

# A BRIEF OUTLINE OF SADHANA



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## **Publisher's Note**

This is a series of four discourses that Swamiji gave during the Sadhana Week program held in the Ashram in 1997 as a general outline and introduction to spiritual practice.

## Chapter 1

### THE NECESSITY FOR SADHANA

The word 'sadhana' has several meanings. Literally it means an instrument of action, a means of operation, a methodology in any kind of procedure or any effort towards the achievement of a purpose; but understood as a spiritual exercise, sadhana means the total effort on the part of an individual in the direction of the greatest of all purposes in life—namely, the attainment of God.

Why should there be so much effort in achieving a spontaneously accepted reality, which is God's existence? Is it such a hard job that we have to struggle in order to make any progress in that direction? When we move downstream along the current of a flowing river, there is no necessity to put forth any effort for movement along the waters of the river because the current takes us with its impulsion of movement. But effort is necessary if we try to swim cross-current, upstream, or against the natural flow of the water of the river.

Here is a deep truth behind the very meaning of life itself. Is life not a struggle? Are we not busy from morning to evening? Is not all our life, every day, an effort? Is it not an endeavour on our part to meet

oppositions of every kind, from any corner of our life? The moment we wake up in the morning, we face opposition in the form of people and the world outside. We are in conflict with the world; otherwise, there would be no necessity to put forth tremendous effort to meet the world and its demands. We are in conflict with people in general; that is why we are cautious even to speak to people, lest we may be taken amiss. The adjustment of oneself with people is a great effort psychologically, ethically, morally, and emotionally. The world of nature stands, as it were, in opposition to our personal psychophysical inclinations, and it does not appear that the world is ready to grant us everything that we want.

There are types of opposition in the achievement of a purpose. The opposition can be from within one's own self, from people, and from the world of nature, in different ways. We hear it said in cosmological descriptions of the scriptures of the world that when God manifested Himself as this universe, He projected Himself as a triple reality, a threefold ramification of His own Being, so that each of these three forms of manifestation was made to feel a difficulty of self-adjustment with the others. This is a cosmical internality of conflict.

There are two types of interiorisation of experience. One is our own personal psychological introverted attitude—the alignment of the inner components of our personality. The other is the difficulty in even understanding what it could be when it is told to us that there is an interiority in the whole universe. The inwardness of the psyche of a human individual opposes the most misunderstood and unintelligible interiority of cosmic inwardness. No one can ever believe that the world is an internalised reality, that it has a selfhood of its own. For us, the world is an outside object.

The three ways in which God is said to be manifest in creation are known as the *adhyatmika*, the *adhibhautika* and the *adhidaivika* principles. The presence of the transcendent God is mightily felt immanently, both in the *adhyatmika* side and the *adhibhautika* side.

The perception of the world by a human individual, or any living being whatsoever, involves a subtle operation of interiorised interconnection, which is always missed in the perceptual procedure of the daily life of a person. We can know that we are looking at the world, but we cannot know how it is that we are able to look at the world. The world is openly external to our perceptual faculties. An externally existent,

separated, isolated entity cannot become an object of internal experience. This means to say, we cannot know that the world exists at all if it is true that there is a segmentation between the perceiving individual and the perceived object.

On the one hand, we are sure that we are totally independent. We can walk on the road unobstructed, and nobody can say anything to us. "I am a free individual; I can go anywhere I like." This is the feeling of every person. This kind of assumed freedom on the part of the individual opposes the role played by the world forces, even in the permission granted to us while walking on the road. We are falsely and vaingloriously patting ourselves on the back that we are free even while we are engaged in such simple acts like walking on the road. Where is the complication in it? It is such a simple thing. Every day we go for a walk, but it is not such a simple thing as we imagine. The world has to permit us to walk; otherwise, our feet will not be lifted from the ground. The gravitation of the Earth should be of such a proportion that it should not compel our feet to stick to the ground, as if by a glue. There is a proportionately permissible and tolerant quantum of gravity exerted by the Earth so that we can smoothly walk on the road. If, on the other hand, this gravity were not to pull us down to the Earth, we would

be flying in the air, so we can imagine how compassionate the Earth is.

Mother Earth is very kind. We cannot even walk on the road without this compassion of divine Mother Earth. It cannot pull us too much; then we will not lift our legs. And it cannot pull us too little; otherwise, we will fly in the air. How carefully the arrangement is made that we are given the permission to foolishly feel that we are free people! Human individuality is vainglorious, basically, and very egoistic, wrongly. We can be egoistic rightly, sometimes; but if the ego is manifest wrongly, and in a foolish manner, it loses every sense.

These are the oppositions in front of us. No person is opposing us. The world in its material form as mountains and rivers is also not opposing us in any way. The opposition causing conflict and requiring effort on our part arises due to an inscrutable relationship that obtains between us and the world outside. We cannot know whether the world is outside us or it is not outside us. We are so much involved in the operations of the world—not only in the operations, but also in the constituent factors of the world—that there is no good reason to believe that we can stand outside the world. To such an extent is this dependence of the individual on the world that it may

look that we are inseparable from the world. This is the truth on one side of the matter.

If we are totally inseparable, then we cannot deal with the world, just as we do not have to deal with our own selves. Here again a mystery is before us. The word *maya* that is used in scriptures is just this much—an inscrutability, and a difficulty operating, an inexplicability of the relation of the appearance of things to the reality of things. The relationship between appearance and reality is so unintelligible and inexplicable that philosophers have used the word *maya*, which does not mean somebody sitting on our head; it is sitting inside our mind only.

In our sadhana, in our practice of spiritual exercise, we have to put forth effort in the direction of the solution of this peculiar conflict arisen due to the inexplicability of the circumstances in which we are placed in this world. It is a total onslaught of the total individual in respect of the total operation of the cosmos. The whole of us is ready to commence the battle of life, if one would like to call it so, in confronting the totality of the opposition in the form of this inscrutable phenomenon known as the world. If there has been a thing called the Mahabharata war, we are facing it here every day.

We have studied the epic called the Mahabharata. There were two camps of opposing forces, called the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Neither of them was adequate to the purpose. The world by itself is inadequate; the individual by himself or herself is also inadequate. The Pandavas could not have won victory by themselves. Firstly, the Kaurava forces outnumbered the Pandavas. Not only that, mighty warriors on the side of the Kauravas were arrayed against the Pandavas. The generals and the commanders of the Kaurava forces, such as Bhishma, Drona and Karna, were invincible. Equal to them, there was none on the Pandavas' side. Yet, the Pandavas won victory.

It is said that the demons are larger in number than the gods. The idea is that the externality of operation is apparently larger in its size than the internality of individual operation. The world is bigger than every one of us. The Kauravas were bigger than the Pandavas. How could a smaller number overcome the power of the larger number?

The *adhyatma* and the *adhibhauta* are two terms which I mentioned just now as practically opposed to each other. Call these two camps as the individual and the world, or the Pandavas and the Kauravas, the subject and the object, the perceiver and the perceived,

consciousness and matter, or whatever be the nomenclature of the situation. Yet, the Pandavas won victory. How did they win victory? It was not by their personal strength. They had no strength in the teeth of the opposition.

A third element entered invisibly, which was the cause of the victory of the Pandavas. We cannot oppose the world with all the might and main that we may wield. An individual cannot easily conquer the world. The Pandavas could not win victory against the Kauravas, but it was possible for them when they attuned themselves to a third element altogether which ranged beyond the operation of both the subjective side and the objective side. Above was Krishna, who stood above both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. This is the *adhidaiva* principle. It does not do anything, but its very existence is enough.

The planets are actively revolving in space, but the Sun does not move. All these dramatic actions and movements of the planets, the incessant activity of these heavenly bodies, is caused by the Sun, who himself is keeping quiet. A great war took place between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, but the third element never did anything.

The whole world is busy with inconceivable activity, but this activity is controlled by the operation

of the Sun in the sky, in a manner no ordinary person can understand. Our breath, the operation of our lungs, our heart, our digestive organs, our health, our prosperity—everything is related to the way the Sun exerts influence upon the Earth and all individuals. This is by not doing anything physically; no hands and feet are working in the glorious Sun.

This *adhidaivika* principle in the Mahabharata context was the very existence of Krishna. The division of forces as arranged earlier concluded with the proposal on the part of Krishna that each party could choose either his army or himself. The difference was that Krishna's army was an invincible operative force, if anyone wanted to choose it; but on the other hand was the silent Krishna, who would do nothing. If anyone wanted that idle individual who would only eat and keep quiet, they could choose that, also. Duryodhana thought, "What is the good of this individual sitting quiet and eating my food, and doing nothing for me?" He said, "I will take your army, Master." But the sensible Arjuna chose that which never did anything.

We have an inveterate habit of convincing ourselves that the value of life consists in activity. This is a disease in the mind of individuals. Life means work; if we do not work, we are not a meaningful

individual at all. But nobody can understand that there is a workless, actionless existence which is much more than all the totality of actions. This is the *adhidaivika* principle. When the *adhyatmika* or the *adhibhautika* takes the assistance of this great principle, an overwhelming inclusiveness of support emerges from a source which cannot be conceived by either side. Principally, in the spiritual exercise called sadhana, what we are expected to do is to draw the attention of Krishna in this cosmic *adhyatmika* and *adhibhautika* conflict, without which there could be no hope of any kind of advancement in spiritual life or victory anywhere.

Wherever is Krishna, there is righteousness; and wherever there is righteousness, there is victory. *Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ, tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama* (B.G. 18.78): “Where the individual and the supremely transcendent Krishna join together, being seated in one chariot, and drive forward in the operation of the cosmos, victory is certain,” says the concluding verse of the Bhagavadgita.

This chariot may be this body; it may be the whole of human society; it may be the entirety of nature. The whole universe can be considered as the chariot. In all these levels of manifestation of the Ultimate Being, these forces of the *adhyatmika* side and the

*adhibhautika* side operate. Effort, which is the connotation of *sadhana*, is actually the energy of the soul calling the attention of that which is above itself, and above the world. Intensely active people that we are, we require the help of One who does not do any work at all. An Actionless Being is the source of the victory of all people who are filled with activity. It is a great contradiction, indeed, even to think like that. Busy people require the help of someone who is not busy at all. All movement is explicable only in terms of that which is not moving at all. If everything starts moving without anything that is not moving, the concept of motion itself becomes inexplicable.

Spiritual practice, *sadhana*, is not an easy job, though a routine of daily ritual is good enough in one sense of the term. We practise *japa*, read scriptures, go to temples, offer *arati*, take baths in a holy river, and go on pilgrimages. It is wonderful, but they have to be charged with the force of the surrender of the individual spirit to that transcendent spirit which is above both the world and the individual.

We cannot forget the world even in our *sadhana*. The idea of renouncing the world and going to some other place so that we can be free from the torments of life is highly misconceived. No one can move away from the world. We cannot renounce the world. Are we

going to stay in the sky after renouncing the world? We are in the world only.

So, unnecessary enthusiasm of an emotional type is not called for here. Things are not so simple as they appear on the surface. The renunciation of the world means the renunciation of oneself also because one's own self cannot stand outside the world. When I go, the world also goes; but when I continue to be a hard-boiled egoistic individuality which cannot be renounced at all, then the world also cannot be renounced. Self-abnegation is the same as world-abnegation.

Another aspect of spiritual practice is that the whole of the person is to seek the great achievement. It is not the psychological organ, the thought process, that is actually operating here. In spiritual sadhana, it is not the mind that works; it is, rather, the soul that operates. When the soul acts, we are pulled up from our very roots, as an elephant plucks a large tree from the very root itself.

We rarely have an experience of the total operation of the spirit in ourselves. The whole of us is not present in anything that we do. We give partial attention to even the most important kinds of work that we are performing. Part of the mind is in the family, part is in the work, and part is in some other direction—all

which are plenty in number. We cannot understand what it is to think wholly because we have never been trained to do that.

A fraction of an individual can achieve only a fraction of victory. A finite effort can yield only a finite result. "I want everything, but I will do very little," is not going to be our attitude. Sadhana is the spiritual effort towards God-realisation. God is a total in every sense of the term. As there cannot be anything outside God, there cannot be any other thought in the mind external to the concentration of the mind on this purpose in sadhana. *Ekagrata*, or one-pointedness, here means the whole-souled operation of the spirit inwardly in the direction of the whole-souled encompassing reality, which is God Almighty.

It is necessary to have an amount of self-purification even to comprehend the meaning of this wholeness. An impure mind, filled with tensions of every kind, with turmoil in the emotions and attachments of different kinds, cannot practise this sadhana. Sincerity, of course, pays. In that sense, we may say, whatever little practice we do daily, even as a kind of routine, may bring some result. In the Bhagavadgita, there is an assurance of the Lord. *Svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt* (B.G. 2.40): A little bit of exercise, a little effort in the right direction along the lines of

God-attainment, will free you from great trouble, great fear. The fear of death itself will be mitigated by a sincere endeavour on our part in wanting, and only wanting—really wanting, and wanting one-hundred percent—that which we are seeking.

Actually, there is nothing that we cannot achieve if we really want it. ‘Really’ is the word. That is, our whole being should want it, and it will come; but if we have scant respect for even asking—“Let me try, if it is possible; if it comes, well and good”—then, it will not come. No one can experiment with God: “If He is there, let Him come. If He is not there, all right; it does not matter.” This will not work.

Spiritual exercise, sadhana, is not a question of observation and experiment such as physical science, chemistry, mathematics, etc. Here, the soul operates. We have difficulty in understanding even the meaning of the soul. What is the meaning of the soul? Is there something sitting inside us? There is nothing sitting inside us. Do not make the mistake of thinking that the soul is inside you, because if the soul is inside you, you will be outside it. You know the consequence of thinking like that. Are you outside your own soul, which consequence will follow by saying that the soul is inside you? “I am different from the soul.” A foolish consequence follows again. “If the soul is inside me, I

am different from the soul, and I am existing outside the soul. The soul is not me.” Can there be a greater stupidity than to conceive the soul in this manner?

The soul is not inside you; it is yourself. You yourself are the soul, and it is not something that is inside you. Do not bring the question of inside and outside, because the soul is spaceless. The soul is not located somewhere in space. It is the concept of space that brings in the idea of inside and outside. There is no space in this indivisible spark of divinity called the soul; therefore, it cannot be called something existing inside or outside. It is *the* existence. You yourself are the soul. Do not say that the soul is inside you because if it is inside you, you will be standing outside it—a very mischievous thought.

With this determination to understand the poignancy involved in this effort and the amount of effort that is necessary to face the situations presented by the world of operations outside, a daily session of meditation is necessary. It is not a thinking process of “Let me get it; let me get it.” The whole of what you are boils up. There is a welling up of energy from yourself, as if you are lifted up. You will feel as if you are lifted up from the very ground itself in a spiritual sense, and inundated by a power that is neither on your side nor on the world’s side, but on the total side. Remember

this analogy: Krishna never belonged to anybody. He was a totally independent person. That which is totally independent belongs to all sides. It is only what is dependent that belongs to one side. Therefore, try to catch hold of the feet of that which is totally independent.

This mighty independence of the cosmic spirit operates as the independence that we are experiencing in our own selves when we say we are free. The little modicum of freedom that we seem to be exercising every day is a reflection of this inscrutable, mighty, transcendent, invisible independence which is what religions call God Almighty. Independence is the nature of God. Independence is the nature of every person, but dependence seems to be controlling the daily operations of the individual on account of the obsession of the feeling of there being an externality which is called the world, and a third thing called God which is beyond both oneself and the world.

This is like a circus feat, to some extent. If we make a little mistake, we will fall down; and on which side we will fall, we cannot say. It may be forward or backward, or downward, or anywhere. An ardent longing, *mumukshutva*, is the qualification required. The greatest of qualifications is supposed to be asking for freedom, and all other qualifications are secondary.

When the soul asks, it has to be given. But the soul should ask, not the waking mind, the conscious mind, which is a paltry expression of the psychic total which is buried inside us. In meditation, it is something more than the psychic total that is operating. Say, "I am engaged in meditation." Do not say, "My mind is meditating."

You are the most blessed centre of this spiritual activity called meditation sadhana. Here in this great effort, you are guided by nobody except by that independent Actionless Being gazing at you from all sides, and ready to be of assistance to you. *Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (B.G. 5.29). There is one friend for you. That friend is an actionless friend. That friend will not shake hands with you, he will not speak to you, but he will do everything for you.

Towards that end, we must adjust our life's activity in a manner of total operation, which virtually means no operation at all. A total action is no action. This is what the Bhagavadgita tells us again and again. A total action is no action; it is non-binding. A particular action is binding, but a total action cannot bind because it is equally no action. In this action, one sees actionlessness. Anything that is total is not anything that is particular; therefore, no particular reaction can follow from that. Yet, it is all things.

A human mind cannot understand all these things. It requires dedication and *satsanga* with great souls, saints and sages. *Satsanga* is the word. No scripture, no book, no *tirtha yatra*, no conference can be of any assistance here. *Satsanga* is the company of mighty Masters who have delved into the spirit and lived this life of self-contentment inwardly, outwardly and transcendently.

There are great souls even now in this world. They may be not visible to the eyes always, but they are still there. Dharma is not dead; it is still alive. Saints and sages are still alive. Great Masters are still operating, and it is up to you to find where they are. Wholeheartedly, go forward. March onwards continuously, without any hesitation, and you shall succeed.

## Chapter 2

### SITTING FOR MEDITATION

In continuation of what I said yesterday, we may here, in the very same context, bring to our memories a famous passage from the Bhagavadgita: *uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (B.G. 6.5). A very intricate verse, filled with profound meaning, is this passage from the Bhagavadgita. It is a sutra, as it were, an aphoristic saying which briefly mentions what I explained yesterday in great detail.

I pointed out that the conflict which is characteristic of life is due to the apparent irreconcilability obtaining, as it were, among the subjective side known as the *adhyatma*, the objective side known as the *adhibhauta*, and the transcendent side known as the *adhidaiva*. In ordinary language, we may say that this is the conflict among the principles of God, world and soul, whose internal relationship is never clear to anyone's mind.

To refer once again to what we discussed yesterday, the import is that the very existence of the *adhyatma* or the subjective side, and the *adhibhauta* or the objective side, is determined and transcended by a superior interconnecting divine principle known as the

*adhidaiva*. The *adhidaiva* is not a third principle apart from the *adhyatma* and the *adhibhauta*. It does not mean that God is sitting far away from ourselves and from the world because the principle of divinity we call God, the transcendent element, is hiddenly present on both the sides of experience—the subjective *adhyatma* and the objective *adhibhauta*—in such a manner that in bringing about an organic connection between the two terms, the subjective and the objective, the individual and the world, it not only constitutes the very stuff of the world and the stuff of the individual, but ranges far above both these principles.

This is the reason why great thinkers such as *acharyas* have pointed out that the Supreme Creator is not merely an operative cause of the world and the individual, but is even the material cause of the world and the individual. God is not like a carpenter who makes tables and chairs in the form of the world and the individual. The carpenter does not enter into the table or the chair, he stands outside both these manufactured items, while God, the Creative Principle, is the very wood out of which the table or chair is made, simultaneously being the carpenter also. God is the carpenter of the furniture we may call a table and chair; He is also the wood out of which the table and chair are made. So God is the operative

transcendent cause as well as the material cause of the world.

We cannot easily see in this world such a Being who is both the instrumental cause and the material cause. God is in us, and also not in us. He is in us because He is the Self of our being; He is not in us because He is transcendent to both ourselves and the world. *Matsthāni sarvabhūtāni* (B.G. 9.4): Everything is hidden and implanted in Me. *Na ca matsthāni bhūtāni* (B.G. 9.5): But also, nothing is in Me. This is an apparently self-contradictory statement in the Bhagavadgita: Everything is in Me; yet, nothing is in Me. All the drops are in the ocean. The ocean says, “All the drops are in me.” And the ocean also says, “The drops are not in me because I myself am the drops, so how can the drops be in me?” Here is a very interesting statement in the Bhagavadgita. A comparative illustration, as I mentioned, is the ocean and the drops. The ocean is not the drops, but the ocean is the drops.

Here, in our strange predicament of the practice of sadhana, we have to clearly discriminate between the proper attitude and the improper attitude. The self has to be raised by the Self. Which kind of self is to raise which kind of self?

There are, for practical purposes, three kinds of self. The thing that we consider as 'I', this 'me', is one self. Anything that we consider as our own self is the self. But there is another kind of self which is the object of attachment. When anyone is abnormally attached to any particular object, the self appearing to be inside transfers itself outside, pervades that object of affection, and anything that happens to that object looks like it is happening to one's own self. If the child is happy, the mother is happy; if the child is unhappy, the mother is unhappy. If the child is dead, the mother is also dying. Though, really, there is no connection between the mother and the child, the transference of selfhood of the individuality of the mother to the object called the child is so intensely operative that one cannot distinguish between oneself and the property—the object of love, called the child.

Not only the child, but anything that we cling to is our self. The self, therefore, is that thing in which we are sitting, with which we cannot separate ourselves, into which we have entered, and which has become ourselves in an externalised fashion. The internalised self is what we consider as this personality. The externalised self is that which we love, for any reason whatsoever. A third self is that which is neither this

personality nor the object of love, but Pure Consciousness.

The self has to be raised, *uddhared*, by the higher self, is the admonition of the Gita. Now, which self are we going to raise by which self? I mentioned three selves. The first step would be to move from the effect to the cause. The later development should be taken into consideration first, and the source of it should be considered afterwards. The later development here is attachment to objects.

The first step in spiritual practice, therefore, is the understanding of the nature of attachment—what it means, actually. It is a misconceived operation of the mind in finding itself in something else, other than its own self. When I am not in me, and I am in something else, that is called attachment. A clarifying discriminative faculty called *viveka shakti* should operate here. How could we become another thing? Logic points out that A cannot be B. A is always A. As the law of contradiction points out that A cannot be B, how could we be another thing which is the object of our love? Here, the misconception in the operation of consciousness leads to a practical abolition of the selfhood of oneself in such a manner that the self plants itself in another place, which is the object of concern, attachment and affection.

The withdrawal of consciousness from the externalised self, and bringing it back to the internalised self, is the first step in the raising of the self by the Self. The cause raises the effect into itself. How would we achieve this? It is by a logical application of sensible understanding that we cannot be other than what we are. In all affections and hatreds we become another, other than what we are. Since it is a contradiction to believe that we can be anybody other than what we are, this discriminative understanding should help us in centring the conscious-ness in the cause, rather than in the effect that is the object of concentration.

The objective side of the self, which is the object, is to be subsumed under the subjective side, which is our real personality. This is the first step in the raising of the self by the self. But there is a further raising of the self by the Self. The subjective side also should be raised by the transcendent Self. We withdraw our consciousness from the world into ourselves, and then raise ourselves from our personality to the *adhidaiva* principle, the transcendent Creative Principle.

While there is a great difficulty in drawing back the consciousness of the world of objects from its location into one's own internality of consciousness, more difficult it is to raise both into a transcendental

element. This is a more advanced type of meditation sadhana. It is directly encountering God.

In the beginning, it is an encountering of oneself in terms of the world outside, which we do every day. We face the world in the morning, evening, and throughout the day. When our occupation with the world is over, we turn back to our own selves. We reminisce on the activities of our day. This is a simple process going on every day, in the case of every person.

We are very busy outside in the world throughout the day, and then we are busy with ourselves at night, and then we go to bed and sleep. But there is a third principle, to which I made reference yesterday, in the form of Bhagavan Sri Krishna standing between the Pandava forces and the Kaurava forces. Nobody could understand Krishna, and nobody can understand the *adhidaiva*.

When there was a commotion in the streets because of the news of Krishna going to the court of the Kauravas, and the noise went into the ears of Dhritarashtra, he summoned Sanjaya, his minister, and asked, “What is this noise I am hearing? What are all these people saying?”

Sanjaya replied, “It is because Krishna is coming to see you.”

Dhritarashtra asked, “What shall I do? Tell me. What kind of person is Krishna? Can I see him?”

Briefly Sanjaya said, “An uncontrolled self cannot see the supremely controlled Self which is Sri Krishna.”

Self-control means the melting down of sense-consciousness in the mental consciousness, the mental consciousness in the rational consciousness, and the rational consciousness in the spiritual consciousness. That had been achieved by Krishna; therefore, nobody who is accustomed to seeing things through the sense organs, through the eyes, can see him. Eyes cannot perceive him. The entire Mahabharata war was worked by this Invisible Being. The visible warriors were like flies running at the throats of each other, but actually it was done by somebody else. The holocaust was caused by a third element, which was not visible.

The whole world is the action of God. *Mayaivaite nihataḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātram bhava* (B.G. 11.33): “I have done all the things myself. You be an instrument.” The total action, which is the action of God, is the principle that operates in our endeavour to raise the internal self to the universal Self. Therefore, in this meditational exercise of the rising to the transcendental consciousness above internal consciousness, activity of the ordinary kind ceases completely. This is an actionless action. Very deep

concentration of mind is necessary to understand this. We may hold our breath at that time. When we are shocked by the perception of something which we cannot understand, the breath stops. We cannot breathe at that time. The terror of the perception, the magnanimity and magnificence of the whole subject, causes the cessation of breathing itself.

In the Kathopanishad we have a similar statement. *Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ, manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ. Mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ, puruṣān na paraṁ kiñcit: sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ* (Katha 1.3.10-11): The objects appear to be very important. That is the first stage of human involvement in the world. Higher than the objects are the perceptual faculties, the sense organs. The object of perception is conditioned by the structural features of the sense organs. What we call the object is not a solid substance. It is a form that has been assumed by the mind when certain concentrated parts of space and time are cast into the mould of the mind itself. The senses, therefore, are superior to the objects; superior to the senses is the mind. Beyond the mind is the reason, or the *buddhi*. Beyond the reason or the *buddhi* is the cosmic intellect, called Hiranyagarbha-tattva, Mahat-tattva. Beyond that is the supreme cause of the universe, called Mulaprakriti. Beyond that is

Paramapurusha, Purushottama, Narayana, the Absolute Being. Beyond Him, there is nothing. *Sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ*: Beyond that Supreme State, nothing is. It is the final goal of everything.

*Eṣāsya paramā gatiḥ* (Bri. U. 4.3.32): This is the goal of all life. *Eṣāsya paramā sampat*: This is the greatest treasure we can acquire. *Eṣo'sya paramo lokaḥ*: This is the greatest heaven we can think of in our mind. *Eṣo'sya parama ānandaḥ*: The supreme bliss is this. It is all the heavenly comfort coming at the same time, flooding towards us in the abundance of bliss of that Inclusive Self.

In the exercise called spiritual practice, right from the beginning we have to be a little cautious. First of all, there should be time for us to sit and pray and meditate. When we have no time to sit, then how would the exercise commence?

Vasishtha, a great sage, speaks to Rama in the Yoga Vasishtha: Control of the mind being very difficult, do not jump into the highest peak of it at once. Give one sixteenth of your mind to God, and the rest to the world and the business of life. The mind will not feel disturbed by this because the lion's share has come to it and you have given only a little bit to God. It doesn't matter; even that is good enough. This prescription of Vasishtha is to see that the mind is not disturbed by

any kind of renunciation activity. You should not reject anything. You must go so slowly that you do not know what is actually happening. After some time, give two sixteenths to God, and the balance to the world. Like that, go on increasing the proportion you give to God more and more, and less and less to the world, until a day will come when your absorption in God-consciousness will bring you such satisfaction that you need not go to the objects of the world for secondary satisfaction.

The time for meditation is not any particular hour of the day. It is that time when you are really relaxed, when you are free from any kind of occupation, when there is no pressing call of duty in any manner whatsoever, when you need not write letters, attend to calls, or go anywhere. For an hour when you are free and no disturbance will come, that is the best time. It may be morning, midday, or evening; it may be any time. The convenience of the mind is the time, not the clock time. That is not important. When the mind feels it is convenient, that is the time to sit, just as you eat when you are hungry and it is necessary to eat, and not because it is time to eat. So, it is the quality of the approach that is more important than the quantitative assessment of it.

If possible, have the same place for meditation. You need not go on changing the location. It may be your house, your altar, a temple, a riverbank, or whatever it is. Once you have chosen that place, let it be perpetually adopted as the proper place.

The time cycle has a direct impact upon the particular hour which you have chosen for the meditational session so that when you sit for meditation every day at the same time, the time cycle acts, and automatically the mind cooperates by the habit of being able to sit at the same time every day. In the same way, even the place has an influence. The place where you sit gets charged by the meditational effort, and if it is done every day, the spot on which you sit, together with the time during which you sit, join together and cooperate in bringing about concentration of the mind.

The third thing is the method—place, time, and method. Whatever method you are adopting in meditation, it should be continued every day. You should not dabble in different kinds of techniques—one day concentrating on the breath, another day on the *trikuti*, the third day on the heart, the fourth day on the *ishta devata*, and the fifth day on some Upanishadic passage. This should not be done.

Whatever is conducive to help concentration of mind, that method is final.

The object of meditation should be finally chosen. It is the most dear thing for you. The *ishta devata* is the dearest thing that you can think in your mind. If the object of meditation is not dear to your heart, concentration is not possible. Meditation is not a legal practice, like a judiciary operating in a court by compulsion and pressure. It is a movement of the heart toward the heart of the cosmos. Which is the dearest object in the world? You may say that you have many dear things in the world. No. No object in the world can be regarded as the dearest. They may be relatively dear, for some purpose, at some time, for some reason, but not always, for all reasons. The most dear object is that beyond which you cannot think in the world.

Secondly, as such an object is not available in the world, and every object is perishable, you would not like to love a perishable object. You infuse divinity into the concept of your deity, and feel its presence with great intensity of concentration. Since there is the immanence of God in everything, any point in space can be the object of meditation. If you touch a part of the wall of your building, you have touched the whole universe. People keep symbols for meditation in front

of them—portraits, diagrams, mandalas, yantras, tantras, mantras, idols—as symbolic representations of a concentrated point of divinity in any particular spot. The world concentrates itself at every point in space. It converges even into an atom, and the whole energy of the universe can be seen concentrated even inside an atom.

Just as when sunlight is focussed through a lens it becomes very hot and is capable of burning objects, so this concentrated consciousness becomes very strong and compels the universal forces to converge at one point. Thus, any god is good; any idol is good; any symbol, any portrait before your mind is good enough. Whatever you intensely concentrate and feel in your heart will materialise itself. The power of thought is such that it gets materialised into form by the intensity of the effect.

The dearest object is that which the consciousness loves most. As it is not available in this world, you have to infuse a heavenly interference into the object of your mental conception, and meditate on that. There must be an assurance on the part of the mind that what you want will come to you because what you want is nothing but the materialised form of the mind itself. The things that you want are inside you.

Hence, the verse *uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ* of the Bhagavadgita contains a vast treasure of information for us. I think the whole teaching is there in these two verses. Raise the lower by the higher, and raise the higher by the highest. Raise the effect by the cause, and raise the cause by the highest cause. Raise the outside by the inside, and raise the inside by the universal. Meditation in the beginning is external, conceived as an object located somewhere in space and time of the world. Later it becomes internal, a point in the personality of one's own self. It can be the heart centre, or any kind of *chakra*, as people call it, or the centre of the eyebrows. From the external concept you come to the internal concept; then you go to the universal concept, inclusive of both.

*Yasmāt kṣaram atīto'ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ, ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ* (B.G. 15.18): He is called Purushottama because He is transcendent both to the *kshara* and the *akshara*. The imperishable soul in the person and the perishable feature which is the world outside are both transcended and subsumed by Purushottama. Everywhere, in all the scriptures, we have the same thing told again and again in different styles of language.

The world on one side and yourself on the other side—this is the epic of all the religions of the world. Conflict between yourself and the world outside is the

war; this is the battle. This is the business of life. The conflict between oneself and the outer world is the transaction that is going on in markets, whether it is economical, financial, political, social, or whatever. Everything is a conflict between oneself and that which is not oneself. It is resolved only by an element which is above both the outer and the inner.

A hard job is this, as right from childhood you have been brought up in a false atmosphere of possessiveness, with intense likes and dislikes; and the old habit still continues. However much you may try to understand the Gita and try to meditate, the old habits will not leave. The idea of possession, property and relation will not leave a person. “My relations, my relatives, my money, my land, my property.” Who can forget it? You are going to get all your relatives, and you can always be with them. You can have all the property of the world, provided you fulfil one condition. You can be with all your forefathers, all those who lived centuries back, and also with those who are going to be in this world in the future; they will all present themselves before you.

In the Chhandogya Upanishad it is mentioned that if the self is controlled, if you think something, it happens. What kind of mind can materialise the past and the future in the present?

After the Mahabharata war was over, everyone went to the riverbank to do *shraddha*. All the women were weeping because they lost their husbands. Kunti and Gandhari prayed to Vyasa, who was sitting there.

“Why are you crying?” he asked.

“We want to see those people who have died. Husbands and relations who have perished in the war, we want to see them,” they replied.

Vyasa went waist-deep into the river, offered water three times, and called everybody. It was a surprise to these ladies that all the dead soldiers rose up from the waters. Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Duryodhana all came, and they chatted throughout the night. Can anybody believe that? It is the power of summoning of Vyasa’s mind.

The self-controlled mind’s wish is indestructible. When God thinks, it should take place. And God thinks through us also, so through the Self within us, it should take place. There should be no hesitation when you sit for meditation: “I have chosen the right path, I have chosen the right method of meditation, and I have the correct perspective of it. The purpose of meditation is also clear to me. There is nothing wrong in the technique that I am adopting; therefore, I should achieve success.” Then, you will be successful.

All prosperity will follow you if the mind gets tuned up to the Cosmic Mind. Any music, any talk anywhere can be heard through the receiver set of your radio, provided the wavelength is tuned to the waves moving in space, which is transcendent. Similar is the way that you can concentrate your mind on the Cosmic Mind. The Cosmic Mind raises the lower mind. Just as the lower mind raises the world into itself, the lower mind is raised by the Cosmic Mind.

A simple thing is told a hundred times in various ways in the scriptures, whether it is the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Bhagavadgita, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, or any other scripture. Sadhana is just a withdrawal from the outer to the inner, and a withdrawal from the inner to the universal. The whole of sadhana is only this much. You need not read many scriptures for that. It is a simple thing, but it is a most difficult thing. Therefore, we have to tell stories to make it clear how this can be achieved. "See how that man did it, how he achieved it, how he became successful. You also do this." That is the reason why the Puranas are written. It is to convey this simple thing that I am telling in these sentences. Draw the outer into the inner, and the inner into the transcendent. That is all. The whole of spiritual practice is here.

But adamant is the ego. It will not permit it. It will say, “No, this is not possible. I am not meant for it.” For this purpose, a daily hammering of the mind into this concentrated purpose should be done. A daily session of meditation is necessary.

## Chapter 3

### TOTAL ACTION IS YOGA

It is necessary to maintain a harmony within and without, and it should be considered as unavoidable. This is so because of the great activity of the universe itself, which is unceasingly operative in the direction of a Self-realisation of itself. The universe is eager to become its own self. This is indicated by the fact that the world, or the universe, is always regarded as an external object of perception. It is not itself. That which is an outside something is not in its own self. It is not *svastha*, or established in identity with its own self.

There is a perpetual evolutionary process going on in the universe, right from the smallest atom to the largest conceivable activities in the stars and in space and time. That is the reason why Bhagavan Sri Krishna emphasised: *na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt* (B.G. 3.5). Everyone involved in this process of the evolutionary activity of the universe is compelled to be active simultaneously, in the same manner and with the same speed as the universe moves. We cannot go faster than the universe, nor will we be permitted to go slower than the universe. Our movement should be parallel to the requirement of

universal activity. A great drama is being played, as it were, in the whole cosmos.

Due to the potency of thoughts, feelings and actions of earlier births, this body of the present life is manifested. What is the substance of this body? The substance is nothing but the thoughts that we entertained in our previous lives, our feelings in earlier incarnations, and the actions that we did earlier. Forces which are called *apurva*, the nemesis or the resultant effect of thoughts and actions of earlier lives, condense themselves and appear solidified, as it were, in the form of this body-mind complex. We have not come to this world with our free will. An automatic action takes place everywhere, where causes and effects are indistinguishable. The cause can become the effect and the effect can become the cause, under certain circumstances.

The length of life that we live in this world, the experiences that we pass through, and all that we enjoy or suffer in this world are the net result of what we have done in our previous lives. When we have pleasures and rejoicings in this world, it does not mean that somebody is blessing us; when we suffer, it does not mean that somebody is cursing us. No such thing is taking place. We are ourselves blessing

ourselves and cursing ourselves by the manner in which we speak, think and act.

What is the secret behind this kind of operation? Thoughts which are repugnant to the way in which the world operates are immediately rejected by the cosmic activity. This rejection takes the form of what we call *karma- phala*, or the result of action. The result or the nemesis of action is a mysterious circumstance that is created, unintelligible to ordinary minds, by the abhorrence of cosmic activity in respect of individualised thinking. The universal purposiveness of movement through evolution does not accept the way in which we think and act; and inasmuch as practically no one can think and act in terms of the law of the evolution of the universe, everyone has to suffer. There is no unadulterated joy or happiness in this world because our minds and intellects are not so very purified as to understand the way in which the universe is working.

We have in ourselves a very inveterate self-assertiveness, called egoism. Egoism is not something sticking to us inside our body. It is not like a ball that is inside a soda bottle. It is just a circumstance, a condition of intense self-affirmation of consciousness in a particular point of space and time.

Consciousness itself is the ego when it is pinpointed in space and time, at a particular spot.

The affirmation of consciousness is that it is here only, it is not anywhere else, and it wants this only, not anything else. This kind of concentrated affirmation, intensely localised, is the egoism that we speak of. There is no separate ego sitting somewhere. We ourselves are the ego. The manner of our thinking is called ego. It is not a substance or a thing existing. Neither the mind is a substance, nor the ego is a substance. They are only circumstances, conditions, procedures, or the manner in which the consciousness is operating.

Thus, the body is born. It is born in the universe itself. We are not standing somewhere else, outside it. In spite of the fact that we are inseparably, organically connected with the universe of operation, we feel that we are totally independent. If it rains above or if there is a thunderstorm, if there is a flood, if there is a drought, if there is hot sun, or it is day or night, we feel that it is none of our business. We are unable to appreciate our real relation to the universe.

In the Chhandogya Upanishad we are told: Beware. When it rains outside, it rains inside us also. When thunder strikes above, it is thundering inside us also. If the sun is hot outside, it is hot inside us also. If

it is day outside, it is day inside us also. If it is night outside, it is night inside us also. If there is an earthquake outside, then there is an earthquake inside us also. If there is a catastrophe outside, then there is a catastrophe inside us also. Whatever happens outside happens inside us also.

That is why we are seriously affected by the activities of nature. Because we are unable to adjust ourselves with the rain inside and the rain outside, the heat inside and the heat outside, the flood inside and the flood outside, they seem to be totally different. Seasonal changes upset us, and make us fall sick. That is because what is happening in nature is not allowed to take place harmoniously inside us. Certain things should not be eaten in the rainy season. Certain things should not be eaten at night, and so many other rules and regulations point out that external universal operations are the same as internal operations. To the extent that we can harmonise ourselves with the activities of the cosmos, we are happy; to the extent that we are unable to do that, we are unhappy

How long are we going to live in this world? The length of our life depends upon the intensity of the action that we performed in the previous life. If the deeds that we perform are extremely good, beyond expectation, the reward in the form of great rejoicing

will come to us in this birth itself; and if it is an extremely bad action, intolerable, the suffering as a consequence of that action will also be experienced in this life itself. But if our good deeds are very mild, their results will be experienced in some other life because they are not strong enough to produce a result in this world. Similarly, bad deeds which are not very strong and intense will not show any result in this birth. They will produce their consequences in the next birth. Sometimes the actions may be very mild, and they may not result in experiences even in the next life. They may come some five or six lives afterwards, and we may not even know why this experience has suddenly come.

If a blessing befalls us, we say it is a windfall. This windfall is not a sudden occurrence. It is a result of some good deed that we have performed either in the previous life or in some three, four, five births before. Karma is an inexorable law working precisely, more dexterously than mathematics and computers. It never makes a mistake. In the proportion we have done something in this world, in that proportion we will get the result of it. If the proportion of our action is very mild, we may get the result of it ten births afterwards. We may suffer something after ten births and wonder why we are suffering when we have not done any bad

deed in this birth. It does not mean that bad deeds committed in this birth bring suffering in this birth. A person may be in high prosperity in this life, but he may face doom later on due to the consequence of something that will come in the next birth.

Thus, the cycle of life goes on, round and round, like a wheel. There is no end for this. When the past actions produce results in this birth, we may be under the impression that the matter is closed and no further trouble will come; but it is not like that. All the effects of all the deeds that we performed in all the lives before cannot be experienced in one tenure of the physical body. One particular physical body is not strong enough to tolerate the consequences of all the deeds of all the lives that we passed through previously. So, nature has a very strange way of operating and executing its requirements. It punishes individuals little by little, never allowing anyone to know what punishments will follow afterwards.

There is a storeroom behind a shop, as it were, where things are stored, and customers do not know what is in it. Whatever is necessary is brought out to the retail shop. This retail allotment of the deeds of earlier actions which we are undergoing today is called *prarabdha* karma. "My *prarabdha* is causing me trouble," people say. *Prarabdha* does not cause trouble,

and it does not give happiness, also. It is a law. Law is neither good nor bad; it is just there for what it is. This *prarabdha* is a friend, as well as a foe.

There are three kinds of *prarabdhas*: *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. If the *prarabdha* is *rajasika*, extremely distracting in its nature, then the person will be intensely running about here and there, never sitting quiet any time, being very busy day in and day out; and if it is *tamasika* the person will be lethargic, and will not be inclined to do any work. But if the *prarabdha* is *sattvika*, then there will be an inner inclination to do further good actions.

We are all seated here. A thousand people have come to this ashram. They are all spiritual seekers. The idea that one should be a spiritual seeker cannot arise in the mind unless their *sattvika prarabdha* is working. Instead of coming to Rishikesh, you would have gone to Piccadilly or Hollywood. All of you have good karmas operating; otherwise, you would never have come to Rishikesh. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say, “No one who has not done some good deed can keep his foot on the platform of the Rishikesh railway station.” You cannot even stand on the platform of the Rishikesh railway station unless you have done some good deed. The sanctity of this place begins from the railway station itself, not

merely here. So, *prarabdha* which is *sattvika* permits the operation of an aspiration for God-realisation. This *sattvika prarabdha* should be utilised for further implementation of this aspiration or, longing for God, by intensive activity called *sadhana*.

I mentioned that there is a storehouse where goods are stored, and there is a retail shop in front where certain items are sold to the customers. In a similar manner, certain types of karma alone are allowed to be experienced in this body because this body is not stout like an elephant. It is very weak, and if all the karmas start acting, the body will break in one second. So, the torture is inflicted little by little, to the extent that it is possible for the body to bear it. This is *prarabdha*. And that which is not allowed to operate simultaneously, and kept aside in the storehouse, is called *sanchita* karma, the storehouse of karma.

Now, we may be under the impression that the old storage will be exhausted one day and then we will attain salvation, but this does not happen. While it is true that the quantum of actions in the storehouse gets diminished by the experience of *prarabdha* in different lives, its quantum is also increased by further actions performed in the present life. It is not only one side that is working; there is a double action taking place, simultaneously. There is

a diminution of the content of the store of *sanchita* karma due to part of it being allotted for experience in the present life, but like a mouse or a rat which can never keep quiet, we also unnecessarily dabble in some activities and add to the karmas already existing in the storehouse, so that it will never be exhausted. That means to say, *samsara* will be endless and beginningless; there is no possible way to escape. The causal chain is so hard to break that no one knows where it begins and where it ends.

What is the way out? We say sadhana is the way. What kind of sadhana are we going to engage ourselves in, with this condition of an inviolable law of cause and effect operating, and *karma-phala* being unavoidable? The only way is to work, to the extent it is necessary, to bring about a harmony within oneself and outside, and not go beyond it. Proportionate activity, unavoidable for the purpose of the maintenance of an alignment or harmony within oneself and in society outside, acts like a medicine in illness. Medicine is not food. Nobody goes on eating medicines; but when there is illness, that medicine also becomes food because it counteracts the illness. In a similar manner, action by itself cannot free any person. Action is a harmless element. It cannot be called either good or bad. It is an instrument of

operation, and no instrument can be regarded as either good or bad. Fire, water and wind are neither good nor bad. They can destroy things, and they can also keep one alive.

This analogy is to prescribe for us the way in which we have to conduct ourselves throughout our life, which is to be a perpetual meditation for us. The whole of life is a manner of harmony that is being established from different sides. Emotional disturbance inside us, due to irrational desires and turmoil caused by longings which are not permissible, harms the whole psychophysical organ. There is also conflict of the individual with society and nature as a whole, which is to be carefully taken note of. We should never fight with nature, nor fight with human society, nor fight with our own selves.

*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (B.G. 2.50): Adroitness, expertness in the performance of work in a way that it does not harm us, in a way that it does not bind us, is yoga. *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (B.G. 2.48): Equilibrium is yoga—equilibrium not only in the way of thinking, but also in the way of doing things. Nowhere are extreme things prescribed. The balance should not tilt on one side. On one side we are here as individuals, *jivas*, aspirants; on the other side is the world. The world may look very heavy in comparison with the weight of

an individual, but the individual should be able to rise to the height of such weight of understanding that both sides of the balance will be equilibrated.

We cannot and should not oppose the world, nor should we find ourselves in a position of actually counteracting the requirements of nature. Every step in life is a process of participation. Work is not something that is done by us. Nobody can do anything; we can only participate in what is already going on. The universe is working, and we are not to do something new from our side. There should not be any clash created by our activities in relation to the cosmic activity. When the universe is working in one way, we should not start working in another way, creating conflict between ourselves and the world outside. This is the art of equilibrium. All work is participation.

When a railway train moves, the passengers inside it are also carried along by its movement. It is not necessary for the passengers to also do some exercise to accelerate the movement of the train. The speed of the train will not increase merely because we are running inside the train. This is exactly what we are doing. We are not doing any good to the world by thinking that we are doing good while acting independently for our own purposes. Every individual effort has a

desire-ridden motivation. Nobody can work without some desire behind it.

People talk of desireless action. What does it actually mean? It is often felt that desireless action is impossible because if there is not some motive behind the action, the action cannot be performed. But it is forgotten that the motive should be universal, not particularised. Let there be a motive, but it should not be my motive, your motive or somebody else's motive. It is the universal motive.

We are universal beings. We are not born of some father and mother. Our brains are washed—very, very unfortunately—in such a way that we can never appreciate that we belong to the world of activity, to creation as a whole. Remember that the world was created first, and we came afterwards. The human being is a latecomer in the process of evolution. If we read the cosmological details in the Puranas, epics, etc., we will find that the human being was not created first. The world was created first. The sky and the heavens were created first; the plants and the trees were created later on. The celestials in the heavens were created first, and human beings came much later; yet, human beings have the audacity to wrongly arrogate to themselves all the work that proceeds from them.

The world is not our enemy. It is not also a friend. It is ourselves. I am not my friend; I am not my enemy; I am just what I am. This is the relationship between oneself and the world outside. We do not have to ask the world to bless us, nor do we fear that it will punish us—just as we do not bless our own selves, and do not punish our own selves. The question itself does not arise, as we are self-identical beings. If such a self-identity of purposive activity is established between oneself and the world outside, then no action can bind. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat, tena tyaktena bhuñjitha, ma grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam* (Isa 1); *na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2). Action motivated by individual consciousness binds. Action motivated by universal consciousness liberates because action which is engendered through the motivation of the universal consciousness is total action. It is every action, all action simultaneously taking place; therefore, it is no action. *Karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyed* (B.G. 4.18). Here is non-action in the presence of intense action. It is intense action, and not absence of action.

When an electric fan moves at high speed, it may appear that it is not moving at all. We can know whether it is moving or not only if we thrust our finger into it; otherwise, the eyes cannot catch up with the speed of the blades. That is why it looks as if it is static.

In a similar manner is God's action. It is such intense activity—high speed or high voltage, we may say—that the energy, the voltage of our body, our perception, cannot catch up with it. We are accustomed to the little deeds of our individuality, but we cannot understand what is cosmic activity. It is a perpetual activity. Our activity has a beginning and an end. We do not work incessantly every minute. Our work has a beginning and an end, whereas cosmic activity is unceasing, perpetual activity. It is ever going on, but it is *sattvic* activity, not *rajasic* or *tamasic*.

Such is the difference between God doing things and human beings doing things. The doings of human beings have a beginning and an end, and they are motivated or activated by certain individual motives, whereas God's action is without any individual motive because God is not an individual. The transmutation of human motivation in the direction of cosmic motivation of universal activity is the highest karma yoga one can think of. It is doing without doing anything. It is all action—perpetual, unending activity—without any action taking place. *Mayaivaite nihataḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātram bhava* (B.G. 11:33). The Lord says, “I have done everything myself”; but God's doings are such that no one can know that anything has happened at all.

Cooperation with that kind of total action is the pinnacle of spiritual practice—a whole-souled dedication of the self to the limitless Self of God’s intention. When we tune ourselves to the will of God, which is the creative power that manifested this universe, we in a way become friends of God, and He becomes our friend. *Suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (B.G. 5.29): Realising that this Great Being is our perpetual friend, and is always with us in perpetual harmony, we attain peace.

## Chapter 4

### **MEDITATION: THE APEX OF SADHANA**

The apex of sadhana, the final onslaught in spiritual practice, is *dhyana*, or meditation. It should not be imagined that meditation is an easy affair. It is a penultimate stage of the eight limbs of yoga, culminating in divine absorption. Meditation is not the beginning; it is the end of the spiritual endeavour. We should not take it lightly and be under the impression that we are collected at different moments of our day and are engaged in a religious exercise called meditation. Meditation is a stage, one step below divine communion. Its importance must be clear by the fact of its being proximate to the goal of the practice of yoga.

The fullness of achievement that is expected in meditation is practicable only if there is a fullness of aspiration. An overall whole-souled adventure of the spirit within is spiritual practice. When that is done, everything else is done simultaneously. Meditation is not one of the routines of our daily practice. It is not one among the many, even as God is not one person among many other persons; He is *the* Person, and all the persons. The longing that surges forth from the

heart of the seeker has to be commensurate with the ideal that is sought in meditation. The means develops into the end. A maturity of the processes which we call 'means' or 'methods' is the flowering and the fructification which is the divine experience. The means gradually evolves to the end, and the end determines the nature of the means.

What kind of means are we to adopt? It will depend upon what we are expecting by the practice. The total inclusiveness and perpetuity of the goal aspired for will call for a similar characteristic from the means adopted. Inasmuch as after achieving that expected goal nothing further remains to be expected or achieved, so also when the requisite methodology or means is adopted towards the achievement known as meditation, it should be equally inclusive and there should not be any other method better than that. The method that we are adopting in meditation should be the best of all methods. It is to be considered the best because it wholly satisfies our soul. If something that we do fully satisfies us, we can be sure that we have done it correctly. If after having done something we feel distracted and find ourselves in a state of anguish and despondency, with inadequacy of some kind or the other, we may be sure that we have not adopted the proper means.

The object of meditation is very aptly designated as *ishṭa*, or the most beloved. It is not just an object; it is a beloved deity for the purpose of concentration of the whole spirit within us. It is beloved because nothing can be more dear than this chosen ideal. Have we, in our mind, anything in the world which can be considered as surpassingly dear? In haste we may say this is dear or that is dear; but haste makes waste. We should not make such statements. There is nothing in the world which can be regarded as unsurpassingly dear because under different conditions and circumstances another thing may look very dear. When conditions or circumstances change, the affection also changes. Loves that are the characteristics of the human mind are fickle. They change their point of concentration from time to time according to the requirement felt by the individual personality.

As I mentioned yesterday, in the process of evolution automatic changes take place in the universe as well as in our individuality, and corresponding to and in accordance with the particular changed condition in which we find ourselves, we consider a particular object as dear to us. That which is dear is not any particular thing, really; it is that counterpart of the requirement on the part of the individual at any given

moment of time in the process of evolution. Nothing, therefore, can be dear always. As the evolutionary process is perpetual movement, the longing of the mind is also a perpetual movement from one point to another point.

This is not the nature of the *ishta*, or the divine ideal, which is to be taken as the object of meditation. An *ishta devata* is not a flitting object; it is a permanently dear thing. A permanently dear thing is not available anywhere in the world. Even the dearest, nearest relative, the largest wealth, the highest position, a great reputation or power and authority can all flee at any moment; therefore, they cannot be considered as beloved objects.

What we are aiming at in meditation is not the possession of something that is fleeting, tantalising, and moving from one point to another point. Since every person can be any person under different conditions, and no single person can be self-identical in behaviour because of the pressure exerted by the process of evolution, any person can behave in any way, at any moment of time, under prevailing conditions. We can behave like gods, and we can behave like tigers, snakes, scorpions. There is nothing which cannot be compared with us. It only depends upon the circumstances of the case.

People who are caught in a flooded river carrying their beloved family, finding that death is at the elbow, would not mind throwing away their wealth. There is a great desire to protect one's wife and children, but that all vanishes when the flooded river threatens the very life of the person. There is a last longing to save oneself because one can later on acquire all the things that were lost in the flood.

Such being the case, we cannot find any object of love in this world. So, the meaning of the *ishta devata* should be defined in a different way altogether. The *ishta devata* is not anything that is available in the world. It is a form, a symbol, an item which is invested with the highest values of life. The highest values are perpetual existence, not temporary living. The highest value is being possessed with all the values and treasures of the whole world. The highest value is being imbued with mighty power, invincible strength. These are the longings of the spirit. We cannot love anything which is not invested with these qualities. The divinity, the deity of our concentration, is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-pervading. It is most beautiful.

It is very unfortunate that no religion of the world describes God as a beautiful person. God is always depicted as a judiciary in the cosmic court, a

terrorising parent, a lawgiver and a lawmaker, but no one can think that God is beautiful because we have an inveterate habit of considering God as old. We even invest God with a beard. How could a bearded man be beautiful? God is very old and doddering, due to the age of creation. This is the picture that we are given by religious scriptures. We read all the scriptures and get this idea only: Father in heaven. A father is not a beautiful person; he is a feared individual. But God is beautiful. If He is not beautiful, the mind cannot be pulled towards Him.

Very rarely do we find in scriptures a description of the beauty of God. Not in any of the scriptures, not even in the Vedas, will we find the beauty of God being described. The might and the glory of God are described in the Vedas and the Upanishads, not His beauty, though sometimes, especially in the Upanishads, we have indications of God's happiness. It is a sea of happiness. *Eṣāsyā paramā gatih, eṣāsyā paramā sampat, eṣo'sya paramo lokah, eṣo'sya parama ānandaḥ* (Bri. U. 4.3.32), says Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A flood of bliss will inundate our personality if the vision of God becomes practical. We will be flooded with bliss. We are not accustomed to bliss in this world; we are used only to that kind of pleasure which is nothing but a titillation of the nerves. Real happiness is not

available in this world. Nobody has experienced happiness anywhere, except a scratching of the itches, as it were, in the desirous mind.

As unseen things cannot be conceived in the mind, God's beauty also cannot be conceived. Beauty is inconceivable. No beautiful thing in the world can be really beautiful because it is a conditioned complex arising in the mind under given circumstances in the process of evolution. A perpetual beauty should be conceived in the mind. We may mentally bring together all the conceivable beauties that we can imagine in the whole universe, blend them together into a cosmic form, and feel that this glorious beauty is standing before us.

It is only in the Srimad Bhagavata that we hear that God can be the highest beauty. *Sāksān manmatha-manmathah* (S.B. 10.32.2) are the words used by Vyasa in the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata. He is the Cupid of Cupid. Cupid will be ashamed of himself. These are only stories for us. Mortals that we are, we can imagine nothing out of them. Great effort is necessary to perceive for ourselves that God is beautiful, powerful, all-pervading, and immortal. This object that we choose for meditation should be invested with this power. We do *abhisheka* in a Siva temple to a *lingam* or we worship a *murti* of

Sriman Narayana or Devi on an altar, and we invoke the royal glory of God into that particular *murti*. In large temples, the deity is treated as an emperor. The deity is taken out in a procession, called a *rathotsava*. An emperor is coming! Give way!

How do we receive an emperor if he happens to come to our house? Everyone can imagine what one would do. There will be a great commotion of joy: “The king has come to my house!” The usual practice in India of receiving a guest is to offer holy water to wash his feet, give him a beautiful seat, wave a holy *arati*, give everything we would generally give to a king, and arrange for music and dance to celebrate the festival of a king’s coming to our house. In large temples there is daily *utsava*. Musical instruments are played—nadaswaram, etc. And in some temples even dance is part of the worshipping process. It is an expression of the ecstasy of feeling that God has come.

Each one should feel in the heart what our feeling would be if God comes and stands before us. We would not be alive at that time, due to the excess of joy. Fear can kill; too much joy can also kill. Not eating can kill a person, but too much eating can also kill a person. So is the case with anything anywhere. These wondrous qualities of immortal inclusiveness and perfection should be invested upon the deity by

mental invocation. Place the power of God in that idol, and feel it is vibrating with the divinity.

Sometimes mantras are chanted. The name of God dear to us is recited loudly, so that it pleases the worshipper. When the joy reaches a pinnacle of ecstasy it becomes uncontrollable. Then it is that in the temple people dance. This dance is not a ritual, actually. It is a spiritual exercise demonstrating the excess of joy arising out of the feeling that God has come.

The choice of the object of meditation, the *ishta devata*, should be such that there should be no need felt to change the object. Once the object is chosen, it is a final choice. We should not experiment with the object. Experiment will not bring any result. If we want to dig a well, we do not go on digging in a hundred places, little by little. We will not find water anywhere. We have to dig in one place only; then we may find it. So allowing the mind to move from various conceptualised objectivities will not bring anything worth the while. There should also be a certainty in the mind that this is going to bring the desired result.

Actually, the force that is invested in the object of meditation arises from one's own self. It is the power of the mind that is working when such investiture is

performed on the object of meditation. Our thought of divinity, our thought of inclusiveness, our thought of intense concentration and positivity charges the object, and the object vibrates by the power of thinking.

The mind is all powerful. Incalculable is the speed and also the strength of the mind. A very intense assertion by the mind materialises itself according to the proportion of the mind's strength. If the strength is a hundred percent, the objective should be realised in this life itself. If it is mild, it will be realised in the next birth.

Arjuna speaks to Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. *Cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dr̥ḍham* (B.G. 6.34): "All this is very difficult. The mind is fickle." *Abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gr̥hyate* (B.G. 6.35): And Bhagavan replies, "It is true that the mind is uncontrollable, but repeated practice will bring it under control." Even if there is no expected achievement in this life, there should not be any disappointment. The practice of this birth will be carried forward to the next birth. Automatically, the reborn individual will be prompted along the lines of the same practice which was done earlier in the previous life. Though no one remembers their previous life, a spontaneous impulsion will be

there, right from the beginning of one's life, towards this practice. *Pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hriyate hy avaśopi saḥ* (B.G. 6.44). Because of the impetus of previous practice, the newly born individual will be carried along the same lines.

If the fructification of meditation does not take effect in one life due to the obstructive activity of certain *rajasic* and *tamasic prarabdha*, the achievement in one life may be difficult. But really, nothing is difficult. The power of the mind is such that it can transmute *rajas* and *tamas* into *sattva* by its ardour of concentration. The impediments caused by *rajasic* and *tamasic prarabdhas* will be transferred to another condition of *sattvic* motivation. There is also compassion and goodness in the world; it is not merely law and order. Any good intention is rewarded because the heart has greater force and power than mere intellectual motivation. It is possible that in one birth itself the realisation may take place.

With this conviction, one may be seated in meditation. Finally, we are our own guide in the advanced stages of meditation. Our conviction, our assiduity of practice—*tivra samvega*, as the Yoga Shastras tell us—will bring good dividends. *Tivra samvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21): The achievement is very near to those whose ardour of longing is

sufficiently intense. The Yoga Shastra also subdivides this ardour into mild, middling and intense. Like that, it is multiplied nine times, so that the ardour becomes inexplicably intense—wanting it, and feeling that it is impossible to live without it.

“I want it, and I must get it.” This is the highest qualification required of a spiritual seeker. Every other requirement is subordinate to this great ardour called *mumukshutva*. It swallows up every other discipline. If all the disciplines are well intact but our longing is lukewarm, these disciplines will not bring any result.

The mind is fickle; this is well known. When it concentrates itself on the chosen ideal, it is very eager to exclude certain other thoughts, not knowing that the thought of excluding another thought also is a thought itself. So two thoughts are operating, even at the time when one is imagining that there is only one thought. By a dexterous operation of the mind, the thought of that which is excluded should also be brought within the purview of the thought which is actually concentrating on the object. This is a psychological secret.

Likewise, there may be an endless series of these thoughts, one following the other, and a time may come when we have to bring all the thoughts into the focus of attention on a single thought. Then, the

thought becomes what we call cosmic thought. That thought which is cosmic in its nature is called *brahmakara vritti*. All other thoughts in our mind are *vishayakara vritti*; object-motivated thinking is called *vishayakara vritti*. When the universe becomes the object of meditation, the thought assumes a *vritti* called *brahmakara vritti*, the total *vritti* of everything. A single thought is a binding *vritti*, and all the thoughts joining together, like an army marching as a single force, as it were, in a given direction, is *brahmakara vritti*. The whole world cooperates at that time. The gods dance in joy over the world-redeeming thought of the spiritual seeker.

This is the greatest service that one can do to the world. Service does not mean running about here and there. It is not a question of doing at all. A total being of our mind, that is the greatest service. Contemplation is action when it reaches the highest stage. Those who are engaged in this kind of total concentration of mind touch the corners of creation and have done the greatest service to humanity, much more than all the social workers anywhere in human history can imagine. Hands and feet do not do any service; it is the mind that does the service. A powerful blessing that emanates from our mind is a redeeming

service, more capable in its potency than what we can give in the form of service through our hands and feet.

Nothing equals meditation. The greatest duty of every individual is to perpetually engage oneself in this art, and be sure that the whole world will be at your feet at that time. Things will be at your beck and call. The gods will be pleased. The denizens will serve you. The whole world of humanity is served at one stroke instantaneously by this non-active activity of the cosmic endeavour of the spiritual seeker. Words fail here. It is non-active adventure, but it is all activity blended together into a total focus of concentration.

These are some of the preliminaries in meditation. 'Glory' is the word that we can use to designate meditation. 'Wonder' is the word we can use to designate meditation. 'Treasure', 'magnificence' and 'blissful experience' are the words we can use to designate meditation. It is your dearest relative. The Yoga Shastra tells us this yoga of inner communion with the outer reality loves you more than a hundred mothers. A mother loves her son or daughter, but yoga will love you more than a hundred mothers. It wants you more than you want it. The world wants you more than you want the world because that is the cause and you are the effect. The effect pulls itself towards the cause, and the cause exerts its influence on the effect.

These words that I have spoken themselves constitute a kind of meditation because if you have listened to me properly you would be in a state of great attention, bereft of any kind of distractive thoughts in your mind, and you will be inordinately enthused to take upon yourself this divine task of achieving divine perfection, which is the highest goal of life.