociology and politics, which it has become, and so much the worse for religion. It is our duty not to contemplate religion in its form of travesty, but to visualise it as it is, and as it ought to be. From such a viewpoint, every form in this world is a vehicle of the omnipresence of the Almighty. Such a conviction in our heart will rouse within ourselves a force of joy, a power of satisfaction, an urge which we sometimes may not be able to control. If this conviction is deeply driven into our mind that the form that we are visualising before us is the form of that Omnipresence Itself, we will be stunned to the core at once, and we will be stupefied by the very thought of it. And this stupefaction, religiously brought about, is the force of concentration. This is meditation. Deep meditation is nothing but a stupefied state of the spirit which stands face to face with the Almighty's Presence as enshrined in a form, a concept, a notion, or any idol, for the matter of that. Such a religious spirit should take possession of us when we are seated for concentration or meditation.

## **Meditation: A Cosmic Activity and Not an Individual Affair**

Now, we come to the more practical initial stages, after considering something of the supernormal aspects of Yoga meditation. What should we do at the initial stage? We have to sit; that is all. *Sthira-sukham asanam*: we have to be seated. We cannot stand. We have already seen that it is not a proper posture. We cannot lie down. We have to be seated in that particular *asana* or that particular posture, which is convenient and non-painful. And we should introduce into our mind the ideas of nobility, sublimity and divinity. We should tell ourselves that we are seated, even though for a few minutes only, for a magnificent purpose, which has a value not only to us as individuals, but to the whole of society, why, to the whole world.

The false idea that meditation is an individual affair has to be removed from the mind. Many so-called spiritual men, religious men, and devotees get side-tracked into this erroneous notion that meditation is an individual business, and that it has no connection with other people. The spiritual seeker may be under such an impression, and others also may drive such ideas into his head. People make a distinction between social service and spiritual meditation, as if they are two different things. They try to project the view that while social service benefits a large number of people, meditation is an individual affair which does no good to anyone other than perhaps the meditator himself. This is a bogey that hangs heavy on our heads, even when we are about to touch the fringe of God Himself. The devil will not leave us even to the last moment, because

the devil works the most when it tries to feast on our intellect itself, and afterwards we cannot think any more in a proper manner. Who on earth says that the outside is different from the inside? Have we not been repeatedly emphasising that there is no such thing as an inside and an outside for this vast Creative Force called *purusha* and *prakriti*, and by other names variously? In this vast atmosphere of an inter-related system of values, called creation, what is inside and what is outside? So, how can there be an individual effort? What is the Bhagavad Gita but this great gospel that there is no such thing as individual activity at all? Such a thing does not just exist. So, there is no such thing as individual meditation also. There is no such thing as 'my practising meditation'. Therefore, it is stupid to the core to imagine that social work is different from spiritual meditation. The two cannot be isolated. Meditation is a cosmic activity, and not an individual's effort. It is not a mister or a mistress sitting in the corner of a house and thinking something for one's own self, calling it meditation. It is touching at the very base and root and switchboard of the cosmos. When we properly adjust ourselves to the requirements of true concentration or meditation, we interfere with the structure of the cosmos itself. At that time, we are not individuals, we are not social units. We are sparks of that Spirit and units of the Cosmic Force. When a particular drop in the ocean begins to think, quite naturally, that thought of that drop will have to affect the whole ocean. There is no such thing as an isolated activity of a drop in the ocean. It is not there. Every drop is the ocean itself, and therefore, when it starts acting, the

whole ocean becomes active. So, when an individual starts concentrating with a proper understanding of the meaning of concentration, the whole universe concentrates. What a joy, what a satisfaction, what an energy comes and how happy the person is at that time! He will not be able to speak afterwards. His mouth will be shut at the very thought of this great energy that seeps into him and the joy that comes on account of his correct apprehension of the very meaning of concentration. How glorious is Yoga! Thus we must ratiocinate and understand the true significance of *dharana* and *dhyana*. We are not doing anything for our own selves. We are doing it for everybody. The greatest service that anyone can do to the whole of creation is to commune with the Creator, who is not different from His creation.

The spiritual seeker must accommodate these noble ideas in his mind. It may take some time for him to think on these lines, to think like this. He may not be able to do this at once. It does not mean that the moment he sits for concentration, he will be able to think like this, in the way we have outlined. The mind will not be ready to think like this; it has its own idiosyncrasies and anxieties, emotions and worries. When there are emotions, tensions, one should not sit for meditation. At that time, one should go and take rest, lie down, sleep for an hour. If one is very much disturbed in his mind, he would be well advised to go and sleep, or take a cup of tea or coffee, or go for a long walk musing within himself as to what has caused the sorrow in his mind. No one can be friendly with God by being an enemy of man. One has to be friendly with every

stage of creation, and Yoga is nothing but this establishment of amity and friendliness in every level of creation. All tension and disparity is overcome by a gradual accommodation of oneself with the atmosphere in all the levels in which it may manifest itself. So, there should be a proper mood in the mind to sit for concentration. Otherwise, it will be boring; these noble thoughts will not always occur to the mind. Very rarely do such thoughts come unless one is in the presence of a great person, or one is reading a mighty scripture, or some miracle takes place.

So, in a proper mood, with a sober mind, with no other occupations in the mind, no other engagements calling for attention, one should be seated in a posture, and one should try to concentrate the mind in the manner suggested. At the outset, a need for an external form may be felt. How can anyone think anything when there is nothing in front of him? That is why generally people keep an image in front of them. It may be of Christ, it may be of Krishna, it may be of Devi, it may be of any blessed thing. The person who sits for concentration must open his eyes and gaze at the portrait of that mighty incarnation whom he adores as his divinity. Do we not feel stimulated within us when we see the picture of a great man, whom we adore as a mighty genius born in this world, much more so when we think he is a divine incarnation? When we look at the divine portrait, we will be stirred. Why go so far to incarnations? Even if we look at the portrait of a mastermind in any field of life, we become stirred in our emotions to some extent. It may be even a Churchill or a Khrushchev, an Einstein or a Kennedy. When we look at

these faces, we will be moved into a peculiar mood that will take us beyond ourselves, to speak the least about the psychology of the human mind. And if we have before us a portrait of such mighty individuals like Krishna or Jesus Christ or Mohammed, or great mystical masters like Lao-tse or Confucius or Zoroaster or any such mighty individual that has trodden this earth, we will be lifted beyond ourselves. This automatic lifting of ourselves beyond ourselves is itself a concentration and meditation. We cannot help being raised above ourselves when we look at the portrait or the picture of these people. Automatically this elevation takes place. So, taking advantage of this psychology of our mind, we may have a portrait in front of us. These are the most initial stages of concentration. Many people love their own father or mother. They have an immense love for their father. Okay, let these people keep the picture of their father or mother in front of them. There are others who have an intense attraction for things of the world for reasons of their own, and those things are all good enough, provided they have the capacity to raise the mind above the limitations of body-consciousness, for the time being at least.

### **The Technique and Stages of Meditation**

One should gaze at the picture, gaze at the image, look at the idol, and begin to feel the greatness, the nobility, the sublimity, the force, the knowledge and the power and the capacity of these forms, of the individuals or incarnations, whom one is gazing at. Then the eyes must be closed, and the outer form or image must be forgotten or dropped from



the mind. And one should begin to closely think, “How would Einstein have thought? He was a great man. How would he have thought? Why is it that I cannot think like that?” If one starts analysing his own mental processes, he will be lifted beyond himself. The mind of Einstein could go beyond the limitations of ordinary empirical objects and probe into the mysteries of space, time and causation. Oh, how wonderful! How would Jesus Christ have thought during his days? What was the thought of Krishna? What was he thinking every day, from morning to night? We can go mad if we think like this persistently. How could we imagine what they were thinking? What was Sankaracharya thinking every day from morning to evening? What was Jesus Christ thinking? What was Lord Krishna thinking? What is Brahma thinking, what is Vishnu thinking, and what is Siva thinking just now? We will go crazy at once if we start imagining in this manner. Well, this craze is good if it could take possession of us. So, thus the mind should be brought back to the point of concentration. If one cannot think anymore, the eyes may be opened, and once again the gaze may be directed at the portraits, and the presence of the wonderful values mentally associated with the persons may be imagined as present in the forms and portraits. The eyes may be closed once again and an attempt may be made to entertain these thoughts independently, without an external prop of pictures and idols. All this may take some months of effort; it may take even years. The mind cannot be so easily brought into harness for the spiritual purpose, because it has got various impressions, Samskaras, suppressed desires and frustrations.

After some months and years of practice in this manner, one will find that an external image is not necessary. The idol and the picture become redundant; one can think for oneself. But even when one thinks like this, one thinks only on the earlier pattern. Though there is nothing outside, inwardly there is the same concept of the very same form which was visualised in the earlier stage. So, the difference arises only between the physicality of the form and the conceptuality of it, but the characteristic of it remains the same. So, the further succeeding stage of concentration would be to entertain only a concept, independent of the outside form. Practice in the foregoing manner must be continued for a long time, must be persisted in, until one is able to get to every succeeding stage of meditation.

All this is a bare outline of the possible stages through which the spiritual aspirant may have to pass. Though the stages may vary from individual to individual in their detail, in broad features, they are perhaps something as outlined above. In the beginning, there is the necessity for an external form, a prop. Afterwards, there is no such necessity. One has gained the capacity to think only, and the very thought itself is enough. The third stage is more advanced, and here comes real religion, real spirituality, real mysticism, real Yoga. We may call it a real divinity that takes possession of us. The omnipresence of the Almighty which we were trying to tether to a particular form, begins to make itself felt even outside this form, just as a pot that is sunk in the ocean contains water not merely within itself, but also outside itself. So, His omnipresence is not only in

the form that one is meditating upon, but is also outside it. If this omnipresence is in one form, why should it not be in any other form? This charity that one develops is a higher religion, beyond the religions present in this world now. One becomes a really religious person when one begins to see the same God in all the forms, not merely in one form, in just one concept of Christ, Krishna, Brahma or Allah. A person goes beyond the limitations of religious faiths, and becomes a truly religious, impersonal super-individual, and no more remains the merely individual religionist that he was earlier. The omnipresence of the Almighty thus makes itself felt also outside the form that one worships. It is here that the seeker will see a kind of light flashing in front of him. Until this stage, no light will be there. The seeker will have only the suffering of concentration, and a pain sometimes felt due to the effort required. But, when he comes to the third stage, he will feel the liberation of a light from the atom of concentration, a flash that will strike like a lightning in front of his mental eye, which will look like a light before the physical eye. He will imagine that he is seeing a light with his eyes, though it is not seeing of any physical light, but an internal flash which is released on account of the concentration that he has been practising. Just as energy is released by bombarding an atom, the mind atom, when it is bombarded, releases an energy in the form of a light which is super-physical. So, here in the third stage of concentration, the seeker is in a blessed mood, feeling that one is lifted above the earth. He does not anymore think that he is a man of this world. He belongs to other worlds also. And he has friends not only in this world, he

has friends in other realms also. He can summon their succour if he so needs it. He will begin to see light flashing forth in the shape of various forms, and everyone will be his friend. He will be able to smile before every person. He need not have to frown or close his eyes at any person in the world afterwards. He has no enemy, and he will not be able to dislike anything. That would be an utter impossibility for him. Everything will be able to exude a love and an affection which he could not discover earlier in anything in this world.

## Chapter 16

### MEDITATION-THEORY AND PRACTICE (2)

*Pratyahara* leads to *dharana* by a gradual self-movement of itself towards a larger expansion and an inward intensification. The stages of Yoga gradually taper off into one another, without it being possible for us to draw a hard and fast line between one stage and the next, just as we cannot know when a child becomes an adolescent, an adolescent a youth, and a youth an old man, because there is a slow, continuous movement without points of hard demarcation, proving thereby that the whole of Yoga is a completeness, a whole by itself, and is not like a house built of isolated bricks, which can be removed one by one, without one brick disturbing another. The Yoga process is an organism of practice, and is a greater wholeness than even our own physical body. We have bestowed sufficient consideration and thought on the nature of *pratyahara*, and the way in which it enters into concentration or *dharana*. The difficulties on the way, the nature of the practice, and the necessity for exercising vigilance on the part of the activity of the mind in the arduous task have also been discussed.

A fourfold psychological activity takes place when concentration or *dharana* is undertaken, an activity which can best be compared to a struggle or an effort, not less difficult than the process of medical treatment or military warfare. There is a negative process and a positive one, catabolic and anabolic, we may say, both taking place at the same time, as it happens in our own body. There is a

rejecting process and a constructive process taking place everywhere in nature, physically outside in the five elements, in society, in the bodies of men and animals, and even in our own psyche. Every movement in the world is a double process of rejection and absorption. And this movement of nature as a whole is also the movement of the internal psyche of man, even if it be in concentration or meditation.

### **Rejecting the Irrelevant Thoughts**

The mind feels a need to reject the thoughts that are not supposed to be consistent with the requirements of concentration or meditation. Each one knows for one's own self, from the way in which one's conscience speaks, what are the ideas, thoughts or feelings which cannot be regarded as compatible with the character of the ideal that one places before oneself. What is to be regarded as not consistent with the ideal of Yoga is a matter to be decided in each individual case isolatedly, without any generalisation about it, because what may be consistent with one individual may be inconsistent with another, and so on. That is why Yoga was taught individually from the earliest times, and not en masse. It is because the details of the workings of the mind of people vary from individual to individual, though in general they may appear to be practically the same in the case of all people. When we go into the internal intricacies of *dharana* or *dhyana*—concentration or meditation—we are not tackling merely the general processes of the mind, which are practically the same among the whole of humanity, but we are touching

the details of the internal working, and there, individualities differ from one another. Hence, as we advance, we have to be more careful in the analysis of the components of the mind, as careful as the research scholar in physics or chemistry is in the analysis of scientific matters in the laboratory. In the internal mental laboratory of the Yogi or the external laboratory of the scientist, as a person advances, he becomes more concentrated, because then he enters into greater details, into more minute details involved in his observations and experiments.

Broadly speaking, without touching upon the difficulty connected with individual idiosyncrasies, we may say that any thought, feeling, or idea, which cannot be easily regarded as directly or indirectly connected with those thoughts which go to conceive the object of meditation may be regarded as irrelevant. The relevancy or the irrelevancy of a thought depends upon the kind of object or ideal which one is holding before one's mind's eye, as that on which one has to concentrate or meditate. So, we cannot say what is relevant and what is irrelevant, generally speaking, because it has something to do with what one has kept as one's ideal before oneself. Here again, the role of the Guru comes in, in the work of distinguishing between the positive thoughts that act as constructive forces in concentration, and the negative ones which interfere with it and create distraction in the mind. Such a distinction should be followed by a rejection of the irrelevant thoughts and ideas. A list of these possible irrelevant thoughts has to be prepared, each for oneself. A distracted mind cannot take to serious concentration or meditation. The seeker has to be prepared

as a dedicated individual when he takes to spirituality or Yoga. That is his whole occupation and vocation. Nothing else is there before him. However, whatever be the nature of the thoughts that have to be abandoned, there is a stage where one feels the need to abandon certain thoughts.

Here, one may be faced with a tremendous difficulty. In this world, it is difficult to reject anything that has been accompanying one for a long time. Thoughts that were our friends and inseparable from us in our daily life are now to be rejected, which is not easy, because the rejection becomes possible only when their valuelessness is recognised. Anything that has a value for us cannot be subjected to this vivisection in the psyche. That which we consider as necessary in one way or the other in our daily life cannot become an object of our abandonment. It has to lose all sense of value, every meaning and connotation, much as a dream object becomes irrelevant to us in the waking state. Only then can we reject it. But, no thought which is of the waking life can be shunned easily, because that which we consider as irrelevant is also a part of the waking consciousness, and so, we will find it a painful process.

Here, we may recollect our earlier observations regarding the errors in our very perceptual process, and the division of the thought-process into *klishtha vrittis* and *aklishta vrittis* by Patanjali. The *klishtha vrittis* are obviously irrelevant to the practice of concentration and meditation. There is no need to explain how they are irrelevant. But, the more difficult thing would be to realise the inconsistency of the *aklishta vrittis*, or the non-painful operations of the



mind, which are part and parcel of our daily life. And, therefore, to regard them as irrelevant would be a hard job. So, we should not suddenly jump into the higher stage of abandonment, when we are still in the lower stage. We have to bring back to our memory our earlier observations regarding the nature of the creation as a whole, the universe in its internality of structure, in whose light we cannot say that it is permissible on the part of the mind to regard objects as external to the perceiver. The whole point about the *aklishta vrittis* of Patanjali is that the world is not an external object, even if we name it *prakriti* in the language of the Samkhya. It cannot be regarded as an object, because the so-called subject who considers *prakriti* as an object is a part of *prakriti* itself. The individuality of the *purusha*, the percipient character of the individual, has been brought about by the workings of the *gunas* of *prakriti*, but for which there would be no individuality of the *purusha*. Therefore, the individual percipient who considers the *prakriti* or the world as an external object, is himself a part of that object. Therefore, there is some mistake in the operation of even the *aklishta vrittis*, what to speak of the *klishta vrittis*! Thus, it will be known what is irrelevant and what is relevant if we go into the philosophical implications of the very nature of existence.

### **The Fourfold Psychological Activity in Dharana**

In principle, therefore, it follows, and it should follow, that the ideas, thoughts and feelings which are inconsistent with concentration or meditation are those which insist on the externality of the objects and the location of things in

space and time. Together with this effort on the part of the mind to reject these ideas of externality, spatiality and temporality, there is the positive, constructive activity taking place at the same time, towards collecting those ideas which focus themselves towards that conception of the object of meditation which has been considered as the proper one for the aspirant. So, there is a double activity—an activity of the abandonment of those *vrittis* or activities of the psyche which insist on the externality of things, and the insistence or the taking in of those ideas which are contributory to the higher idea of the total indivisible structure of the object of meditation. So, one aspect among the four mentioned, is the activity of the mind to abandon thoughts and ideas which are irrelevant to the purpose. The other one is the thought of the object itself. While we are conscious of the nature of those ideas and thoughts that are to be abandoned, we are also conscious of the ideas and thoughts which are to be maintained in regard to the nature of the object. There is a third set of ideas which maintain the consciousness of the existence of the meditator himself. We are aware that we are seated there as a meditating principle and that there is the object also before us on which we have to concentrate. Also, there is a fourth process, which is the knowledge process, which connects the meditator or the concentrator with the object. This is the *pramana chaitanya*, as they call it, in the technical language of *Pramana Sastra*, epistemology.

We are aware that we are, we are aware that we are thinking something, we are aware of the nature of the object on which we are concentrating, and we are also

aware of those thoughts which have to be abandoned. So, these four sets of ideas commingle with one another, all appearing to be there at the same time. That is why it looks like a struggle on the part of the mind to create a sort of a system in the activities of these four aspects that impinge upon it simultaneously. This is the difficulty. We have to think all the four aspects at the same time. Though we cannot be deliberately exercising any effort to maintain these fourfold thoughts, they will present themselves there subconsciously, or in a spontaneous manner.

### **What Differentiates Meditation from Concentration**

We have seen already that the tying of the mind to a particular concept is concentration—*Desa-bandhas chittasya dharana*. And, a continuity of the very process of concentration is supposed to be meditation or *dhyana*—*Tatra pratyayaikatanata dhyanam*. We cannot easily understand the relation between concentration and meditation, just as, to give a very homely analogy, we cannot know the relation between threads and the cloth which they constitute. It appears often that the cloth is the same as the threads. We cannot see, in the cloth, anything but the threads. Yet, something tells us that the cloth has some characteristics that are different from the qualities present in the threads. Hence, often, no distinction is drawn between concentration and meditation, *dharana* and *dhyana*, and Patanjali himself does not seem to suggest any distinction qualitatively between concentration and meditation, when he says that a continuity of the process of concentration itself is meditation—*Tatra*

*pratyayaikatanata dhyanam*. But, we may say that there is some distinction in the qualitative make-up between the two, just as we can wear on our body a cloth but not a bundle of threads, though they are virtually the same thing, and not two different things.

Meditation distinguishes itself qualitatively by an intensity, which is characteristic of its own self, apart from the activity known as concentration. In meditation, in *dhyana*, some novelty takes place. We do not any more feel a necessity to reject thoughts. There is nothing to abandon. The idea that certain thoughts and feelings are inconsistent is dropped. One has already accommodated within oneself all sets of thoughts which arise in the mind, and the so-called irrelevant thoughts and feelings have been so co-ordinated with the existing system of thinking, that they have ceased to be irrelevant. Even that which appeared very ugly, inconsistent and evil has lost its ugly character, and has undergone a transformation in the process of meditation. It has not been rejected, as it was thought earlier. It has been absorbed by a transfiguration of its inner constituents. Thoughts are incapable of rejection finally, in the end. They cannot be abandoned, because they are our thoughts, and not somebody's thoughts. That which we have to reject is not the thoughts themselves, but the way in which the thoughts function. Here is a subtle distinction in psychological operation. For instance, we do not reject a person when we hate a person, but only dislike the way in which the person himself or herself acts in the context of things. It is a peculiar, subtle distinction that we have to draw between the sinner and the sin, as they say, the person

and his conduct and behaviour and the way he manipulates relationships. Such is the case with thoughts. Thoughts are like things; they are like persons. They are substances, perhaps more concrete than the so-called objects which feel as tangible. The undesirableness of any particular thought in the mind is in the way in which it is conducted in respect of things in the world, but not in the thought itself. So, in meditation, the way in which the thought erroneously conducts itself in respect of things is harnessed in the proper manner. The restive horse that tries to move in its own way, in any direction it pleases, is put to the yoke and made to move in the required direction. The horse has not been thrown away or rejected, but its movement is regulated. So, in meditation, in *dhyana*, rising above *dharana* or concentration, the irrelevancy of things itself becomes irrelevant. The very idea of evil itself becomes evil. Such a thing as the idea of evil does not exist any more.

### **Dhyana Is Total Thinking**

All this is a very advanced stage, and one is not supposed to go on haranguing on these things, since they are matters for personal experience, and no amount of explanation will mean anything at all to the people who read or listen, because it is like a taste of sugar and cannot be known by reading a textbook on it. What all this means will be known only when a person enters that stage himself. And any amount of reading or hearing will not help much. Whatever has been stated above is only to project the mathematical structure or the logical pattern of the way in which ideas have to be brought round in harmony with, or

in tune with, those thoughts which may be considered necessary for the purpose of meditation on the great ideal that one has placed before oneself. When thoughts become harmonious, everything else also becomes so, because the jarring noise and the ugly scene which we see in the world, which we come in contact with through our senses, are due to a peculiar working of our minds which is what makes them appear as inconsistent with our meditation. This situation has now ceased to exist, on account of a new way in which we have begun to view things, in co-ordination with the system of our total thinking. *Dhyana* is total thinking. It is not partial thinking. It does not mean that some thoughts have been thrown away as irrelevant, and some thoughts have been kept as our friends, as relevant to meditation. All thoughts have been brought together into a completeness as a focus. We meditate as a whole, and not only as some thoughts which we have kept within ourselves as necessary. At this advanced stage, the meditator becomes a whole man, and ceases to be a schizophrenic individual, which one usually is in the workaday world. We have a double personality, even a treble or quadruple personality, when we live in this world. But that double, treble, quadruple personality coalesces into a single individuality in meditation. Very few can be said to be fit for meditation in this light. We are all poor nothings, considering the difficulty in actually making ourselves fit for this great attainment called the meditation of the mind on the ideal of Yoga.

## Meditation in the System of Patanjali

What are the things on which we are going to concentrate or meditate? We are specially concerned here with the system of Patanjali, and so, we shall not touch upon any other subject or theme which may be discussed in the Vedanta or other systems of philosophy. According to the system of Patanjali, the objects of concentration are the evolutes of *prakriti*. The stages by which *prakriti* descends into diversity are the very same stages by which we may say that we ascend to the completeness of the object in the form of *prakriti*. This is the sum and substance of the concentrational or the meditational process. The Samkhya or the Yoga has it that *prakriti* is a vast indivisible, incomprehensible, indistinguishable mass which is the whole universe itself. What we call the entire creation is comprehended within *prakriti*. There is nothing outside it. We are also a part of it. The peculiar activity of the Cosmic *sattva* of *prakriti* projects a Cosmic Intelligence, called *mahat*. These are terms used in the Samkhya. An intensification of this Cosmic Intelligence into what we may call Cosmic Self-consciousness is called *ahamkara*. So, there is *prakriti*, there is *mahat*, and there is *ahamkara*, gradually descending from the higher to the lower. This *ahamkara*, sometimes known as *bhutadi* in the language of the Samkhya, because of the fact that it is the ‘*adi*’ of the ‘*bhutas*’, or the origin of all the elements, is supposed to manifest itself in a tripartite form—the subject, the object, and that which connects the subject with the object. We have touched upon this theme, this tripartite division into the *adhibhuta*, the *adhyatma* and the *adhidaiva* in an

earlier chapter. The cosmic subtle elements known as the *tanmatras*—*sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*—are the immediate evolutes of the *ahamkara* or the Cosmic Self-affirmation. These *tanmatras*, by a process of permutation and combination, become the substances known as the five gross elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth. Meditation, properly speaking, in the light of the system of Patanjali, is the concentration of the mind on these stages, the five elements, the *tanmatras*, the *ahamkara*, the *mahat*, and *prakriti*.

No one can imagine what all these things mean, if these things are told at once, at the very outset. Therefore, cautiously, Patanjali has given us other minor techniques of concentration in the very first chapter itself, the chapter known as the Samadhi Pada. It is not possible for anyone of us to think of the five elements suddenly, though we are expected to gather our minds to such a height one day or the other. So, we take one particular object before us, any object which is a form of the five elements themselves. This particular form should have those characteristics which will attract our attention. Unless we are so deeply philosophical as to know the connection of this particular physical frame with all the five elements, we have to emotionally relate ourselves to the object. In meditation, especially in its advanced stages, there is no necessity to bring in the emotional aspect. There is more the logical side of things than the emotional one. But, in the earlier stages, emotions do not leave us, because we have a liking even for God Himself, so to say, due to an emotion that is worked up when we think of this great idea called God.



## **Role of Constructive Emotions in the Earlier Stages of Meditation**

Our concept of God is not purely logical. It is also emotional. And, therefore, when we take to any point in concentration, and choose any object for this purpose, we have to see if it agrees with us emotionally. For instance, we cannot keep a snake in front of us and meditate upon it, though, for the purpose of concentration, that is also good enough, as any other thing is. But, emotionally, we will not be in harmony with the thought of a cobra sitting in front of us. There will be a disharmony, for reasons well known to us. But, if we choose an object which is emotionally connected with what we like for reasons of our own, our mind will concentrate immediately. While it is true that we have to be emotionally appreciative of the object of concentration or meditation, we must also see what sort of emotion it is that we entertain when we meditate. There are emotions and emotions. Even when we are rebellious, outrageous and rude, we are in a state of emotion. But, that is not the type of emotion that we speak of when we say that emotionally we have to be related to the object of concentration. Rebellious emotions are distracting emotions. They are not wholesome feelings. They tear our personality to shreds and throw us in different directions. But, the constructive emotions knit the parts of our personality into a whole, and we become brighter and more beautiful than a tyrannical individual with a self-assertive individuality. When we frown, we are in a state of emotion. When we smile, we are again in a state of emotion. But, the two emotions are of two different types. When we are very

ruthless and cruel, we are also in a state of emotion. When we are compassionate, kind and merciful, we are again in a state of emotion. There can thus be different kinds of emotion, and we have to know where we stand. The constructive emotions make us strong in our personality, and the destructive emotions make us weak and dejected in our moods. Thus, it requires a lot of psychological training in the beginning to find out what sort of object would best suit us for the purpose of meditation.

This is the reason why many of the Yoga teachers, Gurus and Masters tell us that it would be good and profitable to take to the chanting of the Name of God instead of unnecessarily struggling in the mind by an imposition upon itself of thoughts and feelings which it is not accustomed to or familiar with. Each individual has his own notion of God, the Almighty Creator, to whatever religious faith he may belong. It is sure and certain, and clear and obvious for him, that his own notion of God is the best of thoughts. He may not have a better thought than that. There, his emotions come together in a fraternal embrace, and his logic also works in a friendly manner. So, *japa* of a Name of God, concentration on the meaning of the mantra, or the formula containing the Name, is regarded as perhaps the best method to bring the mind to the point of concentration. When we offer prayers to God, we say something, at least mentally. We say something in our mind, and emotionally, we feel certain attitudes towards God. These are the things that we have to maintain perpetually, as far as possible, by repeated sessions of prayers, and a continuous sitting for *japa* or chanting of the

Divine Name, which will bring us to the point of concentration. This is a religious technique of concentration.

There are other techniques of concentration that need not necessarily be called religious. They are, rather, psychoanalytic or psychological, and they are suggested by Hatha Yogins, Tantriks and others. In those techniques, there need not be thoughts of God in the sense of an omnipresent Creator, but there may be any particular thing with which one is emotionally tied down. These are subtle secrets. All meditation is a secret working of the mind, in accordance with the instructions received from a superior. What is it that the seeker is emotionally tied to? Only he knows this, and he cannot shout it, will not be able to shout it in the market, but he has to reveal himself to the Guru, as a patient reveals himself to the doctor. The patient should not hide facts before a physician, if his ailment is to be cured. Similarly, in spiritual life, there must be a complete confession before a superior, as sometimes this process is insisted upon in churches. So, the disciple confesses, inwardly and outwardly, the totality of his emotional set-up before his great Guru, who is responsible, who is supposed to be responsible, for the spiritual progress of the disciple. So, there is no hiding of facts from a Guru, if we regard a particular person as our Guru.

We should not try to tear our emotions from the objects of our affection under the impression that they are unholy, irreligious and unspiritual, because, finally, there is no unholy thing in the world. We have been brought and bred up somehow in some atmosphere of religiosity, which

makes us sometimes think that something is evil, and, therefore, it has to be thrown away as religion is opposed to it. But, religion is not opposed to anything. It is opposed only to a misunderstanding of the context of things. Very difficult is Yoga practice. It is a very hard thing to do, and a long time is to be taken in understanding its requirements. A sudden bounce of a spirit of renunciation and rejection is not called for. Yoga is a process of healthy living, and not an unhealthy wrenching of oneself from all ties, like tearing one's own skin. Even if we have certain emotions which religion would not permit as holy, even if we think that they are rogues, they have to be treated as our friends for the time being because the association that we have maintained within ourselves, with those feelings, is so intense that the knot of this association has to be gradually untied. And, in Yoga, there is no such thing as cutting the knot. There is only a gradual untying of it, and a vehement behaviour with anything will prove to be a disastrous process.

### **Necessity to Establish a Proper Relationship between the Conscious and the Subconscious**

No one can understand these processes by one's own self, nor can one practise them by one's own self, especially when one reaches these stages where one has to fight with one's own mind and not with other people in the world. We cease to have a practical relationship with the objects and the persons of the world, when we realise that the objects are only psychological objects finally, and there are no other objects in the world. Physical objects appear to be external things, because of the operation of the mind in a

particular manner, and if this operation ceases and is transformed into a different process altogether, the so-called persons and things cease to be objects. So, we have to deal only with our mind finally, and not with persons and things, or the world as such. A gradual healing process has to take place in our mind, with constant guidance from an experienced teacher. We all are emotionally connected to things. These emotional connections have to be brought into right relation, directly or indirectly or in some way, with the purpose of our meditation. Otherwise, though our conscious mind may be putting forth hectic efforts in concentration on the so-called religious ideal of ours in Yoga, our subconscious mind will be revolting against our practice. We will become a double personality, inwardly one thing, and outwardly another thing, and we will be dreaming of our rejected form, while in waking life, like an unhealthy individual, we will be trying to practise Yoga.

Sometimes Yogis become queer individuals, unsocial and anti-social, and sorry within themselves and unhappy in their core, because some of them have not succeeded in bringing the subconscious and the conscious into a proper relationship. The two levels of consciousness always remain separate. They are like warring camps and they do not agree with each other. The conscious mind does not agree with the subconscious, and vice versa. And psychologists tell us that we have got a deeper terror inside us, known as the 'unconscious vast', the racial unconscious as the psychoanalysts tell us, which keeps us in contact with the whole of humanity. And that is why we are always thinking of mankind only, and we cannot think anything else in this

world. All our problems are human problems. Why is it so? Why should there not be anything else? It is because our racial unconscious has the larger say, it forms the larger base of our personality. It is connected to the species into which we are born. That is why our problems are problems of the human species only, and not of other things in the world, though they may be more important than the human ones. So, when we enter into the deeper levels of Yoga practice, we are entering into dangerous zones, forbidden areas where angels fear to tread. But, no fear will be there if we have a good Guru. No person should have the hardened egoism to imagine that he does not require a Guru. It is a stupidity and he will not succeed, because he will be faced with terrors as he goes further and further, and these terrors are not outside things, lions, tigers. They are the forms taken by the incapacity of the person's own mind to adjust itself to the requirements of meditation. So, here the seeker lands in a tumult within himself, caused by various obstructing powers, mentioned in some of the *sutras* of Patanjali, in the third chapter called the Vibhuti Pada.

### **From Meditation to Samadhi**

While the concentration process has the fourfold aspect mentioned earlier, in meditation there are only three processes. The rejecting process is dropped. The consciousness of the meditator and the consciousness of the nature of the object of meditation, together with the process of concentration or meditation, remain—what are known as the *dhyatr*, *dhyeya*, and *dhyana*. These three

continue, but the earlier requirement of the effort on the part of the mind to reject certain ideas is no more there. We will be continually flowing to the object of meditation, as it were. We will be flowing in the whole of our personality, and not merely in one of the aspects of our mind. All meditation worth the name, in the spiritual sense at least, is an integrated movement of the whole mind, and not merely of a segment of it. In the light of this analysis of the nature of meditation, very few of us will be fit for it. We struggle unnecessarily and reach at nothing. However, this is the ideal before us, to reach one day or the other, may be in this birth with the Grace of God, and if not, in the next birth. It does not matter; one day or the other, we have to get there. The movement of our wholesome, soulful individuality towards the object of meditation is *dhyana*. This is what Patanjali calls *pratyayaikatanata*, or the continuity of the flow. There is no break in the flow, but a wholesome continuity, as in the flow of oil from one vessel to another, or as in the flow of a lamp where bits of process join together in such a harmonious manner that we do not feel that the flame is a process at all. The whole flame looks like a compact completeness. Likewise, though meditation is constituted of bits of thought, we will not feel these bits as different from one another. They will together make one whole process, like the movement of a river where we cannot see the distinguishing drops of the waters. The whole river will be one mass. So, in meditation, the whole mind assumes the shape of a mass that moves wholly, entirely, totally, completely towards the object, the great

point on which we may be concentrating for the purpose of our union with it.

The union that is attempted in Yoga is known as *samadhi*. It is a very hard word even to hear, because each one has his own or her own idea about it, which is quite natural, and we get frightened by the definitions given of it. A complete absorption of ourselves with anything is impossible. We cannot identify ourselves with anything in this world. We cannot become anything other than what we are ourselves. A cannot become B. A is A, and B is B, always; and this is the essence of the world. But, why should A be A and B be B, and not otherwise? The Yoga psychology or philosophy tells us that the very fact that we know that B exists, and yet B cannot be A, must tell us implicitly as a meaning between the lines, that there is an undercurrent of unity between the seer and the seen, between A and B. A totally dissociated B cannot become the object of knowledge of A. While A says, "I am different from B", A is not fully conscious of what he is speaking because, though in the light of the characteristics of B, as situated in space and time, B may be different from A, the fact that A has a knowledge of the existence of B itself should reveal a deeper truth than is available on the surface. Here is a deeper psychology, the philosophy of perception or knowledge. A hidden connectedness of A with B is the reason behind the knowledge which A has about B, and A takes advantage of this fact of there being such a connecting link, and touches B through this knowledge process, rather than through the form or the name which B has apparently assumed in the spatio-temporal location. So, when we go



further and further in Yoga, we confront greater and greater difficulties, which we will not be able to accommodate in our minds at once. Hence, the slower we go, the better for us. We must go very slowly. The union or the coming together in utter communion between the seer and the seen is the aim of *dhyana*, or meditation, and towards this end, we have to move with great caution.

## Chapter 17

### EMPIRICALITY AND TRANSCENDENTALITY

The communion sought in meditation is such that its meaning has to be properly understood before the practice is made to commence. There is a double activity which goes on at the time of meditation—one aspect being a separation of oneself from those conditions and factors which have separated the individual from the essence of the objects; the other aspect being the actual entry of the very substance of the meditator into the substance of the object. There are conditioning factors that persist in creating a difference between the meditating consciousness and its object, space and time being the foremost among them. The person who attempts to meditate is a phenomenal individual located in space and time, in the same way as the object is located. Inasmuch as the two, namely, the meditator and the object of meditation, stand on a par and belong to a similar degree of reality, inasmuch as both are involved in the complexity of space and time, there is a difficulty of an obvious nature in attempting the communion of subject and object through meditation. As was noted in the last chapter, A is A, and B is B. A cannot become B. This is the philosophy of empirical life. What one is, that alone one is, and one cannot become another. This is simple logic, and this logic is the sorrow of man, which keeps him tied to a conviction of his separatist existence, separate from everything else, each of which is also separate from all other things. There is an interference of space and time in every little thing in this world, not only outwardly, but even inwardly. Externally

we perceive the isolation of objects—persons and things—on account of the space and time factors conditioning the existence of these objects, and inwardly, we are unable even to think except in terms of space and time. Even the mind operates spatially and temporally. So, there is an insistence of a very vehement type, outwardly in society, and inwardly in the mind, towards an affirmation of utter isolation and self-existence, self-affirmation, and love of one's own individual life to the dread of death. The aspect of meditation which severs oneself from the relationship with those factors which serve the individuals is known in the Bhagavad Gita as *duhkha-samyoga-viyoga*, a separation from contact with the causes of pain. So, it is separation from a union; it is isolation of oneself from conditions or factors which contribute to the union of everything with the limitations of space and time. This is the crux of the whole matter in meditation. The personality of the meditating consciousness does not forget its earlier placement in the context of social values. This is the reason for distraction and jumping of the mind in meditation. No one can be free from these difficulties in which the mind finds itself the moment one sits for meditation, because the meditator is a temporal individual, outwardly as well as inwardly, socially as well as psychologically, and he cannot get over these limitations. The hardship may well be compared to one's attempt at climbing on one's own shoulders, a practically impossible thing, yet something to be attempted if the intended communion or union is to be successful.

## Invisible Factors that Connect Us With the Universe

Every individual, every man, everything in the world, has a double character of empiricity and transcendentality. Philosophers describe this situation as being empirically real and transcendently ideal. We are not living only in this world even now. We are living in other worlds also. From the bottom of our feet to the top of our head, we touch the heavens and the nether regions at the same time in a very strange manner by relationships and connections which are not visible to the naked eyes. To every realm of being, we have a relationship, and that relationship obtains even now. However, only one form of it, one degree of its expression, one density of it becomes the object of our sensory perception. The world that we see with our naked eyes now is one type of density in which the whole universe manifests itself or descends in the process of evolution or creation. It does not therefore mean that other densities are not there. There are realms that are invisible to us. There are things that are invisible to us in our own internal structure. We cannot see our *pranas*, we cannot see our mind, we cannot see our intellect, we cannot see the five *koshas*, the five sheaths of the body. We cannot see our own selves as we truly are. But, we see ourselves as we appear in our external, empirical relationship of space and time. We are cosmic individuals, at every time, in any state of affairs, wherever we be, in hell or in heaven. The difference is only tentative, and not real in itself. So, when we touch the borderland of meditation, in the real sense of the term, according to the requirement prescribed by the system of Yoga in Patanjali's style, we are working upon

certain features of our life which are not available to ordinary workaday existence. We begin to interfere with our own selves in a very mysterious manner, which is, at the same time, a coming in contact with invisible factors that connect us with all things outside, so that, in an act of sincere meditation, we operate upon the switchboard of the whole universe. Suddenly, all the sleeping dogs begin to wake, and we know what we can expect when dogs that are sleeping are awakened at once. From every side there is an awakening to a new system of values, and things in the world, which were related to us in a particular way, assume a new relationship.

### **The Empirical Law of Isolation and the Law of Connectedness of Things**

In the beginning, there is an opposition of a very stalwart type, a strong hectic opposition from everything. Nobody would like to change his relationships with anything in this world in a way quite different from the one he is used to maintaining. The world is accustomed to a particular habit of relationship, and it cannot brook any kind of interference with it. But, our relationships are empirical, which is the cause of our sorrow. Thus, the importance of making ourselves ready for this arduous task is very stringent. Nobody should attempt this difficult technique, unless one has the internal strength to confront the consequences that follow from an attitude of change in the relationship of oneself with things in the world, not merely with this world of physical frame, but with all the other realms with which also we are connected. That is why

the Yoga Sastras tell us that the denizens of other realms put obstacles on our path, which they do not do when we are not openly connected with them. The test of a person is when we oppose that person. This is a law operating everywhere in the case of everything. True, in meditation, we do not try to oppose anyone; on the other hand, we try to befriend everyone and everything. But then, as a result of some meditation, it may appear as if there is a sudden increase in the intensity of our illness, as it often happens in the case of diseases that are to be cured by strong drugs or medicines. This problem arises on account of our double relationship with things. Our connection with anything in this world is not uniform, is not a straight beaten-track dealing. It is a very complicated relationship. On the one hand, we cannot commune with anything in this world. A is A, B is B. Otherwise, our logic falls. But, on the other hand, we cannot get on with this kind of complicated relationship with things where A is A and B is B; if we do that, then society cannot exist. There cannot be any such thing as social co-ordination or amity, for any sort of relationship of anything with anything, if A is always A, and B always B. Our endeavours in the different fields of activity in life, and our aspirations and loves and hopes in our own minds, tell us that A is not always A, and B is not always B, really at all times and under every circumstance, though it may appear to be such under certain given conditions. So, this peculiarity of A or B which confines them to their own framework of individuality, this peculiarity, is our obstacle which may come in the form of an angel from heaven or a so-called friend from this world

itself. It can take any shape and stand before us like a hard impregnable fortress, which we cannot pierce through.

Problems arise from two sides, outwardly as well as inwardly. There is no such thing as a merely inward problem, or a merely outward problem, because the whole world is a complete whole in integrality, and therefore, everything is everything else also. So, to the world, there is no inside and outside. To us only, it appears as if there is something inside, as distinguishable from that which is outside. So, the law of connectedness of things, which does not see any distinguishing factor between the outside and the inside of things, compels us to place ourselves in this quandary of not being able to do anything either way. So, in certain places, Patanjali tells us that the sorrow of the individual is the union of the seer with the seen. But, from another angle of vision, the sorrow of the individual is the incapacity of the one to be in union with the other. Both statements are correct from two different angles of vision or two different standpoints. The attempt of the individual empirically to come in contact with another thing, which is totally different from himself, is the cause of sorrow. So, the seer trying to come in contact with the seen, is the grief of this world. To grab anything, to possess anything, to enjoy anything or to maintain any kind of true relationship with another, is impossible in this world, because the empirical law of isolation operates, and therefore, there is no such thing as one possessing another thing or holding another as one's own property. There is no property here in this world. Thus, on the one hand, there is an urge to grab, to come in contact with things. On the other hand, there is the

insinuation of an incapacity to achieve success in this direction, because of the very nature of things. We are grappling with a very hard situation when we are in meditation. Many of the meditators do not realise what they are actually attempting. We merely listen to certain definitions of concentration, meditation and *samadhi* and get carried away by the noise of the teachings. But, any amount of adumbration, proclamation or advertisement of the need for meditation cannot touch the fringe of the problem, because the problem is hard-boiled. We have been in this circumstance of spatial and temporal empiricity since ages. We have had several incarnations. We have been born in various forms through the process of evolution; and in every stage of evolution, in every form into which we were born, we were entertaining the same notion of this empirical isolation of ourselves from the others. The impressions formed by these experiences of the past are present in our mind even today, and they persist in a repetition of these experiences and contacts. So, we become our own enemies internally when we try a complete transvaluation of values in the interest of spiritual meditation.

### **The Role of Dharana in Thinning Out the Vrittis**

The two terms '*vairagya*' and '*abhyasa*' mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita and in the Sutras of Patanjali refer to these two aspects of our task—the empirical and the transcendental, the spatio-temporal and the spiritual. The empirical aspect of our task relates to the physical or the psycho-physical being of ours as well as of others. The



transcendental aspect of our task relates to the true being of ours as well as of others. In deep concentration on any object, the mind gradually sheds the characters of *rajas* and *tamas* that also are present in it, and tends to become transparent to some extent. Normally, the mind is muddled like disturbed water. By deep concentration, we allow the mind to settle down—as turbid waters can be allowed to settle down—so that it can become gradually translucent and transparent. Concentration is to allow the mind to settle in its own self, without being pulled in the direction of other objects of sense. If we go on interfering with the turbid water in a pond, it will be shaking perpetually, and the dirt cannot settle. But, if we leave it to itself, we will find that the water settles down, and in the process, it gradually loses its turbidity and becomes transparent and capable of reflecting the light of the sun. At no time do we allow the mind to settle in itself. We give it work as if it is a labourer, a bond slave. We give it continuous work in the form of cognition of objects, and make it worse by compelling it to take interest in the cognised objects by means of the operation of the twofold *vruttis*, the non-painful *vruttis* and the painful *vruttis* mentioned by Patanjali. In concentration, the mind settles down to one-pointedness, and this settledness is tantamount to freedom from *rajas* and *tamas* to some extent, because, when we settle down to a particular type of thinking continuously, the distractedness that pulls us in the direction of other things ceases, and therefore, there is a diminution in the intensity of the activity of *rajas*. There is *tamas*, the dark side of things, which generally fixes itself in a state of inertia,

unconsciousness being its aim finally. But, inertia is completely obviated in consciousness, inasmuch as consciousness is being maintained. Concentration is not a state of sleep, where we are oblivious of everything and know nothing. Inasmuch as there is a conscious attention of the mind on a given object, there is an avoidance of sleep, lethargy or *tamas*. And also, inasmuch as the mind is not allowed to think of matters other than the object on hand, there is cessation also of *rajas*. Inasmuch as *rajas* and *tamas* are obviated, *sattva* remains. And *sattva* is transparency of the mind in which the object reflects itself in its wholeness, as in a mirror.

We can see the object of concentration within ourselves without opening our eyes. We can visualise the nature of an object even while closing the eyelids themselves. This is made possible by what they usually term as the internal eye. The visualisation becomes possible on account of the transparency and clarity of the mind effected by the preponderance of *sattva*, to the exclusion of *rajas* and *tamas*, as mentioned before. The *vriddhis* become weak. ‘*Kshinavritti*’ is the term used by Patanjali. The *vriddhis* become tender, as if they are going to break like a silken thread. Originally, they were very stout and very vehement, very strong, because of the contemplation of the various isolated objects. Now, that is gone. The mind is concentrating on one thing only, and therefore, the otherwise strong *vriddhis* used to jumping up at the objects of sense are thinned out. The mind becomes clear like crystal. When it becomes clear in this manner, it can reflect the objects within itself. The *gunas* of *prakriti* which operate

outwardly in the object, as well as inwardly in the mind, release their tensions and permit the coming together of the *sattva* element present in the subject as well as in the object. *Prakriti* is a Cosmic Substance which appears as the subject of concentration on one side and as the object of concentration on the other side. The *tamas* aspect of *prakriti* appears as the visible object, and another aspect of it appears in a subtle form as the mind cognising the very same object. The *gunas* of *prakriti* operate inwardly in the mind, and also outwardly in the objects. This is the reason why there is an affinity seen between the mind and the objects also. But, when there is the transparency of the mind effected in this manner through meditation, by the exclusion of *rajas* and *tamas*, there is a closer affinity established between the subject and the object, the seer and the seen. The world comes nearer to us, as it were. We touch it in a real sense, and not merely appear to touch it on its surface as heretofore.

### **The World, an Illusion; Ourselves, a Mirage**

In sense perception, we do not actually come in contact with objects. We only seem to contact. Therefore, our pleasure arising out of this seeming contact is a seeming pleasure, but not a real satisfaction arising out of a real union with things. We never come in union with anything in this world at any time, even with the dearest of objects and the greatest of our possessions. We always remain outside them. There is, therefore, a perpetual anxiety in the mind of every person, under every circumstance, due to the fear of loss of possessed things. Everything that is possessed

shall be also lost, because of the nature of the world as a whole. But in meditation, when the conditions that separate one thing from another thing are nullified by the exclusion of *rajas* and *tamas*, we seem to really possess things, and not appear to possess them. The originality of things reveals itself and not merely the reflections of them. Who would like to possess the reflection of an object, and be contented with its possession? The contact and the possession is of a reality, and not of an illusion. And every reflection is only an illusion of the original. The world is nothing but a reflection of an originality that is above space and time, and therefore it is that people say oftentimes that the world is an illusion. It is not there as we look at it, or as we seem to conceive it in our mind. The world, as it is in space and time, cannot be regarded as being in its true form. And we too, involved in the very same world of space and time, are in a world of illusion; when we look at our own selves, we are seeing a mirage of ourselves. No one is seeing himself. Everyone is equally deluded.

### **How Meditation Reveals the Hidden Reality**

Meditation cuts at this knot by a piercing focus of concentration, which darts through the veil of *rajas* and *tamas*, and stands face to face in utter nakedness of spirit before the object which is truly there, and not merely appears to be there. The well-known components of the process of meditation, known as the *dhyatru*, *dhyeya* and *dhyana*, commingle in such a manner that it appears that there is no movement at all of the psyche, as when the waters of two adjacent lakes remaining on a common level

may move from one to the other, and yet may not appear to move at all, because of the common level in which they are. Here, when the transparency of the mind enters into the true nature of the object in concentration and meditation, it would appear as if one is not meditating at all. There is no more effort of concentration at that time. The meditator seems to flow into the object spontaneously, and the object flows as spontaneously into the meditator. Neither the meditator is there, nor the object. In such a situation, no one can say who is where, which is at what place. The consciousness in the form of the *vishaya chaitanya*, hidden in the object so-called, reveals its new form, and as two lost friends may embrace each other by recognising each other after years of separation, the subject and the object recognise each other in their true form, casting off their masks which separated them originally in the world of sojourn and reincarnation. They see each other as birds of the same feather. The two birds sitting on the same tree, mentioned in the Veda and the Upanishad, begin to recognise each other as belonging to a single realm. Then it is that meditation ceases to be an activity on the part of the meditator. It becomes a spontaneity of existence, a character of being, which unites itself with the very same being of the object, and one cannot say at that time whether the meditator is thinking of the object or the object is thinking of the meditator. Both statements may be correct, and perhaps both activities are taking place.

## **Subconscious Impressions—A Great Obstacle to Progress in Meditation**

This is not merely a well-advanced stage in meditation, but something incomprehensible to the ordinary mind. The struggles, the tensions and the prejudices of the human mind will not permit the entry of the mind into such a state. The person who attempts to enter this state will be pulled back again and again. However much be his effort, he is dragged back. Because we are individuals with subconscious and unconscious prejudices compelling us to remain as human beings, men and women, busy people engaged in activities of this type or that type, in spite of the fact that we are honestly attempting at this union of a higher character, the internal downward pull will not leave us so easily because, oftentimes, we may make the mistake of concentrating and meditating only through the conscious mind, ignoring the subconscious feelings. Who has the time to think of what is inside us? We are busy bodies, utterly busy every moment, and no time to sit for even a second! Therefore, nature succeeds in her manoeuvre. It is one of the tricks of nature to see that we do not find time at all to sit, that we are kept busy always, running hither and thither, so that the inner impressions remain as they are, in spite of the outward appearance of our sincerely attempting to gain a spiritual outlook of life. So, a consciously attempted outward spirituality, religion or meditation, to the exclusion of the problems lying inwardly in the subconscious and the unconscious, will not be successful. Otherwise, religion will become a business,

spirituality a kind of activity, and meditation a hocus-pocus. It will not lead anyone anywhere.

### **The Metaphysical Foundation of Modern Psychology**

The great master Patanjali is very honest in disclosing before us the essential ingredients of proper meditation in the true sense of the term. True meditation, according to him, is when we become the object, as it were, because we cannot distinguish between ourselves and the object at that time. '*Arthamatrau-nirbhasa*' is the term used. It will be that state where the meditator will not be clearly conscious of the object of his meditation, but he himself would have become the object, resulting in the object meditating on itself, rather than a subject concentrating or meditating on it. When we are concentrating our mind on a tree, for instance, by the act of *samyama*, a fixing of the attention of consciousness, it is as if the tree is itself thinking, and not as if we are thinking that there is a tree outside. This is the philosophical or the metaphysical foundation of the so-called technique of modern psychology known as telecommunication, telepathic establishment of relationship, and distant healing, and so on. Mesmerism, hypnotism—all these are comprehended within this technique. The success of mesmerism and telepathy lies in this fact of an inward communion eternally being there between the contemplating mind and the object whose distance is maintained by space and time. A person in India may be spatially distant from one in London. It will be difficult to imagine how we could have any kind of influence on that person in London, he being some

thousands of miles away. But, that person is not thousands of miles away really. It is an illusion created by the interference of space and time. There is no distance between things, really speaking. One thing is not thousands of miles away from another thing. This is a delusion and a master-stroke which nature strikes upon our mind so that we may not attempt anything worthwhile. Nothing is far away from us, not even the heaven itself, what to talk of London and America.

### **Abolition of Space and Time in the Last Stage of Meditation**

The abolition of the spatial distance between the seer and the seen is the master-stroke in meditation. The meditator must be convinced hundred per cent that it is so. What prevents us from succeeding in this attempt is lack of faith itself. No one has this faith that distance does not obtain between things. We always feel that distance is there. Who can deny distance? We all travel, go places. In spite of that, it has to be conceded that finally distance does not exist between things. As distance does not exist, space is not there. Because space is not there, time also is not there. This is a great revelation before us. We cannot believe this. Our mind will not accept this. The mind will revolt against any kind of driving of conviction in this manner, so that it manages to retain us in this condition of disbelief always. Thus, we are what we are, and we remain as always. But, Yoga is swallowing fire; it is not a mere ordinary word or statement. It is so, really. If this sort of conviction is necessary before we succeed in true meditation, veritably



Yoga is swallowing fire. And, are we to forget that we are here for this attainment or achievement? Or, are we here only to erect buildings and maintain papers, files and run to office in the name of a great good that is being done to the world? Are we not in an illusion? Are we not deceived by the trick of Nature? If we are going to acquiesce in this trickstress “Nature” working so dexterously, inwardly as well as outwardly, so much the worse for us. Doubly and trebly we have to guard ourselves against this trick that is played upon us by the ace sorceress, this Nature as a whole, who has succeeded in drowning everybody and throwing them down with the force of her will. Great people there may be in this world, but whatever be their greatness, no greatness will work before Nature. Her greatness is more than that of the greatest people who have lived in this world. She does not care for saints and sages, or even their grandfathers! She is a greater saint. She knows Herself.

So, here is a terrible fact before us, which is Yoga proper. And, Yoga is not an international activity or any kind of activity whatsoever. It is an opening of the bud of the flower of our own heart before the blazing sun of God’s Being, and here, the sincerity of our heart will be our guide. *Tivra-samveganam asannah*, says Patanjali. The intensity within us, our honesty of purpose, will be the guideline here, and we should not be under the impression that everything is in our favour, while we are unable to lift our feet even one inch above the usual outlook of life that we have been maintaining in terms of our bodies and its relations.

So, in the attempt at communion, at meditation proper, there is this transparency of *sattva* working in the mind, which reflects the nature of the objects by which the apparent differences and distances obtaining between the seer and the seen are broken through and completely extenuated. One enters the other. This state of inter-related reflection of the true being of all people is the Brahma-Loka that is described in the scriptures, the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God that we hear of in the scriptures, the Brahma-Loka, is this very realm of values, where everyone is reflected in everyone else. There is this mutual reflection brought about by the entry of the true being of one thing into the true being of another. This is the last point in meditation, which commingles with what Patanjali calls the final aim of *samyama* or *samadhi*, whose objects are the evolutes of *prakriti*.

## Chapter 18

### MERGING IN THE BOSOM OF THE CREATOR

The main theme of Yoga is the ultimate communion aimed at by all the preceding processes that the seeker goes through. Even as the efforts of an agriculturist or a farmer, right from the gathering of the seeds, sowing in the field, taking care of the tendrils, protecting the harvest and gathering the harvest are all aimed at eating the produce of this hectic labour for months together, even so, whatever we have considered in all the previous chapters up until now tends towards the principal aim of Yoga, which is communion with Reality. Communion with Reality is the last step or leap into the Unknown that the known individuality takes, which is the consummation of all efforts, and the attainment *par excellence*. This communion, in the context of the system of Yoga as propounded by Patanjali, means attunement with the various evolutes of *prakriti*, or rather the evolutionary stages of the universe. Each such stage is made the object of concentration, meditation and communion, so that there is a union established between every stage of individuality with every stage of cosmic evolution. As we are concerned mainly with the system of Patanjali, we shall now touch upon the principles of *samyama*, *samadhi* or communion as conceived in the system.

#### Communion—The Final Aim of Yoga

Communion with Reality is *samadhi*, that is to say, *samyama* practised for the ultimate attainment. That is the

goal, that is Yoga proper. But, every stage of conscious experience may be regarded as a tentative reality with which one has to establish a communion, as for instance, right from the stages of *yama* and *niyama* through the various graduated evolutionary stages in the course of the ascent of the individual soul from the lower to the higher, up until the final stage of total merger in the Unknown. Right from *yama* onwards, every stage is nothing but an attempt at communion. *Yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama* and *pratyahara* are endeavours in Yoga to commune with different stages of the Reality, different degrees of or intensities of the Reality. But, when we come to the climax of *dhyana* or meditation according to Patanjali's system, we confront Reality in its true colours, not as it appeared previously to the empirical individual. The major problems of Reality present themselves when we reach the pinnacle of the meditation process. Here, we have to grapple with a very interesting process by which we seem to break through the knot of the empirical constitution of the objects, and enter into their noumenal existence. While, in the earlier stages also attempts were made to commune with the Reality as it presented itself through the environment, right from the human society upwards, when we come to the final level, we have to undertake a new technique altogether of solving the problem of existence, once and for ever. All the stages mentioned earlier are empirical in one sense, even if they are graduated ascents. They are ascents through degrees of empiricity itself. Though, when we rise up higher and higher, the empiricity becomes more and more transparent and capable of reflecting Reality in a

larger and more intense measure, nevertheless, they are after all empirical stages only, because of the fact that the object somehow remains outside the subject. Even if the medium separating the subject from the object be utterly transparent, and for all practical purposes it appears that there is no difference at all between the seer and the seen, the transparent medium acts as a separating element. This happens in the earlier stages. But, in the ultimate stage, this should not happen. We do not wish to have even a transparent medium of separation between the seeing consciousness and the seen object, because utter communion is what is attempted now, and not merely an apparent coming together in a fraternal embrace. Friendliness is different from communion. Up to this time, we were all attempting to be friendly with the atmosphere in the different degrees of its manifestation. Now, our attempt is not to remain merely as friends, as brethren, but to coalesce into a single self-identical being. This is the aim of Yoga finally.

### **The Complex of Name and Form**

Now, as per the analysis made by Patanjali, the nature of the peculiar feature which separates or distinguishes the subject from the object is *name* and *form*. He does not, of course, use these specific words. His technical terms are 'sabda' and 'jnana', definition and notion, or idea. When we conceive or perceive an object, three factors are involved in the apprehension of the object, factors which make it appear as an empirical something. The three factors are: the thing as such or the thing in itself, in its true essentiality

(*artha*); the shape, the contour, the mould into which it is cast by the structural pattern of conception or perception (*jnana*); and the nomenclature that is attached to this form (*sabda*). Every object has an essential nature of its own; it stands in its own status. And every object has a form which distinguishes it from every other object. And, because it has a form, it has also a name. Now, when we conceive of an object, we mix up these three factors in the knowledge of that object. To conceive the form of an object—a mountain, a tree, or anything whatsoever—would be to mix up these three factors and create a picture of empirical isolation of the object from the seeing subject.

We cannot think of an object, unless we associate a name also with it. It may be a person, it may be a thing. As every person and every thing seems to have a name attached to one's own form, the name is considered as an essential distinguishing feature characterising each particular object as different from other objects. The moment we utter the name of a particular thing, the form of that object also gets presented in the mind. No object has any name, really speaking. Names are given for purposes of convenience. We cannot distinguish between objects, unless they are defined in a particular manner. The ideological definition of an object is the cause of its being perceived as an object. For purposes of a convenient distinction to be drawn between one thing and another thing, we give names to things, though no thing, no person, has any name in itself, in himself or herself. No one is born with a name. It just does not exist. It is created for a practical purpose. But this is a minor matter, considering

the other two aspects of an object which are more significant.

The form of an object is really that which distinguishes it from other objects, and this distinction calls for an identification of itself by a name or a nomenclature. The conception of an object is nothing but the conception of a form that distinguishes it from other objects with different forms. The length and the breadth, the size and the shape, the structure, the pattern, the colour and other aspects—all these go to create the form of an object, and this distinguishing form is the reason behind the name that is given to it. So, name and form and idea go together as one single complex.

### **Prakriti—The Basic Substantiality Behind All Objects**

However, the real thing behind the object cognised need not necessarily be the form into which it is cast during the process of perception. Why this is so is a point that takes us far, far into the realms of the cosmic structure of things, which was discussed in some detail in the earlier chapters. Everything is a manifestation of the one original substance called *prakriti*. The three forces known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* that constitute *prakriti*, with their internal modifications, create the so-called distinction of one thing from another thing. But, it is not true that there are many objects in the world. The whole point is this. The different objects are only different shapes assumed by the one substance called *prakriti*, while it descends to the pattern of space and time in greater and greater densities. The lower it comes, the grosser is its form, and the greater is the

distinction that is seen between one object and another. The difference subsisting between one thing and another thing gradually tapers off into a narrowness of near-identity, when we rise gradually from the lower to the higher principles. As *prakriti* descends from the original unity of its structure into the principles known as *mahat*, *ahamkara*, the *tanmatras* and the *mahabhutas* by the permutation and combination of its three *gunas*, it becomes more and more diversified, finally resulting in the individual forms of personalities and objects. This diversification process becomes worse still in the social relationships of the individual forms. Yoga practice, therefore, is an internal effort of the consciousness that has descended into such a terrible differentiation to rise up into progressively larger unifications of itself with its environment, until, at the stage of what is known as *samadhi* or *samyama*, the five elements are confronted directly, and not the ordinary forms of the individualities of persons and things.

The name or the designation, the nomenclature, the idea, and the form, are peculiar to each object. But, the substantiality of the object does not originally vary from the substantiality of another object, because all objects are constituted of the same three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Prakriti* is the only thing that is behind all forms, all objects, as the thing-in-itself. The thing as such is *prakriti*. So, in a particular form of concentration, *samyama*, in the lowest of its stages, an attempt is made to divest the form of all the names associated with it, and an effort is also made at the same time to see through the form into the substance



out of which the form is made. And, because of the fact that the individual subject is formed of the same essential substance as the objects concentrated or meditated upon, the consciousness recognises or discovers the basic similarity of structure in itself and in the objects. It is like two rivers meeting each other or two oceans joining at a particular point in an indistinguishable mass. The five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—are forms of *prakriti* itself. They are not really five separate or unconnected elements, but one single gross substance appearing in various degrees of descent as ether, air, fire, water and earth, of which five elements also our bodies are constituted. Therefore, it would be difficult to see how there can be a distinction between one thing and another thing.

### **A Description of the Savitarka Samadhi**

When we are established in the *samadhi* state, if we open our eyes, we will not be able to see anything, in spite of the fact that our eyes are open. This is because the consciousness within has discovered the similarity of being between itself and the outside objects. The spatial distinction vanishes on account of that very same thing being inside the seeing subject and the object that is seen. Time is overcome, because space is no more there. So, *arthamatra-nirbhasattvam*. The status of cognising the pure substance of the object, as it is in itself, is the ultimate *samyama*, the so-called *samadhi* of Yoga. It is the equilibrated consciousness that is called *samadhi*. The up-and-down distinction that we usually observe between the seer and the seen is abolished, and the substance of the one

enters into the substance of the other. Rather, an awareness arises within as to the similarity of structure of the substance of the one and the substance of the other. It is not that communion is created by meditation; it is only discovered as having been there already, right from eternity. This identification of the meditating consciousness with the vast structure of the physical cosmos constituted of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—as involved in the complexity of *sabda*, *artha* and *jnana*—name, form and ideation, is the lowest state of *samadhi*. This is called *savitarka samapatti* or *samadhi*, in the language of Patanjali. He calls it by this name, because there is an internal metaphysical argumentation taking place, when the consciousness within struggles and grapples with the vast substance of the five elements in their relationships to name and form. Together with the conception of the objects as involved in name and form, there is also the interference of space and time. As these are very difficult things to imagine in the earlier stages of *samyama*, space and time are dropped out altogether from consideration at this level, and only the name-form complex is considered. We have to peel out the outer vestments of the object, as we peel out an onion, stage by stage, until we enter into the substance of that thing. In this manner, the outer vestures of the object are gradually cast off by a graduated attempt made to commune one's consciousness with every vesture of the form.

And every *samyama* on a particular vesture of an object is, at the same time, an achievement of union with that vesture to such an extent that the vesture ceases to be there

as a distinguishing mark of that object, or a differentiating feature of that object, it having become one with the meditating consciousness itself. Such is to be the achievement of the meditating consciousness in respect of the other stages or vestures of the object also. The *savitarka samapatti* is the lowest state of attainment because, here, the gross form of the universal object is the thing that is concentrated upon as related to its name and ideational form, *śabda* and *jñāna*, in addition to the substantiality of it, the *artha*, as it is called. Normally, no one can go beyond this stage. To say anything beyond it is a waste of time. But, intellectually and theoretically at least, we can take a peep into the further stages, in consideration of both the attainments that lie ahead, and the necessity to guard ourselves against any kind of distraction of our mind, contrary to the requirements of the meditational process. We can look into the bare outlines of what we can expect, though we cannot expect these for years to come or, perhaps, for some ages to come. Normally, these distant goals remain only as theoretical ideas. These are not easy things even to imagine, much less to come in contact with actually. Even the so-called lowest *samapatti* is far from the reach of anyone. One cannot hope to have even a glimpse of what it is. Who can rise to the status of the permeation of one's consciousness into the entire physical structure of the cosmos? Can we even dream of this state? However, this is regarded as the lowest of the *samādhi* stages, the *savitarka samapatti*.

## Higher and Ever Higher Samadhi States

When we succeed in dropping out the association of the object with empirical name and form altogether, and in gaining contact with the object vitally, in its essential substantiality, where our substance becomes one with it—perhaps, this is the true transubstantiation we hear of, we are in a higher state of attainment which is known as *nirvitarka samapatti*, where a grappling with, or an argumentation about, the relationship of name and form with the substance does not anymore arise. Consciousness becomes giddy, unable to stand on its own legs, and feels as if it is melting away into nothing or, perhaps, everything. This is the height of religious consciousness that one can imagine, the pinnacle of spiritual attainments, and the last point in Yoga. But even this is not enough, says Patanjali.

Patanjali wants to make us mad by saying that even the *nirvitarka samapatti* is not enough, because the stages of *prakriti* are not exhausted by these considerations of our attunement with the grosser forms of *prakriti* as the five elements, known through the *samapattis* known as *savitarka* and *nirvitarka*, because higher than the physical elements are the *tanmatras*—*sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*—the forces which are the essential constituent principles of the five gross elements, something like the electric energy that is behind the formation of things. An energy of vibrations is there behind the forms and substances of things. We can only say this much, because we cannot see these energies. We cannot imagine what this electricity is or what this vibration is. But there is something, a vital permeating vibration. This is the

principle behind the concrete forms of objects, and the principles are called the *tanmatras*. The *tanmatra* is the principle of any particular substance, the ‘that’ as such, ‘Tat’ as it is called in Sanskrit. The ‘that’ is not the same as the ‘what’ mentioned by philosophers sometimes. The ‘that’ is invisible to the eyes and inconceivable to the mind. But, the ‘what’ is the descriptive form, the analytical feature of a particular object. Or rather, the ‘that’ is the noumenon and the ‘what’ is the empirical form. So, the ‘that’ or ‘that-ness’, apart from the ‘what-ness’ of an object, is the *tanmatra* which is there again to be confronted in another stage of *samapatti* which is known as the *savichara*, when it is associated with the relationship of it with space and time. The last thing that will leave us is the notion of space and time. With all one’s effort, we cannot get out of it, because we ourselves will cease to be, the moment there is a cessation of space and time. Our existence is nothing but space-time existence. If space-time is not there, none of us can be. So, the conception by the internal meditating consciousness, of these higher principles of *prakriti*, beyond the five gross elements, in relation to space and time, at the time of communion, is known as *savichara samapatti*. It is *savichara*, because a kind of internal analysis is still taking place—in a very high sense, of course—as to the proper relationship of the *tanmatras* with space and time. We cannot overcome the limitations, or the distinguishing characteristics, of space and time, as long as we remain as a perceiving, cognising, meditating consciousness outside that on which we meditate or which we conceive in our mind.

The seer becomes the seen, consciousness becomes matter, the meditating principle becomes the very thing on which it meditates. It becomes the 'other' thing, and does not merely conceive, or have an idea, of the other thing. "To *know* is to *be*" is the point we arrive at in direct cognition and realisation, when we come face to face with the structure of the space-time process which conditions even the subtle vibratory principles known as the *tanmatras*. When even space and time are overcome, and we are one with the *tanmatras*, we become an omnipresent something; we are then in *nirvichara samapatti*. We become practically omnipresent. We permeate the cosmos. We do not remain any more as a 'you' or an 'I'; that has gone forever. It has gone forever, never to come back. A great joy surges forth within the omnipresent consciousness. Unthinkable, incomprehensible, undetectable, indefinable, ungraspable—such is the bliss that bursts forth within oneself on account of having perceived, grasped, possessed and enjoyed all things at one stroke. A joy which cannot even be dreamt of by even the richest man in the world, or the greatest emperor of the universe, enters into the being of the meditating principle, not on account of being in possession of the universe, but on account of having become one with it. The universe rises above its relationship with its own contents, which earlier appeared to be outside itself, and gazes at its own self as a completeness, as a mass of being which has gathered its corns into a granary of its totality. And Self-realisation of the universe takes place, not the individual self-realisation, of a he or a she, but the universal Self-realisation, where the

cosmos recognises itself as it really is. This joy is an experience which is designated by Patanjali as *sananda samapatti*, an attainment attended with great joy, bliss. All the words in the dictionary cannot exhaust the content of the significance of this joy. A bare universal Self-consciousness remains as 'I-am-What-I-am', or as one is sometimes told, 'I-am-That-I-am', or simply 'I am', or even more simply 'I'. All words are useless in the end. No word is capable of conveying any sense here. The richest literature and the brightest word that one can think of in any language pales into an airy nothing before the requirement of this mighty experience of the universal 'I', which is God-Consciousness or God-Experience. There can be nothing more than this. How can there be anything more than God-Experience? This is the Cosmic 'I' asserting Itself, the *sasmita samapatti*, an attainment where 'I' alone remains, but an 'I' which is divested of the 'you' and the 'he' or 'what' aspect, freed from space and, time itself, what to speak of objects of perception and knowledge. The 'I' that one becomes in this stage excludes everything that can be designated or conceived as the 'you' or the 'what', a Total Subject which has no object outside it, and therefore cannot be called a 'subject' at all. It is not even an 'I'. It is nothing that one can ever hope to think in one's mind. This is *sasmita samapatti*, the lofty *samadhi*.

### **An Utter Death for an Utter Eternity**

And, as a tyrannous creditor will not go without extracting the last drop of blood from our body, and ruthless he shall be in extracting this from us, so Patanjali

does not leave us even at this. Like a leech, he catches us again, and wants to tell us that there is something more than this. Patanjali is more than a Shylock, and will not be satisfied with even all the blood that we have, so he extracts the last quintessence of our being itself and sees to it that it is not there. We are abolished totally, root and branch, and we are no more to be retained in the memory of anyone. Our memory even should not be there. Such a tyrant, such a despot, it is hard to imagine. But, such is Yoga. The despotic, tyrannical attitude of Yoga is such that it will not permit even the memory of our existence, even after cutting off all our existence totally. That ultimate self-annihilation in the attainment of an ultimate Self-gathering and experience, a dying to live, a total relinquishment for a total fulfilment, an utter death for an utter eternity, is known as *nirbija samapatti*, the final *samadhi*. We do not know what it is, and the less that is said about it the better.

So goes Yoga. And all shades of Yoga come together here in their last requirements. Whatever the path that the seeker may pursue, he will find that he is here on this point ultimately. Whatever be the religion that he may be practising or may belong to, whatever the spiritual technique that he may be adopting in his practices, whatever be the aims that he holds in life, all these come together here, in this last point of attainment, which, faintly, the teacher Patanjali attempts to describe in his *sutras*, taking us stage by stage, step by step, from all the lower categories of cosmic evolution, raising us to the very point at which evolution started, merging us in the bosom of the Creator Himself—call him Purusha, if you like—and



seeing that we live the Life Eternal. Here the exposition of Yoga is over.

## EPILOGUE

My main purpose in the foregoing chapters has been to take the reader along the difficult labyrinth of the practical side of Yoga. All that I have tried to expound is nothing but the practice of Yoga according to the system of Patanjali. He has many other things to say as his school of thought, as a system of philosophy, into which I have not digressed much, inasmuch as I have addressed my words to spiritual seekers, and not to academicians or theoretical philosophers, because there are many knotty metaphysical themes which Patanjali introduces in the various chapters of his system, especially in the third and the fourth chapters. I do not think there is any point in discussing in detail the theoretical metaphysics of the Samkhya and the Yoga, since, together with the exposition of the practical processes of Yoga, I have attempted to touch upon these metaphysical principles also, in some way, without actually mentioning that it is philosophy.

To rouse our spirits into a mood of intense satisfaction, and to force our spirits into the practice of Yoga, Patanjali gives us a long list of the attainments automatically following the *samyamas* or the *samapattis*. Powers known as Siddhis, after which many are these days, seem to be the spontaneous consequences of communion with Reality. It is useless to run after powers. When one runs after a power, it cannot be acquired, because it remains an outside something. And capacity, or power, or Siddhi as it is called, is an automatic consequence that follows the communion of the Yogi with a stage of Reality, because he then has a

complete control over that with which he has identified himself, which he himself has become for all practical purposes, which cannot be differentiated from his being in essence. A person can lift his hand at his will, and it may be called a power, because an ant, for instance, cannot lift his hand. To a small weakling like an ant or a crawling insect, a feat of lifting a heavy thing like the human hand will be a *siddhi*, no doubt. An elephant lifts its heavy leg or its own body, which even a dozen persons cannot lift with all their strength. How does the elephant lift itself while nobody can lift it? Because, its consciousness is identical with its form. Even the heaviest or the stoutest person can lift his own body, but another cannot lift that body. This is because the consciousness of that heavy or weighty person is identical with the form or the very being of that form. So, when the consciousness of being is identified with the being itself, the control over that being follows spontaneously. A man may be able to lift even a mountain, if he himself is that mountain. If an elephant can walk, why should not a mountain walk? But, while we are not able to enter into the principles and policies behind the attainments known as these powers or Siddhis, we get enamoured of them, and we want only the profits without the efforts that are required for the enjoyment of these profits. When we think of a power or a gain or a *siddhi*, it shall run away from us. Anything that we consider as outside ourselves cannot become our possession. There is an eternal saying in a famous Upanishad known as the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. *Sarvum tam paradat yo-nyatra atmanah sarvam veda*: Nothing will, or can, become our friend, if it

stands outside us. Anything that we consider as external to us cannot become our possession, cannot become our object of enjoyment. We cannot have any control or say over it. But, the extent to which we identify our being with that particular object will be the extent of our control over that object, or our *siddhi* over it, as we may say. Omnipresence is followed at once, simultaneously, by omnipotence. So, our capacity depends upon the extent of our union with things. And the lesser we are in communion, the lesser is our strength, the greater is our weakness.

So, various types of *samyama* are delineated in the different aphorisms of Patanjali in the third chapter, known as the Vibhuti Pada, based on the philosophical principles he describes in the fourth chapter. Anything can be under our control, provided we are one with that thing. But, our mind revolts against union with things on account of an egoism that it maintains, a principle of self-assertion which follows our existence always. We are always some individuals, and therefore, there is a clash of our individuality with other individualities. There is a conflict between egos, and therefore, no one can have control over anything. Everything is self-existent and independent by itself. But, this independence is a falsity in the light of the ultimate structure of things. There is no independence of anything, because everything belongs to everything else on account of the very nature of *prakriti* itself. So, the *siddhis* or the powers are attainments that follow a communion of oneself with the stages of *prakriti*, ultimately aiming at union with the whole of *prakriti* itself. We need not bother

about the powers or the *siddhis*. They are spontaneous results that must follow when we succeed in our practice of Yoga *samyama*, as attainment, as communion, as *samadhi*, as Realisation. Thus, as we proceed higher and higher, we become more and more self-contented, because we seem to realise that we are in union with more things than we could imagine earlier. Our world looks larger than it appeared before. We are no more denizens of a particular realm, but a permeating principle through not merely this particular realm, but also other realms beyond the physical. The super-physical realms also begin to open up their eyes before us and we begin to gaze at them. We are stupefied by the picture that is presented before us as a vast conspectus of inter-related regions, so that we seem to be at once in earth and in heaven, why, in all the realms of being.

These few words that I have placed before the reader should be able to give him an idea as to the grandeur and the majesty of Yoga, and the super-religious character of this practice, and the inviolability of its requirements, and the impossibility of any person not to be a student of Yoga one day or the other. So, here is Yoga before the reader, and here I conclude.