

# BEING THE COSMIC WHOLE



**SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**

The Divine Life Society

Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

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## **Publisher's Note**

This is a series of six discourses that Swamiji gave to the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy in the Sivananda Ashram during March and April 1999.

## Discourse 1: The Universal Fabric of Interrelationships

[Addressed to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy]

All of you are new to this place. It is the first time you are coming here. It is a great thing that God has blessed you all to find time to come here, and God has blessed you with all the facilities to come here even from long distances.

Apart from the fact that your intellectual comprehensions of the values of life are going to be enhanced by the teachings and the studies in the Academy, there is another thing which is very important – that you have come to a holy place. You have not come to an ordinary college or university in the midst of the humdrum of life. This is isolated completely from any disturbing atmosphere, and it is a sacred atmosphere.

Rishikesh may be considered as one of the most holy places in India. Large numbers of people are eager to come here. Something attracts them. The very word ‘Rishikesh’ is enchanting. There is a power which originated from time immemorial through the great sages and masters who lived here right from the time of Rama and Krishna. We are told that Rama came here, and Krishna was born very near us in Matura. These are the great gods whom people worship; they have come here. They have trodden the sands of this Mother Ganga. The sands of Mother Ganga are very sacred and are greatly purifying. Ganga has not only mineral values but also divine values. Even in the Rig Veda, the holiest and most ancient scripture of this country, Ganga is heralded as a divinely creative power.

There are many different stories of the descent of Ganga. There was a king called Sagara who had a large number of children. Kings in India had a habit of performing a horse sacrifice. They would free a horse to move in any direction it chose, and if any king along its way caught the horse and did not allow it to move further, the king who released the horse would fight with that king and overcome him, and annexe his total kingdom for himself. This was the intention of the *asvamedha yagnas*.

It is believed, according to tradition, whoever completes 100 sacrifices of this kind will reach the heaven of Indra, the leader of the gods in heaven. This was a fashion for all the kings. They wanted to become the leader of the gods in heaven, and King Sagara also wanted to achieve that blessing.

But Indra was always ready to put an obstacle in the completion of this sacrifice. He would do something, some mischief, so that the sacrifice was not completed. So he stole this horse and he tied it to a tree near a great sage called Kapila, who was one of the minor Avataras of Lord Vishnu. The intention of Indra was that those people who followed the

horse would take it back, and would attack him, and Kapila's wrath would destroy them completely. This was the trick played by Indra.

When the people following the horse saw it tied to the tree, they imagined that the sage sitting nearby must be the thief, so they attacked him. But he was not an ordinary sage. When Kapila heard noise from all sides created by those who followed the horse, he opened his eyes. When he opened his eyes, fire came out of them, and that fire burned all the people into ashes. They lay dead.

King Sagara, who sent these people, wanted to know what had happened because they had not returned. He sent another person, his second son, to find out what had happened. He found that everyone was gone once and for all. He grieved very much, and did a lot of *tapas*, but that *tapas* was not of much aid. When he died, his second son, Bhagiratha, tried his best to bring Ganga to the ground so that she may flow over these ashes and the dead ones would attain salvation.

Ganga was not on this Earth. Ganga was supposedly in a little pot, a holy *kamandal* in Brahmaloaka, ruled by the Creator of the universe. Bhagiratha did *tapasya* and prayed to Brahma, "Please release Ganga for the benefit of these people who are all dead and gone." Brahma said, "She cannot be released like that."

After some time, Lord Vishnu would take the Avatara of Vishwarupa in connection with some other instance. His universal leg would touch up to the skies and then he would topple the *kamandal* and the Ganga would fall down. So Bhagiratha went on waiting for this occasion and, as we have heard of in Srimad Bhagavatam, Vishnu took the form of Vamana Avatara. He did not send Vamana Avatara to topple the Ganga. His intention was only to subdue the Ganga so that she should flow over the ashes. But the Ganga fell down with such tremendous force that she could have contained the Earth and gone inside, and the purpose would have not been fulfilled.

Then Bhagiratha prayed to Lord Siva, "O Lord, please hold Ganga on your head by force so that she may not go deep into the Earth." Ganga fell on Lord Siva's head, and was held up within his hair. But the purpose was not served by Ganga being on Siva's head. He must let her down to the Earth so that she may flow over the ashes of the dead ones. Again Bhagiratha prayed to Lord Siva: "Dear God, I request to you release Ganga from your hair." Siva released her, and Ganga fell with such tremendous force that she washed away the *kutir*, the hermitage, of a sage called Jahnu.

Jahnu, the sage, was very angry. "You have come and destroyed my hermitage." He took the whole of Ganga in his hand and swallowed her. He had such yoga shakti. The Ganga was swallowed, and now all this *tapas* was a waste. Again Bhagiratha prayed to Jahnu Maharsi, "Please let Ganga come down." Then Jahna let her down. Because she was

connected with the sage Jahnu, Ganga is called Jahnavi, a derivative of the word '*jahnu*'. Jahnavi is one of the names of Ganga. Then she flowed over the ashes of the dead ones, and they attained salvation. So Ganga flowed from the high heaven through the astral regions down to the Earth.

Now you are on the bank of this great Mother Ganga. The very breeze that blows from her is sanctifying. The Vedas describe the glory of Ganga in high theological terms. You are here on the foothills of the Himalayas where the holy breeze wafts on our heads. Here it is that great Masters lived. Rama and Krishna also came here, and great sages lived here – Vasishtha, Vyasa, Sukadeva, and many other Masters – sanctifying the whole ground of this place. And you are here. This is a blessing, apart from the teachings that will be imparted to you in the Academy. Intellectual exercise along the line of expansion of knowledge and learning is the basic foundational intention of the establishment of this Academy by the great Master, saint and sage Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

We are sitting, inundated by the grace of everybody in this most holy place, Rishikesh. What is it that the Academy will teach you? The intention of the founder of this institute called the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy is to build up the personality of a human being. You will be wondering what is the meaning of this. Are you not all built up properly? Are you not hale and hearty? You will be thinking that you are well off, and there is nothing wrong with you. But there is something fundamentally wrong with anyone with fractional thinking. You may think one thing and not another thing, as when you want one thing, you will not want another thing. When you see one thing, you will not see another thing. This is called fractional perception and fractional mentation, and a human being cannot exist as a fragment of the perceptual and psychological values. You will be perfectly hale and hearty in a larger sense. What makes you what you are is the way in which you are thinking. You can imagine, "What have I been thinking since morning?" It has been all scattered ideas running helter-skelter, here and there, pursuing their objectives.

We hear these days that basically the mind is a compact whole. Modern psychology uses the word 'holistic', by which is intended 'whole' – wholistic, but spelt as holistic. The basic substance of the mind is a total thinking. The mind has lost this totality of perception and vigil due to some tragedy that befell it during the time of creation itself, so it has to reconstruct itself into a coherent and perceptive being which is perfect in its logical conclusions, emotional activities, and external performances. There should be harmony between what you understand, what you feel, and what you do. Mostly this harmony is not available. You cannot make meaning of the division between the intellectual comprehensions, emotional feelings, and outward actions, so they look like three different things. I may understand anything, I may feel anything else, and I may do

a third thing. This is the tragedy of life. You think you are doing three different things when you understand, feel and act, but you are doing one thing – the releasing of the power which makes you a whole being.

No human being is confined to the intellect, or to the emotion, or to the impulse to act and to go on doing work. These three things are three ramifications of a single impulse to be complete in oneself. Otherwise, what will happen to you if you understand things in one way, feel them in a different way, and then work for them in a third way? You will be a completely distracted, torn personality. Most of the people in the world are torn into pieces. In a moment they change their thoughts. Every moment they change their desires, and none of their desires can be fulfilled. Only if your whole being acts, the desires can be fulfilled. But you will not find a whole being acting anywhere. A part of the brain is operating, and a part of the feeling. Mostly the feelings do not agree with the understanding of the brain. They are like the husband and wife quarrelling. The emotion says one thing, feeling says one thing, and the understanding says another thing. There is a perpetual conflict between logical understanding and emotional impulse.

Everyone is passing through this conflict in life. You feel it should be like this, but the intellect says no, it is not all right. The logic of the intellect and the feeling of the emotions should come together into a single force of total understanding. This is possible only by an act of meditation. Meditation is not doing something, but trying to expand the dimension of your being itself. This was the intention of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Now, what are you supposed to do? You have to find time in order to be yourself for some time in the life of everyday existence. You think of a hundred things, but there must be a time when you do not think like that, when you think of yourself only. What is your worth or value? Each person can deeply think over: What is my worth? Do I have any, or are the so-called values appearing to be in me foisted on me by external circumstances? Are you important because the external conditions make it possible for you to envision the actual conditions; or if these external conditions are completely separated and you are living alone, are you an important person even then?

An elephant has its own strength. Its strength does not increase by the votes of people. People do not have to raise hands, "Elephant, you are very powerful." It has got an intrinsic strength. There are officials who have great power of governmental service, but when they retire, the power goes away. Are you able to maintain the strength within yourself even if you retire from your governmental service? That is called intrinsic strength. You are yourself complete and perfect, and you need not have to take the assistance of things that are outside you to make yourself perfect. It cannot actually increase the dimension of your personality by dovetailing things that are outside. If one

thing is dovetailed to another, they cannot really join together. Whatever be the help you are receiving from outside is also to improve your personality. You are fragile internally. Your strength has to be built up from within by the adjustment of values in the mind itself, and an internal relationship with the whole creation. The yoga that people speak of is actually a systematic art of ascending from the lower region of the personality as you conceive it to be and expand it beyond the physical frame in which it is encased, expand it beyond the four walls of the body, and comprehend the objects of the world as inseparable from your existence.

Now we come to a subject called yourself and that which you perceive. Philosophically this is described as the relationship between subject and object. When you see a thing that appears to be an object of your perception, and you are a subject, what is the relationship between the subject and the object? What is the relationship between yourself as the perceiver and the object that is perceived?

Like unlettered folk, we glibly say that we are perceiving. The perceptual process is so intricate that it is not that we suddenly jump on the object in order to perceive it or commune with it. An undercurrent takes place between the subject and the object to bring them together into a meaningful relation of cognition and perception and, much more, to bring them together into a sort of identity in the final stage wherein that which you are and that which you see with your eyes do not stand apart from one another.

This consciousness within you which cognises an object outside becomes aware of the object. How does it become aware of the object? You think your mind is inside your body. The eyes are in the socket within the body. How does it become possible for you to cognise or perceive an object that is at a distance? The object does not enter your eyes, nor does it enter into your mind. Your mind does not touch the object. Your sense organ, the perceptual medium, does not touch the object. The object may be very far away, yet you are cognising it and becoming affected by the nature of the object. How has some interaction taken place between yourself and the object? You may not know what is actually happening. How do two things totally different from each other, placed at a distance from one another, act and react unless there is an undercurrent of activity taking place in a submerged area of consciousness deeper than the superficial waking consciousness?

There are levels of consciousness. One is the superficial sensory awareness. You are aware of everything in the world by means of the activity of the sense organs. This is the uppermost layer of consciousness. But below is the subliminal consciousness, sometimes called the subconscious. It is the storehouse of all the impulses of perception and action. And still deeper is what psychologists generally call the unconscious. That is the state into



which you enter every day while you are asleep. While you are asleep, when you are not conscious of anything, you are not non-existent. You do not know that you are existing in the state of deep sleep because consciousness is covered over by a mist or a cloudy substance which consists of the potentials of unfulfilled desires. Whenever desires are fulfilled, you feel perfectly all right. You work hard every day to fulfil one desire or the other, as all the desires cannot be fulfilled simultaneously.

Your desires are so many that one life is not sufficient to fulfil them all, so their unfulfilled potentials get buried in the unconscious level, or the deep sleep level. The unfulfilled potentials do not leave you. They pursue you through your incarnations, whatever be their number. That potential of the unfulfilled desires is the occasion for a reincarnation, another birth. Why is another birth necessary? Because a desire is a live force, it cannot keep quiet. It insists that it should be fulfilled. Every desire asks for fulfilment, and if the body is not able to live long enough to be able to fulfil all the desires, it is shed. That is called death. The germinating desires which are not given an avenue of approach rise up in the next birth. There you take a body in a particular circumstance where it is possible to develop faculties of fulfilment of the remaining desires, and life goes on like that.

There again the reborn soul develops further desires. As long as your individuality is maintained, desires cannot stop. There again this accumulation of unfulfilled desires harassing the mind will continue. Then there is death of the body a second time and another, third birth, takes place. This is called samsara, the unending cycle of being born and dying. This has to be put an end to. We should not have to be born again and again only to suffer and then die. How do you put an end to this cycle of birth and death? By abolishing conditions which create desires. What are the conditions which create desires? The conditions for rebirth are the desires for external objects.

Is there anything called externality, or not? Is there such a thing called the external world, unconnected with you? Think over this matter. People think the external world is unconnected with them. They say, "What does it matter what happens anywhere? I walk on the road independently." This cannot be done because if the world is completely unconnected with you, you would not desire for anything in the world. Who will desire for a thing with which they are unconnected? That there is a desire to possess things as if they are totally external to one's own consciousness shows that though they appear to be external, they are not really external. The world is a universal being; it is not an external object. The moment you think it is external, you will be in great trouble. On the one hand you want to possess the things of the world, and on the other hand you cannot possess them because they are external. This is the tragedy of samsara.

The panacea for overcoming this difficulty is to not consider the world as external to you. There is nothing external to you, really speaking. Everything is connected to you through the universal fabric of interrelationships. This is something very new that you are hearing. Everything is connected to everything else. Whether you think through a scientific or logical way or through meditation, you will realise that nothing in the world is totally outside you. The whole point is, if it is totally outside, you will not hanker after it. Who will hanker after a thing which is not connected with you? That shows there is an undercurrent of connection between you and everything else.

This act of meditation on the interrelationship of everything with everything else will make your mind a cosmic mind. A mind that can think the interrelationship of everything with everything else is not an ordinary human mind. It is a super-mind. Nobody thinks like that. Can you think of the interrelationship of everything with everything? Your mind will stop thinking at that time. It becomes a cosmic mind which has no object in front of it, and therefore, you should not hanker after objects. Therefore, there is no rebirth. This leads to salvation. This is the technology of the method of thinking and meditation by which you can put a stop to the samsara of birth and death and the agony of living in the world.

Great effort has to be put forth. Everything is connected to everything, as every thread in a cloth is connected to every other thread. The cloth that you speak of is only an interrelated activity of many threads. In a similar manner, the world that you are thinking of in your mind is only a fabric of threads of desires, personally or externally, which constitute an apparent sheet of observation. Every thread is connected to every thread of the cloth. In a similar way, every thing is connected organically, in a vital manner, with every other thing in the world, so that the world is one whole. It is not for your enjoyment. You cannot enjoy a part of your body. The world is made up of the same substance as your personality is made up of, just as you do not have to cling to your legs or your nose, and you do not have to go on hugging your hands – because it is you. You do not have to hug your hands because you yourself are the hands. Likewise, the so-called objects of the world will not tempt you, will not attract you, similar to the way your hands do not attract your attention. You do not have a desire for the limbs of your body. They are you, and therefore, no desire is possible.

In this way, expand your consciousness to the area of the whole creative existence, the whole world, and you will find that you are everywhere. As your body is everywhere in all parts of the body, in all limbs – in the ears and nose and legs and heart and lungs and everywhere, your body is there – in a similar way you will find you are everywhere because of the interconnection of one thing with another thing. You are connected to

everything right from the Earth to the heavens. There is no isolated existence anywhere because of the necessary interconnection of the subject and the object, until a stage is reached where the subject merges with the object and, vice versa, the object merges with the subject. You remain a cosmic whole. This thought is called God thought. God does not think like us because there is nobody outside God. There is no thing. That is why God cannot have any desires. He desires Himself only.

Can you imagine that you are in that position where you yourself and that which you think of in your mind are clubbed together and you become one whole, in a larger fashion, so that you become wider and wider until you are as wide as the whole sky and beyond the sky, beyond the stars, because even that which is beyond the stars is an object? That object cannot stand before you because of the interconnection of all things. Everything is everywhere. This is God-consciousness. This is the art of meditation.

This meditation has to be carried on every day, in the morning and evening, for as long as possible. It is necessary for you to reconstruct your personality and refurbish your mental way of thinking: You do not have to apply too much logic of the brain, of the emotions, of the feeling, or of the impulse to the activity of the hands, but you stand whole as one integral being, which is the very condition of God-consciousness.

Do you understand what I am saying? Think over this deeply. And during the coming occasions I will try to tell you something more about this so that you may feel not only well educated in the Academy but also happy in your whole personality, and that you go from here as a new person altogether. That will be your blessing.

## Discourse 2: The Centralisation of Consciousness

When a photograph of a person is taken, the personality is photographed, but not the individuality of a person. What is the difference? The individuality is an affirmation of the conception of oneself, limiting the self-identity of a person to a limited location so that a person is in one place only at a time and cannot be in two places. This is the so-called 'I' in statements such as "I am coming", or "I am going". Now, who is coming and who is going? It is the affirmation of the self-identical nature of one's own self, the 'I am what I am' in a purely empirical sense, not the 'I am that I am' of God's experience.

The empirical structural pattern of the outward look of this individuality is the personality. Nobody can see the individuality of a person because it is an internal operation taking place in the consciousness. The personality is an extension of the type of individual that a person is. The type of individuality is the determining factor of experience: the way in which one speaks, the way in which one responds, and the like.

Each individuality, which is at the back of the awareness of what personality is, is not as separated as one sees. There are tentacles which operate in a mysterious way which make us feel that we are stable, steady and self-identical.

The Upanishads give a detailed description of how we exist at all, and what it is that exists when we say, "I am here." The limits of the body, of all the organs which constitute this bodily personality, are controlled by certain divinities. The high heaven controls us. The 'high heaven' means the whole universal operational system which determines our way of thinking, speaking and acting.

You must have heard that the eyes see with the blessing of the divine Sun. Surya is the divinity operating through the eyes. People who wish to have good eyesight do *surya upasana*. For maintaining good eyesight, *surya upasana* is very important. You have to worship Surya, the Sun god, if you want good eyesight.

There is a peculiar Vedic concept of obtaining prosperity by worship of the holy Agni, the fire, which is not the fire that is cooking our food. It is a divine principle operating in the form of fire. Fire is a mysterious thing which cannot be described. You do *arati* in the temple by burning camphor, and then it is gone. Now, can you find where it has gone? Is it on you, or above you? When you just blow on that camphor light, it vanishes. But 'vanishing' means it has gone somewhere. Where has it gone? This is a great mystery. This is a common experience with everybody, and perhaps it is seen every day. We do not give it sufficient respect so we just say it has gone.

If you want learning, *vidya*, worship Lord Siva. If you are interested only in liberation, then worship Narayana. This is all mentioned in the scriptures.

The idea behind it is that there are gods, forces which are above the physical world. We may look like puppets dancing to the force exerted by puppeteers. If you see, it is due to the sun. If you hear, it is due to the Vayu devata, etc. If these devatas do not work, you will not be able to see, hear, smell, touch, or do anything. You will feel paralysed completely. You will look like a dead body.

People who do not believe in the relations of these gods, especially in modern times, usually have an ultra-exteriorised attraction to forms and things outside, and do not know how they are existing at all. There is no such thing as individual existence finally, unless it is permitted to exist by the operation of forces which are beyond the individuality.

There are several planes of existence. In Sanskrit they are called Bhuloka, Bhuvanloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janarloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka. These are the seven planes of existence, one over the other, exceeding interpreting capacity and subtlety as they go higher and higher. The grossest form of existence is Earthly existence, where everything is different from everything else. No one is concerned with anybody. This is the Earthly plane. Everybody, even father and son, are different; they do not identify with each other. Father is father, son is son, husband is husband, and wife is wife. There is no vital connection between them except some emotional attraction.

But when we go from one level of divinity to another level of divinity, from Bhuloka to Bhuvanloka, etc., the relationship between people, the relationship between anything, becomes closer and closer. Now we are utterly different. There is no connection between one and another on this Earthly plane. When we go to Bhuvanloka, Svarloka, the subjective side and the objective side, myself and yourself, come together closer and closer, and one becomes nearer to the other as the closeness increases, and the experience becomes much more than one of friendship and organic relation. Finally we reach the highest level of existence, which is called Satyaloka, where Brahma the Creator abides, as we are told, and at that level each person looks like every other person. We cannot distinguish one person from another person in Brahmaloka. Now, on the Earth plane, we can see many people here, and each one is different from the other. There each one becomes so fine and subtle, and begins to shine like a mirror. Each one is a mirror reflecting everyone else, as if all mirrors face each other and reflect each other, so that we cannot know where one is and where one is not.

The Upanishads are our standard guide, and they make out that in the highest level of Satyaloka, or Brahmaloka as it is called, there is practically an amalgam of individualities, and no one can know who is where. They are like drops of water in the large ocean, and we cannot find where one drop is and where another drop is. They are all touching each

other almost organically, livingly, to make one believe they are one drop only. That one drop is the ocean, in which the little drops appearing to be different from one another are individuals. This individuality merges in Satyaloka. It is difficult to imagine what that condition is. You will see yourself everywhere.

Can you imagine what would be your feeling when you see yourself in all places simultaneously? We, who are accustomed to seeing with mortal eyes, cannot imagine the spiritual eye operating in Brahmaloaka. It is the spirit beholding spirit, not a body contacting another body. There are no bodies there. There is a spiritual blaze, countless in number. These are the blessed ones who, by intense *tapasya* and meditation, have reached the topmost level of creation, which we call Brahmaloaka, the abode of the Creator, Brahma. We cannot make out what it is. With the farthest stretch of our imagination we will not be able to visualise this immortal existence through the perception of mortal eyes. But by hearing all these things you will feel some kind of shakeup in your personality. Though you have not reached that place, you will feel as if you are rising up into the spirit of the cosmos. What a glory! How happy, how liberated you will feel at that time! Your skin will shake if you think deeply like that, and you will be immensely purified by the very thought of such a kind of experience. This is veritably a supernormal meditation that one can think of.

That is to say, though we look like individuals, different persons, we are really controlled and operated by cosmic forces. I gave the example of a puppet show. There is a drama going on among the puppets. They play a joke, they play historical occurrences, but they play nothing. They are only moved in a particular fashion by the operator of their strings. Similarly, these strings in the cosmos operate the pattern of our existence, the way in which we think, and the nature of our reactions to things.

In a way, we may say there are no individuals existing. They are made to feel as if they are existing, just as puppets are made to show that they are individually existing while really there is no such thing. They are dead wooden pieces. We are like that – dead wooden pieces.

But we have some principle which is called *ahamkara*, the ego, as they say, which is a mysterious thing which cannot be described. People think that ego is inside. It is neither inside nor outside. It is an operating method. What kind of operation? Consciousness, which is the ultimate nature of everything in the universe, centralises itself, for reasons the Almighty only knows, in a particular point in space. This centralisation is like electric forces coming from all sides and pounding in one spot, one point, and then agitating. That agitation of centralised forces which are moving from outside, from cosmic levels, is

something like an electrical knot, and not a physical knot. It is electric forces pushing towards a centre in all possible ways.

Electrical powers are unthinkable. How much strength has electricity got? It can blow up an entire building. Such a series of forces which are super-electrical in their power converge at one spatial point which is me and you and everybody else, and then become so hard that one thinks, "I am a perfectly solid person." Electrical shocks can sometimes give the impression of solidity. If anybody has an experience of electrical shock of sufficient high voltage, they will know what is felt at that time. One's hand will hang down from the body as if huge stones are tied to the fingers, with such a heavy weight. There is no heavy weight, there are no stones hanging, but the electric power which jolts with such force can give the impression that there is something heavy. A non-existent object such as the operation of electrical power can make it seem that a stone is hanging on one's hand. That same thing happens in our feeling that we are existing. Just as a feeling that a stone is hanging on the hand is possible while such a thing does not exist, in the same manner we feel that we are existing. Really, we do not exist individually.

This kind of obstreperous, inveterate habit of asserting oneself as the only being is called egoism. It is not a thing moving inside the body. There is no such thing as 'inside me'. It *is* you. The totality of your existence itself is ego. It is not outside or inside yourself. You yourself in a totality are the ego. It is an uncalled-for experience that is compelled upon us due to our inability to recognise a similar existence in other things and other persons.

One of the ways of reducing your egoism is to feel yourself with everything else. You cannot do that exercise because you cannot accept that you can be in somebody else or in something. Can you feel that you are in the tree, in the walls, in the buildings, in the mountains, in the rivers, in the sun, moon and stars? Can anybody accept it? The ego principle will not permit you to think like that. It will revolt and put you down: "Do not think like this." That is why spiritual meditation is very difficult. The consciousness that you are maintaining in meditational posture is contrary to the affirmation of the egoistic individuality, so there is distraction. The affirmation of the concretised form of electrical or conscious operation inside pushing you in one direction only, in one place only, at one point, at one time, is the ego. It is an indescribable operation taking place, if you use the word 'operation' rather than a thing. But nobody can know this operation because one who tries to know is itself the operation. It is a very serious tragedy for everybody.

Therefore, yoga is a very difficult subject. It requires such force of determination as it will be necessary to break down this solid apparent individuality of anything. There are no individuals like sun, moon, stars, and so on. They are also coalescing with each other.

But due to some centralisation that takes place as in the case of everybody else, they look as if they are existing.

Have you heard the cosmological doctrine of creation where there was no sun, moon, stars? There was no human being, no living being. In the Manusmriti, the great scriptural ethical book, the first *sloka* itself says: *āsīd idam tamobhūtam aprajñātam alakṣaṇam, apratarkyam avijñeyam prasuptam iva sarvataḥ*. Before the manifestation of scattered particularities we call creation, there was an indescribable stillness – dark, as it were, as if the whole universe was sleeping. That is the pre-creational condition of existence, says the Manusmriti. A similar thing was recorded in the Rigveda mantra called the Nasadiya Sukta: *nāsadāsī`nnosadāsitta* (1). At that time, prior to the creation of particularities, there was no existence and no non-existence, there was no space and no time. Can you imagine a condition where there is no space and time? That is the prior condition of this universe. You have to climb on your own back to find out what all this is. That is, you are the effect and the thing that I am speaking of is the cause, as the effect is pushed forward with vehement force by the cause. You can go forward in one direction and cannot turn back and see what is behind you, so that you will never know how the world is working and how creation took place.

But yoga *abhyasa*, the art of meditation, is the way of disentangling this ego and feeling yourself in the egos of everyone so that you exist in the same way as you seem to have existed prior to the formation of particularities.

You know the scientific theory of the origin of things, called the Big Bang. It is the cosmological theory of the physicists. The world was not yet created, as the Rigveda and the Manusmriti mention. What was there? Oh, who can answer this question of what was there before creation? Your head will reel as if you have received a blow. Prior to this so-called Big Bang, as modern physicists say, there was a point. This point is accepted in all religions. It is called a *bindu*, one dot. It is said at that time, prior to creation, this endlessly spread out universe was in the form of a single dot. Its dimension was of the dimension of a point that we strike on the paper by the nib of a fountain pen. There was no dimension because dimension is a form of distance, and there was no distance because there was no space. And there was no ‘now’, no tomorrow, no past, present and future, because there was no time. What a wonder that this incredible universe can be contained in one dot, one full stop! This is called a *bindu* in the Tantra Shastra, and in the Vedanta also. ‘*Bindu*’ means an incredibly small dot, a point which includes the vast universe, which became this vast universe. The *bindu* is the dot. It is not a spatial dot. Even the dot struck on the paper by the nib of a fountain pen has got some distance. It has a dimension, which can be seen through a microscope. Here is a *bindu* which has no



dimension. If you can concentrate your mind on this peculiar thing, you will cease to be a human being.

“Oh, I see,” you go on telling yourself. “I was not at that time. The whole universe of particularities, individualities, things and persons, all were contained in that impossible dot.” This is the *bindu* that the Tantra Shastra speaks of. Then there was *nada* – the Big Bang, as it is called, a big burst of sound. What kind of sound it is, you cannot imagine. It is a cosmic sound, not a sound that we hear through our ears. They are all impossible things to conceive. *Bindu*, *nada* and *kala* – these are the three terms used in Tantra Shastra. *Bindu* is the pre-creational dot. *Nada* is what we may compare with the Big Bang, the splitting of the cosmos into two halves, the positive and the negative. And third is *kala*, all the variety that we see.

We are stunned by the variety of the universe. We use telescopes to see the stars and the planets. But all these impossibly distant things are contained in that little wavelike dot. And we ourselves are there. So to which part of the universe do we belong? Where are you? You belong to which place? You will say, “I am from Delhi, Madras or Kerala,” and so on. This is all false descriptions of oneself which binds us to *samsara*. You do not belong to any place in this world. You belong to that condition prior to the creation of the universe. Where were you at that time, prior to creation?

It is, we may say in modern language, a super-metaphysical point. ‘Metaphysics’ is a very poor word. It is something super-metaphysical. You were at the very seat of the universe before creation took place. That means to say, you are everywhere. You are not in India, you are not in any place or country if you agree that you were prior to the bursting of the cosmos into two parts. Otherwise, if you do not exist at all, how do you come to be existent now? You were in the Eternal Being. Even now you are coming from God. The eternity is dancing through your heart even at this moment. That is the reason why nobody wants to die. The eternity inside tells you that you will not die. Even if everyone knows that tomorrow will be the last day of one’s life, nobody will believe it. People want to perpetuate their existence by creating a false eternal circumstance by nameplates and legacies, and many other things.

It is the immortality that is within us which is acting in us as the belief in the impossibility of dying. Nobody believes that they will die. They say, “Let us see after fifty years, after sixty years.” Even after sixty years, nobody believes that death will come because the principle of life asserts itself perpetually. So eternity is ruling our very existence, but because of the variety seen with the two eyes in the form of space and time, we see, at the same time, that there is a perishability of things. Everything in the world is

perishable. On the one side it says everybody will go. We are afraid of that. And on another side our central being says we will not die.

That fear of perishability is due to our involvement in external things, and the principle of eternity working inside us makes us feel that we will not die. Nobody will feel that one is going to die in a few days. Why a few days? It may be in a few minutes. Nobody can accept it. We think it is not possible. The eternity says it cannot be, we cannot go. But the other side, the empirical side, pushes us into the acceptance of the possibility of death at any time. So we belong to two worlds – the eternal world and the perishable, empirical world, and we are pushed from both sides. Sometimes we emphasise our empirical aspect more and we get caught in what they call samsara. On the other side we emphasise the eternal side. We feel happy and spiritual at that time.

The essence of all this is that you are everywhere. If you were everywhere before the bursting of the point of creation, you must be everywhere even now. How could you be at one place now while you were at all places prior? It requires a little bit of analysis. Your real nature is all-pervading inclusiveness. But the sense organs compel you to see things with the eyes and work as a media of perishability.

Everybody sees somebody is dying. What is the greatest wonder in this world? Yudhishtira, the Pandava, was asked this question. He answered the question: “What can be a greater wonder than that people see daily that bodies are taken to the cremation ground, but think that they themselves will not be taken?” People carry a dead body to the cremation ground, but the one who carries the body to the cremation ground will not believe that he or she also will meet the same fate. This is the conflict created by the eternal and the empirical in us operating simultaneously. That is why I said you belong to two worlds, the perishable world and the eternal world. But the perishable nature of things can be subsumed under the meditation of eternity.

There are various ways of meditation. One of them is, as I mentioned in a simple way, where were you before creation? Find out that spot, and there you are even now. You cannot say that you were somewhere very far, far away. This idea of ‘far away’ also is not correct because there was no space. Without space, there is no ‘far away’. There is no distance. And you cannot say that you were some time back, many, many years back, because there was no time. Therefore, you cannot say you were there many, many years back and far off somewhere. Both these statements are incorrect because there was no space at that time, and there was no time. In that incredible blessedness of existence you were, and even now you are there because no time has passed after your existence in the heavenly point. You should not say many, many years back. There is no many, many years back because there was no time, and you should not say somewhere, a long

distance, because that also is not proper. This is a kind of meditation which shakes up your personality, brushes you completely, washes your karmas, and you will have a double feeling of fear as to where you are going and the joy that you are moving towards a point of truth.

Mysterious is life, mysterious is this creation, mysterious is the way everything has come. Nobody can say anything about it because that 'it' does not exist. It is a part of you only. When you try to know another thing, you are also dragging yourself in that direction. You must know yourself first before you try to know others. This is a kind of meditational technique. And you must be sunk in it with utter sincerity – now or never. The whole day you must think this. Even if you are busy with some work in the office or the family, let the work go on, but at the background you cannot forget that you are not of this world. An *aya* takes care of children belonging to somebody else, and she will take care of the child as if it is her own, but at the background of thought she will know that her child is somewhere else and this is not her child. Likewise, you must do work very vigorously as if it is your work, but at the background you know that it is not your work; it is a cosmical work in which you are engaged.

There are people who dance with a water pot on their head. They throw their hands in all directions and whirl vigorously, but the water pot will not fall down because the mind of that dancer is so intensely conscious of the presence of this water pot on the head that all the whirling and throwing of hands, etc., will not block the consciousness of the pot. So any amount of moving in dancing postures will not put the pot down. Likewise, do any work in your office, house, railway station, but the pot of your memory, your consciousness that you belong to another realm altogether, cannot leave you. Work is not a bondage; it is a big drama that is being played, and it is wonderful. Do work, but at the background of your thought know that you belong to somebody else.

Labourers are there, workers are there, servants are there. They do hard work, as if they are doing work for themselves, but they know very well that they belong to another house. They will leave this place and go away afterwards. This is the type of detachment we have to maintain in ourselves.

You are eternity dancing in the form of a person. Be happy. You will dance with a great joy – “All is well with me; I have no problems” – because God will never let you down. He wants you much more than you are wanting Him. It is not the drop wanting the ocean, but the whole ocean wanting the drops. God loves you much more than you love God. Your love for God is called devotion. What do you call that love of God for you? When God loves you, do you call it devotion? It is an indescribable state. You will be spewed into the network of existence when God calls you. At that time, you are on the

borderland of becoming a saint or a sage, as it may be. You are moving towards being a Godman, as it is called.

### **Discourse 3: Reversing the Process of Perception**

It is necessary for everyone to know where one stands. Where are you positioned at this moment? A symbolic description of what has happened to us is majestically given in the famous Aitareya Upanishad. Why are we what we are? What is our joy, and what is our sorrow? When we try to understand things which are beyond human comprehension, we have to use symbolic language. No mathematics, no logic can explain to us what has happened to us really. We are something. But why are we something in the way we perceive our own selves? We must know what has happened to us, why it is that we are looking like we are.

The symbolic story that the Aitareya Upanishad gives us is that there was one only, there is one only, and there will be one only. Now, you have to remember that whatever I am telling you is symbolic, and not capable of understanding through logical methods. In these methods of analogy that are sometimes employed, I give an example. There is a star in the sky called Arundhati. In one of the traditional rituals of India, especially during weddings, it is required that the couple should look at the star called Arundhati. There are hundreds and hundreds of stars in the sky. How can they find Arundhati? For that, a symbolic method is applied. The couple is asked, "Come here. Do you see this tree in front of you?" "Yes." "Do you see one branch shooting off in the right direction?" "Yes." "Do you see one star just above the branch of the tree which is to the right?" "Yes." "Do you see one star just above?" "Yes, we see." "Now, to the right of that star, do you see another star?" "Yes." "This is Arundhati."

We cannot know what has happened to us because what happened was prior to our present state of condition. As the effect cannot know the cause, we cannot know what happened to us. Sometimes we feel we are competent, and sometimes we feel we are incompetent and miserable.

The Aitareya Upanishad story goes like this. There was one majestic, all-pervading, indivisible existence. There was no second thing beyond it or outside it. Something happened suddenly. Now, you cannot ask why something happened because that would be the attempt of an effect to find out the cause of its own self. You are not a cause; you are an effect in the process mentioned. Just as you do not climb over your own shoulders, you cannot turn back your mind to the source from where it has emanated.

What does the Upanishad say? It manifested itself into an infinite number of particulars, like stars jetting forth from a huge conflagration. There was a scattering activity going on, and everywhere there were stars. These stars are the origin of the individuality of every person and everything in this world.

The word 'star' is very suggestive. We had no physical body at that time. A star is fire, and it is not physical. It is a luminous force rising with great ferocity, moving in some direction. In what direction? The natural tendency of everything in these kinds of emanations is to run away from the centre. There is an exteriorised push of this central conflagration of consciousness running away from one's own self. This is the only way we can describe what has happened to us.

When we started moving away from our own selves, we started beholding ourselves as not ourselves. The Atman became the *anatman*, as they say. That which you see with your eyes or sense with your organs is neither disconnected from you nor is it directly connected with you. If the parts are shut off from the configuration of consciousness – if they are totally independent, one star having no connection with others – then they will not know that the others exist. You cannot know that I am, and I cannot know that you are because of the assertion of the self-identity of each star by itself. But that is not the case. Everyone knows that there is something else outside. There is a perceptual activity going on in each centre of the star by which it cognises and beholds the existence of other stars. This process is called perception, beholding, cognising, becoming aware.

Now, I am aware that you are all sitting here. How do I become aware? You have not entered my mind or my eyes. You are sitting outside me entirely. There is a distance between you and myself. But in knowing that you are all sitting here, I expand my area of perception to the area you are occupying. I become larger than what I am in order to know that you are there in front of me. Truly there is no connection with the one who sees and what is seen, as they are two different things; but one sees, and one knows that one sees that other things exist. This is a mysterious process of knowing anything.

This un-understandable situation, the infinite expansion of the conflagration of consciousness spread itself externally with such force that every spark became topsy-turvy. We fell headlong, as one of the Upanishads says.

All doctrines of creation, perhaps all the religions, state that that which shot off from the original infinitude turned upside-down symbolically, we may say, with legs up and the head down. In such a position, the perception of anything would be topsy-turvy. Even ordinarily speaking, if it is possible for you to practice the headstand asana called *sirsasana*, you will see the objects outside in a strange way, not in the way you would see when you are sitting here.

In this mysterious, topsy-turvy fall of the so-called individuality of the spark of consciousness, every perception within is topsy-turvy. What is the meaning of topsy-turvy? The inside looks like the outside, and the outside looks like the inside. The creation theme also is symbolic. It doesn't mean that God sat one day and started creating.

Nobody has seen that act. It is recorded in the Yoga Vasishtha that when Sri Rama asked Vasishtha how this came about, Vasishtha said, “Don’t put questions like that. Ask me how you can get out of the tragedy, but don’t ask how you came to be in this condition. You should not ask why you are what you are. You can do something, but you should not know why you should do anything.”

The Aitareya Upanishad tells us that enigmatic particles of the fire of consciousness shot off and fell upside down. They saw their own source, which is the world, as an outside object, and themselves, the effect, as the subjective perceivers. The perceiver really is that which is prior. The posterior is the perceived. We have turned the whole thing upside down. The prior thing is considered as the posterior, and the posterior as the prior. We are looking at the world, but we cannot look at our own selves. This is the effect produced by the powerful exteriorisation of consciousness. When this exteriorised, topsyturvy fall took place, says the Upanishad, everyone developed a terrible fear. This is the source of fear in the world. This is the metaphysical fear, we may say. The creation brought about a fear in everyone and everything which was created.

Why is there a fear? It is because there is a loss of one’s own Self. What is your Self? It is the invariable and vital connection with the source of the conflagration of consciousness. The moment you are separated from that, the vitality that sustained you is snapped off. Then there is a fear: How to protect myself? These little sparks, which are the so-called individuals, cry out, “Give us food! We are hungry!” Hunger is an indication of the inability to sustain oneself by one’s own power. You depend on something else. Life which is a kind of dependence on something else is not really a life. It is a kind of beggar’s life. Every day you have to beg. So there was a fear of losing oneself. The ‘oneself’, so-called, gets into a solidifying process through the stages which we call the layers of personality. They are called the *koshas* in Sanskrit. There is, first of all, the state of shock when there is no consciousness of everything. That is reflected in the state of deep sleep.

One cannot be in the state of unconsciousness continuously. Immediately the submerged consciousness which is covered over by the ignorance of its connection with the universal whole creates a world of its own. “It is better to rule in hell than serve in heaven,” is a very wonderful passage from a poet. “It is better to rule in hell than serve in heaven. I want to rule, even if it be in hell. Why should I serve anybody?” So the hell that we have created by being kicked out from the heaven of universality creates the heaven of itself even in the nether regions of consciousness. The ignorance of the connection of oneself with the Universal Being is what is called *avidya* – that is, absence of knowledge.

The potentiality of this so-called isolated being having a subtle connection with this All-in-all projects itself in a negative manner and opens up an artificial perceptual

process, and sees things as separate. Everything is seen like this. This seeing of the world or anything whatsoever is done by a kind of diluted consciousness or, we may say, it is distracted consciousness, which passes through the state of the prior ignorance through a new mechanism if it is created through our intellect. Thus, intellectual knowledge is not real knowledge. It is the light of the sun passing through thick clouds, and that too, moving clouds. The scattered particulars of pieces of clouds when they are moving in different directions can also reflect the light of the sun above. Firstly, it is really not the sunlight at all; it is a reflection. Secondly, it is a distracted reflection. It is not steady awareness. This is also the motion of the clouds. In a similar way, the way in which we are seeing things is not only a part of the ignorance which separated us from the universal whole, but also disturbed consciousness.

Therefore, the intellect and what you call intellectual knowledge is a part of ignorance only. In the spiritual sense, a highly intellectual person should not be considered as spiritually well educated. It is a knowledge that is created by the false activity going on in the state of ignorance. As I mentioned to you, one is cast into hell, and there he opens the eyes given in the conditions of hell itself, and begins to look around as a master of all things. That is to say, all knowledge available to us is false knowledge unless it is motivated by the central operation of consciousness, which is all-in-all. Knowledge cannot be considered as genuine. This is why a highly learned, intellectualised professor of philosophy, or anyone of that kind, is internally unhappy.

The characteristic of true knowledge is happiness, power, and righteousness. If these three are missing in a person, that intellectual knowledge cannot be called real knowledge. A person may have so many degrees of various schools of thought, but when he goes home he feels miserable inside, quarrels, and wants to lash out. Learned people are not necessarily happy people. They are one thing in their heart and another thing outside in the classroom. This is the fate of intellectual knowledge.

But no one wishes to be defeated completely. This intellectual knowledge persists in affirming its own validity through means such as mental activity, sensory activity, and the like. We feel quite comfortable when we are rid of hunger by means of eating food. We amuse ourselves by musical performances. The sense organs provide us with great joy. It is a joy of the topsy-turvy perception. We are seeing through the eyes operating when the head is down and the legs are up. This cry of the separated souls for assistance was attended to immediately by producing external objects for their satisfaction.

The blessing that we receive from God in this topsy-turvy fit is not a real thing that we are obtaining. This would mean finally that whatever we think, whatever we do, is ultimately meaningless. There is no substance in it. The reason is that whatever we do in



the best of our capacity takes us back to unhappiness of one kind or another. Nobody can comfortably say they are perfectly happy and have no problem of any kind. Such a person perhaps does not exist in this world because whatever affirmations we make through our mind and consciousness are impure activities of disturbed consciousness. No one can be happy in this world. No one can confidently say, "I am perfectly happy." "But," they will say. One 'but' will be there.

Now, what the Upanishad finally tells is that we have to reverse the track of our consciousness. The reversal of consciousness is what is called yoga, a gradual interiorisation of the perceptual process.

In certain places in the Kathopanishad, the method of this reversal of consciousness is explained. The sense organs are the outermost exteriorising force. Then there is the mind, the intellect, and the state of affairs in deep sleep. You must reverse your process of perception. This will lead you to great meditation. It will look very terrible to hear all these things. You have to transfer yourself to the level of the Creator Himself. Nothing can be known unless God is known. Everywhere knowledge is only tinsel shining like sunlight, but it is not worth anything. Tinsel also shines, but what is the use of shining? It is not sunlight, really speaking.

What is this reversal of the consciousness? Close your eyes for a few minutes. Imagine that you are seeing something in the form of the vast world around you. Place your consciousness in the location of the things that you are visualising. You are seeing a mountain in front of you. Transfer your consciousness to the mountain. Instead of feeling that you are perceiving the mountain, affirm that the mountain is seeing you. This process can be extended further and further until you reach the whole sky and time process – sun, moon and stars. Wherever you feel that something is worthwhile beholding, imagine strongly that you are sitting on it. Behold the object that is beheld as the thing that beholds you. Instead of seeing that there are walls here in a building, let the walls begin to see you. You have to push your consciousness to the status of the wall so that you will not see a wall there, you will see yourself only. Or, another way is to melt down your exteriorised perceptual capacity and touch the walls around, and the walls will start feeling what you are feeling. In modern times, this is called telepathic communication. Suppose a person is at a long distance, even in another country or on another continent, and you want to convey a message to that person, not by email and fax and so on, but by the mental process. You cannot communicate with another until you yourself become that another. Can you understand what this means? You take the shape of that thing which you are contemplating upon. Then there is no contemplation. Then there is no transference of oneself in the direction of another.

You have to communicate something to somebody. Close your eyes and sit, and imagine that you yourself are that person. Then that person will be you only. So what are you communicating? You are communicating a message from yourself to yourself only. That will work a miracle. The mind of that person to whom you want to convey a message will start activating immediately. In a minute it will change, provided your thought is very intense and strong. Shallow thoughts will not easily work. Whatever you want to contact, for any reason, assume the form of that particular thing in your own self.

So you yourself are all things. Expand the mind, expand the consciousness further and further, further and further. You have become as large as the whole sky, the entire space. That is the farthest reach of the objective perception in us. You cannot go beyond space. That is yourself only. It is a very strange thing to imagine that you yourself are that thing which you are seeking. There will be an initial shudder in your personality. The prana will jump because you are now introducing into the mind a type of affirmation to which it is not usually accustomed.

These unexpected types of experience in the reversal process are called obstacles. They are really not obstacles. They are only attempts of the mind of the meditator to adjust itself to the new outlook which you are trying to introduce. You are trying to introduce into the mind a technique of knowing whereby the known object has to enter into you, and you will behold the known object in yourself, so that you are not beholding the object, the object is beholding you. This is a type of samadhi, as mentioned in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Samadhi is the unity of the very substance of the seer and the seen so that there will be no seer of anything. The object itself sees itself in you. This is the reversal process of consciousness. It is worth attempting.

The object that you are seeking, even if it be God Himself, is inseparable from you because if it is separable, it will not become a part of your consciousness. The content of consciousness and the consciousness have to become one and the same. Generally the content of perception is different from the perceiving consciousness. It should not be different. The content has to melt down into the consciousness of the perceiving method. The seer and the seen have to melt down into one single being. This requires great power of will. An ordinary person cannot think like that. It is a kind of assertion which is totally contrary to the way we are adopting and perceiving things. In the state of an attempt to reverse the consciousness in this manner, you will look like a funny person to outsiders. You will not want to see anybody afterwards because that somebody who you want to see has become one with you.

You should not take it as a kind of joke. It is not a magic trick. It is not a psychological twist. It is the uncommon way one is adopting in consciousness to turn oneself in the

direction of the perception of God Himself. How would God see things? He sees nothing. He sees Himself only. All these tentacles which seem to have proceeded from this centre which is God consciousness, these individualities, these particles, will all look like rays of the sun converging at one spot.

You have to practice this process and become a different person, a new person altogether who beholds things from the centre from which everything emanated and does not outwardly look at objects which apparently seem to be having no connection with you at all.

A daily practice of this kind of reversal of the exteriorised consciousness into an interiorised one in a universal gamut of perception will take you to God Almighty.

## Discourse 4: The Forbidden Question

Previously we were considering the nature of human individuality and human personality, and their mutual relationship. Now we shall go a little further. In the Kathopanishad this question is raised once again in a different manner altogether. There is a story attached to the teaching of the Kathopanishad.

There was a pious boy called Nachiketas whose father, a very religious person, was performing a sacrifice called Sarvavedas. Sarvavedas is a sacrifice in which all belongings are given away so that the sacrificer, by the virtue of this act, may reach heaven and enjoy the pleasures of heavenly existence. He was giving, giving, giving everything he owned. The boy was a shrewd little lad, and was observing that his father was giving poor skeleton-like cows that had given milk and eaten grass for the last time. Nachiketas was thinking, "What good is there in giving a charity of cows that will live only for a few days?" Willy-nilly, he held his tongue.

Because the son also is considered as a property of the father, Nachiketas asked, "Father, to whom are you giving me? If you hand over all your belongings, you will naturally hand over me also." The father kept quiet at this impertinent question. Twice, thrice the boy kept on repeating this question. The father got irritated and replied, "To hell I shall send you," because he did not expect the boy to speak so irreverently regarding the sacrifice that he was performing.

There is something hidden after that. The boy must have actually died, but the thread of the story is missing. However, what we are told is that Nachiketas found himself in the abode of the Lord of Death, Yama, who, mysteriously, was absent. The gatekeeper said, "The boss is not here." Without eating and drinking, the boy stood at the gate of Yama's palace for three days and three nights.

After three days, Yama appeared. "Oh, my dear boy! A Brahmin lad is starving in front of me. I have to do some compensation for this unwitting mistake I committed. For three days and nights he has starved and stood before me. Ask for three boons as my compensation for my absence here for three days and nights," Yama said.

"Great Master, I have three questions. My father sent me here in anger. When I go back, let him receive me with joy," asked Nachiketas.

"Granted," replied Yama.

"I have heard that there is a *vidya* called Vaishvanara Vidya, the knowledge concerned with the heavenly fires," said Nachiketas.

"Take it, granted," Yama said. Universal knowledge was granted. When Nachiketas returned to the world, not only his father but the entire humanity would receive him as a

dear friend. This heavenly secret was granted in the form of what is called Vaishvanara Vidya.

“I have a third question,” said Nachiketas. “I want to know what happens if the individuality disappears and dies, as people generally think.”

“No, my dear boy. You should not ask questions like that. Take the wealth of the worlds, all glory, the longest life. Such pleasures I shall grant you which no human being has ever thought of. Be happy. Don’t harass me. Go. Now further you should not talk to me,” replied Yama.

The boy stood firm. “Great Master, I shall stand here until you give the answer.”

“Don’t bother me. I am sorry that I said that you should take three things. I never knew that you would ask this kind of question. Don’t bother me. Please go,” said Yama.

“No, I shall not,” insisted Nachiketas.

What happens in *mahati samparaye*? *Mahati samparaye* means the great death. It is not the ordinary death that he is referring to because the intelligent boy that he was must have known what happens after the death of the body. There is a reference made to it, and he knew it. He was already dead, and his spirit, as it were, was now speaking. “I want to go back to the world,” he said. Therefore, Nachiketas knew all these mysteries of after death. But he was asking for something else. “*Mahati*, the Great Beyond – tell me what happens.”

*Devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṅur eṣa dharmah, anyam varam naciketo vṛñīṣva* (Katha 1.1.21). “Even the gods cannot answer this question. Ask for some other boon.”

“Great Master, you are saying that the gods cannot answer. It means that you can answer. Now tell me.”

“Don’t worry me. This question cannot be answered. Nobody can answer this question. Nobody has seen the Great Beyond,” replied Lord Yama.

Later on the Kathopanishad appears to be giving some kind of answer, though the answer is not clear. There is only an appearance of an answer. It looks to the ordinary reader that Lord Yama side-tracks the whole issue and makes it appear that the answer is given, but the answer actually does not come forth. In the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads we find some indication of the answer to this question.

The problem is like this. Everywhere we hear, whether from scientists or from scriptures, that the origin of things was a phenomenon of the One becoming the two. Then two becomes four, four becomes eight, and endless variety comes out. Now, in this position, where are we, the people who are asking questions?

We must be very careful in understanding the difference between one and two. We cannot think of the one without thinking the two. We cannot think of two without

thinking the one. It appears that there is a correlation between one and two, but there cannot be a correlation because already we said one, two. There is a division. The concept of the one is followed by the concept of two, as if there is some kind of internal relationship between one and two. And yet the usage of the word 'two' defies this possibility. Two things cannot become one thing. If two things can become one thing, then there are no two things.

Now, we all, having been created from this mysterious occurrence, are perhaps on one side of this duality as being bodily created. This one side is called either the subject or the object, as we cannot belong to both sides simultaneously. Where are we among these two things which are the effect of the split of one? To which part do we belong?

Philosophers have designated these two parts as subject and object. Which is the subject, which is the object? That also is a difficult thing to understand. Am I the subject here and you are the object, or are you the subject and I am the object? Either way it looks very fine, nothing wrong. But there is a quandary. What are we asking now? Beyond this individuality, what is there? First of all, what do we mean by individuality? Let us explain it. It is the state in which one is. Now, what is the state in which we are? Are we objects because we belong to one side of the split part of the One? Or are we subjects? Are we seeing things, or are we seen by something else? We can think only one side of the matter, but the question is: What is beyond this so-called split of the One into two things? Who can answer this question?

The One who split into two alone can answer this question. No one on Earth can answer this question because everyone on Earth is one of the two. We belong to some party. We cannot belong to two parties simultaneously. Only if we belong to two parties at the same time is there some hope, and that is an impossibility. Therefore, no answer can be given to this question. We are asking an impossible question. The origin of things, about which we are raising a question, cannot be thought by that which has been downgraded as a split of the One into two parts.

Yama does not say all these things, but his reluctance and refusal to answer has an implication of this type. He could answer a hundred questions as he was an omniscient being, but he would not speak on this matter. It is mind-boggling. The Upanishad says that if anyone tries to probe into this mystery their heart will break. An incident of this type took place in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Someone asked a question of this kind to Sage Yajnavalkya. "Ask not, lest your head break," he said. And it broke, and the questioner fell. There are two sides of the brain. How they coordinate themselves is a mystery. Why do we not have one brain? Why are there two sides? Somehow,

mysteriously, they coordinate, cooperate, and make it appear that there is only one mass of brain and not two halves.

We live together in this world as if we know each other. We are friends. I will cooperate with you, and you will cooperate with me. But why should I cooperate with you, and you with me? You are different from me, and I am different from you. If we accept that we are totally different, where comes the question of cooperation? Here is an artificiality behind every concept of cooperation and social values. There is a problem at the very root of things, and therefore Yama, knowing this, would not talk more.

The two parts which were the effect of the splitting of the One have no relationship between one and the other, and are trying to know what is beyond them. Now, what is the answer? As I said, the answer does not come in the Kathopanishad. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is some indication. “After death there is no consciousness,” says Sage Yajnavalkya. His consort Maitreyi got befuddled. “What are you saying?” By ‘death’ he meant the same thing about which Nachiketas was asking. It is not the death of the body, but the death of individuality. So there is no consciousness. “How is it?” Maitreyi asks. “What happens to consciousness?”

“My dear Maitreyi, as any one beholds the other, there is perception. There is a consciousness of the object.” So is the case with the ear, the nose, and all the senses. Where there is one, and also there is the other, there is the possibility of perception, cognition and sensory knowledge, conceptual knowledge, intellectual knowledge, and all kinds of knowledge that we can boast of in this world. But you are caught up in an imbroglio of belonging to one party and not being able to understand your relation to the other party. So all knowledge is futile, in one way. All learning, all professorial degrees, fall flat because of this intrinsic defect in the very fact of knowledge of this kind because this knowledge arises from one side of the matter without knowing the other side.

What is the meaning of saying there is no consciousness after death? There is no consciousness after the death of individuality. Here is the answer to Nachiketas’ question. “Why is there no consciousness?” Maitreyi asked. It is because normally by ‘consciousness’ we mean the phenomena arising out of sense contact. Where there is no one to see or hear or touch or breathe, of what can there be consciousness?

*Salila eko draṣṭādvaito bhavati, eṣa brahma-lokaḥ, samrāḍ iti. hainam anuśāśāsa yājñavalkyaḥ* (Brih. Up. 4.3.32). Yajnavalkya spoke to King Janaka, “An ocean is there, like an ocean without boundaries.” That consciousness which does not arise from sense perception is indescribable. It is something like God-consciousness – not consciousness of God, but consciousness which *is* God. It knows nothing but itself. Pure Being is conscious of itself. *Sat* is *chit*, *chit* is *sat*. You are speaking about that, but you are incapable of touching that subject because you are not Pure Being.

As the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says, everyone in the world is like a part of the split pea. The pea has two sides. It looks as if the two are one, but they are split in the middle. Two persons cannot coordinate themselves. It is an impossibility. Under any circumstances, there is a rift between one and the other. There is a subtle possibility of separation even in the best of united existence. There is sorrow at the bottom of things. In all the joys of the world there is great grief hidden beneath, like a serpent's fangs, because we are finally caught up in a very difficult, mysterious phenomenon which we are trying to probe into, but we cannot find an answer to it. Here is something which is very, very interesting in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. *Tat kena kam paśyeta* (Bri. Up. 2.4.14): When the One alone is there, who will see whom, and who will be conscious of what? Therefore, there is no consciousness after the death of this individuality. Nachiketas would have heard this if he had been there with Yajnavalkya.

Questions of this kind should not be asked. They are called forbidden questions – *ati prasannas*. One of the great scholars mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, a great saintly lady called Gargi, went on asking questions, pressing, pressing, pressing, one question after the other. Yajnavalkya said, “Gargi, ask not more lest your head fall.” Then she held her mouth. There is a limit for asking because the whole universe is empirical, and everyone inside is a part of this empirical existence. It is phenomenal. We are caught up in phenomenality, and we are trying to exert hard to transcend phenomenality and reach something that is beyond. That is not possible because we are already accepting the fact that we are phenomenal. The phenomenal cannot become that which is not phenomenal. One cannot become two; two cannot become one. Nothing is clear.

This is at the back of human life. We believe that everyone is fine, no problem. “I am getting on well,” everybody says, but there is death gnawing underfoot. We think we are happy, very happy, but what kind of happiness is it?

Towards the end of the Mahabharata there is a story. A person was being pursued by a tiger, and he fell into a well. In fear he caught hold of the root of a tree which was above, and when he looked down he found a crocodile inside the well. He could not climb up because of the tiger above, and he could not fall down because of the crocodile below. Two rats are gnawing at the root on which he was hanging, and at any time it could break. He was in a terrible situation. At that time he saw honey dripping from a beehive on a branch at the top of the tree, and he stretched his tongue to catch the drops because whatever be the tragedy, honey is sweet. This is our life.

It is hard to search for God, and so hard to understand our own selves. Impregnable is this mystery. “My dear Nachiketas, go back. Be happy. I will give you whatever you want, but this question should not be asked.”



Severe *tapas* is necessary to understand this mystery. Great austerity is to be practised. What kind of austerity has to be practised? It is the withdrawal of the consciousness of the sense organs, and utilising that consciousness by centralising it in the mind which is to concentrate on this mystery. When the mind and the senses stand together with the intellect, that is the state of yoga, says the Kathopanishad. The sense organs, the mind and the intellect should stand together as one focussing attention. Attention on what? Not on any object because the sense objects have been withdrawn, so there is no consciousness of the object. It is a sinking down into an abyss of unthinkable majesty of experience where we cannot know where we are or what is happening to us. Wonderful! *Śravaṇāyāpi bahubhir yo na labhyaḥ, śṛṅvanto'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā, āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ* (Katha 1.2.7): The Upanishad tells us this is a wonder. One looks at it as a wonder. A wonder is what we are hearing, a wonder is the person who is expounding this, and a wonder is the one who can receive this knowledge. We cannot say anything about this mystery except that it is a wonder. 'Wonder' explains everything. We will not say anything further.

All philosophy began with wonder, according to one theory. All philosophy began with doubt, is another theory. The Greeks were wonderstruck by the majesty of creation, and there were also people who had doubts in their minds. So wonder and doubt are the beginnings of philosophical thinking. But we have not come to any conclusion. Endless schools of philosophy are there, but each one is a facet of what is possible in the field of knowledge. Total knowledge does not come because the sense organs, which are more than one, do not come together. They refuse to fuse themselves into a single organ of perception. So there is an element of duality, multiplicity, even in our best attempt to know what is beyond the sense organs.

Even with the best of intentions, there is a desolation at the bottom of things because of the fact that we do not belong to the whole, we belong to a part of things. It is like, as I said, belonging to one party and always being afraid of the other party, so any amount of reconciliation is only artificial. We have to rise beyond the subjective side and the objective side. But who are we to do that? We have already dubbed ourselves as belonging to one side only. Can we belong to two sides simultaneously? This is called yoga.

“Ah, I belong to both sides simultaneously.” Who is this ‘I’ that is able to belong to two sides simultaneously? To break the barrier of the twoness, the human mind is not competent enough to probe further. *Gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ* (Gita 4.17): The activity of the human mind is very mysterious. *Yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥā* (Gita 6.17): The unitedness that is spoken of in the form of yoga is a destroyer of sorrow of every kind – intellectual, sensory, mental, psychological, everything. The world is an abode of sorrow. *Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam* (Gita 8.15) are the words used in the Bhagavadgita. *Dukha*,

sorrow, is embedded in the very fact of our being in a peculiar state of phenomenality and yet struggling to break out of it, which we find is impossible.

This is why an answer cannot be given to Nachiketas. “Go back and take the pleasure of the whole world, and live a long life,” said Yama to Nachiketas.

“What is long life, my dear Master? When the long life ends, it becomes short. Do not deceive me like that. You said that you will bless me with the power of enjoyment of the whole world. What is enjoyment? It will wear out the sense organs. The body will become decrepit and collapse. Don’t tell me all these things. Take away all your joys, and answer my question,” replied Nachiketas.

All these things seem to be involved in the refusal and hesitancy of Lord Yama in answering this question. It is a question of life; it is not a question about something else. So deep is the implication of these Upanishads. We read the Upanishads so many times, we memorise grammar and lexicon and so on, but the heart does not open. It is like trying to break a rock. Grammar cannot break the rock.

The individual, which belongs to one side of the issue, has to belong to both sides in order for the two sides to not exist at all. The subject is the object; the object is the subject. Are you able to think like that? The mind, which is obliged to think in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, refuses to answer this question. Here is the reason for Yama’s refusal to answer the question. He knew everything, but he thought it is not good to speak further.

These are some of the issues arising from the study of the Upanishads, and as we go further the Upanishads become deeper and deeper until, in my opinion, the Brihadaranyaka answers every question. It touches every aspect of life. The Chhandogya and the Brihadaranyaka should be studied together. The Chhandogya Upanishad emphasises mostly cosmological phenomena, but the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad goes beyond and emphasises the non-empirical side. You have to read both the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads.

We are not reading; we are actually refreshing ourselves and trying to become another thing altogether. We are expecting a touch of the philosopher’s stone so that the iron that we are becomes gold. We are not reading and studying just because we have no other work. It is in order to become different. We do not want to acquire knowledge. We want to become different. We have to be transmuted, transformed and given a new touch of our very existence itself. The Bhagavadgita says that after many, many incarnations we may have the blessing of knowing what this truth is. The *samskaras* of the previous birth will urge us on to further investigation, and one day we will reach a solution to this question.

## Discourse 5: The Paths of the Soul to Liberation

In answering the great question that the little boy Nachiketas raised, we also considered the reason of the difficulty because the question was concerning the transcendent, which is beyond the area of human perception and cognition. That is, an individual was trying to know what is beyond the individual. That was the problem. The tuning of the individual to that which is beyond the individual is the impossibility. So Yamaraja, the great god, was not willing to say anything on this matter; however, something was said.

Actually, the Kathopanishad is a reservoir of the wealth of spiritual knowledge. It tells many things. These are all connected with the processes of the spiritual ascent of a person. In some ashrams in India, the students are asked to commit to memory the whole of the Kathopanishad. The Kathopanishad should be learned by heart, just as we read the Gita and chant it every day.

There is nothing concerning spiritual life which the Kathopanishad does not touch. Everyone should read it thoroughly. There are commentaries on this Upanishad, as in the case of the other Upanishads also. One adventurous British scholar wrote a regular thesis on the Kathopanishad. He was in the Indian Air Force during the British regime and settled in India after the war, becoming a professor of English literature in Lucknow University. Afterwards he took *sannyas* under the Vaishnava system of renunciation, changed his name to Krishna Prem, and started an ashram of his own called Uttar Vrindavan in Almora, in the hill districts. He wrote two books, one called *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita* on the intricate mystical meaning behind the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, and the other called *The Yoga of the Katha Upanishad*, in which he has made a very deep analysis of every verse of the Upanishad. It is highly mystic and touching. Both are wonderful books. He wrote in a state of rapture, as it were.

I directed your mind to the conclusions of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad where we find an inkling into the difficulty of the problem, and why one cannot know another thing. One can know oneself only. The 'another thing' is a debarred experience. When you are trying to know something other than yourself, you will never succeed. But this thing that you are seeking is not something other than yourself. So the knowledge of the Ultimate virtually amounts to be knowledge of one's own self: Know thyself and be free.

The stages of actual practice also are given in certain verses of the Kathopanishad. *Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ, manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ; mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ, puruṣān na param kiñcit: sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ* (Katha 1.3.10-11). This is a suggestion for gradational ascent of consciousness, stage by stage, to the Ultimate Being.

We cannot tear ourselves abruptly in order to become the transcendent. The transcendent has to be opened very, very carefully, like the blossoming of a flower. We cannot cut open the bud and expect the flower to come forth. This bodily individuality is also to be taken into account. We cannot destroy the body for the sake of the Realisation of the Supreme Being because, unfortunately, the Supreme is indwelling even in the physical body. This is one of the selfs, as we call it.

In the Bhagavadgita there is a reference to this. The Self should raise the self in meditation. *Uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.5). What does this mean? Raise the self by the Self. Raise the lower dimension by contact with the higher dimension. What is this higher dimension? It is the pervasive character of consciousness.

Usually in ordinary persons, ignorant ones, consciousness pervades only within the limit of the physical body of the person. Cultured people who are conscious of the presence of a society outside feel compelled to extend the consciousness locked up in the body in the direction of the wider circumstance of human society. Then it is that one begins to feel the necessity to cooperate with other people. Purely selfish persons have no need for cooperation. They are, and nothing else is. This activity of recognising the presence of other things external to one's own self is the activity of the same consciousness expanding its dimension in the direction of the area of society of living beings. But this is an artificial way in which the consciousness within tries to expand itself. Consciousness cannot expand itself unnecessarily. It can only pervade, but it cannot become different from what it really is. That is the reason why, despite all our efforts to be one hundred percent friendly with others, our attempt does not succeed because this relationship cannot be one hundred percent at any time. There is a snag at the back of it which comes out under difficult situations. The difficulty is the clinging of consciousness to one's own physical existence. It is the first and foremost thing that consciousness takes care of. When everything fails and nothing is okay, it reverts to itself and feels: Let me be alone to myself.

People who are socially very active, politically very aggressive and hardworking, go on doing this work until they feel the pinch of the difficulty in pleasing everybody, and actually end up quarrelling with everybody. Politicians, social welfare workers, get fed up with their work. They say, "We have had enough of it. We will go to an ashram and stay alone." This is the reversal of the consciousness to its primitive condition of encasement within the body which is its primary status. As when monkeys are threatened they will run up to the top of the tree and sit, likewise, consciousness will suddenly come back and enter the person. The person will start saying, "I am fed up with everything because there

are immense pains that one has to undergo in political and social life.” Oftentimes these people are rejected completely. Society does not want them. This is the fate of most people, if we read history. The reason is that consciousness is physically bound and has to be liberated gradually.

*Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā.* The sense organs are conditioned by the characteristics of the objects. The nature of the structure of the objects outside impinge upon the perceptive capacity in us, and then perception gets conditioned by objectivity. This is another controversy in philosophical history: whether knowledge comes from outside or it arises spontaneously from inside. Those who insist that knowledge comes by contact with outer conditions are called empiricists, and those who insist that knowledge spontaneously arises from inside are called rationalists. There is always a clash between these two opposing views. Many other philosophers have tried to reconcile these two extreme positions.

Empirically speaking, as long as we are in a world of physicality, we have to give due consideration to the fact that objects influence us very much. It is not that we are directly influencing them. We have the capacity to influence the objects in our deeper consciousness but ordinarily, like waves dashing over one another in the ocean, the objects perceived attack us and compel us to be attentive and conscious because they are more powerful.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us that there are two processes involved, the *graha* and the *atigraha*. The sense organs catch the objects; that is *graha*. The objects catch the sense organs with double force; that is *atigraha*. Once we are involved in objective perception, the objects will not leave us so easily. The memory of the contact with the objects will harass us for all time, and our little, individual consciousness will not be able to bear the brunt of this assault. If we attack a tiger with all our strength, it will attack us with greater force and maul us completely. We have the capacity to control the tiger to some extent, but its strength is much more.

The priority of the existence of objects in the process of creation and the posteriority of the sense organs and our individuality explain the whole situation. The world is more powerful than the individual. This is another way of saying the objects have an impelling and forceful effect on human individuality which is, according to the process of evolution, a latecomer. The Upanishads tells us we have to liberate ourselves from this situation gradually. Objects are very powerful. Now, what to do next?

*Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā:* Objects are more powerful, and seem to be beyond the control of the *indriyas*, the sense organs. *Arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ:* The mind has the capacity to understand the activity of the objects. By analytical understanding, one can

know why the objects are harassing us. Here the intellect comes into action. Why do the objects harass us? Why is it that we are always thinking of the objects? We always think what is outside. The reason is the weakness of physical individuality and the greater strength of objective reality.

If we consider the process of evolution as mentioned in our scriptures and also in scientific processes, space and time came first. Therefore, we cannot get over the clutches of space and time. Whatever we think is in space, and in time. Even if we feel that we are going to transcend space, that thought also will be in another kind of space. This is the catching aspect of objective reality. The cosmic vibrations created by the activity of space and time, which are unintelligible at present, reduce the potentials of further creation. These are what we may call the electrical forces. Electrical forces are not substances; rather, they are the prior conditioning factors which congeal themselves into solid objects. In Sanskrit they are called *tanmatras*, potentials, not manifested parts. When they are actually manifested in gross form they are called elements, *bhutas*, such as earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Now, where comes the human individuality? Strangely, the Taittiriya Upanishad tells us: *tasmād vā etasmād ātmana ākāśas sambhūtah, ākāśād vāyuh, vāyor agniḥ, agner āpaḥ, adbhyaḥ pṛthivī, pṛthivyā ośadhayaḥ ośadhībhyo annam, annāt puruṣaḥ* (Tait. Up. 2.1.1.). Our humble status in this world is described here in the gradational description of the Taittiriya Upanishad. The first evolute from the universal Atman is space-time. It is a terrifying thing, if at all we are able to think of it. We cannot know what this space-time is: how long it is, how wide it is, how big it is, how powerful it is. It is a cosmic heat producing the impact of further evolution in the form of solid objects – earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Now, the Upanishad says after the earth has manifested, it produces herbs, edibles, etc. – *ośadhībhyo annam*. The food that one eats is the product of edible plants, herbs, and other vegetables in the vegetable kingdom, by eating which the human body is formed. The human body is a feeble structure. It assumes some kind of strength due to combining the foodstuffs provided by the products of the earth, and feels a kind of energy inside which is purely derivative and not original. None of us has original strength. We have only a derivative strength based on the cooperation of earth, water, fire, air, ether, etc. We cannot even breathe, as we have no facilities to manufacture the breathing apparatus. We cannot manufacture air, and we cannot manufacture heat in the body. We can manufacture nothing. This is the humble status of the human being, and must be recognised. One should not try to jump over one's own shoulder.

*Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ.* The mind spoken of is twofold: the higher mind and the lower mind. Yoga practice is very difficult. We must understand all this psychological apparatus. The lower mind always agrees with what the sense organs bring to it as reports from outside. Whatever report comes through the sense organs regarding the world outside, the mind agrees, so the mind also is sensorily conditioned to a large extent. The mind thinks, but it thinks only sensory thoughts. We cannot think something more than that.

But beyond the mind there is what is called the intellect, which analyses the whole thing and finds out what is true and what is not true in the operation of the mind. Why should the mind agree with every report that the sense organs give? It is weak, and simply says “yes” to everything. The *viveka shakti*, the discriminative faculty of the intellect, analyses and extracts the milk from the water with which it is mixed. This faculty is called the higher reason. The lower reason is that which just acquiesces with the working of the mind in terms of the sense organs. The higher mind is an ambassador of the Supreme Being, and it reflects the characteristics of the Absolute. Here, in this stage, people become philosophers. They contemplate the Eternal through the shining aspect of the intellectual organs.

There are two kinds of argument: empirically conditioned argument and transcendently conditioned argument. Reason can confirm by one way or the other what the mind is thinking in terms of the sense organs, but it cannot liberate itself from the clutch of the lower mind and rise above to the contemplation of what is beyond. It is the presence of the activity of a higher reason in us that makes us unsatisfied with everything in this world. The lower mind, the lower reason, the sense organs say, “Everything is well with you, the world is very fine.” But the higher reason says, “I am an ambassador of God. I have come here to fulfil the dictates of the Supreme Being.” The higher reason pulls us up in the direction of non-sensory experience, whereas the ordinary mind pulls us down in the direction of sensory gratification.

*Arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ, manasaś ca parā buddhir:* Beyond the mind is this reason. Reason is intellect. This intellect, so-called, is a part of, or we may even say a reflection of the cosmic intellect or Mahan, Mahat-tattva. Mahat-tattva is identified with cosmic intelligence, and is often equated with Brahma the Creator, the factor of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

Slowly take the mind from the physical body, from the sense organs, from the mind, to the discriminative intellect, and apply that which the reason provides you with an inkling of the presence of that which is above individuals. Can you imagine cosmic understanding? It is an understanding of a type of intellect which is not physically

encased. It is present everywhere. It is a universal intelligence pervading every kind of expression in the form of varieties of individualities.

It requires a little bit of courage on the part of the spiritual seeker to raise the mind to that level of universal intelligence. Here is the beginning of true yoga. When the Gita says that the self has to be pulled up by the higher Self, it means the Mahat-tattva should pull up the lower intellect. How does the Mahat-tattva pull up the lower intellect? Your intellect is bodily conditioned. How did it reach the status of a universal intelligence? It reached it by intense *tapasya*, discipline of the consciousness which extricates itself from attachment to bodily conditions and sensory demands, and confirms itself to be that in the liberated cosmic intellectual condition. It does not require the help of sense organs, nor does it want any objects because the so-called objects and the apparatus of the sense organs gets melted down and subsumed under this cosmic understanding that is Brahma, the Cosmic Being. Concentrate your mind on that as if you are in that state and not in this world. "I am in the Cosmic Intelligence." Cosmic intelligence pervades even space and time. Therefore, you are beyond space and time.

Very great courage is necessary here to apply the will in this manner. Determination is necessary in yoga. Will power is necessary. Go on, go on, go on every day: "I am cosmically pervasive. I am not sitting in one place. As cosmically pervasive, my objects are myself. There are no objects here because this cosmically pervasive intelligence includes not only all the objects of the world, but myself also." The subject and object do not stand apart in that condition. They get fused into one another, and there is one experience. This is what they call the experience in Brahmaloaka, which is unthinkable for ordinary people, where everything is reflected in everything else as if millions of mirrors are positioned with every mirror shining on another mirror so which shines where, nobody knows, and everything is everywhere. Every person is all persons. This is one of the great experiences referred to in our Upanishads, and some of these indications are available even in the circle of Western mystics like Plotinus. Everything is everywhere. Everywhere is sunlight, everywhere is the sun. The sun is beholding the sun. This is what Plotinus explains in his ecstasy.

Nobody can know what Brahmaloaka is. It is an operation where all externalised conditions of operations cease. Automatic cosmic operation takes place where it is not directed to any objective outside because the outsideness is subsumed in this cosmic intelligence. Mahan, Mahat. *Buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ*. On that you concentrate. Very vigorous and determined willpower is necessary. You should not take it lightly.

*Mahataḥ param avyaktam*. Here is a dark screen before oneself. The word 'avyakta', the indeterminate cosmic screen, the source of the creation of diversity, is used here.



Before you reach the orb of the sun you will see everything dark everywhere. You can imagine the brilliance of the sun. But if you gaze at the sun, you will not see the sun. You will see only blackness. Everything is black, dark. The darkness is due to the excess of light of the sun.

The reversal order of perception takes place here in a similar way. It is impossible to understand. Even the Rigveda says in its cosmological hymn: “Who can know what happened?” In a sarcastic way the mantra ends: “Perhaps the Creator Himself does not know what He has done.”

There we will find ourselves stationed like Nachiketas trembling before Lord Yama, finding nothing, and wanting everything. If you are determined spiritually, this nexus of subject-object relation will be darkness, but when you pursue the art of going beyond them, they will get dispersed; the clouds will scud here and there, and the sun will shine.

It is not a question of one or two years of practice. *Anekajanmasamsiddhas tato yāti parām gatim* (Gita 6.45), the Bhagavadgita says. Ordinarily we have to pass through many incarnations, many births and deaths, in order to make ourselves eligible to have this kind of experience, but there may be exceptions. A determined soul may get released in this birth itself. That is also possible. The pranas of such a person who has dissolved all desires and dissolved the capacities of sense organs do not depart. He dissolves himself then and there, like a bubble merging in the ocean. The bubble need not travel a long distance in the ocean; it becomes the ocean. But if such a thing is not possible, if there is hesitation in the mind, if there is a pull from below, then there is a gradational ascent from one stage to another stage, one stage to another stage, one stage to another stage. Passing through the solar orb, and further stages, are all mentioned in the Panchagni-vidya in the Chhandogya Upanishad until, surprisingly, one finds oneself in the inscrutable Brahmaloaka.

There are some people who hold different opinions here. What is Brahmaloaka? It is the ultimate creative repository of compulsive activity which is called creation. As creation is compulsive, it cannot become retrograde; you cannot break it through. That may mean you are breaking through the creative force itself. Some say it is possible. You can break through the creative force and transcend Brahma also, and immediate liberation is possible. That is called *sadyo mukti*. Rare are those souls. Rare are these people who can break through the creative force, the intricate nexus of creativity in the cosmic level.

To break through the cosmic nexus, what strength you must have, what power! You should not be a human being at all. How pure you must be in your heart, how desireless you must be for paltry things in the world, how detached, how balanced, and how united

with everything! Unthinkable is this exercise. For such people, liberation is instantaneous. It does not come tomorrow. When you sleep and wake up, you do not wake up tomorrow; you wake up now itself because all the cords which put you into the torpidity of sleep are broken instantaneously when it is invaded by the waking consciousness. So is the case here. When the Absolute consciousness invades all the creative apparatus looking so hard indeed, it bursts forth all this nexus, and an eternal sun shines – not shining upon you, because you are not there as separate. The sun shines on itself. God knows Himself. He shines on Himself. He knows Himself, not somebody else. That state of one knowing one's own self in a cosmical sense, God knowing Himself – it is impossible to think what kind of thing it is. That is the stage of liberation.

Thus, the Kathopanishad has also given some prescriptions for going from the lower to the higher gradually. It is a masterpiece of spiritual literature. In the beginning it looks very hard and practically useless. Yama will not give the answer. But then he gives the indication of the route that you have to pursue. Go this way, until you cross the several gates of entry into this cosmic citadel. These gates are the obstacles. They are the presence of subtle desires in your own mind. The mind will not allow itself to be abolished like that. You cannot say that you want nothing, that you do not have any desire. Such a person is impossible to imagine. But if such a thing is possible, that great possibility is immediate liberation.

Seekers in the general sense cannot expect this kind of liberation. They have to pass through the process of exercise from one stage to another stage, gradationally, until they get purified – slowly, not abruptly. This is why it is said that one may have to take many births.

Sometimes the joy of the possibility of reaching God bursts forth so quickly that all the karmas are destroyed in one second. There is a story mentioned by Sri Ramakrishana Paramahansa. There was a gardener who tended fruit trees, and there was a farmer who tilled the land. At that time Narada was passing that way.

“Great Master, where are you going?” they asked.

“I am going to Vaikuntha to see Lord Narayana,” Narada replied.

“Oh, please ask him when I will be liberated,” requested both the farmer and the gardener.

When Narada returned from Vaikuntha they asked, “Oh, what is the answer? What did the Lord say?”

Narada told the farmer, “You will take five more births to reach God.”

“Oh, no good! So much sadhana I have done, after all. Oh, no good,” said the farmer.

But the gardener was told, “You will take as many births as there are leaves on the tree.”

“Oh, is it possible that after all I am eligible? Oh, after all I am eligible!” The gardener burst, and attained liberation there itself, whereas the farmer was crying because he had to take five more births.

There is a possibility for us to break through the chain absolutely in one instant, provided our longing is so intense and we are one hundred percent bursting with the love of God. *Sadyo mukti*, immediate salvation is possible. Otherwise, we have to pass through the gradual steps through the gatekeeper and so many other conditioning factors. Here the door is flung open at once, and we are there in the glory of that great thing which Nachiketas wanted to know.

## Discourse 6: The Rising of the Total Phenomenal Being

There are gems of instructions scattered over the whole of the Kathopanishad. This Upanishad is not merely a philosophical thesis but a practical guide in the exercise called yoga meditation. We have heard a lot about the foundations of spiritual life, and in connection with the conversation between the great Master Lord Yama and the young boy Nachiketas, we have also tried to understand the difficulty in touching this subject. Now let us go further along that line.

*Yacched vān manasī prājñas tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani, jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet, tad yacchec chānta ātmani* (Katha 1.3.13) is a little verse of two lines. *Yacched vān manasī prājñas*. *Vak* means speech. It is indicative of all the sense organs. The sense organs have to be deposited in the mind as the first step in yoga. Now, what does this mean, actually?

The mind is a repository of great energy, but much of that energy leaks out through externalising caused by the impetuous activity of the sense organs. Day and night we are seeing something, hearing something, touching something, smelling something. This sensory activity could not have been possible but for the cooperation of the mind with the sense organs. Suppose there are five holes in an earthen pot and you have filled the whole pot with water. However much you may go on adding water, the five holes will leak all the water out; similarly, there is no possibility of replenishing this energy because of the sense organs. You do a lot of concentration, meditation, self-withdrawal, but simultaneously you are thinking of objects. Now, what is the meaning of an object? Why is it said that you should not allow the senses to go along the lines of objects?

The objects by themselves are not harmful. Nothing in the world directly harms another thing. The reaction that our consciousness produces in regard to certain things determines whether the thing is object or subject. I have mentioned earlier that when I see you, you are the object. When you see me, I am the object. Now between these two persons, who is really the object and who is the subject? There is no such thing as object-subject diversity.

The introduction of a factor called space-time prevents us from knowing the exact nature of things in the world. We have decided that things are outside, and nobody need tell us that they are outside. The word 'outside' explains all the problems of life. Anything that is outside is debarred from any kind of connection with one's own self. We say, "This person is an outsider," which means to say we do not want to have any relationship with that person.

This word 'outside' is a very serious matter. If a thing is outside, we cannot have any kind of relationship with it. The outsideness of the thing we ignorantly call an object will

not allow us to have any relationship with it. In this interrelated universe everything is hanging on something else; everything is depending on some other factor. There is a cosmic interdependence of interrelated factors, in which case we cannot say there are subjects and objects. When I depend on you and you depend on me, there is a relativity of connection, but there is not a watertight, compartmentalised relationship between us. I have sacrificed something for you in considering you also as a subject, as I am. This is the principle of mutual cooperation. Why should anybody cooperate with another person if they are totally different from one another? In spite of the apparent spatiotemporal difference between one and another, there is an undercurrent of a common denominator which keeps us perpetually aware of the existence of other things and other people.

If they are actually an other, unconnected with us, then we will not even know that people are existing anywhere. This is a subtle matter. The people do not give trouble; things in the world do not give trouble. Our concept of the location of people and things in the relationship that we have maintained with them gives trouble.

The mind should absorb the sense organs: *yacched vān manasī prājñas*. A wise person should not allow the consciousness embedded in the mind to flow out. The word 'out' comes again. The word 'outsideness' is a fallacious invention due to the interference of the thing called distance, which is created by space. If one thing is different from another, it is because there is a distance between the two. Distance is the characteristic of space. Everything is involved in spatial concept. You cannot find anything which is not located in some spatial corner. Here is the difficulty in the practice of yoga. You have to overcome space itself in order that there may be a commonwealth of individuals forming a universal family.

As long as there is special concession given to the externality of things, they cannot be possessed. You can never become a friend of anybody because that person is outside you. There is always mutual suspicion, separation, and fear. The fear arises on account of your not knowing what the next person will do.

Nobody can be happy in this world, not because there is no possibility of being happy but because we have perceptually created a dichotomy between ourselves and the objects we consider as our benefactors. You first keep a person aside and then want something from that person. You are doing this perpetually. First and foremost you regard things in the world as alien, unconnected, because you never consider that you yourself are an object like other objects. It is an abominable concept. Nobody will say they are an object. There is a prejudice of pure subjectivity on behalf of oneself, and an uncharitable feeling towards things which we consider as external to us. This is the reason why we cannot concentrate on anything without vacillation of the mind.

When it is said the sense organs should be settled in the mind, it means the power house should create energy, but you should not utilise that energy by turning on gadgets because then there is a diminution of the force of the power generated at the power house, and there is a leakage of current.

The generation of energy in us is due to the self-satisfaction of the mind in itself. The mind is immensely powerful. It can break mountains if it is allowed to exercise its force. With one thought you can bless, with one thought you can curse. No dynamic force in the world can compare itself with the mind. The mind is not an ethereal something pervading inside us. It is the energy quantum of the whole personality. Your strength, whether it is mental or physical, is due to the inwardised activity of this quantum of energy.

Never allow the mind to think of something other than what it is. This is a difficult thing. There are complaints: I cannot concentrate, and my mind goes in different directions. What is the different direction? The conviction that there are things outside us should be removed. It requires great courage and intellectual power to realise that the things are not outside us. You should never use the words 'outside', 'alien', 'at a distance'. There is not even a one-millimetre distance between ourselves and another thing in the world. The world impinges upon you, and tells you that it is you and you are it.

People who are free from ordinary impulsive desires, who have no tumult of waves in the mind and emotions, will be able to appreciate this. If there is a disturbance in the emotional power and it dashes hither and thither with the waves of disturbance, then concentration is not possible. It is no use simply trying to concentrate with desires submerged in the mind. Even if one says, "I have no desire. I am free from all things," this is only a conscious level of the mind speaking. That this is not the whole truth will be revealed sometimes in dream experience. Those things which you have prevented from entering your mind will find an opportunity to manifest themselves as impulses in dream experience where the intellectual prohibition is lifted.

People can behave in any way they like if there is no checking police force or governmental system. Just imagine there is no government. Anybody can do anything, and great chaos will be there. In a similar manner, because of the power of the intellect which subdues the impulsive activity of desires in the waking state, it takes an opportunity to rise up from ambush, and tells you that you are not what you appear to be. These impulses may be even prenatal, impulses of childhood, the experiences that you have passed through in your family in early babyhood. Because of the maturity of your understanding and the educational qualification and a conviction inside that you are perfectly all right in human society, it looks that you have no emotions.

Are there people in the world who have no emotions? You will be immediately disturbed by one single thought, one word, one action. Because of a rational pressure that we exert on our feelings, it appears that we have no feelings at all. When we speak to one another, we do not speak through the feelings. We speak through the rationality embedded in our intellect. That means we do not speak from the bottom of our heart. When that is understood properly, we can also know, to some extent, what our problem in life is.

We have brought from several incarnations the impulses of our feelings and thoughts, expressions and actions, which pursue us throughout the various births that we take. We have not just now been born into this world. We have not dropped suddenly like an apple from the tree into this world, into the mother's womb. We have brought forth all the limbs of the chain of our existence throughout an incalculable number of years. They are pressing us for a forward action. And together with this, there is a pressure from the future possibilities of our life. We are buffeted from behind and from the front. We are getting crushed, as it were, in the middle. The future possibilities pull us ahead. The past actions put an impact upon us so that we are feeling as if we are an independent solid entity, a phenomenon projected by the two forces of past and future, presenting a phenomenal apparition-like existence in our situation. We do not seem to be existing at all, only existing ontologically speaking.

Great effort must be exerted. *Tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau* (Katha 2.3.11). Desire, *apramattas* – don't be heedless. Any moment some dacoits will rise up from ambush and throw us in a wrong direction, though we are determined to sit for meditation.

The present and past collide with each other in a little interspace we call present. We do not know whether there is anything called the present. The pressure of the past and the pull of the future join together and produce a psychological concussion making us feel like an apparition, totally helpless, and we do not know in what direction we are drifting.

Yoga comes and goes: *yogo hi prabhavāpyayau*. You will not be always in the state of yoga. In a minute you will slip out, and you will be once again in a mortal, phenomenal state. Again you have to struggle. In one of the Upanishads it is said that you must bite your teeth, hold your breath, clench your fists, and be determined that you will not get up until the mind is concentrated. Do a practical exercise as if you are preparing for pugilism, fighting. Now you are fighting with your mind only: "Don't disturb me like that." Very difficult, very difficult! Then what happens?

In case you succeed in concentrating your mind even against the impulses of the sense organs moving outside, old desires manifest themselves as enchanting things in the

world. There are many enchanting. You cannot know how many glorious things the world can present before you.

There are no glorious things in the world, really speaking. It is all a makeup of the dexterous activity of the three qualities *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is like an expert in dancing gesticulating in different directions, preventing us from concentrating on any posture of that person. We are dumbfounded by the action of the dancer – sometimes this side, sometimes that side. Very difficult! Like that is the activity of the three qualities *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*: the stability of the mind, which is its basic quality, the distraction due to *rajas*, and an enthralling lassitude and lethargy which will not allow us to do it.

When you persist in concentration against the wish of the mind, it will put a stop to all the activity, and you will think you are in samadhi. Completely dark it will be. You will have to shake up your body and find out that you are not actually concentrating. Sometimes *sattva* and *tamas* look alike. *Sattva* is utter stability, perfect balance. In *tamas* also there is a kind of balance. In a state of perfect balance we go to sleep, and in a mood of great satisfaction we are allowing the mind to be in balance.

The whole point in the Kathopanishad is to not be heedless. Do not think that everything is all right, because at any moment anything can drop on your head. Everything seems secure, but tonight an earthquake comes. You cannot know what will happen the next moment. Trouble arises from all sides, not only from one side. From ten directions it will come, and you will be flabbergasted.

Therefore, *apramattas ta*: Do not be heedless. You must be prepared to expect anything from this unstable world. In the great Sanatsujatiya, the great sage Sanatsujata, the son of Brahma, told Vidura of the Mahabharata that heedlessness is itself death. It is carelessness about one's own welfare: "Let it go, what does it matter?" This 'don't care' attitude will not work here. Vigilance. *Sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām*. Straight you sit, and vertically move the consciousness. Do not allow it to move horizontally in the direction of external spatiotemporal objects. You are ascending, not horizontally moving. When you ascend you carry with you the forces of the whole world, as if the whole world is rising with you. Because of your intimate relationship with everything in the world, the rising is a total rising of all the forces constituting the world, and it is not an individual moving. The whole world wakes up in cooperation with you.