

# INDIA'S ANCIENT CULTURE

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SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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## **PUBLISHERS' NOTE**

This book consists of a series of 21 discourses that Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj gave to students in The Divine Life Society's Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy from November 1989 to January 1990.

Swamiji Maharaj begins with the earliest stages of Indian culture, and discusses its evolution until the highest level of human achievement, which is liberation of the soul by the realisation of Brahman, the Absolute, through the stages of samadhi.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE**

India has always been considered as the repository of one of the earliest of cultures. Cultures are there in every country, but Indian culture is said to be one of the most ancient, historically speaking. So there is some point in trying to go a little deep into the ancient circumstance that gave rise to the kind of culture which we call Indian culture.

The word 'culture' is something which requires to be defined in an adequate manner. It is a process of purification. Culturing a thing implies analysis and purification. Indian culture or any culture—human culture, so to say—is the theme connected with the efflorescence, the development, the onward progress, the extent to which perfection has been attained by a group of people or an individual, and there has been purification of the inner nature. Culture is connected with the inner life of a person, and whatever the inner life of a person is will decide their outer behaviour because we cannot conduct ourselves outwardly in a manner different from what we are inside. The way in which we speak to people, our physical gestures, our demeanour, our deportment and our social concourse with people outside are a manifestation of what we are within. In our social relations, which

are culturally oriented, we express outwardly what we are inside.

Therefore, the culture of a people, the culture of a nation, the culture of a country is the cumulative product, so to say, of the culture of the individuals constituting that particular nation or country, broadly speaking. It does not mean that every individual thinks identically with every other person. Every individual has his own or her own pattern of a general outlook of life, taken independently. Yet, apart from there being a difference in the minor details of the outlook of life by individuals, there is a general consensus of opinion, a broad-based outlook which determines a community, a large group of people, and so apart from individual differences which are practically negligible, we may say, there is a general consciousness which brings people together into a nationality, into a cultural background—that is to say, into a general outlook of life.

Culture, therefore, is a product of a general outlook of life. What do we think about ourselves? What do we think about other people around us? What do we think about this world into which we were born? What is our general idea about things—the world and the individual included? Our reaction to the outer atmosphere of the world and people outside is our culture. We react in a particular manner in respect of conditions prevailing outside, and our reaction will show what kind of culture it is that we are endowed with or that we are born into. Something is happening in the world outside, in

nature. Something is happening among people outwardly. There is a large country. There is a large world. There are people. Something is happening to them or they are doing something, and we react in a particular manner to these events taking place in society or in the world in general. How do we react? That reaction is the product of our culture. We react in a particular manner in respect of natural history, as well as social history. This is a very subtle point because though individual reactions in respect of particular events may vary from moment to moment, from person to person, general reactions are common, and they lay the very foundation of a community. Thus, cultures can be individual and also collective.

India is a country with millions of people inhabiting it, and each person has his own or her own way of thinking due to individual differences in his or her evolutionary stage, but commonly an Indian is supposed to think in a general and a collective manner. There is some common background on which an Indian thinks, in spite of there being so many differences among individuals. That commonness of thought that we find in India, among its citizens, is the culture thereof. This is what we call Indian culture.

Before I go further into this subject, I request you to read two books thoroughly, from cover to cover. The first book is *The Foundations of Indian Culture* written by Sri Aurobindo. The second book is *The Human Cycle*, also by Aurobindo. The book was originally called *The Psychology of Social*

*Development*, and now it has been reprinted under a different title, *The Human Cycle*, and is clubbed together with another book that he wrote. The entire book now goes under the title of *The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-Determination*. But this book must be read after the first book, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. This is a standard work which will inspire you not only by the elevated style of English literature, but also by the profundity of thought. It is a classic. There is another book which is also very inspiring and interesting: *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* by S. Radhakrishnan. There are many other books, but as you have no time to read too many books, I suggested only the basic fundamentals.

I mentioned that culture is basically an outlook of life. What do you think about life? You would have noticed that generally when you think, you think in three ways. First of all, you think of your own self. You look within and think about yourself. Every day you think about yourself for some reason or the other, because you are very important to yourself. You cannot ignore your existence. Right from morning onwards you think of yourself. That is the first thought. Then you think about other people. You look within at your own self, and you look without at the world outside. This without includes not only the world of nature, but also the world of people. Subjectively you think of yourself, and objectively you think of nature and history, as we may put it. By 'history' I mean the movement and performance of people. You look at yourself

and you look at others, the others including nature as well as people outside.

Then there is a third way of thinking, which generally is not a concomitant of your normal way of thinking. The mind gets so much occupied with one's own self and with other people outside, due to its having to deal with the external atmosphere from one's own point of view, that there is very little time left to think of the third item, though the third item will also come up for insistent consideration one day or the other, especially when you are totally dissatisfied with both your own way of living and the way in which people outside live. You are somehow or other not satisfied. You feel that there is something wrong somewhere. Something is wrong with you, and something is wrong with other people also. The world itself does not seem to be satisfying.

As long as you feel there is some point in being satisfied with the conditions prevailing in the world, the third outlook will not arise in your mind. Why should there be any necessity to think of a third thing when you are perfectly all right, there is nothing wrong with you, and people in the world are also perfectly all right? They are all getting on well. What is wrong with them? The world is fine. If this is so, you will have only two ways of thinking: the within and the without—the subject and the object, as they are called philosophically. The subjective side and the objective side constitute the whole of human thought. But there is something which is neither a subject nor an object, which will

speak in its own language one day or the other when neither the subjective side nor the objective side are going to satisfy.

In youth, when you are little boys and girls, budding adolescents, you are not quite acquainted with either the components of your inner psychological world or with the world outside. Even your own ways of thinking are new to you. Young boys and girls are not good psychologists. They are mostly carried away by instincts, emotions, and a kind of enthusiasm which spurts up not by the application of reason but by a combination of instinct and emotion. That is why young people are difficult to control. They do not want any kind of discipline because discipline is a rational application of certain principles, and rationality is set aside to a large extent when instinct and emotion become predominant. Students in schools and colleges are turbulent and very disobedient, and do not always subject themselves to the rules and conduct of study or education because of their rationality not yet having properly manifested itself into a state of maturity, and their natural instincts and emotions taking an upper hand.

But you will not be always students. As you progress and have a better experience of the world, something will tell you that this kind of life is not fully satisfying. You will feel that it is something like a drudgery which you have been passing through, that there is some problem every day with you, and with others also. Something is not at all satisfying.

Something should be satisfying, but nothing in the world is going to be satisfying. You cannot complain against anything unless you have a solution for it. You have an idea that things should be a certain way; therefore, you say things are not all right. So when you do not feel satisfied with your own self or with the world outside, it is because there is something which you have placed before yourself as a standard, in comparison with which you complain against the world or against your own self. You have set a standard. That standard cannot be yourself because you are dissatisfied with yourself, and that standard cannot be the world outside because that also is not satisfying. You have got a peculiar, nebulous, unarticulated ideal which seems to be calling you and telling you that it exists. This is the third way of looking, and is what is called 'looking above'. Looking within, looking without and looking above, these are the three ways of looking by the mind of a human individual.

Philosophical thoughts, religious ideals or a spiritual encounter with life are connected with looking above. This 'above' is not actually looking to the skies. It is a logical aboveness. It is a circumstance which pulls you and attracts your attention. The words 'within', 'without' and 'above' that I used should not be taken literally as physical locations. It is not that something is here, something is there, and something else is somewhere else. The terms have to be taken and understood in their proper spirit, and not merely in

their letter. The withinness is a conditioned limitation of the psyche, and the withoutness is a condition under which you look at the world of people. Both these conditions, being only conditions, do not satisfy you because of the fact they are conditions, and you want to be unconditioned. You feel that limitations are abhorrent, and you do not like any kind of limitation. The world is limiting you, and you are limiting the world. You do not like the world, and the world will not agree with you; therefore, you are always at loggerheads. You want to find a solution for this state of affairs by resorting to some principle which will not be partisan, either on your side or on the side of the world. This principle will stand like an umpire in a game, not belonging to either party.

Cultural values are not subjective values. It is not just what you think because you want to think it. Cultural values also do not mean just what other people think. It is something which people in general are expected to think for a harmonious way of existing. It is not my thought or your thought; it is the thought of human beings in general which they have to entertain for their common welfare. Otherwise, if I have my own thoughts and you have your own thoughts, we cannot have a life of community, and there cannot be the integration of a national spirit. There cannot be a country, as we call it. The whole country thinks in only one way: "This is my country." So Italians say, Germans say, French say, Indians say, everybody says "this is my

country". The person who says "this is my country" does not think merely from his or her point of view. He somehow or other transports himself into a way of thinking which is in consonance with the general pattern of the life of the whole nation. It is a kind of universal, generalised form of thinking. Cultural thinking, or cultured thinking, as we may like to put it, is a thought that rises above both pure subjectivity and pure objectivity. Neither are we connected purely with what is happening outside, nor are we limiting our thoughts to ourselves only, individually.

To be a cultured person, therefore, is not an easy thing. You may study books in a school or a college, you may be educated, but you need not be cultured. Education is not the same as culture. Education gives you information about things, but culture refines your personality. That is the difference. You may have a degree, but you may not be a refined person. You may have a degree in physics or chemistry or history, you may be well informed as to what history is, physics is, chemistry is, but if you do not know anything about yourself, you are not a refined person, not a polished person, not a smooth-going person. You do not attract; you repel, rather. That would be an uncultured person's attitude. Therefore, education need not be considered as the same as culture.

But education is supposed to be a medium for making a person cultured, and if today's educational system does not make a person cultured, so much the worse for it. We have job-

oriented education, technological education; we have the arts and sciences, humanities and so on, but they are all connected with limited areas of thought. A person who is proficient in physics knows nothing of history, a well learned man of history knows nothing of chemistry, etc. They are aliens in their own psychological world. To be cultured is to be human, and to be cultured is to be able to rise above the purely subjective way of thinking or the purely externalised way of thinking. You should not condition your thought either to your own personality or to some group of people outside—a communal way of thinking, as they call it, a fundamentalist way of thinking. All these have to be transcended. A cultured person is not an ordinary individual; a kind of super-individual is that person, super-individual because of the fact that this person has risen above the ordinary limitations of human individuality.

What are the limitations of human individuality? Physical instincts such as hunger and thirst, and psychological pressures such as egoism play a dominant role in our lives. We have to eat every day. A very important point it is. We have to get a good meal at least once every day. This is a very basic need, physically unavoidable, and it cannot be ignored under any circumstances. Whatever be the conditions prevailing in the world, that we require a meal every day is first and foremost, and we are always keeping an eye on it. Secondly, we require to be recognised. An unrecognised person is not a happy person. Otherwise, we will feel we are

nothing. There is what is called self-regard. We always feel that we are something, and we would not like to be treated as nothing. We are somebody, and we would not like to be told that we are nobody. We require to be respected. That is the ego working, and this instinct is stronger than even hunger. For some reason we may starve without food for three days, but we would not like to be starved of our self-respect. Rather, we would starve for days together for the sake of gaining self-respect if we feel that our respectability is going to be enhanced under certain conditions which require us to be without food. We may have to work very hard to see that our self-respect is taken to its pitches, that we are socially respectable to the highest point. If the highest respectability can be gained by working hard, involving a little bit of starving, we would not mind it. When political electioneering takes place, for instance, people who stand for election and who wish that they be lifted up to a high position of respectability in social circles may have to run about here and there, sometimes without being able to eat or sleep. Without sleeping, without eating, we can exist for some time, but without self-respect we cannot exist for even a day. The ego is a stronger instinct than other instincts. But a cultured person rises above this basic, crude, limiting condition to which he is subjected by the ego and by physical conditions.

A human being is a person who can recognise humanity in another person also. It is not that we want everything and others do not want anything.

The meal that we require and the respect that we are asking for are also craved by other people. A human being is an unselfish individual in the sense that he or she is capable of recognising the same human characteristics in other people also. We love others as we love ourselves, and we would be able to treat others in the same way as we would like to treat ourselves.

The basic factor behind a cultured person's behaviour is that person is able to look at others, treat others, behave with others in the same way as one would behave with one's own self, or one would wish others to behave with one's own self. In what manner would we like others to behave with us? We have some idea, a standard set of the manner in which we wish that others treat us. That very manner is the way in which we have to treat other people. In a way, there is a give-and-take policy between us and the world. The world will give us exactly what we give to it. We cannot expect from the world what we are not prepared to give to it. If we ill-treat the world psychologically or socially, it will ill-treat us in the same way.

Why does this happen? It happens because we are part and parcel of the world, both from the point of view of nature and of society. The physical body is constituted of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. In that sense, we are a part of nature because nature is constituted of the same five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. The same are the constituents of our physical personality, this anatomical physiological

personality. We are one with nature as far as the basic building bricks of our personality are concerned—the same physiology, the same anatomy. Socially also, we are one with people. Some people say that man is a social animal. Maybe he is an animal, that is a different matter, but he is social. Sociality means the capacity to come in contact with people in a harmonious manner. Disharmonious relationships cannot be called social relations. That would be antisocial relations. The harmony that is necessary for the survival of people is the sociability thereof. Why is it necessary to be social with other people? It is because in order to survive, we require the collaboration and cooperation of other people. We want other people to cooperate with us and help us whenever necessary. But why should they help us if there is no connection between ourselves and other people? The necessary connection between ourselves and other people for the purpose of a reasonably comfortable existence, and even survival, is the sociability that we are speaking of.

All these are a part and parcel of cultural behaviour, and whatever words I spoke to you today form a kind of base which is partly psychological, partly sociological, and perhaps to some extent it is even philosophical. Culture, therefore, is partly psychological, partly sociological, partly philosophical. Why is it so? It is psychological because we are involved in it, it is sociological because other people are involved in it, and it is philosophical because life is involved in something

which is more than ourselves and other people. A transcendent element controls the destiny of the whole world. That comes under the theme of philosophy. Therefore, cultural studies generally include psychological studies, sociological studies and philosophical studies.

In this course regarding India's ancient heritage, the scheme that I will follow is something like this. Firstly, I have mentioned a basic factor: how we have to start thinking at all before we start thinking of culture. And I have also said something about what culture is in its essentiality. Now, inasmuch as we have used the words 'India's ancient culture', it will also have something historical about it. So apart from the three factors I mentioned—psychology, sociology and philosophy—we may have to add a fourth factor now, called history. In connection with this particular subject, there will be India's ancient history over and above psychology, sociology and philosophy. It is a very vast subject.

## Chapter 2

# THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURE

To recapitulate, I mentioned that a qualified, educated person may not be up to the mark in culture, because the human individual encounters the world as an object of perception and activity. A kind of irreconcilability is seen between the subjective side and the objective side. The world does not always behave as we would like it to behave, and we do not always behave in the manner in which the world is behaving. Nature and human society, which are the objective side of our experience, do not always seem to be going hand in hand with our whims and fancies, our requirements, our needs or our outlook of life. The world has its own way, as we have been seeing, and we do not feel competent enough to put ourselves in a state of harmony with the ways of the working of nature and of human society. This is a kind of conflict that we have been noticing.

When we started contemplating on the meaning of culture, we found it necessary to define the basic features of culture. Culture is a kind of refinement of personality, and in this refined position that the personality assumes, the human individual to an extent rises above the limitations of his or her individuality so that the apparent conflict seen between the individual and the world is

diminished to a large extent. The more we are individuals, the more is the chance of our conflict with the world outside. Our assertion of our personality and our individuality comes in conflict with the assertion of the world, which also maintains its own personality, we may say, so either the world has to rise to the level of our way of thinking or we have to rise to the level of the world's way of thinking.

It has been observed that we are not outside the world; we are part and parcel of nature, as well as of human society. I am briefly repeating what I told you during the previous session. We are, on the one hand, physically part of nature. Anatomically and physiologically, the same earth, water, fire, air and ether constitute our physical bodies. We are inseparable from nature on the one hand, and on the other hand we are also inseparable from human society because every person is a unit of human society. So whether we look at the whole circumstance from the point of view of nature or from the point of view of human society, we cannot stand outside either of them. Therefore, it is incumbent on the part of an individual to bend a little and burnish one's personality by scrubbing the ego a little bit, and lessen the self-assertive instinct by which one rises above the limiting conditions of individuality. The limiting conditions of individuality are nothing but the ways of the working of the human ego.

The status of culture is that heightened position which a person maintains above oneself. You have

to rise above yourself in order that you may be regarded as a truly cultured person. Culture requires you to be in a state of harmony with the conditions prevailing in life. A cultured person rarely comes in conflict with conditions prevailing in life. The malleable, flexible, harmonious, affectionate, very considerate behaviour of a person, which is the characteristic of true culture, makes the person a super-person, a super-individual. An educated person differs from a cultured person almost in the same way as a politician differs from a statesman. We have many politicians, but statesmen are very few. A statesman is a person with a wide vision of things and who also looks to the future of the nation, not merely the present, and who knows what is good for the nation for all time to come, not only for the present moment. But politicians think of the present moment only; they have got a very narrow outlook of the conditions prevailing today, and they do not bother about tomorrow. A statesman is a highly cultured person, from the political point of view at least. In a similar manner, generally speaking, true culture raises the dimension of the very outlook of the person above the individual human personal viewpoint. That is to say, culture raises you to a level which is able to bring about a rapprochement, or a reconciliation, between yourself and the world. There is no more conflict between you and other people, and there is no more conflict between you and the world outside. A cultured person does not come in conflict with anything. He is a cementing factor even where

there is some conflict or disharmony. These were some of the ideas that I tried to place before you during the previous session as a brief statement of what culture is.

I also mentioned that India is considered as the repository of one of the most ancient of cultures. Why are there different cultures? Every country has its own background of some culture. India somehow or other, by a freak of nature or by some circumstance, happened to be the soil on which one of the earliest of cultures arose. What kind of culture arose?

In the beginning, every person is like every other person. There is not much of a difference between or among people from the point of view of their basic instincts or their physical nature, etc. Hunger and thirst, the need for security and the urge for survival are common features in all individuals. Primitive man, in the earliest of stages of the anthropological development of human nature, is said to have lived mostly under the pressure of the basic needs of the physical personality, if we are to go along the lines of the evolutionary process of nature, which seems to have risen gradually from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, and from animal to man. This way of thinking has been accepted both in the East and in the West. There has been evolution, and in the process of evolution the succeeding stage is supposed to overstep the limitations of the previous stage. It bypasses, it overcomes the conditions prevailing in the previous stage, and the

succeeding stage is an improvement on the earlier one. For instance, human nature is an improvement on animal nature. But natural evolution has been seen to work in a peculiar way. That is to say, the succeeding stage has some little remnant left as a tail end, as it were, of the previous stage, so that the earlier instincts are not completely destroyed or overcome in the succeeding stages. We sleep like stones, we breathe like plants, we have passions like animals, and yet we are also human beings over and above these previous conditions characterising the lower species. The earlier instincts are not completely overcome.

A person becomes completely human only when the earlier instincts are thoroughly subdued. Animals and plants have a localised consciousness of themselves. The plant bothers only about its self-survival. The animal is also concerned only with itself. The saying "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" aptly fits animal nature. There are also human beings who care only about themselves and do not care about what happens to anyone else. If this kind of outlook is also seen in some human beings, we may conclude that even at the human level there is sometimes the remnant of the earlier stages. In such stages of life culture is buried deep as a potential, and it has not manifested itself even in a modicum.

When evolution progresses further, the animal man becomes a little bit more refined in the sense that he recognises the necessity to live in a society. There is a primitive tribal culture, for instance,

which is a way of living in groups of people who have common instincts and common needs. The totally independent animal life is later found to be unsuitable for even the survival of oneself because there is a threat of nature's working on one side, and there is a threat of other individuals on the other side. So it became necessary in the process of gradual evolution to protect oneself from the onslaughts of nature. A habitat, a kind of house, was found to be essential; otherwise, wind, rain, cyclones and the sun will beat upon our heads, and nature may not allow us to even exist. A little bit of security from nature was found to be necessary, and security from other people was also necessary because even though, under the pressure of circumstances, one person mostly recognises that another person also exists as a human being, a human being may not bother so much about the welfare of others when it comes to the question of his or her own survival. Everyone has this instinct of the survival of one's own self, and when we are cornered from all sides and pressed to an extreme, we may not mind guarding ourselves somehow or other, even at the cost of others. This is the animal working in man.

Human society developed as a further stage in the course of history, where group culture arose as a development that is superior to the purely individualistic and personal animal-like life. Mutual cooperation was found to be a necessity for the survival of everybody. I support you and you support me, and if you have any difficulty I help

you, and if I have any difficulty you help me. What you lack I give to you, and what I lack you give to me. This is cooperation.

Human society arose on account of the necessity felt by individuals to have a cooperative system for the sake of survival itself, because no person is complete in himself. Everyone is terribly finite. Everyone immensely lacks something or the other. This lacuna, this lack, this need, this finitude is attempted to be made good by the cooperative spirit maintained by a large number of people, and so we have a community; and this community behaves in a particular way for their mutual welfare, for their good. This is a primitive culture in the sense that it is a basic instinct of survival, extending itself to the other people also in the community. Community culture requires that everybody should survive. Perhaps in a purely individual state of affairs it was like animals roaming in the forest, and the question of social culture did not arise.

Now, there can be group culture, tribal community culture, and yet it may not be up to the mark from the point of view of what is called human nature. We have to define human nature in a proper way. I briefly mentioned it during the previous session. A human being is one who is in a position to recognise the same humanity in another person as well. The great dictum which India's culture placed before us in this respect is in a Sanskrit passage. *Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareśām na samācharet* (Panchatantra 3.104): "You would not

mete out to another what you would not like to be meted to yourself.” That is to say, you would not behave in respect of another person in a manner which you would not like to be meted out to you by another.

Culture starts from this recognition of it being imperative to behave and conduct oneself in respect of others as one would expect others to behave with oneself. If we are hungry, we must know that others also can be hungry. If we are thirsty, we must know that others also can be equally thirsty. If we are exhausted, we must know that others also can be exhausted. If we would like to live long, we must know that others also would like to live long. And if we do not want to die, others also would not like to die. If that is the case, how would we behave with others? We will adjust ourselves in society in such a manner that we will give the same concession and the same freedom to other people as we are trying to give to our own selves. Do we know how much freedom we want? Are we not exercising freedom? A lot of concession is given by each one to one’s own self, but we are very miserly in giving concession to other people. We are very strict with others, but very liberal with our own selves. To the extent we are liberal with ourselves, to that extent we must be liberal with others also, and if we find it is necessary to put a limitation on one personality, it will be equally applicable to others also. It does not mean that we can control others and we do not want to be

controlled, that all limitations are for others only, and for us there are no limitations.

Culture as a human requirement rises to the status of a freedom that is granted equally to all people, and culture becomes a harmonising principal operating among a group of people; that group may be a little community or it may be a country, a nation. There is national culture. The Indian nation has an Indian culture, a European nation has a European culture, etc. The difference in cultures of nationalities arises on account of various factors such as geographical location, hereditary tradition, and the needs of people under the conditions they are placed. These are some of the factors, among many others, that define the difference among cultures.

Now, having taken note of the roots of human culture being connected with human needs, we have to go a little deep into what these needs are. Cultures arise on account of the needs of people. The basic needs, of course, are very clear, as I mentioned: hunger and thirst, and security. We have to eat in order that we may live, and we have to be protected from any kind of onslaught from outside. Towards this end cultures move, but this is not a refined form of culture because this definition of culture limiting itself to bodily needs and physical survival does not take into consideration the other needs of people, such as mind, feeling, understanding and spirit. We may be happy when we are granted the freedom to physically live comfortably with all the security that is required,

but physical comfort and security do not touch the whole of human nature because we have other needs such as self-respect, as I mentioned during the previous session, which is not a physical necessity. We require to be recognised. The asking for recognition is not a physical need; it is a need of a person's mental state. The mind has hunger, just as the body has hunger. The mind asks for a peculiar diet of its own, just as the physical body also asks for its diet. The mind aspires. The body has a need, but the mind has an aspiration. It longs for certain things in a realm which is not necessarily physical.

Hence, culture becomes more and more refined when it becomes more and more psychological and rational. Tribal culture confines itself to purely physical needs, but higher culture takes into consideration the needs of the psyche because when human aspiration, human longing, rises to a certain stage in evolution, it begins to dream of possibilities, expectations, realisations, etc., beyond merely the physical level. These are the philosophers. A philosopher is a dreamer of the higher realms of experience, rising above the limitations of the subject and the object, visualising some vast domain of attainment and achievement which rises above the circumscribed location of the perceiving subject and the world outside. The world, which is physical and social, is limited to that particular aspect only, and the human individual, the perceiver of the world, is limited in a different way. There is a possibility of rising above both

these conditioning factors, the subjective and the objective. The mind dreams of universal possibilities. It hopes to achieve a condition of living which may rise not only above the subjective and the objective sides of ordinary living, but may positively achieve a superphysical and super-individual reality above this world of a physical and individual nature.

In India, culture is said to have started from the time of the Vedas. The Vedas, which are the scripture of the fundamental religion of India, consist of records left by persons who dreamt of realms above the earth, and visualised possibilities of experience and attainment far above the limitations of the human person. Philosophically, there is the need to look above. I am mentioning again what I said during the first session, that there are three ways of looking at things. We look within, we look without and we look above. We look within into our own selves as individuals, we look without at the world of society and nature, but we also look above into the starry heavens and wonder at the firmament of far-reaching potentialities and profundities. We would like to touch the stars and rise above the conditions of the world and of our own physical personality.

It is said that there are two great wonders in this world: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. We cannot understand what the starry heavens are. They remain a mystery for us. What exactly is it that we are gazing at in a clear night sky? What are these that are twinkling before us?

How do they hang in mid-sky? How do they exist at all in that manner? That is a wonder for us. The other wonder is our own conscience saying that we must do the right thing. It may not be easy for us to know what exactly is the right thing, but we know very well that it is necessary to do the right thing. Our conscience will not tell us that the wrong thing should be done. Whether or not we know what is right and wrong, we at least know that it is good to be right.

The mystery behind the very consciousness of it being necessary to be righteous, and the mystery of the heavens, are said to be the greatest mysteries. The contemplation on these mysteries makes one a philosopher, which is above the psychologist, the physicist or the sociologist. The physicist studies physical nature, the components of matter; the sociologist studies human behaviour in society; the psychologist studies the functions of the mind. But why do they function in that manner? Why should physical matter behave in the manner it behaves? Why do people in society conduct themselves in the manner in which they do? And why do we think in the manner we think? There is a way in which we think. All people think in some fundamental manner, but why should we think in that manner? Can there not be any other way of thinking?

The question 'why' is the subject of philosophical studies, and 'how' is said to be the function of science. Science studies the how of things, and philosophy goes into the why of things. Science cannot tell us why electrons move in that

particular manner around a nucleus. They tell us how they move, but why do they behave in that manner? They gyrate in a manner of their own. Why do people behave in the manner they behave? Why do people ask for the things they ask for? Psychology and physics have their own limitations. Psychology is limited to subjective phenomena; physics is limited to objective phenomena. Philosophy is said to be a science and an art which will endeavour to lift us up above the limitations of both psychology and physics, as well as sociology.

The Veda Samhitas consist of records of these stalwarts of yore who lived in India long ago. '*Samhita*' means a collection of hymns. Basically they are prayers offered to the gods in the heavens. Any kind of prayer is a hymn. The Vedas are classified into certain books known as the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda. The earliest history of mankind is found in the Rigveda Samhita, a great collection of hymns and prayers written in ecstatic metrical poetry. These great masters seem to have been great poets as well. They did not just scribble down in a slipshod manner whatever they thought. It is a wonder that such metrical poems could be composed by those ancients who are said to have lived in this country some thousands of years ago.

The metre of the Samhitas is a wonder. A metre is a set formula, according to which, words are arranged in a given manner and in a rhythm. The Rigveda Samhita particularly is a great wonder to linguists and historians. Even the number of words

in the Samhita has been counted. About ten thousand hymns are in the Rigveda Samhita; the total number of words in the whole book are counted, and that number has not varied right from the ancient times of its origin till today.

In those days there was no writing on paper. Knowledge was communicated from the mouth of the Guru to the ears of the disciple. The whole Veda was committed to memory. For centuries the Veda Samhita was preserved through memory only, and not by printed book or written script. So we can imagine such a huge tome being kept in memory for centuries. Even today in India we have some Vedic masters, though their number is gradually diminishing, almost to extinction. Especially in southern India we have got some pundits who can recite the entire Vedas by heart. They may be half a dozen, but still they are there.

The Rigveda Samhita is a great wonder. As a scripture it is a wonder, as a book of prayer it is a wonder, as a poem it is a wonder, and as a mystical guide to understand life as a whole it is also a wonder. The Vedas are said to have been edited by a great master called Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyasa. It appears that one day students went to the great master and said, "Please teach us the Veda." And the answer was *anantā vai vedāḥ*: "Infinite is the Veda." It was not easy to explain the meaning of the Veda because its profundity is infinite.

Experience, whatever the experience be, has many phases of ascent. An experience can be purely subjective from our own point of view, an

experience can be purely objective from the point of view of the world outside, and an experience can be supernatural from the point of view of a connecting link that is there between the subject and the object. The connecting link arises because of the fact that we cannot know the world at all unless there is a medium of connection between us and the world. We are aware that the world is there because there is some link connecting us with the world. The world has not entered our eyes. For instance, the mountain is far away. The knowledge of the fact that there is a mountain in front of us arises not because the mountain has entered our eyes, and not because we have gone and hit our head against the mountain. It arises because there is an invisible link between us and the world. It is invisible; the whole point is that. If this invisibility had not been there, if the link between us and the object were visible, there would have been a tremendous transformation of our personalities. We would not have been human beings afterwards. Fortunately or unfortunately, this link has been kept a secret by the Creator of the world, and no one knows what is there between you and me. If this is known, neither will I be what I am, nor will you be what you are.

Thus, experience can be subjective, it can be objective, and it can be something beyond the subject and the object, which we call transcendental. Therefore, the Vedas can be studied from various points of view as an *adhyatmika vidya*, or the subjective science of the spirit; as an

*adhibhautika vidya*, or the objective science of the world; as a *divya* or *adhidaivika vidya*, or the science of the gods superintending over the whole of creation; or as a *karma vidya*, or the action that we perform in this world. It also deals with the way in which we have to live in this world by performing action; *adhiyajna* is the name that is given to this aspect of the Veda. The *adhyatma* is the science of the inner spirit, the *adhibhuta* is the science of the objective world, the *adhidaiva* is the science of the gods in heaven, the *adhiyajna* is the science of action in the world, and the *adhidharma* is the manner in which we can righteously live in this world.

The Vedas, therefore, are difficult to understand. They cannot be easily translated because most of the English and Hindi translations, and so on, are translations from purely the linguistic and grammatical meanings, but the profundities are not given. We will continue this in the next session.

### Chapter 3

## THE VEDAS—THE FOUNDATION OF INDIAN CULTURE

The culture of India can be traced back to the Vedas, especially the Rigveda Samhita. Generally, the Veda is regarded as a religious scripture, and practically every so-called scripture in the world is considered as the basis of a particular religion. Therefore, an idea or an opinion has been formed by people generally that the culture of India is principally a religious culture, and inasmuch as religion is connected with the existence of God, this thought was further developed into the consequence thereof that Indian culture is not connected with this world so much as with the other world. This is a wrong notion, a wholly mistaken view of the content of the Veda Samhita.

The Samhitas are the basic feature or the face of the Vedas as a whole. There are four sections of each Veda, the four sections being Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. The Upanishads are based on the Aranyakas, the Aranyakas on the Brahmanas, and the Brahmanas on the Samhitas. The mantras of the Veda Samhita are, therefore, the seed of the further development of thought which is the rock bottom of Indian culture.

Now, it is necessary to dispel the wrong notion that the foundation of Indian culture is otherworldly because religion is otherworldly, because God is not in this world. One thought leads to another thought. If God is not in this world, and He has to be reached in another world, then God becomes an otherworldly reality. This is also a wrong notion. God is not otherworldly, removed from this world. Therefore, religion cannot be regarded as otherworldly; it has connection with this world. Therefore, the Samhitas are not the foundations of an otherworldly religion. They are connected with this very realistic existence of ours.

I mentioned briefly during the previous session that the Veda Samhitas have different meanings from various points of view. I said there are five phases, at least, of the meaning of the Veda Samhita. *Adhyatmika* is the subjective, the psychological and the spiritual aspect, we may say. *Adhibhautika* is the objective, the material and the external phase of life. *Adhidaivika* is the transcendental vision, what we call the religious, ecclesiastical and divinely oriented, the so-called otherworldly aspect. *Adhiyajnika* is the phase of our actual action, work or encounters with this world; the field of activity is *adhiyajna*. *Adhidharmika*, the aspect of law and order, the regulative principle of life, is another aspect.

When we look at a thing, we have to look at it from various points of view. Everything in the world has a fivefold relation. A person also has a fivefold connotation. A person like me or you, or

like anybody else from the point of view of the physical or individual personality, is physiological, sociological, psychological, action-oriented, and law-bound. Just see how one person can be related to different aspects at the same time. A human being, though he may look independent by himself or herself, is a unit in human society. Therefore, a human individual is sociologically restrained and limited. A human being is a physical body with hunger and thirst and other demands, so a human being is also physical and material. A human being is very active and is compelled to do some work or the other; therefore, action-oriented is a human individual. Also, every individual is restrained by a law or a regulation. Whether it is a socially-bound regulation, a community-bound regulation, a governmental regulation or a moral regulation, some regulation is there which keeps us within bounds. We cannot overstep certain limits of human behaviour. We can now appreciate that a single person is four things at the same time, and also a fifth thing in the sense that we are never satisfied with anything in this world. We look up to some reality which is above this world for satisfaction, and that is the *adhidaivika* aspect working within us. If a human individual is involved in five ways at the same time, the teachings connected with the welfare of an individual also should have a fivefold connotation. Therefore, it should not be said that Indian culture is religion and it has no connection with the material world, it

has no connection with duties in this world, and it is always looking to the skies above.

The Bhagavadgita, to mention only one instance among many others, is a very precise statement of this fivefold involvement of reality and value, the essence that has been set down from the Upanishads and the Vedas. A passage says that the Upanishads are like a cow which yields milk, and the milk of this cow of the Upanishads is the Bhagavadgita; and the Upanishads are the essence of the Veda Samhita. I need not go into further detail as to the importance of the Veda Samhita, repeating the same thing again and again. Briefly I mentioned to you that the Veda Samhita is the foundation of Indian culture, but it is not religious in the sense that people wrongly understand it because we always have a peculiar notion of religion being something connected with that which is not in this world, that religion is connected with the divinity that is above. Not so is the truth.

The Veda is called Sruti. Sruti is a Sanskrit word which means 'that which is heard'. In ancient days, the Vedas were studied by word of mouth. The teacher, the master or the Guru would pronounce the Veda mantras, and the disciple or the student would listen. The mantras were repeated several times in different ways by the teacher, and the student learned the art of pronunciation and articulation of the mantras of the Vedas by hearing them. The Guru split the particular verse or the mantra into its divisible parts. Nine times he said it, and the student

repeated it nine times. It is understood that when a mantra is repeated nine times, the student has captured the art of proper articulation of the mantra. If the student is dull, it is repeated more than nine times.

Now you have some idea of the significance of the Vedas. Art and science, technology, physiology, psychology, religion, metaphysics, and the art of living in this world—all these can be found implicit in the mantras of the Veda Samhita. This is why the Vedas are considered as the most holy of the scriptures.

During the previous session I suggested one or two books that you may read. There is one more small book which will be very interesting—a very small book, but very touching. The name of the book is *Vedic Religion and Philosophy* by Swami Prabhavananda of the Ramakrishna Mission. You may read it to your benefit. It is the same person wrote *The Spiritual Heritage of India*. *Vedic Religion and Philosophy* contains three beautiful essays on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. It is worth reading, as it is very well written.

Due to the large comprehensiveness of the Vedas, it was not easy for people to study the whole thing at one stroke; therefore, students took up studies of only certain sections of the Veda, as it was not practicable or feasible for them to take up the study of all the sections at the same time. Some students took up the study of only the Samhitas, which they learned by rote and chanted and repeated again and again. They spent at least

twelve years in mastering the pronunciation and the intonation of the mantras of the Veda. At least twelve years it will take to learn to chant the Veda Samhitas. Others took to the study of the ritualistic side, laying emphasis on *karma-kanda*, as it is called. The *yajnas*, *havans*, *homas*, rituals, etc., are explained in great detail in the particular school of philosophy known as Mimamsa.

There are six systems of philosophy in India: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Mimamsa is the school of philosophic thought which concerns itself entirely with the exposition of the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, particularly the Brahmanas, as they are called. Those who were inclined to philosophical thought, meditation-oriented minds, took to the study of the Aranyakas and the Upanishads much more than the Samhitas and the Brahmanas. Great scholars called Sayanacharyas wrote commentaries on the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads—a giant of learning, a colossus of scholarship, I should say. Who could find time to write commentaries on all the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads when people could not manage to study even one section of it in their lives! You can imagine the stature of the learning of these great persons such as Acharya Sayana, who was the brother of Vidyaranya, who wrote the Panchadasi, etc.

The five aspects or phases of the meaning contained in the Vedas drew the attention of subsequent scholars and even of rishis and sages,

and they expatiated upon and commented upon one or the other of the aspects of the Vedas. Those who were interested in only the pronunciation, intonation and chanting of the Veda mantras took to further studies along those lines and entered into serious study of its grammar, phonetics, and the like, which led to the formation of the six limbs of the Vedas, and these limbs are called Vedangas. Veda-anga: *anga* means limb. The six limbs of the Veda are six auxiliary introductions to the study of the Veda. This work of writing separate textbooks on the Vedangas, as they are called, became necessary on account of emphasis specially laid on either the Samhita or the Brahmana. The phonetics or the pronunciation aspect of the Veda Samhita was taken up for detailed consideration in a science called Siksha. Panini wrote this text, called Siksha, on how to pronounce the Veda Samhita. Any wrong pronunciation will bring a wrong meaning, and a wrong consequence will follow. Thus Siksha, as a science of intonation and phonetics, was developed as one of the *angas* or limbs of the Vedas.

The grammar of the language is also very difficult. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit, but it is an archaic, old type of Sanskrit, not the modern classical Sanskrit of Kalidasa, etc. Therefore, it became necessary to write grammar, and this was also a work of Panini, who wrote Siksha. We are told that there are nine grammars, but the most prominent one is Panini's grammar, which is studied in schools and colleges everywhere these days. Thus, the science of phonetics and chanting is

one limb, and the science of understanding the grammatical meaning of the words of the Veda, called Vyakarana, is another limb. Vyakarana is grammar.

The third limb of the Veda is Chandas, or metre. The lines of a poem are set in a definite number of words, and you will be surprised that in those most ancient of days, thousands of years before Christ, the composers of the Veda mantras could present the whole Samhita in poetic form, with a systematic arrangement of words in various regular metres. The Veda Samhita is not written in only one metre; different sections are in different metres. What is this metre, and what is the effect produced by the recitation of a mantra in a given metre? That study also became one of the limbs of the Veda. It is called Chandas. Chandas is metre.

Then comes the etymology of the words of the Vedas. Indra: What is Indra? From where did this word arise? What is the root of this word? Every word of the Veda had a root from which it arose, and the study of the roots of the words of the Veda mantras became another limb, called Nirukta. Nirukta is the study of the etymology of the words of the Veda. So we have Siksha, Vyakarana, Chandas and Nirukta.

Now, emphasis being laid on the Brahmana portion of the Vedas—the ritualistic side of the Vedas—it became necessary for the performers of these rituals, or *yajnas* as they are called, to commence the performance at a particular time of the day as decided by the movement of the stars in

the heavens. How the planets and the stars influence everything in this world is the science of astronomy, on which astrology is based. So a new science was developed called astronomy, which is Jyotish. Jyotish Shastra is astronomical science. That is also a limb of the Veda, as it is important to know at what particular stellar or planetary conjunction it would be necessary to commence a *yajna*, or sacrifice. At auspicious moments only do we start things, but how do we know what is the auspicious moment? For this we have to know the movement of the planets and the stars, which is astronomical science, Jyotish Shastra. So we have Siksha, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta and Jyotisha.

Now comes the sixth limb. There are six limbs in total. It is called the Kalpa Sutras. The Kalpa Sutras are short aphoristic texts which deal with the details of the actual performance of the sacrifice. How do we start the sacrifice? What are the things necessary? What is the proper order in which they are kept? What is to be done first? What is to be done next? What is to be done at the conclusion? What is the manner of the procedure of the whole sacrificial act which will go on for hours, sometimes for days together? The entire detail of the appurtenances of the performance of the sacrifice is in the Kalpa Sutras.

Incidentally, these Sutras have certain subdivisions. The Srautasutra is one part of the Kalpa Sutras, which deals with only those sacrifices which are connected with the Brahmana portion of the Veda. The other section is the Sulbasutra, which

details the measurement of the articles that are used in the sacrifice. Suppose there is *dharba* grass, what should be the length of it; and if there is a vessel, what type of vessel should be used? These are some of the details which we have in the Sulbasutra. Then we have the Grihyasutra, which details the minor rituals that a person performs in one's own house—not a huge sacrifice with a lot of people, etc. Every householder has a little *puja*, a little ritual, a little time allotted for worship. The miniature worships and *havans*, etc., which a *grihastha* or a householder does in one's own house are detailed in the Grihyasutra. *Grihya* means connected with the house, so the Grihyasutra is connected with the performances in the house. Another aspect of the Kalpa Sutras is the Dharmasutra: what is to be done and what is not to be done, what is proper and what is not proper. The dos and don'ts of the performance regulating rituals of every kind we have in the Dharmasutra.

I have mentioned something very important about the Veda Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishads, and the Vedangas, which are six. I will confuse you a little more by mentioning an additional item of these four Vedas. There are auxiliary Vedas which are called Upavedas. Vedas are four, Vedangas are six, and the auxiliary Vedas, called Upavedas, are four. These four are Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Artha Shastra.

Somehow or other the science of healthy living, called Ayurveda Shastra, has been connected with

the Rigveda, perhaps because the Rigveda Samhita has much to say about the science of right living. Hence, the Ayurveda Shastra developed from the Rigveda. From the Yajurveda the military science, the Dhanur Shastra, arose. In those days archery was the primary way of military science. Nowadays we have got all kinds of other things. In those days there was archery—bows and arrows. Everywhere in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata we find bows and arrows. The military science of discharging arrows with bows, called Dhanurveda, is connected with the Yajurveda. The Samaveda is sung musically, and so it is connected with the science of music; Gandharveda it is called. And political science and the art of government are connected with the last of the Vedas, namely the Atharvaveda. Thus, the four Vedas have four auxiliary Vedas, namely, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Artha Shastra.

So to repeat once again for your memory, Vedas are four: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda; and each Veda has four sections: Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, Upanishad; and the Vedas in toto have six limbs: Siksha, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotisha, Kalpa. The Kalpa Sutras have four sections: Srautasutra, Sulbasutra, Grihyasutra, Dharmasutra. There are four Upavedas, or subsidiary Vedas: Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Artha Shastra, which also includes economic science. This is a huge body of learning which is all embedded in what is known as the Vedas.

Many of you would not even have dreamt that the Veda contains so many things. You simply know some chanting done by a pundit. Some mantra he recites, and you think this is all the Veda, that it is a prayer to some god. This is all that has been said in history books, but it is not so. History books will never tell you all these details. Sometimes wrong things are said because many historians are not well equipped with this knowledge. On this is based India's culture. How broad-based is India's culture you can know from this little introduction.

But the capacity of the human mind, being what it is, could not always suddenly accommodate all this knowledge because it is too much for the human brain. The brain will get tired by even hearing the names of these variegated texts and ways of thinking. History has shown that as time passes, the capacity of the human mind to comprehend becomes more and more diluted. Our intellectual power gets diminished, as it were, as ages pass. Intuition gives way to pure intellection, scientific observation and experiment. Direct apprehension, which was the foundation of the Veda mantras, is completely obliterated from the modern mind especially, which is very busy with technology, material science, socialistic living, and all kinds of appurtenances connected with an externally oriented life.

So what is to be done when the mind of the human being is unable to carry on with this integrated knowledge? Emphasis has to be laid on section-wise learning, as we have today in schools

and colleges. Everything cannot be studied in a college. We take up only one or two subjects. As we go further in our studies, it becomes only one subject in postgraduate. If a person is specialised in physics, he knows nothing of history. If a person is specialised in history, he knows nothing of other subjects. Compartmentalised specialisation started later on due to paucity of time, shortage of the duration of life of the human being, and difficulty in comprehending many things at the same time—problems and problems, and everywhere difficulties.

Then specialisation started. While during the time of the Vedas, I should say, there was no specialisation in only one particular branch and it was necessary to acquire an all-round knowledge of all aspects of the Vedas, as time passed this was no longer possible. Therefore, people would take up only one side, one aspect. So some sections of people emphasised only the chanting of the mantras. Today we have got pundits who know the Vedas, but they know only how to chant it. People say there is a pundit who knows the Vedas, but what does he know? He can recite the Vedas by rote; like a parrot he can go on chanting it, but he does not know the meaning of it. The meaning of what he chants, the pundit does not know. It is a parrot-like chanting that he does, but still people consider it as a great achievement. For instance, if the whole of the Rigveda is learnt by heart by some pundit and he can recite it from beginning to end, ten thousand verses at one stroke, he is considered

as a very sacred person, a very holy man. He is worshipped in the village and town like a God-man almost. But he knows only the chanting, and nothing else does he know. He cannot do any *havan, homa, yajna* or anything; that is a different thing for him. He knows neither the ritualistic side of it nor its meaning.

You may wonder why a man should be respected so much merely because he chants the mantras. That is also very important to know. The mantras are electric forces. The recitation of a Veda mantra—even the mere recitation of it, not going into the meaning, etc.—charges one's personality with a power because of the fact that the arrangement of the words of the Veda mantra is such that it creates a vibration. Every word is a sound potential. By 'sound potential', I mean a packet of energy or a hidden power in each word which releases itself into action when it is chanted, uttered, pronounced correctly. A correct intonation and pronunciation of a particular word creates a sudden stimulus inside us and energises our personality as if we are charged with a little electric current; and the sanctity of the Veda mantra—because of its inclusiveness, because of the divinity hidden in it—creates a special effect in the personality of the individual who recites the mantra. So even the mere recitation of the Veda mantra is a great thing, and the person who has such capacity to recite the Veda by heart is worshipped as a holy man, not unnecessarily but very necessarily. Even if the mantra is recited

without the knowledge of its meaning, it has an effect. That is why these pundits are worshipped and adored.

Specialisation, therefore, took the turn of mere recitation of the mantra on the one hand, and on the other hand there was specialisation on the ritualistic side. They know all the little details of *yajnas*, sacrifices, *havans*, and so on—how to raise an altar for the sacrifice, how a *kunda* is dug, and what are the other details, etc. These are *purohits*, as they are called. They are specialised in *yajnas*, performances, rituals, etc. They may not know the whole of the Veda Samhita by heart, but they know by heart those mantras which are connected with a particular sacrifice. That is the second specialisation. The first specialisation is only chanting. The second specialisation is ritualistic.

The third specialisation is ethical and legalistic. To this we turn our attention now, the specialisation of the ethical and legalistic side of the import of the Vedas, known as the Smritis or the Dharmashastras. All the things that I told you up to this time come within the purview of what is known as the Veda Rashi—Sruti, to put it briefly. Now, the second specialisation is Smriti, ‘the remembered’. Smriti means ‘that which is remembered’. In Sruti, it is only heard from the Guru by the disciple, whereas in Smriti it is remembered in the sense of how it has to be actually employed in the performance or the conduct of one’s own life.

The conduct or the behaviour that is required of us, the ethical mandate, is the subject of the Smritis. The greatest of all the Smritis is the Manusmriti, and all the other Smritis follow the line taken by Manu. There are eighteen Smritis. We need not go into the details of all these. Eighteen Rishis wrote eighteen books of law and order, ethics, and the conduct and behaviour of people—how in society and in our personal lives we have to conduct ourselves. That is the subject of the Smritis. The most important one, as I told you, is the Manusmriti. The next important one is the Yajnavalkya Smriti. The third important one is the Parashara Smriti. Generally only these three are studied.

The Manusmriti is so very strict in its injunctions that it has been found to be difficult to follow in this age where people are weak in mind and will, and in everything. There are four ages or time cycles, called Krita Yuga, the Golden Age; Treta Yuga, the Silver Age; Dvarpara Yuga, the Copper Age; Kali Yuga, the Iron Age. We are now in Kali Yuga, the Iron Age, not the Copper or Bronze or Silver or Gold. In the Golden Age people were able to follow the injunctions of the Manusmriti, which are very strict, and in the Treta Yuga it became difficult, so the Yajnavalkya Smriti was the text for the Treta Yuga. The text of the rishis Sankha and Likhita was for the Dvarpara Yuga, and for the Kali Yuga it is said that the Parashara Smriti is the only one that can be followed.

Now, what do these Smritis tell us? The way of conduct and behaviour, and the maintenance of a general outlook of life, is the subject of these Smritis. The aims of existence, the purpose of life, is the first and foremost of issues discussed in the Smritis. What for are we existing in this world? What are our aims and objectives? What is it that we are doing from morning to evening every day, and for what purpose? You will find that all your aims are capable of being condensed into three or four issues. Number one: you work very hard for material comforts. You want salary, you want money, you want physical security, you want a house, you want clothing, you want food. These are the material needs of a person. These material needs are called artha in Sanskrit.

You have got a lot of money, you have got a bungalow, you have got nice food to eat, all physical security is there, but nobody recognises your existence at all. Nobody talks to you. You have no friendship with any person. You feel very barren in your emotions. It is not enough if you merely eat and have a comfortable physical existence; you also require affection and love from people. If that is removed, your food cannot be digested and your life will be dreary, a waste. You will feel that you are living in a desert.

Emotional needs are also important. Aesthetics, the love of art, architecture, sculpture, painting and drawing, music and dance, and literature are all avenues of the expression of emotions, feelings. Do you not think that your feelings are important? Is it

enough if you merely eat good food and have a good house but your feelings are drying up? Emotions have also to be fed, in the same way as your stomach has to be fed. You require affection and love. Perhaps it is a greater requirement than food and shelter, etc. You may starve without food for some days, but you cannot allow affection to be starved. You expect recognition, and it is not given to you. You die by the very thought that you will not be recognised. You will not eat at all for days together because of sorrow: "I am not recognised. I am not promoted. I am not considered. I am a nobody." The feeling that you are a nobody and you have no affection from anyone will dry up your personality much more quickly than not eating food for days together.

Artha is material requirement, and kama is emotional requirement. Married people generally try to make good the lacuna that they may feel in the absence of affection and love, though love and affection are not limited merely to married life. It does not mean that if the husband loves the wife, and the wife loves the husband, that is everything. Though that is an important thing, there is much more than this in kama. You require to be loved by society, the public. People in general should recognise you. Would you like the whole society to pooh-pooh you though you are living a family life with a husband-wife relationship? Social recognition and status are also a part of the requirement of feeling and emotion, apart from a good family life. All this is included within the

requirement of what is known as kama, apart from artha, or material requirement.

Now, you must remember that you are permitted to have physical comforts and emotional needs under one condition: that you should not interfere with other people who also require the same needs. You should not say that you want everything for yourself. The regulating principle which restricts your asking for artha and kama is called dharma. You want freedom, but your freedom is limited by the necessity for freedom for other people also. If two people require freedom, neither of them can have one hundred percent freedom because if each one has one hundred percent freedom, there will be two one hundred percents, and that cannot be. Two infinities cannot be there. Inasmuch as every person has a need of the same kind and everyone wants to be free, it is necessary to put a limit on the freedom of each person. That regulative principle which limits your freedom and ordains how you have to conduct yourself in society, together with the sanction that you can have artha and kama, is dharma, law and order. Artha, kama and dharma are the relative values of life. But they are relative values; that is very important. Why are they relative? Because they are not absolute values. These things cannot satisfy you eternally, though they may be there with you. Now, inasmuch as they are relative, naturally there must be something which is absolute, in comparison with which they are relative.

The last one, the fourth, which is the absolute requirement, is moksha, or absolute liberation. You do not require conditioned freedom. In society you have only limited, conditioned freedom, but you want absolute freedom. In society, in the world, absolute freedom is not possible because of the existence of other people. How will you have absolute freedom? That subject we shall take up next.

## Chapter 4

# THE FOURFOLD AIM OF LIFE AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

We bestowed sufficient thought on the foundations of Indian culture, which are the Vedas. We observed that the Vedas are not merely a scripture of religion in the sense of an aspiration for a God above the world, and we had occasion to go into the different aspects of the meaning of the Veda Samhitas. They are inclusive of at least five aspects of life. It is religion, of course, because the mantras of the Vedas are addressed to gods, or divinities, above the physical world. But the Veda mantras are also connected with this world, not merely with the other world. They are not merely connected with *adhidaiva*, or divinities in heaven, but are also connected with *adhibhuta*, the actual physical world in which we live. The mantras of the Vedas are also connected with the soul of the human being. They are *adhyatma* and, in that sense, they are also psychology and spirituality. They are also *adhiyajna* because they give us information about the method of conducting ourselves in our actual performance and action in the world. They are also *adhidharma* because they tell us the way in which we have to conduct ourselves in relation to other people in the world, in relation to the physical world outside us, in relation to the Creator Himself,

in relation to our own selves—in relation to everything, for the matter of that. This is called dharma or law, and it is also laid down in the Vedas Samhitas.

The meaning of the Vedas is, therefore, so profound and inclusive that the Vedas cannot be studied merely from the linguistic or grammatical point of view, which is generally the way in which modern scholars study them. The meaning of the Vedas is fivefold, a hundredfold, a millionfold. That is to say, it is inclusive of every phase of life. Therefore, it is considered as the foundation of the culture of the people of India. To say, therefore, that the culture of India is only religious is to say very little. Sufficient thought is bestowed by the culture of India on all aspects of life, which is highlighted by the inclusion of these phases: *adhidaiva*, *adhyatma*, *adhibhuta*, *adhiyajna* and *adhidharma*.

Vast are the Vedas, and difficult is their meaning. We noted that in order to make the Vedas a little easier to understand, the Smritis came up. The Smritis are codes of ethics and law. They are eighteen in number, and three of them are considered as very important: the Manusmriti, the Yajnavalkya Smriti and the Parashara Smriti. The ordinances of the Manusmriti are very strict, the regulations laid down in the Yajnavalkya Smriti are a little easier, and the Parashara Smriti is considered as the only Smriti that is suitable for Kali Yuga, this age where the will of people is weak and the mind is not as strong as it was in the earlier ages of Krita, Treta and Dvapara.

We noticed the purpose of the Smritis. What do the Smritis tell us? They lay down the laws of life. What are the laws of life? These laws depend on the laws of existence itself. Our existence is summed up in our longings or aspirations, and our longings or aspirations are summed up in the fourfold aim of existence, which was mentioned during the previous session: artha, kama, and dharma. The material values of life, our physical requirements or physical needs, are summed up by artha; our emotional needs are summed up by kama; and the regulation of the way in which we have to fulfil our desires for material comfort and emotional satisfaction is the dharma thereof. It does not mean that we can have everything that we want. Dharma restrains us from having excessive freedom. Though it grants us freedom, our freedom is limited by the necessity for others to also have similar freedom. The existence of another person who also requires freedom limits the freedom of other persons. One hundred percent freedom is not possible for any person because each one has to survive, and everyone has to be granted the minimum needs for survival and reasonable comfort.

It is freedom that we seek, finally: freedom from want of every kind, freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from heat and cold, freedom from threat of any kind coming from external sources. This is freedom from the point of view of physical and economic existence. We also want to be free from emotional tension. This freedom, which is

external as it is connected with material existence on the one hand and emotional existence on the other hand, is what is required by every person. We should be physically comfortable, and also emotionally comfortable. There should be no tension from either outside or inside.

This freedom which is material as well as emotional is regulated by a law, a system of operation which is called dharma. But who lays down this law? What is the source of this dharma? It should be like this and it should not be like that, says a law-and-order system. We are not supposed to behave in this manner; we are supposed to behave in this manner only; this we can do, but the other thing we cannot do. Who lays down this law? Of course, these laws are written down in the Smritis, but on what grounds do they make these injunctions? Here we have the fourth aim of existence, inclusive of and yet transcendent to artha, kama and dharma. The highest aim of life is not only inclusive of artha, kama and dharma, but it transcends them. That is moksha.

Four are the aims of existence: dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Actually, moksha is not one item among four items; it is that which surpasses and stands above the other three. It is a logical superiority which is over and above the other empirical needs or relative requirements which are physical, emotional and ethical. On what basis and in what manner are we to conceive this foundational concept of moksha? What is it, actually? What is meant by moksha, which is

inclusive of all the other values of life? We cannot have a hundred percent freedom in this world because our freedom is restricted by the freedom necessitated by the existence of other people in the world. If two people are living together, the freedom that they need should be shared by both of them in the required proportion. But there is such a thing called absolute freedom. The relativity of the freedom that we can expect in this world is only an indication that there should be something called absolute freedom. In this world it is not possible to have absolute freedom because there is a world outside us which conditions us, and there are people outside which limit us. What then is absolute, because things in the world are relative?

A state of being in which there would be nothing outside which can restrain us, that alone can be regarded as absolute. If there is nobody except us, if we are the only existence, then we can exercise our freedom entirely. We will be one hundred percent free. In this creation we are not alone. There is a multifarious variety in this world of creation; therefore, relativity rules the freedom that we can expect in this world. But we want absolute freedom. Absolute freedom is possible only when there is nothing external to us. Here we enter into the field of philosophy and metaphysical studies, as they are usually called.

How is it possible for us to exist independently of anything that is outside us? The very concept of outside, or externality, has to be completely abrogated and transcended. Is it possible?

Normally, we will feel that such a thing is not possible. How is it possible for anyone to be totally alone, with nobody else existing? The idea of somebody else and something outside us is the limiting factor in which we are all involved in this world. Physically, socially, or from the point of view of natural life we cannot be absolutely alone. Aloneness is impossible in this world. Wherever we go, whatever we are, there is something outside us. Everywhere there are people outside us. There is the natural world of the five elements outside us. Space and time are there wherever we go. They are external to us. That means to say, in this world of space and time, and objects and people, absolute freedom is not possible.

But we do not want to be limited in any way whatsoever. Unlimitedness, if possible, is our aspiration. If we would like to have wealth, we would like to have unlimited wealth. If we want to live, we would like to live unlimitedly, for endless years of duration. This is not practicable; we have noticed that. But does it actually exist? "If possible, I would like to be the master of the whole sky and all the time process. If possible, I would not like to die at all. Eternally I would like to exist, transcending time, breaking through the process of temporal duration. If possible, I would like to possess the whole sky." These ideas arise in the mind of a human being because there is a potential inside us which speaks in this language. We know that in practice this is not a workable procedure, but something that is unworkable normally speaking is

telling us that it is workable. This world tells us we cannot be free, but something inside us says we can be free.

There is something in us which does not belong to this world. All that the world is—space, time, objects, and all people—seeks to limit us in every way, from all sides, and tells us again and again that we are bound, very much bound indeed, that we are the slaves of circumstances and conditions, dependent on the events of history, the moods of people and the vagaries of nature. We feel this way. We accept it. But still, there is something inside which says that, if possible, it would be good to break through all these bondages. A person who is a hundred percent bound and entirely involved in bondage as his very nature will not have ideas of this kind—namely, ideas of transcending bondage. The idea of unlimited freedom cannot arise in the mind of a person whose mind is really bound and is incapable of the fulfilment of the aspiration of unlimited freedom.

We, therefore, seem to be belonging to two worlds. One is the world in which we are now, which is bound to spatial and temporal laws. We live in this world where everything is conditioned in every way. Death itself is the ruler of this world. In addition to all the limitations that harass us from all sides, there is a final limitation which ends our existence itself, which is death. We live in a mortal world, a world of death; but we also seem to be belonging to another realm which is deathless, which is immortal.

Our inner consciousness, which is usually known as the Atman inside, is what is responsible for these kinds of aspirations which are very superphysical, dreamlike, and impossible to describe in the language of the mortal tongue. This consciousness, which is what we really are, is something which is required to be studied properly. What are we? We say we are Mister so-and-so, this person. We describe ourselves as the son of somebody, or we describe ourselves in terms of the occupation that we have got. We have some designation as an official or a workman, or we have some other designation as a relative of so-and-so, etc. But this designation, this definition of ours, is in terms of the physical body. This body of ours, which is material, we consider as ourselves, and we define ourselves only in terms of the body. This body is connected to a language, to a regional culture, to a state, to a nationality, to a species.

But every day we pass through various stages in our life which, if studied properly, will tell us that we are not actually this body—for instance, the state of deep sleep. This state of deep sleep is very intriguing indeed. We do not know what is happening to us when we are fast asleep. We are unconscious, but unconscious of what? We are unconscious of this body. This body which we consider as everything and all in all, which is the very dear and near object of our love, which is very important for us from a social, economic and material point of view, this body of ours which is the son of so-and-so, the brother or sister so-and-

so, this physical body which is sitting on a chair and calling itself an official or a ruler or a worker, etc., this physical body which is so very important, which is all that we have, is not there in the state of deep sleep. Yet we exist in sleep. Do we exist in the state of deep sleep? Yes. Did we exist as this body? No. As what did we exist there? We did exist minus the body, minus also the mind. Not only was our consciousness of the body not there, we have not even the thought of the body. Did we exist as something independent of body and mind? It seems to be so.

Please think over this matter deeply. Where was the mind in the state of deep sleep? It was not there. There was no thought of any kind. The body was also not there as the physical body. Did you exist minus the physical body and mind? Yes. What was your condition when you were there existing as independent of the physical body and the mind? "I knew nothing." This is all that you can say. "I cannot say what I was. I was fast asleep." Who is saying that you were fast asleep? In the morning when you wake up from sleep you say, "I was fast asleep. I had a very happy sleep." My question is, who is making the statement? When you say "I had a good sleep yesterday", who is making this statement? Does the physical body make the statement? The physical body was not there. Is the mind saying it? The mind was also not there. Who is making this statement?

It is a statement made by some peculiar thing which has the memory of having slept the previous

day. You have a memory that you slept yesterday, and this memory makes you say that you had a good sleep yesterday. But what is memory? It is the recollection of an experience that you had earlier. Unless you had some experience, you cannot have a memory of it. Now you have a memory of having slept. That means to say, you had an experience of having slept. Prior to the memory that you have in the waking condition, you had an experience of something which you now say is sleep. Did you have an experience in sleep? You did not have any experience at that time. You were unconscious. If you had no consciousness in the state of deep sleep, as you say, how is it possible that you have a memory that you slept yesterday? Does an unconscious stone have a memory of anything? Do you believe that you were totally unconscious in sleep? If so, there would not be any memory of it afterwards. Remembrance of anything is not possible if it is totally bereft of awareness. Unconsciousness cannot breed memory. Memory is always of something which was consciously experienced earlier. That is to say, there must have been a consciousness in the state of deep sleep that was covered over by something, due to which you did not have any experience of it. The consciousness that was there in the state of deep sleep was covered over by some cloud-like thing, some darkness which prevented the consciousness from being aware of itself. Thus, though consciousness seemed absent, yet it was there, and

that is the reason why you remember that you slept.

Therefore, from the fact of there being memory subsequent to the experience of deep sleep, you conclude that consciousness must have been there in the state of sleep; otherwise, memory would not be possible. You existed in the state of deep sleep as consciousness, not as body, not as mind, not as any psychic function. Pure consciousness was your state, independent of any kind of relation to the body and the mind. No social relation, no physical contact, nothing of the kind was there. You were not there as a person, as an individual. You were there as consciousness; but where was this consciousness? Was it inside or outside? The question of inside or outside does not arise for consciousness because the idea of inside arises only because of the fact that you associate consciousness with the physical body. "The Atman is inside", "Consciousness is inside", etc., are statements you make in terms of the physical body. Now we are defining and trying to understand consciousness independent of the relation with the physical body because we cannot say the Atman is inside the body, that consciousness is within, inasmuch as in the state of deep sleep there was no consciousness of the physical body. Therefore, in the state of deep sleep, consciousness was not inside the body, nor can we say it was outside the body. That which is neither inside nor outside, yet exists, has to be everywhere. This is a logical deduction that we are making from the fact of our consciousness in the

state of deep sleep being neither inside our body nor outside our body. A universality of consciousness must have been there which was shrouded in ignorance of certain types, ignorance caused by various factors. We did exist as consciousness. Because of the fact that consciousness has to be everywhere, limitation of consciousness cannot be conceived. Consciousness is absolute in every sense of the term.

Our essential nature is consciousness, which is not inside or outside, or in any particular place. It has no particular location because location is a concept that arises in terms of physical existence, but physical existence is completely obliterated in the state of deep sleep. There was not even mental existence. It is super-mental and superphysical existence, pure consciousness which is everywhere. Because it is everywhere, it is absolute. There is nothing to condition us or limit us at that time. That is why our happiness in sleep is greater than the happiness of even a king or an emperor of the earth. Do you know how happy you must be when you are fast asleep? Not the best of delicious dishes, not the best appurtenances of the comforts in life, not even kingship can be equal to the happiness of deep sleep. You get up rejuvenated. Even a sick person feels better after getting a good sleep. You have not eaten any good food in sleep, you did not possess any property, there was nothing worth the while, but you woke up with a joy of having got charged with some force which makes you feel healthier than you were earlier. How this is

possible? It is because you were yourself in the state of deep sleep. In the waking condition when you are physically conscious, you are other than what you are. In the state of waking, you have changed your position, your location, into what you are not. This consciousness which is therefore everywhere, which is yourself, is absolute freedom. The attainment of this experience is moksha.

Moksha is the delving into the state of this universality of consciousness, which is the nature of everyone. Inasmuch as universal consciousness can be only one, there cannot be many universal consciousnesses in the case of different people. It does not mean that when you are fast asleep you enter into a universal consciousness different from the universal consciousness which another person enters into in the state of deep sleep. We are all bathed in the ocean and are sinking into a single sleep. The ocean is only one for all the waves. Millions of people may be fast asleep, but it does not mean that they are all entering into different kinds of universality. All the waves sink into the same sea of this universal existence.

We are not aware of it. We are bound by the physical body and conditioned by the mental *vrittis* or operations, totally unaware of there being such a thing inside us or outside us or everywhere, which is the absolute universality in us. If that state of universality can be directly experienced, we will be omnipresent. Universality means existing everywhere at the same time. Now we are in Rishikesh. A person who is in Rishikesh cannot be

in Delhi at the same time. There is the limitation of location, and the limitation of the duration of time, caused by the existence of space and time. All this limitation is overcome in the state of pure awareness, which is consciousness. Attainment of it, or experience of it, is called moksha.

Now, all this description about the nature of moksha is necessary in order to understand what the law and order is which regulates the requirements of our artha and kama. Law and order in life, dharma, as it is called, is the way in which universal existence operates in all particulars. There are many particulars in the world. Many individuals of various types are there. All these individuals are conditioned by one law, namely, the universality to which they belong, of which they are a part, and from which they are inseparable. So whenever we conduct ourselves in life, behave in some way, we have to see that it is in consonance with the universality which is the aspiration of all people. We cannot contend with others. There cannot be exploitation, there cannot be competition, there cannot be hatred, there cannot be ill will. Nothing negative is possible here in this state where universal existence is the common aspiration of all people. This is to mention briefly what moksha is.

Thus, what are the aims of existence? They are dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Inasmuch as moksha is universally inclusive, it is not just one of the four aims; it is the aim which automatically includes the other three, and subsumes the other three. The goal

of life is Self-realisation, God-realisation, the realisation of this absolute universal consciousness. This is to say something about the fourfold aim of existence: artha, kama, dharma, moksha.

How are we going to work for it? Now comes the practical question. We have understood that these are the aims of life. How is it possible to achieve it? This methodology of the actual attainment of this great purpose of life is laid down by regulations of a different type altogether, namely, ashrama dharma, the dharma or the law of the order of life, the stages of life. We have to grow vertically, through a process of education, into the expanded state of the dimension of consciousness by overcoming the limitations to which we are subject, which is the ashrama dharma. *Brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa* are supposed to be the stages through which everyone has to pass. When a person is born as a little child and grows into an adolescent, that person is put under the restriction of a law and order of education, and a discipline which conserves energy. This frees the mind from distractions which, if they are allowed to work with a free hand, may deplete the energy of the system, and the self within may feel weakened by its concentration on things other than its own self. We call this consciousness as Atman, and that which is outside this consciousness is *anatman*, also known as the subject and the object.

Pure consciousness cannot be an object. It is the knower of all things, the seer of all things;

therefore, it cannot be something that is known by somebody else. But we, in our physical condition of embodiment in this body, see something outside—the world in front of us, filled with things, people, etc.—and our mind moves in terms of these external things. This movement of the mind in terms of external things is what we call the Atman moving in terms of the *anatman*. We are moving in terms of that which we are not. We know that we are something and that the things that we see in front of us are not us, so whenever we think something outside us, or the sense organs pull us in an outward direction, we are concentrating our mind on that which we are not. This is the reason why we become physically and mentally weak. When we are not ourselves and we have become somebody else, naturally all our energy is sucked by that which is not us, the object, and we have poured ourselves, as it were, on that thing which we are not, and we have become weak. A person who is sensorily indulgent, mentally contemplating objects of sense outside, weakens the system physiologically as well as psychologically. This is prevented by the rules and regulations of *brahmacharya* wherein, at least for a period of 20 to 25 years, it becomes incumbent on the student to conserve energy. A system of this conservation of energy has evolved by which the *brahmachari*, or the student, is not allowed to indulge in anything that is sensory, and is also not permitted to brood mentally over objects of sense. So for 20 or 25 years—nowadays it is less in number, but

originally for the first 25 years, at least—one should live a life of intense self-conserving discipline.

Whatever you have been in your young age will tell upon you when you are old. This is something you must remember. What did you do when you were young? Did you live a dissipated life, an indulgent life, a distracted life, an uncontrolled life? Its effect you will feel when you are old. When you are young, you may not know what you are doing. Everything looks like milk and honey. Little boys do not know the harm that they are bringing upon themselves by living a dissipated life of distraction and mental indulgence in objects. If you want to live a long life and have a strong-bodied existence even in old age, not be drooping and coughing and suffering, your young age should be lived in a disciplined manner. Therefore, the first period of one's life is *brahmacharya*, the period of discipline, wherein the energy is conserved for those performances which are required to be undergone subsequently through the stages of *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*.

*Grihastha* dharma is what is known as family life, generally speaking. It is also a very difficult life. It does not mean that the disciplined *brahmachari* suddenly becomes indulgent when he becomes a householder. That is not so. It is another kind of discipline altogether. All the four stages are stages of discipline only, but they are different kinds of discipline. It does not mean that in the *grihastha* stage you have got a long rope, whereas in

*brahmacharya* you are all controlled. Nothing of the kind. Many a time you will feel that the life of a *grihasthi* is more difficult, disciplined and controlled than even the *brahmacharis* because you are actually in contact with things in the world in front of you while living a life of conservation and discipline. The *brahmacharin* has lesser difficulties; the *grihasthi* has greater difficulties. Therefore, the discipline that the *grihasthi* has to undergo in terms of the difficulties of the entanglements in which he is involved is much greater.

A *grihasthi* is a person who holds the house. That is the meaning of *grihasthi*: one who resides in the house, and the other ashramas are supposed to be dependent on him. The *brahmachari*, the *vanaprasthi* and the *sannyasi* are taken care of by the *grihasthi*. In one of the sutras or aphorisms of the Brahmasutra, the *grihastha* dharma is considered as an integrated existence. *Grihastha* is the word used there because all-round discipline is necessary in *grihastha* dharma, whereas a unilateral type of discipline is required in the other stages of life. The physical, psychological and social disciplines required of the householder are more difficult to practise than the ones that are before the *brahmachari*, the *vanaprasthi* or the *sannyasi*.

The daily routine of the *grihasthi* is more variegated and complicated than the duties of a *brahmachari*, a *vanaprasthi* or a *sannyasi*. The *pancha mahayajnas*, as they are called, the five great sacrifices which a householder has to perform every day, are very important to make note of. He

has to offer his daily worship to the gods who are not only superintending over our sense organs and controlling them, but are taking care of us. The higher divinities in heaven are the superintending powers which are lodged in our various sense organs, and if these divinities were not to operate, we would not see, we would not hear, we would not think, we would not have any consciousness of our existence. Surya—Aditya, the Sun god—is the superintending power over our eyes. The Ashwinis as celestials are the determining factors of our organ of smell. Varuna is the deity superintending over taste by the tongue. The quarters of the skies, called the Digdevatas, are the deities which regulate our organ of hearing, and Vayu Devata, the wind god, is the power superintending over the sense of touch. The Moon determines the mind, Brahma determines the intellect, Vishnu determines the subconscious or the memory, and Rudra decides the fate of our egoism. These are some of the gods who are worshipped daily by the *grihasthi* in a particular ritual called Deva-yajna—offerings made to the gods.

We have also to pay our gratitude to the rishis who handed over, through a succession of Gurus and disciples, the knowledge which we have gained. The study of the Veda, the study of the Upanishads or any scripture has been made possible to us because of the hierarchy of the knowledge that has come down to us through a lineage of Guru and disciple from rishis who are the originators of these scriptures. Therefore, the study of the scriptures is

a daily ritual of the *grihasthi*, by which he discharges the debt to the rishis. It is called Brahma-yajna.

Our ancestors who are no more here, who have gone to the other world, also expect a recompense from us for all the good they have done to us. Libations are offered during *shraddha* and related ceremonies, and this is one of the five great sacrifices, called Pitri-yajna.

There is the serving of the guests; at least one guest must be fed every day. The rule is that when your worship and rituals of the day are over, and you are sitting for your midday meal, you have to open the front door and see if anybody is standing in outside it. If anybody is standing there, he must be fed first. An uninvited person who is standing there is called *atithi*. *Atithi* is considered as God Himself. A person who suddenly presents himself without your having invited him is God coming. This is what Indian tradition believes. That person has to be fed first, and you take your meal afterwards. So open your door and see if anyone without food is standing in front of it. Give him food, and then take your meal. Every day this has to be done. This is Manushya-yajna—feeding, entertaining the guests. Then you have to feed the animals; there are so many dogs, birds, crows, etc., wandering about. Give them their due. That is Bhuta-yajna.

Thus, Deva-yajna, Brahma-yajna, Pitri-yajna, Manusha-yajna and Bhuta-yajna are the sacrifices which a householder has to perform every day. To

do this, he has to earn his livelihood. That is again a very difficult thing, which the *brahmachari* has not to do. So all these make one feel that *grihastha* dharma is more difficult. It is a tremendous discipline through which one has to pass in order that one may gradually free oneself from the clutches of the laws of nature, the laws of society, and the laws of the physical world. Freedom from the laws of nature, or any kind of law, is possible only by obeying that law. You cannot bypass a law. When a law is obeyed, it also frees you at the same time; but if you violate the law, it catches hold of you.

Thus, through these stages, the ashrama dharmas, you obey the law of nature, of society, and also of your physical body. By discharging the obligation and the debt that you have to pay to them, you gradually free yourself from them. After the maturity that you gained by living the disciplined life of a householder, you are now given permission to free yourself from all the obligations of a householder. You can become a free to a large extent—become a recluse, a *vanaprasthi*.

## Chapter 5

### INTRODUCTION TO THE EPICS

In an earlier session we discussed the foundations of Indian culture and the inner contents and classification of the Vedas. Next we moved further on to a consideration of the special emphases laid in the course of history on the different sections of the Vedas, with some groups or communities laying emphasis on the Samhitas, others on the Brahmanas, and others on the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

Orthodox Vedic pundits who are available to us even today in small numbers in India study the Veda Samhitas by rote, by heart, and they make it a profession. Study of the Veda Samhitas requires the capacity to recite the Samhitas. Emphasis is laid on the Brahmanas in the form of the Mimamsa doctrine of ritualism, *karma-kanda* as it is known in Sanskrit, and the externalised form of the application of the Veda mantras. The mantras of the Vedas were originally intended as prayers to the gods who, in the beginning, were conceived as a group superintending over all the powers of nature, and were later on clubbed into different categories of ruling powers, culminating with a monotheistic concept of the one God and the Absolute. This aspect of the Veda mantras was taken up for

meditational purposes in the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The ethical and the moral side, the sociological side, became the study of the Smritis, eighteen in number, of which the Manusmriti, the Yajnavalkya Smriti and the Parashara Smriti are the most important. What is it that the Smritis tell us? I am repeating what I said in an earlier session. The aims of existence conceived as material needs, emotional needs, ethical needs and moral needs centred round the final aim of life, which is moksha, liberation of the spirit, which achievement was attempted through an internal educational process of actual living in the world through the stages of *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. All this we have already observed in some detail.

Thus, the aim of life, which is the liberation of the spirit, is the conditioning factor of ethical and moral living in the world—righteousness and justice. Even the permission to have material comforts and emotional satisfactions in our life is determined by the law of the universal salvation of the soul.

It is very difficult to imagine how, in India, every aspect of life has been interpreted in terms of the highest aim, which is the principal occupation of all mankind. These days, this widespread, well thought-out, precise pattern of living laid down for us by our ancients through the Smritis is forgotten. We do not seem to be living for the sake of the ultimate liberation of the spirit. The very idea of it

has been brushed aside from our brains on account of intense pressure laid on us by economic factors, physical needs, political conditions and community values. We live in communities, we have national barriers, we have political limitations of various kinds, and today our needs are, principally, wrongly conceived as economic and material. We have come down far from the ancient ideal, looking to the effect and the fruit only, which we want to reap and enjoy without knowing that the fruit will not come unless there is a tree which is well planted.

How would we expect material comfort, emotional satisfaction and security of any kind unless there is a law that operates permitting us to have these perquisites? From where will we get our material needs? How will we have mental satisfaction, peace of mind and emotional security? How can we be guarded from the onslaughts of nature and other people in the world? Where comes the necessity for setting up a set of regulations and a system of law and order? On what ground will we contemplate the system of the management of human society unless there is a basic, universally acceptable principle? This principle on which every other consideration is based, and has to be based, is the principle of the universal liberation of the spirit—not merely of mankind, but of creation as a whole. Here is the forte, the strong point of India's culture, which has been misunderstood by modern historians as an otherworldly consideration, which it is not. Liberation of the spirit is not something that is to

take place after the death of the body. This is a misguided, modern interpretation of wrongly written history. Religion is not a guideline or a map which will take us to the other world. Religion is a consideration of this world itself.

Actually, this so-called moksha is not outside the world; it is inside the world in the same way as our soul is not outside our body. It is inside us. It is us. What we call liberation of the spirit is nothing but the realisation of the Self of the whole cosmos, the Soul of the universe, and if we consider the Soul of the universe to be somewhere far off outside the universe, it will be like thinking that our soul is outside the body, and in order to reach our soul we have to move geographically from our body to the soul. What is the distance between our body and our soul? That is the distance between life in this world and life in moksha. There is no distance. This subtlety is not properly grasped by modern theologians, philosophers, historians and leaders of mankind who say that India is a religious country and it thinks only of the other world. Especially Christian bigots and evangelists who try to throw dust upon Hinduism are very much interested in emphasising this aspect of a wrongly interpreted so-called otherworldly aspect of Hinduism, which Hinduism does not have. And modern education in colleges and universities, being practically Christian-oriented and Western-oriented, has thrust this wrong notion into the brains of modern youth who even now incorrectly think that the Hindu religion is an otherworldly affair and that it

has no concern with modern physical, material, down-to-earth life.

Other doctrines such as communism, socialism, etc., which rebut the very idea of religion, also have a wrong notion of what religion actually means because they think that religion does not feed the stomach of a person, that it only promises an otherworldly goal to the soul, if it all there is a soul. These are the two errors of laying excess emphasis on the economic and the physical side of life, without proper understanding of the relation between matter and spirit. Communism, socialism, anti-God and atheistic religions, which are also a kind of religion, arise not because they say something wrong, but because whatever they say is based on wrong foundations.

The relation between this world and the other world, the relation between matter and spirit, the relation between religion and political existence, is like the relation between your body and your soul, so you cannot emphasise the body aspect of your life too much and forget that you have a soul and a consciousness. I am telling you all these things in order to remove from your mind any idea that religion is connected with life in the other world and it is a temple worship of gods who are not in this world. Religion is the worship of gods who are in this world—not only in this world, but who are the guiding principles of this world. In the same way as the soul is permeating every cell of your body, religious spirit is to permeate every activity of your life. Even your kitchen and bathroom are to

be conditioned by this great goal of moksha because nothing that belongs to your body is outside the activity of the spirit, or the soul, which you really are. This is something very intricate, and though all the implications of much of it might not have entered your mind, it is good for you to think over this aspect of it.

Thus, these are some of the conclusions that we wisely draw from the contents of the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishads and the Smritis, which laid down for us the pattern of the concept of the aims of existence—dharma, artha, kama, moksha—in connection with which it was necessary to tell you something more as to what moksha is. Moksha is not something that will take place in the future; it is an eternity that is operating. Moksha is identical with timeless eternity, and inasmuch as moksha is not in time, it is not a question of tomorrow. Moksha is not an after-death affair. There is no question of 'after' because there is no time there. It is a just now, here. That is moksha. This is a hard nut to crack. Ordinary minds cannot grasp this subtlety of the very concept of freedom of the spirit, which is not tomorrow's matter; it is a matter concerning just this moment, at this place where you are seated. It is a question of here and now, as they say. So much about the basic scriptures, the foundations of Indian culture, which are recorded for us in the Vedas, or the Srutis as they are called, and the Smritis.

Though the essentials of the practice of religion, the practice of these injunctions of the

Vedas and the Smritis, which I tried to delineate in these few sessions, appear to be clear to some extent, they did not become clear to every mind of every person for all time. Even those who are well-educated and clear-headed are not in a position to keep this in their minds for a long time. After hearing all this, they will again think that God is outside the world, that God is above in heaven, and moksha is after death. These ideas will persist in them wherever they go, and if such educated persons can find it hard to maintain the true spirit of what culture in the sense of the freedom of the spirit is, what to speak of common folk, rustics, farmers, tillers who are more body-oriented than intellectuals or the spirit-oriented? But to them religion had to give sufficient attention.

The culture of India is not only for intellectuals, it is not only for students in a university, it is not only for Brahmins or pundits, it is not only for Kshatriyas or rulers and administrators, it is not only for traders, but it is also for the lowest, the downtrodden. The very purpose of the culture of India is to see that the spirit of freedom is inculcated into the minds of even those who do not know what freedom is. Even if a person does not know what freedom is, it is necessary for him to be free. People are so very untutored in the art of living that they do not even know that they are bound. Merely because they have no consciousness of there being such a thing called freedom, it is not proper for those who have such consciousness to exploit them.

Indian culture is a broad-based, charitable action of enlightened ones for the purpose of bringing the very same enlightenment even to those who do not know that they are bound. Even to the lowest and the most unlettered, this spirit of the freedom of the soul has to be introduced gradually by a process of education. Cultural values are actually processes of education. Today we have education, but the subjects are compartmentalised, departmentalised specialisations in certain sciences and the humanities, as they are called. But culture, which is inseparable from true education, is so inclusive that it has not ignored the operation of any aspect of human nature.

Therefore, it became necessary for the promulgators of India's culture, especially in ancient times, to find some way or means to drive into the minds of those who are not academically qualified, those who are not pundits, what religion is. When I use the word 'religion', please be cautious to keep in mind that it is not used in the sense of anything that is not of this world; it is always used in the sense of an enlightening scientific operation taking place on this very earth itself, in your very body. Religion is an imminence, and not merely a transcendence.

The work of introducing the spirit of true culture, spirituality and religion, bringing it down to the earth, to the streets and to the marketplace, to the fields and to the shops, was attempted by experts such as the writers of our great epics, especially the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The

Ramayana and the Mahabharata are known as stories of something that happened years back. In the same way as there are wrong notions of religion, spirituality and moksha, there are wrong notions about the intention behind the Ramayana and the Mahabharata epics. These epics were not written merely to tell us some stories. They are not Aesop's or Grimm's fairy tales. They are a modus operandi of telling us the very same truth that has been more precisely and scientifically laid down in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Smritis.

The Srutis and the Smritis are difficult because they are down to earth and mathematically pinpointed in their teachings. In mathematics there is no story, and there is no emotion in the calculation of equations, etc., yet it rules the world, as we know. Mathematics is an exact science, and logic is also an exact science. Hence, logic and mathematics, as it were, became the foundations of a precise way of thinking which is at the back of the Veda Samhitas, the Srutis and the Smritis. But we are not always logicians and mathematicians, and exact, precise, calculated thinking is not accessible to every mind everywhere. So the epics tell us what the groundings of the Vedas and the Smritis are in a more satisfying and considerate way by recounting to us what happened in this connection in ancient times, in historical days. There was the time of Rama, and there was the time of the Pandavas and the Kauravas during the time of Bhagavan Sri Krishna.

We do not merely want to understand things; we also wish to see these things that we are understanding. Calculus is very clear indeed, and the intellect, the reason, is able to appreciate it, but the heart has a reason which the reason does not know, as they say. Sometimes the heart says something which the intellect does not say. The intellect accepts everything that is logically presented, but the heart has some problem with logically acceptable truth because it wants a peculiar kind of satisfaction which only the emotion can understand.

Spiritual seekers, students of culture in its practical aspect, should also be psychologists to some extent. It is not that you are mugging up something that you read in textbooks or is told to you in colleges by your teachers and professors. It is necessary for you to know what you are seeking as a student in a college or a university. When you try to find out what it is that you require, you must know something about yourself. What are your needs? For that you must know something about yourself. A good student of culture or an educationist should also be a good psychologist. You have to know something about your mind, and when you go into the depths of these needs of your personality, you will realise that your emotions are as strong as your intellect, and your emotional needs are as important and urgent as your intellectual requirements. Intellectual education is as important as emotional education, and vice versa, emotional education is as important as

intellectual education. The Vedas, the Srutis and the Smritis, to which we made reference earlier, spoke principally to the intellectual and rational side of human nature, and not so much to the emotional side. The emotion has to be paid sufficient attention, and this work has been attempted by the epics: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and some of the Puranas.

An epic, or an Itihasa as it is called in the Sanskrit language, is basically a history of events that took place some centuries back. There are epics everywhere in the world. There are Greek epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* written by Homer, which delineate the story of the Trojan War and such things, and the achievements of Ulysses, Achilles, and heroes of that kind in the Greek world. Epics are heroic poems. In the epics there is always a spirit of valour, chivalry, a warlike spirit and action, and that we find in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as we have in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There is another important epic in the Latin language, written by Virgil, and that epic is called *Aeneid*, which refers to Roman history. Then we have the great epic of Dante, called *Divine Comedy* in three books, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, worth reading indeed. It is a wonderful epic of the ascent of the soul from hell to heaven through the purgation of suffering which it has to undergo on the way. Then we have Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, an English epic, and we have the stories of *Edda* in Iceland culture, and epics of Nordic culture, etc.

Likewise, we have heroic poems in India, principally the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, written in Sanskrit. Actually, India's culture is not only in Sanskrit. Indian culture is also in some other languages, for example, Tamil. The Tamil language is a very ancient cultural foundation, and modern English-educated youth have very little access to this culture of the Tamils. As we have great *kavyas* or literature in Sanskrit, such as that written by Kalidasa, etc., we have great epics in Tamil which are as profound, I should say sometimes more profound, than in those in Sanskrit verse, such as *Cilappatikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Valayapathi*, *Kundalakesi* and *Civaka Cintamani*. These are the five great Tamil epics. Only those who are capable of understanding classical Tamil, not the ordinary workaday Tamil, may be able to appreciate these masterly expositions of the wondrous secrets of human life. We have epics in the Kannada language, in the Telugu language, etc., also adding to the cultural value of the entire country.

But the origin of the concept of the epic arose from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which are translated into other languages also, in poetic style, by great experts. The idea behind these epics is to instil into our mind an emotional appreciation of the very same truths of the Srutis and the Smritis, the Vedas and the Dharma Shastras.

I again repeat to you to read these books: *The Foundations of Indian Culture* and *The Human Cycle* by Aurobindo, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* by Dr. Radhakrishnan, and other

introductory books such as *The Spiritual Heritage of India* by Swami Prabhānanda, and I added one more: *Vedic Religion and Philosophy* by Swami Prabhavananda. If you read these books, you will have some idea of what is actually the implication of what I am saying to you.

When you read the epics, the glorious Ramayana and Mahabharata, you will always feel that you are stimulated from inside, as if you are drinking a cup of strong coffee. You are stirred up. After reading some passages of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, you will not be the same person that you were before you took up the book. And these epics are so impressive, so catching, so enlightening and absorbing, that you will not like to put the book down. Some of the plays of Shakespeare are also like that. When you start reading some of Shakespeare's plays, you will not like to put the book down until you complete the whole thing because they are so absorbing, and so very interesting and practical. They are emotionally attractive, and therefore it is that you feel the need to study them right from the beginning to the end. Like attractive novels, they will catch you from the very root of your soul, and you would not like to put them down until you go through the whole book, so absorbing they are.

Therefore, the spirit of a novel, the spirit of a literature, the spirit of a heroic poem and the spirit of a spiritual teaching are all found clubbed together in these great epics. Masterly literatures are these Ramayana and Mahabharata epics—the

Ramayana written by Valmiki and the Mahabharata written by Sage Vyasa.

In the Ramayana, the literary aspect of Sanskrit is lyrically oriented, mellifluous, smoothly flowing, calming the spirit, calming the emotions, stilling your passions like the slow, steady, calm and quiet movement of the Ganga in the wintertime. It is not the tumultuous movement of the Ganga during the rainy season; that is the Mahabharata. If you want to know how the Ramayana story moves smoothly, as if it is not moving at all and yet moving, you can see the Ganga moving in winter. It is moving, yet it does not appear to be moving at all. Calm and quiet, leisurely and majestically, royally, the Ganga moves during the winter season. But see the Ganga during the month of July and August; that is the Mahabharata. Great things are coming; huge waves dash over one another. A cataclysm of thoughts, an avalanche of ideas descend on your head when you read the Mahabharata, and you are stirred into a spirit of intense activity and doing something in some way or the other for some purpose. This spirit is instilled in you by the Mahabharata of Vyasa, whereas when you read the Ramayana you are calm, quiet, subdued, and feel sober and restful. Militant language is used in the Sanskrit of the Mahabharata. Virile poetry is the Mahabharata, whereas the Ramayana may be said to be a feminine type of poetry, calm, quiet, sober, leisurely, not roughly yelling out. Rough and rue poetry is sometimes seen in the Mahabharata,

whereas calm and quiet, beautiful poetry is in the Ramayana.

I shall tell you something about the origin of the Ramayana epic and the Mahabharata epic as a kind of interesting information which you will be happy to know.

Sage Valmiki was walking in the woods, and he saw a hunter shooting a bird, a male bird which was with its consort on a tree. The male and female birds were *krouncha* and *krounchi*, a variety of birds. The couple were on a tree, and the hunter shot an arrow at the male bird. The poet, Sage Valmiki, was looking at it, feeling grieved and struck to the quick. He uttered an imprecation, cursing the hunter, and this Sanskrit verse is the beginning of the Ramayana. *Mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvamaḡamaḡ śāśvatīḡ samāḡ, yat krauñcamithunādekam avadhīḡ kāmamohitam:* “Wretched man! Eagerly, affectionately the couple were seated on the tree; the lover and the beloved were sitting with great joy inwardly. Cruelly you struck one of them. Therefore, I utter this word: May you not live long. May also you die as you made the poor bird die.”

Brahma, the Creator, upon hearing these words of the great Sage Valmiki, immediately came down and said, “In this series of words that you have uttered, you have glorified Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu. I ask you to write the whole story of Rama.”

The sage was stunned. “When did I utter words in praise of Rama? I cursed the hunter; that’s all I said. I never took the name of Rama, I don’t know

anything about Vishnu's incarnation, and I was not in a mood to glorify anyone. I was, rather, in a mood to curse."

"No, it is not so. You thought it is a curse but actually, inadvertently, you uttered not merely prose, you spoke poetry," said Brahma.

"Poetry? I uttered poetry in cursing?" replied Valmiki.

It is said that this is the first verse of a type of a poem in Sanskrit, and so Valmiki is called the original Sanskrit poet of India.

Now, if you want to know how a curse could be construed as a prayer or a glorification of God in the words of this verse, you must know something of Sanskrit; otherwise, my attempt to explain this intricacy is a waste of time because it is a grammatical peculiarity, due to which a curse has become a blessing and a prayer. There is a grammatical peculiarity in the words of the verse which suddenly converts the curse, internally, into a prayer to God Almighty, especially in the form of Rama. This is about the origin of the Ramayana, and on the order received from Brahma, the Creator, Valmiki wrote the epic during the time of Rama himself, not after the passing away of Rama. Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama, and as events took place, he wrote. Some people say that Valmiki wrote the Ramayana even before the events took place on account of his omniscience. So this is the beginning of the Ramayana in Sanskrit poetry.

How did the Mahabharata start? Vyasa Krishna Dvaipayana, as he is called, one of the Avataras of

Vishnu, wrote the Mahabharata. He prayed to Brahma: "I require a clerical assistant to take down the verses of the great epic that I am thinking of in my mind. Can you suggest somebody?"

"Why, no problem; Ganesha is there," Brahma replied. "Ganesha will be your clerk. He will take down whatever you say. Let the epic, the Mahabharata, come. I bless you with success."

Then Brahma requested Ganesha, "You please help Vyasa. He will dictate, and you take it down."

Ganesha came and sat before the great Vyasa and said, "I shall do your work, but on the condition that my pen should not stop. If you start thinking in the middle, scratching your head and making me wait for the next word that you speak, I will get up and go away from this place. So you must speak continuously so that my pen should not stop. On that condition I will do this work of writing."

Vyasa thought, "This is a very great condition you are putting on me." So he thought of a peculiar tactic which would put Ganesha to a little difficulty. So Vyasa said, "I also put one condition, that without understanding what I say, you should not write."

Then purposely, to make Ganesha think a little while as to what Vyasa is saying, here and there he put such hard-nut verses that it is not easy to make out their meaning. If Ganesha, the Lord of Wisdom, requires time to think of the meaning of some of the verses, you can imagine what they could be. In the whole of the Mahabharata, one hundred thousand verses, there are eight thousand verses of this kind.

They are called knots of Vyasa, eight thousand, and when he uttered those words, Ganesha would think about them. By that time Vyasa would go to the next verse. This is an interesting relationship between the wondrous Vyasa and the more wonderful Ganesha.

The Mahabharata was written by Vyasa as the story of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and the Ramayana was written by Valmiki as the story of Rama on the one hand and Ravana on the other hand. A great wonder is this set of epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; and if you want to read a shortened form, or an abridged form of these great epics, you can read the beautiful English rendering of them by Sri Rajagopalachari. Sri Rajagopalachari's rendering of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, and he brings the true spirit of the whole of each epic, though in a very abridged form, about two hundred and fifty pages each. You will know what these great epics are. Rajagopalachari thought our modern youth do not know what the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are. They have not even heard the names of these epics. Knowing that even modern youth who are so-called educated are not acquainted with even the basic knowledge of the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Rajagopalachari took them up. He originally wrote them in Tamil, and then he put them into English. So you can read these two books, Rajagopalachari's rendering of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. I am not asking you to read bigger volumes as they

are very confusing, so these two are good enough.  
Here we close with this brief consideration.

## Chapter 6

# SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA

Epics play a significant role in the cultural values of people. This speciality of epic literature in the world is not in any way less profound than the basic scriptures of the religions of mankind as a whole.

With special reference to the cultural foundations of India we highlighted the inner contents of the Vedas, or the Srutis, as they are called, and the Smritis which, in their wide gamut of comprehension, brought together into a focus all that can be regarded as valuable in life—namely, the universal element, the objective element and the subjective element; or, to put it more plainly, we can say God, world and soul. The universal element is God, the objective element is the world, and the subjective element is one's own soul, oneself, the individual. The whole of existence is comprehended in this classification of God, world and soul. Everything that follows in any department of life has its roots in the concept of this threefold visualisation of reality: God, world and soul.

While the Vedas, the Srutis—the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads—

centred themselves primarily on the concept of God, world and individual, the Smritis took upon themselves the task of the social side of human existence as well, which is not an essential concern of the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

I mentioned the primary principles of existence which are comprehended in the concepts of God, world and soul, but where is such a thing called society? What do we mean by society? Society is the arrangement of the individuals themselves into a group or a pattern of systematised living for the purpose of convenience—geographically, ethically, historically, traditionally or whatever form the reason behind this classification takes. The social classification of human society into the system of cooperative existence, which took care of the welfare of society as well as the political administration, was the subject of the Smritis—the development of society as a horizontal expansion of human individuality and a vertical concern of the individual's personal education through the stages of life, on which we bestowed sufficient thought. It is the concept of the *purusharthas*—dharma, artha, kama and moksha—and the *varna ashrama* dharma, as it is known in terms of the social classification of the function of people and the process of internal educational for the vertical ascent of consciousness. This is something about the foundation of India's culture: the Srutis and the Smritis. Dharma Shastra is another name for Smriti; Sruti is another name for Veda.

I mentioned during the previous session that the emotional side of human nature requires to be attended to from the point of view of the correct practice of religion, because the rationality on which the Srutis and the Smritis are founded has to be supplemented by the total upsurge of the human personality, which has various psychological aspects. The mind of a human being is capable of classification into intellect, feeling, will and memory. The aspect of will determines our activities, our projects, our decisions and our occupations in life. The aspect of feeling is at the back of even our activities in life, and generally we do not do whatever we do not feel like doing. Compulsions there are, of course, many a time imposed upon us by the rules of the government or traditions of society, which may sometimes be in harmony with our own requirements and feelings, but also may sometimes not be in harmony with our own personal feelings. Anyway, the feeling plays an important role, which subject is taken up by the authors of the epics, especially the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in India, to which we made reference previously.

Human society is the subject of the Ramayana: how society involves itself in various aspects of its internal culture and struggles to slowly integrate itself into a cohesive, cooperative fabric of internal stability, gradually rising from the potentials of the disintegration of society that may be inherent in the beginning. The story of the Ramayana is something known to you all, and I am not going to tell the

story. I also mentioned that for your edification you may read the brief presentation exquisitely done by Sri Rajagopalachari in his abridgements of the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata because merely listening to the stories will not do you much good. The stories as novels, for instance, move, carrying us forward along the lines of our feelings, which touches our hearts and brings up to the surface of our consciousness that which is buried in our feelings. Many a time our intellect and rationality take an upper hand in our life, and in the hurry and bustle of their intense activity very little time is allowed for the emotions to take part in our intellectual activity. Our feelings and our reason should go together in order that our perceptions may be integrated. It is not that we feel something which is against our understanding and rationality, or we are forced to come to a logical decision which is not compatible with our instinctive feelings. The logicity of life and the instinctive nature of personal existence are both taken into a harmonious state of consideration in the epics. How this exquisite work has been executed by the poets of the epics can be appreciated only if you read the epics yourself, if possible in their original, or in a very able précis or abridgement.

The mystical interpretation of the epics, the spiritual connotation that seems to be there at the back of the story of the Ramayana, makes out that the story of Rama and Sita and their encounter with Ravana have a reference to our own personal life. The soul is bereaved when it is dissociated from its

harmonious contact with the mind, which is Sita. Rama is in search of Sita, the soul is in search of the mind in the wilderness of existence where the sense organs roam about in the forest of ignorance. That is one analogy that is brought out. The other analogy is that the ten-headed Ravana is the monstrous mind with its ten senses. The five senses of knowledge and the five organs of action are the ten heads of the mind, which is eager to take advantage of the first opportunity to grab objects; and, as we know, the sense organs have no other work than to attempt at grabbing things that are outside in the world. Ravana was a grabber. He vanquished all the ownership of people even up to the heavens, threw the gods out of their seats and took possession of all their worth and value, and the property of everyone in heaven as well as on earth. A person who went to the extreme of greed and passion and took his ego to its apex, up to the breaking point, and lived the glory of utter selfishness, caring not for the welfare of anybody else—this principle is exemplified in the concept of Ravana.

Generally in our epic stories, these demons come in pairs. There are the demon brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu in the Srimad Bhagavata. Ravana and Kumbhakarna were brothers. Shishupala and Dantavakra were brothers. The reason for this twin performance of a demoniacal nature is the dual way in which ignorance acts upon us, covering the consciousness of reality and projecting the consciousness of

unreality. Whenever a war takes place between the divine natures and the demoniacal natures, whether it is an encounter with Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu, Ravana and Kumbhakarna or Shishupala and Dantavakra, we will find the stronger one is encountered afterwards, the weaker one is encountered first. Kumbhakarna dies first, Ravana afterwards. Dantavakra goes first, Shishupala afterwards. Hiranyaksha dies first and Hiranyakashipu dies afterwards. This is to illustrate the manner of our extrication of consciousness from involvement in world perception. Firstly, the attempt is to be weaned from the compulsion to sensorily contact objects of the world; that is the younger brother. The elder brother, who causes this compulsion to perceive sense objects, is ignorance. The cause is more difficult to face than the effect, so the effect has to be encountered first and we take care of the cause afterwards.

In spiritual practice we move from effect to cause, and not from cause to effect. Lesser involvements are to be taken into consideration first, and they have to be handled effectively before the larger involvements are taken care of. It is something like knots in a rope tied one over the other, wherein the attempt is to untie the outer knot first, and the inner knots are untied afterwards because they are at the root and they are the support. In a similar manner, in the treatment of illnesses, for instance, we take into consideration the acute form of a disease first and the chronic form afterwards. Likewise is the

spiritual encounter in the world. The Ravana-Kumbhakarna episode, and many others of that kind, illustrate the spiritual activity of the human individual in withdrawing its concern from external perception first and then trying to bring about a state of inner illumination afterwards.

The externality that is involved in human life is a subsequent phenomenon arisen after the creation of individuality itself. There cannot be society unless there are individuals. There cannot be perception of a thing outside unless there is a perceiver. Therefore, the movement is from the internal to the external. The internality involved in perception is, again, a consequence of a fall from Universality. God, Vishnu, Narayana, who is the embodiment of Universality, has to descend into human form as Rama, for instance, and then faces the social consequences, all which are the whole story of the Ramayana.

The coming of God into the state of Incarnation is an epic illustration of the fall of man, the coming down of the Universal into the state of particularity, where the story does not end. The Universal does not take an Avatar, or Incarnation, and then keep quiet. It actively engages itself in the purpose for which the Incarnation has taken place. In the case of ordinary individuals, the purpose of the coming down of the Universal into the state of the particular is to concern itself with the whole social atmosphere, which includes not merely human beings outside but everything that is visible to the eyes—all that is subhuman, including animals,

plants, and even inanimate nature. Our concern with this level below the human is the activity of the human individual that has come down as a particular, as a descent, as it were, from the Universal that the individuality originally was. Avataras, Incarnations, are the subject of the Puranas. We say Vishnu has taken ten Avataras, among many others. The Incarnation of God is the concretisation of the Universal in the particular.

Now, there is a distinction between ordinary human beings and Avataras. In one sense we have all come from the Universal Being, but none of us can be regarded as an Incarnation, or an Avatara, for an important reason. The Avatara, or the Incarnation, is conscious of its relationship with the Universal from where it has come, or of which it is a descendent, whereas ordinary human individuals like us are not aware that we have come from the Universal. Both have come from the same source, but one is aware of its link with the Universal from where it has come, of which it is an offshoot, and the other is totally unconcerned with the origin from where it has come. In one of the verses of the Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, "Many births I have taken and you also have taken, but I am aware of all these linkages of incarnations through which I have passed, whereas you are not aware of it."

In an Incarnation, the Universal is pressed into concentration and focused activity in some measure, in some percentage, in some degree, and the importance or the power of the Avatara, or the

Incarnation, depends upon the percentage of Universality that is pressed into action in an individual form, and so we have got Kala Avataras, Amsa Avataras and Purna Avataras, as they are called—that is, segmented Incarnation, lesser percentage of Incarnation, and complete Incarnation. If the entire sunlight is focused through a beam, it will be as hot and as radiant as the original sunlight, which is something like a Purna Avatara of the sun, but if this light is diluted through an aperture which is connected with a medium that lessens the intensity of the light, even distorts it in some way, the Avatara of the sun would be diminished to that extent and the power of the light will be less.

The Incarnation is a conscious descent of the Universal into the particular, whereas the birth of people like us is an unconscious coming from the Universal to the particular. Though we are equally conscious, something has hindered the manifestation of that consciousness in us, due to karma. It is believed that Avataras have no karma and they do not come because of the pressure of some karma that they did in the past. It is a deliberate coming down. If we purposely do something, it is an Avatara, but if we are compelled to do something, it is karma acting. We are born by the compulsion of our previous deeds, but Incarnations are a voluntary, deliberate, conscious coming of the Universal into the particular for a special purpose. So are the Avataras, of which Rama is one and Krishna is another.

Rama Avatara is the subject of the Ramayana of Valmiki, and Krishna Avatara is the subject of the Mahabharata of Vyasa. In the previous session I mentioned the literary beauty of the Ramayana and the tumultuous style which the Mahabharata adopts in a more virile fashion. The whole purpose of the enactment of this drama that is portrayed in the epics is to describe human life itself as it moves through the process of evolution.

First of all, there is an incipient complacency of the human individual in childhood. Whether they are the Pandava brothers in the Mahabharata or Rama and his brothers in the Ramayana, everything seemed to be going on very well when they were little children. Princes they were. The children of kings have no worry, botheration or any apprehension of future problems. But on account of the innocence born of an ignorance of events that are yet to take place, they were suddenly confronted with some realities of life which posed themselves in a manner which, in their innocence of childhood, was never expected. Mostly our innocence of childhood is attended with ignorance. It is not innocence born of wisdom, but innocence born of not knowing the facts of life.

Then the marriage took place, the wedding of Sita with Rama, all on a grand scale, only to be faced with a tremendous consequence which was very unexpected, which is the exile of Rama from the palace, and the Pandavas going to the wilderness in the context of the Mahabharata. How happy the Pandavas were with their princely costumes and

royal comforts! They were about to ascend the throne, and really Yudhisthira did ascend the throne, in a way, after he performed the great *rajasuya* sacrifice, but it was only an apparent joy.

Rama was to be installed on the throne. Glory was before him; everywhere was music and dance, everywhere gaiety, everywhere glorious preparation for the coming of the new king, and a little hunchback put down all the glory and the joy, the royal preparation, the power of Dasharatha, and the expectations of Rama himself. A little thing like a small grain of sand sitting on the pupil of our eye can disturb our entire perception, obstructing the vision of the whole sun itself. Earthly glory is very attractive. It is all milk and honey. There is nothing wrong with this world. We are going to be princes and emperors, rulers, ministers, presidents, and so on. Gold and silver, milk and honey, these are the stuff of life. This is what we were told earlier. But there is a thorn at the back of every beautiful rose flower, and when we touch it, it will prick us. From a distance it is beautiful, but when we touch it, it has its own sting.

Both in the Ramayana and in the Mahabharata we find an initial picture of the glory of human life, only to be contaminated by the vision of a poisonous sting that also is a part of human existence. Life is not always smooth going. It is not like walking on a tarred road where we can drive blindly, as it were. There are zigzag movements, ups and downs, and everywhere we have to be conscious of what is ahead of us. Every step that we

take is to be taken with great caution, and we cannot walk in this world with closed eyes.

So Rama, the great would-be emperor, and Yudhisthira, the would-be king, were both thrown out of gear, and it appeared as if they had nothing to say in this matter, one for one reason and the other for another reason altogether. And both worked for dharma. The dharma of obedience to the word of the father was the cause of exile in the case of the Ramayana, and the dharma of sticking to the principle of royal justice was the cause of exile in the case of the Mahabharata.

You will be surprised, actually, if you read the original Ramayana, that Dasharatha did not openly tell Rama to go. It was Kaikeyi who said, "He cannot speak until you leave this place. He is disturbed. You leave this place. He wants to say that you should leave this place and go to the forest. I am telling you his word." She went on dinning this into the ears of Rama, but mum sat Dasharatha, wailing. Dasharatha did not open his mouth and tell Rama to go. Kaikeyi took this task upon herself and said, "I am telling his royal word. Go! As long as you are standing here, he will not wake up from this. He will die."

What a shock! It is told to us that Rama did not take it as a shock, but he did take it as a shock, if you read Valmiki himself. It was a combination of honey and poison both poured into his mouth at the same time, and he did not know what to say, what to feel. His feeling for his father and his feeling towards his queen Kaikeyi were a mixture of earth

and heaven put together, and this peculiar human tragic situation is exquisitely portrayed in the beautiful poetry of Valmiki. In order to know what was actually the feeling of people at that moment, you should read Valmiki's Ramayana, and not the précis or the abridgement.

The Ayodhya Kanda of the Valmiki Ramayana is a history of human emotion, comedy and tragedy mixed together, the height of glory ahead of us, and also hell at our feet. However, there is a lot of comparison between the events that took place in the case of Rama in the Ramayana and in the case of Yudhisthira and his brothers in the Mahabharata. The movement of history is practically the same in all countries, though there are differences of minor detail. The going into the wilderness of life, living in the forest, is common to both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, though the causative factors behind the two were different. There was a lot of suffering. It was not that Rama was enjoying life in the forest, nor did the Pandava brothers live a happy life there. In the case of one it was fourteen years, in the case of the other it was thirteen years. It was practically the same. There was great difficulty.

What happened to the power of Rama and the power of the Pandavas, which was there with them? Where did Rama's power lie at that time when he was thrown out and asked to go to the forest? Actually, Lakshmana highlighted this aspect. When the news reached that Rama had to go to the forest, Rama took everything calmly and quietly as

the wish of the father, but Lakshmana was not like that. He rose up into action and told Rama, "Today Ayodhya shall cease to exist. There shall be no father, no mother. There shall be nothing here. Lakshmana's power will see that Ayodhya ceases to exist." He took up his bow and arrows, his eyes became red, he was rage incarnate, and he would have actually done something. Rama, the counterpart of this rage of Lakshmana, was like the ocean that was calm and quiet, away from the turmoil of raging rivers in the flood season. Rama calmed Lakshmana down.

So is the case of the fate of the Pandava brothers. The atrocities that were committed in the court of the Kauravas were enough to raise the arms of the brothers of Yudhisthira. They would have taken immediate action. Fire was jetting forth from their eyes and power was manifesting itself from their arms. Bhima stood up. Arjuna looked at his bow and arrow. Yudhisthira, like Rama, with his power of calmness and understanding of the circumstances in which they were involved, just gazed at them with calmness, that they should be calm.

Why should Rama tell Lakshmana to keep quiet when injustice was done to Rama? Why did Yudhisthira tell his brothers to keep quiet when the uttermost disgrace was poured upon them? The time had not come, was the feeling of Yudhisthira; and the father's word cannot be disobeyed, was the feeling of Rama. Whether it is necessary to obey the word of an unjust father or one has to obey the

word of any father, is a question that is placed before us in this great predicament. Commentators on the Ramayana have a hundred things to tell us, and each one says whatever he likes. Do you obey the word of someone just because he is a father, even if he is totally bereft of the sense of justice and righteousness? So was the question of Lakshmana: "What kind of father is this who does not know what is proper?" But Rama's reply was, "Father is father, and whatever be his wish, it has to be fulfilled."

Here is a social contradiction before us. Obedience and conscience sometimes clash within ourselves. Sometimes society seems to be unjust to us; sometimes it feels that the individuals are rebellious and they are to be put down by the force of law. Totalitarian governments consider that the state is the God that is manifest on earth, and individual freedom has to be sacrificed to the state, whereas individuals rebel and say that the state cannot be there unless individuals exist. What for is the state if individuals are not there? For whose sake is the government working if not for the welfare of the people? And if the people are to be merged in the state, for whose sake is the state working? That is one point of view. But the other point of view is that obedience is primary, and rebellious moods cannot be for the welfare of even a single individual. So there is a kind of peculiar extreme in the contrast that political science takes many a time. It is an emphasis laid on the state, and an emphasis laid on individuals.

But people who are more sober in their minds and who are having greater insight into the problems of human existence and the human psyche have come to the conclusion that neither of these points of view can be considered as solely correct. It is not true that the individual is totally independent of the state, and it is also not true that the state is independent of the individual. There is a harmonious relation between the two aspects of their existence: the individual and the collective. This question is poignantly brought before us both in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata: Who is right and who is wrong?

Sri Krishna raised this point in one context when he said to Duryodhana, "Did you not deliberately harm the Pandavas by trickery?"

Duryodhana's retort to Sri Krishna was, "What mistake have I committed? It was a royal game. It was a give-and-take policy of actual dice playing, and as a king Yudhishthira deliberately, voluntarily took up this game of dice, and he lost. What is my mistake? Why are you finding fault with me?"

But Sri Krishna said, "There was *adharma* at the back of this game of dice. The intention was wrong. Your intention was not to merely play dice; your intention was to destroy the Pandavas. A trick was played. A king has to play with a king, but who played with Yudhishthira? Shakuni played. Shakuni is not a king. Where is the justice? Unequals cannot play dice."

Yudhishthira ought to have known this, but some weakness of his mind did not permit him to

know that he was playing a game of dice with an unequal. Actually, Duryodhana ought to have played. He was a king, and a king plays with a king. Duryodhana did not know the art of dice so he tricked Yudhisthira by putting forth Shakuni. Bewilderment caught hold of the mind of Yudhisthira, and he let himself into the quandary of playing with an unequal, which was a royal injustice done to him.

Krishna pointed this out by saying, "Don't tell me that Yudhisthira lost the kingdom of his own will. There was trickery at the back."

Similar was Lakshmana's retort to Rama: "Brother, you do not understand truth properly. There is injustice at the back of this. Cunning is being played by Manthara on the one side and by Kaikeyi on the other side, and Dasharatha, the old man, does not know what he is saying. He made a promise, yes, but who asked him to make a promise? Even when promises are made, one must be capable of knowing what are the consequences."

Promises may be dangerous, especially when they are not rationally conceived. Emotionally projected promises do not generally yield results in an expected way, and the weakness of human nature always has something to say in spite of the part that is played by dharma, justice and law. Does human nature not interfere even in judicature many a time? There is a justice in the court. The judge is a human being, the clients are human beings, and the advocates are human beings. Now, who is to judge whom? How can a judge, who is a

human being like any other person, pass an impartial judgment on another person, who is also like himself?

The idea behind justice is that a judge is not a human being at that time. He raises his perspective, his vision of things, into a larger dimension of comprehensiveness, wherein he lifts himself up above the personality concept of himself. A judge is not a man or a woman sitting there; he is a judiciary in the sense of a large justice or worthwhileness, which is the welfare of the whole nation. As a person he is physically like any client, but the vision before him is not like the vision of the client. An impersonality is at the back of the vision of the judge, while a personality is at the back of the client, or even the advocates arguing the case.

Similarly, in the epics, the concept of dharma is to be interpreted more from the universal point of view than from merely a particular point of view. Even after reading the Ramayana and the Mahabharata a hundred times, we will not find a good solution to these problems. Even today we have great difficulties. What justice was meted out to Rama? For no fault of his, should he be thrown out because somebody said something? Though it is true that he had to obey the word of his father and reap the consequences even if they were bitter, did he deserve it? Can you mete out undeserved punishment to a person in the name of law and justice or dharma, as the case may be? Even though it may have been right on the part of Rama to obey the word of his father who was, of course, to be

respected in every way, Rama had undeserved punishment, which was the point of Lakshmana, to which Rama did not agree; and this disagreement between the viewpoints of Rama and Lakshmana is a point of great social quandary to the interpreters of the Ramayana even today.

Secondly, we have got the encounter of Rama with Vali. I am not taking up that subject here, but it is a question that is raised even today. Why did Rama kill Vali? Did Vali deserve that punishment? What mistake did he commit? Well, he had a little disagreement with his brother, of course, and there was a family feud between Vali and Sugriva, but what did Rama have to do with this matter? Why did he interfere? If it was because of the fact that he had made friendship with Sugriva for the sake of reclaiming Sita, Vali could have also done that work. Vali said, "If that is the reason, I would have done that work for you. In one minute Sita would be here. I would have bundled up Ravana and brought him here. For that sake you killed me, for no fault of mine. What dharma are you practising?" Rama had some answer, but what answer it was, God only knows.

Many other questions also arise. Of the *dharmanishta* Rama, the greatest of the incarnations of dharma and justice, equal to whom nobody existed in this world, Valmiki says *ramo vighrahan dharmah*: "Dharma or justice incarnated itself, as it were, in the personality of Rama." Such a Rama asked Sita to be brought after the death of Ravana, and the jubilant Sita came. Her joy knew no

bounds. But what did Rama tell her? "I have not come for you. You can go wherever you like. I have done my duty." He told worse words than this. "You can marry Lakshmana or Hanuman if you like." What does this mean? A *dharmanishta* who is the incarnation of dharma speaks to Sita, who had no fault on her part. In public, before all people, he said, "Go. Marry Lakshmana or Hanuman." Well, Sita's heart broke, and what broke, God only knows. And then he banished her for no fault of hers.

These are quandaries not merely in the story that Valmiki depicts before us, but a predicament in which every one of us will find ourselves one day or the other. The difficulty is that the world is a mix-up of values, empirical as well as transcendental. Even today, we are living partly in heaven and partly in hell. That is to say, part of our nature is conditioned by transcendent aspirations. The soul in us is transcendently asking for freedom in the Universal, whereas the body is pulling us down. We have society, we have hunger and thirst, and we have our occupations whereby we earn our livelihood; we have little conditions which are earthly, physical, social, material, economic, together with the soul asking for liberation from all this turmoil. The quandary of human existence, the conflict between the higher and the lower, the transcendent and the empirical, the Absolute and the relative, is presented here before us in a poignant manner in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, where on the one hand the justice of the Universal speaks in its own language of

universality, and on the other hand there is a weakness of human nature which is social, personal, political, economic, and so on.

The purpose of the epics is not to tell you to do this or not to do that; they are only to tell you what life is. Take it for what it is worth. Life is just what it is. I cannot tell you that this must be done or that should not be done, but I will tell you what life is. Life is a conflict. The Mahabharata is a conflict, the Ramayana is a conflict, life is a conflict; it is a tension between the subjective side and the objective side, a conflict between the transcendental and the relative, God and man, Titan and the heavens. These clash between each other, and this clash will continue as long as the world exists and creation continues.

The manner in which you have to free yourself from this predicament of conflict is the *sadhana* that you have to practise. The spiritual practice, the *sadhana*, the *japa*, the meditation, whatever you are engaging yourself in, is the process of an intricate disentanglement that you are undergoing for the gradual relief from the relative entanglements for the purpose of a transcendental achievement. Finally, it is success.

It is in the Bhagavadgita that we have the final word as to the reason for success—the coming together of God and man: *yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pāṛtho dhanurdharaḥ, tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama* (B.G. 18.78). God will not plough your field for you, He will not cook your food, but He will see that you are provided

with the facility to plough your field and also cook your food. But without God's help you cannot plough your field or cook your food. The individual and the Universal have to move in a harmonious manner, seated in a single chariot. Arjuna and Krishna were seated in a single chariot, and they have a common purpose in the movement of the chariot. If the purpose of God and the purpose of your mind are one, success shall be yours.

*Yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ* (M.B. 6.41.55). "Where is success, Grandfather?" asked Duryodhana to Bhishma, who replied, "Wherever there is dharma, there is Krishna; wherever there is Krishna, there is success." The other way around Bhishma said, *yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo yato dharmo tato jayaḥ*: "Wherever there is Krishna there is justice and righteousness, and wherever there is justice and righteousness, there is success." That is to say, where God is present, all is well. Where God is not present, all is hell. A verse from the Pandava Gita says, "That moment is hell and the worst of things come upon you when you forget the universal Vasudeva."

Man's glory, success, welfare and future depend entirely on the extent to which the individual, the man that he is, is in harmony with the great Krishna of the cosmos. The harmony that is there between Arjuna and Krishna in every little predicament of the war should be considered as the source of success. Krishna knew what was necessary for the welfare of Arjuna, and God knows

what is necessary for your welfare, what it is that you need. You should know that God knows what is good for you, and you should not interfere with His orders. Krishna told Arjuna what to do. Sometimes Arjuna could not understand what it was that was being told him, but he did what he was told. There is complete rapprochement between the human will and the Universal will, but before this rapprochement takes place, before this harmony is finally established, before you find yourself in a position to totally agree with God's will, you will have to pass through hell, really speaking.

A poem of Aurobindo says, "Before you reach heaven, you have to pass through hell. Before you reach God, you have to pass through the world. Before you reach the Absolute, you have to pass through the relative. And before you drink honey, you have to have the sting of bees."

## Chapter 7

### THE MESSAGE OF THE MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is one of the great epics, about which we had something to consider from its literary point of view and from the point of view of its majestic contents. We have already observed some aspects of this great Itihasa epic. Now I shall try to highlight the inner message that it seems to be conveying to humanity as a whole, apart from its historical and epic grandeur and literary majesty.

The Pandavas and Kauravas, who were opposed to each other right from the beginning, had actually descended from a common source. Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa was responsible for the birth of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, the ancestors of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, as they were called. As two rivers may have a common source and yet move in different directions, this original fund of power and spirituality which was Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa was responsible for the birth of Dhritarashtra and Pandu. Something like a great-grandfather of all these people was Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. From Dhritarashtra came the Kaurava family, and from Pandu's line we have the Pandava family. They were all happily studying together under the great Acharya Drona, who was a master archer.

Incidentally, not connected with the subject I am referring to, I will tell you a story about Drona. These boys were playing ball. The Kaurava boys and the Pandava boys, little children, were playing with a ball, and by chance the ball fell into a well. They were all looking at the water deep below and wondering how the ball could come up.

An old Brahmin, Drona, was passing by. Drona asked them, "What are you all gazing at?"

"Oh, Dada, the ball has gone into the well," they replied.

"Shame on you, Kshatriya boys! You do not even know how to take a ball out from the well. See how I take it."

The great Acharya Drona took a little piece of straw and invoked a mantra into it, and took another piece of straw and joined that to the first one. Like that he went on joining little pieces of straw until they became a large chain, and he shot it down the well. The last end of it caught hold of the ball, and he pulled the ball out. Is there a human being like this? He connected little pieces of straw by some mystical power of his chanting and made it a chain, and pulled the ball out.

The children ran to the palace, to the great Bhishma, their grandfather, and reported this wonder. "There is a mystery man here who has struck wonder before us. We cannot understand how a person can have such a power."

Bhishma said, "I know everything. I know who that person is, and there is no wonder about it. He shall be your tutor from today onwards."

Thus, Drona was summoned to the palace and was appointed as the Guru, or the teacher, of the Pandava and Kaurava children.

They were all living happily for the time being but, for some reason or another, jealousy crept in, especially in the minds of the Kaurava children. Bhima and Arjuna were two of the five Pandavas. They excelled in power, in archery, in physical strength, and in various ways. They seemed to be nearer to the heart of the teacher Drona than the others. This incited the jealousy of the Kaurava children, who felt that they were a little bit alienated, and from that day onwards there was a feud, and all sorts of means were employed by them to see that Pandu's children did not get on well.

They poisoned Bhima and tried to burn the Pandavas in a house made of lac, an inflammable material, but somehow or other, due to the wisdom of a mentor called Vidura, the Pandavas escaped from that lac house. For a year they were incognito, moving about somewhere, and later on, at the wedding of Draupadi, who was to be the queen of the Pandavas, they attended the gathering in the guise of Brahmin boys, though they were really Kshatriyas.

At that time, in that assembly, Bhagavan Sri Krishna was also sitting. This was the first time that Sri Krishna saw the Pandavas, but he did not say one word. He was one of the members who attended the great function and, as luck would have it, Arjuna, who was disguised as a Brahmin boy, shot the arrow which won the test prescribed by

the father of Draupadi for winning her hand. All the Kshatriyas were defeated, and the Brahmin boy won victory. The Kshatriya kings were up in arms. "Shame on the Kshatriya kings. A Brahmin boy has won victory." There was a great hullabaloo. That chaos was put down, and the victors took Draupadi and went to their little hut where they were living incognito, unknown to people.

Sri Krishna went to the Pandava's hut with a large retinue. A lot of gifts he brought, elephants and horses, gold and silver, and so on, and offered them to the elder of the brothers, Yudhisthira, as a mark of respect. Yudhisthira was also disguised as a young Brahmin man. He asked Krishna, "How did you recognise us?" Sri Krishna said, "Fire can be known wherever it is, and there is no difficulty in knowing where fire is." With this, he departed from that place. They did not talk much. Krishna went to Dvarka.

The Pandavas, having been recognised later on, were called to Hastinapura, and it was the wish of Yudhisthira to perform a *rajasuya* sacrifice, which means to say, the performance of a great ritual, a *yajna* or a sacrifice, for the recognition of kingship of the person who performs the sacrifice. All the great men came there, and Sri Krishna also came. All was well.

In that assembly of the *rajasuya* sacrifice, to which Sri Krishna was invited by Yudhisthira, a question arose. Before a ceremony commences, there is a tradition even today that whenever we have a large ceremony, a sacred function, a

conference, etc., the chief guest is honoured first. And so there was a discussion regarding who would be the chief guest. There were thousands of royal men—kings, princes, etc. Krishna was not a king. He had no land and property, he had nothing, but he was recognised as someone very important. Bhishma, the grandsire, knew who Krishna was. Others did not know. So when this question arose as to who would be the chief guest to be honoured before the ceremony commenced, nobody had anything to say because how could they choose one person among thousands? If they chose one, the others would feel hurt that they had not been recognised.

Bhishma stood up and said, “I declare that in this assembly no one can be equal to Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is seated here. He shall be the chief guest, and he shall be honoured.”

This was enough to rouse the anger of all the princes seated there. “You consider Krishna, a cowherd boy who is not a king, who has no friends, who has no wealth, who has no status, as the chief guest? Have we all been invited here to be insulted like this? Yudhisthira, shame on you!” they all cried out. “Have we, princes and kings, come here to be insulted like this? We quit this place. We don’t want to stay here any longer.”

They were all mumbling and raising their arms, and one of them, Shishupala, got very angry. He said, “The time has come that Kali Yuga has descended on earth. This is why respectable kings are insulted in the public assembly and a cowherd

boy is being considered as the chief guest.” Shishupala went on haranguing for a very long time, deafening the ears of all people, who could not tolerate it anymore. Some of them stood up in anger to make the man close his mouth, some were merely watching with reddened eyes, and even the Pandava brothers were about to rise up to take some action.

Bhishma said, “Be calm, be calm. Sit down. The time has not come for taking action. This gentleman who has been blabbering all kinds of words just now, his end has come.”

When Bhishma said “his end has come”, Shishupala got still more angry. “You fellow, old man with wrinkled face, you say that my end has come? I will tear out your tongue just now.”

Bhishma replied, “I will tear out your tongue first, but I will not do that because the person who will do it is seated here.”

Sri Krishna uttered not a word, as if nothing was happening. Calm and quiet he was sitting, though an avalanche of abuses in the worst of terms were being poured on him.

There is a story behind this incident. As a digression I will mention it to you. It appears that Shishupala, this blabbering man, was born with four eyes, four arms, four feet, etc. Some abnormal creature-like thing was born. Everybody was wondering what kind of child this is.

An invisible voice spoke from the skies, “People from all around will come to see the child. Generally when a baby is born, people in the neighbourhood

come and say hello, and if any one of them, while touching the child, suddenly causes the disappearance of these double limbs, that person will be the death of this child.”

Everybody was coming and fondling this child who had all kinds of contortions, and one of the persons who came to see him was Sri Krishna himself. When he touched the child, his extra limbs vanished and he became normal.

Shishupala’s mother cried, “Oh, please, please, please save this child, save this child, save this child!”

Krishna said, “What is the matter? I have not come here to harm anybody.”

Shishupala’s mother said, “No, the *akasha vani*, the voice from above, said that if somebody touching the child causes the disappearance of the extra limbs, that person will be the death of the child.”

Sri Krishna replied, “No, I will give you a promise. Even if this boy insults me a hundred times, I will not do any harm to him. But if he insults me a hundred and one times, that is a different matter.”

They say that when this boy, who grew up to be a prince called Shishupala, was abusing Sri Krishna in the assembly, Sri Krishna was silently counting the abuses. All were wondering why Krishna was keeping quiet, tolerating this noise; he did not say a word, he did not get up, and he did not respond. But he was responding in a different way. When a hundred abuses were over, then a hundred and

one, Sri Krishna stood up, and with a discus he severed the head of Shishupala.

It was indeed a very inauspicious event that took place at the beginning of the otherwise auspicious coronation ceremony of Yudhisthira. The whole sacrifice was an auspicious, most blessed event. It was the coronation ceremony of the king, and before that this happened. Vyasa Krishna Dvaipayana was also there. He said, "I foresee something which is not good for this family. I think some tragedy is to fall on the entire Kaurava and Pandava family, and nobody can avert it." Saying this, he left.

After that, the coronation ceremony of Yudhisthira was performed, in which the Kaurava brothers were also present as invitees. Duryodhana himself was appointed as the treasurer, to collect donations coming from all parts of the country. They say humorously that Sri Krishna purposely made Duryodhana the treasurer; because of jealousy he will spend the money lavishly, which will only add to the glory of Yudhisthira because people will say, "How kind, how kind, how kind! How kind Yudhisthira is! This man is lavishly squandering." The glory, the power and the royalty of Yudhisthira at that time increased the jealousy of Duryodhana still more. He could not tolerate it any longer. All sorts of incidents took place, into which details we need not go.

Then Duryodhana cunningly managed and manoeuvred a play of dice in which he wanted to

see that Yudhisthira lost his entire kingdom and become a pauper. This was done. In this assembly in which dice was played twice, Yudhisthira lost everything—lost his wealth, lost his brothers, lost his wife, lost his honour. Worse than a human being did he become, and he was exiled to the wilderness. For twelve years the Pandavas had to be there, according to the stipulation of the game. Twelve years passed, and another stipulation was that the thirteenth year should be spent incognito. That also was done. Nobody helped them at that time. They were on their own, suffering.

In the beginning, children do not understand what this world is. You have seen little boys, little girls playing on the veranda of the house of even poor parents. The parents may not have food to eat for the evening, but the children play games. They do not know the suffering inside. The Pandavas and the Kauravas, as little babies, were happy indeed. Later on community consciousness gradually arises, and children are awakened to the consciousness of who is a good neighbour and who is not to be considered as a good neighbour. In the beginning, all is well. Little children may even go into the house of a neighbour who is an enemy and ask for sweetmeats, not knowing what kind of person he is. Children are innocent. But the parents will say, “Don’t go there. They are not our friends. These are our friends, and those are our enemies. This land is ours, and that land is not ours, so don’t go there.” Children are slowly initiated into this

prejudice of who is their friendly neighbour and who is not.

This kind of consciousness arises in every one of us. Little babies, little children, do not know much of these kinds of things. Then they are initiated into the consciousness of rivalry, the goodness and the badness of people, mine and not mine, and so on. Each one tries to see what best can be done for his own future; and some succeed, some do not succeed, as was the case with the Pandavas who succeeded and the Kauravas who did not. Jealousy, business clash, court cases, and violence of various kinds get ignited on account of the impossibility of the ego of one group to tolerate the ego of another group. Somehow somebody earns something, to the chagrin of another who has not been able to earn like that. We have difficulties of emotional tensions and social disputes whether in the house, in the community, in the office, or even in governmental circles. The various parties that we speak of are nothing but cleavages that are created among people for the purpose of a single person, a community or a larger group, as the case may be. It can even be between nations. One nation may not tolerate another, for its own reasons. And after an initial victory due to the power and ability of youth there comes a disillusionment of the values of life, something like the exile of the Pandavas going to the forest.

God sees all these things. With millions of eyes, God knows what is happening in the world. He knows what is proper, what is improper, who is

just, who is not just. But mostly what happens is that God's mills grind slowly. They say God takes action very, very slowly. We do not know why He should take action so slowly. God's way of doing things is compared to the way of a lion. A lion is very powerful. It lies down somewhere in a corner, and if children pelt a stone at it, it might not mind because it knows its strength. The stronger we are, the less we mind interference from people. The weaker we are, the more do we rise up and show our vehemence. As the lion knows its strength, why should it bother? It will simply keep quiet. Even if we pelt stones at it, it will not get up at all. But once it gets up and is on its feet, no one can stand before it.

God is like that. If we have some problems, He will see that the problems continue. Let them go on for some time. And if we have greed for pleasure or any kind of desire, He will allow us to have that for a long time, to learn by experience. But there comes a moment when He will no longer tolerate it, and that is when the circumstances of the world go totally against the law of God. Sometimes little things in the world go against the law of God but they are tolerated, and God gives us a long rope.

Sri Krishna was the mighty Incarnation of Bhagavan Vishnu, Narayana, who came to redress the world of all its sorrows. But he did not interfere with these skirmishes in the family of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Dice play was going on, the family feud was increasing, the Pandavas were suffering in the forest for thirteen years. Why did Sri Krishna

not come and talk to them? He could have ended the whole thing in one minute, if he wanted to, but he never took cognisance, as it were, of even the thirteen years of suffering of these boys. When the thirteen years were over, Krishna came with a large group of his friends to the city of King Virata, where the Pandavas were living incognito. Then conferences took place as to what the next step should be.

The person who spoke first was Sri Krishna. "A lot of suffering has been endured. The Pandavas, innocent children, have lost all their kingdom. Their share is due. In dice they lost everything, and the thirteen years of being away, as stipulated, is over. Now their share has to come. But how it will come? We will send a messenger to the Kaurava princes that the share of the Pandavas is due and it has to be given."

Some messenger was sent, some young Brahmin, and whatever message he conveyed from the side of the Pandavas was rebutted with vehemence by Duryodhana who said, "Nothing doing. Go home. Go from here!" The messenger did not succeed. Then Sri Krishna suggested that some suitable person be sent to speak properly and place their case exquisitely.

"Who will go?" asked Yudhisthira.

Sri Krishna said, "Why are you asking that? I am here as your servant. If you want, I shall go, taking your message."

Yudhisthira said, "I will not send you. You are our beloved heart, our soul. You are our friend,

philosopher and guide. Will I risk your life in the midst of the wolves who are the Kauravas?"

Sri Krishna replied, "I am glad that you are so concerned about my welfare, but you need not be afraid. Let them be wolves. If they are wolves, I shall be a lion, and if they do anything mischievous, I shall end them and come." With these words, he departed.

There was a grand reception arranged by King Dhritarashtra, who came to know that Krishna was coming. He called his minister Sanjaya and said, "Krishna is coming; that is what I am hearing. What kind of person is he? What is his intention in coming here? Kindly let me know."

Sanjaya, his minister, replied, "It is good that you have put this question to me. Your Highness, I shall tell you who is coming. The deeds of Krishna, no one knows. Why he is coming is also not very clear to people. He is coming to end your children because of the greed that they have exhibited in their behaviour and the relentless heart with which they have spurned the humble request of the Pandavas to have their kingdom back. Oh, even if the whole world is on one side and Krishna alone is on the other side, the whole earth cannot do anything to him. Even a hair of Krishna cannot be shaken by anybody. Such a power is coming."

Dhritarashtra was frightened. He ordered, "A man is coming. Receive him well. Give him glories. Clean the streets, drench the paths, have festoons put up, let a band and music receive him. Entertain

him well when he comes so that he may go peacefully and not frighten us.”

Sri Krishna came. He looked at the gaiety, the grandeur and the majesty of the reception that had been arranged for him, and saw the vanity behind it. It is the empty heart that is showing the outer glory.

Duryodhana invited him for supper, “Honoured guest, supper is ready. Please come.”

Sri Krishna replied, “Well, I shall tell you one thing. I have come for a purpose. Let the purpose be fulfilled; then I shall have supper. Also, why do you offer me supper? I am not hungry. You see, people accept food on two occasions. If they are hungry, they will accept food. Or even if they are not hungry, if the food is offered with love, it will be accepted. You do not offer food to me with love. You hate the Pandavas, and I am on their side for justice, so you have no affection for me; and I am not hungry. On what grounds will I accept your supper? I shall see you tomorrow morning, and I will speak to you the message which I have to deliver to you.”

Humbly Sri Krishna went to the house of a poor man, called Vidura. It was a very interesting encounter indeed between two persons—Krishna, the mighty man, going to the hut of Vidura, who was humble.

Anyway, in the morning the assembly began, and Sri Krishna went to deliver his message. Beautifully, grandly, logically he placed the case of the Pandavas.

“Whatever it be,” Duryodhana said, “I am not going to talk to you. I shall not give to the Pandavas even as much of ground as would be covered by the prick of a needle. Let war take place.”

Sri Krishna said, “This is a very adamant reply to a humble request that I am making. Great men, wise people seated here in this assembly, do you agree with the words that this young man has spoken to me? Is he just? I think it is a shame on these people. He should not be made the ruler of the country.”

When Krishna said this, Duryodhana got angry and went out, and conspired to imprison Krishna so that the strength of the Pandavas would no longer be there. Duryodhana, his brothers, Vrishasena and Karna secretly conspired: “This fellow must be bound up. Krishna should not go back, because if he goes he will play some mischief.”

Satyaki, the friend of Sri Krishna, who came to know of this little conspiracy, whispered into the ear of Krishna, “Some danger is coming.”

“What danger?” asked Krishna.

“They are trying to imprison you.”

“Very good. Let them try.”

“No, I will bring the army. I will call friends.”

“No. You keep quiet,” Krishna said. “I don’t want any friends. I don’t want any army to protect me. Let them try their hand.”

Then Sri Krishna spoke to Dhritarashtra, “Your young man, your son, is asking for trouble. It appears that he wants to imprison me. Let him try.”

Gandhari, Duryodhana's mother, was sitting there. "What is this nonsense? My son is talking like this? Call him here." And on the order of his mother, Duryodhana came in a great huff and sat, turning his eyes and face away from her.

Gandhari said, "Are you mad, my son? Have you no sense? You talk of imprisoning an honoured guest who has come from a long distance? Be quiet."

Sri Krishna told Duryodhana, "If you want to arrest me, you can do that. Perhaps you are under the impression that I am alone here. You have got a large army and I have nothing, but do you know that the entire army of the Pandavas is just here? The army of the angels and gods in heaven is just here." And immediately Sri Krishna showed his Cosmic Form, the stunning vision, to all the people there, frightening them. Uttering not any further word, Krishna left, and then war took place.

The story of the Mahabharata in this historical context is also a lesson for all spiritual seekers. That is to say, in the beginning of the lives of people there is jubilation, and an innocence coupled with ignorance of the facts of life. We are happy not because there is something worthwhile in this world but because we do not know the secrets of life. It was Buddha who said that a wise one cannot stay in this world for three days if he knows what this world is made of. It is burning pits of live coals. And Patanjali, in one of his sutras, says *duḥkham eva sarvaṃ vivekinaḥ* (Y.S. 2.15): "The whole world

is a heap of sorrow to the eye of a discriminating individual.”

Do we not think the world is beautiful? We think there is milk and honey flowing everywhere, and it is good to be in this world which presents us with all kinds of delicacies and comforts which make us feel that all is well with this world. The feeling that all is well with the world, that we shall enjoy this world for a long time to come, that death is far away from us, is an illusion that has been cast before our eyes. But the discriminating one knows the truth. Just as Sri Krishna knew the intention behind the grand reception that Duryodhana offered, the discriminating eye knows what is behind this world.

This world is made up of little atoms finally, as modern science tells us. The solid earth, which is so heavy like granite, is actually made up of little porous substances, and there is no solidity behind it. When I say the world is made up of such porous elements, we are also included in it. You and I, all of us, are part of this world. So when this world is to be recognised as a fluxation, as a movement, as a transitory phenomenon, it follows that we too are included in that phenomenal presentation. The whole presentation, subjectively as well as objectively, is transient movement. Actually, solidity, permanency and substantiality are not in this world, but if we go by the wrong reports that the senses give us and imagine that there is solidity, permanency, and much glory and value in this world, we are actually mistaken.

The Mahabharata, as well as the Ramayana, have a glorious beginning, of course. All is well, there are royal, grand and pompous presentations of every kind, but there is tragedy in the end. The Mahabharata concludes with the great message of Bhagavan Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author, who says, "Shall I tell you what my message is in the Mahabharata? All accumulation is going to end in its diminution to nil. How much money, how much property, how much land can you gather? One day you will lose it. All accumulation ends in its vanishing at any moment. Those who have risen to high status in society will fall later on. Today you are a king; tomorrow you are a beggar. Today you are adored as the ruler of a country; tomorrow you are on the streets. All wealth will end in destruction, all attainment in social status will be lost, and all union will end in separation one day or the other. Friends will depart, bereavement will take place, and all that you consider as yours will depart from you one day or the other. How long will you live in this world? Only until Yama comes and catches hold of your throat, which is an event that can take place at any moment of time."

This friendship, this communion of people, this family life, this gaiety of community is compared to the coming together of logs of wood in the ocean, again a verse from the Mahabharata. As we know, winds blow on the surface of the ocean, and logs of wood drift towards each other due to the power of the wind. One log goes and touches another log. "Oh, my dear friend, how are you? We shall have

coffee in the hotel.” They go together, and the friendship increases. One hugs the other. Attachment takes place. One log of wood is attached to the other log of wood. Then the wind blows in another direction, and the log drifts away. “Oh, bereavement, death has taken place. My son has gone, my brother has died.”

This is what is happening. When the wind of the cosmos blows in one direction, something comes in contact with something else, but not because there is something worthwhile in us; it is the destiny of the power of the cosmos that has been working. We say, “A child is born. How happy! The marriage has taken place. The wedding has been successful. Glory, glory!” Then suddenly the man dies or the wife has gone. “Oh, gone, gone!” we say, because the wind has blown in another direction. As is the coming together of logs of wood in the ocean, so is the friendship and the community affection of people in this world. But as the wind will blow in another direction and the logs will separate, so is bereavement in this world.

A message in the Bharata Savitri, which is towards the end of the Mahabharata, says *harṣasthāna-sahasrāṇi bhayasthānaśatāni ca, divase divase mūḍham āviśanti na paṇḍitam* (M.B. 18.5.48): “Hundreds of occasions we have every day to be happy, and also hundreds of occasions we have to be sorry.” Why is it? One moment we are smiling, and the next moment we are frowning. The idiocy of the mind is demonstrated here. Fools have hundreds of occasions to be in a state of exultation,

and also hundreds of occasions to feel sorry. Does the day pass in one mood only? For a few minutes we are happy for some reason, and for another few moments we suddenly feel that hell has descended on our heads. The mind is not able to appreciate and delve into the truth of things. But wise men know that there is nothing to attract, nothing to hug, nothing to call one's own in this world. Kings and emperors have come; empires have come. Where have they gone? They have gone to dust. Kings and emperors have gone to dust, and do we think we will be there, superior to all these people? All these Napoleons and Hitlers and Caesars who walked the earth with the thud of their feet, thinking that the whole world belongs to them, have become atoms, minute particles of earth. Do we think we will be in a better position? The whole thing goes.

*Ūrdhva bāhur viraumy eṣa na ca kaś cic chṛṇoti me, dharmād arthaś ca kāmaś ca sa kimarthaṁ na sevyate* (M.B. 18.5.49). The author of the Mahabharata, Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, says, "Oh people, with uplifted arms I am crying. Obedience to the law of the cosmos is also the source of material comfort and emotional satisfaction. Moksha, final liberation, will be yours, provided dharma is followed. But who listens to me? With uplifted arms I am crying from the housetops: Follow dharma. Obey the law of the universe; you will have moksha, you will have material facility, and happiness will be yours. But nobody wants to follow the rules of life, the wisdom

of the cosmos.” This is what Vyasa cries finally at the end of the Mahabharata epic, which story, even considered historically, actually concludes with the end of all the glory of the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Great turmoil, great preparation, great rejoicing, great warfare—what for are all these things? And a little, insignificant span of life was the glory of Yudhisthira as the king for about thirty-six years. What is thirty-six years? They had suffered so much, and the benefit accrued was only thirty-six years of precarious joy—precarious because he was not happy even then. After all, he began to weep and wail, “What is the kingdom I have got after the bloodshed of all my kinsman? My brothers have been destroyed. I have killed everybody, and then I have become king. I don’t want this.” He was wailing every day. So in spite of having been enthroned as the king of Indraprastha, Yudhisthira was not a happy man. Finally he came to know that Krishna departed from this world. That was the final shock to him. The Pandavas all bundled up their baggage and went to the Himalayas for their final journey to the other world.

What is the Mahabharata telling us? Great joy, great enthusiasm, great wealth, kingdom, power, status, and all that we want in this world is finally to take us to the other world—kingdom come. Nothing as is reported by the sense organs should be trusted finally. The senses are deceptive. They tell us everything topsy-turvy. They tell us that the world is there for our enjoyment, but it is like a

crocodile that will catch hold of us and swallow us one day. Therefore, be not attached to anything in this world.

The Bhagavadgita is a part of the Mahabharata, and it tells us the quintessence of the intention of the author of the Mahabharata. The story is there; of course, you know what the story is about. But there is a message behind it: that detachment, no contact with things with emotional clinging, should be the law of your life. And all the duties that you perform in this world, all the office going, all the hectic activity, all the factory working, and so on, with all the sweating of your brow is intended only to justify your participation in the cosmic law. God does everything. There is only one action taking place in the whole cosmos. Nobody does anything, finally. If you walk on the road, the legs are moving, the hands are moving, the eyes are seeing, the ears are hearing, but all these varieties of actions of the limbs are actually the action of one person. You are walking, you are seeing, you are hearing, and you are moving. It is not that your legs are doing something and your eyes are doing another thing. So is the case with the activity of the cosmos.

The great history of the world—world history right from the beginning till now—may be regarded as one action taking place of the Supreme Absolute. One action is taking place in the whole cosmos because the entire cosmos is a single organism. It is one person, finally. There is only one person in the whole universe. That person is working. That architect of the cosmos is the source of every

movement, historical or evolutionary, and whatever you are thinking or doing is also a part and parcel of that action. Just as the legs may feel that they are walking while actually the person is walking—it is not the legs that walk—so is the case with all your activities. The whole universe is a single action which is motivated by the will of the Central Intelligence of this universe. It is called God in religion, the Absolute in philosophy, the Ultimate Reality towards which everything is moving gradually in the process of evolution. You are not an actor in this world; you are a participant in the action of the cosmos. Therefore, be not attached to anything. Do your duty very well as a participant, as a cooperative medium, but do not say 'mine', because nothing is yours. No limb of the body can say it is the whole body. It is a part and parcel of the cooperative activity of the total organism of the body.

Thus, the Bhagavadgita tells you that it is the duty of every person born in this world to perform their appointed work—which is what is called cooperative activity or unselfish action—with detachment because if you are attached, you will be under the impression that you are doing the deed, and if you think that you are doing any deed, the recompense of it will also fall on your head. Therefore, expect not the fruit of action. Work is your duty, but the fruit of your duty is not in your hands. You have the right to act, but you have no right to ask for the fruit of your action because the fruit is in the hands of the cosmic powers.

Therefore, do not expect a particular fruit to be yielded or to follow from your single action.

Do your duty. Duty is your imperative. There are no rights in this world, but these days people cry for rights: "This is my right, but I have no duty." There are people who do not do any work. They say, "I will not do any work, but I must get what I want." That is to say, they are asking for rights only, without duties. But the world does not work in that manner. It is duty that operates; there are no rights. Actually, when you perform your duty, rights will automatically follow. You need not ask for your rights and privileges. The world is so abundant and rich in all its contents that when you perform your duty as a participant in the cosmic activity, the cosmos will open its treasure before you. When you cling to God, He will see that all abundance is poured upon you. I repeat once again the great statement of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." A similar message we have in the Bhagavadgita. *Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham* (B.G. 9.22): "Undividedly if you contemplate the Absolute, the whole world of wealth will follow you wherever you go." You will lack nothing.

So trust in God, rely on Him, and undividedly be meditating on that great glory, that Supreme Reality. You will lack nothing in this world. Blessedness shall be yours in this world, as well as

hereafter, is a wonderful message of this great epic the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgita. God bless you.

## Chapter 8

### INDIA'S CONCEPT OF TOTALITY

The Vedas and the Upanishads cater to the intuitional and the direct apprehension faculties of the human individual. Intuition is the faculty which was the cause of the coming of these great scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, but they can also be apprehended directly. We cannot read the Vedas and the Upanishads like a school textbook whose meaning is clear on a proper linguistic analysis or from the point of view of grammar. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not to be studied from the point of view of etymology, grammar or linguistics.

These days, people are attempting to translate the Vedas into the English language, and into other languages. I was presented with one or two volumes of a translation printed together with the original Sanskrit mantras. What I found was that it is a grammatically construed translation. I asked one of the sponsors of this great project, "What are the steps that you take? In what direction are you moving when you are embarking upon the translation of the Vedas? Do you appreciate that when the Vedas have infinite meaning—due to which it is that they are considered as the foundation of India's culture—should the Vedas be understood merely as a Sanskrit poem which

requires only knowledge of etymology, meter and grammar to know its meaning? Are the Vedas not a foundation for an all-round appreciation of life outside and inside, subjective, objective, spiritual, material, social and transcendent? How would you bring out all these connotations of the Vedas?" He replied, "This is not our business, and we cannot say anything in this matter."

It was Sri Aurobindo and some of his followers who tried to look at the Vedas from an integral point of view, and delved into the inner content of the Veda mantras, whereby they could decipher certain potentials of cosmic powers behind the otherwise anthropological names that are found in the Vedas, such as Indra, Varuna, Mitra, etc. These names of gods in heaven are actually significances, indications of the powers of Nature, and when I say 'Nature', you should not identify it with trees and rivers and mountains, the geographical earth. Nature has revealed itself in various degrees of its manifestation, or reality. By Nature, we mean all that this cosmos is; and all the potentials and powers that are hidden in the cosmos are to be considered as the superintending principles of Nature's activity.

There is a famous doctrine in the Chhandogya Upanishad called the Panchagni Vidya. This tells us how even the grossest and the most obvious of occurrences in the world—such as rainfall, which we consider as something commonplace—have been considered as objects of meditation through this Panchagni Vidya. By Panchagni, what is

intended is the visualisation of a fivefold stratification of the working of cosmic powers before they actually become visible to the eyes. Rain does not fall merely because clouds gather. We must also know why clouds gather. We are told that clouds are caused by the heat of the sun, which brings about a vaporisation of the waters of the ocean. Winds collaborating with this activity move the condensed form of this vapour as clouds in different directions, and when the clouds come in contact with certain atmospheric pressure, especially near mountains and forests, they release water in the form of rain.

But there is something mysterious behind the action of the rays of the sun on the water of the ocean. Why should the rays of the sun act on the waters of the ocean in that particular manner? The moon causes tides in the ocean. On a full moon day there is high tide. The waves rise up as if they are being pulled above the surface of the earth towards the moon. The moon does not pull only the waters; it pulls the entire earth. Because water is liquid, we can see it rising above its normal levels, but the influence of the moon on the solid parts of the earth cannot be seen with the eyes because solid objects do not rise up. Nevertheless, the influence of the moon is there on the earth, and it is not merely an influence on some part of the earth. The entire planet is pulled up due to the law of gravitation; and when this total pull of the moon over the earth is exerted during the full moon, our brains are also pulled up. It is said that people think in a certain

manner on full moon and new moon days, and for people whose minds are not normal in the accepted sense of the term, the feeling of this pull is accentuated, and they behave a little erratically on these days. The word 'luna' applies to the moon. Anything connected with the moon is lunar, and even the word 'lunatic' comes from that very word—highly influenced by the movement of the moon. So is the case with the sun. The power which the sun exerts upon the other planets is much more than the power that the moon exerts on the earth.

Now, the question is: Why should they act in this manner? The Panchagni Vidya says there is something above even the phenomenon of the planetary actions or the solar action on water, etc. Up to the invisible realm we are taken by the doctrine of the Panchagni Vidya. A central action seems to be taking place somewhere—in modern terms we may call it interstellar space—and today science has also been telling us that there are certain things called cosmic rays coming from interstellar distance. The action of the cosmic rays upon the whole atmosphere of the solar system is something that has been observed but not fully explained in a scientific manner. Every little activity, every event, historical or economic, all these are conditioned from the centre of the cosmos in a manner very unintelligible to us.

This is a suggestive observation from the point of view of the in-depth analysis made by the seers of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and it can be appreciated only from the point of view of a deeper

insight into the nature of things. The Vedas and the Upanishads are sacred not merely because we carry them on our heads as a textbook for our daily guidance; they are repositories of a wisdom that is beyond the comprehension of the sense organs, and even the mind. The translations of the Vedas available these days are only the shell, the outer covering, as it were, of the form of the Vedic mantras, but not its inner wisdom.

The Upanishads are also difficult to understand. Their meditations are deep. Every little event in the world, everything that happens anywhere, is considered as an object of meditation. The Upanishads do not meditate merely on that conceptualised, ethereal Absolute. For instance, if we read the earlier chapters of the Chhandogya Upanishad, prior to the fifth chapter, fantastic forms of meditation are delineated, some of which are beyond our comprehension, and some of which look very funny, fantastic, and even meaningless from a purely historical point of view. The littlest of things, the most insignificant things, the commonplace occurrences in nature, every event in society and all thoughts in the mind are taken as objects of meditation, from which route we can gradually rise through the levels of the manifestation of nature to the highest cosmic comprehension.

Deep is the Veda, and deeper are the Upanishads. The Bhagavadgita is said to have taken up the task of making this great subject a little more easy for us because it is from an epic point of view.

As I mentioned during the previous session, the Bhagavadgita forms a part of the Mahabharata, so it has an epic style, not the intuitional side of the Veda mantras or the Upanishadic proclamations.

We had occasion to take into account some of the deeper aspects of human life portrayed for us in the Mahabharata of Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. The epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Some people include in this list of epics another great work called the Harivamsa, which is an appendix to the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata contains eighteen books. As we have eighteen chapters in the Bhagavadgita, there are eighteen *parvas*, or knots, we may say, halting places, in the Mahabharata. Adi Parva is the first one, Sabha Parva is the second, Aranyaka Parva or Aranya Parva is the third, Virata Parva is the fourth, Udyoga Parva is the fifth, Bhishma Parva is the sixth, Drona Parva is the seventh, Karna Parva is the eighth, Shalya Parva is the ninth, Saaptika Parva is the tenth, Stri Parva is the eleventh, Shanti Parva is the twelfth, Anushasana Parva is the thirteenth, Ashvamedhika Parva is the fourteenth, Ashramavasika Parva is the fifteenth, Mausala Parva is the sixteenth, Mahaprasthanika Parva is the seventeenth, and Svargarohana Parva is the eighteenth. These are the eighteen books of the Mahabharata, as we have seven books of the Ramayana: Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yuddha Kanda and Uttara Kanda.

The nineteenth book of the Mahabharata is the Harivamsa. It is regarded as a kind of appendix. Perhaps one of the reasons behind the division of the Harivamsa from the Mahabharata as the nineteenth book is that the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna as incorporated in the eighteen books of the Mahabharata takes into account only the public picture of the life of Sri Krishna; his earlier life in Dvarka, Brindavan, Mathura, etc., does not find a place in the Mahabharata in spite of the fact that it is in the Bhagavata. Historians and students of the epics tell us there was no Bhagavata at the time of the writing of the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata was written first, and to have a supplement to the Mahabharata in order that the other aspects of the life of Sri Krishna may also be incorporated in the great epic, Vyasa seems to have written the nineteenth book, which contains the earlier life of Krishna including Dvarka, Brindavan, etc. So, in a way, the eighteen books of the Mahabharata plus the nineteenth one, the Harivamsa, apart from being the story of the Pandava-Kaurava war, also consist of the complete life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna.

It says in one of the Puranas that even after writing his magnum opus—the masterpieces the Mahabharata and the Harivamsa—Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author, was not feeling very happy inside. He was in a state of despondency and restlessness, as if something was missing. It is said that at that time Narada, the great sage, came and asked Vyasa, “What is it that you are brooding over?”

Vyasa replied, "I have written the Mahabharata epic so that in that book I have left nothing unsaid." There is a verse in the Mahabharata itself which says, "Whatever is there anywhere in this world you will find in the Mahabharata, and whatever is not in the Mahabharata will not be found anywhere in the world." It is also said, "All the knowledge of the world Vyasa has spat in the Mahabharata." He spat it. That means to say, the words which constitute the entire Mahabharata are also the whole literature of the world—spiritual, social, and every blessed thing is there. Whatever we want to know about dharma, artha, kama or moksha is in the Mahabharata, and if we do not find something there, we will not find it anywhere else in the world. Such a great thing was written, and still Vyasa was not feeling very satisfied.

Narada said, "I will tell you why you are not feeling happy. You have not sufficiently sung the blissful aspect of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. No doubt you have explained in great detail his powers, his glory, his might, his statesmanship, his strength, and his public image. Beautiful! But he is not merely that. God is not merely power, glory, majesty, elephantine strength, which, of course, He also is, but God is also beauty, love, tenderness, affection. That aspect you have not touched upon, and this is why you do not feel fully satisfied. I request you to write another text altogether which will lay special emphasis on Sri Krishna's beauty, tenderness, goodness, loveliness and affection. All these aspects must be brought out."

Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa is said to have written the Bhagavata Mahapurana as his last work. It is also called the Samadhi Bhasha. That is to say, after the departure of Narada, Vyasa entered into deep meditation and sank into samadhi, and whatever he visualised in that condition of samadhi got expressed in his new work called the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana; therefore, the Bhagavata is also called the Samadhi Bhasha, the language of super-consciousness.

The style of the Mahabharata is different from the style of the Srimad Bhagavata, which is a very difficult style. People say if you want to test the learning of a person, you must see to what extent he has understood the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. If you want to test the scholarship of a person, put him questions on the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana's meaning and see what answers come. That is, the language and the style of the Puranas in general, which follow the style of the Mahabharata, are simple from the point of view of ordinary spoken Sanskrit. If you have some knowledge of Sanskrit you will know how to read the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas, but the Bhagavata is not like that. It is knotted. Every *sloka* is very hard. In spite of there being eight thousand verses in the Mahabharata which are very hard to understand, which Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa seems to have composed to make Ganesha pause when he was writing—in spite of that, there is some simplicity in the style of the Mahabharata; but the Bhagavata is not like that.

The Samadhi Bhasha of Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, which is the Bhagavata Mahapurana, is constituted of twelve books, not eighteen. The first book is the introductory chapter, the second book goes into details of creation, etc., the third book has further details of creation, and so on. It is the tenth book that is entirely devoted to the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The tenth book of the Srimad Bhagavata has two parts. The first part of the tenth book, or *skanda*, which is ninety chapters in length, is devoted to the early boyhood days of Krishna in Brindavan and Mathura—his childhood days—and ends with the death of Kamsa. Krishna's more public family life, at a mature age, is the subject of the second part of the tenth book of the Bhagavata, but Vyasa does not touch the points that we have in the Mahabharata. All the great things about Bhagavan Sri Krishna which are told to us in the Mahabharata we will not find in the Srimad Bhagavata and, vice versa, what we have in the Bhagavata we will not find in the Mahabharata. So the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata put together may be regarded as a complete epic picture of social and divine comedy, with also a touch of tragedy in the end.

The Veda says, "I am afraid of people who approach me without the knowledge of the epics and the Puranas." This is because the epics and the Puranas—the reference is especially to the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata—explain the inner meaning and potentiality of the Veda. But if we approach the Veda directly without having

understood the inner meaning of the epics and the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata, the Veda is afraid: "This man is going to kill me." We will slaughter the Veda if we try to understand it with our own intellect without having read the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata. As I mentioned, the intellect is not sufficient for the Vedas. The Vedas are deeper intuitions, and as common people cannot have access into this required insight, they have to slowly proceed towards the inner content of the Vedas by having mastered the more easily explained theme of this sacred text through the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata.

Though the epics are two—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—the Puranas are eighteen in number. The most important of the eighteen Puranas are the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana. Actually, the life of Sri Krishna as we have in the Srimad Bhagavata is a condensed and more amplified form of whatever we have about him in the Mahabharata, the Harivamsa and the Vishnu Purana. The Srimad Bhagavata is Vyasa's last work, his Samadhi Bhasha, the final work, and perhaps Vyasa put down his pen after he completed writing it, as it is sometimes said that Shakespeare put down his pen after writing *The Tempest*. Shakespeare threw his magic wand into the sea, and Vyasa did not write anything more afterwards, is the story that we hear.

Sometimes the Yoga Vasishtha is also considered as one of the epics, though not normally speaking, because in one verse of the Valmiki

Ramayana there is some peculiar suggestion that Valmiki wrote the story of Rama together with a supplement, but what that supplement is, is not mentioned. The Yoga Vasishtha is also said to be, according to common consensus, the work of Valmiki. As the Harivamsa and the Bhagavata are the work of Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa who wrote the Mahabharata, the Yoga Vasishtha is attributed to the pen of Valmiki.

If we read the Yoga Vasishtha, we will find that the style, the language and the method of writing is similar to the Valmiki Ramayana. Mostly, the thirty-two lettered *anushtup chanda* metre is used in the whole of the Ramayana, but every chapter ends with a little longer verse. Similar is the style of the Yoga Vasishtha. The whole thing is in thirty-two-lettered *anushtup* metre, but every chapter ends with another metre altogether; and the mellifluous movement, the sweetness, as it were, of a musical way of writing, we find both in the Ramayana of Valmiki, the story of Rama, and in the Yoga Vasishtha. Therefore, many people think the Yoga Vasishtha should also be included in the category of the epics. Thus, if all these aspects are taken into consideration, we have four epics: the Ramayana, the story of Rama; the Yoga Vasishtha, an appendix to it; the Mahabharata; and the Harivamsa. This is the large literature of Hinduism.

We will find, if we travel from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, all people who are called Hindus follow the religion of the epics and the Puranas only. We will not find any Hindu anywhere who

lives according to the Vedas and the Upanishads, or even the Bhagavadgita. These are all beyond them. They read the Bhagavadgita, they chant the Vedas and study the Upanishads, but in practical life the outlook of the religion of Hindus today is not of the type of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. Everybody is a worshipper of some god or the other who is not mentioned in the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita. Our gods are epic gods only. We have Ganesha, Devi, Durga, Narayana, Vishnu, Surya, Kumara, etc., who do not find a place in the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita. We worship our own epic gods and Purana gods. Historians of religion may be interested in finding out how the religion of Hindus today has become an epic religion, a Purana religion, rather than a Veda religion or an Upanishad or a Bhagavadgita religion. Why it has become like that is something for scholars to investigate. Anyway, the fact stands as it is.

Now we have a brief outline of the content of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Smritis, as I mentioned, and also the epics and the Puranas.

To recapitulate, the culture of India is based on a spiritual outlook of life. This spiritual outlook, on which we have been bestowing thought, is to be known in its proper spirit. What do we actually mean by 'a spiritual outlook of life'? Generally, all people in the world, learned or unlearned, have a wrong notion that to live a spiritual life is not to live according to the norms of the social and physical life of the world. One becomes a little funny, queer,

when becoming a spiritual person. This is what people think. This is far from the fact. One does not become uncommon, queer or fantastic when one becomes a spiritual person. On the other hand, a spiritually-oriented person is an integrated individuality. A mighty superman-like individual is the spiritual person. The world and God are not to be segregated. The wrong notion that spirituality concerns some reality that is outside or beyond the world, and that what is called secularism is a matter-of-fact existence in the physical world, is a total misconstruing of the facts.

Spirituality is the way of living according to that structure which blends together the here and the hereafter, the secular and the transcendent, the visible and the invisible, matter and spirit, the inward and the outward, the here and the hereafter. The word 'integration' may perhaps bring out the true meaning of it. To be religious is not to be leaning oneself away from contact with things in the world; it is to be in the world as a spirit that pervades the whole cosmos. To be a human being, healthy and wise, is not to be concerned only with the soul inside and to cast out the body. The body and the soul have to be kept together in a state of union, in a blend, and in an integrated completeness. The health of a person is not merely in the soul or the body, but is the putting together of these two phases into a comprehensiveness so that one permeates the other. Spiritual life is, therefore, the permeation of a transcendent outlook of life which takes into consideration the

transcendence or the superphysical reality of the cosmos, but at the same time takes the whole world as the footstool on which it stands. The world is like a footstool on which we are standing, and the legs are not unimportant. In the Cosmic Form of the Universal Reality described to us in the epics and the Puranas, the whole physical universe is pictured, portrayed, as the feet of the Virat Purusha. The higher realms are the thighs, the trunk, the neck, the head, etc. Hence, the relationship between the world and God is something like the relationship between the lower extremities of the body and the higher part. We cannot say that the lower is not at all necessary, and to be a spiritual person is only to concern oneself with the head.

Bernard Shaw said, it seems, that the real man is the brain, and all the other parts of the body are only servants of this brain. The brain is to be carried here and there, and so there are legs. The brain has to see, and so there are eyes. The brain wants this and that, and so all the limbs are cooperative servants, as it were, for the benefit of the brain. This is one view. Well, it is not like that. The total view of things is actually a consideration for the benefit of every part that constitutes the whole. The universe is one whole, and there we have got the God of the universe who created the world, and we have got creation itself. God and creation are intriguing features which we have to fathom properly from their own essential point of view. God created the world, or there is God and there is the world. There is a transcendent spiritual

entity which we are trying to attain in our meditations, but there is also the world in which we are staying. Are we connected with the world in some way? That connection of ours with the world is the reason why we are so concerned with the events taking place in this world. Our physical body is a part and parcel of this physical nature. Therefore, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue, desire for security of some kind, and a subtle desire to continue living in this world for as long a time as possible—all these are the impact of the world of creation upon our individual existence. We do belong to this world. Therefore, a spiritual person is not outside this world.

Secondly, the wrong notion that the world has to be renounced in order to become a spiritual individual is also to be clarified. There is much about this theme of renunciation in religious and spiritual life. It is said that the world has to be renounced in order that we may become spiritual and religious, but what kind of world are we renouncing? Please consider this matter seriously. Are you renouncing the trees in the forest? They do not belong to you, and even if they are there in your garden, that is not the thing that you are going to renounce. Poor things, why do you renounce them? Are you renouncing the sun and the moon and the stars? You say, "I am religious. I have no connection to the sun and the moon and the stars. I have renounced them. I have renounced all the rivers, I have renounced the ocean, I have renounced the mountains, I have renounced the very ground on

which I am standing.” Is this the way you are renouncing the world? And if this is not so, what else is the world? Tell me. Generally, people renounce people; they cannot renounce the ground, they cannot renounce mountains and rivers and trees, so what they say is, “Goodbye, my friend. I will not talk to you from tomorrow.” This is called renunciation.

This is not true renunciation, because the world includes your own self. Are you standing outside the world? Neither are you outside nature, nor are you outside human society. So when you consider renunciation of the world, you must take into consideration the fact that you are not outside that which you are trying to renounce.

What does it imply, finally? The renunciation of the world may also imply the renunciation of whatever we are. But we keep ourselves intact with all our ego and all our longings, and want to cut off relationships with things other than ourselves. It is like the leg saying that it has no connection with the body. The leg is a part of the body, and renunciation of the body is not possible as long as the leg is integrally and vitally connected with the performances of the whole body. Renunciation does not mean physically being away from something, because that is not possible. Wherever we go, we are in the natural world only. How can we be physically away from the world on which we are standing? Actually, the concept of nature, the visualisation of things—or rather, to put more plainly, the notion, wrongly entertained by us, that

the world is outside us—is to be renounced. Renunciation is the abandonment of the wrong notion that the world is outside us as an object of perception. The world cannot be outside us because we, as the perceivers of the world, are also included in this totality called nature.

These days, modern physicists tell us that scientific observations are not finally reliable because the perceiver's presence in the act of the observation of a particular phenomenon is to be taken into consideration. The observer, the so-called scientist working in a laboratory, should not ignore the fact that his very presence, and the presence of the instruments that he is using, disturb the object that he is trying to observe; therefore, nobody can observe the true nature of a thing as long as instruments are necessary, and instruments disturb the observation. The holistic nature of any object—that is to say, the inclusive character of any object, which is also related to the subject, in a way—makes it difficult for any particular subject, such as a scientist, for instance, to have a clear insight into the nature of the object. The subject, such as the scientist, who is the perceiver, influences the very existence of the object.

Our very conception of the object, our knowledge of the object, our awareness that something is there outside us, implies the fact of our connection with the object. Unless we are in some way related to the object, the knowledge of the existence of the object itself will not be possible. The object is not totally outside the process of

perception. If it were totally outside, perception would be impossible. Inasmuch as perception seems to be vitally connected with the object, and perception proceeds from the perceiver, the perceiver is vitally connected with the object, so there is no such thing as real perception of an object that is totally outside. If this is true, the world cannot be renounced as we generally do when we are moving from one place to another place. We have to lift ourselves up totally, holistically, completely, from the very phenomenon of world perception, including our existence in that atmosphere. This is very hard.

It is not easy to live a spiritual life. Religion is difficult because we may have a traditionally bound, ritualistically construed idea of renunciation of the world. What most people do is, they go from one place to another place and stay there, and call this renunciation. Nothing happens. They are the same person, the same individual, with the same mind, the same world, the same nature, the same problems. Everything is the same because actually they have moved nowhere.

When we are moving within the dream world, wherever we go, we are inside the dream world only. What is the use of moving in the dream world? Our dream has to be cut off, and we have to awaken ourselves from the dream world. If we travel within the dream world, it does not become religion. Even if we are great yogis within the dream world, it is, after all, a dream yoga, so it will not help us. The point is that we have to wake up from the dream

itself into the reality of the actual visualisation of Reality. This is why religion becomes difficult, and most people who have taken to religion and spirituality, and even to meditation, have not succeeded satisfactorily either for their benefit or for anyone else's benefit. Many illusions present themselves, and then they come down to the ordinary level.

The difficulty of practising true religion or spirituality from the point of view of the integrality in the outlook of things that is necessary for a religious or a spiritual seeker, makes it incumbent upon every spiritual seeker to go slowly. Slow and steady wins the race. Haste makes waste, so we should not be in a hurry. We have to, first of all, find out our capacity—to what extent we can understand and appreciate the values of things in the world.

Illusions come first; enlightenment comes after-wards. The gods and the demons who were said to have churned the ocean of milk for extracting nectar out of it did not get nectar. The story of Samudra Manthana, or the churning of the ocean for the purpose of getting nectar, as we have it described in the Puranas, is the story of spiritual ascent. We churn the life of our personality, and the whole world itself, for the sake of the nectar of immortality. When we churn our life, God does not come first. The devil comes first as poisonous fumes. They expected nectar from the ocean but what they got was smoke, dust, a suffocating poison. The worst of things came while they were

searching for the best of things. This what we will experience in our spiritual life. The total opposite of what we are expecting will be there before us in our meditation, to the shock of our nerves. But if we persist like a Buddha or a Christ or a great yogi with real strength, having an understanding into the nature of why this phenomenon has risen at all, if we persist continuously in spite of these blinding fumes of a darkening venom or smoke that is in front of us, we will come face to face with other problems which are not in any way less difficult to face than the venom, the temptations of various kinds.

Uplifting the world, saving humanity, becoming an Avatara Purusha, such desires also will come to us many a time. We will think that we have already had a vision of things, that Reality has been comprehended, and so now our next step is to uplift the world. All sorts of desires will come to us. These are temptations. Gold and silver, social status, and the offer to be a potentate in this world, all these will also be presented to us by the gods in heaven. *Sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgasmayā karaṇaṁ punaraniṣṭa prasāṅgāt* (Y.S. 3.52) is the sutra of Patanjali: “When you advance in meditation, gods in heaven will come down and present temptations of various kinds.” And Vyasa, who wrote a commentary on the sutras of Patanjali, says in this connection, “What do the gods say? Do you know? ‘Master, you have attained the supreme perfection. We are waiting for you. Come. Here is the river of milk, here is the sea of treacle, here are the golden

chariots for you, here is the empire which you are going to rule, here are all your servants. Here is the fruit of your great *tapasya*. Come.' This is what they say." Indra and all the gods will descend. They do not descend immediately; none of us has seen these gods because we have not even scratched the outer crust of meditation, and therefore these denizens do not come like that so easily. They are not afraid of us. Only when they are frightened by our deep meditation do they start kicking up all this dust before us. These temptations like the *ratnas*, or jewels, that came from the milky ocean while churning it are also illustrative of what we are going to expect in our meditations. First comes blinding darkness, venom, the total opposite of what we are expecting, to the shudder of our personality. If we persist in it, temptations of this kind come. Lastly, if we overcome even these temptations, the fear of death will take hold of us. "Oh, I am dying. Something is happening. The nerves are cracking!" We will find that we cannot understand what is happening in front of us.

Some such phenomenon arose even during the Samudra Manthana, or the churning of the ocean. A battle took place between the gods and the demons. That state of affairs is worse than the earlier temptations and even the venom. The world will fight with us. "Away with you!" the world will say, and how will we face it? The world is so very enormous before our little puny personality. At that time we must have the courage to expand the potentials of our personality inside and be

convinced that we are not so puny as we appear. Our potentials inside are as wide as the universe itself. Divinity is larger than the universe. With that strength, with that might of inner awakening, we will face the whole world of temptation and the battle which is presented before us. In the beginning it is venom, next there is temptation, and then there is actual confrontation, battle. All these three stages have to be passed through. Then it is that the sun of knowledge rises and the universe will dance to the tune of our own personal existence. We will become one with the universe. The enemy will become a friend, the outside will merge into the inside, there will be no outside-inside afterwards, and there will be no God, no universe, no creation. There will be One: That which Is.

Towards that end we are moving gradually through these inner practices of spiritual life, religious life. This is not to be construed as a running away from existing things or physically being away from the phenomena of the world, but a transmutation of our very relationship with things. Therefore, we can be religious and spiritual wherever we are in the world; and wherever we are, our problems will be the same.

This being properly taken care of, you will be able to proceed further in the direction of the appreciation of this in-depth analysis of the culture of India, which is not merely religious in an ordinary fundamentalist sense of the term. It is not true that India is a religious country and that

Indians do not know how to stand the realities of life. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita are standing refutations of this wrong notion that the religion of India is otherworldly. It is nothing of the kind. It is neither otherworldly nor this-worldly. It is a total picture which the universe presents before us, and that is the object of the study of India's culture.

## Chapter 9

# THE VISION OF LIFE WHICH IS THE CULTURE OF INDIA

Reality has many sides, and these sides, arranged in a proper pattern, as in the manner of the arrangement of material during the construction of a house, constitute what is called the individuality of a person. When we think, when we act, some of the sides of our personality begin to operate, and it is not that all the sides operate at the same time. We have facets of the physical personality, which we call this body, this embodiment of material substance. It is physiological, anatomical, and is as good as any other material thing in the world.

Even the material body is not one uniform spread-out substance; we cannot say that our physical body, which is of course the grossest part of our personality, is a kind of even, harmonious arrangement. For instance, there is the skin which is external, and internally there are the lungs, the heart, the alimentary canal, the circulatory system, and many other wondrous operations even in the physical body itself. That is to say, even the physical body is not to be taken for granted, as if it is very clear to our mind. The wonder of the physical mechanism surpasses human understanding. The way in which this body works is a miracle. It is a great wonder of the world. The manner in which

the various external as well as internal limbs of the body collaborate for a purpose that they have before them is impossible of understanding. Billions of brain cells are there which are connected to various functions, not only of the body but even of extra-physical phenomena.

The cells of the body, the cells of the brain, the structural components of any limb of the body, for the matter of that, is a miracle in the sense of how they voluntarily take upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining this personality, and it is something we cannot understand. We do not deliberately operate the cells of the brain. We do not operate any limb of the body. They take care of themselves. There is a capacity to adjust among the limbs of the body, for a purposive which is before them.

It is said that the cells of the brain are connected to every atom in the cosmos. A cosmic emporium, as it were, is deposited within the skull of a human being, and if all the cells of the body and all the internal structures of what we call the brain were to operate simultaneously, the entire cosmos would be revealed with a direct apprehension of even the minutest things. But most of the brain cells are completely closed, and we cannot open them. Only a few of them are open, and even those which are open are not actually able to rise up to the level of the frequency of the different layers of the cosmos, and so the available cellular functions of the brain are quantitatively as well as qualitatively deficient for the purpose of apprehending the inner

component of the cosmos with which they are connected. This is something to say about the physical body itself.

More subtle than the physical body is our internal structure, the *prana sarira*, the vital body, and it is connected with the system of cosmic energy. Today we hear in the field of scientific exploration that the material of the universe can be converted into a continuum of energy, a continuum which defies the presentation of the world available to us as segregated in terms of space and time. The scientific visualisation of this continuum of energy, to which the whole of matter can be reduced, is non-spatial and non-temporal. Events in the world, it is said, do not take place in space. That is to say, events have no location. But we see events taking place only in some place, and we never see something taking place everywhere in all space and at all times. This is only to say that we cannot know how events operate at all. Scientific findings in respect of the continuum to which the whole of matter can be reduced is that events in the world, which appear to be historical and local, are actually non-historical and non-local—which means to say, they are non-spatial, and perhaps also non-temporal.

What is meant by all these things? Events in the world are not in space, and they are not in time. If they are not in space and not in time, they are not in the world. But we see events taking place in the world. Something is happening in the streets of Rishikesh, and elsewhere something else is

happening. The level of the frequency of apprehension through the brain cells has come down to such a gross form that we see a totally different picture from what is actually taking place in the world. Non-local events look like local events, non-spatial operations look like spatial occurrences, and we see that everything is in time. A non-temporal thing cannot enter our brain. So much for the body and the vital system, the *prana sarira*.

If we go further, into the deeper level of our mental structure, we will be wonder-struck to realise how our mind is connected to the cosmic mentality. Just as the physical body, the physical cells, the components of the body and the brain, etc., are connected to physical levels in all the realms of being, and the vital body is connected to the universal non-spatial and non-temporal continuum of energy, so also our mind is connected to the cosmic mind. If the cosmic mind were not to operate, we would not be able to think anything that is objective. If the mind—which seems to be operating within our body, within our brain, within ourselves—were to be really within in the sense of a physical location, we would be subjectively conscious of what is happening within us, but objectively we would not know what is happening in the world. There is an objectivity of perception. For instance, we know there is something other than our mind. Do you believe that this wall is inside your brain or that it is a part of your own individual mental structure? The objectivity

involved in mental perception is an indication that there is some field of operation which itself cannot be identified with the subjective mind.

For instance, I am seeing you sitting in front of me, and you are seeing me here, which is itself a very interesting phenomenon. The connection between me and you, the operation that is invisibly taking place between my location here and your location over there, is something which is worth considering. There is a kind of simultaneous action taking place at the time of the perception of an object. When I see you sitting in front of me, it is necessary to know how it is that I know you are sitting in front of me. You are physically away from me; physically you are not touching me, nor am I touching you. There is absolutely no connection between you and me. I am seeing you through my eyes, but my eyes are inside me, and you are not entering into my eyes. The mountains are so far away, and you can know that there is a mountain in front of you. When the mountain has not entered your eyes, how do you know that there is a mountain? There is an invisible medium operating between the object of cognition and the subjective medium, which is the mind.

This universality of the cosmic mind is the reason why we cannot know that the cosmic mind is existing at all. We can see an object; we can know that there is something outside us, but we cannot know that there is a cosmic mind because objects are localised, there are in some place, and they are external to the mind. That which is external to the

mind can become an object of cognition by the mind, but the universal mind is not an object in that way. The universal mind is something in which the perceiving individual mind is also included. This is the reason why we cannot see anything that is universal in nature. We cannot see God, we cannot see heaven, we cannot see anything that is larger in dimension than the location of our mind. We are particularised individualities; therefore, the mind involved in this individuality will only be able to apprehend an object which is equally individual and outside in space and in time. That is to say finally that the mind—which is really involved in a cosmic operation, without which it could not be aware of even the objects of the world—is not a content of direct apprehension by the mind. The wonder of the physical body is there, the wonder of the vital organs is there, and the wonder of the mind is greater than the wonder of the vital system and the body.

There is another wonder, which is the spirit in us, what we call consciousness. Nobody can know what consciousness is. It is only a word which we read in books and hear of. Consciousness is that which is responsible for the knowledge of anything in this world. Therefore, no one can know consciousness. Consciousness knows everything, but who can know consciousness? *Yenedam sarvaṃ vijānāti, taṃ kena vijānīyāt, vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād* (B.U. 2.4.14) is the great proclamation of Sage Yajnavalkya, as we have it recorded in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. How

can we know consciousness, inasmuch as it is the thing that knows everything? Who can know the knower? The knower of all things is consciousness; therefore, how can anyone convert consciousness into an object? In order to know consciousness, there must be somebody else to know it. That somebody would be consciousness. That is to say, no one can know the knower.

If no one can know the knower, how does one become aware of the existence of the knower? How do we know that we are existing? We know that the world exists, that people exist, and that everything exists, because of the operation of the sense organs and the mind in the act of perception, inference, etc. We can prove that something exists or something does not exist by the logic of the perceptual process, but how do we know that we are existing? What is the proof that we are taking advantage of in the demonstration of our own existence? These days we ask for proof. We want proof for the existence of God, and there is a need to demonstrate the proof of anything in the world. We are living in a world of verification, observation and experiment, etc. What kind of verification or experiment can we conduct in regard to our own existence? Can we prove that we are existing?

Inasmuch as there is no conceivable proof in regard to our own existence, how would we, based on the hypothesis of our existence which itself cannot be proved, ask for a proof that other things exist? Does it mean that all logic is meant for other people only, and it is not applicable to us? We do

not want to prove that we are existing because we think it is achieved. Then why should the proof of everything else existing not also be achieved? How is it that we are so generous to our own self and so hard upon others? It is like the humorous story of the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law.

Mother-in-laws are mostly very hard on daughter-in-laws. They tease them and harass them very much because the mother-in-law is very jealous of a new entrant into the house taking hold of things and achieving ownership, as it were.

It seems one day a mother-in-law had gone for a bath in the river nearby. Her daughter-in-law was there in the house.

A beggar came and said, "Ma, give some *biksha*."

"Get out from this place!" the daughter-in-law said. "Get out. Nothing doing. Go!"

The man went. On the way he saw the mother-in-law coming after her bath.

From where are you coming?" she asked.

"Oh, I went to your house. Your daughter-in-law kicked me out. She wouldn't give me anything."

"Is it so? Who does she think she is? What right does she have to say anything like that? Does she think that she is the owner of the house? Come with me. I am the owner of the house. She has no right to say anything."

The old man thought he would get something. When they returned to the house, the mother-in-law said, "Now I am telling you to quit this place, because I have the authority to say that. The

daughter-in-law has no authority. You go from here. Go!"

This is something like our assuming every kind of generosity of logic in regard to our own existence. Even the most hardcore scientist who cannot accept anything other than through experiment, etc., bases his hypothesis on the existence of the world. The scientist believes that there is a thing called the world, but he cannot prove that the world exists. Let alone the difficulty in proving the existence of our own self by logic, we cannot even prove that the world exists except for the fact that we are seeing it. But seeing it is not a proof. And so there are certain assumptions which are the hypothesis on which all logic and argumentation are based.

The idea is that the Self, Pure Consciousness, which is responsible for every kind of logical deduction, induction, etc., cannot itself be proved. These are the wonders which we ourselves are. Physically we are so wonderful from the point of view of the anatomical and physical operations. Vitality we are wonderful in our relationship with the quantum of energy which pervades the whole cosmos, into which the whole of matter can be reduced. Mentally we are connected to the cosmic mind, and spiritually our Atman is the supreme knower of all things. Just imagine the dignity of it. The human being is not a slave.

I began by saying that we have various sides of our personality. These are the sides, to put it briefly. We have a physical aspect, a vital aspect, a mental aspect, which includes the intellectual also,

and a spiritual aspect. This is to say something about the internal components of our personality. But there is also the social aspect, which connects us with other people. The relationship of our personality with other individuals is what is called social relations. In spiritual life, in the field of yoga practice, we attempt a harmonious blending of all the sides of our nature gradually, stage by stage, from the lower to the higher.

The ascent in yoga is practically a kind of reversal process of the manner in which we have, physically and socially, descended into this predicament. The Yoga System of Patanjali especially has outlined an eightfold system of ascent—*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*—indicating thereby, or suggesting thereby, the way in which we have to ascend to the higher reaches of our being from the lowest category in which we are involved.

Our life is a great involvement, and many a time our involvements look like a mess, heaped up one over the other. "I have got so many involvements and so many things to do," people sometimes complain. Now what are these many things? As in the case of a medical diagnosis, as in the case of a scientific experiment, the so-called manyness—the muddles and the so-called chaotic involvement—has to be dissected into its basic essentials. Even if a person has twenty symptoms, it is essential for the physician to know what these twenty types of manifestation of the illness are,

how they have cropped up. A very careful investigation into our psychological involvement and social involvement has to be undertaken. In yoga, there is no hurry. It is not that tomorrow everything has to be done and we have to ascend to heaven. "Slow and steady wins the race" is a good motto for the spiritual seeker. First of all, be sure that you have taken a firm step, even if it be only the first step. You should not take twenty steps only to retrograde and retrace your steps by feeling that you have made a mistake. Take only one step at a time, and not many, but let that one step be so firm that you need not have to retrace it.

The involvements of the human personality in life's processes are to be dissected piecemeal into the minutest quantum, and nothing should be left over. When this adventure is attempted, you will find that finally you have no assistance coming forth from anybody. You have to be your own master in the end. Even if there is a Guru, a teacher, a master or a guidebook, they will be of assistance to you only up to a particular point. Beyond that, when you come to the core of your own personality, which is so subtle, you have to stand on your own legs. The involvements of your personality in the world are so very subtle that every aspect of this subtlety cannot be found described in textbooks, and your Guru is not expected go on telling you every day what your involvements are. Finally, you have to practise the art of self-help.

There are certain difficulties which a spiritual seeker faces, very peculiar to that person himself.

Two spiritual seekers do not have all the same difficulties. Two individuals are two individuals. Because they are two individuals, they are different in the subtle makeup of their personalities and their problems. My problem is not identical with your problem. In general, on the surface, of course there are certain uniform patterns of our involvement, but there are certain deep things which are special to our own selves. There are strengths and weaknesses in every human individual. It is not that you are completely armed enough to face all the encounters in the world. Such strength nobody has. Nor is it that you are nothing and you have no strength at all. There are adjustments and maladjustments which you make every day with the outer environment of society and nature, due to which you seem to be sometimes advancing and sometimes retrograding, or moving back. You are happy and unhappy, both at the same time. You are not unhappy the whole day, nor are you happy the whole day. At least for a moment in the day there is something irking, pricking like a needle, and making you feel troubled; but at other times, you are a little free. The adjustments that the physical personality makes with the outer world are the sign of the health of the body. The maladjustments that it makes are the sign of ill health. Similar is the case with the other layers of personality: the vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual.

What are these adjustments and maladjustments? How are you to understand these,

and take to them in right earnest? Here, the actual geographical map of the adventure of the journey will be given to you by your teacher. Cosmological maps are there which are laid down before you by the scriptures. A cosmological map is a drawing of the procedure that nature has adopted in coming to this level of actual concrete perception, and by knowing it you will know how to retrace your steps. The objects of the world look as if they are outside, disconnected from you, and you seem to be sitting here as if you are the observers of the world outside. When you look at the world outside, you feel it is at a distance. The distance that seems to be there between you and any object in the world is a creation of space. There is no distance in the universe, finally. That which is inseparably connected with the subjectivity of the observer may look like an externally placed object.

There is a humorous anecdote. Two trekkers went up to the mountains. They got lost, and wanted to know which peak they were standing on. They opened a map.

“Do you know where we are standing? Which is this peak? Do you know where we are?” asked one trekker.

“I will tell you. Look at that peak over there. There we are standing,” the other trekker said, pointing to a peak in the distance.

What is this? How can he say that he is standing on a peak that is so far away from him?

The mental structure of your personality is so constituted that it drives your consciousness out

into the location of an outwardly placed spatio-temporal object. The sides, the faces and the principles that constitute your personality are not so easy to understand. Yoga students many a time find it hard to go on with this practice for a long time because in the earlier stages everything looks very beautiful and fine, and later on they face a black curtain, a mountain in front of them.

We have been discussing the inner content of the epics and the Puranas. With this introduction that I have told you about your own personality, I will now take you to the contents of the epics and the Puranas, which are heavy tomes that have gone into great detail of exposition on the involvement of every face of your personality in relation to the cosmos. I would advise you to study the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana especially, which is a textbook of cosmic history, the coming down of the human soul from its state of Godhood, the highest level, through its evolutionary descent. It gives every detail, not only of the process of your coming down to this earth as a physical entity, but also the spiritual process of the retracing of your steps to Godhead.

The epics and the Puranas, especially the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata, would be your guide. In the Mahabharata, the philosophical sections are four. The Bhagavadgita, which occurs in the Bhishma Parva, is the central philosophical theme of the Mahabharata, and there are also three other books in the Mahabharata which are philosophical.

In the Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata, which is the fifth book, there is a conversation between Sanatkumara, the great sage, and Dhritarashtra. This conversation is metaphysical, and is called Sanatsujatiya. Dhritarashtra could not sleep due to various apprehensions in his mind as to the forthcoming events. As he was sleepless, he summoned Vidura, his minister, and said, "Friend, tell me something so that I may pass my night. I am not getting sleep."

"I hope you are not one of those four culprits who do not get sleep," said Vidura.

"Who are those people who do not get sleep?"

"A thief does not get sleep, a sick man cannot get sleep, a passionate man cannot get sleep, and he who wants to grab another's property does not get sleep. I am sure you are not one of them."

But Dhritarashtra was awake. Then Vidura gave Dhritarashtra a large homily on the ethical side of life, which goes by the name of Vidur Niti. Everybody should read this. It is a textbook of political science and sociology, ethics and morality.

"Something more must be known. I want to know something more," said Dhritarashtra.

"I had a talk with the great sage Sanatkumara, who said finally that death is not the ultimate reality," replied Vidura.

"Tell me something about it," said Dhritarashtra.

"I cannot talk to you on this subject. I am not competent. Only a great master can speak to you," replied Vidura.

“Bring the master.”

Vidura thought of Sanatkumara, the son of Brahma, who immediately descended and spoke on the highest metaphysical reality, called Sanatsujatiya. This is one of the philosophical portions in the Mahabharata, occurring in the Udyoga Parva, which is the fifth book.

The second is the Bhagavadgita, of course, which occurs in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata.

The third is Moksha-dharma, which occurs in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, which is the twelfth book. It is a very elaborate discourse given by Bhishma to Yudhisthira on every blessed thing. The Shanti Parva has four sections. The first section is called Rajadharma, political science. Then there is Apaddharma, the conduct which we have to adopt when we are in a great crisis. It is not the normal way of approach to things. When we are critically involved in death, as it were, and nothing is clear to our mind, in such conditions what are we supposed to do? That is called the dharma of social moments; it is called Apaddharma in Sanskrit. The third is Moksha-dharma, a most elaborate lecture on spiritual and religious existence. And the last section is Dhanadharma, the virtue of charity, philanthropy, etc. Thus, the Sanatsujatiya, the Bhagavadgita, and Moksha-dharma are three great books.

The fourth philosophical portion of the Mahabharata is the Anugita, which occurs in the Ashvamedhika Parva. It has a little background.

Arjuna and Sri Krishna were sitting on a lawn. Arjuna said, "Krishna, during the war you told me something when I was unable to take up arms. I want to hear it again because I have forgotten it." He was referring to the Bhagavadgita.

Sri Krishna said, "I cannot repeat it. Once again it is not possible to say that." *Param hi brahma kathitam yogayuktena tan mayā* (M.B. 14.16.12): "I cannot recall that now. I was united with the Absolute at that time, and in that state of affairs I spoke to you. Now once again I cannot repeat it. Anyway, I will tell you something." Then Sri Krishna told some stories to illustrate the same truth that he had told at the beginning of the war. That sequel, that tail end of teaching, as it were, which Bhagavan Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna, is called the Anugita.

Thus, the Mahabharata is a great treasure house of varieties of teachings, and these four treasures of knowledge in the Mahabharata, together with the entire Bhagavata, which every spiritual seeker should read for the purpose of knowing the intricacies of spiritual life, should be your *vade mecum*.

The Ramayana is of a different type. It does not give homilies. There are no lectures in the Ramayana as we have in epics such as the Harivamsa, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. What does the Ramayana say? It tells us how somebody behaved, and it is up to us to draw the lesson from that. So-and-so was in that condition, and in that condition so-and-so behaved in that manner. It is illustrative, rather than expository.

That is the Ramayana. But the Mahabharata is not merely illustrative; it is also expository. So both these put together are a good guideline for us in our daily life.

Our subject is India's ancient heritage. The heritage of India is a pattern of culture into whose essentials we dove briefly, in outline, during our earlier sessions, and if you have remembered everything that I told you, you will realise the cultural pattern of India is rooted in an outlook of life which is its religion, or dharma. Many people say that this outlook of life, which is India's basic foundation—this so-called Hinduism, which is the name that has been given it—is also a way of life. The philosophy and religion of India is not a teaching; it is a description of the way in which we have to conduct ourselves from day to day, from moment to moment. Philosophy is action. In India, philosophy and religion become action, and the awareness of the procedure we have to adopt in this action is the philosophy thereof. Philosophy is the rational foundation of religion, and religion is the practical implementation of philosophy. I would like to call it the religion of life, the religion of humanity, and not any 'ism' of a fundamentalist nature.

This culture, this religion, this philosophy is not compartmentalised. It is absorbent like a sponge, and not repellent like an iron ball. This culture is capable of reclaiming any faith, any cult, into itself, by a process of sublimation and transmutation. This culture is like a crystal with many facets, and every

facet, though it differs from the others, is capable of reflecting the other facets in its own self. A perfect man, or a superman, who is the ideal of this culture, is represented as the symbol of Man as such. A crystal-like superman reflects within himself the suggestiveness that we can recognise in any pattern or way of life of other individuals also.

For instance, the whole of humanity was reflected in Arjuna. He was moderate, and was considered by Sri Krishna as the best medium for the reception of the highest integrating knowledge. He was not an extreme like Bhima or Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira was an excessively virtuous man, virtue gone beyond limit, whereas Bhima was the opposite. Any extreme is not the law of nature. The dos and don'ts gone to extremes are not the manner in which nature operates.

Therefore, the cultural pattern that is laid before us by these wondrous texts is what we can best call as an outlook of life, a vision of life, on the basis of which, action is performed in this world. Our conduct and behaviour, and our encounter with anything in this world socially or naturally, is the outcome of the vision of life which is its culture, and in this vision we are supposed to bring into focus all the sides of our personality to which I made reference just now. We must first be whole before our actions can be wholesome. Otherwise, our actions will be partial, and a total recompense cannot be expected from a partial action.

The action which is the highlighting principle in the Bhagavadgita, for instance, is a total action that

we are expected to perform. Only a total man can perform total action, and we are not total individuals even in our ordinary life. Our mind wanders in different directions, and a holistic, or a Gestalt pattern of thought, is not our method in our daily encounter with things. There is only a partial way of thinking. The whole mind does not act at any time. That is why we love something and hate something, and we have prejudices of various types due to certain excessive emphasis laid on partial sides of our mind, to the neglect of other parts. The attractions and the repulsions in which we daily find ourselves involved are a trick played by certain excesses of emphasis we lay on parts of our psyche. This is the reason why we overemphasise certain things in the world, calling certain things as our own and other things as not ours. Friends and enemies do not exist in the world; they exist in our mind only. The mind focuses its attention on things outside from a partial view of its own structure, and we see a partial side of nature, the other side being completely blotted out.

For instance, we see leaves as green, but leaves are neither green nor any other colour. The structure of the leaf is such that it is able to repel the other colours which are also in the sunlight, and it is able to absorb only one particular colour. Green stops the possibility of every other colour, and absorbs only one particular aspect of the sunlight, and so the leaf looks green. The real colour of the leaf can be seen only in pitch darkness. In pitch darkness there is no perception of colour, and yet

that is the only time we can know what the colour of a thing is. All objects repel certain things, and absorb certain things, due to an inner peculiarity of their composition.

In a similar manner is the psyche of our personality. It repels certain things, and absorbs certain things, on account of a partial emphasis it lays on itself due to a split that is inherent within its own composition. The point is that the whole of the mind of a person never acts. Therefore, the whole of our personality does not come in contact with the world. Therefore, we see everything partially. We do not like a thing; we like a thing very much.

Yoga absolves us from this peculiar malady in which our psyche is involved because of this split—a split which need not be merely one cut into two, but can be one cut into several pieces, so that we are fragments of personality scattered, as it were, in the region of perception, and we are seeing a multitudinous variety, while actually our duty is to have an insight into the nature of things in an integrated way. Health is the integrated functioning of the physical body and of the breathing process, sanity is the integrated functioning of the psyche, logic is the integrated functioning of the intellect, and superhuman power and knowledge is the integrated functioning of the spirit in us.

## Chapter 10

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD

Indian culture reaches its zenith, beyond which it is impossible for the mind to think or contemplate, when it occupies itself with the consideration of the nature of Reality. In its precedent stages, when a culture is only in the process of development, it seems to be engaged in the individual and social values of life and all the appurtenances connected with social and personal security, in all ways possible. But when the developmental process of culture reaches a point which we may consider as its apex, it feels a necessity to outgrow its earlier occupational pursuits, and finds that it is encountering something which may be regarded as the Reality of the universe.

As we are here concerned mostly with India's culture, we may limit our studies to the records available in India on this subject of the developmental process of what we may call religious consciousness, the pursuit of the Spirit, the encounter with Reality. The human mind wonders at the way in which the universe operates, though it does not always express this wonderment in the initial stages of its evolution. The more material is the outlook, the more physical is the need; the more the perceptual process is

externalised, the less is the pressure of Reality felt by a person or by human society. But when the needs of the body are amply available, as we had in India, when social security is not hampered beyond a certain limit, and all the abundances of nature are at hand, there is less pressure from the external, physical and social circumstances of life, and the mind becomes philosophical, as we say.

The search for the causes behind the effects that we perceive in the world is the beginning of philosophical investigation. Philosophy is a very wide subject, and when it begins with wonder and an awesome feeling in respect of the occurrences in nature, it starts to question as to how nature operates and why it operates in the manner it does. Every event, every occurrence is caused by some pressure, some operating medium that seems to be at the back of it. We have never seen something taking place without there being some cause behind it. The search for the cause of events, or the antecedents behind the occurrences in nature, is the beginning of philosophy and metaphysical pursuit.

In the earlier stages, this pursuit was for the discovery of the presence of various causative factors behind groups of phenomena, or even behind each individual phenomenon. Every event that takes place in this world is caused by something which occasions it. If the sun rises, if the sun sets, if it rains, if there are seasons, if any kind of change is observable in the universe, there must be something causing it. We may posit individual

causes behind isolated events. Something is causing the rise of the sun, something is causing the fall of rain, and something else is the cause of something else. This is an initial step in the adventure of the search for causes behind effects.

When we cannot identify or collate the conditions behind rainfall with the rise of the sun or the occurrence of seasons, for instance, the mind takes resort to the easiest way of positing causes as individual, independent of other causes, because when one event does not seem to be connected with another event, the cause behind that particular event may also not be connected with the other cause. That is to say, the seasons may be caused by some operation which need not necessarily be the operation behind the rise of the sun or the falling of rain. This is the stage of religious awareness where a multitude of causes began to be posited behind the multitudes of events as they were observed in daily life.

This is also the stage of the visualisation of spiritual principles, gods in heaven, angelic powers, as it were, operating differently in different places. The universe is populated by gods. A god is a name that we give to any superphysical power which has to be at the back of all physical phenomena, and the gods are said to be residing in heaven in the sense that the abode of these gods, or divinities, cannot be in this world. The cause cannot be identical with the effect. As the cause is the pressure behind the occurrence of an effect, it has to be different from

the effect. Therefore, the events which are caused by the gods cannot be in heaven, and the gods cannot be on the earth because of the philosophical requirement that the cause cannot be identified with the effect. Therefore, heaven cannot be in the world; it has to be above the earth. The kingdom of God is not in this world. It cannot be, because of the fact that the causative factors are certainly capable of differentiation from the effects that they produce.

Thus, the gods whom we worship, whether they are the gods of the Veda Samhitas, the gods of the Greek religions or the gods of any other religion, are not standing with their feet planted on the earth. We are told many a time that the feet of the gods do not touch the ground. They stand above, in mid-air. This is a religious picturisation of the cause being superphysical. That is to say, the cause of a physical occurrence or event has to be superphysical, again to repeat, because of the fact that the cause is behind the effect as the determining principle of the nature of the effect, but is itself above the effect.

The gods control the world, but they are not capable of identification with the world. They stand above the earth. This is the visualisation of the gods of religion, in the earlier stages of its development. Perhaps it is a phenomenon that can be observed both in the East as well as in the West. We can study Greek religions, for instance, or even the religious themes that we observed earlier in our studies, precedent to Greek religions, and also the

earliest visualisation of gods in the Vedas. They seem to have some kind of similarity.

As I mentioned, in the earliest of stages the gods are posited as independent of one another, and later on it was felt that it is possible that certain gods can form a group. In the language of the Vedas, the groups of certain gods are called Visvedevas. A combined congregation of certain divinities is designated as Visvedevas. They are members of a family, as it were, but they act with some sort of an agreement among themselves. For instance, in the Vedas we have the Ashwins, two brothers. One brother is of course different from the other brother, but they act together. In the Veda Samhitas we have the Maruts—forty-nine gods working together in collaboration. And there are varieties of Vayus, who are branches or segmented operations of a single wind god, and so on.

Religion begins with the necessity felt by the human mind to accept the existence and operation of something which has to be behind activities taking place in the world. The mind of man is made in such a way that it searches for the causes of effects. Is it necessary that every effect should have a cause? This question the mind will not raise because the structure of the mind is such that it can think only in terms of causes and effects. Philosophers tell us that the structural pattern of the mind is so conditioned that we can practically pigeonhole the way in which the mind basically operates, though it looks as if it thinks in a hundred ways. We have a thousand thoughts in our mind,

yet these thousand thoughts are capable of being cast into certain moulds which are the structural patterns of the functioning of the mind.

Firstly, the mind can think only what is outside. Anything that the mind thinks has to be somewhere in space; it cannot be anywhere else. The spatial location of an object of cognition is one of the conditions of mental operation. Simultaneously with the spatial location of anything that the mind can think, there has also to be a temporal association; it has to be at some time. The object of the mind is somewhere, and it is also at some time.

Secondly, an object can be only in one place at a time, and it cannot be at two places at the same time. This is a limitation that the mind sets on its perceptual process.

Thirdly, anything that the mind thinks should have a quantity. The mind cannot think a thing that has no dimension. Even if we are to think of the minutest things, such as a particle of matter—an atom, for instance—we will picture it only as a kind of little globular dimension. Even if it be the minutest sand particle, capable of observation only through a microscope, we can think it only as a small substance with a dimension. Hence, the mental object, that is, the object of cognition or perception, must have a dimension. It is three-dimensional in its nature; it has length, breadth, height, and it may have weight.

Fourthly, the object of mental cognition must have a quality. It is heavy or it is light, it is this

colour or that colour, it is round or square or oblong or triangular, it is this or it is that. It has a solid mass of a three-dimensional nature, which is what is meant by quantity; and in addition to that it must have a quality. A thing which has no quality at all cannot become an object of perception or cognition by the mind. The mind cannot think a thing that has no dimension.

The fifth limitation that the mind puts on the object of cognition is that it is conditioned by the existence of other objects. There is some kind of relation of one thing with another. The relation may be a distinction that obtains between one and the other, or it may be a relation of one thing determining the other or influencing the other. If two large bodies of matter are placed at a particular distance, they may pull each other with a gravitational power, etc. Some kind of relation obtains between them.

Finally, every object is in one condition at a time, and it cannot be in two conditions at the same time. It can be in different conditions at different times, but at a particular moment it can be only in one condition.

These are, to state briefly, the circumstances under which the mind can think. And even if we contemplate the gods in heaven, we apply these mental concepts to them. These gods must be somewhere. Our religions, even the so-called advanced types of religions, we may say, have a subtle predilection to posit their gods in a quantitative measurement, a qualitative picture, a

relation and a condition. It may be the highest Father in heaven; it may be Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; it may be Surya, Ahriman, Mitra, Agni; it may be Zeus, Thor or Odin. It does not matter who the god is, but that god has to have the characteristics of these limitations which the mind has set upon it, because the mind can think only in this manner.

Now, the religious consciousness, as I mentioned, commences with the necessity to posit causes behind effects, and this law of cause and effect has compelled the mind to posit superphysical powers, which are called the independent causes behind events taking place in the world; and these are the gods. Why do we call them gods? Because they are not limited by the laws of the physical universe. They are deathless. We call them immortal because mortality is a characteristic of matter. Matter, which is physical, of which the universe is composed, is partite. It is composed of little bits of internal components. Therefore, it undergoes transmutation, and transmutation is nothing but the characteristic of dying. And the causes, which are the gods, who are not physically conditioned, whose bodies are not made of matter, cannot die. So we say the gods are immortal, deathless. Another peculiar feature we attribute to the gods is necessitated by the fact that all matter is in space and in time, and the space and time complex seems to be the reason why there is mutation of material components, and why things die. Therefore, the gods in heaven are non-spatial and non-temporal. If they are to be immortal, they

have to be not in any way conditioned by the spatio-temporal complex.

Somehow or other we struggle against odds, as it were, to picture the gods in heaven as non-spatial and non-temporal. Gods can penetrate through walls; they have no physical obstruction in front of them. They can travel through space, and they can be in the past, present and future. These are ideas that we conjure up in our mind, against our own conviction that things cannot be thought without the involvement of space and time. So, on the one hand, there is an internal struggle in the concept of the presence of gods in heaven being unconditioned by space and time and, on the other hand, there is the impossibility of the mind to think anything which is not in space and in time.

Thus, to come to the point again, the positing of causes behind effects, leading to the concept of gods in heaven, led us to believe that the heaven of the gods, the heaven of the immortals, is our actuation. When we die, where do we go? The religious mind accepts the conclusion that it has to go to the causes. When the matter of which the body is composed gets decomposed at the time of death, the soul has to go to the source from where it has come. When the effect is dissolved in the components thereof, it goes to the cause. So in the earlier stages of religion there was a fond hope that the soul, which is the inner essence of the human being, goes to the gods in heaven and enjoys the bliss of immortality there. It goes to Indraloka, *swarga*, or the heaven of the immortals.

But there is also a proviso behind this hope that after the death of the body one can go to the heaven of the gods. The proviso is that material forces need not necessarily be confined to visible particles of matter, but they can be certain pressures which are exerted upon the soul, causing its return to earth even after the shedding of the body. So another assumption arose, that even if we happen to go to the gods in heaven on account of certain virtuous or righteous deeds that we performed in this world, we may come back to this world if the material pressures continue—that is to say, if desires persist.

The so-called desire of a person is the pressure of matter upon the soul. The compelling force which necessitates the soul to think of matter again and again is what is called desire. A desire is a pressure exerted upon the soul in terms of material objects, in terms of this material world itself. The soul would like to go to the heaven of the gods, but it would not like to leave this world completely. Do we see any person in the world who is so fed up with this world that he would not like to live a long life? Even a diseased person would like to cure himself and see that his life in this material world is prolonged to as long a period as possible. Do we believe that the world is worthless? Why should there be medical treatment and processes to lengthen life if the world is a wretched thing and it is only sinful, as some people say? There seems to be something which the soul beholds in this world of matter which it likes. This liking is called desire,

and that brings it back to this world. *Gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante* (B.G. 9.21) is a passage in the Bhagavadgita: “Those who desire objects outside in space and time will go to the gods in heaven, of course, due to some meritorious deeds that they perform, but they will come back when the momentum of those righteous deeds is exhausted.”

Thus, the gradual advance of religion in the direction that it takes through the process of evolution has certain ups and downs. It is not a linear movement like walking on an straight road, as it were, with closed eyes. It is like the road to Badrinath with its many ascents and descents. There are so many hills which we have to ascend, and there are depressions towards the valleys to which we have descend. The ascent, though it be finally a progress and a march onward, is hampered on the way by ups and downs. Therefore, the positing of the gods in heaven does not preclude the coming back of the soul to this world due to desire.

Religion advances further by its assumption that it is good to be with the gods always. Why should we come back to this world? Though there are tastes which are licked with the tongue of desire, saner deliberations conclude that it is not good to be in this world for a long time. Even if we live a very long life, how long will this life last? Suppose we have the best of medicines, very good health and a panacea which will prolong our life, to what extent will it be prolonged? Even if we live for ten thousand or one million years, what happens after one million years? The law of the world will

pursue us even then. That which will kill us after fifty or sixty years can also kill us after two million years, so we have not escaped the clutches of death merely by prolonging life. Thus, saner moments brought to the vision of the mind a conclusion that it is fruitless to imagine that we can be happy in this world by living a long life, because even the longest life is short when it comes to an end. Even the wealthiest man is poor when his money is exhausted. So what is the good of this accumulation of moments of time to lengthen life or accumulate dollars in a bank? How long will we accumulate them? One day they will come to an end.

Hence, the question arose as to how we can prevent the soul from coming back to this world by the abolition of desires. How can we abolish desire? Desire has been explained as the pressure of matter upon the soul. It tells us that it is also here, and that it is not nothing. Who can say that this world is nothing? Is there anyone who can say the world is an illusion? We perceive it as a solid substance. The solidity or the substantiality of the world of matter is the reason why we are unable to extricate ourselves from the clutches of matter. However much we may love the gods in heaven, we also love our little brother, this earth. This body is a little brother ass, and this ass has to be carried with us wherever we go. Whatever be the intensity of our religious contemplations, the pressure of matter cannot be obliterated completely. Everyone who is in the highest state of religious awareness is also standing on the ground, which is matter. We have

never seen a saint flying in the air. He is on the earth. That is the pull of gravity on matter, together with which the mind also gets pulled. It is said that the moon pulls the whole ocean, and it also pulls the minds of people. The moon is a force that exerts influence upon everybody's thoughts. That is to say, matter exerts a tremendous influence on the thought process.

Therefore, to free ourselves from any kind of material influence upon our mind is a herculean task; it is a higher form of religion where the bodily pressures are overcome by the love of God, which defines God in a different way altogether. The so-called multiplicity of gods in heaven, or the manifold groups of gods assumed in religion, melt down into the concept of a single authority who seems to be the architectural designer of this whole world. The pluralistic concept, the polytheistic concept, the group concept or the henotheistic concept, as it is sometimes called, boils down to the theistic concept. The most advanced form of religion is theism, where one God is posited behind the operations of the whole cosmos. There can be thousands of events taking place in this world, but there is no necessity to posit thousands of causes behind them; one supreme force can perhaps handle millions of operations in this world. We have ten fingers, but it does not mean that there are ten bodies behind the ten fingers. There is only one body controlling the operation of the ten fingers. In a similar manner, manifold operations in the universe, appearing different and contradictory to

one another, can be the work of one single architect, a designer, an all-knowing eye, an all-powerful controller, or a creator. Gradually the mind rises to the necessity of positing a universal existence, which is the Supreme Father in heaven, the God, the Vishnu, the Narayana, the Siva or the Brahma, whatever be the nomenclature for this power.

How is it possible for one being to control a universal manifold activity? It is possible only if we accept the other corollary: that the controller of the universe must be as vast as this universe. The cause has to be as big as the effect. We cannot have a large effect and a small cause. The cause requires a dimension that is as equally large as the dimension of the effect. So big is this universe, its end nobody has seen. Because endless seems to be this physical universe, endless also has to be the controller, the designer, the operator, the creator of this universe. All-pervading has to be this God. The one God of creation has to be everywhere in order that He may be able to operate even the littlest things in the world. Even the movement of a leaf in a particular tree has to be known by Him; otherwise, the leaf cannot move, because the movement of a leaf is an effect that is taking place, and there must be a cause for the leaf to move. Who will cause the leaf to move if the God is somewhere else, unconnected with that leaf? As these leaves or atoms or particles of matter are spread out everywhere, this God, this theistic Supreme Being, has to be equally present everywhere, all-pervading, and it is all-pervading

not in the sense of a segregated operator, but as an immanent force.

Now, the concept of 'all-pervasion' has to be clearly explained. What is meant by saying that something is all-pervading? Suppose we have a bucket full of water. If we soak a cloth in that water and allow it to sink down, we will find that water pervades every fibre of the cloth. The water in the bucket pervades the entire fibrous structure of the cloth. This is an illustration of how one thing can completely pervade another thing. But the water is not the cloth. There is a total distinction between the cloth and the water. The water has never become the cloth, and the cloth has never become the water. Is it in this sense we say that God is all-pervading in the universe? Is God like water pervading the substance of this material universe? In that case, God would be totally different and He would remain transcendent.

Certain religions, especially the Semitic ones, have emphasised this transcendent aspect of God, and they are abhorrent to the concept of God's immanence. They do not want to defile God by making Him immanent in this universe of sin and wretchedness. They think that God would be contaminated by the evils of the world if we believe that God is immanent—that He is hiddenly the soul of even the smallest things in the world, and so God has to be transcendent. Such religions completely reject the concept of immanence, and maintain only the transcendent aspect of God. God is the maker of the world, but He is not associated with the world

of matter, because if that latter concept is also conceded, there will be harm done to the purity of God's existence. God is transcendent. As a potter is transcendent to the pot that he makes or the carpenter is different from the furniture that he manufactures, God, as the maker of this universe, stands aloof from this world. God operates this world with His hands reaching from the skies, just as a carpenter can touch wood and shape it to a particular model, though the carpenter is not the wood and the wood is not the carpenter. This is a transcendental concept of religious positing of God even in theism.

But difficulties arise. Religion has not ended here, because it is still struggling against certain odds. A God who is transcendent may be a good friend, but logically there is some difficulty, namely, the relationship between a transcendent God and the world of creation. What is the relation between God and His creation? The carpenter has wood, but where is the wood for God? In one of the passages of the Atharvaveda a question like this is raised. Where is the beam, where is the wood, where is the furniture out of which God has manufactured this world? Where is the matter? Was there a matter before God which He could fashion into the substance of this vast universe? Did matter exist before God, even before creation took place?

The Sankhya philosophy of India, and other dualistic doctrines even in the West, faced this difficulty of positing something before God, an Ahriman before Ahura Mazda or a Satan before the

Father in heaven, or a *prakriti* before *purusha*, or matter before consciousness, or something separating God from what He creates. These are the difficulties in the advance of religions. Is there something in front of God?

Now, the transcendent concept of God also accepts the all-pervading nature of God, though sometimes the limitations of the mind compel it to press God into a corner of creation. When we say God is in heaven, we do not know what we are actually thinking in our minds. Where is this heaven? And does God occupy the whole of heaven or is He occupying only a throne, like an emperor, in some part of the heavenly world? There are angels around Him. If angels are there, if there is Gabriel, if there is Michael, if there are other divinities who are the fingers of God operating independently, as it were, then the all-pervading nature of the transcendent God gets marred. We cannot think of God as He is. Even if we accept the transcendent nature of God as the creator of the universe, we cannot think of Him except in terms of some spatial location. This is the reason why the religious quest for Truth adventures further and further into the logical limits of it being necessary for God to be all things, and not put in the predicament of having something opposing Him, in front of Him.

God created the heaven and the earth out of what material? Can we say God created the world out of nothing? What do we actually mean by saying that God created the world out of nothing? What do we mean by 'nothing'? If nothing is the cause out of

which the universe has come, the effect which is the universe will also be a nothing, a zero. Is this world a nothing?

But the senses conclude that the world is not a nothing. Solidity and dimension are associated with the world of perception. Is nothing also characterised by solidity and dimension? There is a contradiction in the definition of the term 'nothing'. We cannot say that God created the world out of nothing, nor can we say that He created it out of something, because there is no 'something' before Him. That something which we posit would be the opposite of God, and the opposite of God would limit God's all-pervading nature.

In India especially, the schools of thought which struggled with these concepts are the Nyaya, the Vaisheshika, and the Sankhya. The multiplicity of effects which are seen in this world were considered as being operated by a transcendent extra-cosmic God by the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika philosophies. And the Sankhya went further by concluding that it is not essential to posit a multiplicity or a variety of effects, because the so-called multiplicity of effects can be boiled down to some basic substance, called *prakriti*, constituted of three strands of actions, or *gunas* as they are called: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Though the Sankhya is a great advance that has been made over the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika concept of God as extra-cosmic, and the multiplicity or the variety of the world of perception, it is not really a solution to the problem. The problem that

was raised by the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika concept of Godhood as extra-cosmic was not obviated by the Sankhya. It only landed us in another problem, namely, the opposition between consciousness and matter, *purusha* and *prakriti*. Here we conclude, and we shall pursue this later on.

## Chapter 11

### THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD

The quest of the human mind was the subject with which we began our previous session. It was found that the habit of the mind to seek causes behind effects is an imperative implanted upon it by its very structural pattern. The mind has to seek a cause behind all the effects in the form of events taking place in this world, and inasmuch as the cause is not identical with the effect, the happenings in this world cannot be identified with anything which is of this world itself. The cause of events in the world has to be outside the world, beyond the world, not identifiable with the world, because if the cause of events in the world is not separable from the effects, the cause will get merged into the effects. That cannot take place because if the cause gets identified with the effect, there will be no relation between the cause and the effect.

We noted that there are certain habits of the mind, certain patterns of thinking under which it works. It is under the pressure of these patterns of thinking that it becomes obligatory on the part of the mind to accept the presence of a cause that is distinguishable from the effects. So goes the search for transcendent causes beyond the events in the world; and as they are transcendent, they also are

superphysical. I am briefly outlining what I said during the previous session. The superphysical character of the causes of events in the world follows from the fact that these causes are not in this world. They are outside the world, beyond the world, transcendent to the world. Therefore, they are not physical. They are mental and spiritual. The gods are not physical bodies. They do not touch the ground. They are superphysical, and therefore they can penetrate through matter. Even granite is not an obstacle to the gods. They can pierce through all things due to the subtlety of their inner composition. The spirituality, the mental structure, or the superphysical nature of the gods in heaven follows from the fact of their being not in this world. This is the initial stage of the search for a religious background for the processes in the world, so that in the earliest of stages it looks as if different events have different causes. We are unable to identify one event with another event. They are different. Therefore, the mind thinks that perhaps there are different causes for different events, so we have many gods. In the early phases of the religious development of the human psyche, multiple gods are posited. This is a phenomenon that we can find in the religious history of both the West and the East.

The development advances further into the discovery that it is not essential that independent events should have independent causes. One single event need not have one single cause. Several events can be occasioned by a single cause, just as

many functions in the body, our own physical organism, need not necessarily be caused by different factors. One single organism, which is this body of ours, can operate in many ways. We can see, we can hear, we can touch, we can smell, we can walk, we can digest food, and we can speak. We can do many things almost simultaneously, and these simultaneous activities, apparently differing one from the other, are not caused by different pressure points. There is one pressure point, which is the entire organism.

A universal cause may perhaps be responsible for even the variety of events taking place in the world. Many things in the world need not have many causes in the heavens. There can be only one cause, which is the theistic conclusion of religious discovery. Theism is the acceptance of one God being there as the creator of the whole universe. The organism of the universe is animated by a single intelligence in the same way as the organism of our physical body is animated by one intelligence. The Mister so-and-so, you or I, this so-called person, is the animating intelligence behind this physical personality. In a similar manner, the conclusion follows that there is a supreme animating intelligence pervading the whole cosmos, and notwithstanding the fact that there are almost millions of events taking place in the world and there are endless atoms constituting this physical universe, there can be one cause. Theism in religion is the conclusion that God is one, and there cannot be many Gods.

Why should there not be many Gods? What is the harm? Let there be hundreds of Gods. This question may arise in one's mind. If there are many Gods, or even if there are only two Gods, the question of the relationship between one God and another God arises. How are we to understand the connection of one God with another God? The rules of logic require that the perception of two things, or the cognition of the relation between two things, is impossible except in terms of an awareness which is neither the one nor the other. A and B cannot know the relation between them because A is confined to A, and B is confined to B. We are now trying to locate the connecting link between A and B. That link cannot belong to A, nor can it belong to B. It is a different thing, a third element altogether; therefore, the relation between one God and another God can be known only by a third God. That would certify the independence of the so-called two Gods that we have posited. If there are many Gods, or even two Gods, we have this problem of asserting another God who will be, after all, one God only. So finally, we land on one God. Even if we have tentative assumptions of there being many Gods, finally we are boiling down the whole question into the existence of only one God. Thus, we cannot escape this predicament. Theism reigns supreme.

Now, having accepted that there can be only one God for the whole cosmos, a further question arises as to the relation between God and this world. During the previous session I mentioned

that there are certain religions which emphasise the transcendent aspect of God. Devotees of this kind do not wish God to be contaminated by the evils of the world. Why should God come down to the dust of the earth? Let God be above in the purity of His heaven, and so God is transcendent. This is one stage in religion. The transcendence of God makes God extra-cosmic. An extra-cosmic God is a fashioner of the whole substance of the universe, as a carpenter fashions a piece of furniture or a potter makes a pot, etc., so that He becomes the instrumental cause, but not the material cause, of the universe. A question again arises as to what is the substance out of which the universe is made. Out of what substance does God create this universe? Either there is a material independent of God, as there is wood independent of the carpenter or clay independent of the potter, or there is nothing outside God.

There are schools of thought and branches of religion which posit the existence of some matter which is external to God's existence. God fashions this universe out of a clay which is cosmic in its nature, a *prakriti*, a matrix, some sort of unidentifiable substance. The Sankhya philosophy of India has this doctrine of *prakriti*, or the matrix of all creation, independent of *purusha*, which is the consciousness which is aware of the process of creation. If there is something in front of God as a substance which is the stuff out of which the universe is fashioned, again we have the same problem of the relation between two things. The

most difficult thing in philosophy is the question of relation. The question of relation between one thing and another is the crucial point in philosophical studies. Someone wrote a thesis on this subject, the question of relation. It is impossible to answer the question as to how one thing stands in relation to another. And so, even if religious devotion tentatively concludes that there is some matter out of which God creates the world, we have to answer the question: Where does God stand in relation to this matter? It is the same problem. The judge who answers this question will be transcendent to even God Himself. What a predicament!

The Sankhya doctrine does not seem to be a great answer to this problem before us, nor is it possible to believe that God creates the world out of nothing. Sometimes it is held that God does not require any material to create the world. God is a magician who conjures up things even without there being anything at all. If that is the case, the world that has been created by God would be a nullity. There would be no substance. It would be a zero, finally. Many philosophers have concluded that perhaps this is the truth, and it is better to say that God created this world out of nothing rather than to create a further problem by accepting the existence of something independent of God.

God is all-pervading. The all-pervading nature of God follows from the infinitude of God. If God is not infinite, He would be finite, and all things that are finite are subject to the process of transmutation, change and evolution; and God

would also be evolving into something other than God Himself. This would happen if He is finite; therefore, God cannot be finite. He has to be infinite. And because God is infinite, He is all-pervading. If God is all-pervading, there can be nothing to oppose Him as an object.

During the previous session I brought before you an illustration of the peculiar way in which you can understand all-pervadingness. I told you that water pervades a cloth which is dipped in a bucket full of water, but this pervading of the cloth by water does not in any way affect the cloth being independent of the water. So if God pervades the world as water pervades cloth in a bucket full of water, the world would stand independent of God; thus, God would not be all-pervading even then, and His infinitude would be marred. See how many difficulties we have got! Difficulties after difficulties arise.

Then what is the solution? God pervades the world, not as water pervading a cloth in a bucket full of water, but in a different manner altogether. In what manner can we conceive the all-pervadingness of God if not as water pervading cloth? We have to somehow accept that God cannot stand outside the world. The moment God is considered as something standing outside the world, the question of the relation between the two cannot be answered. Therefore, the transcendence of God boils down to the immanence of God. God is not merely outside the world in the sense of a transcendent element; He is also the material of the

world. God *becomes* the world. God is not merely the instrumental cause, He is also the material cause.

In Vedanta terminology, this involvement of God as both an instrument and a material is known as *abina nimitta upadana karana*. *Abina* means 'non-different', *nimitta* is 'instrumental', *upadana* is 'material', *karana* is 'cause'. God is the non-different instrumental as well as the material cause of this universe. When we say that God is the instrumental cause, we have to understand that He is responsible for the structure of this world. God is responsible for the shape the world has taken, the picture that is in front of us as the world. When we say God is the material cause, we understand thereby that in each and every nook and corner, in every little bit of things in the world, this Infinite is present. The Infinite is present in every little finite particle.

The great mantra *pūrṇam adah, pūrṇam idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate; pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvasisyate* is a metaphorical statement of the way in which God creates the world without actually creating anything outside Him, and without Himself getting affected by this creation. From the infinite, the whole infinite universe proceeds. There cannot be two infinities either from the point of view of mathematics or from the point of view of logic. Two infinities are inconceivable because an infinite is that which occupies all space, so when an infinite has occupied all space, there cannot be another infinite which will interfere with it. Yet, the infinite universe has come from that infinite cause.

But having seen that this infinite universe has come from that infinite cause, we should not conclude that there is a diminution of the substance of the cause to some extent when this infiniteness has come. If we take away something from something else, the substance of that something from which it has come is less; but here it is not the case. If the whole thing has come from the whole thing, the remainder is not less than whole; it is also whole. This stultifies all mathematical laws and logical principles. Mathematics and logic do not work in God's kingdom.

Here is an illustration from Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa. There were two devotees who saw Narada coming from Vaikuntha, the abode of Narayana. The devotees asked, "Great sage, what is Narayana doing there in Vaikuntha?"

Narada said, "He is passing a camel through the eye of a needle."

One devotee said, "Not possible! A camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle. Even God cannot do that."

The other devotee said, "Glory, glory, glory! Oh, what a glory! God can do everything. God can do everything!"

Sri Ramakrishna said, "The person who said that God cannot pass a camel through the eye of a needle is thinking in terms of mathematics and logic, whereas the other person is a real devotee."

God can convert a square into a circle, and a circle into a square. It is impossible for us. We will wonder how it is possible, but God is God,

omnipotent. Omnipotence is one of the characteristics of God, which means the capacity to do anything. He can do, undo, and otherwise do things. These are the three qualities of God: doing, undoing, and otherwise doing. We cannot do that, so we should not apply our logic there. Mathematics and logic do not operate in the kingdom of God. It is super-logical and super-mathematical. That is why the reality of the universe is sometimes considered as four-dimensional, and not as three-dimensional. Mathematics and logic are the manner in which the three-dimensional world operates. The four-dimensional realm, which is vaguely adumbrated by Einstein's theory of relativity and the theories of others, goes beyond the concept of time and space. "Somebody came tomorrow and he will return yesterday." We say this sentence does not make any sense, but it makes very much sense with the theory of relativity. A person has come tomorrow, and he will return yesterday. Do we see any meaning in that? It has a meaning with relativity. It is possible. Such a thing can happen.

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana took place here centuries back. In some places they have not yet taken place. The vibrations that set up events are also the causes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and certain parts of the cosmos have not yet received these vibrations. When the vibrations reach there, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata will take place there. These epics have taken place in some realm, and are yet to take place

in some other realm. Therefore, events are not historical. According to a theory of modern physics as well, events do not take place in space. Therefore, we cannot know where the Mahabharata or the Ramayana took place, where Christ was born, and where Krishna was. We should not say 'was', 'is', or 'will be'. All events take place in eternity, and therefore history does not ultimately apply to the nature of things.

Sometimes we see a star shining in the sky even though it has ceased to exist. It is no more there. The star's light has taken so much time to reach us that by the time it has reached, the star no longer exists. There is so much distance between the earth and the star, and yet we say the star is there. We are only seeing the vibration, the particles or the waves of light impinging upon the retina of our eyes, which makes us conclude that some object is there, though the object has ceased to be there. Logic cannot be applied to the realm of God, and so God can pass a camel through the eye of a needle, and He can convert a square into a circle.

Now our problem is, how can we relate God to this world? In what way is He connected? Has God transformed Himself into this world? We found that there is no matter independent of God out of which He fashions this world, because if we posit a matter or substance independent of God, the infinitude of God will be marred. So there cannot be something that exists outside God. And if God fashions the world out of nothing, He is like a magician making

things appear as if they are there, though really they are not there.

But some schools of thought and some religious beliefs feel that we cannot consider this world as a nullity or a zero. There are values, there is meaning, there is substance, there is attraction and repulsion, there is solidity in the world, so how can we conclude that the world is a nullity? Therefore, they feel that perhaps there is a transmutation of the very body of God into the substance of this world. This doctrine of God becoming the world by a self-transformation of His substance is called *parinamavada* in Sanskrit. *Parinama* is actual transformation of a substance into something else, like milk becoming curd, yogurt. When milk becomes yogurt, the milk has ceased to be there. There is no milk after it has become yogurt because yogurt cannot become milk once again. The milk ceases to exist. Has God become the world in that way, by self-transformation, so that God no longer exists, and we have only the yogurt of this world? This cannot be. Why are we aspiring for God-realisation when God does not exist because He has become the world? The aspiration for God-realisation shows that God has not ceased to exist. God has not become this world because if something becomes something else, it ceases to exist as it was. God cannot cease to be at any time. Eternity is the nature of God; infinity is the nature of God. Therefore, even if the whole world comes from God, He is not in any way diminished, even by a bit. This

is the reason why the transmutation theory, *parinamavada*, cannot be applied to God.

The final theory these philosophers hinged upon was that God *appears* as the world, He does not *become* the world. Though gold appears as an ornament, the gold continues to be the same as it was even before it became the ornament. Gold does not become something else when it becomes an ornament. When clay becomes a pot, we are seeing a pot, but actually the potness, so to say, is a shape taken by the clay. Can we separate the shape from the substance? When we touch a pot, are we touching clay or are we touching a pot? What are we touching? We may say we are touching a pot, but actually we are touching clay. Separate the clay from the pot, and let us see where the pot is. Actually, there is no such thing as the pot. It is clay that has assumed potness. Potness is a spatio-temporal condition. Space and time join together to create a peculiar condition called shape, and shape cannot exist independent of the substance which has taken that shape. This is an example of how there can be an appearance without a substantial change being there. Clay appears as a pot; it has not become the pot. Ask the clay, "Have you become the pot?" It will say, "Nothing has happened to me. I am the way same as I was." Only the perceiver of the pot says there is a pot, but the clay itself may not be aware that it has become the pot.

We see the world, but it may not be really there. This is called *vivartavada*, the theory of apparent creation, like a snake appearing as a rope

in twilight when perception is indistinct. We think that there is actually a snake; we can see it, and we jump over it in fright. We perspire at that time. The perspiration and the jumping are actual occurrences, but the cause thereof is zero; the snake is not there. A non-existent cause can sometimes create a real, visible effect. The snake is non-existent in the rope. Though it is really non-existent, it has caused some real effect because we are jumping over it with perspiration, fright, agitation etc. Such is the *vivarta*, or apparent relationship, that is assumed as existing between the supreme cause, which is God, and this universe. Otherwise, there is no way of explaining the relation between God and this world. The world is not a *parinama*, or a transformation or transmutation, it is not actually a fashioning of a substance which is independent of God, and it is not a zero or a nullity. It is just as it was.

Gradually we have moved from the concept of the heaven of the gods as an abode of multiple existences of causes behind effects, to groups of gods, to one God—not merely one God in the sense of a transcendent, extra-cosmic existence outside the world, but as something which is universally present. Universality is the nature of God. God is the nature of universality, and vice versa, universality is the nature of God. What we call the universal is the name of God. We have, therefore, to define the existence of God in clear principles of universality. When the universal is present in the particular, the particular assumes a reality. The reality of things in

the world is in exact proportion to the extent of universality present in the particulars. If we remove all the universals, we will find that there are no particulars existing.

Unfortunately for us, the universals are not visible things. They are invisible to the physical eyes. Only the particulars are seen by us. The eyes can see only externality; therefore, the universals, which are not outside the particulars but are immanent in them, cannot be visible to the eyes. Even the lowest universal is incapable of physical perception.

We have to learn the art of thinking in terms of universals in order that we may become really religious or philosophical. The universal is a concept which has to be explained very carefully, not as some abstract imagination drawn out of or extracted from particulars, but as something that is prior to the existence of parts.

In the West there is a certain school of thought which goes by the name of nominalism, which holds that the universal is posterior to the particular, not prior to the particular. Horseness is present in all horses. Now, horseness is a universal that can be said to be present in all particulars called horses. Which came first, horseness or horse? Some say unless there is such a thing called horseness, there cannot be a horse. Horseness has to be there, into whose mould the substance of the horse has to be cast so that a horse may be created. But others say it is not like that. There cannot be horseness unless there is horse. That is to say, they consider

horseness as a quality and horse as a substance. Can there be a quality without a substance? The quality has to inhere in the substance, and so nominalists think that the particulars are the real essences, of which the generalities, or universals, are only abstractions.

But others in the West, such as Plato and Aristotle, for instance, and Vedanta philosophy in the East, have proclaimed that universals are not extractions or abstractions taken out from existing particulars, but they exist prior to the particulars. The idea comes first, and the implementation of it comes afterwards. For instance, there is a thing called money. We cannot see money with our eyes. We see only a piece of paper or a piece of metal. Money is in the form of a metal piece called a coin or a piece of paper called a currency note, or it can be in the form of a transferable commodity such as rice, wheat, etc. Now, minus commodity, minus metal, minus the piece of paper, what is money? Money is a concept of the power to purchase. The power to purchase is called money, which is only in the mind of a man. It is working in the brain as a kind of idea; it does not exist as a solid object. This impersonal universal called purchase power has become the particulars in the form of a coin or a piece of paper called a currency note, or a commodity which is transacted in commerce. But the thing itself is not the money, it is the value attached to it that is the money. It can lose its value due to devaluation. Today a currency note is worth a hundred dollars, but tomorrow can be worth

nothing because it has been devalued to zero. So it is the value that we attach to a particular piece of paper that is the money thereof, and the substance that we are touching is not actually the money. Thus, the particular is not the real; the universal is the real.

Or, to take another instance, there is the concept of administration through a government. We cannot see the government with our eyes. If we travel from one part of the country to another part, we will see shops and marketplaces with people running about here and there, vehicles, and people sitting on chairs at tables; we will not see the government anywhere. Ask any person, "Are you the government?" He will say, "No, I am a servant of the government." If every person, even in the highest of positions, considers himself as a government servant, whose servant is he? Government is an abstract concept, a value that is attached to the total which coheres in each individual, an ideology which keeps the nation intact. The government is an idea; the national spirit is a thought, a concept which is implemented in the form of individuals operating as officials—police, administrators, ministers, commissioners, etc.

Physical objects are not the values of the world. The values are implanted upon the physical objects by certain conceptualisations, which are the generals behind the particulars. I am not going into the details of this subject, which is very deep. You have to read the *Republic* of Plato or the Sankara

Bhashya of the Brahmasutra, etc. I am only giving an indication as to how the universal comes first and the particular comes afterwards.

The highest universal is God-consciousness; therefore, God comes first and the world comes afterwards. God-consciousness is not an effect of the physical objects of the universe. This also rules out the doctrine of behaviourist psychology, which says that consciousness is an actuation of matter. It is something like saying God is extracted from the physical world, or the universal is extracted from the particular. It is not so. The physical brain cells of the body, as it were, do not manufacture consciousness. In the same way, particular things in the world do not create values. The values are independent and prior to the particulars. Otherwise, we could extract God from all material things in the world. Therefore, behaviourist psychology—which is material psychology, holding that consciousness exudes from matter—is untenable.

What is the conclusion, then? The conclusion is that universals come first, particulars come afterwards. “God first, the world next, yourself last” is the sum and substance of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj’s philosophy. If you know what these terms actually mean, you have understood the whole of philosophy, religion, and the practice of yoga. God first, world next, yourself last. When you assess anything, homage to God should come first. First of all you pay homage to God, then you consider the welfare of the world, and your welfare

comes as the last. If you consider yourself first, it means the effect comes first and the cause comes afterwards. Because God created the world and you are a part of the world, you are the third element in the process of creation, so do not put the cart before the horse. Otherwise, there will be topsyturvy thinking.

The universal has to be taken into consideration first in your prayers, in your meditations, and also in your daily dealings with people. The universal element in things must be taken into consideration first—even in the marketplace, even in the vegetable shop, even in the railway station. You have to see that the universal is taken into consideration first as the element of judgment, and then take into consideration the lesser elements, the lesser universals, which are the relationship between you and the person concerned; and lastly, you as the independent person. But mostly, selfishness comes first: “I am first, and God may be or may not be there. Let the world go to the dogs.”

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a very humorous person. He would tell a story, and laugh. It is said that in some places there are three kinds of tea. If a rich man sees some near and dear friend coming and he wants to entertain that person by giving him tea, he will say, “Give him the tea which I take.” But if that person is not so very intimate, he will say, “Give him the tea that I give to my father.” And if that person is not important, he will say, “Give him ordinary chai. That is the chai I give to

the world.” The worst thing is that which he gives to the world, a better one is that which he gives to his father, and the best is what he takes. So he has three kinds of tea. You should not consider God as ordinary. God is not even better. God is the best. God is your very self. As God is your very self, how will you give Him third-class tea? You must give Him not even the tea you give to your father, but the tea that you yourself take, because God is the best. So Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj said when you give in charity, do not give a torn currency note or old coins which cannot be spent. Such charity is of no use. You are irritating God by doing that

The universality of God, which is the subject of our discussion now, also implies the Selfhood of God. Because of the all-pervading nature of God, the infinitude of God, the universality of God, it follows that your existence is included in the universality of God. Therefore, my dear friend, you cannot exist outside God. Therefore, you cannot deal with yourself in a manner contrary to the way in which you deal with God, and you cannot deal with anybody else in the world in a manner that is contrary to the Selfhood of God. The world is a kingdom of ends; the world is not a kingdom of means. Neither the world, nor other people, nor yourself can be used as a commercial commodity, as a means to the exploitation of any particular end. Everybody is an end in himself or herself; nobody is a means to somebody else. Everybody loves himself or herself as dearly as an ant loves itself, or anything loves itself. The tendency to survive, the

love of existence, which is the selfhood thereof, is ingrained in each particle of matter. Even an atom loves itself and tries to maintain its atomhood. One atom cannot become another atom. This is the nature of the Self, which tries to maintain itself as an independent end, and not as a means. Therefore, you cannot convert any person into a slave. There is no such thing as slaves in the world. Everybody is an end in himself. To convert, to exploit, to utilise or to arrogate is to be untrue to the Godhood that is present in you, in the Selfhood of people, in the universality that pervades all things, which is the ultimate meaning of the quest for religious consciousness.

## Chapter 12

### THE SOUL WANTING GOD

The eyes see the world, and they see nothing other than the world. The concern of the mind, which beholds the world through the sense organs, is confined only to the world. It does not see anything beyond the world; it does not see anything other than the world. There is nothing superintending over the world. The world manages itself somehow, with its own physical and chemical laws. This is the doctrine of materialism. It also implies a kind of atheism. It is materialism because the world of matter is looked upon as something self-sufficient. It can explain itself by itself. The world does not require something else to explain itself. If everything is self-explicable, there is no need for another factor to be introduced in order to understand or explain what it is.

The theory of physical matter, which was advanced by Isaac Newton, Laplace and others, concluded that the whole world can be explained by the laws operating within the world itself. The components of the world in space and time are self-explanatory. Laplace went even beyond, ahead of Newton, and said the entire universe can be explained on the map of human understanding. If only we had the place to keep this world in front of us, we would see it with our own eyes as self-

explicable. It was not merely a doctrine of materialism in the sense of the self-sufficiency of space, time and matter, it was a peculiar doctrine of matter being contained in space. Newton's law of gravitation, and any other laws that he adumbrated, imply that the world, which is material, is inside space, and space is something like a cup, as it were, within which this material universe is contained.

It was long after Newton that a discovery was made by scientists and physicists that space is not a cup or a vessel, inside which the world is sitting. Space, as well as time, and the world of matter, are one complete organism. The cup is part of the inner content, and the inner content is part of the cup. The cup, so-called, in which they thought the material world is contained, is organically connected with the content itself, and we cannot separate the cup from the content and the content from the cup. Therefore, the world is not inside space; the world is spatio-temporal. Here we are in the second step of the advance of material science. In the beginning it was only matter within space. Now it is not matter within space, but matter inseparable from space.

What happens then? We have some stuff which cannot be called either space or matter. It cannot be called matter, because it is connected with space, inseparable from space. It cannot be called merely space, because it contains material substance. And it is in the process of evolution, which is a characteristic of the time process. So space, time and matter come together in the understanding of

what this universe is. What is this universe? It is space-time-matter, or space-time-object. According to this great discovery before us, the words 'space', 'time' and 'object' do not imply three things. They are three facets, three phases, three conditioning factors of one thing which cannot be called either space, time or matter because it is involved in everything that space is, time is or matter is, and yet is much more than what space is, time is or matter is. Inasmuch as matter has been identified with what space is or time is, it appears to be a lump of substance located somewhere. The earth is somewhere, and the other planets are somewhere else. They are not everywhere. Here, this idea has been melted down. It is as if all the planets, all the suns, moons, stars and galaxies are melted into one liquid and thrown everywhere that space is. This is an analogy, an illustration for us to think about how modern science has changed our understanding of matter.

The identification of spatial expanse with the material content of the cosmos implies the diffusion of the so-called localised matter into the expanse of space itself so that it is liquefied, as it were—rarefied, as it were, as space itself is—and the universe is not in some place; it is wherever space is. As space cannot be regarded as a solid substance, the universe also cannot be regarded as a solid substance. We can imagine where science has taken us. The universe is not a solid substance, because we do not identify with solidity anything that is capable of being identified with space itself.

Thus, the definition the universe that obtains later on by these modern theories is that it is capable of description only in terms of words such as spatio-temporal continuum—‘spatio’ because it is connected with space, ‘temporal’ because it is connected with the time process of evolution, and ‘continuum’ which is a substance. But our idea of substance is that it is a solid matter existing somewhere, and this is not something existing somewhere; it is existing everywhere. The universe is an everywhere-ness not in the sense of a heavy stuff stuck somewhere because of the content that has evolved within it, but because it is a continuum, it is a movement, it is a flux. The universe is a transition, but a transition towards what? Here modern science stops; it cannot go further. It is satisfied with saying that the universe is a liquefied movement, as it were, a fluxation of a content which cannot be described in any physically oriented language. We can only call it a kind of continuum, but a continuum of what?

Everything is made of electrical energy, but what is electricity made of? It is made of force. What is force made of? It is made of motion. But motion of what? It is motion of motion only, because there is no substance there to be moving. It is a birdless flying. We do not require a bird for flying; there can be only flying without a bird. Therefore, a substanceless non-entity, as it were, is this peculiar continuum. We cannot call it materialism in the crass sense of the early Greek thinkers, or even of Newton, because the matter of

these materialists, or the earlier classical physicists, has been boiled down to liquid. Therefore, we cannot call it materialism in the ordinary crass sense, but it is materialism nevertheless because of the universe being conceived even at this moment as something of the nature of an object of perception. We can observe the universe and experiment upon it. Even today science is a process of observation and experimentation, and observation and experimentation imply the objectivity of the thing which is observed or experimented upon. Thus, materialism continues in science even today, though it is not that old, crass materialism of the earlier classical science.

Now, here we are still in the stage of atheism. We have advanced in physics to such an extent that we have melted down the whole cosmos into a liquid. In spite of that, we are atheists because we see nothing beyond this so-called spatio-temporal continuum. There is nothing visible to the eyes because, in the laboratory of experiment and observation, we see nothing outside this so-called electromagnetic continuum. Materialism and atheism go together even in their most rarefied form. There is no question of religion here. We do not have to adore somebody outside the universe. In spite of this rarefied perception of the universe as a molten mass, as it were, it is still self-explanatory. It is capable of explanation by mathematical and physical laws. Instead of pure physical computations, we now have more advanced mathematical forms of it. Physics uses

mathematics, and the latest definition of the nature of the universe is not in terms of physical laws, but in terms of mathematical equations. And equations, to the horror of even the scientist himself, are the operations of the mind of the scientist. Does it mean that the world is made of mind?

Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir James Jeans, top-level physicists, put a cap on all the observing and experimenting physicists by saying that we are heading towards a dangerous, deep abyss, and we are seeing before us, as the vast universe, that which seems to be within our skull. They shook the very root of physical science, and toppled it upon the mental field of observation that is possible only by an intelligence. Does the universe, therefore, reveal itself as cosmic intelligence? Let the scientist not say anything. He closes his mouth lest he be dubbed as a madman, because no physicist will say that the world is made of intelligence, though privately he feels that it cannot but be that. Physics leads to metaphysics, which it has already become, practically.

The metaphysical implications of modern science have been explained in two great books, written by well-polished thinkers who have delved into the metaphysical foundations of modern science. One book is preliminary, and the other book is more advanced. First there is *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science* by C.E.M. Joad. He was a British thinker, very interesting to read. But more interesting is *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* by Edwin Burtt of Cornell

University, New York, who was in this Ashram for sometime as our guest, but now God has taken him to heaven. Then we have got the well-known book called *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra, which is the Bhagavadgita of modern science.

Thus, in the earlier stages of religious awareness we seem to be encountering a physical world, and the so-called self-explanatory character of the physical and mathematical laws of the world free us from having any necessity for a God above the universe. But I ask you to remember what I told you in our earlier sessions, that the mind of man is made in such a way that it seeks causes behind effects. How does the phenomenon occur? All this that I have told you about modern physics, etc., is the 'how' of the operation of physical forces, but why do they operate in that manner? Here religion begins. Where the physics and mathematics of science end, religion commences.

In the earlier stages of the religious consciousness, therefore, there is a habit of the mind to delve into the causes of phenomena. I am briefly repeating what I said sometime back. The earlier stages of religion commenced with the discovery of there being causes behind phenomena, and it ended with the location of manifold causes behind the manifold phenomena, so that in the earliest stages of religion we have a concept of many gods. It is a pluralism of divinities, heaven populated by angels and divinities of every kind, and every god is adorable. And for different purposes of our life we seem to be adoring different

gods: Ganesha for one purpose, Devi for another, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Zeus, Odin, Thor, and so on. We have got one god for every little occurrence in this world or to fulfil some of our desires. For every desire there is one god connected with it, so that the whole world is populated by gods and gods everywhere. This is one stage of religion, which cannot be regarded as a false form of religion.

Do not be under the impression that the earlier stages of religion are false and the later stages are true. We are not moving from false religion to real religion or true religion. We are only moving from lesser levels of religion to higher forms of religion. We should not think that the lesser levels are wrong or absurd, in the same way as a kindergarten stage or a first standard and second standard of education are not false in the eyes of a postgraduate Ph.D. student. We cannot say the kindergarten education is a false education. We have transcended it. It was the footstool on which we stood for the sake of higher education.

In a similar manner, the concept of divinities populating heaven as the causes of all phenomena is one concept of religion, valid in its own way. We can summon these gods if we want, so they cannot be called false gods. Though they are real gods, there are more real things than they. Therefore, they become subsumed under that higher level in the same way as we have got a government with so many officials. Each official is real in himself, there is no false official in the government, but there are degrees of authority, the lesser and the higher. The

lesser official has an authority, but the higher official includes the authority of the lower one. That is the way in which we can conceive an organism of administration as well as the organism of the whole cosmos of perception and religious consciousness.

Pluralism, the concept of the multiplicity of gods, then gives way to the concept of there being one central power, as there is one central government in spite of there being thousands of officials working as members of this central authority. A central government is not sitting in one place; it is pervading the entire country. Similarly, this universal God who is the operator of the cosmos is all-pervading, existing everywhere, just as in every little speck of dust of a country the government is present, though it cannot be seen with the eyes. We cannot see with our eyes that the government is present in even one inch of the ground of the country, but we can see it by manifesting it through a particular process. The government is an operating medium, it is an operating power, but it is not a physical object. Similarly, God is not a person, which fact comes to high relief by the concept of there being a God who pervades all things, and inasmuch as the pervasion is of all things, there cannot be a spatial limitation of God.

Theistic conceptions in religion somehow or other feel a necessity for a personal God. We cannot get over this idea of personality, because our heart is in the personality. Our feelings are lodged in a person. We are persons, though we are not only

persons. There is something in us which is impersonal. The concept of the personality of a human individual is also to be shed. There is somebody called Vishnu, Narayana, John or Joseph. He looks like a person; he has a personality, but what is this personality? It is made up of certain inner components. Of course, on a casual outlook or even with a little bit of application of common sense, we can know that Joseph is not merely a combination of the limbs of the body. When Joseph says "I am coming", it is not his hands or legs that are speaking. None of the organs of the body are saying "I am coming". Who is speaking? The body did not make the statement. The mind also did not make the statement, really speaking, because this person who said "I am coming" has a capacity to continue to exist even when the mind is not operating, as in sleep, for instance. In deep sleep Joseph existed. He was not thinking at that time. He existed minus the mind, and minus the organs of the physical body. So a statement such as "I am coming" may not be capable of association entirely with the body or with the mind. It is neither the body nor the mind; it is not a person. Therefore, Joseph is basically not a person. He is an impersonality assuming a personality through his mind and body. We cannot say Joseph does not exist as a person. We can have a photograph of him, and we can see him and touch him. We can speak to him as an individual. Therefore, Joseph is a person, but he is not merely a person. He has an impersonal character behind him which makes him one with all

that is capable of being designated as human, etc. Thus, when even in the case of an ordinary human being, impersonality is at the back of personality, then why not with God?

A personality of God is necessary. Because we cannot pray to God with a feeling that there is an emptiness or vacuum in front of us, a kind of portrait is presented before our mind. We paint a picture of God before our mind, and then we pray to God. Unless God is there in front of us, we cannot pray to Him. Even if God is not in front of us, He must at least be everywhere. Even the everywhere-ness of God is a kind of form that we are attributing to God. The personality of God need not necessarily be a location in one particular spot in space. It can also be an all-pervading personality—as we have in the concept of the Visvarupa, the Cosmic Form, for instance. The eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita describes the Cosmic Form of God. Even then it was a form—the Cosmic Form, the Visvarupa, as it is called; *rupa* is form, though it is *visva*. It is a manifested universality, universality manifest; therefore, we call it Visvarupa, God, All-form. It is not one form but All-form. Nevertheless, it is a form, so even the All-form is a form. Therefore, the concept of God, freed from all locations in physical personality, also takes a form.

The necessity to conceive God as having a personality or a form arises because we are still continuing to exist as beholders of this great God. Arjuna did not vanish. He was there, beholding this Cosmic Form. The beholder continues to be

beholding that which is otherwise inclusive of all things. Can we imagine this mystery? The Visvarupa is inclusive of even Arjuna himself, yet Arjuna was beholding it. It is a peculiar, intriguing situation, the borderland, as it were, of this world and the other world, the personality and the non-personal universality. It is impossible to describe how Arjuna could behold the Cosmic Form when the Cosmic Form also included him.

The peculiar period of transition of religious awareness during which the personality of the beholder somehow seems to be continuing in spite of the acceptance of the universality and the inclusiveness of the All-being is the penultimate stage of the concept of the personality of God. We cannot know how such a thing is possible. We accept the universality of God. "O All! O Thou which are All!" Arjuna cries, and yet he is there to make this statement, to offer this prayer. This offering of prayer to the universal All is made by somebody who is offering this prayer. That person has to exist, and because of that person's existence somehow or other in an intriguing fashion, surpassing ordinary human psychological explanation, certain advanced levels of religious awareness are incapable of description in terms of the mould into which modern psychology is cast. Religious psychology is very difficult to explain. It is not ordinary Freudian psychology, general psychology or abnormal psychology; it is religious psychology.

If you are interested in advanced studies, you may read a very interesting book on this subject,

religious psychology, written by James Bissett Pratt. The name of the book is *The Religious Consciousness*. Another book which you can read to your advantage is *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, a well-known author. These two books will give you a certain insight into the nature of the superior psychological forums of religion which transcend ordinary psychological findings.

Thus, here we are in a stage of religion where the theistic concept of the personality of God becomes something inseparable from our necessity to adore God. As religious people, we have to adore God. We feel a joy in summoning God. We cry before God: "Come! I am in distress, O Thou All. Come at this moment. I am sinking. I am entering into the abyss and the bowels of the earth, in sorrow. O All, come!" Thus great saints cry. Draupadi cried, Sita cried, all cried. Whom are they crying for? They have a vision of something whose hands seem to be operating just near them. Draupadi cried out in the court of the Kurus for help from somebody who was not there, and who could not be there. She was crying for Krishna's help, and Krishna was in Dvarka, a thousand miles away from the Kuru's place. What good was there in crying? But when the soul cries, it does not think of distance. That idea of distance between one thing and another thing is a mental operation; but religious crying is not mental crying. It is not crying with the voice of the throat, it is not the words of language. The cry of the soul for God is not a word that is uttered by the tongue or a description in

language that is known to humanity. The soul speaks, and the soul has no spatial distance.

“Oh my dear child, you have gone!” a mother cries, even if her child died in London and she is here in Uttar Pradesh. The heart of the mother melts for something that she has lost in an accident that took place in London, and she does not think about the distance between Uttar Pradesh and London. The sorrow is so deep in the mother. It has sunk into her soul, and her soul is crying, “My child, my only one, you have gone!” Where is the distance between the mother and the child? All distance in space and time is a concoction of the mental operations in terms of space and time. But religion is not a mental operation. If we think that religious consciousness is only the work of the mind, something that we are thinking as we are thinking a marketplace or a vegetable shop, then it is not religion. Actually, religion takes root in our personality only when the soul acts. Very rarely does the soul act in a person. We are shells rather than real personalities. We are broken fragments of mental operations. We think and think and think, but thinking is not religion, and God will not listen to our summoning, because God is the Universal Soul. As God is the Universal Soul, He will respond to the calls of our soul.

The government responds to another government through its ambassador. An ambassador is the medium of contact of one government with another. Direct contact between governments is not done. A citizen in one country

cannot directly send a petition to another government except through the embassy, as it is expected to be done. Similarly, the ambassador of God is in our hearts, and only through the ambassador will we speak. It is not in the heart in the physical sense; it is what we call the soul.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mentions that the soul of man is the indicator of the presence of God in a person. The soul is the mark of God in us. It is a map drawn by God in our own personality. As through a map we can know the location of a particular thing, the map that is drawn in our own heart by God Himself, as the soul in us, will indicate where God is. Our conscience is the outer crust of this soul that is within us, and the soul speaks.

It is very difficult to know when the soul speaks. Mostly in our ordinary life, our soul seems dead for us. We are only physical bodies and minds, and souls we have none. We have a mind, we have an intellect, we have feelings, sometimes very deep, but we have no soul. When does the soul act? When we are fast asleep the soul operates, and that is why the joy that we feel in deep sleep is superior to any kind of joy we can think of in this world. The best of milk and honey, the best of social position, the best of monetary conditions of which we are in possession cannot equal the joy of deep sleep. If we do not sleep for fifteen days, then we will see what happens. Emperors will say, "I don't want any kingdom. Let me sleep!" This is because, as the Upanishad tells us very briefly and beautifully, the joy of an emperor is external. It is not organic to the

person. The joys appearing to be emanating from our possessions are external to us, and inasmuch as they are external, they are not organic to us. Inasmuch as they are not organic to us, they are not ours. Inasmuch as they are not ours, those joys are not our joys. They are only concoctions, imaginations, illusions, and therefore they split, which is why all the joys of the world end in bereavement. The king will die, the mother will lose her child, the husband will lose his wife, the wife will lose her husband, the owner will lose his property; but we cannot lose ourselves.

Only that which you really own can become the source of your real happiness. That which you do not really own cannot become the source of your joy. Inasmuch as one day these things will leave you, everything is capable of causing bereavement. They cannot become the source of your joy. Not your money, not your father, not your mother, not your husband, not your wife, not your child, not even your body can give you happiness, because all these things are capable of being lost one day. Therefore, they are not you. They may be yours, but they are not you. Therefore, the real joy, which is you, is not in these things.

In deep sleep you are temporarily divested, as it were, from a connection with the body and the mind, and all its relations. In deep sleep the soul emerges, slumbering though it is, but it cannot see properly. Though it is groping, it is the soul that is groping. Therefore, it is a joy surpassing all the conceptual enjoyments of the world. There are

other times when you are likely to see the soul acting, such as when you are drowning in water. Only those who have almost drowned know what it means to feel that everything is over, finished. Deep down what they think at that time, nobody can explain in words. It is said that the whole personality, from its very root, comes up, and you will see all that happened to you right from your birth. Like a reel of film that is projected on a screen, the whole life of a person will be seen. This happens because, at the time of death, the soul acts because the bodily and the mental associations are wrenched out bit by bit. The nerves crack at that time. It is said in a frightening, or rather humorous style, that the pain that one feels at the time of death is like seventy-two thousand scorpion stings. The idea is that there are seventy-two thousand nerve knots, and they all crack at that time. You can imagine what happens when one nerve knot is breaking; intense agony will be felt at that time, and suppose seventy-two thousand knots break. But the knots need not break in the case of the person who is really detached, who has lived an unselfish and charitable life, who has not grabbed another's property, who has not exploited anybody, who has not hurt others, who has been good, who has never entertained ill feelings towards anybody. In that person's case, the nerves will not crack. Their body will be automatically dropped like the slough of a snake. This is a solace for all of us.

Have you seen a slough of a snake, a long dry skin? It looks like a snake with the mouth, eyes,

everything, but it is not a snake. The snake does not feel the pain of the sloughing because it is detached, like a dry coconut which is unconnected with the shell. If a raw coconut is breaking, it will feel the pain. Your soul should be like a dry coconut when you depart from this body, so that the shell may go, and the coconut will not feel that the shell is going.

The point is that the soul acts at death, and also in deep sleep; and in very rare moments of uncontrollable agony and ecstasy beyond the capacity of the mind, the soul acts. When everything is lost and your life itself is at stake, the soul acts. Or if the whole world has come under your possession, the soul acts. If you are the emperor of the entire earth, which is something unthinkable, unimaginable, then also the soul will act.

But in religion, the soul also acts. You do not have to become an emperor for the soul to act. You need not be sleeping or be prepared to die for the soul to act. You can consciously rouse the soul into action by an operation of what is called religious consciousness. The soul wanting God is actually what is called religion.

## Chapter 13

### TRUE SPIRITUAL DEVOTION TO GOD

Religion is an approach to God. When this inner endeavour of the soul of man girds up its loins, as it were, to contact God, that practice comes to be known as yoga. Yoga is the union with Reality. Inasmuch as in our deliberations we have noticed that there are degrees of reality—stages of the approach of human consciousness to Reality as such—the practice of yoga also becomes a graduated series. It is not a sudden, abrupt jump from one level to another. The movement of nature through the process of evolution has been observed to be very gradual. There is not a single missing link, stage or step in this process. In evolution there is no double promotion. Everyone has to pass through every stage. Therefore, yoga becomes a systematised endeavour of the consciousness of man to gradually ascend to larger and larger dimensions and degrees of reality.

One of the special features of yoga as an inner endeavour of the soul to contact God is devotion. It has often been emphasised in scriptures of yoga that the primary qualification or requisite of a student is devotion. We may call it devotion, bhakti, or we may call it *mumukshatva*, the longing for freedom or liberation. It has been told to us again and again that perhaps the only qualification that is

expected of us is wanting it. If we want God, God comes. If we do not want God, the question does not arise. Our heart has to ask for it. "Ask, and it shall be given; knock and it the door will be opened to you; seek and you shall find it," is a prophet's saying. If we do not seek, if we do not knock and we do not long for it, any amount of austerity, *japa*, standing on one leg, sleepless nights, etc., will be of no avail. Yoga takes many forms. Austerities of different types also are prescribed as part and parcel of divine devotion, but they are only auxiliary. They are assistants, but they themselves do not constitute yoga proper.

In the practice of yoga—we would now like to call it the path of devotion, love of God—the soul, to which we made reference during our previous session, occupies a peculiar position in the structure of the cosmos and attempts to stand face to face with God. Devotion to God is a kind of summoning which is expected to place the soul face to face with God. Love of God, devotion to God, even a prayerful mood in respect of God, any kind of asking in terms of God symbolises an inward attitude of being face to face with God. This being face to face is an essential requisite of any kind of devotion one may call spiritual. The only difference is the characteristic or the nature of this being face to face. One can be face to face with God even if God is said to be a little distant. God may be in the seventh heaven, very far away geographically, but even then one can be face to face with Him. We can visualise the presence of that Almighty in the

seventh heaven as if He is looking at us or we are looking at Him.

The distance between the soul of the devotee and the location of God is not what is important. The important thing is the attitude. The structure of the mind is such that it can place itself in the context of continuous association with anything in the world by being face to face with it, even if the object concerned is geographically far away. Suppose there is a person in London and we are in India, here in Rishikesh. We can be face to face with that person by juxtaposing the attitude of our psyche in such a manner that we are visualising that person, as it were, as if that person is just looking at us. And if our concentration is intense enough, even if that person is not facing us, he will be made to face us. Some peculiar idea will arise in the mind of that person without the knowledge of the cause thereof, and that person may turn his or her eyes in the direction of our eyes. This is a very low form of telepathic action. We can contact anybody in the world, whatever be the distance of that person from our location, and action at a distance, known as telekinesis, can take place.

Action at a distance is possible because there is no distance finally. If distance were really there, action at a distance would not be possible. Telekinesis would be a total impossibility. The mind acting in terms of distant objects could not be practicable if distance really obtains between the mind and an object; but really there is no such distance. The universe is an organism, as we have

been hearing again and again. It is a living entity. It is a wholeness with a soul animating it, prana vibrating everywhere. Therefore, there cannot be distance between one part of the cosmos and another part of the cosmos, in the same way as there is really no meaningful distance between our head and our toes, for instance. In one sense there is a distance; a five-and-a-half-foot or a six-foot distance is there between the toes and the head. There is a distance which can be measured by a ruler, yet there is no distance because it is an organism. We do not have to take time to communicate a message from the head to the feet or from the feet to the head. Timelessly, without distance, as it were, communication from one part of the body reaches another part of the body. Timeless communication is possible only in a spaceless circumstance. So is the structure of the universe.

We have to remember, again and again, that the universe is formed in the same way as the organism of the physical personality. The cosmos, called the macrocosm, is a counterpart in the spatio-temporal realm of the microcosm, which is the human individual. The microcosm, which is the human personality, is a cross-section of the total cosmos. All the degrees of reality, all the levels of being, all the fourteen worlds, or any number of worlds that the universe may be constituted of, are found in the human personality. The whole world is dancing in our cells. That is to say, distance as we think of it in terms of mathematical measurement does not

really obtain, finally, if only our mind is capable of accepting this truth, and accepting it from the bottom of our heart. We should not accept this truth merely because somebody said it is so. Our heart has to reason out the worthwhileness of this situation, and the heart has its own reason which reason does not know, as people say.

So in religious encounter with God, the devotee does not feel a distance between himself and God. "Oh God, You are so far away. When will You come? How many days, how many months, how many years will You take to come and see me?" This doubt does not arise in the mind of a devotee. The intensity of feeling, whatever be its nature, abolishes the concept of space. A loved object or a hated object, if it becomes an intensely concentrated arrangement in the pattern of the psyche of the person concerned, will appear very near, as if it is touching one's nose, though for other reasons it may be far away from oneself. Psychoanalysis or telekinesis is not our subject. I mention it only as a diversion, as a matter of illustration.

The point in religious consciousness is the placement of oneself in the context of God's existence. This is love of God. In all religious prescriptions, this injunction is laid that one has to be face to face with God in one's devotion. God should look at us, and we should look at Him. There is no problem as far as God is concerned, because He has all eyes. Every little leaf in the tree is an eye of God. Every little dust, every atom and every sand

particle on the shore of the ocean is an eye of God. Every speck of space is an eye of God. There is a famous verse in the Bhagavadgita. *Sarvataḥ-pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham* (B.G. 13.13): "That Being has eyes everywhere, hands and feet everywhere, heads everywhere, limbs everywhere spread out, and there is not one little nook or corner in this world where His presence cannot be felt." God looks at us, whatever be the position we are occupying, and so it is up to us to place ourselves in the context of the visualisation of God's presence rather than expect God to adjust Himself to us. God does not have to adjust Himself at all because He is already adjusted to every situation in the world. Every kind of circumstance or condition in the world has already been set in tune with the position of God from His point of view, because of the omnipresence of God.

The love of God, therefore, becomes intensified the more we are able to accept the presence of God as all eyes, all power, and all presence. The immanence of God is also the nearness of God, so near that He is touching our skin. We cannot contain this thought for a long time, and so sometimes we may feel tremors, shaking, a kind of jerk in the physical system as if some shock is injected into our body if the thought of the nearness of God continues very intensely for a few minutes. Let it continue even for five minutes. We will not be able to tolerate it because we will feel as if some high-voltage current is passing through our body.

The mind feels a lot of difficulty in acquainting itself with this high-power contact which becomes the immediate consequence of such a visualisation. The intensity of the feeling of the presence of God depends upon the extent of our concentration on the all-pervading nature of God. In the earlier stages, this all-pervading nature cannot become a content of our mind. Very few of us will always be able to keep in our heart the feeling that God is everywhere, in every place, so that even on the road we are walking on Him, as it were. This kind of feeling is rare. In very intense forms of mystical communion we may be able to feel a kind of drowning ourselves in that feeling of the all-pervading nature of God, but normally this is very difficult.

Therefore, in the earliest stages of devotion, the concept of God, or the placement of God in front of one's own self, the visualisation, the juxtaposition of God face to face with oneself, has to take the shape of a kind of personality which is very near us—as a person standing before us, as it were. The largeness of God, which is the cosmic expanse, becomes a person like Christ standing before you, or Sri Krishna or Rama, or whatever our feeling of devotion to God is. When we pray, we feel somebody very near us, listening to us, and not only listening but condescending to listen and implement our request.

An energy of assurance proceeds, as it were, beam-like, sun-ray-like, emanating from this personality and touching us. Sunlight warms us,

and we may begin to feel such a kind of warmth, some kind of touch, a tingling sensation as if some ants are crawling through our nerves, and we will not know what is actually happening to us. It is like a little electric current being passed through our body. We cannot know what we feel at that time. We cannot explain it; we just feel it. An electric current was passing through us, and we felt something. What did we feel at that time? We have to feel it for ourselves. We cannot explain to people what we feel when a current is passing through our body. It is not jerk, it is not shock, it is not many things. It is something which only we know, and nobody else can know. This kind of experience will be our heritage when the concentration increases.

How does concentration increase? Many a time there are complaints from devotees that the mind is not concentrating, that it is moving here and there. Why does it move here and there? Why does the mind flit from one thing to another thing? Why is our beloved not able to attract us sufficiently? Is not God our beloved? Or is our beloved other than God? Are we wanting God as a kind of instrument to bring us in contact with our beloved, who is other than God? Sometimes this happens. We have lost something; there has been bereavement, and we cry for union with what we have lost. It may be a loss of property, it may be a loss of millions of dollars in business, it may be a loss of someone dear and near, and we may cry before God not because we want God, but because we want to use

Him as a policeman who will somehow or other escort us to that which we have lost.

Now, is this the kind of feeling that we are likely to be entertaining in ourselves in our devotion? If that is the case, the mind will certainly not concentrate. We do not want a policeman. He is only an assistant to take us to that place which is in our heart. But God is not to be taken as an instrument. We have already convinced ourselves through our observations and studies that God is not a means to something else. We cannot utilise God as an instrument for somebody else, for something with which we have to come in contact. A bereaved mother prays to God, "Bring me in contact with my little child that I lost yesterday." Do we call it devotion? It is a kind of devotion. We love God, of course. We have to love Him because we want His assistance in our desire to come in contact with our lost child. Spiritual devotion, this is not.

To repeat once again, religion, which has been the subject of our discussion since many days, is our manner of contacting God. Inasmuch as the manner of contacting God depends upon the concept of God that we are entertaining in our mind, this has to be very carefully taken care of. What do we think about God? Why should we think about Him? What for is our devotion to Him? What do we expect from Him? There is an element of expectation from the object which we love. This is the first stage of devotion; a little bit of selfishness is there, creeping in. In all our mortal loves, there is always an expectation that the love be returned. "I

love you, and you care not for me in spite of my loving you. This does not please me. I have been so kind and compassionate towards you, but there is not a single gesture of reciprocation or indication of your acceptance of my affection." This is selfish love. It may be a father loving his son or a mother loving her child, but these loves in the world are conditioned. Unconditioned love, we cannot find in this world. "If you behave in this manner, I will love you. If your behaviour is contrary to the expectations of mine, I shall kick you out." This is anybody's love in the world. Therefore, there is always separation. The father is separate from the son, the husband is separate from the wife, the mother is separate from the child, and so on. The condition of separation is that we cannot tolerate any attitude that we do not expect from that person whom we love. This kind of love is not in any way connected with the love of God. Sometimes our love of God looks like mortal love. "If I cannot expect anything from God, why should I love Him?" This may also be a question from inside. "After all, there should be some justification in loving God. If God can give me nothing, why should I be bothered about Him?"

Now, can God give us something? Even intensely honest devotion to God may raise questions of this kind. Well, preliminary instructions in devotion, or the path of bhakti, tell us that abundance will be our heritage. God will give us everything. This 'everything' is very important. God will give us not God Himself; that is

not what we want. What is the good of that? We say, "If I love you and I expect nothing from you except yourself only, do I want you to sit on my lap? I love you because I expect something from you. I do not expect you only." So is the purely mortal and secular attitude that is foisted upon us and God.

Philosophers of the acutest type also have doubts of this kind: "What is the use of liberation if nothing will come out of that liberated condition? What am I going to do in that condition of freedom?" You are utterly free spiritually, you are a liberated person. Now a question will arise in your mind: "What will I do when I am totally free? In that hallowed condition of spiritual freedom in the heaven of God I am placed totally carefree, no doubt. Then afterwards, what will happen to me?" Again the question of "afterwards, what will happen to me" arises, because there are two questions connected with two aspects of your involvement in life. The term 'afterwards' implies the continuance of time even in eternity. You have accepted that God is an eternal, timeless Being. But the question of what will happen to you afterwards, after attaining God, is a question that introduces the very time factor that you have kicked out, and left far behind, in the eternity of God. The lingering continuance of the time process is the reason behind your thinking of the past, present and future even in the assumed eternity of God.

You ask, "What will happen to me after I attain God?" Why do you bring this word 'after' if time is not present there? Can the time-bound mind of a

devotee conceive what eternity is? No. 'Eternity' is only a word in the dictionary. For us it means nothing practically. We cannot imagine anything except as being located somewhere, in some place, and at some time. So God also is conceived in that manner: as an all-pervading, spatially expanded, cosmic existence. 'Spatially expanded' is the whole point, and 'existing now'. This 'now' is also a temporal word. "Afterwards, what happens to me?" Questions of this kind are due to a lingering of the time process. "What will I do there?" This is the hackneyed involvement of the human personality in activity. What are you doing? What is your occupation? You must be doing something. Can you expect there to be a person who is doing nothing, who does not move? Every person is involved in some doing, and therefore a similar question arises: "What will I do after I attain God?" You have carried two things from this world to the realm of God. One thing is the idea that you have to do something there in the presence of God, and the second thing is a doubt: "What will be my situation there? What kind of job will God entrust to me?"

These ideas are to be boiled down to a nullity by the further acceptance of the all-inclusiveness of God. Rarely do we find a person who wants only God. Why is it so rare? Because of the lingering doubt: "It will amount to nothing practical for me. If I have nothing to gain from God but I have only God in front of me, what will I do with Him? God says 'Here I am'. What is the use of saying 'Here I am'? I want something from God, and God says 'You take

Me, as I have nothing else'." God cannot give you anything, because He does not possess any property. God has no money with Him. He has no land. He has no friends.

I remember a humorous line in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Adam complains to God, "Lord, you have created friends, colleagues, relations for other species. For me there is no friend, no colleague. You have left me alone, miserable. Why should I not have a friend and a colleague when other species have them? Trees are living with trees, and I have nobody. I am alone." God answers, "Adam, since eternity I have been alone. I have no friends, and of course I have no colleagues. Do you believe that I am an unhappy person?" Adam cannot say that God is unhappy. God is the highest of happiness. How could God be happy with no friends around Him, with no property, with nothing to call His own? God is alone. Can you imagine being alone, with nobody around you socially, and yet being immensely happy? You will be utterly miserable, as a lost soul. You will feel estranged if you are not socially placed. So it is likely that your concept of God is sometimes tarnished by this sociological action-bound and time-bound relation, which has to gradually be shed by ardent practice.

In the earliest stages of devotion, therefore, let these factors come. It does not matter. God is standing in front of you as Jesus Christ who will bless you, as Lord Krishna who is going to bless you in one form. Conceive your God in any way you like—as large a man as He could be, or as small an

individual as He could be. You can even conceive God as an idol. The devotee has all freedom to choose the spiritual technique. There is no restriction whatsoever. Your god is your God. Take your god, whatever be the nature of that god. I do not prescribe any particular form or put any stipulation before you. Have your own god, but he must be your God. He should not be something else. You may have your own god; I do not want you to take my god or somebody else's god. But be sure that you are asking for your God. The term 'god' implies nothing other than that which can attract you, an inclusiveness of all the values that are capable of conception in your mind, and you cannot afford that the mind go somewhere else because you will be betraying the earlier assurance given to your own self that God is an all-inclusive value. If God is not all-inclusive, He is not God, and you are pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp, a phantasm, because your value is elsewhere in this world. It is essential to convince oneself that since the concept of God is all-inclusive, the drifting of the mind from God is meaningless.

Therefore, the prescription is that your God should be your *Ishta-devata*, as it is called in Sanskrit. Your God is your *devata*, and *devata* is a Sanskrit word for your deity, your emblem of Godhood. *Ishta* means beloved. The word 'beloved' is very important. God is your beloved, and your heart cannot go anywhere else except in terms of your beloved. If you cannot understand the meaning of the word 'beloved', so much the loss for

you. The term implies an all-absorbing ideal in front of you. The beloved is that which absorbs you root and branch, melts every cell of your body, liquefies you totally, as it were, and it ceases to be in front of you because you have become that, or it has entered you. Only those who have loved one-hundred percent will know what love is. But nobody can love anything one-hundred percent. There is always a little reservation even in the best of loves. You add the word 'if' in all your loves, whatever they be. But God love is not an 'if' or a 'but' or a 'because of', and so on. There are no conditions. It is unconditional surrender.

The unconditional surrender of the devotee in respect of God is meaningful because of the all-inclusiveness of God. Impress upon your mind again and again that because God is all-inclusive, all things shall be well. If you are doubting whether God is enough and He should not give something else, a little concession is given to your weakness in such great statements as "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Are you happy? If you seek God, do not be under the impression that, after all, only God will come and nothing else will come, that it is emptiness. To make you feel that it is not emptiness, believe that you are going to be filled with an abundance of all things, even of this world. Let it be; let us take into consideration the values of this world also. All gold, all silver, all honey, all milk—that also will come. God is not incapable of bestowing upon you even that. When the dog goes,

the tail also goes. When God comes, all that He is capable of blessing you with will also be there. Abundance in the most absolute sense will follow from your total absorption in the all-inclusiveness of God. So let your doubts go. Doubts are your traitors. If there are traitors in this world, doubts themselves are the traitors. There is nobody else who can deceive you. All things shall be yours.

Sometimes God gives Himself, and sometimes God gives something other than Himself. There is an illustration in the Mahabharata. There were two contending parties, Arjuna on the one side and Duryodhana on the other side. War was going to take place. Sri Krishna was there as a well-known hero of that time, a great warrior owning a large army, and his assistance was of course considered as desirable.

Arjuna and Duryodhana, the contending parties, both went to Dvarka to seek the help of Sri Krishna. It is said in the Mahabharata that Lord Krishna was resting at that time. He was reclining on his couch, half dozing. Knowing that the Lord was lying down and was half-asleep, not wanting to disturb him, Duryodhana sat on a chair near his head. Arjuna, knowing the Lord was resting, stood at his feet, folding his hands. There was a difference between their attitudes: the one sat on a chair near his head, and the other one stood at his feet, folding his hands. After a little while, the reclining Krishna opened his eyes, and the first thing that he saw was that which was standing at his feet.

Sri Krishna asked, "How are you, Arjuna?"

“No sir. I came first,” somebody retorted from behind.

“Oh, you have come, Duryodhana. What is the matter? How is it?”

Duryodhana said, “Well, you see, you know everything. What shall I say? A war is about to take place. There is no other alternative. We want your help. Arjuna has come for your help, and I also want it.”

“What can I give you?” Sri Krishna said. “You see, there are only two things. I have got a large army, Narayani Sena. It is almost invincible. If you want to take it, you can take it. The other thing is myself. I am a single man here. If you want to take me, you can take me instead. But I will not fight. I will not take up arms. I will not be a participant in the battle. I will be merely sitting and watching. You can take me if you like, merely as a person who will watch. Otherwise, you can take the army. Anyway, I will ask Arjuna first.”

Duryodhana said, “No. I should speak first because I came first.”

Sri Krishna said, “Maybe. But after all, I saw Arjuna first. Secondly, he is younger to you. As a younger brother, I think he must be given the choice first. And why are you so very adamant? Let Arjuna speak. What do you want, Arjuna? Do you want a large army, invincible, do you want or me sitting quiet and doing nothing?”

Arjuna said, “I want you only, Lord.”

“I have won the battle,” Duryodhana thought. “This foolish Arjuna has chosen a person who will

do no work, will only eat and sit quiet. What good is this person?" Duryodhana said, "I want the army, great Master."

"Take the army," said Sri Krishna.

Duryodhana went in jubilation, and declared before his people that he had already won the war. "Already I have won the war because that invincible army is with me, and that fool has chosen a man who will not do anything."

After Duryodhana left, Sri Krishna put a question to Arjuna: "How is it that you have been so indiscreet? What made you choose me when I told you that I will not do anything? You could have chosen the army. That man has taken it. How is it that you have been so foolish, Arjuna? What is the good of my unnecessarily being there in your house, in the battlefield, just sitting and watching?"

Arjuna replied, "Your presence itself will be my victory."

The whole point is that God is one, and the things in the world are many. We always think that many things are better than one thing. Many dollars are more valuable than one dollar; many people can do more work than one person. Many things, many things, many things—one thing is no good. We are accustomed to value all things in the world in terms of quantum, as large as possible. Duryodhana was a person who measured things quantitatively. He thought the larger number was better than the lesser number. What good is one person in light of the possession of a millionfold powerful army? But he made a mistake in calculation. The many that he

took in the form of soldiers in the army were like drops. There were many in the army, no doubt, and Sri Krishna was just one, but Krishna was the ocean. This was only one, but it was an ocean. The other one was manifold drops, and millions of drops cannot be regarded as larger than one, because the one is an ocean. So the ocean was chosen by Arjuna and the drops were chosen by Duryodhana, under the impression that many things are better than one thing.

The idea of oneness, which is associated with God, is not to be thought of as a computed item. God is not one in a mathematical sense. One is smaller than ten or hundreds, but this is not the way in which we have to think of God as one. God is not the number one. It is a different oneness altogether. 'Oneness' is a term that we use due to the poverty of our language. All the manyness or the multitude of this great universe of expanse is included in that one. As I put it before in the illustration, all the drops are included in the ocean; though the ocean is one, the drops are many.

Here is an instance where Sri Krishna offered himself as the ocean offering itself. He did not give anything. There was nothing to give, because the ocean cannot give anything except itself, and all other things are within it. In certain cases, God will give you secular benefits also. God is capable of doing that, as it happened in the case of the story of Sudama.

A friend, an old schoolmate of Sri Krishna, who was poverty-stricken and wanted some financial

help from Sri Krishna, went to Dvarka. He was received well, taken care of, and given good lodging. The next day he was given a farewell without being asked as to why he had come. "Do you want anything from me?"—even those words did not come from Krishna. The poor man did not know what had happened. "I came for a little financial assistance, trekking all the way through the deserts of Gujarat. I walked from Ujjain to Dvarka. What for? He has taken care of me with great affection—nice bedding, lodging and boarding, he spoke sweet words, shampooed my feet—and then the next morning, what happened? He bid me farewell but did not ask why I came. Oh, what a pity, what a pity!" He was weeping. When he returned home, he found a gorgeous palace shining where his hut had been. This is how you can expect secular abundance from God. Or if you do not want that, God Himself will come. But anyhow, it is not good for you to expect anything from God, so in your prayers to God, let God speak to you in the manner in which He would like to speak to you.

Thus, again to come to the point, in earlier stages of devotion you may place your god as a standing personality according to your predilection—Devi, Durga, Ganesha, Christ, whatever it is. It is an emblem, a representation, a focusing point, a pinpointed energy centre, as it were, of the whole cosmos, an ambassador standing before you on behalf of a large government, and whatever he utters is equal to the government speaking; if he promises something, it is the

government which he represents that is promising it. This personality—Christ standing before you, Krishna standing before you—is not a person. It is the representation of the power of the whole universe standing before you. When you speak to it, the whole cosmos replies. With this assurance, place yourself in the proper context, juxtaposed before this tremendous personality, God come in form.

## Chapter 14

# THE NINE FORMS OF WORSHIP OF GOD

We have been noticing in our observations that the apex of religious pursuit is the positioning of oneself in the context of the existence of God. 'Positioning' is the proper word; the adjustment of our whole being in respect of the being of God is the final requirement in the highest form of religious consciousness. We have seen that there are lesser degrees of religious awareness, which take the form of actual ritualistic performances, gestures in the form of music and dance, scripture reading, prayer, or chanting of a mantra or a formula in a holy sanctified place such as a temple or a church. All these are also a form of religion, but religion does not mean any kind of performance in this manner. Religion is the placement of ourselves in the context of God's existence. We took a lot of time in trying to find out how this can be achieved, because while we are to some extent confident as to where we are located, we are not so confident as to where God is located.

The all-pervadingness of God, which is the conclusion we drew from our investigations, requires of us a kind of adjustment which is commensurate with that character of all-pervadingness. It is not ordinarily possible to adjust

oneself to all-pervading things, because we ourselves are not all-pervading. We cannot be doing many things at the same time; certain things we do, and certain things we omit. The capacity to adjust oneself to all things or many things is an inward requirement that has to emanate from ourselves when we are seriously treading the path of religion.

A distinction has sometimes been made between religion and spirituality. Though the distinction is not actually warranted, we can, theoretically speaking, draw a thin line between the two concepts—namely, while religion is the practical implementation of our approach to God in our daily life, the status which our consciousness occupies at that time is spirituality. Spirituality is the status of our consciousness; religion is its implementation in daily life. The position, the attitude or the behaviour of our consciousness in the presence of God, in the context of even the idea of God, is what may be called spirituality. But how do we actually put it into practice in our daily life? When we work, when we speak, when we behave, when we do anything whatsoever, how does this status of consciousness act? The manner in which we are able to bring into action this status of consciousness, which is true spirituality, is what is called religion.

The religions of the world, many in number, are emanations of the various channels through which the ultimate spirituality manifests itself in daily life, because the manifestation of this great universally applicable spiritual status is conditioned by various

factors such as our psychophysical personality, the geographical conditions of where we live, the cultural background of our country, and many other things which bring us down to the earth. These conditioning factors are all sorts of things that make us what we are—the moulds, as it were, through which this ultimate spiritual consciousness passes, or into which it is cast. Because of the fact that historical, geographical, social and personal conditions differ from one individual to another, there is the feeling that there are various religious attitudes. They are actually not many religions; they are the shapes or the forms taken by the one broad daylight, the solar light of the spiritual status, when it passes through various media. Sunlight can appear in different colours. Though it is one ubiquitous all-pervading universal blaze, it can take various colours on account of the medium through which it is made to pass. A glass or lens with colours, without colours, with dents, convex, concave, and so on, will make the sunlight appear in different contours, but they are not many independent lights; they are merely structural differences of a single light.

Similarly, while on the one hand we have many religions in this world, on the other hand they are not to be considered as really manifold religions. Any kind of dichotomy between one religious faith and another is a travesty of affairs, which is to mistake the medium for the thing which passes through the medium, to mistake the vessel for that which is in the vessel, and vice versa. The quarrels,

the strife, the antagonism, the differences of various types—philosophical, religious, social or otherwise—in the name of religion is a discredit to human intelligence, which is unable to recognise the reason for these differences, and it should be to the credit of human intelligence that it is able to rise above these parochial cloaks through which it is that the original spiritual status manifests itself.

These words that I speak are in connection with the topmost level that you can reach in religious consciousness. If you can maintain this awareness in your daily life, you are not merely a religious person, and not even merely a spiritual individual or a seeker in the ordinary sense of the term; you are a master yourself. Self-mastery follows automatically from this consequence engendered by the maintenance of this great behaviour of your consciousness.

In Indian terminology, and also in certain other phases of religion outside India, the worship of God has been taken as a footstool or a primary pedestal to approach God. While the placement of the inner consciousness in the context of the universal consciousness of God is the ultimate aim, it has to be reached gradually, stage by stage, due to the frailty of the human body, the weakness of the human mind, the conditions of social life, and many other things of that nature.

A famous verse occurs in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana: *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pāda-sevanam, arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam* (Bhagavata

7.5.23). Nine modes of approach to God through worship are dealt with, and this verse delineates these nine methods.

You contact God by certain adjustments of your mind in the attitude of adoration and worship. One of the methods is to attend *satsanga*, a community gathering of devotees where the glory of God is sung either by the chanting of the Divine Name or by a loud repetition of a mantra, a formula or a prayer, a common prayer, a group meditation. You participate in it. Even if you are not able to actively participate, you listen to the recitations, the songs, the *bhajans*, the *kirtans*, the prayers, the invocations, the liturgical readings, and so on. This is filling your ears with the glory of God. Wherever there is a singing of the glory of God, be present there. You will find that your heart will be filled with that which has passed through your ears. If you cannot do anything yourself, you can at least listen. *Sravana* is hearing about the glory of God. Listen to prayers constantly, either in a *satsanga* where chanting or singing is going on or where a discourse highlighting the greatness, the majesty and the glory of God is taking place, or a study of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana or any other scripture where the glory of God is sung by a person who is discoursing. Attend it, participate in it, listen to it, fill your heart and feelings. *Sravana* is listening, listening, going on listening. Wherever there is a gathering devoted to the glorification of God, be present there.

The second method is *kirtana*. You yourself sing the glory of God. While participating is wonderful, singing yourself is also very good. You can sing the glory of God in your own room. You need not be a musician to sing the glory of God. You can simply feel astounded, struck to the quick, to the core, by the very thought of this Mighty Being. "Wonder, Great God, where art Thou? I weep for You. I cry for You. I am sleepless in bereavement of You. Master Supreme, Divine Being, All Eyes, All Hands, All Power, All Knowledge, All Everything, come into my heart!" If these words emanate from your heart, God shall descend. It is not necessary to have a musical instrument. Your heart is the tabla, your words are the music, and your feeling is the symphony, so sing the glory of God. If you are afraid of dancing before others, dance inside your room. God will see your dance.

By way of a digression, I will tell a story. There was a great devotee, a lady who lived in southern India once upon a time. Purandaradas was another great saint. Master saints they were. Purandaradas heard that this great lady devotee was in Tirupati, near the Venkateswara temple, and he was far away in Karnataka. Hearing of the greatness of this devotee, he went there and offered obeisance to her, and she bade him to be seated.

He was sitting and observing what she was doing. She had one practice every day. At about eleven o'clock every night she would dress herself beautifully in the best of costumes, and go out somewhere. At about five o'clock the next morning

she would come back sweating, exhausted, and sit there.

Purandaradas was not able to understand where this lady was going every night. He did not understand this situation, and did not want to say anything because she was the host and he was the guest, but one day he could no longer contain his curiosity and so he asked, "Every day you are going out like this, and coming back sweating. Where are you going?"

"It is good that you have put this question to me. I shall show you where I am going," she replied. She took him to the inner sanctum sanctorum of the temple. "Be seated in a corner, and you can see what I am doing."

Purandaradas saw the light of that living Being rush out from the image of Venkateswara, and she was dancing with that Mighty Being. You may call it a mini Rasa Lila where God and His devotees were in an unintelligible relationship of souls communing with God.

There are instances galore of this kind in the lives of saints, both in the East and in the West, such as St. Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, and Saint Teresa. There were two Teresas, one in Spain and another in France; were both great. In India we have similar saints. Their lives were not the lives of mere human beings. Their feet were planted on the earth, of course, but their spirits were not on the earth. Through their prayers, their spirits could contact the highest heavens, and yet they could be in the midst of men,

spreading this message. Saint Tukaram is one master saint whose name is to be remembered for all time to come. It is believed that he physically rose up from the earth with his musical instrument, a tambura, a single-stringed instrument. Together with it, he was lifted up bodily; some distance he went, and then the instrument fell from his hands. In Maharashtra there is a spot where this tambura is said to have dropped to the ground, and they have built a temple there. And Jnaneshwar Maharaj—what a master!

This mastery of the saints arises from their power, which God has implanted in their hearts. Lord Krishna is said to have lifted a huge mountain. You will be wondering how anybody can lift a mountain. Have you seen an elephant lifting its own foot? You cannot lift the severed foot of an elephant. Four people are required to lift it. How can an elephant lift itself? Can you lift an elephant? No. You cannot lift even a human being. You require another person to help you in lifting a person who is lying on the ground, for instance. So how can an elephant lift itself, and how can a man whom you cannot lift, lift himself? The reason is, the mountain which Sri Krishna lifted and the leg which the elephant lifts are not outside the being who lifts them. The mountain is part of the wider personality and the body of Sri Krishna, and the elephant's leg is part of the elephant, but the person whom you are trying to lift is outside you. The outsideness is the limitation on your strength.

The powers of the saints and the miracles that they seem to have performed are all illustrations of their unity with the source of power. They are not themselves powerful. Their energy enters into them on account of the openness of their personality to the influx of the power that is everywhere. It is not that God is only in the saints. God is also in non-saints. But the trouble is, these non-saints, so-called, have closed their windows and will not allow the light of the sun to enter into them, whereas saints have opened all the doors, and the light of the sun from above, from the heavens, enters into them. God's grace is not only for today or tomorrow; it is an eternal rain that is actually flooding us. There is openness from the side of God, but there is closing from the side of the human individual. God does not wait for your asking. It is an eternal abundance that flows, only if there is receptivity on your part that you are prepared to receive it. Eternity is not tomorrow or yesterday or today. God's existence is eternity's existence, so its action is not after sometime, because the question of 'after sometime' does not arise in eternity. It is ever perennially flowing, which one has to feel competent to receive. *Sravanam* and *kirtanam* are listening to the glory of God, and singing the name of God prayerfully in your own room, as I suggested.

Another method, *smaranam*, is always remembering God. Day in and day out you are thinking this. A rich man is always thinking how many dollars he has, and how he can increase them.

Just imagine you have in your pocket some ten thousand dollars in currency notes. Will you ever forget that you have got this in your pocket? You will keep feeling it now and then, to see whether it is there or not. Whether you are having breakfast or lunch, or are in the marketplace, or travelling on a train or on a bus, or wherever you are, the mind will be always conscious of this thing in your pocket. This is *smaranam*, or remembering. But you cannot remember God's name. Why should you not? Because the dollar has a value, and everyone knows what value it has. It is like life and death for you, so how can you forget it? But God's existence is not yet such a valuable thing because there is a peculiar 'but' that the mind draws, together with its acceptance of the all-pervading and eternal nature of God. Subtly a voice speaks from within: "Yes, God is all-pervading and eternal, but I can manage somehow. I can forget God for a day at least. Am I needing God just now? What is wrong with me? Everything is okay. I have set myself in tune with the daily routine. Just now, for the moment, today, my routine is so clear that God's assistance may not be necessary for me. When I'm in trouble, perhaps I will need His help." This is a subtle erratic behaviour of the mind, which escapes recognition of the fact that the very existence of the person is impossible without God's existence.

In one of the chapters of the Panchadasi, the great Vedantic text, we are told again and again that God is existence, and He is not name and form. The existence of a thing is God, and if that is the case,

your existence also is God's existence. You have borrowed the existence of God and appear to have your own existence. Minus existence, there is only an empty nullity of the name-and-form complex. If you detach existence from your personality, you immediately become non-existent, and you do not have the hardiness to recognise that to think you can get on even for a day without God is the wrong way of thinking. It is like saying that without God's existence you can be for some time. For a few minutes at least you can be without God's existence. How is it possible? You would not be able to breathe.

*Smarana*, therefore, is the constant remembrance of God as the most valuable of all things. How could you persuade yourself to believe that God is the most valuable of all things? I mentioned during the previous session that, to the spiritual seeker, the concept of God is described as the *Ishta-devata*, the most beloved of all objects. I also told you the most beloved is a superlative, and there cannot be something different or superior to the superlative. How can there be something better than the best? Better than the best there cannot be, and therefore the *Ishta-devata* is the best that you can think of, the most beloved of all things. How can your heart move to something that is not the beloved?

The choice of the concept of God, therefore, which is the choice of the *Ishta-devata*, or the most beloved, is very important. It is the initiation which the Guru conducts in respect of the disciple.

Initiation is the inducting of the disciple's mind into the mystery of the placement of himself in the context of the best of things—the most lovable, the most attractive, the most inclusive, the most perfect and complete thing. How can the mind go elsewhere? The word 'complete' includes all that you would like to have in this world. But if you feel that the concept of God is not capable of wholly attracting your attention and sometimes it drifts into something else, you have not thought of God's concept properly. There is incompleteness in your choice of the *Ishta*, or the beloved. The Guru is responsible for gradually taking your mind to the state of the acceptance of this concept of God being complete. Once its completeness has been accepted, the mind is certain to rejoice in that concept, and it cannot go elsewhere.

*Japa* of the mantra is also a *smarana*, a remembering of only that. Go on chanting it one thousand times, twenty thousand times. To remember God always in the light of His being the most beloved of all things is difficult. The mind has never seen a beloved. Even with the most beloved of things in this world, there is a 'but'. "I love you very much, but..." "I love you very much, provided that..." This kind of love will not work. It cannot cut ice. Unconditional affection is what God is expecting from you. It is difficult to maintain this concept. Chant the name, the mantra, again and again. Mantra *japa* is considered as one of the best methods of spiritual practice because it keeps you in a state of the memory of God. Go on chanting the

name, the mantra, again and again, again and again. Again and again hammer the name into your mind, and the form or the concept of that object which is indicated by the name will be melted into your heart. *Smarana* is going on thinking it again and again, again and again.

*Pada-sevanam*, worshipping the feet of God, is another way. How can you worship the feet of God? You have never seen God. In your present state of affairs, the worship of God's feet may take the form of either worshipping the feet of a deity, an idol, or worshipping the feet of a person who is God-oriented, or worshipping the feet of humanity as a whole by welfare activities and public works for the benefit of people, with the feeling that all humanity is the *Viratsvarupa*, the cosmic form of God. This is to worship the feet of humanity as a manifestation of the Almighty. In this manner you may conceive this method of devotion to God as worshipping, adoring the feet of God, inasmuch as the actual feet cannot be seen with your physical eyes. *Pada-sevanam* it is called.

*Archanam* is actual ritualistic worship. You have a portrait of your divinity in front of you. It can be an idol, it can be an image, it can be a sculpture, it can be a painted portrait, it can be Michelangelo's Last Supper, it can be Lord Krishna seated with Arjuna in the chariot; it can be anything, for the matter of that, and you offer sacred flowers at his feet. You have a little shrine in your own room, a little corner devoted to the worship that you carry on every day. Public

worships are conducted in large temples and churches, for instance, with grand music and occasionally processions. In large temples such as Tirupati and Shrinathji, during the annual festivals there are elephant processions, musicians and the dancing of devotees, and with great grandeur the worship in these temples is conducted. This is done on a smaller scale in smaller temples.

God is adored as a king who has come to your house. When you receive a king in your house, you receive him with all alertness, all cleanliness, all neatness, all regimentation, all discipline. You are well attired to receive the king. You do not wish to appear unkempt before this great master, because you know the king is a perfect person, and so you would like to be perfect as much is possible. "Your highness, please be seated on this good chair. May I wash your feet? Here is some refreshment for you. Oh, come! I will wave a divine light before you, and then we will have a little discussion. I will sing and dance before you, and then place gifts before you as an offering."

These kinds of things are done in large temple worships through sixteen methods, which are the ways a person may adopt in receiving a great emperor or a king coming to the house. In Sanskrit they are called *shodasha upachara puja*: sixteen ways of adoring a great person. That is, every method in glorifying and satisfying is adopted. There is *archana*, worship. Either it is done in the form of mass in a Catholic church or adoration and actual ritualistic performance in a Hindu or

Buddhist temple, or in any temple, for the matter of that, where God is worshipped. The seeker adorns God with flowers, with garlands, with clothes, with costumes, with music, with prayers, with delicious offerings such as sacraments, and with large quantities of *prasad*. All varieties are offered because you want to satisfy God in every way. Whatever you think is best for you is also best for God; that is what you feel. What can you offer to God? Well, what would you like to be offered, tell me? If I want to offer something to you, what shall I offer? I have to know what you like—the best dishes, served on good plates, with everything perfect to satisfy every part of your personality. That kind of attitude will project into your personality when you adore God in worship. All things are offered to Him, the best of all things. This is *archana*, actual ritualistic gesticulation for the purpose of adoring, pleasing, satisfying, glorifying in worship the great guest who is God, or a king in secular conditions.

*Vandanam*, prayer, is another method. Some people say that prayer is the best method. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” This is a line from Tennyson, a very touching line indeed. You should not think that prayer is an empty sound. It is not. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Do not be under the impression that prayer has no effect. With all your hands and feet, you cannot work so many miracles; with all your sweating and toiling and running about, you cannot do so much

work, so much good in this world, as you can effect through your spiritually felt prayer from the bottom of your heart.

We in our own Ashram experienced the effect of this prayer right from Swami Sivananda's time. Every day there were prayers suited to the different conditions prevailing in the world. When the Second World War was taking place many years back, Swami Sivananda introduced one special item of prayer for the war to cease and for agitated minds to calm down. In Sanskrit *Om shanti sarveśām svastir bhavatu* was chanted, but he added an English translation of it: "Peace be to the east, peace be to the west, peace be to the north, peace be to the south, peace be above, peace be below, peace be everywhere." That 'everywhere' is very important. It touches the heart.

What is prayer? It is a shaking up of your feelings, a melting down of your heart, an impossibility to contain something which you feel within yourself—an impossibility to contain the thought of God within yourself. You cannot contain it; it is beyond you; it breaks the feelings; it clutches the heart; you are overcome by it. That is prayer. Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa used to say it is something like a mad elephant entering a little hut and thrashing it to pieces. This is what will happen to you when God enters you. Sometimes He will break you completely, but it is good to be broken if it is God that breaks you. It is good to be drowned in the sea if the sea is Godhood, so do not be afraid of being broken, and do not be afraid of being

drowned. Prayer is, therefore, not merely an uttering of words which, of course, may be one of the forms of prayer, but actually it is the heart shivering, trembling, gesticulating, and feeling that it is getting crushed by the weight of that mighty abundance. This is one of the methods of worship.

*Dasyam*: “Servant of God am I. Master, you are everything.” You consider yourself as master of nothing, and the master of everything is God. You are nothing, a master of nothing, a humble servant. *Dāsa-dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ* (CC Madhya 13.80). A devotee said, “I am the servant of God.” So very low he placed himself. “Grass-like you have to be,” said Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Who is the person fit to chant the name of God? Everybody cannot utter the name of Hari. *Tṛṇād api su-nīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā, amāninā māna-dena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ* (CC Adi 17.31): You must be like grass. Let people trample on it; it will not prick you because it bends down. After you walk over, it raises its head again. So let the world trample on you. Be humbler than a blade of grass, more patient than a tree that is being cut. People cut trees; they chop off branches, but the tree does not complain. Afterwards it puts forth some little tendrils, little leaves. Have you seen how patient trees are? They will, after all, yield some fruit one day to the very man who chopped off their branches. Be humbler than a blade of grass bending down, and more patient than a tree that tolerates any kind of insult that is visited upon it.

Never expect respect from anybody. Not even a word of thanks do you expect from a person, but you must respect everybody and thank everybody for every little goodness or gesture that has been shown to you: "Thank you, thank you. Very grateful, very grateful." But do not expect to hear those words yourself. Let not anybody say to you these things, because your ego will get propped up if somebody thanks you. Expect not any kind of recognition or thanking for yourself, but thank others, respect others, adore others. Consider yourself as nothing, but others as everything. Your ego will be no more there. It is finished.

"Such a person alone can have the right to chant the name of Hari," said the great saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Humbler than a blade of grass, more patient than a tree that is being cut, giving respect to all but expecting respect from nobody, only such a person can chant the name of God, because it is the name of God, in the abode of God, in the being of God, that the traits of ego are not there. It is the highest reach of egolessness. Therefore, how can an ego-ridden man take the name of God? So consider yourself as a servant of God. That is one method.

*Sakhyam.* Sometimes you are in an elevated mood, as if you have encountered God Himself, as if you have rubbed shoulders with Him and walked on the street with Him. "Come on my dear, let us walk." That is a very great stage. Now you cannot consider God as your friend, but when you reach a very advanced state of God-consciousness, you feel

He is with you always. God walks with you on the street, He shakes hands with you, He dances with you, He takes breakfast with you, He chats with you, He lies down with you, He is together with you as Nara Narayana, as two brothers inseparable from each other. You and God are always together, inseparable. This is a very advanced state of devotion. You dare not consider God as your friend unless you have risen to that status, but this is also a form of devotion.

*Atma-nivedanam* is the last, the ninth method—complete surrender. The ego melts as salt melts in the sea, as night melts when the sun rises. You cease to be when God is. A poetic line is: When shall I be free? When I shall cease to be.

## Chapter 15

### YOGA IS THE STATE OF AT-ONE-MENT

Since commencing these sessions, we have covered a large area of studies. We started with the foundations of Indian culture, which we located in the Veda Samhitas and the Upanishads particularly, as also in the Smritis and the Itihasas or epics, and the Puranas. Then we had occasion to delve a little deeper into the main theme of universally applicable cultural values, namely, the quest for Reality. In this attempt of an investigation into the nature of Reality as such, we had occasion to dilate upon various facets of approach taken up for consideration and implementation by different philosophies, schools of thought and religious affiliations. We came practically face to face with the Reality of the cosmos, and it became necessary for us to adjust ourselves to the situation in which this cosmic existence appears to be placed in the context of our own existence. As a recapitulation, I am rapidly moving, in a few sentences, through all the details we covered over many sessions, right from the beginning.

The positioning of consciousness, as I mentioned previously in the context of God's existence, is the essence of yoga practice. During the previous session we concentrated our attention

on one aspect of the practice of yoga, which is designated as love of God. The greatest yoga is love of God, love of Reality, asking for It, and a welling up of our feelings in respect of That which we are seeking in such an intensity that it becomes practically impossible for us to live in this world without our association with That.

We concluded with the great dictum that we cannot breathe even for a few seconds without our affiliation with Reality, because to be dissociated from Reality would be to be dissociated from existence itself. To cut off existence from our personal life would be to enter into annihilation; and after a proper investigation into the nature of God Almighty, the Supreme Being, we concluded that it is identical with Universal Existence. Universal Existence is the nature of God, and all other attributes that we foist upon God are secondary in comparison with the basic character of this Being, which is Existence as such. Inasmuch as Existence is the fundamental character of the Absolute, it includes our existence also, and therefore we cannot exist unless It exists. This is to say, in other words, we cannot exist without God, and to imagine that we can get on well with our daily routines minus this association with the Ultimate Reality would be a folly of the first water. Well, I am only briefly mentioning the essence of our studies so far. One of the aspects of the practice of yoga I mentioned is love of God, technically known as *bhakti*, and the various modes of the

practice of this devotion were also considered during our previous session.

There is another methodology adopted in the practice of yoga. It is highly technical, and is known as ashtanga yoga, raja yoga, or sometimes just succinctly stated as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. I am not going to speak on that subject now, and am only referring to it as another way of the practice of what we may call contact with Reality.

The Sanskrit word 'yoga' actually means 'union with Reality'. It is an attempt to contact Reality in some way or the other. The contacting of ourselves with Reality is the aim of life. If we are disconnected, it is like having a loose electrical contact, and all our electrification would then be of no avail to us. We might have spent a fortune in electrifying our house, in the setting of wires and bulbs, etc., but there is a loose contact somewhere, and we have no light. Such a thing happens in our own life. We have done a lot of things in this world, tremendous work in social levels, and in our own personal religious routines of the day so much time has been spent, but nothing is happening to us. We are the same old bandicoots. Nothing has changed our personality. After fifty years of this social work, welfare activity, humanitarian approach, religion and prayer, we find ourselves in the same condition. The reason is, there is a loose contact that we have forgotten. The loose contact is that we have not been able to find a means of communing ourselves with this Reality.

Towards the end of the previous session I said that because of its inclusiveness, Reality, the

Universal Being, escapes the attention of the individual spirit merely because it is all-inclusive. The concept of all-inclusiveness is impossible of entertainment in the human mind, because there is nothing all-inclusive in this world. All the objects of sense perception are exclusive in their nature. Inclusiveness is not seen in this world; everything is different from everything else. There is dividedness, division, separation, isolatedness of one thing from another. There is nothing connected with another thing in this world. We have to work hard to artificially bring about some kind of cohesive force in the midst of these divided objects in the world in terms of social organisations or psychological operations. Metaphysically, objectively, everything seems to be different from everything else. On account of the involvement of our psyche in this predicament of the dividedness of things, we cannot entertain the thought of inclusiveness, especially of a universal type, which is required in the practice of yoga. The whole problem with yoga practice is finding a technique, or a novel method, to position ourselves in the context of the Universal Being. We may practice karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, or any kind of yoga we like; we may belong to any kind of religious faith or affiliation. It matters not what we are affiliated to, but we will find in the end that the basic question is not answered—namely, how will we face it.

This so-called 'it', having already been described as inclusive of our own existence, slips

out of our consciousness. We cannot think it, because there is nobody to think it. We cannot contemplate on it for the same reason. We cannot describe it or give a definition of it, because the moment we endeavour to deal with it in this extraneous manner, we place ourselves outside it. The highest pinnacle of yoga is reached when the meditator convinces himself as to the impossibility of standing outside it, because the moment it is envisaged as an object, it disconnects itself from us.

The object is never organically related to the subject, though there is a basic relation which is invisible to the eyes, and inasmuch as this dividedness obtains between the subject and the object, we find that we are always placed in a quandary in our relation to things in this world. The quandary is that unless the thing is outside us, we cannot even see it; and if it is really outside us, also we cannot see it. The total disconnectedness of the object from us impairs our relation with it to such an extent that there is no psychological connection between us and the object. The perception of an object is actually the establishment of a conscious contact between ourselves and the object. 'Conscious' contact is the word to be underlined. If it is unconscious, we will not see the object and, more than that, we cannot have any kind of dealing with it. Dealing with the thing is actually establishing a conscious relation with that object, but where is the question of consciousness in relation to an object when, according to our

empirical consideration, our consciousness is inside us and it is not anywhere else?

Where is our consciousness? If we psychologically, psychoanalytically or, even from the point of view of physiological psychology, think of the status of our consciousness, we will find that it is intriguing. It appears to be somewhere in us, and not anywhere else: "My consciousness cannot be outside me. It has to be in me." If that is the case, how will we touch an object outside consciousness? This is one aspect of the difficulty in the perception of an object. We seem to be cut off from the object on account of our consciousness being within us and it not being anywhere else. But on the other hand, if it is really so, we will not know that the object outside exists.

We cannot love a thing unless it is different from us; and if it is totally different from us, we also cannot love it. Here the intriguing character of all connections in this world is succinctly stated. We are related to the world, and yet not related. This is the cause of the restlessness that we feel in our mind, personally as well as socially. We are utterly restless, and we cannot have a moment's peace in this world because of this difficulty we feel in establishing an intelligible relationship of ourselves with the world outside. It is neither with us, nor is it not with us. In the context of the practice of yoga, this question has to be resolved. We have already briefly traversed this question along the lines raised by the Sankhya thought, which adumbrated the distinction between *prakriti* and *purusha*,

consciousness and matter; and the Vedanta psychology bridged the gulf between these two apparently different things, consciousness and matter, by telling us that there has to be something more than and different from both the *purusha* and the *prakriti* of the Sankhya, or consciousness and matter, in order that one may even be aware that these two things exist.

In the Bhagavadgita, we have an answer to this quandary. *Dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca, kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate; uttamaḥ puruṣas tvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ* (B.G. 15.16-17): "There are two realities in this world, the perishable and the imperishable, and there is something transcending both the perishable and the imperishable, known as the Supreme Person." Now, what is this perishable and imperishable? The subject and the object of the very process of life in this world, the relation between what one sees and oneself, is what is referred to here as the *kshara* and the *akshara*. In comparison with the world which lasts for many years, we as individuals are perishable objects. We die after some years; the world will not die so easily. So in comparison with the transiency of individuals of any kind of species, the world has to be considered as imperishable. The perishable and the imperishable referred to in this verse of the Bhagavadgita are the *kshara* and the *akshara*; or the *kshara* and the *akshara* may also be regarded as the individual and the cosmos. In relation to the cosmic existence of nature as a whole, the individual is

perishable, and the individual is a late development and entry into this cosmos.

'God' and 'the individual soul' can also be the meaning implied in these two terms, *kshara* and *akshara*. The creative principle, which is universally *akshara*, is as imperishable as the universe itself, and all created beings are perishable. All these differences and characterisations boil down to the distinction between the subject and the object. It matters not what the object actually is. It may be God, it may be the universal whole, it may be nature, it may be human society, it may be one individual outside, one thing; the point is that it is different from us. Because of its difference from us, it is necessary to bridge this gulf between ourselves and the object. That bridge is this third element, and in the verse of the Bhagavadgita it is called Purushottama, transcendent.

In the Yoga System, whether it is cast in the mould of devotion, psychic concentration, public unselfish activity or metaphysical meditation, whether it is known as karma, bhakti, yoga, jnana or Vedanta, whatever be the shape it takes, it boils down finally to a question requiring a solution: "What is my relation with that which is not me?" This 'not me' is the whole issue. A person sitting in front of me is a 'not me', the whole human society is a 'not me', the world of nature, and all things contained in nature, are outside me, and they are not me, the not-self. The astronomical universe, even God Himself, is not me, and I have to establish a relationship with that.

Inasmuch as organic structure seems to be the essence of everything, it is incumbent on the part of every spiritual seeker to enter into the structure of this organism before yoga proper is attempted. We must first of all know what an organism is. I have also mentioned this earlier, in a different context and in different words, and repeat it once again for your memory. An organism is something which cannot be seen with the eyes. It is a force that welds together apparent parts. It may be in the form of members in a family. There may be ten members in one single family; and when we enter the house, we will not see the family there, we will see only people. Yet they will say, "This is my family." Where is the family? We see only various individuals. The family is a concept; it is an intelligent cohesive form, an idea that is ultimately expected to keep intact the otherwise divided members who are, from their own point of view, independent. Each member of the family, for all practical purposes, is independent by himself or herself. They can go for a walk without telling another person, and it will not affect the existence of another. Yet, it has some connection, because that member who has gone for a walk, or is doing something independently, is a part and parcel of the organism of the family. We cannot see this organism; nevertheless it exists because this organism, which is ideational, conceptual, is more real than the members of the family. The members may be there as concrete perceptible objects, and the organism may not be visible, but we know how important this organism

is; and all social organisations, political organisations and communities are of this character.

An administrative setup is also an organisation, but we do not actually see it with our eyes because as the operations of realities become more and more valid and active, they also become more and more invisible. It is difficult for us to conceive how invisible realities control us, while we are visible, concrete objects. If a cohesive force within the organisation is absent, the individuals will fly at the throats of each other and they will not exist after three days, in spite of the fact this organisational force seems to be only a thought, and a thought is generally not regarded as identical with concrete reality. Here is an instance to highlight how that which is not at all a concrete, visible object restrains the operations of concrete things, and the more a thing becomes ethereal and intangible, the more also is the power that it can exert on solid objects. A high-voltage electric current can blow up a mountain, though the mountain is so solid and hard. But electric energy is invisible; it is a pervasive force.

Do you know that thought actually moves this world? Ideas are the determining factors of the destiny of humanity. And where are these ideas? Are they existing in trees, in the marketplace or in the streets? The concept of one world, the idea of an international existence, the very thought of unity, is not a visible object, and yet that rules all the values

in life. When this conceptual generalisation is taken to its logical limits, it becomes God-existence.

The ultimate level, Pure Existence, is not a solid reality, but it is more solid than all the solidity that we can think of. We define God as Consciousness. The substance of the ultimate Absolute is Consciousness. If we identify Consciousness with the thought process, or something that is not physically concrete, then God is not a physical object, and is not capable of perception through the eyes. We cannot see God with our eyes because generals, universals, those ranging forces that control particulars, are above particulars. That which enables us to perceive an object is not the object itself, because it has already been placed outside us in the context of space and time. It is also not us independently, because our consciousness is locked up in our skull. There is a third element, an intermediary principle, which is invisibly operating between us and the object. If this can be known, we will be saved in one second.

In the technical description of this process of perception, the perceiver is called the *adhyatma*, the perceived is called the *adhibhuta*, and the thing that is between the two is called the *adhidaiva*, the superintending divinity. Divinity cannot be seen with the eyes. No god can be seen with the eyes, because the immediate god that is before us is that which is linking us with the object, and that we cannot see, notwithstanding the fact that without it, we cannot even know that something is under our nose.

Therefore, in all the practices that go by the name of yoga, our endeavour is to rise above our individual personality, and also to rise above the locatedness of the object outside in space and time, and to place ourselves in the context of that which is neither us nor the object. This is a herculean task, like walking on a wire in a circus, as it were, which is very difficult indeed. If we make a little mistake, we will fall down.

How are we to place ourselves in that which is not us? The sutra of Patanjali in this context receives little attention, and nobody knows what it means because people never go to that part of the Yoga Sutras. Generally they wind up all their studies with the first and second chapters. A sutra in the third chapter says *bahiḥ akalpitā vṛittiḥ mahāvidehā* (Y.S. 3.44): “The large embodied, which actually is a disembodied condition, is that state when the mind transfers itself from its own personal location to another which is not itself.”

Everything is a psychosis, a function of the mind, which generally operates within our own selves as the principle of the psyche, the very starting point of all cognition and perception. The modification of the mind at the time of cognition or perception is called a *vṛitti*, and it is inside us. But here, the reference in this sutra is to a kind of operation of the mind, or the psyche, which is not to be thought of as located within us, but outside us. *Bahiḥ* is ‘outside’, and *akalpitā vṛitti* means ‘non-conditioned psyche’. Our psyche is conditioned as long as we are in the process of the perception of an

object totally outside us. Now, unconditioned psyche is a *bahiḥ akalpitā vṛitti*. You have to stretch your imagination with some effort of deep thinking to appreciate what this actually means. What on earth is meant by saying that you have to place yourself outside yourself?

Suppose there is a tree, and you are looking at it with a *vṛitti*, or a modification of the mind. In the perception of an object, such as a tree, the mind operates in such a way that it envelops the form of the object as located in space and time, and then the consciousness of the Atman, or the *puruṣa* inside, magnetises and enlivens, or charges within itself, the process of the psyche which is enveloping the object; and then you have a double consciousness when you say that this is a tree: the shape of the tree on the one hand, and the consciousness of the shape of the tree on the other hand. This is ordinary perception. But in the transferring process that is referred to in this sutra of Patanjali, you have to become the tree yourself. A telepathic self-transference, as it were, takes place in this intensively thought-out process of the transference of the mind from within the body to the body of the tree, as it were. What has happened? Your consciousness, your mind, your psyche, whatever your essence is, is wrenched out from your body. It is not your body; you yourself are coming out of this house which is the body. Place yourself in this context of an inhabitant of this body. You are occupying this body, as it were, as a house, and you come out of this house and enter into another

house. It is, as it were, that you leave one house and go to another house. Do not be under the impression that the body is you. The body is not you; it is a tenement which you are occupying. So consider this body as a house in which you are living. You are not this body. Now, get out of this body. Think, "I am going out of this body. And what do I do? I enter into the body of the tree." Immediately the mind has fixed itself on another thing. The attachment to this body gradually gets loosened by meditations of this kind. The sutra says that you can practice this technique in respect of any object in this world. Why should you be always thinking that you are inside this body? Why not consider that you are also in another body, especially as your mind is connected to the cosmic mind? This subject has been dealt with earlier.

The yoga process involves the transference of your personality to a non-subjective universality. In the beginning, it is an attempt in terms of lesser and lesser wholes of reality—any object, for the matter of that. It may be a pencil, it may be a flower, it may be a candle flame, it may be a great saint's personality, it may be your own concept of God, your Ishta-devata, whatever it be. Meditation becomes active and operational in an effective manner only when your consciousness has been transferred from the location of this body to the location of that on which you are meditating. Otherwise, if you are always inside the body and then you start to meditate on an object, it will be a thought process, and it will not be meditation.

Meditation is not thinking an object. You have to distinguish between the thought of an object and actual meditation. Meditation is an absorption of your consciousness in the context of the object of meditation. Rather, you have become it. This becoming it is called samadhi in yoga terminology. It starts with concentration, it intensifies itself in meditation, and finally it finds itself in samadhi, or perfect communion.

This perfect communion with Reality is necessary in all levels of life. Even if you want to become a good officer, you have to be in tune with your staff. You cannot stand outside your staff and then be a good administrator. Not even a servant will be obedient to you if you are totally outside your servant. You have to feel kind of at-one-ment with the atmosphere with which you are connected, and from which you cannot be separated. You will be a good cook, a good sweeper, a good officer, a good friend, a good administrator, a good everything, provided you are able to practise this technique of at-one-ment with the environment, whatever that environment be.

Then there is all success. *Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ, tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama* (B.G. 18.78): “Where Krishna and Arjuna are seated together in one single chariot and march forward on the battlefield of life, there is success perennial,” says the last verse of the Bhagavadgita. This is not merely a verse to be read in a holy tone in your puja room, it is a technique of actual living in your daily

life—in your office, in your factory, in the market, with your friend, in your kitchen, at your dining table, with your servant—everywhere, wherever you go. Yoga is not meant only for closing the eyes in a temple; it is a day-to-day action to be done everywhere, even in the marketplace. Wherever you go, you are in the state of yoga. You are identical, in the state of at-one-ment, with the atmosphere—at-one-ment with everything that is outside you, because that thing which you think is outside you is really not outside you. The whole point is that. You are under a misconception that things are outside you, that everybody is different, and you are independently sitting here alone, unbefriended. No. You are a friend of the whole universe. The world is with you wherever you go. It clings to you like the tail going with the dog. The world, the environment, the people, the whole nature, trees, mountains, the solar system, the galaxies, they are hanging on your body, as it were, when you walk. This is the way in which you can transfer your consciousness from your little twig-like body and place it in a larger context of anything in this world. Thus goes yoga. This is one technique.

The other methods are your own daily routines into which you have perhaps been initiated by your guide, your teacher, which vary in detail from person to person and from one level of your evolution to another level; and each one has to chalk out a daily routine of practice.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had a masterstroke instrument for teaching people to develop a

technique of self-discipline every day, in the form of three recipes. The first is known as a spiritual diary. Maintain a spiritual diary. Those who have read the book *Sure Ways of Success in Life and God-Realisation* by Gurudev, or perhaps *Essence of Yoga* or some such book to which a pro forma of this spiritual diary is appended, will know what it is. It is a series of questions which you put to your own self: "What have I done? What have I not done? Today, this evening, after the passing of the whole day, how have I passed my minutes and hours? Have I done one good thing today? Have I brought a little consolation and peace to one single heart in this world? Have I been good and charitable at least for a few minutes? How many times have I been angry today? How many times have I been disturbed in my emotions? How many times have I found myself out of gear in my psychological personality?" There are various questions. A series of specimen questions are given in the ready-reckoner, as it were, the spiritual diary. You can have your own additions and subtractions by adding or removing questions. This is called the method of a self-check. Every day when you go to bed, you have to check your personality: "What have I done today? Have I wasted my time or have I gained something? What is the balance sheet of my day's existence—an asset or a liability? If it is a liability, so much the worse. If it is an asset, thank God for that. If it is a liability, tomorrow I shall make it good. Today there is a debit side in my

personality, and tomorrow it must be rectified.” This is a spiritual diary.

The second recipe is a daily routine. You must know what you are going to do today and tomorrow. It is not that anything comes and anything is done in any slipshod matter. Many people live a desultory life in this world. They do not know how to conduct their life. They do not know what to do, how to pass the day. Every day you should know what is to be done. Actually, the routine of a particular day is a little link in the long chain of the routine of your life. Any intelligent person with a little bit of education in the spiritual field will have some idea as to what it is that one is expected to do in this world. “What for am I in this world? This is the program. Right from today onwards, till the end of my life, I have to follow this kind of routine or program for the fulfilment of the purpose for which I have been born into this world. And for that purpose, for the fulfilment of this aim, I have to do something today.” Today is a little link in the long developmental process of your entire life. So if you are a little cautious in knowing what the aim of life is finally, what are the facets and the aspects connected with the fulfilment of the ultimate aim of life, you will also know what is to be done today, what is to be done tomorrow, etc. So a daily routine is the second recipe of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, apart from a spiritual diary. Though there may be differences in the minor details of your daily routine, the basic factors should not change. The mould of your daily routine

should be the same, though the method or the material that you cast into this mould may vary. So keep up a daily routine.

The third recipe is an annual resolve. New Year's Day is coming, the first of January. Strike a balance sheet of your whole personality for the entire year. It is a cumulative total of the little psychic accounts that you have been maintaining every day. "One year has passed, and what has happened to me? Where do I stand? Is there progress in the direction of an onward movement towards the fulfilment of my life? No, I have made a mistake. I have done such and such, which I ought not to have done, and I ought to have done such and such. So from today, from New Year's Day onwards, I shall be living like this. This I shall do, and this I shall not do." These dos and don'ts of your self-disciplinary process, annually taken up for self-checking, constitute your annual resolve.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj never tired of dinning into the ears of people these three items of spiritual instruction: an annual resolve, a daily routine, and a spiritual diary.

Keep contact with people who are going to be of assistance to you in your daily life. Do not keep friends who are going to waste your time or exploit you. Have good friends or have no friends. Let your God be your friend. It is better to be alone to yourself rather than be in the company of those people who will distract your attention and take you along the wrong path of life. If possible, have *satsanga* with saints and sages, good people,

stalwarts, superiors who are more experienced than you, and remain in contact with only these people. Always be in search of great men, great scholars, learned pundits, philosophers, saints and sages. And if there is *satsanga* going on somewhere, make a beeline to that place.

When there are difficulties in finding occasions for having *satsanga* with saints and sages, have what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj suggested as a secondary type of *satsanga*, namely *svadhyaya*, the study of great scriptures written down by masters, such as the *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana* written by Veda Vyasa, or the *Bhagavadgita*, the gospel of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. When you read these great gospels or scriptures, you are indirectly coming in contact with the presence of the masters who wrote them. When you read the words of the *Bhagavadgita* or the *Bhagavata*, or the words of the New Testament or the Koran, or whatever the religious scripture be, you are actually inwardly in rapport with the thoughts and the forces of these prophets and teachers, which are impregnated into the very words of that scripture. So the study of a scripture is also a *satsanga* with great masters. The thoughts, the forces, the ideas and the very presence of these masters, you will find in the words of these holy books. Actual *satsanga* with saints and sages is best, if possible, but if not, at least have a study of great scriptures such as the *Bhagavata Mahapurana*.

If that is also difficult, do chanting of the Divine Name, *japa*, so that you are actually in contact with

the being whose name is being chanted. Actually, *satsanga* is a Sanskrit word which means *sangha* with *sat*. *Sangha* is contact, association with. *Sat* is Pure Existence, goodness, sobriety, saintliness, holiness, existence. All these meanings are implied in the word 'Existence'. So *satsanga* may mean contact with or association with holy people, saints and sages, stalwarts in the Spirit, or it may mean contact with Pure Existence itself. Where *satsangas*, or associations with people, become difficult under the circumstances in which you are placed in society, you can have an inward contact with the Pure Existence within your own self, contact with God. *Ishvara-pranidhana*, as Patanjali's sutra tells us, is one of the great ways of self-discipline inwardly, religiously.

Thus, these methods you can adopt: *satsanga*, as much as it is possible—externally in the midst of people who are holy and saintly, or inwardly in direct contact with the Pure Being, the Atmasvarupa, the Paramatman in your own self. Have contact with God daily in your prayers. During the previous session I referred to a method of prayer, to some extent. Bring it to your memory just now. All these instructions, plus Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions*, *Sadhana Tattva*, and the three recipes for self-discipline every day, you may keep in your mind. God bless you.

## Chapter 16

# SOME ASPECTS OF THE ESSENTIALS OF MEDITATION

I feel that I have conveyed to you enough information on the foundations of cultural values, religious principles, and the very meaning of what spiritual life can be. But you have to progress personally, individually, and it is not only some information, some learning, some increased academic dimension of your mind, though that is very good indeed. You are also spiritual seekers, not merely students in an academic, university sense. It is necessary for you all to do some practice as well. There is no purpose in merely learning and becoming a scholar if it has not changed your personality, made you a better person, and given you an enhanced insight into your own self.

It is necessary for you to have a daily program of your occupation, whatever that occupation be. First of all, you should calculate how many hours of the day you should devote to your profession. Suppose you are a student; how many hours have you to devote to studying for an exam, and so on? Out of the twenty-four hours of the day, so many hours are absolutely necessary for you to study in order to appear for an examination, so you deduct these hours which are essential for your line of work, your occupation, from the twenty-four hours.

Afterwards something remains. You have to take a bath every day, you have to take your breakfast, lunch and supper. Daily ablutions take some time. So make a second set of calculations: How much time do you require for bathing, washing and cleaning? How much time should you spend for your diet every day? Deduct that many hours. You must sleep as well. How many hours should you sleep for your health? Deduct that also. Then you must have a little time for exercise, call it recreation, going for a walk, doing asanas, etc. Deduct one hour at least for that. Something will remain. That something should be the cream of the hours of the day. That is to be utilised for another kind of study, intended for assisting you in meditation.

The study that you make in schools and colleges is quite different from the study which generally goes by the name of *svadhyaya*, or sacred study. Only one book you must read. It may be the Bhagavadgita, it may be an Upanishad, it may be the Veda Samhita, it may be the Bible. Whatever is your way of life, based on that you select one book for deep concentration, and absorb yourself in the thought of that book; ruminate over the thought again and again, again and again, so that this repetition of the same idea continuously, every day, in light of the scripture that you are reading, would be a kind of secondary meditation. Instead of sitting alone without any kind of guidance or assistance and trying to meditate, you will find it easier to concentrate your thoughts in the right direction

with the help of a scripture which contains noble thoughts and direct guidance for meditation. Some half an hour every day, at least, you must spend in reading a book. You should not think you know everything and therefore it is not necessary for you to read. That is not a proper attitude. Even though you have studied a lot and it is true that you know something, it is not easy for the mind to be thinking the same thought every day. Especially very high, elevated thoughts cannot come to the mind frequently. They get dampened and diluted due to other, extraneous interests that the mind has. Therefore, it is necessary to have a pocket guidebook. Open a page of a scripture. Generally in a scripture, every page is equally good. Something noble, wonderful and elevating is mentioned there on every page. Whether it is the Bhagavadgita or the New Testament, they are all equally good.

If you are used to reciting the Divine Name, doing *japa*, that also will be a part of your *sadhana*. Spiritual *sadhana*, a daily routine of practice, generally consists of three processes: study of a holy scripture, *japa* of the Divine Name, and direct meditation on the Supreme Being. These are the three prongs, as it were, of the trident—the *trishula*, as it is called—of spiritual practice.

Now we come to the highlight of all these endeavours, namely, meditation itself. How do you meditate? Sometimes you feel that you are spending a lot of time in meditation. You sit for one hour, or half an hour, but from the fruit you know the tree, as they say. The feeling with which you get

up from your session of meditation will be an indication of the quality of the meditation which you have been carrying on for half an hour or one hour. Do you feel relaxed, relieved of some tension? Do you feel some protection coming to you from nature outside and God above? Do you feel, after an hour of sitting, a sort of harmony with the environment of nature, with creation, or do you feel tremendously individualised, the same ego personality? Have you gone to meditation to come back the same way as you went, or is there a difference?

Every day a little check-up of personality should be done, because every day you sit for meditation. Perhaps most of you do that. One day, two days, three days have passed, and every day you do this kind of meditation. In what way are better now in your feelings? Are you happy? Happiness, relaxation, a spirit of buoyancy of personality, lightness, elevation, all these will be part and parcel of the effects that follow from right meditation. If you feel heavy, lumbering, lethargic, drowsy, and nothing seems to be happening to you in your meditations, it is because of some mistake in the technique adopted. Meditation is not merely thinking something, because you are thinking of something every day. Instead of thinking of some object in a shop or some file in your office, you are thinking of another thing. The objects have changed, but the process of thinking is the same. That should not be the case. In spiritual meditation, it is not merely the change of the character of the

object that is important; your way of adjustment of the thought of the object is more important. The adjustment of your thought to the object concerned is a special novelty of meditation; it is not the way in which you generally think of an object.

Every object in the world, whatever it be, is something totally outside you—‘totally outside you’ is a very important point. Nothing in the world seems to be having any relation to you. The building in which you are staying, the food that you eat, the association that you have with people outside, this society, and this world of nature, are all entirely outside you. They do not have any vital connection with you, though you can think of them for various reasons. You can think of your harvest, the market from which you purchase things, the house where you live, the members of your family with whom you have daily concourse, but they are all independent from you. None of them are part and parcel of you. You have a mechanised contact with them, an artificial relationship, a kind of give-and-take policy. This is how you think of things in the world. In meditation, this is not the way of thinking.

What do you meditate upon? You may say that you meditate on your concept of God. Do you consider this new entry of thought into your mind as identical with the thought that you entertain in respect of other things in the world? You utilise things in the world as instruments for your personal purpose, but an instrument is not a vital part of your personality. A fountain pen is not a part

of you, and no tool that you have employed during your work is essential for you except for the purpose of executing that work, and only for the time being, as long as the work is being carried on. Otherwise, you throw the tools down. Therefore, the things in the world are only of tentative utility to you. They are not ends in themselves; they are only means to certain ends.

The object of meditation is an end in itself, and not a means to an end. Here is a distinction between the object of meditation and any other object in the world. You are not connected with anything in this world; therefore, you are using things in the world as instruments, whereas the object of meditation is something vitally connected with you, and so you cannot utilise it as a means to some other end. The object of meditation is the end, in which you want to achieve release and absorb yourself, and it is not to be used for some other purpose. All things in the world are used for some purpose other than themselves, but the object of meditation cannot be used for any purpose other than itself, because there is nothing other than itself. The choice of the object of meditation is the crucial issue here, and this choice is generally done in consultation with a spiritual guide, a teacher, a Guru, a master, some good friend in whom you have faith and who is in a position to help you in your practice.

The inclusiveness that characterises the object of meditation is the factor that distinguishes it from any other object in the world. All things in the

world are exclusive; the object of meditation is inclusive. Here is the difference. Everything in this world excludes everything else in the world, but here, in this great adventurous process of meditation, the object, so-called, is somehow or other included in the organism of your person and, vice versa, you also are included in the very location of that object. What is that object?

Different students have different notions in regard to meditation, perhaps due to their cultural background or upbringing in family circumstances, etc. How do you meditate? Some students concentrate on their breathing process. They breathe in and breathe out, breathe in and breathe out. They go on thinking of this continuous activity. This is good enough, but it is not sufficient. It is good because the breath is so very near to you and so very inseparable from you. You feel so very friendly with it. It is so vital, and one of the most intimate things in the world as far as you are concerned is the breathing process itself. It is as if you are thinking yourself as a function in some way.

Other students are taught by their teacher to move their mind along the parts of the body from head to foot, and then take the mind back from the toe to the crown of the head. This is one technique of meditation, of a psychological nature. The mind moves only within the ambit or the circumference of the body, and inasmuch as you are moving it, it has little chance of jumping from the body and going elsewhere. If you compel the mind to think only of one part of the body, it may do it for a few

seconds and then jump to some tree that is in front of you. The advantage of this technique is that you are giving it some active occupation. Movement is involved here. Here again, the body being your own self for all practical purposes, you feel a satisfaction that you are brooding over your own self. It is very painful to go on concentrating on something with which you have no connection, and so some intelligent teachers have prescribed certain methods of concentration on things which are somehow or other inseparable from you. The breathing process is one, and your own body is another.

The third method is something very funny. You may wonder whether this kind of meditation really exists and people are practising it. Look at your face in a mirror, and look only at yourself. As you consider yourself to be the most attractive person in the world, the most beautiful of all people, and nobody can be so lovable and dear as your own self, the mind will concentrate itself on itself. You cannot normally see your own face, but in a mirror you can see your face. It is called *darpana* yoga in Sanskrit, the yoga of a mirror. Try it and see. You will be amused, actually, at the effect that it produces. Look at yourself. You will find that the mind stops. The mind stops because it has got what it wants. And what does it want? It wants itself, and it does not want anybody else; and inasmuch as you cannot see yourself except through a mirror, you can see yourself in a mirror and then get absorbed thoroughly in your own self. This method works

because, here again, the love that is hidden in respect of one's own self is manifest in actual action of the mind.

A more difficult method is to think of the thoughts—one thought, two thoughts, three thoughts, four thoughts, a hundred thoughts. Let them all come in a pageantry, in a procession, but they are your thoughts. And here it would be advantageous for you to note down on a piece of paper or a diary what are these thoughts that occur to your mind during these one or two hours. Mostly they will be bundled up into a certain category, which you will observe by writing down the various components of the thought process which is carried on for some time, say for one hour.

These are preparatory methods. They are not the final step in meditation. Whether you are concentrating on your own body or your face, or the inner constituents of your thoughts, though they all appear to be connected with you vitally, really they are extraneous to your true being. Neither your breath, your body, your face, nor the thoughts of your mind are actually you, because of the fact they are moving. Action is taking place. Nothing that is moving can be regarded as identical with your being, because movement is what is known as becoming, and your nature is being. You do not move, you do not change, you do not undergo a process; you *are*. Do you not feel that you are, or do you feel that every minute you are changing and your personality changes every second? You do not feel that every minute your

personality goes on changing. You are the same person. The sameness of your personality is what you have obtained from the true being that you are, and therefore all these techniques that have been mentioned here are also not adequate finally. They are good enough, but not sufficient.

The inclusiveness of the object of your meditation in your own being is a higher technique in meditation than including it as a part of your thought process or your physical personality. The casual absorption of the objective environment in your own conscious being is what is known as samadhi. In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali especially, there are certain terminologies such as samadhi, or *samapatti*, the communion of the environment with your true being, carried on gradually through a process of ascending degrees. In the beginning it is an outward adjustment, and later on it becomes an attempt to imbibe the very essence of the object into your own being.

The gradational absorption of the environment of the universe into your personality, also gradually, is what is known as *samapatti*, or samadhi. The identity that characterises this process of absorption is what distinguishes it from ordinary perception, or contact of the mind with the object in your daily activities. Usually none of the things in the world get absorbed into you. They always remain outside you. Thus, perception is different from absorption, and meditation is absorption. Meditation is not thinking; it is not perception. That which looks like an object of perception, usually in

your daily life, is to be transmuted into another location of itself; it should be absorbed into yourself. You mostly repel things, thinking they are not you, that you are totally different from everything that you see and everything that is around you. This is the usual empirical sensory reaction to the environment of the world, which is the opposite of yoga. Yoga is union with the environment, and all perception excludes the environment from one's own perceptual or conscious process.

In yoga, which is meditation, communion, a technique is adopted which is the opposite of ordinary sensory perception. In ordinary perception the object is utilised as an instrument of action for a purpose other than itself, whereas in meditation the object is not utilised for a purpose; it itself is the purpose. It is drawn into yourself. You do not want the object for some other purpose; you want *it* only. Here is the difference between thinking of a vegetable in the market which is only to be utilised for some purpose, and the object which is your concern in meditation.

There are degrees and levels, as I mentioned, in the absorption process. It is not that you suddenly enter into the core of things, even as you cannot enter into the core of your own being. You have skin, you have bones, you have flesh, you have sense organs, prana, mind and intellect; you have to pierce through all these layers, called *koshas*, so that you may find what you really are in your essential being. So is the case with the objects. You cannot suddenly enter into their essence. The

objects, even from an ordinary commonsense point of view, look like physical embodiments, but inside the object, within the object, as a constituent of the object, you will find molecules. In a way, you may say the molecules are inside the object, the components of the object, just as the inner layers of your personality, the *koshas*, gradually become more internal as you move inward from your physical personality. Within the molecules there are atoms, within the atoms there are other more minute particles, and so on, until you go to the very core of that object. A stone or a brick looks square or round or oblong, but it loses its shape, its name and form, as you go deeper and deeper into its essential nature. The gradational probing into the very core of that object is an objective process that you carry on in meditation, simultaneously with a corresponding probing into the depths of your own personality, so that, at a given level, the two aspects, the subjective and the objective, click in one harmonious way, and these two sides click on different levels also. There is no disharmony between the levels that you have reached in your own self and the levels that you have discovered in the object of meditation. This process goes on deeper and deeper, until you find that the object is no more there. It is the very being of yours that you are visualising in the being of that object.

Such a gradational attempt at identification of the being of the object with your own being is the purpose of yoga samadhi, *samapatti*, leading to a universal confluence of the two streams of light, the

inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, so that in the end you attain a merger of all the streams of consciousness in a sea, an oceanic expanse of Being as such. This is called nirvana, *kaivalya*, moksha, God-realisation, or entry into the Absolute.

## Chapter 17

### THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION

During the previous session I touched upon some aspects of the essentials of correct meditation. When you actually gather yourself for the purpose of a session in meditation, some kind of streamlining of your mind is naturally called for, the reason being that in the ordinary thinking process of your day-to-day existence you are excluded from the objects of perception. Nothing in the world can be regarded as a part of your personal life. Everything stands outside you, and you use or put to a kind of utility things in the world, objects of sense, for your own purposes, which are the ends, and the objects themselves are the means to these ends. All things in the world are only instrumental in their value, and nothing is an end in itself. This thinking is incorrect.

It is not true that things in the world are instruments of action. Everything is an end in itself. You should be able to distinguish between a means and an end. What is meant when it is said that something is an end in itself, or when it is said that something is a means to an end and has only a utilitarian value? The distinction is not very difficult to appreciate because anything that you are harnessing, putting to use or considering as an instrument is not of ultimate value to you. Its value

is only insofar as it is helpful to you in achieving a purpose. What that purpose is, it is left to you to decide. This is to condemn the objects of the world to the status of slaves. All slaves are instruments used by a master who wields them. If everything in the world, including friends and relations, colleagues, property and wealth, are of instrumental value only, you cannot love them from the bottom of your heart. Therefore, all affections in this world, relations of any kind, are artificial. They can break at any moment, and anything can be separated from you at any time. Bereavement infects every kind of human relation, and no one can be in permanent contact with anything in this world. This is how you think in terms of the objects of the world.

But in meditation, your attitude changes. Nothing in the world can be considered as an instrument, because if the object of your meditation is also an instrument like any other thing in the world, then that is not the aim or the ultimate intention in your meditation. An object of meditation is the ultimate thing which you want to acquire or with which you want to unite yourself. But with an instrument, there is no such attitude. You would not like to unite yourself with an instrument, because you know the instrument is of tentative value only. It is not of any permanent utility.

The object of meditation is different from an object of sense. This is something you have to underline. An object of meditation is not a sense

object. It is not something that the eyes see or the ears hear. It is a concept that transcends the sensoriness of the otherwise objective character of your chosen deity. The chosen deity, the Ishta-devata, the great ideal of your meditation may also look like some object to the mind, inasmuch as when you close your eyes the mind will see it as being presented before you. The presented character of things is the objectivity thereof, and in this sense, because of the presentation of the object of meditation in a manner similar to any other object in the world, you are likely to make the mistake of thinking that it is also an object like any other object.

The difference between the object of meditation and an ordinary object of sense is to be probed into again and again: namely, that you do not want anything other than the object of meditation, and therefore it is not a means to an end. What you want is that itself on which you are meditating, but in the other cases, something else is in your mind. For example, you cannot love a motor car as an end in itself. It has a utilitarian value, and it is of use to you only so far as it is capable of conveying you to some place. The reaching of the place is more important than the vehicle itself. Therefore, make not the mistake of thinking that your Ishta-devata, your object of meditation, is a sense object. This is to sum up in a few words what I told you during the previous session.

The other aspect is that your heart has to be in that object. It is not enough if you merely

conceptualise it, because the feelings are also clubbed together with the understanding. In the ordinary perceptions of sense objects, the perceptual process through the senses need not necessarily be associated with a feeling. In certain cases the feeling may also be there, but not always. You can see an object without feeling anything about it. Only very rarely do you feel something about a thing when you perceive it.

When you walk along the road, you see some people and things along the way. You see them, but do not feel anything about them, inasmuch as you are not vitally connected with them. The trees and the bushes on the roadside or the parapet wall on the side of the road are also objects of sense which you see, but no feeling is attached to them. You do not bother about them. These are illustrations of perceptions of objects where feelings are not associated. But valuable things which you consider as highly meaningful to you attract your feeling, as when you see your dear friend or a very valuable object, a treasure, wealth of any kind, something which counts in your personal life. The object of meditation cannot be effectively transmuted into the nature of the end that it is, and not a means, unless the feeling is also attached. The parapet walls on the roadside are not ends. They mean nothing to you. But suppose it is a wall made of bars of gold and embedded with jewels; your mind will pause for a while to look at it with a sense of feeling because of the value that you see in gold, jewels, etc.

In a brick wall, the value is diminished to such an extent that it is practically nothing.

It is difficult to accommodate yourself to the object of meditation as an object of affection unless you are able to foist upon this object all things that you would like to have in this world and in the hereafter. Unless all that you expect from anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances, can also be seen in that object of meditation, your mind will not concentrate on it. You may go on sitting for hours together, struggling to concentrate the mind to fix it on that object, but you will not be able to do so inasmuch as your heart has not accepted its total value. The object has only a segmentary, fractional value. Again and again the lower mind, the instinct, will tell you that, after all, the object is only one thing among many things, while the fact is that the Ishta-devata, or the chosen object, is not one among many things. It is the thing which includes the values of everything else in the world, but for which you would not have chosen it as your near and dear.

When you sit for meditation, if you carefully observe your thoughts, you will realise and feel that certain activities go on within yourself. What are the activities? In the earlier stages, there is a little struggle on your side because you sit for meditation with an intention to concentrate on one thing, and do not want the mind to entertain any thought other than the object of meditation. In ordinary sense perception, you do not bother about thoughts entering the mind. Suppose you walk on the road, as

I mentioned. Hundreds of thoughts may enter your mind. A dog, a pig, a bird, a man, something here, something there are all visible to your eyes, and a chaotic mass of sensations pour into your mind when you walk in the marketplace, for instance, where you do not bother about excluding thoughts or including thoughts. You just leave them as they are, and there the matter ends.

But in meditation, there are certain thoughts that you would not like to entertain. You try to exclude certain thoughts, and shut them off. In the Bhagavadgita, towards the end of the fifth chapter, there is a clue given to the process of meditation, a clue like a seed which, in the sixth chapter, develops into a larger exposition of the subject. These seed-like verses towards the end of the fifth chapter of the Gita are: *sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṃś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau; yatendriyamanobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (B.G. 5.27-28). These two verses explain what you should do in meditation. *Sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṃś*: "All contacts are to be shut out by closing the windows of the senses." When you do not want light or a breeze to enter your room, you close the skylight, the ventilator, the doors and windows. Otherwise, everything will enter through the apertures. Shut off, cut off the connection with sensations of every kind. One of the things that people generally do is they close their eyes and plug their ears, and imagine that the objects are shut out. Actually, the shutting out of

contact with external things is not to be attempted merely by physically closing the eyes, because the meditating principle is not the eyes but the mind. You may close your eyes and not see a tree in front of you, but you will think that a tree is in front of you. So here, the shutting out of contact implies a psychological detachment from any kind of association with things placed in space and in time. This is one of the suggestions in this verse. The restraining of the breath, the fixing of the mind on some part of the body, the intense development of an aspiration for the union of the soul with the ultimate goal of life, etc., are suggestions given in this verse.

One of the things that takes place in the process of meditation, in the early stages, is the attempt to entertain certain thoughts, and the attempt to shut out certain thoughts. Therefore, you should first eliminate, by effort of will, certain thoughts which are considered as not conducive to meditation, by refusing to entertain them. How would you succeed in driving out thoughts from the mind? Any amount of pushing them out will not be of much avail. One of the methods that you can adopt is thinking the opposite of what you want to avoid. In the Yoga Sutras this is called *pratipaksha bhavana*. The opposite of what you want to avoid is to be the thought in your mind, on which you hammer the idea again and again. If you want to entertain the thought of strength and not of weakness, then go on mentally chanting the name of Hanuman, the embodiment of tremendous physical strength. Go

on saying: Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman. The power of suggestion is such that, after a few minutes, you will feel a creeping sensation in your muscles. You will feel as if you have become strong. Similarly, any kind of negative thought can be driven out by entertaining a totally opposite thought. Charity, goodwill, charity, goodwill, charity, goodwill, charity, goodwill, compassion, charity, goodwill, compassion. Go on chanting these words again and again so that the idea of ill will, hatred and greed may be eliminated gradually, stage by stage.

If you sometimes feel miserable, as a helpless nobody, as it were, in this world, and would like to entertain thoughts of nobility and divinity, then mentally recite the names of great Incarnations: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, and so on. Chanting the names of personalities who are endowed with immense power and divine glory will also, by the act of the vibratory process of chanting, infuse such an energy into you. This is the effect of *japa sadhana*. *Japa* of the recitation of a particular formula is nothing but the adopting of a method of infusing into yourself forces which are otherwise external to you. So by the entertaining of thoughts which are the opposite of what you want to avoid, you may avoid negative thinking and entertain positive thoughts in respect of that object, so-called, which you regard as your *Ishta-devata*, your beloved ideal in meditation.

The first thing that takes place is the elimination of extraneous thoughts, and the second thing is the entertaining of positive thoughts. In the process of entertaining positive thoughts, again there is a threefold factor. The threefold factor is the consciousness of your being there as a meditator, the consciousness of there being an object of meditation, and the consciousness that there is a process going on which is known as meditation. So there is a threefold consciousness operating simultaneously in the positive line that you are adopting in meditation, after having eliminated negative thoughts. All told, in this streamlining of your mind in the direction of correct meditation, the factors involved are: eliminating negative thoughts and entertaining a positive thought of a threefold character, namely, the consciousness meditating, the consciousness of the object of meditation, and the consciousness of the process of meditation.

Unless you give sufficient time for meditation, you will find there is no palpable change taking place in you. If after having sat for meditation today for a certain length of time you find that there is no visible change taking place in your mind, it is an indication that you have not given sufficient time for it. You have to struggle to delimit the time that you generally give to other activities in the world in order that you may be able to devote more time for meditation. You should not be under the impression that by cutting off time from your extraneous daily activities you are going to lose

something. In meditation you gain, and you lose nothing. Meditation is not a private activity that is going on in your mind in a closeted room. You are stimulating cosmic forces, and the work of these cosmic forces that you stir up in your own mind will also have a beneficial effect upon your daily secular routine.

Intense meditation which is correctly carried on in the sense of a communion of your mind with the cosmic mind will change even the atmospheric conditions outside. The environment of people will slowly go on changing. Enemies will become friends, opposing forces will gradually slow down their activity, and some miracle will take place without your knowing as to what is actually happening. Either enemies will cease their activity or they will perish. One of the two will take place if your meditation is carried on correctly through your communion with the cosmic force.

Remember once again that meditation is not something that you are privately doing for yourself. Meditation is not a private activity. It is an activity that touches the whole world, the reason being that the object of meditation is internally connected to all other objects in the world. Therefore, your bestowing intense thought on the object of meditation is virtually a concentration on a knot in the form of the object of meditation, whose ropes, or connection, reach up to even the distant heavens. The object of meditation is one symbol of the pressure point of all the forces in the world that constitute other objects, just when you touch any

thread in a cloth, you are maintaining a relation with all the other threads in that fabric. Every thread in a cloth is connected to every other thread. This is how objects in the world are intertwined. Totally isolated things do not exist. The universe is a fabric of interconnected operations; therefore, if you even think of an idol, for instance, an image or a portrait, some isolated concept as the object of your meditation, you will be unconsciously stimulating forces which are transcendent to and beyond the normal location of that object.

Thus, the object of meditation is not one single entity, unconnected with other things in the world; it is a symbol of all other entities in the world. Because of the fact that you cannot think the cosmos in your mind at one stroke, you are taking resort to some particular form for meditation. The intention is not to go on with this concentration on a single form. The intention is to expand the dimension of your concentration beyond the limits of this location of the object, until it reaches up to the farthest horizons of its relations with all things in the cosmos.

Just as meditation is not a private practice, your achievement in spiritual life is also not a private achievement. It is a cosmic achievement. Nobody attains God individually. The whole world goes with you, as against the normal erroneous thought that when a person attains God only one person goes. It is nothing of the kind. When you attain God, the whole thing goes, the entire fabric of relations—as it happens in dream, for instance, when dream is

absorbed into the waking consciousness. This is an illustration to clarify this point. When you are in a state of dream, many other people are there in that world of dream. Whatever you see in this world, you will also see in dream. Hundreds or thousands or millions of people, and so many things—space, time, objects, solar systems, galaxies—all things are there in dream. When you wake up, where are they? When you have woken up from dream, have you left those people and everything that you saw in the dream world to their own fate, while you have individually, independently, isolatedly, woken up into waking consciousness? Do you think that the people whom you saw in dream are still there, and you have left them and come up to the waking mind? When you wake up into the waking consciousness, the whole world of dream is absorbed into your waking mind. The entire world is absorbed, including all the people. Nothing remains there. This will happen to you when you wake up into universal Consciousness from this dream of objective perception. So tell your mind that you are not going to be a loser in meditation, just as in waking from dream you are not a loser.

Limit your meditation to the concept of the object of meditation as would be permitted by the normal thinking process. Most of the time, the meditating consciousness feels the presence of some beloved thing in front—that beloved thing, the Ishta-devata, mostly being a divinity, a concept of godhood that is placed deliberately by oneself in

front of oneself. Your god is standing in front of you. Concentrate on this object.

If you find that the mind is wandering and this concept cannot be entertained for a long time, the suggestion is that you can have a visible portrait of this so-called object. Meditate on an Incarnation or a divinity or a god whom you are thinking in your mind in some form. Let that form be a painting or a picture, or let it be an idol. It makes no difference. Let the idol, the portrait, the picture or the painting be as attractive as possible, so that you are thrilled by looking at it. Do not close your eyes. Open your eyes, gaze at the picture, look at it. Go on seeing it. Where the eyes are, mostly the mind also is. If the eyes are open and they are gazing at a thing, the mind will also be there at the same time. So taking advantage of the psychology of the mind, open your eyes. Go on gazing at that beautiful portrait, the picture of that great glorious ideal on which you want to meditate. Spend five, ten, fifteen minutes like this, looking at the object. After a few minutes, close the eyes and try to see how long you can maintain this concept in your mind independent of gazing or looking at it with open eyes. Go on trying for five minutes, ten minutes. Can you keep in your mind that portrait, that picture, without opening your eyes? As long as it is possible, continue this internal contemplation. When you find that it is not possible because the mind is again flitting here and there, open your eyes and look at the picture.

Let this practice continue for a long time, until it becomes possible for you to concentrate only

inwardly through the mind, and an external prop is no longer necessary. Then you do not require an idol, a picture, a portrait. Nothing else is necessary. You will have to practise for some months like this in order that your mind may become accustomed to conceptualising the object and be free from the necessity to hang on something physical that is available outside. Now you have reached another stage of meditation, where objects need not necessarily be physical. They can be forces, concepts and ideas ennobled beyond the limitations of physicality and locality of any kind. This method should continue. You must carry on this method until you are used to this process of deep inward concentration, to your satisfaction.

How will satisfaction come merely by thinking something? As I mentioned, it is not thinking. It is a process of absorption in the most beautiful of all things, in the most glorious element that you can think of in your mind, in the most powerful divinity, and the greatest inclusiveness which can feed you with all the stuff that your personality craves for. These ideas have to be hammered into the mind again and again.

After some months of practise, perhaps, you will be able to see the radiance of this object of meditation spread out in other places also, and not in one place. In the earliest stages you feel that your god is only in one place, that your particular divinity is in front of you. You are looking at it, speaking to it, hugging it, crying before it, and asking something from it. Let this go on for some

time; it is also good enough, but God is not in one place. Now entertain another thought, that locality is not the character of your object of meditation. It is non-local. It is not in space and time at all. It is eternity that is manifesting itself before you for the purpose of your meditation. That which is eternal is not in time; therefore, it is not in space. Therefore, it is not in one place, so it has to be everywhere. If the screen of time is lifted from your consciousness, you will find yourself spread out everywhere. You are now in a room, and not anywhere else. Let the screen of time be lifted. Immediately, you will find yourself spread out everywhere. You are not sitting in one room, actually. It is a wrong notion. Just as the entire world of dream was present in your waking consciousness, in a similar manner, when the screen of time is lifted you will realise that the whole world is inside you, and you are not simply in one place, in a corner of the world.

Thus, you will be able to enhance the intensity of your meditation by feeling that the so-called image of your divinity, or god, is a pervasive character of the very same god. Everywhere you will see your god. As rays of the sun are seen spread out everywhere in the vast sky, there will be nothing in front of you except that divinity. In hills and dales, in the earth, in the water, in the sky, in the sun, the moon and the stars, and everywhere, you will find this Ishta-devata dancing as sparks of radiance, as it were, of a universal conflagration. The one god, who was standing there in front of you and speaking to you like a human person, is now

melted down into the universal inclusiveness, the one God of the whole creation, the animating intelligence of the cosmos. The one god that was only in one place has become the All-God of the cosmos, into which state you will enter when the meditation becomes deep and you give sufficient time for it.

## Chapter 18

# THE MEDITATION TECHNIQUE OF SAVITARKA SAMADHI

We have been considering the various aspects of the technique of meditation. Meditation in the spiritual sense implies our adjustment with the object of meditation. Meditation is a spiritual technique; it is the height of the culmination of yoga practice, almost the last stage in spiritual endeavour.

In the earlier stages of yoga practice there are the disciplines known as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara* and *dharana*, with which you all must be acquainted. Each stage blossoms into the next higher, like the opening of a flower from a little bud growing from a plant. Each stage of the opening of the flower, right from its little bud form until it becomes completely efflorescent, is a wholesome development of the stages of the flower's growth. When the flower gradually opens from its original incipient, rudimentary seed form, it has passed through various stages of completeness in itself, and it was not a fraction of it that was moving. Similarly, the *yamas*, *niyamas*, *asanas*, etc., are not some extraneous limbs of yoga practice like the hands and feet of the body of yoga, but are the whole body itself. The entire body of yoga is found in the *yamas*, and the entire body of

yoga is found in the *niyamas*, etc. When a child develops into an adult, it is not that the fingers grow first, the legs grow next, the nose the day after, etc. The entire organism entirely, holistically, rises into action, into the form of a complete development in the next stage of its growth. So it is important to realise and be conscious of the fact that every stage in yoga is a complete stage, even if it is a preparatory stage.

Now, in the state of *dhyana*, or meditation, the flower has opened up into almost a perfection so that it is now going to yield its fruit in the form of total absorption, known in a very intriguing way as *samadhi*. This word has often been used, misused and abused by people because of the difficulty in knowing what it means. The word 'samadhi' itself is a misrepresented word, and many a time it is understood as some kind of paralytic introversion, as it were, of the mind of a person sitting for meditation and becoming semi-conscious. Nothing of the kind is *samadhi*. It is not a state of semi-consciousness. It is not a paralysis, nor is it an introversion.

Many yoga students are likely to have the wrong notion that in the last stage of meditation, which touches *samadhi*, one is introverted, cut off from all connection with the world, and no relationship is maintained with anything in the world. It is not so. There is also a misconception that yoga and meditation are a personal effort, unconnected with human society or with nature outside. What good is meditation to human society

outside in the world if one is doing it in the corner of a room in someone's house, is a question that arises in the mind because of a wrong notion that meditation is something that is taking place within one's body, in one's mind that is inside the body.

Meditation does not take place inside the body. It is true that meditation is an action of the mind, but it is not that mind which is apparently working inside us as a psyche, as a medium of cognition of objects outside. It is a different kind of mind altogether that is operating in meditation. The difference between these two kinds of mind is to be very properly and carefully appreciated. We have grown into the adulthood of the efflorescence of consciousness, wherein the mind has practically merged into a wider dimension of itself, a theme on which I have been hammering again and again for the last several sessions.

The mind is not inside us. It appears to be inside us only in acts of sensory perception, empirical consciousness or object awareness. *The object of meditation is not like any other sense object.* Underline this one hundred times, and go on saying it again and again so that you may not forget it. The object of meditation is not a sense object. It is not something that we can see with our eyes. It is not possible to see it with our eyes because this object, which is the object of our spiritual meditation, is something higher than us but not outside us.

Can you imagine a state of affairs where a thing is above you, higher than you, but not outside you? All advancement in culture, in education, is a

movement upwards. It is a transcendence of the lower categories of perception and acquirement in the higher stages. The higher stages of achievement culturally, educationally, spiritually, do not mean moving more and more towards some object outside. When we advance outside, we cover a distance in space. If we go to the moon, we have covered a large distance, no doubt, outward in space. We may go to the stars, which is a larger distance still. This is not the way in which we cover distance in meditation. It is distance which is a logical advance in the developmental process of consciousness, in which condition the object of meditation does not stand outside in space and time, but envelops us.

Ordinary perception of a sensory object does not permit us to envelop the object, nor do we actually envelop that object. In all sensory perception of an object, we stand outside it, and it stands outside us. Actually, an awareness of a sense object does not mean union with that object. It is only the apprehension of an externality, rather than a unity. In the sensory perception of an object, we are aware of the externality of the object, but we are not aware of the unity of that object, notwithstanding the fact that even perception of a sensory object is not possible unless there is some basic unity between the perceiving subject and the object perceived. But sensory action is so tricky, so eluding and misleading that it will not permit us to be aware of the basic unity obtaining between the object and ourselves in the act of the perception of

an object, and it will insist again and again that the object stands outside us. In meditation, the whole thing is transmuted; the entire perceptual process gets transformed into a menstroom, into a liquid, as it were, of a coming together of both the object and the subject in a union which is more profound and deeper than the sensory relationship that seems to be there in ordinary perception.

The object of meditation with which we have to establish a union is defined in different ways in terms of the different systems of yoga. We shall, for our practical purposes, confine ourselves to the most clear statement of it available in the system of Patanjali himself. According to Patanjali, it is *prakriti* that is the object of meditation, but one has to understand what exactly it means. How do we conceive this *prakriti*? The entire creation is *prakriti* manifesting in various degrees through the evolutionary process.

I am now, for your benefit, pinpointing my few words on only the suggestions that one can get from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. I am not touching upon other aspects of yoga at this time. Patanjali's system is, of course, centred round the concept of *purusha* and *prakriti*, universal consciousness and universal matter. Universal consciousness is *purusha*, which is conscious of universal matter, *prakriti*. According to Sankhya, which is the metaphysical foundation of the yoga of Patanjali, *prakriti* evolves, or devolves, we may say, in a process of coming down into grosser and grosser forms, into certain states known as *mahat*,

*ahamkara*, *tanmatras* and *pancha mahabhutas*. *Prakriti* is a universal status, an equilibrium of the forces known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Consider *prakriti* as a universal continuum. It is spread out everywhere. There is no up and down, no uneven surface; it is a uniformity, as it were, like a vast sea with no billows and waves. A little disturbance caused in this equilibrium of *prakriti* by the action of *purusha*, which is universal consciousness, stirring up the sleeping *prakriti*, manifests from *mahat-tattva* what we may call cosmic intelligence, comparable with what in another system of philosophy is known as Hiranyagarbha or Ishvara.

*Purusha*, which is universal consciousness, is not objectively aware of anything because it is pure subject and, therefore, there is no objectivity in it. But *mahat* is objective universal consciousness, omniscience. We many a time say God is all-pervading and all-knowing. The all-knowingness of God has a meaning only if there is something which God can know. If only God is, and He knows only Himself, we do not call it cosmic consciousness. The term 'cosmic', knowing everything, is significant only if there are some objective phenomena through which the universal pure subject manifests itself, and such a stage is called *mahat-tattva*. Therefore, *prakriti* is the medium through which the universal *purusha* manifests itself as cosmic consciousness, *mahat*.

The next stage of development is self-consciousness of a universal character. This is *ahamkara*. Though this pure universal

consciousness, which is *purusha*, is pure subjectivity, it is not a subject in the sense of anything that is opposed to an object. It is subject pure and simple, without an object outside. Therefore, even the word 'subject' is not appropriate in respect of, in regard to, the universal consciousness that is *purusha*. However, because it is necessary for us to free it from the concept of anything that is outside it, we use the word 'subject'. This pure universal consciousness that is *purusha*, peeping, as it were, through the medium of the universal continuum that is *prakriti*, having become cosmic consciousness, or *mahat*, becomes self-conscious: 'I am cosmic consciousness'. It is not just cosmic consciousness which is featureless and ubiquitous, but it is also self-conscious: 'I am'. This 'I am' consciousness is not to be associated with either pure *purusha* or with *mahat-tattva*. It is a third stage, which is *ahamkara*. These are the transcendent states of the manifestation of the great principles of *purusha* and *prakriti* according to Sankhya, and to the Yoga System of Patanjali as well.

Then actual creation starts. There is a tremendous vibration taking place everywhere in this wondrous cosmic I-ness: 'I am what I am'. The so-called 'I am what I am' or 'I am that I am' is this *ahamkara tattva*, the third category in the devolution of *prakriti* through universal consciousness, *purusha*. Motion and force are said to be the beginning of creation. Even modern science considers that motion and force are the

beginning of creation. In terms of modern astronomy, the physical theory of the Big Bang and cosmic dust congealing into certain specified concentrated forms of nebulae, galaxies, etc., is similar to what the Sankhya and the Yoga call the *tanmatras*. A *tanmatra* is a congealed, differentiated, segregated form arising out of the gyrating motion and force taking place in the 'I am what I am'. They are five concentrated galactic universal features, we may say. The *tanmatras* are much more than a galaxy. I am using this word only as a comparison for your understanding.

The *tanmatras* are *shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, gandha*, which are the objective universal counterparts of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. The *tanmatras* are the elemental principles which become responsible for sensations of every kind through these perceptive media such as hearing, etc. Now, this cosmic counterpart, objective counterpart or correlative, as it is known, of all these five sensations are not mere ideas. They are actual existences, and they further congeal into solid masses which are capable of actual contact through the sense organs. These solid masses are the physical substances known as the *mahabhutas*: ether, air, fire, water and earth. These five elements are grossened forms of the *tanmatras*: *shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, gandha*.

The individual, the person, the human being, the student of yoga is a part and parcel of this cosmic setup, intending to unite himself, or itself, with the whole to which it belongs, of which it is a

part, from which it has come. This endeavour of the part to unite itself with the stages of the cosmos as delineated just now would be the processes of *dhyana* and *samadhi*. It is a very stalwart, very tall process, shattering ordinary human thinking, stunning the human intellect, and stimulating the whole system even to think of such a possibility.

I am now mentioning some very advanced concepts, not to be found in ordinary expositions of yoga. They are also not to be taught in a public platform. All teachings in yoga generally end with certain techniques of meditation on a given object into which the student has been initiated. We do not try to take the mind of the student to the breaking point by telling it what it cannot understand, and is not supposed to understand. These stages of *samadhi*, also known as *samapatti* in the language of Patanjali's Sutras, are not academic subjects which are to be studied by merely reading a book or listening to a lecture from a teacher or professor. They are stages of actual experience, and experience cannot be explained by any kind of lecture. It is like the sweetness of sugar or the taste of a delicious meal. Nobody can tell you how a delicious meal tastes. Even with the most eloquent lecture on a good meal or the sweetness of sugarcane juice or sugar as such, we will not know what it is. We have to eat the sugar, and have the meal ourselves. So are these *samapattis*, *samadhis*. They will be only words that are likely to go over our heads as water poured on a rock. Water will never sink into granite. We are granites of ego, and

the ego will repel any kind of water poured over it. Anyway, as a lesson on yoga practice I shall cover this subject also, whatever be the extent you are able to understand its meaning.

The sutras are very brief in this regard. Nowhere in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali will we find an elaborate description of this. We have to delve deep into what it suggests. It does not say anything, but only suggests. In one or two places Patanjali is very detailed and elaborate in other matters, but when it comes to a crucial matter he is very miserly, and does not tell us more than what he would reluctantly like to express. He mumbles one or two words, and from that mumbling we have to go deep into his intention. *Vitarka vicāra ānanda asmitārūpa anugamāt samprajñātaḥ* (Y.S. 1.17) is a sutra in the First Pada itself. This one sutra is the secret of whatever Patanjali wants to say about *samapatti*, and he is mum after having uttered these words. I am not going to explain to you the meaning of this verse, but I will explain the intention behind it.

*Samapatti*, the highest reaches of the union of the meditating consciousness with the object of meditation, begins with the identity of the meditating consciousness with the entire physical cosmos, consisting of the *mahabhutas*: *prithvi, appu, tejo, vayu, akasa*—earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five things enumerated as earth, water, fire, air and ether are actually not five things; they are five degrees of the manifestation of matter. As gas can become liquid and liquid can become solid, and

they are not three distinct things but are actually three stages of the condensation of matter, similarly, the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—appear as if they are five. They are not like five fingers, one independent the other; they are the five degrees of the density of matter. So we may say there is only one thing, not five things. The entire universe is matter capable of conversion from solid differentiation into its inner components, and on this, meditation is attempted.

Now I shall give you another aspect of this matter which is the subject of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—that is, when we apprehend an object, three phases of consciousness are involved in that process. Patanjali expects us to differentiate these phases, and not allow all these three phases to be jumbled up into one knot of confusion, which takes place in ordinary perception.

In ordinary perception of an object, a confusion takes place, a mixing up of values. What are these? Three values are involved in ordinary perception. The three phases involved in perception are, firstly, the object as such as it stands in itself—the pure substance, which Patanjali calls artha: the object as such, a substance by itself independent of any quality that we are likely to associate with it.

For example, a leaf is green, but even minus greenness, the leaf must be there. A leaf is oblong, but minus oblongness, the leaf must be there. A leaf is having weight, but minus weight, the leaf must be there. Can you imagine an object minus its shape, quality, etc.? The idea that we have about an object

is different from the object itself. We do not think of an object in the same way always. Now we think of it in some way, and tomorrow in another way. It is said that things are seen in different ways in different levels of perception.

Some say that animals perceive objects differently than human perception. It is said that dogs can see things which the human eye cannot see. In India it is believed that if some death is going to take place, even a month before the dogs will know it. They will start making some peculiar whining sound where the death will occur. They have a peculiar tune, and people do not like that tune. They drive the dogs out when they make the sound which means someone is going to pass away. Vultures also know it. In deserts such as the Sahara or the Arabian Desert where the sand is so vast, like an ocean, sometimes camel riders lose their way because they cannot find the path, and get exhausted with no water to drink. They sink down, and vultures come. They know this man is going to die. He has not died; he only feels exhausted, but he is preparing to collapse, and the vultures can sense it.

Thus, as the categories and the comprehensiveness of perceptions vary, with an in-depth analysis, objects will be seen differently. The idea of an object is different from the object itself, so that is a second factor. The object as such is the first factor, and the idea or the notion that we have got about the object is the second factor. The object

itself is called artha, and the idea about the object is called jnana.

The third factor is the nomenclature. A tree is not called a stone, a stone is not called water, water is not called fire, and fire is not called milk. Each object has its own name. When we utter the word 'fire', the idea of milk will not come to our mind. The association of the name with that particular object is so intimate and essential that we will not be able to make a distinction between the object as such and the name. For example, a man named Joseph will not be able to appreciate being called by any other name, such as Robert. There is a person fast asleep whose name is Rama. If we say "Rama, get up", he will wake up. If we say "Nightingale, get up", Rama will not get up, because he knows that he is not Nightingale. Even though he is fast asleep, he knows he is Rama and not Nightingale. That shows the intimacy, the intense connection between the name and the person.

Now, I mentioned that there is a mixing up of values in the perception of an object. The object as such, independently, by itself, without any association, is one thing. The name that we associate with it, the nomenclature, our idea of it, is the other thing. Patanjali says that in our meditation on the object, we should differentiate that object from involvement in the idea we have got about it, and also the nomenclature connected with it. It is not ordinarily possible for us to do this, and so Patanjali's system of meditation is very difficult. It is very important, and must be practised

by everyone. There is no other way. But it is so difficult, like peeling a hard ball of steel. How will you peel it? However much you may try to dissociate the object as such from the idea and nomenclature, you will not succeed. But ages of practice—I should say ages, not even months and years—will enable you to succeed in entering into the object.

Thus, this earliest stage of *samapatti* or samadhi, which in the language of Patanjali is called *savitarka*, is such a complicated thing; even the first stage itself is so complicated. That is to say, you will face a difficulty in dissociating the subject and the object from their involvements of nomenclature and ideation. This physical cosmos—earth, water, fire, air and ether, this continuum of matter—is an object that is now before you. The object that has been placed before you for contemplation is the entire cosmos of matter. ‘Matter’ is a name that you have given to it. Do not call it matter. Do not call it earth, water, fire, air, ether. Remove these names. Do not call it *mahabhuta*. Remove this nomenclature, and do not have any idea about it as a solid substance like earth, which is of a particular consistency when you touch it. The liquidity of water, the heat of fire, the taste of food, the movement of air, the expanse of sky—remove all these ideas from your mind, and remove the name. You will find there is something remaining as the background of these processes.

If you can succeed in dissociating this entire physical cosmos of matter from the idea that you

have about it, and the nomenclature that is associated with it, you will be in union with the whole reality of *prakriti's* evolution in the lowest of its stages. You will be cosmically identified with the whole of material substance. You will be cosmically aware of your being one with all Nature, and that is *savitarka samadhi*. There are five or six stages, all staggering and yet worth knowing, with which Patanjali concludes with the great attainment of *kaivalya*, or absolute liberation.

## Chapter 19

# TRANSCENDING THE TANMATRAS THROUGH SAMAPATTI

During this session I will be dilating upon certain very important essentials concerning the final reaches in meditation, especially according to the Yoga System of Patanjali. This culminating point which meditation reaches in its intensity and profundity is designated by Patanjali as *samapatti*, or samadhi. I shall use the word '*samapatti*' instead of the word 'samadhi' because the word samadhi has somehow or other acquired certain frightening characteristics. People do not know what samadhi means, and so this word, due to its popular usage and accepted connotation, may not be properly contained in the mind. Therefore, I am using a little milder word, *samapatti*, which means virtually the same thing.

During the previous session we covered the first step in *samapatti*, known as *savitarka*, experiencing which, the object of meditation is intelligently dissociated from all the characteristics foisted upon it, such as the idea about it and the nomenclature associated with it. When we think of anything, any object, we always connect it with some notion that we already have about it. We call a tree a tree, and we cannot call it by any other name. We cannot call a tree a stone, for instance. Though

there is nothing wrong in changing the name of an object, in common usage a particular nomenclature gets associated with a particular object. This association becomes so intense, vital and part of the object, as it were, that we cannot think of the object except in terms of that name or definition.

Apart from that, we have also an idea about it. Patanjali says this is caused by a mix-up that takes place in the process of the perception or cognition of the object. The mix-up is the unnecessary conception into which mould we try to cast that object, which stands independently, by itself. We also cast the object into the mould of a name that we give it. We give a name to the object, though the object itself has no name, and it is free from any kind of idea that another person may have about it. Whatever idea you have about me, that is your business, but I am independent of the idea you have about me. Similar is the name. I am that which need not necessarily be defined by a particular name; I can also be associated with any other name. Therefore, divest the object of its associations in terms of name and ideation.

Is it possible for the consciousness of the meditator to get united with the substance as such of the object of meditation, in its pristine purity? Hard indeed is this achievement, but if this is practicable, we have achieved something wonderful, which is ordinarily not possible. We become a totally unselfish person, entirely impersonal in our envisagement of the object of meditation, so that we do not think the object as we

would like to think it from our point of view, but we think the object as it ought to be thought from its point of view. Also, as far as possible, we think the object free of any kind of nomenclature. The tree itself may not be aware that it is called tree. It is just what it is, and what it is by itself we cannot know, inasmuch as we have never tried to probe into the substance of an object independent of nomenclature and ideation. Now Patanjali expects us to perform this herculean acrobatic feat of going out of ourselves in some mysterious manner, in order that we may become the object, rather than ourselves. To become the object is the *samapatti* spoken of. *Samapatti* is the equilibrium that is established between the essential nature of the object, independent of external associations, with our own essential nature.

Now, you will realise and appreciate that you will not be able to commune yourself with the essential nature of the object, independent of idea and name, unless you yourself, as the meditating principle, free yourself from such an association in which you are also caught, namely, an idea about yourself and the name that you seem to be having. You are Rama, you are Krishna, you are Gopal, and so on. You are only that particular person; you are not another person. "My name is Gopal. I am not Rama or Krishna." You will say that, and you are convinced about it. Apart from that, you have a name and form complex, in which the consciousness is shrouded, and this is the idea spoken of.

So in order that your consciousness may unite itself with the essential nature of the object of meditation, you must try to contact it through your essential nature. Only equals can meet each other. Unequals cannot contact each other. This is a principle that is applicable in society as well as in spiritual meditation. Equals can contact and commune with each other; unequals cannot.

Now, you cannot expect the object to stand by itself, independent of all association, and you yourself will not be prepared to undergo this discipline of the freedom from associations. So internally, in your own personality, you must be free from associations of every kind. You have to shed the covering of your personality in order that the outer cloak of the object may also be shed. The cloak of the object is, as we have mentioned, the name and the idea about it, and your cloak actually consists of what are known as the sheaths: the physical, the subtle and the causal. These three sheaths, these *koshas*, these coverings give you the wrong impression that you are located in some place, that you belong to some particular condition, and that you are such and such a thing and not another thing. This is to briefly explain the nature of the samadhi, or the *samapatti*, known as *savitarka*.

Mostly, this is not easy for beginners. So Patanjali says that, in the earlier stages, the object is to be contemplated upon in the manner in which it is envisioned in common usage. In the level in which you stand at present, try to commune

yourself with that object as parallel to your present condition. In the beginning, therefore, it is an attempt on the part of the meditating consciousness to commune with the object as invested with the idea about it and the name associated with it. Later on, you take the second step of shedding this covering, and go deeper into the essence of the object. When the covering is completely shed, it becomes free from *vitarka*. *Savitarka* is that state in which the object is conceived with the associations one has with it, and *nirvitarka* is the very same object conceived as free from such associations.

What is the object of meditation which we are speaking of as being associated or not being associated? The object, in the earlier stages, is anything and everything. *Yathābhīmata dhyānāt vā* (Y.S. 1.39). In this sutra, Patanjali says: "Choose whatever object you like." Your beloved object, your *Ishta-devata*, is left to your choice. But this is only a preliminary instruction. Later on, Patanjali will not permit you to just think what you like. He is specifically interested in your attaining the ability to commune yourself with the cosmic substance in its lowest level of the *pancha mahabhutas*, the lowest level of the manifestation of *prakriti*—earth, water, fire, air and ether—conceived as a total material continuum associated with idea and name or not associated with idea and name. The associated state is *savitarka*; the not-associated state is *nirvitarka*.

But *prakriti's* evolutes are not exhausted by merely the presentation of the five gross elements

of earth, water, fire, air and ether. During the previous session I briefly mentioned the categories of the Sankhya, on which is based the Yoga System of Patanjali. Higher than the physical universe is the subtle universe consisting of the rudimentary principles, which become dense in the form of the five gross elements known as earth, water, fire, air and ether—*prithvi, appu, tejo, vayu* and *akasa*. These subtle elements are known as *shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*. They are the electrical phases, as it were. We may call them electrical components for the purpose of our understanding, but they are not electrical forces. They are finer, subtler than what we can consider as electrical energy. They are something like *prana-shakti*, the vitality of the cosmos animating the physical universe of earth, water, fire, air and ether. These are the *tanmatras*, the potentials, or the seed forms, of these five gross elements mentioned.

When you deeply probe into a physical object using scientific apparatus, for instance, you will see the electrons rather than the molecules constituting the physical object. Basically, electrical energy is said to be the nucleus of physical objects, which looks rotund, square, or some such shape when you see it merely with the naked eye. In a similar manner, you will find, on a probe inwardly conducted through the process of meditation, that the object will reveal that its inner component is not physical earth, water, fire, air and ether, but something which is pervasive in its nature. It is something like solid ice melting into liquid water,

and water evaporating into gas and assuming a kind of pervasive character, not being only in one place as a solid mass. The physical universe of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—are located in space and time as substances tangible to the senses, but these *tanmatras* are super-sensible. You can see the five elements, but you cannot see the *tanmatras*. They are inward. But by an inwardisation of your mind, and going deep into the *tanmatra* principles also constituting your own personality, you will be able to come in contact with the *tanmatra* principles at the back of the five gross elements.

Now comes the next stage of *samapatti*: unite yourself with the subtle potentials of the physical cosmos. All these things that I am telling you look like theory only. Practically, they mean nothing for people who are not accustomed to such in-depth meditations. During the previous session I mentioned that there is no use talking about this subject in greater detail, because these stages are not intended to be merely heard, read about or just appreciated from the point of view of their dictionary meaning. They will make no sense. These are stages of experience. Anyway, you would do well to have some idea as to what this experience could be which you have to expect in the future processes of your meditation, provided you take to it seriously and not merely in an academic or an armchair fashion.

The *tanmatras* are difficult to apprehend through the sense organs. They are inwardised

forces; therefore, by an introversion of consciousness, it is possible to come in contact with these subtle principles behind the physical cosmos. But these subtle principles, namely, the *tanmatras*, are also conditioned in some way. Just as an object is conditioned by the idea about it and the name associated with it, the *tanmatras* are conditioned by space and time. They are spatio-temporal. In the large expanse of space, and in the process of time, these *tanmatras* operate. With a stretch of imagination you will be able to make some sense out of how or what this circumstance could be. Can you imagine a pervasive electrical force spreading itself everywhere in space, and constituting the basic element of everything that is called physicality or materiality? That would be the world we are thinking of now in the stage of meditation on the *tanmatras* located in space and conditioned by time.

Whatever be the effort that you put forth through your imaginative process to free an object from its association with space and time, you will find that this is not practicable. Everything, whatever it is, is somewhere, and not everywhere, and it is at some time, and not at all times. You cannot imagine something existing at all times, because it was in the past and now it is not there, or it may come in the future, etc. A suggestion into the perpetual existence of anything through all the processes of time—past, present and future—is beyond what can be expected of any imagination. Also, a thing can be in some place, but it cannot be in no place. That is not possible. To be in some

place is to be in space, and if you lift the character of spatiality associated with the object, it ceases to be located, and then the object becomes non-located. What is the meaning of a non-located object? The human mind cannot think it. Even modern science has come to this great conclusion, which is staggering to the human mind, that finally things are not located. They are not somewhere. Events in the world do not take place in space, and they do not take place in time. The whole history of humanity is not a process that has taken place in this world. Human history has not taken place in space and time, because it is an event, and events do not take place in space and time. This is the theory of relativity, which is something worth considering. That is the state in which you will find yourself. A relativity cosmos will be presented before your consciousness. You will rise above the concept of the physical materiality of the five elements associated with idea and name, and enter into the *tanmatras*.

In the beginning, the *tanmatras* are conceived as located in space and time, but later you have to divest them of even the association with space and time. *Tanmatras* associated with space and time become the object of experience in the state known as *savichara*. These are all technical Sanskrit words, and we need not go into their etymology. Suffice it to say, *savichara* simply suggests that state of experience where the universal potentials behind the physical cosmos are presented as conditioned by space and time. But when they are not

conditioned—if you can feel, appreciate and identify yourself with that non-located circumstance where even space and time are not conditioning the *tanmatras*—you will be in the next higher state of *samapatti*, known as *nirvichara*.

When you reach this state, Truth will reveal itself: *nirvicāra vaiśāradye adhyātmapasādaḥ* (Y.S. 1.47). The self will rise up into intense activity of direct perception and you will find God dancing before you, as it were, to put it in the language of devotees. Your own self will be dancing in ecstasy, as if it has attained freedom from the bondage of samsara. Righteousness, called dharma, will rain as if dropping from clouds in heaven, and that condition is called *dharma megha samadhi*. The cloud of virtue will pour upon you abundant rain of goodness and righteousness, charitableness and affection, and you will become a centre of attraction, not merely from one corner, but from all corners. “All the quarters of the universe will pay tribute to you,” says the Upanishad. *Sarvā diśo balim asmai haranti* (C.U. 2.21.4): “As vassals of a large, distant emperor offer tribute to the emperor, the quarters of heaven will start offering tribute to this great person who is no more a person.” Heavenly virtues will descend upon you. Righteousness will be the substance of your personality. Can you imagine? The substance of your personality is not bone, flesh and marrow; it is righteousness.

In the Valmiki Ramayana there is a description of Rama as being the embodiment, the solidified

form of righteousness itself. *Mano-nigraha dharma* is the word of Valmiki. Righteousness has assumed a form, a shape and a concreteness, as it were, in Rama, the paragon of virtue. That is what Valmiki tells us about Rama. Some such thing may be the description of the blessed one who attains to this experience of *savichara* and *nirvichara samapatti*. He contacts the heavens directly. What will happen to you at that time? What you will see at that time, you cannot imagine now. Vyasa, commentating on one of the sutras of Patanjali, says that angels descend. Angels from heaven descend, and they invite you from all directions: "Great one, we have been waiting for you since a long time. Come on. There is the golden couch. Here is the velvet bed. Here is the stream of milk. Here is the pond of honey. Here are the heavenly maidens to serve you. Here is the meadow, the garden, the palace." It is not the palace and the garden that you see in this world, which are all material in their nature. An untarnished, uncontaminated, ever-enduring empire will be presented before you.

"But entangle yourself not in these perceptions," says Patanjali in a simple sutra: *sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgasmayākaraṇam* (Y.S. 3.52). This is because you will be once again bound, this time by the golden chain of these attractions for a heavenly empire, instead of being bound by the iron chain of an earthly empire. What good is it for you if you are arrested and handcuffed with diamond chains instead of iron chains? Are you happy because it is diamond and gold? You are

bound to a pillar of sapphire and jewels with a chain made of gold and diamonds. Would you like to be in that condition of the glory of material prosperity because you are in contact with such riches? No, no good. So be not attracted to these wondrous temptations.

But these temptations will not be a problem for you if you have already prepared yourself basically, in the earlier stages of yoga practice, through the *yamas* and *niyamas*. If there is some remnant of discipline which has not been covered, which has been bypassed for some reason or the other due of the feeling that you are freed of the disciplines of *yamas*, etc., they will be lingering there, as little potentials, to pull you down to the earth: "Why not have it, if possible?" This is to give you a picture of the glory of the experience that you may expect in both the *samadhis*, or *samapattis*, *savichara* and *nirvichara*. *Nirvicāra vaiśāradye adhyātma-prasādaḥ*. The Self manifests itself; the whole point is that. You will be embracing yourself, dancing with yourself. You bathe in yourself. You rejoice in yourself. You play football and cricket with your own self, as it were. You do not require any other person to play with, and you do not need anything to give you satisfaction.

You may wonder, "Is my self not with me now? Why should it be there afterwards? Will it come only later on so that I may enjoy it?" It is true that even now it is you, and you are not going to be another afterwards, but now the self is dead, as it were. We are in the darkness of the ignorance of a

complete oblivion of the existence of our own self. Though there is the sun shining in the sky, in this broad daylight and dazzle we are really in darkness as far as our own self is concerned. We know nothing about our own selves. We know everything about the solar radiance and everything in the world outside, but nothing about our own selves. You have lost yourself and gained the whole world. What is the use of that? Gain the entire world, and lose your own self. Wonderful! Now you are going to gain yourself, and in gaining yourself, you are not going to lose the world. You are gaining the entire thing, including the world, because yourself includes the whole world. Such an experience will be the experience of *nirvichara*—the rain of nectar, the flood of honey. What words can be used to tell you what kind of experience you will be having at that time? Music and dance are insufficient descriptions. It is much more than that. Deliciousness of diet is not an adequate description; emperorship is not an adequate description; possession of the whole cosmos, having it under your control, is not an adequate description. All these descriptions are inadequate. They fall short of what it is that you will be seeing and experiencing there.

Is this sufficient for you, or do you want to hear something more? If this is itself a flood that is drowning you with an inability to even comprehend what it means, why do you expect another flood? The flood of Ganga itself is sufficient to drown you completely to death, and would you like the whole

Arabian Sea or the Atlantic Ocean to come and swallow you? This is what will happen to you if you go further.

These *samapattis* are, to repeat once again, an ascent of consciousness of the *purusha* through the evolutes of *prakriti*, the most rudimentary level of *prakriti* being the *pancha mahabhutas* through which you have risen up, which you have pierced through to enter into the *tanmatras* in their association with space and time, and also in their dissociation with space and time. Great joy ensues. The deeper you go, the more difficult it becomes to explain what it is. In the earlier stages, a lot of explanation is possible. You can go on giving lectures on the earlier stages, but as you go deeper and deeper, you become mum. When you are drowned in water, you will not open your mouth. Only when you are on the surface do you go on chattering and saying all kinds of things. Now you are going to be drowned completely. In what are you going to be drowned? In your own Self.

The *tanmatras* have been transcended by their dissociation with even the connection of space and time. You go to the pure 'I am what I am', the *ahamkara-tattva* described cosmically in the Sankhya doctrine. I am what I am. You have heard this said many a time, but it is only a linguistic sentence with a subject, a predicate and a verb. The meaning of it is not clear.

Moses seems to have said to the Almighty, "Lord, what can I say that You are? What can I tell people that I have seen?"

God replied, "Tell people you have seen I am what I am."

Well, Moses might have understood what this statement means, but many of us will not make any sense of it. It is the Cosmic I speaking, not this I or that I, my I or your I, or the I of this or the I of that. It is the All I. That is the Universal Self becoming conscious of its existence, asserting its sole unitariness, the Self manifesting itself as a Self-conscious universality. This is the Bliss that is spoken of in the higher state of *samapatti*, known as *sananda*. *Sananda* means associated with *ananda*, Bliss, but not the bliss that you can think of in this world.

You also have moments of happiness in this world. Many times you are immensely happy for some reason or the other. When you are possessed of some great value and worthwhileness, you become very happy, but this happiness is nothing. It is a shadow cast by the real happiness of the Self. When this shadow can attract you to such an extent, what will the original do? All this knowledge of the world is darkness before the wisdom of the Self, and all this joy that you are apparently feeling in this world by the contact of sense objects is actually pain, scratching an itch, a nervous titillation. It cannot be called happiness.

The real Self will manifest itself only when the Universal I reveals itself as 'I am what I am'. There is no space, no time; they all came afterwards. God created the heaven and the earth, but this is the state of God prior to the creation of the heaven and

the earth. There is no space, no time, no “Let there be light”. It is much before that. What was God doing before He said “Let there be light” and there was light? Before heaven and earth were created, before God brooded on the waters of the cosmos, what was He? Can you imagine? He was not somewhere, He was not something, He was not all-pervading, He was not omniscient, and He was not all-powerful. These words should not be attributed to God in that state where heaven and earth were not there. All-pervasiveness is not possible, because there is no space, no time. Oh! That tremendous eternity reigned supreme in its own pristine grandeur, majesty. What can I say? This is *ananda*, the bursting joy of the inner core of the cosmos that reveals itself to itself. It cannot reveal itself to you. You are no more there because you have gone together with the going of space and time. This is the penultimate reach of consciousness in its ecstatic attempt to unite itself with itself—*sananda*. Still something still remains. What remains? That I shall not say right now.

## Chapter 20

# THE CULMINATION OF YOGA PRACTICE

We are now on our way to the conclusion of these sessions which were devoted, right from the beginning, to the study of cultural values and spiritual values, which led us up to the point of the actual practice of yoga proper. After the consideration of the different stages of the developmental process of the inner psyche and spirit of man, we came to the stage of meditation and absorption, known as *samapatti* or *samadhi* in the language of the great teacher of yoga, Patanjali Maharishi.

It was pointed out again and again that the goal of yoga is absorption in the nature of Reality. We have also had occasion to consider what this Reality is in which it is essential for us to get absorbed. Conflict is said to be a conflict with reality. Whenever you are opposed to reality, you are in a state of conflict. According to modern psychology and psychoanalysis, conflict with reality means conflict with that which you consider as unavoidable in your life, with that in which you are involved day in and day out. For psychoanalysts and general psychologists, the reality of life is human society. You are in conflict with human society. You hate your own brother and sister, your

father and mother, and your neighbour; you hate everybody, because you have got some ideals—mature or immature, as the case may be—which do not tally with the norms set up by human society. This is a problem with everyone, a problem in society, a problem in the marketplace, a problem in educational circles, in schools, colleges and universities. There is a clash between the inner objective ideology and the social norm, political norm, administrative norm, whatever you may call it.

Now, this is only a psychoanalyst point of view, but reality is not merely human society. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali have already dispensed with the social aspect of reality when Patanjali inculcated the necessity to be trained well under the *yamas* and *niyamas*, the first two rungs in the ladder of the practice of yoga. So for the stage of Yoga Sutras, this social conflict is the least important thing, but for politicians and sociologists, it is a nightmare, a hobgoblin in front of them. They cannot face human society, and consider it as the worst of their difficulties. But for the yogis, it is the least of difficulties. Their problems arise much later on, and not only with human society. Hence, the *yamas* and *niyamas* of Patanjali have already taken into consideration the initial problems that you may have to face with your own brother and sister, and with people outside. Be friendly; be harmonious.

In the case of certain crucial issues arising out of the need to be in harmony with human society, you may have to make some sacrifice. Unless you

surrender some part of your physical, economic and psychological comfort and joy for the welfare of other people, egoism will rule supreme. If each one sticks to his own guns, as they say, and egoism is rampant, there will be no human society. So a mutual give-and-take policy of cooperation, and not competition, is the rule prescribed by Patanjali in the *yamas* and *niyamas*, the earlier stages of his teaching.

We went up gradually. The realities that are to be confronted in the practice of yoga are not merely human society. That matter has already been considered threadbare. Yoga is far superior to all educational activities that we can think of in the modern world because social values are the determining factors, mostly, in our educational system, but yoga is above that. Yoga considers the social system, the educational system, as very important, and transmutes it into the processes of yoga practice. Therefore, the more important rungs of yoga arise after you are well established in the norms of human society in its generality.

Then comes your own personality—the physical personality, the sensory personality, the *pranic* personality, the mental personality, the intellectual personality, and the causal personality, which is deeper than everything else, and then the spiritual personality. These are the stages of the ascent in yoga, and we have covered all these things in some way. Finally, we went up to the spiritual aspect of things. The universe is ruled not by a society of people, but by forces which are precedent

to the manifestation of human society, and precedent to even the manifestation of nature as a whole. In yoga, the universal spirit is the object of engagement and confrontation finally, and this confrontation is what is known as meditation. I am not going to traverse through the process of meditation again because you have already gathered some information from me as to the essentials of meditation from the point of view of pure yoga practice.

*Samapatti*, or samadhi, was the subject we took up for consideration during previous sessions, and according to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the whole universe is the object of meditation. We have categorised the stages of universal manifestation, the lowest level of which is the physical universe of the five elements, the absorption of consciousness which is known as *savitarka samapatti*. We also distinguished between the *savitarka* and *nirvitarka* aspects by drawing a distinction between the object as involved in *shabda*, *artha* and *jnana*—that is, name, ideation and substance as such—and it was necessary for us to wean the object as such from its involvement in ideation and nomenclature.

When the physical substance as such, independent of its thought and its name—the object as such, the substance pure and simple—becomes the occupation of the consciousness in deep meditation, it is *nirvitarka samapatti*. But behind the physical universe there are subtle forces known as *tanmatras*: *shabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*. They are electrical energies, a universal

continuum, we may call it, which is ubiquitous, all pervading, and which decides and determines the forms of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. On that you concentrate, in which you get absorbed in terms of space and time, and also independent of space and time. When the *tanmatras* become the object of your absorption in terms of their association with space and time, it becomes *savichara samapatti*. When the *tanmatras* become the object of your absorption freed from the association of space and time, this becomes *nirvichara samapatti*, which is the glorious thing with which we concluded the previous session.

*Dharma megha samadhi* and *ritambhara prajna* are some of the terms expounded by Patanjali in this context. Truth reveals itself abundantly, as a pot of nectar breaking and the nectar spilling out everywhere. That is *ritambhara prajna*: Everywhere honey is flowing; the flood of Truth is before you. *Dharma megha samadhi*: A cloud of virtue rains abundantly on your head, and you become righteousness incarnate. You need not have to practice virtue; you yourself are virtue. Virtue emanates from you, as light emanates from the sun. The sun need not have to practice the art of shedding light to people, because the sun himself is abundant energy, inside and outside. This is what will happen to you when the *dharma megha samadhi* of *nirvichara* takes place.

What is higher than that? There is *sananda samapatti*. In *sananda samapatti*, bliss emerges from the very consciousness of 'I am I'. This is,

according to the Sankhya doctrine, the state of universal *ahamkara*. *Ahamkara* is a word which, unfortunately, is associated with two aspects: the universal and the particular. "This person is full of *ahamkara*," we sometimes say, which means he is a very egoistic person, self-conscious, always thinking of himself only. But here the *ahamkara* is 'I am what I am', 'I am that I am'. This is the universal 'I' becoming conscious of itself, to the exclusion of every other level of creation—no space, no time, no space-time complex, no *tanmatras*, no *pancha mahabhutas*, no five elements, no human beings, no creation at all. Everything is rolled up like a mat is rolled up when you wake up from sleep.

That universal 'I' is the experience beyond human thought, passing understanding, the *ahamkara-tattva*. When you are solely in yourself, and you are freed from contamination with any kind of objectivity, this universal I manifests itself. Sometimes when you are alone as an individual person, you feel happy. Do you not feel happy sometimes when you are alone to yourself? Do you always like to be in the midst of people? Do you like to be in a crowd at all times? When you are seated alone in a mood of composure and inward absorption, you feel happiness, free from any kind of association. You are totally alone to yourself in the state of deep sleep, for instance. Do you know how happy you are in deep sleep? What is it that makes you happy in deep sleep? Do you take *halwa*, *kheer*, *badam*, *malpua*? Are you a king, an emperor? Even an emperor is not conscious that he is an

emperor when he is in deep sleep, so emperorship is not the cause of your happiness. The idea of money is not there. You do not know whether you are rich or poor. You do not even know whether you are ill or well. All these ideas, all these associations, are completely cut off in the state of deep sleep, and with all this dissociation from every kind of value in life, how is it that you become so happy? You get up refreshed; bones heal, the mind is alert, and you feel energised, as if something has entered you. What has entered you? You have entered into your own Self. The real I has entered into this little I. You are literally alone in the state of deep sleep, and that aloneness has made you happy. This is a reflection of the universal I-ness that is taking place in the state of deep sleep—unconsciously, of course. You are sitting on a treasure, without knowing that you are on a treasure; you are sitting on the throne of an emperor, without knowing that you are on the throne; you have suddenly become rich, without being conscious that you are rich, and so on, are the examples.

In this 'I am what I am' condition of *ahamkara-tattva* of the universal Existence, bliss that cannot be even dreamt of in this world manifests itself as *sananda samapatti*, which is constituted of only bliss. It is not characterised by bliss, but it is the substance of bliss itself. Happiness is not a quality of experience there; it is the very substance of experience. That is the state of *sananda samapatti*.

Higher than that, also there is something. With that I concluded the previous session.

*Mahat-tattva* is a category of the Sankhya process of evolution which is pure universal Awareness, without even I-ness. The I-consciousness is transcended in this *mahat-tattva*. It is generality, pure and simple, cosmic Consciousness, without even the trace of 'I am conscious'. This is beyond us to imagine, of course, because what would be the state where there is cosmic awareness without the consciousness of somebody being cosmically conscious? It is cosmic Consciousness minus the awareness of somebody being cosmically aware. That 'somebody' has gone. That 'I' has also gone. The universal 'I am I' has also gone, merged into pure generality, *satta-samanya*—Pure Existence, general, not particularised, not categorised. *Satta-samanya* is the word that is used in the Yoga Vasishtha—general Existence. Pure Existence-Consciousness is *sasmita samapatti*.

The highest reality is called *sat-chit-ananda*, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. We have already considered the nature of bliss, and you know what is consciousness of bliss. Now general Existence comes. We are conscious of the existence of things, but they are all particular existences, individualised existences, categorised existences, evolutes appearing as existences. When all these particularised forms are totally transcended, general Existence manifests itself as just consciousness of that Existence only.

Here human words fail, language reaches its limit, logic breaks down, the intellect ceases to work, and all mathematics also end. What happens? Nobody knows. That condition where something tremendous takes place, but nobody can explain as to what takes place, is what may be called the condition where God embraces you in His universal chest. Can you imagine what it is to be embraced by God? The universal Existence has taken you into its own bosom and made you a part of itself. The river has been absorbed into the bosom of the ocean, and so the tumult of the river is no more there. Rivers make a lot of noise when they move, but they stop making noise when they enter the ocean. Similarly, all this work, all these deeds, all this aspiration, all the *sadhana* practice, all this activity of the world, the entire human history and the history of the cosmos, are melted down into the sublimity, the magnificence and the universality of Pure Being. This is the freedom of particulars in the Universal, the freedom of the divided aspects in the Universal whole, the aloneness that is the nature of Existence, pure and simple. *Eka, ekata, kaivalya*. The word *kaivalya* comes from the word *kevala*: to be alone absolutely and literally, and nothing can be said about it.

*Astīty evopalabdhasya* (Katha 2.3.13) is an instruction to us in the Katha Upanishad: "What can you say about It, except that It is? It is That which is." In Buddhist terminology this condition is sometimes described as suchness or whichness or thatness. The Mahayana aspects of Buddhist

mysticism go to certain heights, and call the Ultimate Reality as *bhutatahata*. *Bhutatahata* means the thatness of things, the suchness of things, or the whichness of things. Language fails here. All kinds of words, such as *dharmakaya* in Buddhist mysticism, are used, but we do not know what they mean. We run into ecstasies, and utter any word that we can think of in order to explain the joy. When we are over-abundantly happy and are unable to explain the joy that we are feeling, we utter any word that we like; we scream and make a noise, because words become inarticulate at that time. Inarticulate sounds are generally what we make when the joy is too much. If a hundred million dollars have come to us through a lottery, we will have no words; the dictionary fails here. And if a hundred million dollars makes us mum, what about the general Existence of the Absolute? We will melt down completely. This is *kaivalya moksha*, the supreme isolation of Spirit in its own Self. According to the Sankhya, it is the *purusha* revealing its originality, the Universal becoming the personal in its own self, or rather, the personality melting down into the Universal. Even the concept of the personality of Godhead is not adequate as far as the description of it is concerned.

This is the culmination of yoga practice, whether it is called the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, or any kind of yoga. Definitions differ, descriptions vary, but the experience is the same. The same thing is called by different names

by the different schools of thought and systems of practice.

Now I have nothing more to tell you. If there is any question you wish to ask me, please ask it. In the next session I will wind up everything with another few words.

Student: How would you compare the meditation of Patanjali with transcendental meditation?

Swamiji: In one place, Patanjali mentions this: *tajjapaḥ tadarthabhāvanam* (Y.S. 1.28). The contemplation of God through the recitation of His Divine Name is transcendental meditation. You go on repeating it again and again, again and again. It is not merely repeating it; a particular sound is taken as a symbol for the concentration of the mind, the symbol being a name of God, a mantra as it is called, and the mind is totally absorbed in the meaning of that mantra. Thus *japa*, which is the recitation of the Divine Name, is combined with intense absorption of the mind in the meaning of that particular word or mantra. This is transcendental meditation, and this is also what Patanjali says in one of his aphorisms. Therefore, there is no contradiction; they both say the same thing. But Patanjali goes above it because it is one of the prescriptions that he gives, but he has other prescriptions of a cosmic nature, as you have already heard. There is no contradiction. Every stage of yoga is comprehended in the system of Patanjali, whatever stage it is. What all the Gurus say in all their languages and their textbooks is comprehended within the sutras of Patanjali;

somewhere you will find it. Every kind of yoga is merged in that, either briefly or elaborately. Every meditation is transcendental in the sense that the object of your meditation is above this world. Therefore, no meditation can but be transcendental. It is not of this earth. It is above the turmoil of earthly existence. Therefore, it is transcendental.

Student: Is the goal the same, realising that I am That, and everything is That?

Swamiji: There cannot be two goals for humanity. We are all moving in the same direction. All humanity is having only one goal, whether it is aware of it now or not. You cannot have two final aims. There is only one aim.

Student: There is a Buddhist way of meditation called Vipassana. What is Vipassana?

Swamiji: That is meditation on the breath. It is also a very good method.

Student: They say you can reach the highest goal just...

Swamiji: You can reach the highest goal, provided the concentration on the process of the breath goes deeper and deeper until you become absorbed in the consciousness not merely of the breath but of the breather himself, and then go beyond it into the very cause of the existence of the breather himself. So gradually, stage by stage, it will take you to the Universal Being. The process is perfectly all right, only it has to be gradually transcended.

Student: But they put emphasis on being aware of the sensations in the body.

Swamiji: In the beginning you have sensations. You feel the sensations in the beginning stages, but afterwards you become not conscious of the body itself. You become conscious of something above you that is aware. That is the stage.

Student: In Sankhya they say *ananda*, bliss, is not of Pure Consciousness.

Swamiji: It is the bliss of the *sattva guna*. It is not of Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is reached only in *kaivalya*. *Sananda samapatti* is not the bliss of *kaivalya*; it is the bliss of the manifestation of the universal *sattva* of *prakriti*, which is conscious of itself. Universal *sattva* also becomes the medium of experience in *mahat*, or cosmic consciousness, where it is freed from even the consciousness of I-ness. Therefore, both these stages, *sananda* and *sasmita*, are the experiences of the *sattva guna* of *prakriti*, but not of Pure Consciousness.

Student: But in Advaita Vedanta, a slightly different bliss is described.

Swamiji: There are three degrees of bliss. *Sananda* is one degree, *sasmita* is a higher degree, and what is called the bliss of Advaita is the bliss of *kaivalya moksha* itself. You can even be happy with a cup of tea, but you cannot call it Pure Consciousness. So happiness is of various categories. In the beginning it is psychological; then it becomes metaphysical—that is to say, the manifestation of *sattva guna*—then it becomes Pure Absolute Existence, which is what is called the Advaita Vedanta explanation of Bliss. It is identical with *kaivalya moksha*.

Student: Even this *sananda* is like an object.

Swamiji: It is not an object in the sense of a sensory object. It is an object of I-consciousness only. There is no sense organ operating there. *Ananda* is not outside. It is the experience of itself in pure *sattva* as a self-identical being. It is not an object in the sense of a sense object. There are no senses there. You do not see the bliss outside you somewhere. It is yourself only, but in a lesser degree in comparison with pure *kaivalya*, or Absolute Brahman.

Student: *Ananda* also is identification.

Swamiji: It is certainly identification, perfectly so, yes, only a lesser degree.

Student: If I am doing something wrong, is my physical body responsible for that, or is the soul responsible?

Swamiji: Neither the soul nor the body are responsible. The body is an unconscious medium. It cannot be held responsible for anything that is being done. The soul is universal, and therefore it also does nothing. What actually does is the mind that is hanging between the body and the soul, a peculiar identification of consciousness with the body. That particular stage is responsible. It is called personality-consciousness, I-consciousness or doer-consciousness. The consciousness of your doing something is the agent that is responsible there. When you do some action, you are conscious that you are doing it. That thing which is conscious is responsible—your personality-consciousness, your individuality, your being conscious that you are Mister so-and-so, whatever you think you are.

You have got some idea about yourself, and that is responsible, not the universal soul, and not the body.

Student: The mind is a part of memory.

Swamiji: No, the mind is not a part of memory. It is memory that is a part of the mind. Memory is one of the functions of the mind. The mind has got other functions also: the consciousness of identity with the body, the consciousness of understanding things clearly, the consciousness of memory, and the consciousness of doing something—action. All these are functions of the mind; and that mind, which is you, is responsible. Actually, you are the mind itself, with all these associated functions. It is not the universal soul, and it is also not the physical body. You are hanging midway, in between. That individual consciousness, so-called, is the responsible medium for actions, good or bad.

Student: Swamiji, do you think anything is a physical thing, a reflection from...

Swamiji: Physical things have no... Suppose you are unconscious; the mind is not operating, and if at that time you do something, you cannot be held responsible for that action. The physical body has done something due to an unconscious reflex action, and you were not aware that you were doing it. When something has been done through the physical body by a reflex action, unconsciously, as it were, from your part, you are not responsible for it. Only if you are conscious that you are doing it are you responsible for it. The whole point is the consciousness of the action, and what you may do

or not do is irrelevant. If a corpse falls on someone and kills that person, you cannot say the corpse has done some action. It is the physical body that has done it, but it cannot be called an action, because it is a corpse. So unconscious activity of the body is like a corpse doing something; therefore, it cannot be held responsible. It has no consciousness, so where is the sense of responsibility? Responsibility is identical with consciousness of action.

Student: What is dispassion?

Swamiji: Dispassion means not wanting anything. If you do not like something, that is not dispassion; but if you do not want anything, that is dispassion. If you don't like a thing, that is different. You may not like certain things from your own personal point of view. When you have enough of something and then there is no more need for it, that is dispassion, absence of passion. You cannot have dispassion if you have a desire for things, even though you are away from that object of attraction. Suppose you have a possession in Orissa that you like very much, and now you are in Rishikesh. It is not that you have got dispassion, because although 1,000 miles separate you from that object, your mind is thinking of it. But if you don't want it because you have enough of it, then it is dispassion. If you don't want it even if you have it, that is dispassion, but if you would like to have it and then don't get it, that is not dispassion. Not getting a thing which you want is not dispassion. If you can get it, and yet you don't want it, that is dispassion from the point of view of spirituality.

Student: How to understand this?

Swamiji: You have to learn it from *satsanga* with Gurus, long *satsanga* with Gurus.

## Chapter 21

### SIVA'S TRIDENT OF YOGA PRACTICE

It is a necessity for you to chalk out a daily program of actual practise, the conducting of your daily routine, whatever it be, in harmony with the ideals and objectives that have been taught to you during these sessions, as guidelines for the behaviour of your personality in this world, where you have to live. This world is something in which you have to live, whatever the nature of this world be. Sometimes it appears that the world is not a comfortable place for people to live in, and at other times it appears that it has an abundance of values which are going to contribute to your progress towards perfection.

There are adjustments and maladjustments which we make every day in our lives with whatever the world is made of. Firstly, we find it difficult to adjust ourselves harmoniously with nature, because we have no proper understanding of what nature is made of. Mostly our reactions to the world are emotional and utilitarian, and the concept of producing something, or acquiring or gaining something from the world outside decides our attitude and behaviour towards things. What do we gain by a particular attitude that we put on today? We cannot think of any activity unless it brings something to us: What does it bring? We

think of the value it will bring to us as a consequence of a particular work.

These studies of ours will have to dispel this wrong notion that we usually entertain in our minds that our conduct in this world is supposed to bring some extraneous results. The profit-and-loss attitude of the commercial man is not a proper attitude at all, because one's attitude towards the world is not a matter of a give-and-take policy. Neither should we expect anything from the world, nor is it supposed to grant us anything. We cannot imagine how this could be. We think, "If nothing comes from my attitude, work and activity, what for is the work, activity and effort of mine?" This is a businessman's brain, and this calculation of the business type enters into the mind of every human being on account of a tremendous lacuna that one feels in one's own personality.

We feel every day there is something lacking in us; otherwise, we would not be busy, hurrying about here and there, searching for this thing or that thing. There is something wanting in us, and this want will be felt by us every day even if we live for a hundred years in this world. It does not mean that a person who has lived a long life in this world has got everything that he expected from the world. We will find that the world has given us nothing in the end, and in the hope of gaining something from the world, we sweat and toil, and rub our shoulders with nature and with people outside. But we will find that the next day we are in the same condition as we were before, the only satisfaction being that

there is a hope that perhaps something will come from our efforts. We seem to be living on hope, and not because we have got anything from the world, because if the world had really granted us some abundance on account of the efforts that we have put forth in regard to it, tomorrow we would be better persons than today, happier persons, more relived persons, and filled much more than we are today.

But when today we plug one hole of our finitude with a particular kind of effort that we put forth in respect of a condition prevailing just now, tomorrow we find that another hole is open, and we have another problem of a different type. Types differ, but the problems are the same. It matters not whether the pot is leaking through this hole or that hole; it is, after all, leaking. Our whole life is spent in plugging holes, which demonstrates from moment to moment that we are placed disharmoniously in this world. Our entire life is a waste. In the end, after passing seventy, eighty, ninety years in this world, we will realise that we have wasted our life and have got nothing substantial. Promises have been made by the world, but they have never been kept. Gold was promised, but trash and ashes were given to us. We got ashes; that is all. Though we expected apples, the world had no apples to give us. It was a bundle of mud that was thrown into our mouth. That is why we are feeling insecure, unhappy and miserable, though this misery may not manifest itself in a poignant fashion every day

on account of a particular illusion that some part of our lacuna has been fulfilled by the world.

As I mentioned, we have plugged one hole. We are intensely hungry, and food has been given to us. We think the world is very kind to us because it has been good enough to give us a meal today, but it has done something else also, at the same time. It has kept us under suspension, subjection. It has thrown the agony of hunger into our stomach. That is the tragedy which nature compels us to enter into, in spite of the fact that food is given. What is the use of giving food and then creating a burning hunger also, at the same time? This is what nature does to us. It compels us to be in a state of finitude, and then promises to grant something by which our finitude may be plastered over and we are made to feel a little bit secure. No plastering over this personality can make it secure. It will collapse one day or the other. The idea is, we cannot import any kind of thing from the world outside into our finitude and then make it look infinite. A lot of wealth, a lot of land and property, a lot of friends and large mansions are the so-called abundances that the world may promise to give us, to see that our finitude is made tolerable to some extent. But it is like a broken wall that is made to appear smooth by the plastering of cement and the whitewashing of lime. It may look okay, but inside it is rotting. The wall is about to collapse, and our whitewash is not going to help us. It only gives us an illusion of it being all right. This is the world in which we are living.

Throughout history, kings and emperors have come and gone, and they have eaten dust. Though they sat on golden thrones and drank milk and honey, later on dust was thrown into their mouths. The result is the same whatever the person be, whoever he be, saint or sinner, king or beggar. Why does this happen?

This is the question that the Sankhya and the Yoga, in their analysis of the predicament of human nature, delve into. There is a maladjustment of our personality with the natural conditions prevailing outside, call it the world of nature, or of human beings or the society of living beings, as the case may be. We are not to expect anything from the world. The Bhagavadgita dings into our mind again and again, in all its verses practically, that we should not expect anything from this world as a fruit thereof, as a fruit of our work, because the world is incapable of offering us anything. One of the reasons for this is that we do not stand outside nature. The idea that we are outside nature, outside people, outside society, outside everything, and that we stand independent by ourselves, is the reason why we cannot be in a state of harmony with nature, and with our neighbours. We are always at loggerheads with that which is just near us. We cannot reconcile ourselves with it. There is some irksome feeling when everything is outside us. When we see something, we feel disturbed because it is a contending factor in the security of our finitude.

The Yoga, the Sankhya, the Vedanta, whatever we call it, is the science of delving deep into this predicament of human nature in this world of nature and society, which tells us where we stand. Wisdom has to dawn in our mind. The greatest wisdom is to know what kind of person we are, and where we are actually placed in this world. To be foolhardy and to work like a little innocent and ignorant child will not bring us anything. There is a law operating in this cosmos, and if we are unaware of this law, totally ignorant of its operations, we cannot go scot-free. Have you not heard that ignorance of the law is no excuse? If you do not know the law, now you must know it by actually passing through its consequences.

So in the early morning when you get up from your bed—I am suggesting to you some practical techniques—do not jump up into some activity which is your official career, your family business, your trade, or whatever it is. After all, are you not more important than what you possess in this world? Put a question to yourself: “Am I inferior to the land and property that I own? Am I an inferior entity compared to the bank balance that I have got so that I may think only of the land and the money, and I should not have to think about myself? Am I pouring myself, from morning to evening, on things which I am not? Am I so paltry, so good for nothing, that every day I have to think only of what I am not—the building, the land, the money and the people? Or am I also worth something? Have I a value? Am I a human being with some worth, or is

my worth only imported from the properties that appear to belong to me? Are the land and the field, and the building and the money all my worth, or minus these am I also something? Have I an intrinsic value?"

You may have an authority as a large official, but when you retire from your office, you look like a nobody. Nobody wants to look at your face. You become very small the moment you retire from a powerful office. That is to say, the power that you seemed to have was foisted upon you like whitewash on a rotting wall, and without it you look like a nobody. Intrinsic worth is lacking. The strength of an elephant is an intrinsic strength; it cannot be taken away by retirement. But a retired officer's strength is nil, because it was foisted strength.

Have you an intrinsic worth? Are you something important in this world, or are you nothing? Are you rich, and therefore important? Put these questions to yourself in the early morning. Know that you are also an important entity in this world. One day you will have to leave this world, and when you go, what do you take with you—land, property, money, bank balance and buildings? Even a piece of grass or a broken needle will not follow you, and you go before the Justice of the Cosmos literally stripped of all associations. That day may come to you tomorrow, or even after a few minutes. What do you take when you go from this world? You take yourself. Do you take anything that belongs to you? No. Your belongings are nothing.

Actually, nothing belongs to you. You have only an ideological association with things which appear to be belonging to you, and ideological associations are not real associations. They are conceptualisations. They are like building castles in the air, as it is said. Nothing is yours. The land was there even before you were born into this world. Now you say it is your land, but how does it belong to you? It will be there as it was. Nobody held it, nobody grabbed it, nobody ate it. You carry only yourself, and you stand before the Justice of the Cosmos alone. You are face to face with the cosmos. None of your bag and baggage will come with you, and you do not carry appurtenances when you stand before the Justice of the Cosmos. When you stand before the Justice of the Cosmos as a literally stripped individual, what is your answer to the great query which life poses before you?

The scriptures, the epics, the Puranas, have a dramatic way of presenting this condition by saying that you will be asked a question: "What have you done there?" It does not mean that the Cosmos will speak to you with its tongue. The Cosmos has its own tongue, which is the language of Eternity. Eternity will question the time process. The Absolute will question the individual, and the question will be communicated to you in a language which is not of this world, because when you go from this world, you will not go as a man of this world. You will leave this world as a spirit, and your spirit will be encountered by the Universal

Spirit. What have you done here? Answer this question to your own self.

I have mentioned to you sometime back Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's prescription for this purpose, which is a method of daily self-checking, the maintenance of a spiritual diary. Question yourself: "In the morning I woke up, and now it is evening; the day has passed. I have taken my breakfast, I have taken my lunch, I have gone to my office and have finished my paperwork. On this particular day, have I done anything worthwhile to make me a better individual?" What else have you done for your spirit's growth, for the satisfaction of your inner true being, which is expecting an answer from you from moment to moment? Would you give it a slap on its face and say "cry not", as unwise parents treat children who cry, not knowing why they cry?

The soul is crying from inside, and will you say, "No, don't cry? I will give you office work, I will give you a trade, I will make you a partner"? Would you say this to the soul? "I care a fig for you," the soul will say. "I do not want to be a partner in business. I want nothing that you can offer to me in this way. I have asked for sugar candy, and you give me a toy. No." The soul has been crying for ages and ages. Through all the incarnations which you have passed, the soul has been crying. You have never been able to satisfy it, and have never put a question to it as to what it is crying for. The soul is crying for the infinitude of its existence. It is not asking for any paltry gifts that you may offer to it. Remember, this world is not what the soul wants.

Nothing in this world can satisfy your spirit. Here is history before you as a demonstration of the futility of human endeavour in respect of pure material goods.

Yoga practice, which has been your occupation as a study during this time, might have enlightened you to the fact that you are seeking an eternal treasure which cannot be eaten by the moths of time. It is for the purpose of this great adventure of the spirit of eternity that is in you to unite itself with the eternity that is in the Absolute, that you are girding up your loins for the practice of yoga.

In the early morning, wake up and sit on your bed for a few minutes. Do not run about. If you want to take a bath, take a bath. After your daily ablutions, sit for a few minutes. Tell yourself: "I am important. I am an ambassador of God in this world, deputed to fulfil certain duties entrusted to me—to work for the glory of God, to see His majesty in this world, and to return filled with His grace." What is the technique that you would adopt at this moment, when you are seated on your bed or on your meditation seat?

We have in India a stereotyped technique of doing some *japa* of a mantra. The first and foremost thing is that. Different methods of the carrying on of this *japa* process have been mentioned in different circles, and it is up to you to choose a particular formula to invoke the Almighty's grace upon yourself. It is not a routine of just doing something because it has to be done: "I have been told by a Guru to chant a mantra, so I

am doing it.” This is not the point. The point is that it is a medium of expression of your soul itself in order that you may invoke God’s presence into yourself. *Japa* is not merely a recitation of a formula, a mantra or a word; it is actually a prayer, the prayer of your soul before the great Almighty for the purpose of the descent of His grace into your heart. You stand face to face with God in your prayers. Prayer is actually an encounter with God. If this feeling is absent, the prayer is null and void, and the mantra will be an empty recitation. Let the heart move.

But you should not do *japa* if after half an hour you have to catch a train. What kind of *japa* can you do at that time? In that case, it is better to go to the train and sit there, and do *japa*. Inside the train you can do *japa* so that the disturbing idea of catching the train may not be there. Some hurry, some work, or a sudden, urgent situation arising may not permit you to sit for *japa* at that time. If there is something about to happen—catching a train or a bus or going somewhere, or some kind of urgency of a social character—go and sit there, and then do the *japa*.

The mind should not be diverted from the attention that is required for the purpose of this invocation. Are you to have a divided mind when you place yourself before God? All the external encumbrances should be set aside, and they must be fulfilled. If they are unimportant occupations, they can be postponed for tomorrow because now you are busy with prayer: “I want to do the prayer

today, and the work that I have to do is not so important. I can postpone it till tonight or tomorrow, but now I can sit for meditation.” But if the work is very urgent and has to be done now, then do not do the *japa*. After all, it is better not to do anything at all than do something half-heartedly, mechanically, with no result following.

*Japa* of whatever mantra you would like to have is your *sadhana* in the early morning. Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to have a potent recipe for bringing the mind to the point of concentration in the early morning so that you may not become bored by having only one particular method. After half an hour of *japa*, the mind will feel fatigued, so knowing the psychology of the human mind, Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say that you should stop the *japa* after half an hour. Do not go on doing it for two hours, three hours, and brooding and finding it very hard to entertain. Stop the *japa*. When the mind is not concentrating, it is better to stop it. Stand up. Walk about on the veranda. Splash cold water on your face. You can even take a cup of tea, if you like, and then again sit for *japa*, so that the mind may not be harassed by the so-called routine of your practice, because spiritual *sadhana* is a happy, joyous process. It is not a compulsion imposed upon you by anybody else, not even by a Guru. So in order that this humdrum feeling may not attend upon your *japa sadhana*, when you feel tired, stop it, and take to study of a scripture—the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, the Dharmapada of

Buddha, the Bhagavadgita, passages from the Upanishads or recitation of Veda mantras, whatever you like—so that there is a little diversion for you after the concentration on *japa*.

*Svadyaya* is the term that is used for sacred study. It is up to you to choose the book. *Svadyaya* does not mean reading library books. Going to the library and picking up anything, and going on browsing through huge tomes, does not mean *svadyaya*. *Svadyaya* is studying the holy text which you consider as indispensable for you, a mini edition of which you always carry in your pocket. All of you should carry a mini edition of the Bible or the Bhagavadgita, or whatever you like—*The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, and so on. A mini scripture must be in your pocket. A *japa mala* and a mini edition of a scripture are your *vade mecum*, your companions which are always with you. Thus, study of a scripture, even if it be only a few words of it or a few passages, would be a diversion, apart from the continuance of *japa sadhana* of a mantra.

The third item is direct meditation. Many people go to meditation directly and do not consider *japa* as important at all, under the impression that they are very advanced. Very good; it is fine to feel that one is advanced. Why should you depress yourself? Raise yourself up, and feel you are confident and on the path. Yet, one has to be guarded not to overestimate oneself, because the quality of your meditation will tell you the extent you have succeeded in your practice. *Japa* is, of

course, confined to a particular form of mantra or formula which is easily done. *Svadhya* is also easily done because it is of a book readily available, and you can read passages and concentrate your mind on the gospel of that particular text. But meditation is more difficult, because what is it that you are meditating upon? After having done so much study and listening to lectures, you will find, finally, that the object of concentration is not coming forth clearly to your mind.

So to repeat what I have been telling you earlier, your meditation may start with the easiest of concepts which you may like to have in your mind. Everybody has a god before them. If there is no god at all, if you have no concept of it, then my suggestion is to chant Om. Om is the god. There are people who cannot conceive anything at all as a deity or a personality of the Absolute; okay, forget it. Chant Om continuously for fifteen minutes. Aaaaauuummm aaaaauuummm aaaaauuummm aaaaauuummmmmmmmmmm. There should be a continuity of this recitation of Om so that there is no break between one chant and another. When the first chant tapers off and becomes practically inaudible, the next chant starts. You should feel the rising of this intonation almost from the naval, as the scriptures tell us. The naval itself starts vibrating. It is not merely the throat that is active, but the naval, the heart, the throat all act simultaneously when the whole personality is involved in the chant. The chant is not done merely by the throat or the tongue. The entire being has

risen up to the action of this particular word. Om is a vibration which will fill your entire personality so that you feel a tingling sensation, a vibration of an integrating character, a sensation of satisfaction. You feel pleasure. In the beginning, you will feel as if some ants are crawling through your nerves. You will feel some unexpected satisfaction, some joy which cannot be explained now, and when you chant the mantra Om in this manner, not merely as a sound that you produce but as a vibration that you are generating within yourself, try to feel that this is an eddy, a wave, a part and parcel of the cosmic vibration, the cosmic Omkara.

The origin of the universe was itself an *omkara-nada*, a *bindu*, a cosmic point, a cosmic centre of a circle which we call this whole creation, and that centre began to vibrate and gradually expand its dimension. As ripples in a body of water increase the dimension of the circle, especially when you touch a part of water or throw a stone into it, in a similar manner you feel that you are a centre here, generating a vibration through the chant of Omkara, which gradually expands itself and increases its dimension in a circular fashion, touching the cosmic horizon itself. This kind of practice can be attempted.

Otherwise, have a concept of God. Most people have a concept of God. Very few people are unable to conceive God in some way. As I mentioned in an earlier session, the concept of God is nothing but the concept of that ideal which you consider as the most attractive thing in the world. There is nothing

very attractive in this world. The most attractive things are not in the world, because they are all comparatively attractive. Superlatively attractive things cannot be found in the world. So what do you do in meditation? You create a picture of perfection in yourself. All the characteristics of the Supreme Being—omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence—are seen in this concept of your ideal which is the object of your meditation. You create your own god, as it were; and, as the saying goes, whatever you deeply affirm in your mind, that will materialise itself concretely.

Your conceptions are not empty thoughts. They are actually a summons issued to the cosmic abundance, and your call will be rewarded, provided that you are able to communicate this demand of yours from the deepest recesses of your being, because if your demand is only from the surface, the deepest recesses of the cosmos will not be able to receive it. The world is very deep and profound, and your depth should rise up to the surface of action in order that the deepest abundances of the cosmos may feel your demand. Ask, and it shall be given, is an ancient saying of a master, but how will you ask? “God, give me such and such a thing.” If you just utter that feeling of yours in a few words, it will not suffice. Your heart should well up into action.

Actually, this asking is the asking from the heart, from your feeling. Your heart has to throb with the feeling of this asking. If it is impossible for you to exist without this being granted, it shall be

granted to you. In circumstances of utter poignancy, in distress, in agony intolerable, in suffering which cannot be expressed in words, if at that time you ask, it shall be given, because if you cry from the bottom of your spirit while in utter distress—when the earth is shaking under your feet, when you cannot feel secure anywhere, when from all directions everything is going—the universe will respond to you. But when you feel everything is okay here and you have got all the things that you want from the world—you are a king, as it were, you have all securities which are materially constituted—then your prayers will not be answered. If you go into seclusion with a determination to see God after deep meditation, but have money in your pocket because if God does not come at least you can purchase some food, this dubious attitude will not bring anything to you.

The prayer session need not be for a lengthened period of hours. You should not be under the impression that *sadhana* means sitting for hours and hours. It is nothing of the kind. Even one second of intense feeling is sufficient. It is like a spark of fire. A spark of fire looks very small, it is not large in dimension, but a spark can burn mountains of straw, such power it has got. Intense feelingful expression of your wanting it is what is known as *mumukshutva*, and no other qualification is necessary from you. All other austerities, *tapasyas* and disciplines come under the category of the most principle of all your *sadhanas*: wanting it. That is the meaning of asking. If you sincerely and

adequately want a thing, it shall come to you. Your wanting should not be inadequate. Really it must be wanted, and it has to be impossible for you to exist without it. Then it shall be poured upon you.

The meditation technique is the third of the three items mentioned. *Japa sadhana* on the one hand, *svadhyaya* of a scripture on the other hand, and meditation, become the crowning feature of spiritual practice. These are the three prongs of the trident, as it were, of spiritual practice—the trident of Lord Siva, it is called.

In addition to this self check-up that you carry on daily through a spiritual diary, you also may resolve to do what should be done, and not to do what is not to be done. Do not keep unnecessary friends and go on chatting with people. Time is very short; life is fleeting. Have only good friends who will benefit you with their company, and if you cannot find such friends, have no friends. Be alone to yourself. Limit your activity to the required circumference.

Coming to the point, we have these three facets of spiritual practice: *japa sadhana*, *svadhyaya* of scripture, and meditation. In this attempt at meditation, you will be guided by the particular type of yoga that you are accustomed to. There are some who practise Vipassana meditation and have gone to sessions of Vipassana. There are others who are devotees of Lord Krishna and want only to take his name, or they are devoted to Rama. Or there are those who take to Bhagwat Katha and go on reading the Srimad Bhagavata; every seven days

they complete one round. Or there is the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas, etc. Whatever be your technique, it is perfectly all right. Your method should need not change, but continuity is important. The sutra of Patanjali regarding this is *abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ* (Y.S. 1.12): "Practise makes perfect." The saying of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita is *abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gr̥hyate* (B.G. 6.35): "Practise makes perfect." Every day continue the practice of being seated in the posture of meditation, and whatever be the success, it does not matter. Just sit. When you sit in the dining hall, the hunger will slowly manifest itself by seeing the food. In a similar manner, by the sitting posture itself you will feel an inclination to conduct some kind of meditation.

Do not go to extremes in your practice by taking to such methods which you do not find very convenient or practicable to you. Also, when you go deep into meditation, be a little conscious about your inner desires. Have you unfulfilled desires, tensions or feelings? Any tensions of an emotional or social nature have to be taken care of. You cannot keep a disease unattended to and then imagine that you are robust in health. There are various factors in the world which keep you restless. Financially poor people are restless because they have no meal for the day. Or in a family if there is some kind of disagreement—the father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter have no agreement of purpose or policy—

they keep themselves in tension. If there is some disagreement, it has to be settled in a harmonious manner without causing further tension. Sometimes in your attempt to clear up tensions, you bargain so badly that another tension starts. Wisdom, caution, slow progress, leisure, all these are necessary factors before you take adequate measures to free yourself from tension of any kind.

Anything that the feelings desire should be taken care of. Sometimes the desires are reasonable, and sometimes the desires are unreasonable—imaginary asking for the ego; and there are also necessary requirements of the personality. Fulfil them. Not all desires are bad. It does not mean that every desire is an evil. There are constructive desires and destructive desires, anabolic desires and catabolic desires. Catabolic desires, which are destructive in nature, which deplete your energy, which make you weak biologically and psychologically, must be shunted out by very careful methods. You will not be able to easily make a distinction between permissible desires and non-permissible ones. Here you require the guidance of a Guru or a teacher.

Always have a good guide because, after all, you are novitiates; you are just beginning the practice, and a guide is important. All questions cannot be answered by books, and your little personal problems cannot be tackled by any kind of scripture, because the scripture cannot answer every kind of question which everyone in the world will raise. So each person should have a superior, as

far as is practicable, and difficult questions which arise in the feelings or the emotions, which cannot be handled satisfactorily by one's own self, may be presented before a superior.

Therefore, whether you take to the raja yoga method of eight limbs—*yamas*, *niyamas*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—or the bhakti yoga method of *sravanam*, *kirtanam*, *visnoh smaranam*, *pada-sevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dasyam*, *sakhyam*, *atma-nivedanam*, or you take to the karma yoga method of unselfish activity for the welfare of people, or only mantra *sadhana*, *japa*, is your method, that is also fine. Take to these methods, be diligent in your practice, and trust in God.