INDIA’S ANCIENT CULTURE

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Publishers' Note


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

According to history, India has always been considered as the repository of the earliest of cultures. Cultures are there in every country, but Indian culture is said to be the most ancient, historically speaking. So there is some point in trying to go a little deep into this ancient circumstance that gave rise to a 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, to what extent 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 the outer behaviour of the person because you cannot conduct yourself outwardly in a manner different from what you are inside. The way in which you speak to people, your physical gestures, your demeanour, your deportment, and your social concourse with people outside will be a manifestation of what you are within. In your social relations, which are culturally oriented, you express outwardly what you are inside. So 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 another person. Every individual has his own or her own pattern of the general outlook of life, independently taken. 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 decides 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 you think about yourself? What do you think of other people around you? What do you think about this world into which you were born? What is your general idea about things, the world and the individual included? Your reaction to the outer atmosphere of the world and people outside is your culture. You react in a particular manner in respect of conditions prevailing outside. Your reaction will show what kind of culture it is that you are endowed with, or that you 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 you react in a particular manner to these events taking place in society outside or to the world in general. How do you react? That reaction is the
product of your culture. You will react in a particular manner in respect of natural history, and also 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 ways of thinking due to the individual differences in their evolutionary stages, but commonly an Indian is supposed to think in a general and 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 all to read two books. You have to read them thoroughly from cover to cover. The name of the first book is *Foundations of Indian Culture* written by Sri Aurobindo. The second book of Aurobindo is *The Human Cycle*. The book was called originally *Psychology of Social Development*, and now it has been reprinted under a different title, *The Human Cycle*, and is clubbed with another book that he wrote. The entire book now goes under the title of *The Human Cycle and Ideal of Human Unity*. But this book must be read after the first book, *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 mentioned 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 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 of 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 thinking. The mind gets so much occupied with one’s own self and the 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 also will come up one day or the other for insistent consideration, especially when you are totally dissatisfied both with your own way of living and the way in which people outside live. You are somehow or
other not satisfied. 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 is going to satisfy.

In youth, when we are little boys and girls, budding adolescents, we are not quite acquainted either with the components of our inner psychological world or with the world outside. Even our own ways of thinking are new to us. Young boys and girls are not good psychologists. They are mostly carried away by instincts, emotions, and a kind of enthusiasm which spurs 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 are not always subject to the rules and conduct of study or education because of rationality not yet having manifested itself properly into a state of maturity in them, and the natural instincts and emotions taking an upper hand.

But you will not be always a student. As you progress and have a better experience of the world, something will tell you that this kind of life is not fully satisfying. It is something like a drudgery which you have been passing through. 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 like this; therefore, you say these things are not all right. So when you do not feel satisfied with your own self or the world outside is it because there is something 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. That standard also 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; that 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 is 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 geographical locations. It is not that something is here and 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 conditions only, do not satisfy you because of the fact they are conditions. You want to be unconditioned. Limitations are abhorrent. 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. You are always at loggerheads. You want to find a solution for this kind of state of affairs by resorting to some principle which will not be a partisan, either on your side or on the side of the world. It 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. 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 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 an integration of national spirit. There cannot be a country, as we call it. The whole country thinks in one way only: 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 or herself 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 you connected purely with what is happening outside, nor are you limiting your thoughts to yourself only.

Therefore, to be a cultured person is not an easy thing. You may study books in a school or 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, a polished person, 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 whatnot, 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? Hunger, thirst, ego—physical instincts like hunger and thirst, and psychological pressures like egoism play a dominant role in our lives.

You have to eat every day. A very important point it is. You 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 circumstance. Whatever be the conditions prevailing in the world, that you require a meal every day is first and foremost, and you are always keeping an eye on it. Secondly, you require to be recognised. An unrecognised person is not a happy person. Otherwise, you will feel you are nothing. There is what is called self-regard. You always feel that you are something, and you would not like to be treated as nothing. You are somebody, and you would not like to be told that you are nobody. You require to be respected. That is the ego working, and this instinct is stronger than even hunger. You may starve for three days without food for some reason, but you would not like to be starved of your self-respect. Rather, you would starve for days together for the sake of gaining self-respect. If you feel that your respectability is going to be enhanced under certain conditions which require you to be without food, you may have to work very hard to see that your self-respect is taken to its pitches, socially respectable to the highest point. If the highest self-respect can be gained by working hard, involving a little bit of starving, you 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 even without being able to eat or sleep. You have seen this. Even without sleep, without eating, you can exist for some time, but without self-respect you cannot exist for even a day. 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 ego and physical conditions.

A human being is a person who can recognise humanity in another person also. It is not that you want everything, and others do not want anything. The meal that you require and the self-respect that you 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. You love others as you love yourself, and you would be able to treat others in the same way as you would like to treat yourself.

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 wish to behave with one’s own self, or one would wish others to behave with one’s own self. In what manner would you like others to behave with you? You have some idea, a standard set: I would wish that others should treat me in this manner. That very manner is the way in which you have to treat other people. In a way, the world is a give-and-take policy. The world will give you exactly what you give to it. You cannot expect from the world what you are not prepared to give to it. If you ill-treat the world psychologically or socially, it will also ill-treat you in the same way psychologically and socially.

Why does it happen? It happens because you are a 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, you are a part of nature. Nature is constituted of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. The same are the constituents of your physical personality, this anatomical physiological personality. You are one with nature as far as the basic building bricks of your personality are concerned—the same physiology, the same anatomy. Socially also, you 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 for you to be social with other people? It is because in order to survive, you require the collaboration and cooperation of other people. You want other people to cooperate with you and help you whenever necessary, but why should they help you if there is no connection between you and other people? The necessary connection between you and other people for the purpose of a reasonably comfortable existence and even survival is the sociability that we are chalking out.

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 you 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 yourself and other people. A transcendent element controls the destiny of the whole world. That comes under the theme of philosophy. 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 subject 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.

I will not be following any particular book though what I will be telling you will be in these books, especially Aurobindo’s *Foundations of Indian Culture*. My book will be in my mind only; I don’t have any book. Today I close and I thank you very much for being with me here, and I shall see you tomorrow morning.
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. There is a kind of irreconcilability seen between the subjective side and the objective side. The world does not always behave as we would like it to behave, and we also 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 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 conflict apparently seen between the individual and the world is diminished to a large extent. The more you are an individual by yourself, the more is the chance of your conflict with the world outside. Your assertion of your personality and 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 your way of thinking or you have to rise to the level of the world’s way of thinking.

Somehow it has been observed that we are not outside the world; we are part and parcel of nature, as well as human society. I am only repeating briefly what I told you yesterday. We are, on the one hand, physically part of nature. Anatomically and physiologically the same earth, water, fire, air and ether are constituting 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 you look at the whole circumstance from the point of view of nature or from the point of view of human society, you 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. 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 who also looks to the future of the nation, not merely the present, and knows what is good for the nation for all time to come, not only for the present moment. But the politicians are thinking of the present moment only; they have got a very narrow outlook of 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 yourself and other people, and 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 yesterday as a brief statement of what culture is.

Now we are expected to move in the direction of what our curriculum describes as India’s ancient culture. You have to bear in mind every day what you heard yesterday because whatever I will be telling you will be a continuation from what was told the previous day, and it may be difficult to go on repeating the same thing again and again. So please remember the brief outline of our discussion yesterday, the essentials of which I repeated today for your memory.

I mentioned also that India has been considered as the repository 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 the earliest of cultures rose. What kind of culture rose?

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 the basic instincts or 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, plant to animal, and animal to man, etc. This way of thinking has been accepted both in the East and 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 stage. We sleep like a stone, we breathe like a plant, we have passions like an animal, 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 subdued thoroughly. 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 into animal nature. There are also human beings who think like this: I mind my business and you go to hell. 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. Culture is buried deep as a potential in such stages of life, but it has not manifested itself even by a little 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 with common instincts and common needs. The totally independent animal life, primitivity, is later found to be unsuitable for even 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 and rain and sun and cyclone will beat upon your head, and nature may not allow you to even exist. A little bit of security from nature was found to be necessary, and security from other people was also necessary because while one person recognises the existence of another person as a human being, mostly, under pressure of circumstances, a human being may not bother so much about the welfare of others when it comes to the question of one’s own survival. Everyone has this instinct of survival of one’s own self, and when you are cornered from all sides and pressed to an extreme, you may not mind guarding yourself 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 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 lacks immensely 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 you 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. The 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 a group culture, a community culture like a tribal one, 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 mentioned it yesterday briefly. A human being is one who is in a position to recognise the same humanity in another person also. The great dictum, which India's culture placed before us in this respect, is in a Sanskrit passage. Ātmanah pratikūlāni pareśāṁ na samācharet (M.B. 5.15.17): 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 only as one would expect others to behave with oneself. If you are hungry, you must know that others also can be hungry. If you are thirsty, you must know that others also can be equally thirsty. If you are exhausted, you must know that others also can be exhausted. If you would like to live long, you must know that others also would like to live long. And if you do not want to die, others also would not like to die. If that is the case, how would you behave with others? You will adjust yourself in society in such a manner that you will give the same concession and the same freedom to other people as you are trying to give to your own self. Do you know how much freedom you want? Are you not exercising freedom? Yet a lot of concession is given by each one to one's own self. You would be very miserly in giving concession to other people. You would be very strict on others, but very liberal on your own self. To the extent you are liberal to yourself, to that extent you must be liberal to others also, and if you find it is necessary to put a limitation on one personality, it will be equally applicable to others also. It does not mean that you can control others and you do not want to be controlled, that all limitations are for others only, and for you 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, inherited 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 also 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. You have to eat in order that you may live, and you have also 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, physical survival, does not take into consideration the other needs of people, such as mind, feeling, understanding, and spirit. You may be happy when you are granted the freedom to physically live comfortably with all security that is required, but physical comfort and security does not touch the whole of human nature because we have other needs like self-respect, as I mentioned yesterday, which is not a physical necessity. You require to be recognised. The asking for recognition is not a physical need, it is a need from the mental state of the person. The mind has a hunger, as the body also has a hunger. The mind asks for a peculiar diet of its own, as the physical body also asks for it. It 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.

So 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 human aspiration, human longing, when it rises to a certain stage in evolution, begins to dream of possibilities, expectations, realisations, etc., beyond merely the physical level. These people are the philosophers. Yesterday I touched this subject. 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 also 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, subjective and objective. The mind dreams of universal possibility. 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 super-physical and super-individual reality above this world of physical and individual nature.

In India, culture is said to have started from the time of the Vedas. You must have heard that there is a group of scriptures called 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, 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 yesterday that there are three ways of looking at things. We look within and look without and 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 are they hung up 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. The 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 above the psychologist, the physicist, or the sociologist. The physicist studies 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 behave? And why are you thinking in the manner you think? There is a way in which you think. All people think in some fundamental manner, but why should you 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 supposed to be the function of science. Science studies the how of things, and philosophy goes into the why of things. Science cannot tell you why the electrons move in that particular manner around a nucleus. They tell you how they move, but why should they behave in that manner? They gyrate in a manner of their own. Why should people behave in the manner they behave? Why should 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 supposed to be a science and an art which will endeavour to lift you 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 several centuries back. ‘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, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda. The earliest history of mankind is found in the Rigveda Samhita, the great collection of hymns and prayers written in ecstatic metrical poetry.

These great Masters seem to have been great poets also. 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 rhythm and in a given manner. This Rigveda Samhita particularly is a great wonder to linguists and historians. Even the number of the letters of the Samhita
has been counted. About ten thousand hymns are in the Rigveda Samhita, and the total number of words in the whole book is 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 ear 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 you 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 diminishing gradually almost to extinction. Especially in southern India we have got some pundits who can recite the entire Veda 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 also it is 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 Vedas.” 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 your 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 you cannot know the world at all unless there is a medium of connection between you and the world. You are aware that the world is there because there is some link connecting you with the world. The world has not entered your eyes. For instance, the mountain is far away. The knowledge of the fact that there is a mountain in front of you arises not because the mountain has entered your eyes, and not because you have gone and hit your head against the mountain. It arises because there is an invisible link between you and the world. It is invisible; the whole point is that. If this invisibility had not been there, if the link between you and the object were visible, there would have been a tremendous transformation of your personality. You would not have been a human being 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 I will be what I am, nor you will be what you are. That is a different subject.

So 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 adhyatma vidya, or the subjective science of spirit; as an adhibhautika vidya, or the objective science of the world; as a divya or adhidaivika vidya, or a science of the gods superintending over the whole of creation; or as a karma vidya, or the action that you perform in this world. It also deals with the way in which you have to live in this world by performing action. Adhiyajna is the name that is given to this aspect of 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 adhidharma is another thing, the manner in which you can righteously live in this world. These are Sanskrit words; it is better you note them down. Adhyatma is the science of the subjective spirit, adhibhuta is the science of the objective universe, adhidaiva is the science of the celestials in heaven, the gods, adhiyajna is the science of action in the world, the performance of action, and adhidharma is the science of righteousness.

The Vedas, therefore, are difficult to understand. They cannot be easily translated because most of the English translations or Hindi translations, and so on, are translations from purely the linguistic and grammatical meanings, but the profundities are not given. We will continue this next time.
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 also is a wrong notion. God is not otherworldly, removed from this world. Therefore, religion cannot be regarded as otherworldly; it has a connection with this world. Therefore, the Samhitas are not the foundations of an otherworldly religion. They are connected with this very, very realistic existence of ours.

That the Veda Samhitas have different meanings from various points of view, I mentioned briefly the other day. I said there are five phases, at least, of the meaning of the Veda Samhita. *Adhyatmika* means the subjective psychological, and we may say, spiritual aspect; *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. The *adhiyajnika* is the phase of our actual action, work or encounters of this world; the field of activity is *adhyajna*. *Adhidharmika*, the aspect of law and order, the regulative principle of life, is another aspect.

When you look at a thing, you 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 like 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 at the same time related to different aspects. A human being, though he may look independent by himself or herself, is a unit in human society. So 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 also is
physical and material. A human being is very active and is compelled to do some work or the other; therefore, action-oriented also is a human individual. And every individual is restrained by a law or a regulation; either 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. You appreciate now that a single person is four things at the same time, and also a fifth thing in the sense that you are never satisfied with anything in this world. You look up for satisfaction to some reality which is above this world. The adhidaivika aspect also is working within.

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. So do not say 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 Veda. 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 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 it 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 or the Master or the Guru would pronounce the Veda, 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 through hearing only. 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.

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

I suggested the other day one or two books that you may read. I suggested only the writings of Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan, but I remember now 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 *Spiritual Heritage of India. Vedic Religion and Philosophy* contains three beautiful essays on the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavadgita. That is worth reading, as it is very well written.

The comprehensiveness of the Vedas being large, it was not easy for people to study the whole thing at one stroke; therefore, students took up studies of certain sections of the Veda only, as it was not practicable or feasible for them to take up the study of all things at the same time. Some students took up study of the Samhitas only. They learned it by rote and chanted and repeated it again and again, and they spent at least twelve years in mastering the pronunciation with intonation of the mantras of the Veda. At least twelve years it will take to learn the very chanting itself of 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: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. Mimamsa is a school of philosophic thought which concerns itself entirely with the exposition of the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, the Brahmanas as they are called particularly. 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. The 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 and the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas and the Upanishads while people could not manage to study even one section of it in their life? You can imagine the stature of the learning of these great persons such as Acharya Sayana, who was the brother of Vidyaranya, who wrote *Panchadasi*, etc.

The higher aspects or the phases of the meaning contained in the Vedas drew the attention of subsequent scholars and even rishis and sages, and they expatiated upon and commented upon one or the other of the aspects of the Vedas. Those who were interested only in 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 six limbs of the Vedas, and these limbs are called Vedangas. Veda-anga: *anga* means limb. 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 Samhitas 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. So 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 also was 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 work also was of Panini only, who wrote Siksha. We are told that there are nine grammars that stand, but the most prominent one is Panini’s grammar, which is studied everywhere in schools and colleges these days.

So the science of phonetics and chanting is one, and the science of understanding the grammatical meaning of the words of the Veda, called Vyakarana, was another. 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 systematic arrangement of words in various regular metres. The Veda Samhita is not written in one metre only; different sections are in different metres. What is this metre? 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 this 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, 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 also is based. So a new science was developed called astronomy, which is Jyotisha. Jyotish Shastra is astronomical science. That also is 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 you start things, but how do you know which is the auspicious moment? For this you 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 Kalpa Sutra. Kalpa Sutras are short aphoristic texts which deal with the details of the actual performance of the sacrifice. How do you start the sacrifice? What are the things necessary? How are they kept in proper order? Which is to be done first? Which is to be done afterwards? Which is 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 sacrifice is in the Kalpa Sutras.

Incidentally, these Sutras have certain subdivisions. 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 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, sutras which detail 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 it is a Sutra connected with the performances in the house. Then the other aspect of the Kalpa Sutra is the Dharmasutra: what is to be done and what is not to be done, what is proper and what is not proper. This has to be done and this should not be done. The dos and don'ts of performance regulating the ritual of every kind we have in the Dharmasutras.

So 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, Dhanur Veda, Gandharva Veda 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. So 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 will 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 musical science—Gandharveda it is called. And political science and the art of government are connected with the last of the Vedas, namely the Atharvaveda. The four Vedas have four auxiliary Vedas, namely, Ayurveda, Dhanur Veda, Gandharva Veda 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, and Kalpa. Kalpa Sutras have four sections: Srautasutras, Sulbasutras, Grihyasutras, Dharmasutras. There are four Upavedas or subsidiary Vedas: Ayurveda, Dhanur Veda, Gandharva Veda and Artha Shastra, which also includes economic science. So this is a huge body of learning which is all embedded in the Vedas.

Many of you would not even have dreamt that the Veda contained so many things. You simply know some chanting of a pundit. Some mantra he recites, and this is all the Veda; it is a prayer to some god. This is all you must have learnt in
history books, but it is not so. History books will never tell you all these details. Sometimes wrong things are also told because many of the 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 human mind, being what it is, could not always suddenly accommodate within its capacity all this knowledge. All this is too much for a human brain. The brain will get tired even by hearing the names of these variegated texts and ways of thinking. As days pass, history has shown that the human mind becomes more and more diluted in its capacity to comprehend. 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 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 only, as we have today in schools and colleges. Everything cannot be studied in a college. You take up only one or two subjects. As you go further in 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 a particular branch only, and it was necessary to acquire all-round knowledge in all aspects of the Vedas, time showed that this was not 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 the chanting of it. Somebody will say, “Here is a pundit who knows the Vedas.” What does he know? He can recite the Vedas by rote. Like a parrot he will go on chanting it. But ask him, “What is it that you are chanting?” He will 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 they 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 Godman 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 the meaning. You may wonder why a man should be respected so much merely because he chants the mantras. That also is very important to know.
The mantras are an electric force. The recitation of a Veda mantra—even a mere recitation, not the going into the meaning of it, etc.—charges your personality with a power because of the fact that the arrangement of the words of the mantra in the Veda 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 a pronunciation of a particular word creates a sudden stimulus inside you and energises your personality as if you 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 person, in the personality of the individual who recites the mantra itself. So even the mere recitation of the mantra is a great thing, and the person who has such capacity to recite it by heart is worshipped as a holy man, not unnecessarily but very, very necessarily. Even if you recite the mantra 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 is ritualistic specialisation.

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 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 and ethics, and the conduct and behaviour of people—how in society and in our personal life 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 of time cycles called Krita, Treta, Dvapara and
Kali: Krita Yuga, the Golden Age; Treta Yuga, the Silver Age; Dvarpara Yuga, the Copper Age; Kali Yuga, the Iron Age. We are now in the Kali Yuga, the Iron Age, not 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 Shankha and Likhita Rishi was for the Dvarpara Yuga, and for the Kali Yuga they say 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 you existing in this world? What are your aims and objects? What is it that you 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 you are living in a desert. Emotional needs also are important. Aesthetics, the love of art, architecture, culture, painting and drawing, music and dance, and literature are all avenues of the expression of emotions, feelings. Don’t you 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 to be also 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 one 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 is 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 also, 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, none of them can have one hundred percent freedom because if each one wants 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, dharma* are the relative values of life.

But they are relative; that is very important. Why are they relative? Because they are not absolute. 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 we 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 see another time.
Chapter 4

The Fourfold Aim of Existence and How to Achieve It

We bestowed sufficient thought on the foundations of Indian culture, which are the Vedas. By observing also that the Vedas are not merely a scripture of religion in the sense of an aspiration for a god above the world, 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 actual performance and action in the world. 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, is called dharma or law. This also is laid down in the Vedas Samhitas. So they are also adhidharma.

The meaning of the Vedas is, therefore, so profound and inclusive that the Vedas cannot be studied merely from one point of view, from the linguistic or grammatical point of view, which is generally the way in which modern scholars study them. The meaning of the Veda 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 this country. 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. In order to make the Vedas a little easier to understand, we noted that the Smritis came up. Smritis are codes of ethics and law. They are eighteen in number, and three of them are considered as very important: Manu-smriti, Yajnavalkya Smriti and Parashara Smriti. Manu Smriti is very strict in its ordinances. A little easier regulation is laid down by Yajnavalkya Smriti, and Parashara Smriti is considered as the only one that is suitable for Kali Yuga, this age where the will of people is weak and the mind is not so 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 is what we noticed yesterday: artha, kama and dharma. The material values of life sum up our physical requirements or physical needs, and our
emotional needs are summed up by kama, 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 the other person. 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 tension emotionally. The freedom which is, on the one hand, external as connected with material existence, and on the other hand, emotional existence, is what is required by every person. We should be physically comfortable, and also emotionally comfortable. There should be no tension either from 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? Which is the source of this dharma? It should be like this and it should not be like that, says a law-and-order system. You are not supposed to behave in this manner; you are supposed to behave in this manner only; this you can do, but the other thing you 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 do you mean by moksha, which is inclusive of all the other values of life? You cannot have a hundred percent freedom in this world because your 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 you 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 you which conditions you, and there are people outside which limit you. What then is the Absolute, because things in the world are relative?
A state of being in which there would be nothing outside which can restrain you, that alone can be regarded as the Absolute. If there is nobody except you, if you are the only existence, then you can exercise your freedom entirely. You will be one hundred percent free. In this creation you 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 you. Here we enter into the field of philosophy and metaphysical studies, as they are usually called.

How is it possible for you to exist independently of anything that is outside you? The very concept of outside or externality has to be abrogated completely, and transcended. Is it possible? Normally, you will feel that such a thing is not possible. How is it possible for anyone to be totally alone with nobody else existing on earth? The idea of somebody else and something outside you 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 you go, whatever you are, there is something outside you. There are people everywhere outside you. There is the natural world of the five elements outside you. Space and time are there wherever you go. They are external to you. That means to say, in this world of space and time and objects and people, absolute freedom is not possible.

But we never want to be limited in any way whatsoever. If possible, unlimitedness will be 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 it. 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 practically 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, the slave of circumstances and conditions, dependent on events of history and the moods of people and the vagaries of nature. We feel like this. 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 involved in bondage only 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 who is incapable of the fulfilment of the aspiration. 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. We live in 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 super-physical, dreamlike, and impossible to describe in the language of the mortal tongue. This consciousness, which is what you really are, is something which is required to be studied properly. What are you? Mister so-and-so, this person. You describe yourself as the son of somebody, or you describe yourself in terms of the occupation that you have got. You have some designation as an official or a workman, or you have some other designation as a relative of so-and-so, etc. But this designation, this definition of yours, is in terms of the physical body. This body of yours, which is material, you consider as yourself, and you define yourself in terms of the body only. This body is connected to a language, to a regional culture, to a state, to a nationality, to a species.

But you pass through various stages in your life every day which, if studied properly, will tell you that you are not actually this body—for instance, the state of deep sleep. This state of deep sleep is very intriguing indeed. You do not know what is happening to you when you are fast asleep. You are unconscious, but unconscious of what? Unconscious of this body. This body which you considered as everything and all in all, which was the very dear and near object of your love, which is very important for you from a social, economic and material point of view, this body of yours which is the son of so-and-so, the brother of so-and-so, the sister of 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 the thing that you have, is not there in the state of deep sleep. Yet you exist in sleep. Do you exist in the state of deep sleep? Yes. Did you exist as this body? No. As what did you exist there? You did exist minus the body, minus also the mind. Did you exist minus the physical 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 also was 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 the statement? Does the physical body make the statement? The physical body was not there. Is the mind saying it? The mind also was not there. Who is making the 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 memory it is that 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 say now is sleep. Did you have an experience of 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 memory now that you slept yesterday? Does an unconscious stone have a memory of anything? Do you believe that you are totally unconscious in sleep? There would not be a condition of memory 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 consciousness in the state of deep sleep that was covered over by something, due to which at that time you did not have any experience of it. The consciousness that was there in the state of deep sleep was covered over by some cloudlike thing, some darkness which prevented the consciousness from being aware of itself. Thus, consciousness was absent, but yet it was there. That is the reason why you are having a memory that you slept.

So from the fact of memory subsequent to the experience of sleep, you conclude that consciousness must have been there in the state of deep 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 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. So consciousness in the state of deep sleep was not inside. You cannot, therefore, call it outside also. That which is not inside is also not outside. That which is not inside, not 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 something, nor outside something. A universality of consciousness must have been there which was shrouded in ignorance of certain types, ignorance caused by various factors. You did exist as consciousness. Because of the fact that consciousness has to be everywhere,
limitation of consciousness cannot be conceived. It is absolute in every sense of the term.

Your 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 because of physical existence, but physical existence is obliterated completely in the state of deep sleep. There was not even mental existence. It is super-mental and super-physical existence, pure consciousness which is everywhere. Because it is everywhere, it is absolute. There is nothing to condition it or limit it at that time. That is why your 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 comforts in life, not even kingship will 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, and 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? 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. You have changed your position, location, in the state of waking into what you are not. This consciousness which is therefore everywhere, which is yourself, is absolute freedom. The attainment of this experience is moksha.

You want to know what is moksha. It 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 the universal consciousness different from the universal consciousness into which another person is entering into in the state of deep sleep. We are all bathed in the ocean and sinking into a single sleep. The ocean is one only 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, you will be omnipresent. Universality means existing everywhere at the same time. Now you are in Rishikesh. A person who is in Rishikesh cannot be in Delhi at the same time. There is limitation by location and limitation by 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 became necessary in order to understand what the law and order is, which regulates your artha and kama requirements. 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 are there which are of various types. 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 you conduct yourself in life, behave in some way, you have to see that it is in consonance with the universality which is the aspiration of all people. You 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 to you briefly what moksha is.

So what are the aims of existence? Dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Inasmuch as moksha is universally inclusive, it is not just one of the four aims; it is the aim which includes the other three automatically, and subsumes the other three. The goal of life is Self-realisation, God-realisation, the realisation of this absolutely 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 the regulations of a different type altogether, namely, ashrama dharma, the dharma or the law of the order of life, the stages of life. You have to grow vertically into the expanded state of the dimension of consciousness by overcoming the limitations to which you are subject through a process of education, 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 the 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. You are moving in terms of that which you are not. You know you are something and the things that you see in front of you are not you, so whenever you think something outside you, or the sense organs pull you in the outward direction, you are concentrating your mind on that which you are not. This is the reason why you become weak physically and mentally. When you are not yourself and you have become somebody else, naturally all your energy is sucked by that which is not you, the object, and you have poured yourself, as it were, on that
thing which you are not, and you 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 the 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 brahmacharin, or the student, is not allowed to indulge in anything that is sensory, and is also not permitted to brood over objects of sense mentally. 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 the other 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 brahmacharin 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 grihastha is more difficult, disciplined and controlled than even the brahmacharins 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 grihastha has greater difficulties. Therefore, the discipline that the grihastha has to undergo in terms of the encumberments in which he is involved is much greater.

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

The daily routine of the grihastha is more variegated and complicated than the duties of a brahmacharin, vanaprastha or sannyasin. 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 are 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 smelling. Varuna is the deity superintending over taste in the tongue. The quarters of the skies, called Dig devatas, are the deities which regulate our hearing organ, 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 daily worshipped by the grihastha in a particular ritual called deva yajna—yajna, offering made to the gods.

You have also to pay your gratitude to the rishis who handed over through a succession of Gurus and disciples the knowledge which you 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 grihastha, by which he discharges the debt to the rishis. It is called brahma yajna.

The 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. The libation shraddha and other ceremonies connected to this ritual is also one of the five great sacrifices, called pithri yajna.

There is the serving of the guests; at least one guest must be served or fed every day. The rule is that when your worship and your 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 front. If anybody is standing there, he must be fed first. The uninvited person that 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 our tradition believes. That person has to be fed first, and you take your meal afterwards. So open your door and see if anyone is standing in front without food. Give him the 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. So deva yajna, brahma yajna, rudra 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 *brahmacharin* has not to do. So all these make you 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.

So through these stages, the ashrama dharmas, you obey the law of nature, society, and your physical body also. By discharging the obligation and the debt that you have to pay to them, you free yourself from them gradually. After the maturity that you gained by the living of a disciplined life of a householder, you are now given the permit to free yourself from all the obligations of a householder. You can become a free man to a large extent—a recluse, a *vanaprastha*. 
Chapter 5
Introduction to the Epics

In our last sessions we discussed the foundations of Indian culture and the inner contents and classifications of the Vedas. Next, we moved further on to a consideration of special emphasis laid in the course of history on the different sections of the Vedas, with some group or community laying emphasis on the Samhitas, others on the Brahmanas, and others on the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The 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 means the capacity to recite the Samhitas. The 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, conceived in the beginning as a group superintending over all the powers of nature, later on clubbed together into different categories of ruling powers, and culminating in the end 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, Yajnavalkya Smriti and Parashara Smriti are the most important. What is it that the Smritis tell us? I am repeating to you what I said the other day. 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 universal salvation of the soul. It is very difficult to imagine how every aspect of life has been interpreted in India in terms of the highest aim that is the principal occupation of all mankind. This widespread, well thought-out, precise pattern of living laid down for us by our ancients through the Smritis is forgotten these days. 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 our needs are principally today 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 how the fruit will come unless there is a tree which is planted well.

How would you expect material comfort and emotional satisfaction and security of any kind unless there is a law that operates permitting you to have these perquisites? From where will you get your material needs? How will you have mental satisfaction, peace of mind and emotional security? How can you 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 you contemplate the system of 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 you to the other world. It 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 your soul is not outside your body. It is inside you. It is you. What you call liberation of the spirit is nothing but the realisation of the Self of the whole cosmos, the Soul of the universe, and if you consider the soul of the universe is somewhere far off outside the universe, it would be like thinking that your soul is outside the body, and in order to reach your soul you have to move geographically from your body to the soul. What is the distance between your body and your 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. “India is a religious country. It is thinking only of the other world.” Especially Christian bigots and evangelists who are trying to throw dust upon Hinduism are very much interested in emphasising this aspect of a so-called wrongly interpreted otherworldly aspect of Hinduism, which Hinduism does not have. And modern education in colleges and universities, being Christian-oriented and Western-oriented practically, has thrust this wrong notion into the brains of modern youth who even now wrongly think that Hindu religion is an otherworldly affair and that it has no concern with modern physical, material, down-to-earth life.

Other doctrines like 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, it only promises an otherworldly goal to the soul, if it all there is a soul. These are the two errors of extra emphasis laid on the economic and 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 too much the body aspect of your life 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. It 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 much of it might not have entered your mind in all its implications, but it is good for you to think over this aspect of it.

So 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 very concept of the aims of existence—dharma, artha, kama, moksha—in connection with which it became 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 therefore inasmuch as it is not in time, it is not a question of tomorrow. It 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, and 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.

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 days, though they appear to be clear to some extent, they did not become clear to every mind and every person for all times. Even you people who are all well-educated and clear-headed students will not be in a position to keep this in your mind for a long time. After hearing all this, when you go out from this hall, you will again think that God is outside the world, He is above in heaven, and moksha is after death. These ideas will persist in you like a dragon wherever you go, and if such educated persons can find it hard to maintain the true spirit of what culture in the sense of freedom of the spirit is, what to talk of common folk, the rustics, the farmers, the tillers who are more body-oriented than intellectual or 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 the university, it is not only for Brahmins or pundits, not also merely for Kshatriyas or rulers and administrators, not only for the traders, but also for the lowest 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 you do not know what freedom is, it is necessary for you
to be free. You are so very untutored in the art of living that you do not know that
you are bound. Merely because you have no consciousness of there being such a
thing called freedom, it is not proper for those who have such consciousness to
exploit you.

Indian culture is a broad-based, charitable action of enlightened ones for the
purpose of bringing the very same enlightenment into 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 we call them. 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 in this very earth
itself, in your very body. It 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 the marketplace, to the fields and
the shops, was attempted by experts like 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 and spirituality and moksha, there are wrong
notions about the intention behind the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. These
epics were not written merely to tell you some stories. They are not Aesop’s or
Grimm’s fairy tales. They are a modus operandi of telling you 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 the earth and
mathematically pinpointed in their teachings. In mathematics there is no story
and there is no emotion in working out calculations of equations, etc., yet it rules
the world, as you know. Mathematics is an exact science. Logic is also an exact
science. So 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 or 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 in a more satisfying and considerate way what the groundings of the Vedas
and the Smritis are by telling 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 is saying something which the intellect does not say. The intellect accepts everything that is logically presented, but the heart has some problem with the logically acceptable truth because it wants a peculiar kind of satisfaction which only the emotion can understand.

Spiritual seekers, students of culture in the practical aspect of it, should also be a little bit of psychologists. It is not that you are mugging up something that is told to you in textbooks or told to you in colleges by your teachers and professors. It is necessary for you to also know what you are seeking as a student in a college or university. When you try to find out what it is that you require, you must know something about yourself. “I go to the college. I study.” What for? “I need something.” What are your needs? For that you must know something about yourself. Any good cultural student or educationist should be a good psychologist also. 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 their 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 and Srutis, and the Smritis to which we made reference up to this time, spoke principally to the intellectual and rational side of human nature, not so much the emotional side. The emotion has to be paid sufficient attention, and this work has been attempted by the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, 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. We have epics everywhere in the world. We have 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 of the Greek world. The Iliad and the Odyssey are epics. Epics are heroic poems. There is always a spirit of valour, chivalry, a warlike spirit, an action in the epics; and that you will 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 got 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 got Milton’s Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, an English epic. And then we have got stories of Eddas in Iceland culture, epics of Nordic culture, etc.

Likewise, we have heroic poems in India, principally the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in Sanskrit. Actually, India’s culture is not only in Sanskrit. It is also in some other languages, for example, Tamil. The Tamil language is a very, very ancient cultural foundation, and modern English-educated youth have very little
access to this culture of the Tamils. As we have got great kavyas or literature in Sanskrit, like Kalidasa, etc., we have got great epics in the Tamil language which are as profound, sometimes I should say more profound, than in Sanskrit verse, such as Cilappatikaram, Manimekalai, Valayapathi, Kundalakeci and Civaka Cintamani. These are the five great Tamil epics. Only those who are capable of understanding this classical Tamil, not the ordinary workaday Tamil, may be able to appreciate the masterly exposition in Tamil of 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 in poetic style by great experts in other languages also. 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 one or two books that I suggested: Foundations of Indian Culture by Aurobindo, Human Cycle by Aurobindo, Eastern Religions and Western Thought by Dr. Radhakrishnan, and other introductory books like The Spiritual Heritage of India by Swami Prabhananda, and I added one more the other day, Vedic Religion and Philosophy by Swami Prabhananda. Read these books. You will have some idea as to what actually is the implication of what I am speaking to you.

When you read the epics, this glorious Ramayana and the 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 they are so impressive, so catching, so enlightening and absorbing, that you would not like to keep the book down. Some of the plays of Shakespeare also are like that. When you start reading some of the plays of Shakespeare, you would not like to keep the book down unless you complete the whole thing—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 keep them down unless you go through the whole book, so absorbing they are. So the spirit of a novel, the spirit of a literature, the spirit of a heroic poem, the spirit of a spiritual teaching, all these spirits are 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.

The literary aspect of Sanskrit in the epic Ramayana 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 now. It is moving, yet it does not appear it is moving at all. Calm, quiet, leisurely and majestically, royally, the Ganga is moving now in this season.
But see her in 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 Mahabharata Sanskrit; virile poetry is the Mahabharata, whereas the Ramayana may be said to be a feminine type of poetry, calm, quiet, sober, leisurely, not yelling out roughly. Rough and rue poetry is sometimes seen in the Mahabharata. Calm and quiet, beautiful poetry is in the Ramayana.

I shall tell you something about the origin of the Ramayana epic and the origin of the Mahabharata epic for your diversion, 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 krounchi. Krouncha is a variety of birds. And the couple were on the tree. A hunter shot an arrow at the male. The poet, Sage Valmiki, was looking at it, feeling grieved and struck to the quick. He uttered one imprecation, cursing this hunter. This verse is the beginning of the Ramayana in Sanskrit.

\[ Mā niśāda pratiṣṭhāṁ tvamagamaḥ śāśvatīḥ samāḥ, yat kraunçamithunādekaṁ avadhīḥ kāmamohitam : \]

Wretched man! Eagerly, affectionately the couple were seated on the tree; the lover and the beloved were sitting in great joy inwardly. You struck one of them cruelly. Therefore, I utter this word: May you not live long. You die as you made the poor bird also die.

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

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 of glorifying anyone. I was, rather, in a mood of cursing.”

“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?” asked the sage.

This is the first poem, the first verse of a type of a poem in Sanskrit, they say, 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 poem during the time of Rama himself, not after the passing away of Rama. He was a contemporary of Rama. As events took place, he wrote. Some people say that he wrote it 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 avatars 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 think of somebody?”

“Why, no problem. Ganesha is there,” Brahma said. “Ganesha will be your clerk. He will take down whatever you say. Let the epic Mahabharata come. I bless you with success.” So Brahma requested Ganesha, “You please help. 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 one condition: My pen should not stop. If you start thinking in the middle and 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 continuously speak 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 also thought of a peculiar tactic of putting Ganesha to a little difficulty. He said, “I put also one condition, that without understanding what I say, you should not write.” So purposely, to make Ganesha think a little while as to what he is saying, here and there he put such hard-nut verses that it is not easy to make out the 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 lakh of 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 as the story of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, as the Ramayana was written by Valmiki as the story of Rama on the one hand and Ravana on the other. A great wonder is this set of epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; and if you want to read a shortened form, or the abridged form of the great epic, you can read the beautiful English rendering of it by Sri Rajagopalachari. Sri Rajagopalachari’s rendering of the Ramayana and Mahabharata are published by Bharatiya Vidyabhan, Bombay, and he brings the true spirit of the whole 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 is Ramayana, what is Mahabharata. Even the name of these epics they have not heard. Knowing that even modern youth who are so-called educated ones, IAS officers and so on, are not acquainted even with the basic knowledge of the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, Rajagopalachari took them up. He originally wrote it in Tamil, and then he put it in English. So you can read these two books, Rajagopalachari’s
rendering of Ramayana and Mahabharata. I am not asking you to read bigger volumes as they are very confusing, so these two are good enough. Today we close with this brief consideration.
Chapter 6

Quandaries in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata

The epics play a significant role in the cultural values of people. This speciality of the 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, as well as 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 your own soul, yourself, the individual. The whole of existence is comprehended in this classification of God, world and soul. Everything that follows as a matter of life in any of its departments has its roots in the concept of this threefold visualisation of reality: God, world and soul.

While the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Srutis, the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, and the Aranyakas 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 also, which is not an essential concern of the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads.

I mentioned to you 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? It is the arrangement of the individuals themselves into a group or pattern of living for the purpose of a notion of a systematised convenience. Geographically, ethically, historically or traditionally will the reason behind this classification take a form.

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 personal education of the individual through the stages of life, on which we bestowed sufficient thought. It is the concept of the purushartha—dharma, artha, kama, moksha—and the varna ashrama dharma, as it is known in terms of social classification of function of people, and the internal educational process of vertical ascent of consciousness. This is something like 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 yesterday that the emotional side of human nature requires to be attended 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 the 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 feeling
aspect is at the back of even our activities in life, and we do not generally 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 yesterday.

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, rising gradually from the potentials of the disintegration of society that also may be there 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 to you that for your edification you may read the brief presentations exquisitely done by Sri Rajagopalachari in his abridgement of the story of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata because merely listening to the story will not do you much good. The story as a novel, for instance, moves, carrying us forward along the lines of our feelings, which touches our heart 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 also come and 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 understanding and rationality, or we are forced to logically come to a decision which is not compatible with our instinctive feelings.

The logicality 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 prose or abridgement.

The mystical interpretation of the epics, the spiritual connotation that seems to be there at the back of the story, 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 the 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 demonical 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 demonical 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 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 causing 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 a little 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 up one over the other, wherein the outer knot is attempted to be untied first and the inner knots are removed 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, among many others of that kind, illustrates the spiritual activity of the human individual in withdrawing its concern from spiritual 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. So the movement is from the internal to the external. The internality involved in perception is, again, a consequence of a drop or 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 face 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 engages itself in active operational occupation, 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 originally individuality was. Avatars, Incarnations, are the subject of the Puranas. We say Vishnu has taken ten Avatars, 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 Avatars. 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 relation 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. The 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-avatars, Amsa-avatars, or Purna-avatars, as they are called—that is, segmented Incarnations, lesser percentage of Incarnation, or complete Incarnation. If the entire sunlight is focused through a beam, it will be hot and radiant as the original sunlight is, which is something like a Purna-avatara of the sun, but if this light is diluted through an aperture which is also 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.

However, the Incarnation is a conscious descent of the Universal into the particular, and the birth of people like us is an unconscious coming from the Universal to the particular, though we are equally conscious; otherwise, something has hindered the manifestation of that consciousness in us due to karma. It is believed that Avatars 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 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 Avatars, of which Rama is one, and Krishna is another.

Rama Avatara is the subject of the Ramayana of Valmiki; Krishna Avatara is the subject of the Mahabharata. Yesterday I mentioned to you the literary beauty of Valmiki’s poem 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 Pandavas of 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 the 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 are suddenly confronted with some realities of life which hold themselves in a manner which was never expected in their innocence of childhood. 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.

So the marriage takes 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 going to the wilderness of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata context. 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 deities, everywhere glorious preparation for the coming of the new king, and a little hunchback put down all the glory and the joy and the royal preparation and the power of Dasharatha and the expectations of Rama himself. A little thing like a small grain of sand sitting on the retina 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 and presidents, and so on. Gold and silver, milk and honey, these are the stuff of life. This is what we are 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; when we touch it, it has its own sting.

Both in the Ramayana and 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 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 will be ahead of us. Every step 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 their gears, and it appeared as if they had nothing to say in this matter, one for one reason, 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 one case; the dharma of sticking to the principle of royal justice was the cause of the other, in the case of the Mahabharata.

You will be surprised, actually, if you read the original Ramayana, that Dasharatha did not openly say, “Please 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 say, “Go!” Kaikeyi took this task upon herself and said, “I am telling his royal word. Go! And as long as you are standing here, he will not wake up from this. He will die.”

What a shock! It is told us that Rama did not take it as a shock, but he did take it as a shock also, if you read Valmiki himself. It was a mix-up of honey and poison 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 mix-up of earth and heaven put together, and this peculiar human tragic situation is exquisitely portrayed in the beautiful poetry of Valmiki. You should read Valmiki only, not the prose or the abridgement of the Ramayana, in order to know what actually was the feeling of people at that moment.

The Ayodhya Kanda of the Valmiki Ramayana is a history of human emotion, comedy and tragedy mixed up together, the height of glory ahead of one, and hell also at the foot. 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 the brothers in the Mahabharata. The movement of history is practically the same in all countries, though there are differences of minor detail.

Now, 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 is 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 is practically the same. 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 came 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 should be nothing here. Lakshmana’s power will see that Ayodhya ceases to exist.” He took up his bow and arrows, became red in his eyes, rage incarnate, and he would have done something actually. 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. He calmed him 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.

Why should Rama tell Lakshmana to keep quiet when injustice was done to Rama? Why did Yudhisthira tell the other brothers to keep quiet when the uttermost disgrace was poured upon them? The time had not come, was the feeling of Yudhisthira, and that 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 contradiction in this great predicament that is placed before us.

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 answer of Lakshmana. “What kind of father is this who does not know what is proper?” But Rama’s retort 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 among ourselves. Society sometimes seems to be unjust to us. But the society sometimes feels the individuals are rebellious and they are to be put down by the force of law. The 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 running if not for the welfare of 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 state and individuals.

But people who are more sober in their minds and who are having greater insight into the problems of human existence and 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. It is also not true that the state is independent of the individual. There is a harmonious relation between the two aspects of the existence: the individual and the collective.

This question is brought before us poignantly both in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata: Who is right and who is wrong? When Duryodhana was made to feel that he had done a great wrong to the Pandavas in throwing them out of the
kingdom and sending them to the forest, Duryodhana said, “What mistake have I committed? When Yudhisthira deliberately played dice and lost his own kingdom, in what way am I culpable?”

Sri Krishna raised this point in one context. “Did you not deliberately harm the Pandavas by trickery?”

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

But Krishna said, “There was adharma at the back of this 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 Yudhisthira? Shakuni played. Shakuni is not a king. Where is the justice? Unequals cannot play dice.” Yudhisthira 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. A king plays with a king. Duryodhana did not know the art of dice so he tricked Yudhisthira by putting forth Sakuni. 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, which Krishna pointed out. “So don’t talk to me saying that he lost the kingdom of his own will. There is trickery at the back.”

Similar is Lakshmana’s retort to Rama. “Brother, you do not understand truth properly. There is injustice at the back of this. Cunning is played by Manthara on the one side and Kaikeyi on the other side, and Dasharatha, the old man sitting calm and quiet, who 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 even at the moment of the part that is played by dharma, justice and law.

Does it 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 could 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. He 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 other 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, here we have the concept of dharma 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, you 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, he is thrown out because somebody says something? Though it is true that I have to obey the word of my father and I reap the consequences even if they are bitter, do I 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? So it may be right on the part of Rama to obey the word of the father who is, of course, to be respected in every way, but he had undeserved punishment, which was the point of Lakshmana, to which Rama did not agree. So this disagreement between the viewpoints of Rama and Lakshmana also 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. Anyhow, 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 has Rama to do with this matter? Why did he interfere? If it was because of the fact that he had friendship with Sugriva for the sake of reclaiming Sita, Vali also could have 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 is, God only knows.

And so many other questions arise. Of the dharmanishta Rama, the greatest of incarnations of dharma and justice, equal to whom nobody existed in this world, Valmiki says ramo vigrahavan 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 only 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. We are partly in heaven and partly in hell even today. 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 got our occupations whereby we earn our livelihood; we have got little conditions
which are earthly, physical, social, material, economic, together with the soul asking for liberation from all this turmoil. The quandary of the human existence presenting in a poignant manner the conflict between the higher and the lower, the transcendent and the empirical, the Absolute and the relative, is here before us in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, where on the one hand a 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. It is a conflict. The Mahabharata is a conflict, the Ramayana 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 one another. 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 practice. The spiritual practice, the sadhana, the japa, the meditation, whatever you are engaging yourself in, is the intricate disentanglement process that you are undergoing for the purpose of 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 yogesvarah krsno yatra partho dhanurdharaḥ, tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama (B.G. 18.78). God will not plough the field for you, He will not cook your food, but He will see that you are provided with the facility to plough the field and also to cook your food. But without His help you cannot plough the 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 tatah 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 he said, yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharma yato dharma 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 He is not present, all is hell. Sa hanisthan maha chidhram sa ch antha jada moodatha, yan mohurtham kshanam vapi Vasudevam na chintayeth (Pandava Gita 70). This is from the Pandava Gita: That moment is hell and the worst of things coming 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 your welfare, what it is that you need. Similarly, you should also know that He knows what is good for you. You should not interfere with His orders. Krishna said, “Do this.” Sometimes Arjuna could not understand what it is 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.

I read yesterday some little piece of poem from Aurobindo: 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 the bees.
Chapter 7

The Inner 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 content. We have already observed some aspects of this great Itihasa epic. Today 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, as you all know, 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 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. And from Dhritarashtra came the Kaurava family, and from Pandu’s line we have the Pandava family. They were all studying together happily 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 Kuru 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. This old Brahmin, Drona, was passing by. He asked them, “What are you all gazing at?”

“Oh, Dada, the ball has gone into the well,” they said.

“Shame on you, Kshatriya boys! You do not even know how to take the ball out from a well. See how I take it.” This 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. “There is a mystery man here who had struck a wonder before us. We cannot understand how a person can have such a power.” They went to Bhishma, the great grandfather, and reported this wonder.

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 other, 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 others, 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 the Kaurava children 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 gathered together 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 the hand of his daughter.
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 their consort and went to their little hut where they were living
incognito, unknown to people.

Sri Krishna went to their hut with a large retinue. A lot of gifts he brought,
elephants and horses and 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 Brahmin young 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. There was not
much of a talk. 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 sacrifice, which implies the
recognition of kinship 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 the ceremony commences, even today there
is a tradition 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 was 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 something very important. Bhishma, the grandsire,
knew who Krishna was. Others did not know. So when this question arose “Who
is the chief guest to be honoured before the ceremony commences?” nobody had
anything to say because how could you choose a person among thousands? If you
choose one, the others will be feeling hurt that you have not recognised them.
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? Are we all here for being 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 more.”

They were all mumbling and raising up their arms, and one of them, Shishupala, got very angry. He said, “The time has come that Kali has descended on earth. This is why respectable kings are insulted in the public assembly and a cowherd boy is being considered as chief guest.” And he went on haranguing for a very long time, deafening the ears of all people, who could not tolerate it any more. 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, “Calm, 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 he said “end has come”, the man got still more angry. “You fellow, old man, wrinkled face, you say that my end has come? I will tear your tongue just now.”

Bhishma said, “I will tear 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. An avalanche of abuses were poured on Sri Krishna in the worst of terms.

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 and four arms and 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.”

So everybody was coming and fondling this child who had all kinds of contortions, and one of the persons who came to see him was Krishna himself. When he touched the child, his extra limbs vanished and he became normal. His mother cried, “Oh, please, please, please save this child, save this child, save this child!”

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

The 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 him.”

Krishna replied, “No, I will give you a promise. Even if this boy insults me a hundred times, I will not do any harm. But if there are a hundred and one insults, that is a different matter.”
They say when this boy, who grew up into a prince called Shishupala, was abusing Krishna in the assembly, Sri Krishna was silently counting the abuses. All were wondering why Sri Krishna was keeping quiet, tolerating this noise; he did not say a word, and did not get up, and did not respond. But he was responding in a different way. A hundred over, a hundred and one. Then he got 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 an otherwise auspicious coronation ceremony of Yudhisthira. The whole sacrifice was an auspicious, most blessed event. It was a coronation ceremony of the king, and before that this happened. Vyasa Krishna Dvaipayana also was there. He said, “I am foreseeing something which is not good for this family. I think some tragedy is to fall on the entire Kuru and Pandava family. I think nobody can avert it.” Saying this, he left.

After that the coronation ceremony of Yudhisthira was performed, in which the Kuru brothers were also present as invitees. Duryodhana himself was appointed as the treasurer who collected 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 they will say, “How kind, how kind, how kind! How kind Yudhisthira is!” They will say, “This man is lavishly squandering.” The glory and 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. So cunningly Duryodhana managed the manoeuvring of a dice play in which he wanted to see that Yudhisthira lost his entire kingdom and he became a pauper. This was done. As you all know the story of the Mahabharata well, I will not go into the further details of all these incidents.

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 they 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 themselves 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 a game. They do not know the suffering inside. The Pandavas and Kauravas as little babies were happy indeed. Later on the community consciousness arises gradually 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. The little children may even go into the house of even an enemy neighbour and ask for sweetmeats, not knowing what kind of person he is. They are innocent. But the parents will say, “Don’t go there. They are not our friends. These are our friends. They are our enemies. This land is ours. That land is not
ours. 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, schoolboys do not know much of these kinds of things. They are initiated into the consciousness of rivalry, the goodness and 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. Clashes start. 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 even in offices where people work together for a situation 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 purposes of a single person, a community or a larger group, as the case may be. It can be even 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. They compare God’s way of things 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 you are, the less you mind interference from people. The weaker you are, the more do you rise up and show your vehemence. And the lion knows its strength. Why should it bother? It will simply keep quiet; even if you pelt stones at it, it will not get up at all. But once it gets up on its feet, no one can stand before it.

God is like that. If you have some problems, He will see that the problems continue. Let them go on for some time. And if you have the greed for pleasure or any kind of desire, He will allow you to have that for a long time, to learn by experience. But there comes a moment when He will not tolerate it any more. 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 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 never interfered with these skirmishes in the family of the Pandavas and Kauravas. Dice play was going on, the family feud was increasing, the Pandavas were in the forest and suffering 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, but he never took cognisance, as it were, of even the thirteen years of suffering of these boys. When the thirteen
years were over, then he came with a large body of his friends to the city of King Virata where they 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 stipulation of being away for thirteen years is over. Now their share has to come. But how it will come? We will send a messenger to the Kuru 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 and he said, "Nothing doing. Go home. Go from here!" He did not succeed.

Then Sri Krishna suggested some suitable person should 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 said, "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? Will you kindly let me know?"

Sanjaya, the minister, said, "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, if the whole world is on the 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 path, 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 visualised the emptiness 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."

"Well, I shall tell you one thing. I have come for a purpose. Let the purpose be fulfilled. Then I shall have supper. And 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 in 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 ground 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 he 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 opened, and Sri Krishna went for delivering 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.”

Krishna said, “This is a very adamant reply for a humble request that I am making. Assemblies, great men, wise people seated here, 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 away, and conspired to imprison Krishna so that the strength of the Pandavas would not be any more there. They secretly conspired—Duryodhana, his brothers, Vrishasena, and Karna—that this fellow must be bound up. Krishna should not go back, because if he goes he will play some mischief. Satyaki, the friend of 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,” warned Satyaki.

“Very good. Let them try,” said Krishna.

“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.”

And 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 away and facing in another direction. Gandhari said, “Are you mad, my son? Have you sense? You talk of imprisoning an honoured guest who has come from a long distance? Shut up.”

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 of
the people there, frightening them. Uttering not any further word, he left, and the war took place afterwards.

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 life of people, there is jubilation and 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 only 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 sarvam vivekinah (Y.S. 2.15): The whole world is a heap of sorrow to the eye of a discriminating individual.

Don’t you think the world is beautiful? There is milk and honey flowing everywhere. 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 the illusion that has been cast before our eyes. But the discriminating one knows, as Sri Krishna knew the intention behind Duryodhana, even behind this grand reception that he offered. So 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 it has no solidity behind it. When I say the world is made up of such porous elements, we also are included in it. You and I, all of us, are part of this world. So when the 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, begins with a glorious beginning, of course. All is well—royal, grand, and pompous presentations of every kind—but there is tragedy in the end. The Mahabharata concludes with a great message of Bhagavan Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author, who says, “Shall I tell you what my messages in the Mahabharata are? All accumulation is going to end in the diminution of it to nil. How much money, how much property, how much land can you gather? One day you will lose it. All accumulation ends in the vanishing of it at any moment. Those who have risen to high status in society will fall afterwards. 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 come down, 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? Until Yama comes and catches hold of your throat, which is an event that can take place 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, a verse from the Mahabharata again. As you know, winds blow on the surface of the ocean, and logs of wood flow 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. The wind blows in another direction, and the log goes that side. "Oh, bereavement, oh 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, not because there is something worthwhile in you; 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!” Suddenly one man dies tomorrow, the wife has gone, or the husband is drowned in a river. “Oh, gone, gone!” we say, because the wind has blown in another direction. As is the coming together in contact 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 logs will separate, so is bereavement in this world.

There is a message towards the end of the Mahabharata which is called Bharata Savitri. Harṣasthānasahasrāṇi bhayasthānaśatāni ca, divase divase mūḍhaṁ āviśanti na paṇḍitaṁ (B.S. 88): Hundreds of occasions we have every day to be happy, and also hundreds of occasions we have to be sorry. Why is it? In a moment you are smiling, and in the next moment you 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 be sorry. Does the day pass in one mood only? For a few minutes you are happy for some reason. For another few moments suddenly you feel that hell has descended on your head. 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 empires have gone to the dust, and do you think you 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 you think you will be in a better position? The whole thing goes.

Ūrdhvabāhurviraumyeṣa na ca kaścicchñoti me, dharmādārthaśca kāmaśca sa kiṁ arthaṁ na seyate (B.S. 89) The author of the Mahabharata, Krishna Dvaipayana, 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 housetop: 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 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.” So he was wailing every day. So in spite of having been enthroned on the kingdom 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. They all bundled up their baggage and went to the Himalayas for their final journey to the other world.

What is this Mahabharata telling you? Great joy, great enthusiasm, great wealth, kinghood, power, status, and all that you want in this world is finally to take you to the other world. Kingdom come. Nothing should be trusted finally as is reported by the sense organs. The senses are deceptive. They tell you everything topsy-turvy. They tell you that the world is there for your enjoyment, but it is like a crocodile that will catch hold of you one day and swallow you. Therefore, be not attached to anything in this world.

The Bhagavadgita is a part of the Mahabharata, and it will tell you 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 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 of the activity of the cosmos.

The great history of the world, the 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 also is a part and parcel of that action. Just as legs may feel that they are walking while actually the man 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; we call it God in religion, the Absolute in philosophy, the Ultimate Reality, towards which everything is moving gradually in the process of evolution. We are not actors in this world, we are participants 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 that it is me. It is a part and parcel of the cooperative activity of the total organism of the body.

Thus, the Bhagavadgita tells us 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 expectation of the fruit of your duty is not in your hand. 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 people cry for rights these days: “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 content 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 māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhikṣetram yogāścetam 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 Upanishads cater to the intuitional and 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 through direct apprehension. You cannot read the Veda and the Upanishad 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 other languages. I was presented with one or two volumes of that translation with the original Sanskrit mantras printed on one page. 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—is the Veda to be understood merely as a Sanskrit poem which requires only knowledge of etymology, meter and grammar for its meaning? Is the Veda 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 Veda?"

"This is not our business, and we cannot say anything in this matter," was his reply.

It was Sri Aurobindo and some of his followers who tried to look at the Veda 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 of 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 Natural activity.

There is a famous doctrine in the 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. You must also know why clouds gather. We are told that clouds are caused by the heat of the sun in summer,
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 pressures, especially near mountains and forests, they drop as water.

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. The full moon is the day when 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 upon 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 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 also are pulled up. People think in a different manner on full moon and new moon days, it is said, and people whose minds are not normal in the accepted sense of the term feel the accentuation of this pull and 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 moon exerting its power 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 the water, etc. Up to the invisible realm we are taken by the Panchagni Vidya doctrine. A central action seems to be taking place somewhere—you may call it in modern terms interstellar space—and today science also has been telling us that there are certain things called cosmic rays coming from interstellar distance; how they originate, no one knows even to this day. 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 the head as a textbook for our daily guidance; they are repositories of wisdom that is beyond the comprehension of the sense organs, and even the mind. So the translations of the Vedas available these days are only the shell, the outer covering, as it were, of the form of the mantras that we have, but not the inner wisdom of it.
The Upanishads too are difficult to understand. Their meditations are deep. Every little event in the world, everything that happens anywhere, is considered an object of meditation. The Upanishads do not meditate merely on that conceptualised, ethereal Absolute. If you read the Chhandogya Upanishad—for instance, in its earlier chapters, prior to the Fifth—fantastic forms of meditation are delineated, some which are beyond our comprehension, and some which look very funny, fantastic, and even meaningless from a purely historical point of view. The littlest 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 you can rise gradually through the levels of the manifestaton 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 from an epic point of view. As I mentioned yesterday, 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 yesterday 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 the 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 Gita, there are eighteen parvas, or knots, you may say, halting places, in the Mahabharata. Adi Parva is the first one, Sabha Parva is the second one, Aranya-parva or Vana Parva is the third one, Virata Parva is the fourth one, Udyoga Parva is the fifth one, Bhishma Parva is six, Drona Parva is seven, Karn Parva is eight, Shalya Parva is nine, Sauptika Parva is ten, Stri Parva is eleven, Shanti Parva is twelve, Anushasana Parva is thirteen, Ashvamedhika Parva is fourteen, Ashramavasika Parva is fifteen, Mausala Parva is sixteen, Mahaprabhanika Parva is seventeen, Svaragahana Parva is eighteen. 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. One of the reasons perhaps 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, Lila, etc.; so in a way the eighteen books of the Mahabharata plus the nineteenth one, the Harivamsa, apart from
there 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 Mahabharata and 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. At that time it is said that Narada, the great sage, came and asked Vyasa, “What is it that you are brooding over?”

“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 is what 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 you want to know about dharma, artha, kama or moksha is in the Mahabharata, and if you do not find something there, you will not find it anywhere else in the world. Such a great thing was written, and still he 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 picture. Beautiful! But he is not merely that. God is not merely power, glory, majesty, elephantine strength, which, of course, He is also, but He is also beauty, love, tenderness, affection. That aspect you have not touched. This is why you do not feel fully satisfied. I request you to write another text altogether which will lay special emphasis on his beauty, tenderness, goodness, lovableness, 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 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 the new work called 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 other Puranas, but the Bhagavata is not like that. It is knotted. Every sloka is very hard. In spite of eight thousand verses being there in the Mahabharata, which are very hard to understand, which Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa seems to have composed to halt
the memory of Ganesha when he was writing—in spite of that, there is some simplicity about the style of the Mahabharata; but the Bhagavata is not like that.

And this Samadhi Bhasha of Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, which is the Bhagavata Mahapurana, is also constituted of twelve books, not eighteen. The first one is the introductory chapter, the second one goes into details of creation, etc., the third one 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 chapter or skanda, which is ninety chapters in length, is devoted to the early boyhood days of Krishna in Brindavan and Mathura, his childhood days. It ends with the death of Kamsa. Krishna’s more public family life, in a mature age, is the subject of the second part of the tenth book of the Bhagavata, but he does not touch the points that we have in the Mahabharata. All the great things that we hear about Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata we will not find in the Srimad Bhagavata and similarly, 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, also with a touch of tragedy in the end.

The Veda says, “I am afraid of these people who approach me without the knowledge of the epics and the Puranas,” because the epics and the Puranas—especially the reference is to the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata—explain the inner meaning and potentiality of the Vedas. But if you approach the Vedas 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”. You will slaughter the Veda if you try to understand it without having read the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata with your own brain and intellect. As I mentioned, the intellect and the brain are 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 Bhagavata is a condensed and more amplified form of whatever we have about him in the Harivamsa of the Mahabharata and the Vishnu Purana. It is Vyasa’s last work, his Samadhi Bhasha, the final work, and Vyasa perhaps put his pen down after he completed writing the Srimad Bhagavata, as it is sometimes said that Shakespeare put his pen down 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 Vasishththa 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. What that supplement is, is not mentioned. The Yoga Vasishththa is
also said to be, according to common consensus, the work of Valmiki only. 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 you read the Yoga Vasishtha, you will find 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 will end with a little longer verse. Similar is the style of the Yoga Vasishtha. The whole thing is in thirty-two-lettered *anustup* metre, but every chapter will end 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 also should be included under the category of the epics. So 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.

You will find, if you travel from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, all people who are called Hindus follow the religion of the epics and the Puranas only. You 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 will read the Gita, they will chant the Vedas and study the Upanishads, but in practical life the outlook of the religion of the Hindus today is not of the type of the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita. Everybody is a worshiper of some god or the other who is not mentioned in the Vedas or the Upanishads or the Gita. Our gods are epic gods only. We have got Ganesha, Devi, Durga, Narayana, Vishnu, Suriya, 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. It is something very interesting. Historians of religion may be interested in finding out how religion of the Hindus today has become an epic religion, a Purana religion, rather than a Veda religion or an Upanishad or Gita religion. Why it has become like that is something for scholars to investigate. Anyhow, the fact stands as it is.

So we have a brief outline of the content of the Vedas and 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 actually do we mean by ‘spiritual outlook of life’? 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 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 the contact of 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 only concerned 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 a putting together of these two phases into a comprehensiveness so that one permeates the other.

Spiritual life is, therefore, a permeation of a transcendent outlook of life which takes into consideration the transcendence or the super-physical reality of the cosmos, but at the same time it 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 for 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.

So the relationship between the world and God is something like the relationship of the lower extremities of the body and the higher part. You 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 only, 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 legs are there. The brain has to see, so eyes are there. The brain wants this and that, and 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 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 you connected with the world in some way? That connection of yours with the world is the reason why you are so concerned with the events taking place in this world. Your 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 for becoming a spiritual individual is also to be clarified. There is much about this theme of
renunciation in religious and spiritual life. The world has to be renounced in order that you may become spiritual and religious. What kind of world are you 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 a religious man. 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 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 your mind 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 you are. But you keep yourself intact with all your ego and all your longings, and want to cut off relationships with things other than yourself. It is like the leg saying, "I have 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 you go, you are in the natural world only. How can you be physically away from the world on which you 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 you as an object of perception. The world cannot be outside you because you, as the perceiver of the world, also are 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 scientist so-called working in a laboratory, should not ignore the fact that his very presence, and the very presence of the instrument that he is using, disturb the object that he is trying to observe so that nobody can observe the true nature of a thing as long as instruments are necessary, and instruments disturb.

The holistic nature of any object—that is to say, the inclusive character of any object, which is related to the subject also, in a way—makes it difficult for any particular subject, such as the scientist, for instance, to have a clear insight into the nature of the object. The subject, who is the perceiver, the scientist, influences the very existence of the object. Your very conception of the object,
your knowledge of the object, your awareness that something is there outside you, implies the fact of your connection with the object. Unless you are in some way related to the object, the knowledge of the existence of the object itself would not be possible. The object is not totally outside the process of perception. If it is 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 connected vitally with the object so that there is no such thing as a real perception of an object as 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. You have to lift yourself up totally, holistically, completely, from the very phenomenon of world perception, including your existence in that atmosphere. This is very hard.

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

When you are moving within the dream world, wherever you go, you are inside the dream world only. What is the use of moving in the dream world? Your dream has to be cut off, and you have to awaken yourself from the dream world. If you travel within the dream world, it does not become religion. Even if you are a great yogi within the dream world, it is, after all, a dream yoga, so it will not help you. The point is that you 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 don’t be in a hurry. You have to, first of all, find out your capacity—to what extent you can understand and appreciate the values of things in the world.

Illusions come first; enlightenment comes afterwards. 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 assent. You churn the life of your personality and the whole world itself for the sake of the nectar of immortality. When you churn life, God does not come first. The devil comes first as poisonous fumes. They expected nectar from the ocean but what they got was dust, a suffocating poison. The worst of things came while they were searching for the best of things.
This what you will experience in your spiritual life. The total opposite of what you are expecting will be there before you in your meditation, to the shock of your nerves. But if you 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 you persist continuously in spite of these blinding fumes of a darkening venom or smoke that is in front of you, you 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 you many a time. “I have already had a vision of things. Reality has been comprehended. Now my next step is to uplift the world.” All sorts of desires will come to you. These are temptations. Gold and silver and social status, and the offer of a vital potentate in this world, all these will also be presented to you by the gods in heaven. *Sthānyupanimantrane saṅgasmayākaraṇaṁ punaraṇiṣṭaprasaṅgāt* (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, in this connection says, “What do they 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. Now here is the fruit of your great *tapasya*. Come.’” Indra and all the gods will descend. They do not descend immediately; none of you has seen these gods because you 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 your deep meditation do they start kicking up all this dust before you, and these temptations like the *ratnas* or jewels that came from the milky ocean during churning are also illustrative of what we are going to expect in our meditations. First comes blinding darkness, venom, the total opposite of what you are expecting, to the shudder of your personality. If you persist in it, temptations of this kind come. Lastly, if you overcome even these temptations, the fear of death will take care of you. “Oh, I am dying. Something is happening. The nerves are cracking!” You will find that you cannot understand what is happening in front of you.

Some such phenomenon arose even during the *samudra manthana*, or the churning of the ocean. A battle took place between the gods and the *asuras*. That state of affairs is worse than the earlier temptations and even the venom. How will you face it? The world will fight with you. “Away with you!” the world will say, and how will you face it? The world is so very enormous before your little puny personality. At that time you must have the courage to expand the potentials of your personality inside and be convinced that you are not so puny as you appear. Your potentials inside are as wide as the universe itself. Divinity is larger than the universe. With that strength, with that might of inner awakening, you will face the whole world of temptation and the battle which is presented before you. 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 your own personal existence. You 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 phenomena of the world, but a transmutation of our very relationship with things. Therefore, you can be religious and spiritual wherever you are in the world; and wherever you are, your problems will be the same.

This being taken care of properly and written down in your diary, 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 fundamentalistic 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 and 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 worldly. It is a total picture which the universe presents before you, 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, in the manner of the arrangement of material during the construction of a house, constitute what is called the individuality of the 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 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, internal to the outer skin, we have the lungs and 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 minds. 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 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, which is something we cannot understand. We do not operate the cells of the brain deliberately. We do not operate any limb of the body. They take care of themselves. There is an adjusting capacity among the limbs of the body for a purposiveness which is before them.

It is said that the cells in the brain are connected to every atom in the cosmos. A cosmic emporium, as it were, is deposited within the skull of the human being, and if all the cells of the body and all the internal structures of what we call the brain are to operate simultaneously, the entire cosmos will be revealed with a direct apprehension of even the minutest things. But most of them are completely closed as pigeon holes we cannot open. 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, so that 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 is connected with the cosmic energy system. 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 segregated presentation of the world available to us in terms of space and time. The
scientific visualisation of this continuum of energy, to which the whole matter can be reduced, is non-spatial and non-temporal. Events in the world, they say, do not take place in space. That is to say, events have no location. But we see events taking place only in some place. We never see something taking place everywhere, in all space, in all time. This is only to say that we cannot know how events operate at all. The 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, non-local, which means to say they are non-spatial, and perhaps non-temporal also.

What do we mean by saying 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. Our frequency level of apprehension through the brain cells has come down to such a gross form that we see a totally different picture from what actually is 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 the 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 wonderstruck to realise how our mind is connected to 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, 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 the brain, or 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 the location there where you are, 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 do I touch you. There is absolutely no connection between you and me. I am seeing you through the eyeballs, but the 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. The mountain has not entered the 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 you cannot know that it is existing at all. You can see an object; you can know that there is something outside you, but you cannot know that there is a cosmic mind because objects are localised, there are in some place. 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 also is included. This is the reason why you cannot see anything that is universal in nature. You cannot see God, you cannot see heaven, you cannot see anything that is larger in dimension than the location of your mind. We are particularised individualities; therefore, the mind involved in this individuality will be able to apprehend only an object which is equally individual 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 organ is there, and the wonder of the mind is greater than the wonder of the vital system and 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. It 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 sarvam vijānāti, taṁ 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 you 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 consciousness be converted into an object by anyone? 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 you know that you are existing? You know that the world exists, and people exist, and everything exists, because of the operation of the sense organs and the mind in the act of perception, inference, etc. You can prove that something exists or something does not exist by the logic of the perceptual process, but how do you know that you are existing? What is the proof that you are taking advantage of in the demonstration of your own existence? These days we ask for proof. We want proof for the existence of God, and there is a need to demonstrate the action of anything in the world. We are living in a world of verification, observation and experiment, etc. What kind of verification, experiment, can you conduct in regard to your own existence? Can you prove that you are existing?
Inasmuch as there is no conceivable proof in regard to your own existence, how would you, based on the hypothesis of your existence which itself cannot be proved, ask for a proof for other things? Does it mean that all logic is meant for other people only, and it is not applicable to you? You do not want to prove that you are existing. You think it is achieved. Then why should you not achieve everything else also? How is it that you are so generous to your 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 in the house and achieving ownership, as it were. “Who is this stupid person who is coming and achieving ownership?” 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,” said the beggar.

“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 hard-core 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. He cannot prove that the world exists. Let alone the difficulty in proving the existence of your own self by logic, you cannot even prove that the world exists except for the fact that you 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 of 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. Vitally 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. Can you 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 descended into this predicament physically and socially. 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 the involvements look like a mess heaped up one over the other. “Oh, I have got so many involvements,” people sometimes complain. “Many things to do.” 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, have to be dissected into the basic essentials. Even if a person has twenty illnesses, 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 afterwards 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 we have no assistance coming forth from anybody. You have to be your own masters in the end. Even if there is a Guru or a teacher or a master or a guidebook, they will be of assistance to you up to a particular point only. 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 the 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 the person himself. Two spiritual seekers will 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 yours. 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 we make every day with the outer environment of society and nature, due to which we seem to be sometimes advancing and sometimes retrograding, or moving back. We are happy and unhappy, both at the same time. We are not unhappy the whole day, nor are we happy the whole day. At least for a moment in the day there is something irking, pricking like a needle, and making us feel troubled; but at other times we 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: vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual.

What are these adjustments and maladjustments? How are we 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 the teacher only. Cosmological maps are there which are laid down before us 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 we will know how to retrace our steps back. The objects of the world look as if they are outside, disconnected from us, and we seem to be sitting here as if we are the observers of the world outside. When we look at the world outside, we feel it is at a distance. The distance that seems to be there between us 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 to the Alps. They were 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,” he said, pointing to a peak in the distance.

What is this? How can you say that you are standing on a thing that is so far away from you?

The mental structure of our personality is so constituted that it drives our consciousness out into the location of an outwardly placed spatiotemporal object. The sides, the phases, and the principles that constitute our 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 is 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 have to 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 phase 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 the highest level of its Godhead state 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 of 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 it also contains three other books 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 his minister Vidura 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?" Dhritarashtra asked.

"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," replied Vidura.

But Dhritarashtra was awake. Then Vidura gave a large homily to Dhritarashtra 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 an 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," said Vidura.

"Bring the master," said Dhritarashtra.

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

So Sanatsujatiya, Bhagavadgita, and Mokshadharma are the three great books, and the fourth one is the Anugita. It occurs in the Ashvamedha Parva of the Mahabharata. 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.” Paraṁ hi brahma kathitam yogayuktena tanmay (Anugita 1.12): “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 it in epics like the Harivamsha or 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 would have realised the cultural pattern of India is rooted in an outlook of life which is its religion or dharma. Many people say this so-called Hinduism, the name that has been given to the outlook of life which is India’s basic foundation, this outlook of life, is also a way of life. The philosophy and religion of our country 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 our country, 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
other ‘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 others also 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.

The whole of humanity was reflected in Arjuna, for instance. He was the
middleman who 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. Bhima was the opposite of it. 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 only 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 a reference just now. You
must be a whole man first before your actions can be wholesome. Otherwise,
your 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 such 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 minds are wandering in different directions, and a holistic, Gestalt
pattern of thought is not our method in 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 have overemphasis laid on 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 from a partial view of its own structure on things
outside, and we see a partial side of nature, the other side being completely
blotted out.
For instance, we see green leaves. The 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 every other possibility, and absorbs only one particular aspect of it, 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 inherent within its own composition. The point is that the mind of a person never acts as a whole. Therefore, the whole of our personality does not come in contact with the world. Therefore, we see everything partially. We never 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 one cut into several pieces, so that we are fragments of personality scattered, as it were, in the region of perception and are seeing a multitude of 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 it is also the integrated functioning 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.

God bless you. Om Namo Narayanaya.
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 problem of the nature of Reality. Earlier, in its precedent stages, when it 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. It does not always express this wonderment in its initial stages of evolution. The more material is the outlook, the more physical is the need, the more externalised is the perceptual process, and 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 if it begins with wonder and an awesome feeling in respect of the occurrences in nature, it begins 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 unless there is 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, it was 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 there is any kind of change observable in the universe, there must be something causing it. We may individually posit 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.

Since we cannot identify or collate conditions behind rainfall with the rise of the Sun, for instance, or the occurrence of seasons, the mind takes resort to the easiest way of positing causes individually, independently 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 operations which need not necessarily be the operation behind the rise of the Sun or the falling of the rains. 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, as we all know, 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, as it were. A god is a name that we give to any super-physical power which has to be at the back of all physical phenomena, and 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.

So the gods whom we worship, whether they are the gods of the Veda Samhitas or 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 gods do not touch the ground. They stand above in mid-air. This is a religious picturisation of the cause being super-physical. That is to say, the cause of a physical occurrence or event has to be super-physical, 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 religion, for instance, or even the religious themes that we observed in our studies earlier, 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 Veda, 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. Of course, one brother is different from the other brother, but they act together. We have the Maruts, for instance, in the Veda Samhitas—forty-nine gods working together in collaboration—and there are varieties of the
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 causes of the 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, like particles of matter—an assumed atom, for instance—we will picture it only as a kind of little globular dimension. Even if it be a minutest sand particle capable of observation only through a microscope, we can think it only as a little substance with dimension. So 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, it is light, it is brown in colour, it has a shape, it is round, it is square, it is oblong, it is 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. A thing that has no dimension, also the mind cannot think.

The other 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 can be a relation of one thing determining another 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, 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 in one condition only.

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 Suriya, Ahriman, Mitra, Agni; it may be Zeus, Thor or Oden. It does not matter who the god is, but that god is to have the characteristics of these limitations which the mind has set upon them, 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 caused the mind to posit super-physical powers, which are called the independent causes behind events taking place in the world, and they 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. And another peculiar feature we attribute to the gods is necessitated by the fact that all matter and space and time, and the space and time complex, seem 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 spatiotemporal 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 the 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 are conjuring up in our mind, against our own conviction that things cannot be thought without space and time involvement. 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; on the other hand, there is the impossibility of the mind to think anything which is not in space and time.

So 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 there was a fond hope in the earlier stages of religion 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, the *swarga*, or heaven, of the immortals.

But there has also been 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 the 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 also would not like to leave this world completely. Do you 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 as long as possible. Do you believe that the world is worthless? Why should there be medical treatment and lengthening processes of 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. *Gatāgatāṁ 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 advance of religion in the direction that it takes gradually through the process of evolution has certain ups and downs. It is not a linear movement like directly walking on a tarred road, as it were, with closed eyes. It is like the road to Badrinath with its repeated climbings and descents. There are so many hills which we have to ascend, and there are depressions in the valley which we have to get down. 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 in 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 it licks with the tongue of desire, yet 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 with natural medicaments, etc., how long will this long life last? If 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 pursues us even
then. That which will kill us after fifty or sixty years can kill us after two million years also, so we have not escaped the clutch of death merely by prolonging life. So 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 you 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 could we abolish desire? Desire has been explained as the pressure of matter upon the soul. It tells us, "I am also here, and I am not nothing." Who can say that this world is nothing? Is there anyone who can say it is an illusion? It is 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 love our little brother, this Earth, also. 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 completely obliterated. 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. As they say, the Moon pulls the whole ocean, and it also pulls the minds of people. The Moon has 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 that 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 which seems to be the architectural designer of this whole world.

The pluralistic concept, the polytheistic concept, the group concept or the herotheistic concept boils down to a 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. It does not mean that there are ten bodies behind ten fingers. There is only one body controlling the operation of the ten fingers. In a similar manner, manifold operations in the universe, apparently looking different and contradictory to one another, can be the work of one single architect, a designer, an all-knowing I, an all-powerful controller, or a creator. Gradually the mind rises to the necessity of positing the universal existence, which is the supreme Father in heaven, the God, the Vishnu, the Narayana, the Siva or the Brahma, whatever be the nomenclature of 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 also 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 dimension of the effect will require an equally large dimension as the cause. So big is this universe, its end nobody has seen. Endless seems to be this physical universe, so 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? And 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 imminent force.

Now, the concept of all-pervasion has to be explained clearly. 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 the water pervades every fibre of the cloth. The water in the bucket pervades the whole fibrous structure of the cloth. This is an illustration of how one thing can pervade another thing completely. 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; the cloth has never become the water. Is it in this sense we say that God is all-pervading in the universe? Is He like water pervading the substance of this material universe? In that case, He would be totally different and He would remain transcendent.

Certain religions, especially the Semitic ones, have emphasised this transcendent aspect of God, and their abhorrence to the concept of immanence. They do not want to defile God by making Him immanent in this universe of sin and wretchedness. God would be contaminated by the evils of the world if we believe that God is immanent—that is, He is hiddenly the soul of even the smallest things in the world. 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 conception also is 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. He operates this world with His hands reaching from the skies. 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. Gods who are transcendent may be good friends, but there is some difficulty logically, namely, the relationship between 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 a 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 actually we are 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. 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 in future, and not putting Himself into 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 also would be a nothing, a zero. Is this world a nothing?

But the senses conclude that the world is not nothing. The 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.

So 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 in 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 Sankhya is a great advance that has been made over the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika extra-cosmic concept of God 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 extra-cosmic concept of Godhood was not obviated by the Sankhya. It only landed us in another problem, namely, the opposition between consciousness and matter, purusha and prakriti.

Today we conclude with this. We shall pursue it afterwards.
Chapter 11

The Universality of God

The quest of the human mind was the subject with which we began our session yesterday. It was found that the habit of the mind to seek causes behind the 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 the events in the world has to be outside the world, beyond the world, not identifiable with the world, because if the cause of the events in the world is not separable from the effects, the cause would get merged into the effects. That cannot take place because if the cause gets identified with the effect, there will be no relation between cause and effect.

We noted that there are certain habits of the mind, certain patterns 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 effect.

So goes the search for transcendent causes beyond the events in the world, and as they are transcendent, they also are super-physical. I am only briefly outlining what I told you yesterday. The super-physical 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, as I told you yesterday. They are super-physical, and therefore they can penetrate through matter. Even granite is not an obstacle to the gods. They will pierce through all things due to their subtlety of 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 will 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. So many things we can do 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 Mr. so-and-so, you or I, this 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. The 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 will arise. How are we to understand the connection of one God with another God? Logical rules 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. If we have to know the relation between A and B, A and B cannot know the relation, 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 be to certify the very independence of the so-called two Gods that we have posited. If there are many Gods, or even two Gods, we will 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, the further question arises as to the relation between God and this world. Yesterday 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 Him be above in His purity of heaven. For them 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 arises again as to what is the substance out of which the universe is made. We also touched upon this subject yesterday. 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 the *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 matter which is the stuff out of which the universe is fashioned, we have the same problem again 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 single subject: the question of relation. It is impossible to answer the question as to how one thing stands in relation to the other. And so, even if the 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. He 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 is a zero, finally. Many philosophers have concluded that perhaps this is the truth. 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 He is infinite, He is all-pervading. If He is all-pervading, there would be nothing to oppose Him as an object.

Yesterday I brought before you an illustration of the peculiar way in which you can understand all-pervadingness. I told you that water pervades the cloth which is dipped in a bucketful 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 it, the world will 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.

So what is the question? God pervades the world, not as water pervading cloth in a bucketful of water, but in a different matter 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 this world. The moment God is considered as something standing outside the world, the question of the relation between the two cannot be answered. So the transcendence of God boils down to the imminence of God. God is not merely outside the world in the sense of a transcendent element; He is also the material itself of the world. God becomes the world. He 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 a non-different instrumental as well as material cause of this universe. When we say He is the instrumental cause, we have to understand that He is responsible for the structure of this world. He is responsible for the shape the world has taken, the picture that is in front of us as the world. When we say He is a 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 which we chant every day—pūrṇamadah, pūrṇam idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate; pūrṇasya pūrṇam adhvāya 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 infinites either from the point of view of mathematics or from the point of view of logic. Two infinites are inconceivable because an infinite is that which occupies all space, so when the 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 the 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 you take away something from something else, something is less in that something from which this has come; but here it is not the case. If the whole thing has come from the whole thing, the remainder is not something that is less than whole. It is also whole only. 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 Parmahamsa. 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 needle’s eye.”

One devotee said, “Not possible! A camel cannot pass through the needle’s eye. 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 needle’s eye is thinking in terms of mathematics and logic, whereas the other one 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. You cannot do that, so do not apply your logic there. Mathematics does not work and logic does not operate in the kingdom of God. It is super-logical and super-mathematical.

That is why we sometimes consider the reality of the universe 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 the physical theory of relativity of Einstein and 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 in the theory of relativity. A person has come tomorrow, and he will return yesterday. Do you see any meaning in that? It has a meaning in relativity. It is possible. Such a thing can happen.

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana took place 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 Mahabharata, and certain parts of the cosmos have not yet received these vibrations, and 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 somewhere else. So events are not historical. According to the modern theory of physics also, events do not take place in space. Therefore, you cannot know where the Mahabharata or the Ramayana took place, where Christ was born, and where Krishna was. You should not say ‘was’, ‘is’, ‘will be’. All events take place in eternity, and therefore history does not ultimately apply to the nature of things.

Have you heard people saying that sometimes we see a star shining in the sky when 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, it has ceased to exist. 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. The object has ceased to be there. Logic cannot be applied to the realm of God, so God can pass a camel through the needle’s eye, 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 really there outside God. And if He fashions the world out of nothing, He will be like a magician making things appear as if they are there, though really they are not there.

But some schools of thought, some religious beliefs felt 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. How can we conclude that the world is a nullity? So 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 in the Sanskrit language Parinamavada. 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. We cannot have milk after it has become yogurt; yogurt cannot become milk once again. It is dead, finished. Has God become the world in that way by self-transformation so that God does not exist any more, and we have only the yogurt of this world? This cannot be. Why are we aspiring for God-realisation when God does not exist and has already become yogurt? The aspiration for God-realisation shows that God has not ceased to exist. He has not become this world because if something becomes something else, it has to be dead completely. It has to cease. 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 will not be in any way diminished, even by a bit. This is the reason why the transmutation theory, Parinamavada, cannot be applied to God.

The final thing these philosophers had to hinge 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 or a necklace. 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 is the pot. Actually, there is no such thing as the pot. It is clay that has assumed potness. Potness is a spatiotemporal condition. Space and time join together to create a peculiar condition called shape, and shape, independent of the substance which has taken that shape, cannot be there. This is an example of how there can be an appearance but substantial change need not be 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. Really it may not be there. This is called Vivartavada, the apparent theory of creation, like a snake appearing as a rope in twilight, in indistinct perception. Actually there is a snake; we can see it and jump over it in fright. We will 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 non-existent really, 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 they assume is 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. It is not *parinama*,
or transformation or transmutation, it is not actually a fashioning of the
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 into groups of gods, into a
one God—not merely a one God in the sense of a transcendent existence outside
the world, extra-cosmic, 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 no particulars existing.

Unfortunately for us, the universals are not visible things. They are invisible
to the physical eye. Only the particulars are seen by us. The eyes can see only
externality; therefore, universals, which are not outside the particulars but are
immanent, 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.

There are certain schools of thought, especially in the West, which go by the
name of nominalism, which hold 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 manufactured.
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
you have a quality without a substance? The quality has to inhere in the
substance, and so the nominalists think that the particulars are the real essences,
of which the generalities or universals are only abstractions.

But others like Plato and Aristotle in the West, 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 coins or a piece of paper called currency notes, or it can be in the form of a transferable commodity like rice, wheat, etc. Now, minus commodity, minus metal, minus the piece of paper, what is money? It is a concept of the power to purchase. The power to purchase is called money, which is only in the head 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 note, or a commodity which is transacted in commerce. But the thing itself is not the money. The value attached to it is the money. It can lose its value due to devaluation. Today a currency note is worth a hundred dollars, but tomorrow it is worth nothing because it has been devalued to zero. So the value that we attach to a particular piece of paper is the money thereof, and the substance that we are touching is not 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 and 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 best of positions, considers himself as a government servant, whose servant is he? It is an abstract concept, a value that is attached to the total which coheres in each individual, which keeps the nation intact as an ideology. 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 officials, 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 details of this subject, which is very deep. You have to read the Republic of Plato or the Shankara Bhashya of the Brahma Sutra, 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, and therefore God comes first and the world comes afterwards. God-consciousness is not an effect from 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 cells of the body, the brain cells, 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, you can extract God from all material things in the world. So behaviourist psychology—which is material psychology, holding that consciousness exudes from matter—is untenable.
What is the conclusion, then? Universals come first, particulars come afterwards. “God first, the world next, yourself last” is the sum and substance of Swami Sivananda 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, then 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 topsy-turvy 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 friend coming and he wants to entertain that person with tea, he will say, “Give him the tea which I take.” But if he is not so very intimate, he will say, “Give the tea that I give to my father.” And if he is not important he will say, “Give 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 will have three kinds of tea. You should not consider God as ordinary. He is not even better. He 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 your father’s tea, but your own tea. 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 will not work. Such charity is of no use. You are irritating God.

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. Then 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 themselves; nobody is a means to somebody else. Everybody loves himself or herself as dearly as an ant loves itself, or anybody 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. It will wriggle out by writhing this way or that way in order 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. So 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

Rousing the Soul into Action through Religious Consciousness

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 to the world only. It does not see anything beyond the world. It does not see anything other than the world. It does not see anything superintending over the world. The world manages itself somehow with its own physical laws, 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 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 to understand or explain what it is.

The physical theory of matter which was mathematically announced 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 had adumbrated, imply that the world, which is material, is inside space, and that space is something like a cup, as it were, within which this material universe is contained.

It is 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 spatiotemporal. 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. The words ‘space’, ‘time’, ‘object’ do not imply three things, according to this greatest discovery before us. 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. They are not everywhere. 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 you to think what modern science has done to the understanding of matter.

The identification of spatial expanse with 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 identity with space itself.

So what definition the universe obtains later on by these modern theories is that it is capable of description only in terms of words like spatiotemporal 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 a solid matter existing somewhere, and this is not something existing somewhere; it is existing everywhere. It is an everywhereness not in the sense of a heavy stuff stuck somewhere because of the evolutionary content within it. It is a continuum, it is a movement, it is a flux; it is a transition, but a transition towards what? Here modern science stops. It cannot go further. It is satisfied with saying that it 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 of what? We should not put this question.

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. Motion of what? Motion of motion only, because there is no substance there which is moving. It is a birdless flying. We do not require a bird for flying. There can be only flying without a bird. So a substanceless non-entity, as it were, is this peculiar continuum. We cannot call it materialism in the crass sense of early Greek thinkers, or even of Newton, because the matter of these materialists or the earlier classical physicists has been boiled down to a liquid. Therefore, we cannot call it materialism in the ordinary crass sense, but it is materialism nevertheless because of this universe being conceived even at this moment as something of the nature of an object of perception. We can observe it and experiment upon it. Even today science is a process of observation and experiment, and observation and experiment implies the objectivity of the thing which is experimented upon or observed. So materialism continues in science even today, though it is not that old, crass materialism of the earlier classical stage.
Now, here we are still in the state 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 there is nothing beyond this so-called spatiotemporal continuum, nothing visible to the eyes, because in the test tube, in the laboratory of experiment and observation, we see nothing outside this so-called electromagnetic continuum.

Well, 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 in a molten mass, as it were, it is still self-explanatory. It is capable of explanation by mathematical and physical laws. Instead of purely physical computations, we have now more and more mathematical forms of it. Physics has become mathematics to some extent, and the latest definition of the nature of the universe is not in terms of physical laws, but in terms of equations of mathematics. 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? “We are heading towards a dangerous, deep abyss, and we seem to be seeing before us a vast universe that seems to be within our skull,” said Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir James Jeans, the top-level physicists who put a cap on all the observing and experimenting physicists. They shook the very root of physical science, and toppled it upon the mental field of an observation that is possible only by an intelligence.

Does the universe, therefore, reveal itself as a 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 becomes 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 is preliminary, and another other is more advanced. First there is *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science* by C.E.M. Joad. He is 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 some time 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.

So 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 will ask you to remember what I told you in the earlier days of our 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 physics and mathematics and 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 told sometime back. The earlier stages of religion commence 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 the 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 eye of a postgraduate PhD 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 all phenomena as causes thereof 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. They are real gods, but 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 officer in the government, but there are degrees of authority, the lesser and the higher. The lesser one has an authority, but the higher one 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 one power being there, 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 this cosmos is all-pervading, existing everywhere, just as in every little speck of dust of this country the government is present, though it cannot be seen with the eyes. If you want to see that the government is present even in one inch of the ground of the country, you cannot see it with the eyes, but it can be seen by its manifestation through a particular process. The government is an operating medium; it is an operating power, but 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 personality. Our feelings are lodged in a person. We are a person, though we are not only persons. There is something in us which is impersonal. The personality concept 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 bundle of the limbs of the body. When Joseph says “I am coming”, it is not the hands or the 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 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, even in the case of an ordinary human being, the impersonality is at the back of personality. Similar is the case with the concept of God.

For all concepts of humanly available religious appurtenances, the personality of God is necessary. You cannot pray to God with a feeling that there is an emptiness or vacuum in front of you. A kind of portrait is presented before your mind. You paint a picture of God before your mind, and then you pray to God. Unless God is there in front of you, you cannot pray to Him. Even if God is not in front of you, He must at least be everywhere. Even the everywhereness of God is a kind of form that you 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, we call it; 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. So 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 you imagine this
mystery? The Visvarupa is inclusive of even Arjuna himself, yet he was beholding it. It is a peculiar, intriguing situation, a 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 included him also.

The peculiar transition period of religious awareness that somehow the personality of the beholder seems to be continuing in spite of the acceptance of the universality and the inclusiveness of the all being, that stage is the penultimate stage of the personality concept of God. You cannot know how such a thing is possible. You accept the universality of God. “O All! O Thou which are to all!” Arjuna cries, and yet he is there to make this statement or 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 their 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. There is something called 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 Religious Consciousness. Another book which you can read to your advantage is Varieties of Religious Experience by William James, the well-known author. These two books will give you certain insights into the nature of the superior psychological forums of religion which transcend ordinary psychological findings.

So 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 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 that seems to be operating just near them. Draupadi yelled 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 a thousand miles away from the Kurus’ place, in Dwarka. What good is 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!” the mother cries even if the child died in London and the mother 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 worry about the distance between Uttar Pradesh and London. The sorrow is so deep in the mother. It is sunk into her soul, and her soul is yelling, "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 you think that religious consciousness is only a work of the mind, something that you are thinking as you are thinking a marketplace or a vegetable shop, then it is not religion. Religion actually takes root in your 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 a universal soul. As God is a universal soul, He will respond to the call from the soul.

The government responds to another government through its ambassador. An ambassador is the medium of the contact of one government with another government. Direct contact 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. The ambassador of God is in our hearts, and only through the ambassador will you 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 indicator of the presence of God in the person. It 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 is dead for us. We are only physical bodies and minds, and souls we have none. We have minds, we have intellects, 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 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!" because the joy of an emperor, as the Upanishad tells it very briefly and beautifully, 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, that joy will not be our joy. It is only a concoction, an imagination, a makeshift, an illusion. Therefore, it splits. So all the joys of the world end in bereavement. The king will die. The mother will lose the child, the husband will lose the wife, the wife will lose the husband, the owner will lose the property; but you cannot lose yourself.
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 or other 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 this 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 in all its relations. In deep sleep the soul emerges, slumbering though it is, but it cannot see properly. Though it is grooping, it is the soul that is grooping. Therefore, it is a joy surpassing all of the conceptual enjoyments of the world. There are other times when we are likely to see the soul acting, is when we are drowning in water. Only those who have almost drowned know what it means when they are feeling that everything is over, finished. Deep down what they think at that time, nobody can explain in language. 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 displayed 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 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 to 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 the 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 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, something unthinkable, unimaginable, then also the soul will act.

But in religion, also the soul 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.
Consciously you can 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 a 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 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, the question does not arise. Our heart has to ask for it. “Ask, and it shall be given” is a prophet’s saying. Knock and it shall be opened; seek and you shall find it. 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 a reference yesterday in our 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 inward asking in terms of God symbolises an 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 you are in
India, here in Rishikesh. You can be face to face with that person by juxtaposing the attitude of your psyche in such a manner that you are visualising that person, as it were, in the manner of the placement of that person just looking at you. And if your concentration is intense enough, even if that person is not facing you, he will be made to face you. 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 your eyes. This is a very low form of telepathic action. You can contact anybody in the world, whatever be the distance of that person from your 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 would 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 animated with a soul by spreading its prana 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 toe, for instance. In one sense there is a distance; a five-and-a-half-foot or a six-foot distance is there between the toe and the head. There is a distance which can be measured by a foot ruler, yet there is no distance because it is an organism. You do not have to take time to communicate a message from the head to the foot or from the foot to the head. Timelessly, without distance, as it were, communication from one part of the body will reach another part of the body. Timeless communication is possible only in a spaceless circumstance. So is the structure of the universe.

You 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 spatiotemporal 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, will be found in the human personality. The whole world is dancing in your cells. That is to say, distance as you think of it in terms of mathematical measurements does not really obtain, finally, if only your mind is capable of accepting this truth, and accepting it from the bottom of your heart. You should not accept this truth merely because somebody said it is so. Your heart has to reason out the worthwhileness of this situation, and the heart has its own reason which the reason does not know, as people say.

So in religious encounters with God, the devotee does not feel a distance between oneself 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. \[\text{Sarvatah-pañnipádam tat sarvato'kṣiśiśromukham} \] (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. So God looks at you, whatever be the position you are occupying. And so it is up to you to place yourself in the context of the visualisation of God’s presence rather than expect God to adjust Himself. 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 you 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 your skin. You cannot contain this thought for a long time, and so sometimes you may feel tremors, shaking, a kind of jerk in the physical system as if some shock is injected into your body if the thought of the nearness of God continues very intensely for a few minutes. Let it continue even for five minutes. You will not be able to tolerate it because you will feel as if some high-voltage current is passing through your 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 your concentration on the all-pervading nature of God. In the earlier stages, this all-pervading nature cannot become a content of your mind. Very few of you will always be able to keep in your heart the feeling that God is everywhere, in every place, so that even on the roads you are walking on Him, as it were. This kind of feeling is rare. In very intense forms of mystical communion you may be able to feel a kind of drowning yourself in that feeling of the all-pervading nature of God. Normally this is very difficult.

So 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 you as a person standing before you, 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 your devoted feeling of God is. When you pray, you
feel somebody very near you, listening to you, and not only listening but condescending to listen and implement your request.

An energy of assurance proceeds, as it were, beam-like, sun-ray-like, emanating from this personality and touching you. Sunlight warms you, and you may begin to feel such a kind of warmth, some kind of touch, a tingling sensation as if some ants are crawling through your nerves, and you will not know what is actually happening to you. It is like a little electric current being passed through the body. You cannot know what you feel at that time. You cannot explain it; it is just what you feel. The electric current is passing through you, and you felt something. What did you feel at that time? You have to feel it for yourself. You cannot explain to people what you feel when a current is passing through your body. It is not jerk, it is not shock, it is not many things. It is something which only you know, and nobody else can know. This kind of experience will be your heritage when the concentration increases.

How does concentration increase? Many a time we have 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 your beloved not able to attract you sufficiently? Is not your God your beloved? Or is your beloved elsewhere than God? Are you wanting God as a kind of instrument to bring you in contact with your beloved, who is other than God? Sometimes this happens. We have lost something; there has been bereavement, and we cry for a union with what we have lost. It may be a loss of property, it may be a loss of millions of dollars in a business, it may be a loss of someone dear and near, and we may cry before God not because we want God, but we would 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 you call it devotion? It is a kind of devotion. You love God, of course. You have to love Him because you want His assistance in your desire to come in contact with your lost child. Spiritual devotion, this is not.

We are not here talking of the manner of contacting God for purposes which are ulterior, secular, and other than God. Our concern today in these sessions is to try to find out and to describe what true spiritual devotion is. You are here, students in the Academy, not merely to have a good time collecting some information on religious thought. Nothing of the kind. It is a method, a little discipline, a kind of procedure into which you are supposed to be cast, under which discipline you are supposed to be subjected for enabling you to be truly religious and spiritual so that you return from this place a better person,
inwardly rejuvenated, spiritually, religiously, in the true sense of the term. ‘The true sense of the term’ is something that has to be underlined.

To repeat once again, religion, which has been the subject of our discussion since many days, is your manner of contacting God. Inasmuch as the manner of contacting God depends upon the concept of God that you are entertaining in your mind, this has to be very carefully taken care of. What do you think about God? Why should you think about Him? What for is your devotion to Him? What do you expect? 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 love there is always an expectation of the return of love. “I love you, and you care not for me in spite of my loving you. This does not please me. Look at this man. I have been so kind and compassionate towards him. There is not a single gesture of retribution or a gesture of his acceptance of my affection on his part.” This is selfish love. It may be a father loving the son or a mother loving the child. These loves in the world are conditioned. Unconditioned love, you 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 you cannot tolerate any attitude that you do not expect from that person whom you love. This kind of love is not in any way connected with God love. Sometimes, of course, it looks like that 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. If God can give me nothing, why should I be bothered about Him?”

Now, can God give you something? Even intensely honest devotion to God may raise some questions of this kind. Well, preliminary instructions in devotion, or the path of bhakti, tell you abundance will be your heritage. God will give you everything. This ‘everything’ is very important. God will give you not God Himself; that is not what you want. What is the good of that? 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 you 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, and 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 “what will happen to me afterwards” arises, because there are two questions connected with two aspects of our involvement in life. The term ‘afterwards’ implies the continuance of time even in eternity. You have accepted that God is an eternal, timeless Being. Now 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 in the eternity of God and left far
behind. So 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.

“What will happen to me after I attain God?” Now, why do you bring this word
‘after’ if time is not present there? Can a time-bound mind of a devotee conceive
what eternity is? No. ‘Eternity’ is only a word; e-t-e-r-n-i-t-y is a dictionary word.
For us it means nothing practically. You cannot imagine anything except as
located somewhere, at some place, in 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 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 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 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 nullity by a further acceptance of the all-
inclusiveness of God. Rarely do you find a person who will want only God. Why is
it so rare? Because of the lingering doubt: “Practically, it will amount to nothing
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. He
has no money with Him; He has no dollars or pounds. He has no friends. I remember a humorous line in Milton’s Paradise Lost. Adam is
complaining 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 the 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? He is only sitting. Can you imagine being alone with nobody around you
in society, 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 our concept of God
is sometimes likely to be tarnished by this sociological action-bound and time-
bound relation, which has to gradually be shed with 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 spiritual technique is all freedom to the devotee. 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. The word ‘god’ implies an inclusiveness of all the values that are capable of conception in your mind, and you cannot afford the mind to go somewhere else because you will be betraying your 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. Convincing oneself that the concept of God is all-inclusive, and therefore the drifting of the mind from God is meaningless, has to be assured.

Therefore, the prescription has been that your God should be your Ishta-devata, in the Sanskrit language. Your God is devata, and devata is a Sanskrit word for your deity, your emblem of Godhood. And ishta is beloved. The word ‘beloved’ is very important. God is your beloved, and your heart cannot go anywhere else except in terms of the 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. 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 will 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 will go. When God comes, all that He is capable of blessing you with also will be there. Abundance in the most absolute sense will follow from your total absorption in the all-inclusiveness of God. So let doubts go. Doubts are our
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. Many of you perhaps know what the story of the Mahabharata is. 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, contending parties, both went to Dwarka to seek the help of Sri Krishna. It is told 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 who came, knowing the Lord is resting, stood at the 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 near his feet.

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 an 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. 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.”

Krishna said, “Maybe. After all, you see, I saw him 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, 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, only eat and sit quiet. What good is this person?” Duryodhana said, “I want the army, great Master.”

“Take the army,” said Krishna.

Duryodhana went in jubilation, and declared before his people that he has 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 do no good.”

After Duryodhana left, 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 being there unnecessarily in your house, in the battlefield, 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 the 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 one, but Krishna was the ocean. This was only one, but it was a sea. The other one was manifold drops, and millions of drops cannot be regarded as larger than one, because the one is a sea, 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 the association of God, is not to be thought of as a computerised item. God is not one in a mathematical sense. One is smaller than ten or hundreds. This is not the way in which we have to think of God as one. He is not a figure 1. It is a different oneness altogether. ‘Oneness’ is a term that we use due to 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.

So, 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. All other things are within it. In certain cases, He 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 wanting 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 that word did not come from Krishna. The poor man did not know what had happened. “I came for 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 gorgeous palaces shining near the place where he had his hut. This is how you can also 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.

So 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. So 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. You will speak to it, and the whole cosmos speaks. With this assurance you place yourself in a 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 your 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 like a temple or a church. All these also are a form of religion, but religion does not mean any kind of performance in this manner. It is the placement of yourself 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 you are to some extent confident as to where you are located, you are not so confident as to where God is located.

The all-pervadingness of God, which is the conclusion we drew on our investigations, requires of you 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 you yourself are not all-pervading. You cannot be doing many things at the same time. Certain things you do, and certain things you omit, and the capacity to adjust oneself to all things or many things is an inward requirement that has to emanate from yourself when you 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 little line between the two concepts—namely, while religion is a practical implementation in the daily life of your approach to God, the status which consciousness occupies at that time is spirituality. Spirituality is the status of consciousness; religion is its implementation in daily life. The position, the attitude or the behaviour of consciousness in the presence of God, in the context of even the idea of God, is what may be called spirituality. But how do you actually put it into practice in your daily life? When you work, when you speak, when you behave, when you do anything whatsoever, how does this status of consciousness act? The manner in which you 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 your psychophysical personality, the geographical condition of your place, the cultural background of your country, and many other things which bring you down to the Earth. These conditioning factors are all sorts of things that make you what you 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, we feel as if there are various religious attitudes. They are actually not many religions. They are the shapes or the forms taken by the one broad daylight, solar light, of 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 the very structural differences of the single light only.

So 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 strifes, the antagonisms, the differences of various types—philosophical, religious, social or otherwise—in the name of religion is a discredit to the human intelligence, which is unable to recognise the reason for the 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 in certain other phases of religion even 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, because of 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: śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viśnoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāṣyaṁ sakhyam ātma-nivedanam (Bhagavata 7.5.23). Nine modes of approach to God through worship are dealt with. You contact God by certain adjustments of your mind in the attitude of adoration and worship. This verse delineates these nine methods.

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 and prayer. 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 song or 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 else yourself, you can at least listen.

_Sravana_ is glory of God. Listen to prayer constantly, either in a _satsanga_ where chanting or singing is going on or where a discourse highlighting the greatness and majesty and 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, feel it in your heart and feelings. This 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 may say, “How can I sing? I am not a musician.” 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 devotee lady was in Tirupati, nearby the Venkateswar temple, and he was far away in Karnataka. Hearing of the greatness of this devotee, he went there. He offered obeisance to her and she bade him, “Please sit.” 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 in the morning she would come back sweating, exhausted, and sit there. He could not understand where this lady was going every night. He did not understand this situation, and did want to say anything because she was the host and he was the guest, but one day he could no longer contain his curiosity.

“Every day you are going out like this, and coming back sweating. Where are you going?” Purandaradas asked.

“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 Master. 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 from Spain and another from France; were both great. And in India we have similar saints. Their lives were not merely the lives of human beings. They had their feet planted on the Earth, of course, but their spirits were not on the Earth. Through their prayers they could contact the highest heavens, and yet 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 foot of an elephant if it is severed. You require four people to lift it. How would 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 the elephant lift itself, and how can the man whom you cannot lift, lift himself? The reason is, the mountain which Sri Krishna lifted and the legs which the elephant lifts are not outside the being who lifts it. The mountain is part of the wider personality and the body of Sri Krishna, and the elephant’s leg is part of the elephant only, 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 the 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 the saints have opened all the gates 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 on 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 to be prepared for receiving it. Eternity is not tomorrow or yesterday or today. God’s existence is eternity’s existence, so its action is not after some time, because the question of ‘after some time’ does not arise in eternity. It is ever perennially flowing, which one has to feel competent to receive. *Sravanam kirtanam* is listening to the glory of God, 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 wherever you are, travelling in a train or on a bus, the mind will be always conscious of this thing in your pocket. This is *smarana*, 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, and how can you forget it? But God’s existence is not yet such a valuable thing as it may appear on the surface, because there is a peculiar ‘but’ that the mind draws, together with its acceptance of the all-pervading and eternal nature of God. “Yes sir, God is all-pervading and eternal, but I can manage somehow.” Subtly the voice speaks from within, “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 become non-existent immediately, and you cannot have the hardiness to see the wrong way, thinking that you can get on even for a day without God. It is like saying, “Without existence I can be for some time. For a few minutes, at least, I can be without 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 last time that the concept of God to the spiritual seeker 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, most attractive, most inclusive, most perfect, 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 attracting your attention wholly 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 also is 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 memory of God. Go on chanting the name of something 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—worshiping the feet of God is another way. How can you worship the feet of God? You have never seen God. In our present state of affairs, worship of God’s feet may take the form of either the worshiping of the feet of a deity, an idol, or the worshiping of the feet of a person who is God-oriented, or the worshiping of 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 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 worshiping, 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 in the chariot of Arjuna; 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 have to 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 Sri Shrinathji, during the annual festivals there are elephant processions, musicians and the dancing of devotees, and great grandeur is attached to the worship conducted in these temples. 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 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 the refreshment for you. Oh, come! We will have a divine light waved before you, and then have a little discussion. I will sing before you and dance before you, and then place things 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. They are called in Sanskrit shodasha upachara puja: sixteen ways of adoring a great person. That is, adopt every method in glorifying and satisfying. There is archana, worship. Either it is done in the form of a mass in a Catholic church or an adoration and actual ritualistic performance in a Hindu temple or a Buddhist temple, or in any temple, for the matter of that, where God is supposed to be. The seeker adorns God with flowers, with garlands, with clothes, with costumes, with music, with prayers, with delicious offerings like 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.” I think that 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: 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. 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. That is prayer. You cannot contain it. It is beyond you. It breaks the feelings. It clutches the heart. You are down with it. That is prayer. Sri Ramakrishna Parmahamsa 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 master of everything is God. You are nothing, master of nothing, a humble servant. Dāsa-dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ. A devotee said, “I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of 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 saхиśpunā amāninā māna-dena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ (CC Adi 17.31): You must be like grass. Let the 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 will put forth some little tendrils, little leaves. Have you seen how patient the tree is? It will, after all, yield some fruit one day to the very man who chops off its branches. Be humbler than a blade of grass bending down, 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. But you thank them. 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, and 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 feel in an elevated mood, as if you have encountered God Himself, you have rubbed shoulders with Him and walked on the street. “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. He 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, together with you as Nara Narayana, as two brothers inseparable. You and God are always there, inseparable. This is a very advanced state of devotion. You dare not consider God as your friend like that 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 the night melts when the sun rises. You cease to be when God is. “When shall I be free? When I shall cease to be” is a poetic line. “When shall I be free? When I shall cease to be.”
Chapter 15
Yoga is the State of At-one-ment

We have covered a large area of studies since commencing these sessions in November. We started with the foundations of Indian culture, which we located in the Veda Samhitas and the Upanishads particularly, as also 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. I am rapidly moving in a few sentences through all the details we covered over many days, right from the beginning, as a recapitulation.

The positioning of consciousness, as I mentioned last time in the context of God’s existence, is the essence of yoga practice. Yesterday 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 your feelings in respect of That which you are seeking in such an intensity that it becomes practically impossible for you to live in this world without your 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 the 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 the 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 to you is love of God, technically known as bhakti, and the various modes of the practice of this devotion were also considered in our session yesterday.

There is another highly technical methodology adopted in the practice of yoga, which is known as ashtanga yoga, rajayoga, 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 the contact with Reality.
The Sanskrit word ‘yoga’ actually means ‘union with Reality’. It is actually an attempt to contact Reality in some way or the other. The contacting of yourself with Reality is the aim of life. If we are disconnected, it will be like having an electrical loose 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, 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 in religion and social work, 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.

The last word that I mentioned yesterday was 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 the other. 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 involvement of our psyche in this predicament of the dividedness of things, we cannot entertain the thought of inclusiveness, especially of a universal type, as required in the practice of yoga. The whole problem with yoga practice is finding a technique, or a novel method, as required to position ourselves in the context of the Universal Being. You may practice karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, or any kind of yoga you like; you may belong to any kind of religious faith or affiliation. It matters not what you are affiliated to, but you will find in the end that the basic question is not answered—namely, how you will face it?

This so-called ‘it’, having already been described as inclusive of your own existence, slips out of your consciousness. You cannot think it, because there is nobody to think it. You cannot contemplate on it for the same reason. You cannot describe it or give a definition of it, because the moment you endeavour to deal with it in this extraneous manner, you place yourself 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 yourself.

The object is never organically related to the subject, though basically there is such a relation which is invisible to the eyes, and inasmuch as this dividedness
obtains between the subject and the object, you find that you are placed in a quandary always in our relation to things in this world. The quandary is here: Unless the thing is outside you, you cannot even see it; and if it is really outside you, also you cannot see it. The total disconnectedness of the object from you will impair your relation with it to such an extent that there would be no psychological connection between you and the object. The perception of an object is actually the establishment of a conscious contact between yourself and the object. ‘Conscious’ contact is the word to be underlined. If it is unconscious, you will not see the object, and more than that, you cannot have any kind of dealing with it. Dealing with the thing is actually establishing a conscious relation with that object. Where is the question of consciousness in relation to an object when, according to your empirical consideration, your consciousness is inside you only, and it is not anywhere else?

Where is your consciousness? If you psychologically, psychoanalytically, or even from the point of view of physiological psychology, think of the status of your consciousness, you will find that it is somewhere intriguing, it is within you. It appears to be somewhere in you, and not anywhere else. “My consciousness cannot be outside me. It is has to be within me.” If that is the case, how will you touch the object outside consciousness? This is one aspect of the difficulty in the perception of an object. You seem to be cut off from the object on account of your consciousness being within you and it cannot be anywhere else. But on the other hand, if it is really so, you will not know that the object exists outside.

You cannot love a thing unless it is different from you; and if it is totally different from you, also you cannot love it. The intriguing character of all connections in this world is here succinctly stated. You are related to the world, and yet not related. This is the cause of the restlessness that you feel in your mind, personally as well as socially. You are utterly restless, and you cannot have a moment’s peace in this world because of this difficulty you feel in establishing an intelligible relationship of yourself with the world outside. It is neither with you, nor not with you.

In the context of the practice of yoga, this question has to be resolved. We have already briefly traversed the question along these 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 be even aware that these two things exist.

In one verse of the Bhagavadgita, we have an answer to this quandary. Dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraḥ cākṣara eva ca, kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho’kṣara ucyate (B.G. 15.16); uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyaḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ (B.G. 15.17). 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 kshara and akshara. In comparison with the
world which is lasting for many years, yourself as an individual is a perishable
object. You 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’ also can 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 the created beings are perishable.
All these differences and characterisations boil down to the distinction between
the subject and the object. It matters not what actually the object 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 you.
Because of its difference from you, it is necessary to bridge this gulf between you
and the object. That bridge is this third element, called Purushottama,
transcendent, in the Bhagavadgita verse.

The Yoga System, whatever be the shape it takes, 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, Vedanta or
jnana, 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 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. You must first of all know what an
organism is. I have also mentioned this earlier, in a different context and in
different words. I 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 you enter the house, you will not see the family
there, you will see only people sitting. One of them will say, “This is my family.”
Where is the family? You see only the various individuals sitting. The family is a
concept. It is an intelligent cohesive form, an idea ultimately that is 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 even 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. You cannot see
this organism; nevertheless, it exists because this organism, which is ideational,
conceptual, is more real than the members. Members may be there as concrete
perceptible objects, and the organism may not be visible, but you will know how
important this organism is; and all social organisations, political organisations
and communities are of this character.

An administrative set-up is also an organisation, but we actually do not see it
with the eyes because as realities become more and more valid and active in
their operations, 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 an organisational cohesive force is absent, 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 before you 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, or in the marketplace, 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. This conceptual
generalisation, when it is taken to its logical limits, becomes God-existence and
maha samanya or satta samanya, as it is called. The ultimate nature of Pure
Existence is not a solid reality, but it is more solid than all the solidity you can
think of.

We define God as consciousness. The ultimate Absolute is consciousness in its
substantiality. And if you identify consciousness with the thought process or
something that is not concrete physically, God would not be a physical object, and
would not be capable of perception through the eyes. You cannot see God with
your eyes because generals, universals, those ranging forces that control
particulars, are above particulars.

That which enables you to perceive an object is not the object itself, because it
has already been placed outside you in the context of space and time. It is also
not you independently, because your consciousness is locked up in your skull.
There is a third element, an intermediary principle, which is there, invisibly
operating between you and the object. If this could be known, you would be
saved in one second.

In our 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 you is that which is linking you with the object, and that you cannot see, notwithstanding the fact that without it, you will not even know that something is under your nose.

So in all the practices that go by the name of yoga, your endeavour is to rise above your individual personality, and also to rise above the locatedness of the object outside in space and time, and to place yourself in the context of that which is neither you nor the object. This is a herculean task, like walking on a wire in a circus, as it were, very difficult indeed. If you make a little mistake, you will fall down.

How are you to place yourself in that which is not you? 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 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 akalpita vṛitti means ‘non-conditioned psyche’. Our psyche is conditioned as long as we are in the process of 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 “I have to place myself outside me”?

Suppose there is a tree, and you are looking at it with the vṛitti, or the 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 purusha inside, magnetises and enlivens, or charges with 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 double consciousness being 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, and 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 yours. 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. "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 gets loosened gradually by meditations of this kind. The sutra says that you can practice this technique in respect of any other 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 only and then you are starting to meditate on the object, it will be a thought process, and it will not be meditation. Meditation is not thinking an object. You have to distinguish between 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 is called samadhi in the 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 on 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 the 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 practice this technique of at-one-ment with the environment, whatever that environment be.

Then there is all success. "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 the day-to-day marketplace action. 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 the 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 been perhaps 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 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 it is 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-made reckoner, as it were, the spiritual diary. You can have your own additions and subtractions, and have questions. This is called a self-check method. 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. I have a debit side in my personality today and it must be rectified tomorrow, etc. What is wrong with you? “Something is wrong. I have a debit side in my personality, and it must be rectified tomorrow”, etc. This is a spiritual diary.

The second is a daily routine. You must know what you are going to do today or 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 think 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 your spiritual diary. Though you may have differences in 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.

And the third thing is an annual resolve. New Year's Day is coming, the first of January. Have a balance sheet of the whole year struck of your personality. 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 this, which I ought not to have done, and I ought to have done this. 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.

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 higher than you in the stature of their experience. If possible, keep 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. If it is very difficult for you to find people like this with whom you can have satsanga, when you are in the ashram at least you can have satsanga.

And when there are difficulties in finding occasions of satsanga with saints and sages, have what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to call a secondary type of satsanga, namely svadhyaya, 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, you actually are inwardly en rapport with the thoughts and
the forces of these prophets and teachers which are impregnated into the very words of this 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 these words. Hence, svadhyaya, study of a scripture, also is satsanga. Actual satsanga with saints and sages is best, if possible; if not, at least have study of great scriptures like the Bhagavata Mahapurana.

If that is also difficult, do chanting of the Divine Name, japa. You are actually in contact with a being whose satsanga is preeminent. 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, becomes difficult under the circumstances 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, Paramatma in your own self, contact with God daily in your prayers. Yesterday I referred to a method of prayer, to some extent. Bring it to your memory just now. All these little instructions, twenty important instructions, sadhana-tattva, and the three recipes of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, 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 you should not go from here carrying only some information, some learning, some 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 also. 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. You are all coming from various walks of life. Some are perhaps studying, some are in professions, etc. You have many hours of duty, whether as students, officials or professionals. It is necessary for you to have a daily program of your occupation, whatever be that occupation.

First of all, you should calculate how many hours of the day you should devote for your profession. Suppose you are a student; how many hours have you to devote for studying to prepare 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 and appear for the examination, so you deduct these hours which are essential for your line of work, your occupation, from the twenty-four. 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 so many hours.

Then what happens? You must sleep also. Reasonably, 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 afterwards. 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 are making here in the Academy, or that which you make in your 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 the light of the scripture that you are reading would be also a kind of secondary meditation. Instead of your 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 in meditation.
Some half an hour every day, at least, you must spend in reading a book. You should not say, “I know everything, so why should I 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 the page of the 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, 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 they call it—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 also be an indication of the quality of the meditation which you have been carrying on for half an hour or one hour. Is there some difference? “I have been sitting for one hour and trying to meditate in my own way. An hour has passed. Now I am getting up. Has it made any difference? Do I feel relaxed, relieved of some tension? Do I feel some protection coming to me from nature outside and God above? Am I feeling, after an hour of sitting, a sort of harmony with the environment of nature, with creation, or am I feeling 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. Most of you perhaps do that. “One day, two days, three days have passed, and every day I do this kind of meditation. In what way am I better now in my feelings? Am I 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. You feel heavy, lumbering, lethargic, drowsy, and nothing seems to be happening to you in your meditations because of some mistake in the technique adopted. Meditation is not merely thinking something. 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 change, 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. Your adjustment of your thought to the object concerned in meditation is a special novelty of it; 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, all are outside you entirely. 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 is part and parcel of you. You are having a mechanised contact with them, an artificial relationship, a kind of give-and-take policy. This is how we think of things in the world.

In meditation, this is not the way of thinking. What do you meditate upon? You may say, “I meditate on my concept of God.” Do you also 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 for your personal purpose as an instrument of action. 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, when the work is being carried on. Otherwise, you throw the tools down. So 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. Therefore, 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 distinguishing factor of the object of meditation as different 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 is excluding everything else in this world, but here, in this great adventurous process of meditation, the object, so-called, is included somehow or other 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? One student will say, “I concentrate on my breathing process. I breathe in and breathe out, and breathe in and breathe out. I go on thinking of this continuous activity.” This is good enough, but 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 in some way as a function.

Then another student says, “I have another method, which has been taught to me by my teacher. I move my 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 within the ambit or the circumference of the body only, 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 into 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; and 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 of the intelligent teachers have prescribed certain methods of concentration on things which are somehow or other inseparable from you. The breathing process is one; your own body is another.

The third method is something very funny. You may wonder whether this kind of meditation also exists and somebody is doing it. Look at your face in a mirror, and look at yourself only. As you are the most attractive person in the world, you are 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 see your own face normally, but in a mirror you can see your face. Darpana yoga they call it 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: I want me and I don't want anybody else, and inasmuch as I cannot see myself except through a mirror, it is good that I see myself through a mirror, and then get absorbed thoroughly in my 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 thought only—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 actually occur to your mind during these one or two hours. Mostly they will be bundled up into a certain category, which you will observe on taking
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 body or your own face, or the inner constituents of your thoughts, though they all appear to be connected with you vitally, really they are also extraneous to your true being. Neither the breath nor the body nor your face nor the thoughts of your mind are actually you, because of the fact they are moving. Action is taking place. Anything that is moving cannot 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 puts on a new quanta every second? You do not feel that every minute you are going on changing your personality. 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 a few minutes ago are also not adequate finally. They are good enough, but not sufficient.

The inclusiveness of your object of 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, especially of Patanjali, 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. 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 our daily activities. None of the things in the world get absorbed into us usually. They always remain outside us. So 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 as being capable of an absorption into yourself. You mostly repel things. “This is not me. This body is not me, this person is not me, this tree is not me, nothing in the world is me. I am just something totally different from everything that I see and everything that is around me.” 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 is excluding 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 to be utilised only 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 suddenly you enter into the core of things, even as you cannot enter into
the core of your own being. You have got skin, you have got bone, you have got
flesh, and you have got sense organs, prana, mind, and intellect, and you have to
pierce through all these layers, called the *koshas*, so that you may find what you
really are in your essential being. So is the case with the objects. You cannot enter
into their essence suddenly. The objects, even from an ordinary common-sense
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 your
inner layers of the personality, the *koshas*, gradually become more internal as
you move inward from the 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 and name and form as you go deeper and deeper
into the 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 the two
aspects, the subjective and the objective, click in one harmonious way at a given
level, and in different levels these two sides, the subjective and the objective, also
click. 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, so
that 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 you attain in the end a merger of all the streams of
consciousness in a sea, a oceanic expanse of Being as such. This we call nirvana,
we call it *kaivalya*, we call it moksha, we call it God-realisation, we call it entry
into the Absolute.
Chapter 17
The Object of Meditation

Yesterday I touched upon some aspect 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 the day-to-day existence of ours we are excluded from the objects of perception. Nothing in the world can be regarded as a part of our personal life. Everything stands outside us, and we use or put to a kind of utility things in the world, objects of sense, for our 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 is how we wrongly think.

But it is not true that anything in the world is an instrument 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 for you. Its value is only insofar as it is helpful to you in achieving a purpose. What purpose it 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 we 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; 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 yesterday.

The other aspect of this subject is that your heart has to be in that object. It is not enough if you merely conceptualise. 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, a wealth of any kind, something which counts in your personal life. The object of meditation is that which cannot be effectively transmuted into the nature of the end that it is, and not a means, unless the feeling also is attached. The parapet walls on the roads are not ends. They mean nothing to you. But suppose it is a wall made of bars of gold, with jewels attached; your mind will pause 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 in the sense of 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 present in that object of meditation, your mind will not concentrate on that object. You may go on sitting for hours together struggling to concentrate the mind and fix it on that object, but you will not be able to fix it on that object inasmuch as your heart has not accepted the total value of that object. It has only a segmentary, fractional value. Again and again the lower mind, the instinct, will tell you that, after all, it is one thing among many things, while the fact is that the
Ishta-devata, or the chosen object, is not one among many. 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 develops into a larger exposition of the subject in the Sixth Chapter. These seed-like verses towards the end of the Fifth Chapter of the Gita are: 

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\text{sparśan kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁs caśuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāśābhyaantaracārīnau; yatendriyamobuddhirmunir moksaparāyanah, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ (B.G. 5.27-28).}
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These are two verses explaining what you should do in meditation. **Sparśan kṛtva bahir bahyams**: 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 contact with external things is not to be attempted merely by physically closing the eyes, because the meditating principle is not the eye but the mind. You may close your eyes and not see a tree in front of you, but you will think that the 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 in 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.

So 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 other 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 the thinking of 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.” 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 the entertaining of 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 recite in your mind the names of great Incarnations: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, 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 simultaneously operating 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 meditating consciousness, the object of meditation consciousness, and the process of meditation consciousness.

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 found nothing visible 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 other 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 therefore 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. Even enemies will become friends. Opposing forces will gradually slow down, and some miracle will take place without your knowing as to what is actually happening. Either they will cease their activity or they will perish. Either 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 of connection reach up even to 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 as if you touch any thread in a cloth, you are maintaining a relation by that touch 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, even if you 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 the 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, which is absorbed into the waking consciousness. This as 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 see in dream also. Hundreds and thousands and millions of people, and so many things—space, time, objects, and solar systems, galaxies—all things are there. When you wake up, where are they? Have you woken up from dream by leaving those people and all the world that you saw in the dream world to their own fate, while you have individually, independently, isolatedly, got up into waking consciousness? “The people whom I saw in dream are still there, and I have left them and come up to the waking mind.” Do you say that? When you wake up into the waking consciousness, the whole world of dream has been absorbed into your waking mind. The entire world is absorbed, including the people. Nothing remains there. This will happen to you when you wake up into the 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, being mostly a divinity, a concept of a Godhead that is placed deliberately by oneself in front of oneself: “My God is standing in front of me.” 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. You meditate on an incarnation or a divinity or a god whom you are thinking in your mind in some form. Let that form be painted as 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. 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, go on gazing, go on gazing, go on gazing at that beautiful portrait, the picture of that great glorious ideal on which you want to meditate. Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes you spend 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 with open eyes. Five minutes, ten minutes, go on trying like that. Can you keep in your mind that portrait, that picture, without opening the eyes? As long as it is possible, continue this internal contemplation. When you find that it is not possible because the mind is flitting again, 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 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 that is physically 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 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 also have to be hammered into the mind again and again.

After some months of practice 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 felt 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 only the screen of time is to be lifted from your consciousness, you will find yourself spreading out everywhere. You are now in a room, and not anywhere else. Let the time screen be lifted. Immediately, you will find yourself spreading 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, you will realise when the screen of time is lifted 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 standing posture 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 and water and sky and sun and moon and 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 for some time during our Academy sessions here. If you can remember what aspects of this matter we have covered, you would gather that meditation in the spiritual sense implies our adjustment with the object of meditation.

Meditation is a spiritual technique; it is yoga practice in the height of its culmination. It is almost the last stage in spiritual endeavour. In the earlier stages of yoga practice we have the disciplines known as yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, and so on, 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 the stem of a flower plant. Each stage of the opening of the flower, right from its little invisible bud form until it becomes completely efflorescent, is a wholesome development of the stages of the growth of the flower. When the flower opens gradually 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 the whole body itself. The entire body of yoga is found in the yamas, and the entire body is found in 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 tomorrow, 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, though 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 been used, misused and abused one hundred times 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 semiconscious. Nothing of the kind is samadhi. It is not a state of semi-consciousness. It is not paralysis, nor is it introversion.

Many yoga students are likely to have the wrong notion that in the last stage of meditation, which touches samadhi, we are 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 nature outside. “What good is meditation for 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 your body, in your mind that is inside the body.
Meditation does not take place inside the body. It is true that it is an action of the mind, but it is not that mind which is apparently working inside you 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. You 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 you. It appears to be inside 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 you can see with your eyes. It is not possible to see it with your eyes because this object, which is the object of your spiritual meditation, is something higher than you but not outside you.

Can you imagine a state of affairs where a thing is above you, and higher than you, but is not outside you? All advancement in culture, in education, is a movement upwards. It is a transcendence of the lower categories of perceptions and acquirement in higher stages. Higher stages of achievement culturally, educationally, spiritually, do not mean moving more and more towards some object outside. When you advance outside, you cover a distance in space. If you go to the moon, you have covered a large distance, no doubt, outward in space. You may go to the stars, a larger distance still. This is not the way in which you cover a distance in meditation. It is a distance which is logically an advance in the developmental process of consciousness, in which condition the object of meditation does not stand outside in space and time, but envelops you. Ordinary perception of a sensory object does not permit the enveloping of the object in your case, nor do you actually envelop that object.

In all sensory perception of an object, you stand outside it, and it stands outside you. Actually, an awareness of a sense object does not mean union with that object. It is only an apprehension of an externality rather than a unity. In the sensory perception of an object, you are aware of the externality of the object, but you 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 misguiding that it will not permit you to be aware of the basic unity obtaining between the object and yourself in the act of perception of an object, and it will insist again and again that the object stands outside you. In meditation, the whole thing is transmuted; the entire perceptual process gets transformed into a menstruum, 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 you 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. A student here mentioned that it is \textit{prakriti} that is the object of meditation according to Patanjali, but one has to understand what exactly it means. How do you conceive this \textit{prakriti}? The entire creation is \textit{prakriti} manifesting in various degrees through the evolutionary process. I am now, for your benefit, pinpointing my few words only on the suggestions that you can get from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras. I am not touching upon other aspects of yoga now.

Patanjali’s system is, of course, centred round the concept of \textit{purusha} and \textit{prakriti}, universal consciousness and universal matter. Universal consciousness is \textit{purusha}, which is conscious of universal matter, which is \textit{prakriti}. According to Sankhya, which is the metaphysical foundation of the yoga of Patanjali, \textit{prakriti} evolves, or devolves, we may say, in a process of coming down into grosser and grosser forms into certain states known as \textit{mahat}, \textit{ahamkara}, \textit{tanmatras} and \textit{pancha mahabhutas}. \textit{Prakriti} is a universal status, an equilibrium of the forces known as \textit{sattva}, \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas}. Forget the \textit{sattva}, \textit{rajas}, \textit{tamas} for the time being, and consider \textit{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 \textit{prakriti} by the action of \textit{purusha}, which is universal consciousness, stirring up the sleeping \textit{prakriti}, manifests from \textit{mahat-tattva} what we may call cosmic intelligence, comparable with what in another system of philosophy is known as Hiranyagarbha or Ishvara, whatever the name be.

\textit{Purusha}, which is universal consciousness, is not objectively aware of anything, because \textit{purusha} is pure subject, and therefore there is no objectivity within it. But \textit{mahat} is 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 God only 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 \textit{mahat-tattva}. So \textit{prakriti} is the medium through which the universal \textit{purusha} manifests itself as cosmic consciousness, \textit{mahat}.

The next stage of development is self-consciousness of a universal character. This is \textit{ahamkara}. Though this pure universal consciousness, which is \textit{purusha}, is pure subjectivity, it is not a subject in the sense of anything that is opposed to the 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 \textit{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 \textit{purusha}, peeping, as it were, through the medium of universal continuum that is \textit{prakriti}, having become cosmic consciousness, or \textit{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 either with 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 the Yoga System of Patanjali.

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. In terms of modern astronomy, the physical theory of the Big Bang and the cosmic dust congealing into certain specified concentrated forms of nebulae, galaxies, etc., is similar to what the Sankhya or the Yoga calls 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 only using this word for your comparative 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, correlative, as it is known, of all these five sensations are not mere ideas. They are actual existences, and they congeal further 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 to 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 dhyana and samadhi process. 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 initiated object. 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, known also 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. Experience cannot be explained in any kind of
lecture. It is like the sweetness of sugar or the taste of a delicious meal. Nobody will tell you what is the taste of a delicious meal. Even with the most eloquent lecture on a good meal or the sweetness of sugarcane juice or sugar as such, you will not know what it is. You have to eat the sugar, and have the meal yourself. So are these *samapattis*, *samadhis*. They will be only words that are likely to go over your 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 classroom 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 you find an elaborate description of this. You 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 will not tell you more than what he would like to reluctantly express. He will mumble one or two words, and from that mumbling we have to go deep into his intention.

*Vitarka vicāra ānanda asmitārūpa anugamāt saṁ prajñātaḥ* (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 union of the meditating consciousness with the object of meditation in its highest reaches, begins with the identity of the meditating consciousness with the entire physical cosmos, consisting of the *mahabhutas*: prithivi, appu, tejo, vayu, akasa—earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five elements 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 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 not connected from the other; they are 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.

Today 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 processes, and not allow all these three phases to jumble up into one knot of confusion in ordinary perception as it takes place.

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 even minus oblongness, the leaf must be there. A leaf is
having a weight, but even 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 know that we do not think of an object always in the same way. 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 animals perceive objects differently from human perception. It is said that dogs can see things which the human eye cannot see. It is believed in India that if some death is to take place, even a month beforehand the dogs will know it. They will start making some peculiar whining sound in that place where the death is going to take place; they will have a peculiar tune, and people do not like that tune. They drive the dogs out when they make such sound which means that someone is going to pass away.

The vultures also know it. In deserts such as the vast Sahara, or the Arabian Desert, sometimes camel riders lose their way because the ocean of sand is so vast that they cannot know the path. Sometimes they lose their way, 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 fall down. The vultures can sense it.

Perceptions, therefore, vary in their categories and comprehensiveness, and an in-depth analysis will see objects differently. The idea of an object is different from the object itself, so that is a second factor. The object as such is one factor, and the idea or the notion that you have got about the object is the second factor. The object itself is called *artha*, and the idea about the object is called *jnana*.

There is a third factor, namely, 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 name. The moment you utter the word ‘fire’, the idea of milk will not come to your mind. The association of the name with that particular object is so intimate and essential that you 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 himself being called by any other name, such as Robert. There is a person fast asleep whose name is Rama. If you say “Rama, get up”, he will wake up. If you 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 you associate with it, the nomenclature, your idea of it, is the other. Patanjali says that in your meditation on the object, you should differentiate that object from involvement in the idea you have got about it, and also the nomenclature connected with it. It is not ordinarily possible for you 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.

So 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 involvement of nomenclature and ideation. This physical cosmos—earth, water, fire, air and ether, this continuum of matter—is such 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. Remove that name. 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 something, 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 there as the background of these processes.

If you can succeed in dissociating this entire physical cosmos of matter from its 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 worthwhile knowing, with which Patanjali concludes with the great dictum of *kaivalya*, or absolute liberation.
Chapter 19

Transcending the Tanmatras Through Samapatti

Today I am 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, due to popular usage, acquired certain frightening characteristics. We do not know what samadhi means. This word, due to its popular usage and accepted connotation, may not be properly contained in the mind. So, I am using a little milder word, samapatti, which means virtually the same thing.

Yesterday we covered the first step in samapatti, known as savitarka, in which experience, 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 observe that a tree is called by that name, and we cannot call it by any other name. We cannot call a tree as a stone, for instance. Though there is nothing wrong in changing the name of a particular object, in common usage a special 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 taking 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; and also, we cast it 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 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 that 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 of the object of meditation as such, in its pristine purity? Hard indeed is this achievement, but if this is practicable, you have achieved something wonderful, ordinarily not possible. You become a totally unselfish person, entirely impersonal in your envisagement of the object of meditation, so that you do not think it as you would like to think it, but you think it as it ought to be thought from its point of view, and not from your point of view. Also, you would think it, as far as possible, in terms of a freedom that it has from 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 our own selves. To be 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 Mr. so-and-so, you are Rama, you are Krishna, you are Mohanty; you are only that, that particular person. You are not another person. “My name is Gopal. I am not Ramakrishna.” 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 independently of all association, and you yourself will not be prepared to undergo this discipline of the similar 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 it is envisioned in common usage. In your level as it stands at present, try to commune yourself with that object which is parallel to your present condition. In the beginning, therefore, it is an attempt on the part of the meditating consciousness to commune yourself 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 which is associated with an augmentation in respect of the associations of the object, and nirvitarka is the very same object conceived of as free from such associations.

What is the object of meditation which we are speaking of as associated or not associated? The object, in the earlier stages, is anything and everything, Yathābhimata dhyānāt vā (Y.S. I.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 assuming an 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 merely by the presentation of the five gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Yesterday I mentioned briefly 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—prithivi, appu, tejo, vayu, akasa. These subtle elements are known as shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, 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 through scientific apparatus, for instance, you will see the electrons inside rather than the molecules constituting the physical object. Basically, electrical stuff is said to be the nucleus of physical objects, which looks rotund, square, or some such shape when you see it merely with naked eyes. 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 in one place only 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 tantra principles also constituting your own personality, you will be able to come in contact with the tantra 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. They mean practically nothing for people who are not accustomed to such in-depth meditations. Yesterday I mentioned that there is no use talking about this subject in greater detail, because these stages are not intended to merely be 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 it seriously and not merely in an academic or armchair fashion.

The tanmatras are difficult to apprehend through the sense organs. They are inwardised forces and, 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 spatiotemporal. 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 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 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 must have been 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 the expectation 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: 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 taking place in this world. Do you like to hear this? Human history is not taking place in this world; it is not taking 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 worth considering. That is the state in which you will find yourself. A relativity cosmos will be presented before your consciousness.

We 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 we have to divest them of even 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 words in Sanskrit, and we need not go into the 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 and appreciate and identify yourself with that non-located circumstance where even space and time would not be conditioning the tanmatras—you would be in the next higher state of samapatti, known as nirvichara.

When you reach this state, space will reveal itself. Nirvicāra vaiśāradye adhyātmaprasādāḥ (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 from 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. 2.22.3): 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. The 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. Angels descend, says Vyasa, commenting on one of the sutras of Patanjali. 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. There 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 saṅgasmayākaraṇaṁ (Y.S. 3.52). This is because you will be once again bound 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 diamond. Would you like to be in that condition of 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 not covered, but bypassed for some reason or the other, feeling 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 adhyātmaprasādah (Y.S. 1.47): 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 want anything to give you satisfaction.

You may wonder, “Is my Self now not with me? 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 pot of honey. What words can we use 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.

So 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 even to comprehend what it means, why do you expect another flood? The flood of Ganga itself is sufficient to drown us completely to death, and would you like the whole Arabian Sea or the Atlantic 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 now also in their dissociation of 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. Where 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?”

“Tell people you have seen I am what I am.”

Well, Moses might have understood what this statement meant, 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 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 He 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 yourself has 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 is left over. What is left over? That I shall not say today.
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, conflict with reality means conflict of 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’s 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 he 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. So 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 would rule supreme. If each one sticks to his own guns, as they say, and egoism is rampant, there would be no human society. So a mutual give-and-take policy of cooperation and not competition is the rule prescribed by Patanjali in his earlier stages of teaching, the *yamas* and *niyamas*. 
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. So 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, then the causal personality, which is deeper than everything else, 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. The universal spirit is the object of envisagement and confrontation finally in yoga, and this confrontation is what is known as meditation. I am not going to traverse through the process of meditation again. You are all intelligent students, and you have 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, 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 in 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, on 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 last time.

Dharma megha samapatti and ritambhara prajna are some of the terms expounding by Patanjali in this context. Truth reveals itself abundantly, as a pot
of nectar breaking and spilling out everywhere. That is *ritambhara prajna*: everywhere honey is flowing. The flood of truth is before you: *ritambhara prajna*. *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*, a 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 is, unfortunately, 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 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 emperorsip is not the cause of your happiness. The money value 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 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 word I concluded last time.

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, 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. Of course, 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 transcended totally, 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. 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. So 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.

Astity evopalabdhasya (Katha Up. 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. Buddhist mysticism goes to certain heights in the
Mahayana aspects of it, and calls the Ultimate Reality as bhutatathata. Bhutatathata 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 you are over-abundantly happy and are unable to explain the joy that you are feeling, you utter any word that you like; you scream and make a noise, because words become inarticulate at that time. Inarticulate sounds are generally what you make because the joy is too much. If a hundred million dollars have come to you through a lottery, you will have no words; the dictionary fails here. And if a hundred million dollars makes you mum, what about the general Existence of the Absolute? You 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 retrieving 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 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.

I have nothing more to tell you now. If you have any question to ask me, please ask. Tomorrow I will wind up everything with another few words to you.

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 concentration of the mind, the symbol being a name of God, a mantra, and the mind is absorbed totally in the meaning of that mantra. So 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. So there is no contradiction. They both say the same thing, but only Patanjali goes above it. It is one of the prescriptions 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. Correct.

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 one goal only, 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 *vipasana*. What is *vipasana*?

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 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 transcended gradually.

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 *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. So both these stages, *sananda* and *sasmita*, are the experiences of the *sattva guna* of *prakriti*, but not of Pure Consciousness.

Student: In Advaita Vedanta, a slightly different bliss is described.

Swamiji: There are various degrees of bliss. *Sananda* is one degree, *sasmita* is a higher degree, and what you call the bliss of Advaita is the *kaivalya* moksha Bliss itself. There are three degrees. You can be happy even with the 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 you call the Advaita Vedanta explanation of Bliss. It is identical with *kaivalya* moksha.

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Student: Even this *sananda* is like an object.

Swamiji: It is an object in the sense of not a sensory object. It is an object of I-consciousness only. There is no sense organ operating there. *Ananda* is not outside. It is an 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 have not seen 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 is 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 indescribable. It is called personality consciousness, I-consciousness, or doer-consciousness. The consciousness of your doing something is the responsible agent 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 Mr. 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 either.

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. It 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 functions associated. It is not the universal soul, and 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 consciousness of action. What you may do or not do is an irrelevant matter. If a corpse falls on something and then kills somebody, 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. Don’t like, 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 1000 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, this 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 the Gurus, long *satsanga* with the Gurus. Krishna Bhagavan *ki jai!*

Appendix

Siva’s Trident of Yoga Practice

It is a necessity for you to chalk out a daily program of actual practice, the conducting of your daily routine, whatever it be, in harmony with the ideals and objectives that have been taught to you during these days, as guidelines for the behaviour of your personality in this world, where you have to live. This world is something in which we 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 our 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? What is the value to me as a consequence of my 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 result. The profit-and-loss attitude of the commercial man is not a proper attitude at all, because our 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. 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 in spite of our having lived 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 from the world that he expected. You will find that the world has given you nothing in the end, and in the hope of gaining something from the world, you sweat and toil and rub your shoulders with nature and people outside. But you will find that the next day you are in the same condition as you were before, the only satisfaction being that there is a hope that perhaps something will come from your efforts. You seem to be living by a hope, and not because you have got anything from the world, because if the world had really granted you some abundance on account of your efforts that you have put forth in regard to it, tomorrow you would be a better person than today, a happier person, a more relived person, and filled much more than you are today.
But when you plug one hole of your finitude today with a particular kind of effort that you put forth in respect of a condition prevailing just now, you will find tomorrow another hole is open, and you 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 demonstrate from moment to moment that we are disharmoniously placed in this world. Our entire life is a waste. In the end, you will realise after passing seventy, eighty, ninety years in this world that you have wasted your life and have got nothing substantial. Promises have been made by the world, but they have never been kept. Gold has been promised, and trash and ashes were given to you. You got ashes; that is all. Though you expected apples, the world had no apples. It was a bundle of mud that was thrown into your mouth. That is why you are feeling insecure, unhappy and miserable, though every day this mystery may not manifest itself in a poignant fashion on account of your particular illusion that some part of your lacuna has been fulfilled by the world.

As I mentioned, you have plugged one hole. You are intensely hungry, and food has been given to you. You think the world is very kind to you because it has been good enough to give you a meal today, but it has done something else also, at the same time. It has kept you under suspension, subjection. It has thrown the agony of hunger into your stomach. That is the tragedy which nature compels you 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 you. It compels you to be in a state of finitude, and then promises to grant something by which your finitude may be plastered and made to feel a little bit of security. No plaster of this personality can make it secure. It will collapse one day or the other.

The idea is, you cannot import any kind of thing from the world outside into your 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 you, to see that your finitude is made tolerable to some extent. But it is like a broken wall that is made to stand high by the plastering of cement and the whitewashing of lime. It may look okay, but inwardly it is rotting. The wall is about to collapse, and your whitewash is not going to help you. It only gives you 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, but later on dust was thrown into their mouths. There is the same result 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, delved into. There is a maladjustment of our personality with the natural conditions prevailing outside, call it the world of nature or human beings or society of living beings, as the case may be. You are
not to expect anything from the world. The Bhagavadgita is dinning into your mind again and again, in all its verses practically, that you should not expect anything from this world as a fruit thereof, as a fruit of your work, because the world is incapable of offering you anything. One of the reasons for this is that you do not stand outside nature. The idea that you are outside nature, outside people, outside society, outside everything, and that you stand independent by yourself, is the reason why you cannot stand in a state of harmony with nature, and with your neighbour also. You are always at loggerheads with that which is just near you. You cannot reconcile yourself with it. There is some irksome feeling when everything is outside you. When you see something, you feel disturbed because it is a contending factor in the security of your finitude.

The Yoga, the Sankhya, the Vedanta, whatever you call it, is the science of delving deep into this predicament of human nature in this world of nature and society, which tells you where you stand. Wisdom has to dawn in your mind. The greatest wisdom is to know what kind of person you are, and where you are actually placed in this world. To be foolhardy and to work like a little innocent and ignorant child will not bring you anything. There is a law operating in this cosmos, and if you are unaware of this law, totally ignorant of its operations, you 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 I have to think only of what I am not every day—the building and the land and 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 important from the properties that appear to belong to me? Is 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 have an authority as a large official, but when you retire from your office, you look like a monkey crawling on the road. 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 lime-wash 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.

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. “I am also an important entity in this world. One
day I have to leave this world. And when I go, what do I take with me—land, property, money, bank balance and buildings?” Even a piece of grass or a broken needle will not follow you, and you go literally stripped of all associations before the justice of the cosmos, which may come to you tomorrow, or 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 building castles in the air, as they call it. 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. So you stand before the justice of the cosmos alone, and you carry yourself.

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 cosmic justice. So when you stand before the cosmic justice 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 got its own tongue, which is a 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 prescriptions for this purpose, which is a daily self-checking method: the maintenance of a spiritual diary. You question yourself: “In the morning I woke up, and now it is evening; the day has passed. On this particular day, have I done anything worthwhile to make me a better individual? I have taken my breakfast, I have taken my lunch, I have gone to my office and have finished my paperwork.” What else have you done, sir, 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 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 would you say, “No, don’t cry? I will give you office work, I will give you 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.” It has been crying for ages and ages. Since the incarnations through 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 for these few days, might have enlightened you to the fact that you are seeking an eternal treasure which cannot be eaten by the moths of time. 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 it is 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. Put a question to yourself: “I am important. I have an interest in work. 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.” So 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 only 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 formulae 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, and I am doing it.” This is not the point. The point is that it is a medium of expression of your soul in itself in order that you may invoke God’s presence into yourself. *Japa* is not merely a recitation of a formula or 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 think that 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. Inside the train you must do *japa* so that the disturbing idea of catching the train may not be there. Some hurry, some work, or a sudden emergency 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 emergency 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 must be postponed for tomorrow, because now you are busy with a little 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 tomorrow or tonight, but now I can sit for meditation.” But if it 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 early in the 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 be attending 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 little diversion for you after the concentration on *japa*.

*Svadhyaya* is the term that we use for sacred study. It is up to you to choose any book. *Svadhyaya* does not mean reading library books. Going to the library and picking up anything and going on browsing through huge tomes does not mean *svadhyaya*. *Svadhyaya* 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 always carry a mini edition of a Bible or a Bhagavadgita, or whatever you like—*The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas 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 thing 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 about the extent you have succeeded in your practice.

*Japa* is, of course, confined to a particular form of mantra or formulae which is easily done. *Svadhyaya* is also easily done because it is a book readily available, and you can read passages and concentrate your mind on the gospel of the 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 him. If there is no god at all, 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 for fifteen minutes continuously. Aaaauuuuummm, aaaaauuuummmmmm, aaaaauuuuummmmmmm, aaaaauuuuuuummmmmmmmmmm. 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 will have to 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 by the throat or the tongue. The entire being is 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 a 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, 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 expand its dimension gradually. 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 expands itself gradually 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 last time, 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, you cannot find in the world. So what does one do in meditation? One creates a picture of perfection in oneself. 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 in 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 a very 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, your feeling. The 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, 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 everything is going from all directions, 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 will purchase some food, this dubious attitude will not bring anything. So the prayer session need not be for a lengthened period of hours. You should not be under the impression that sadhana is sitting for hours and hours. 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 does not take large dimensions. But spark can burn mountains of straw, such power it has got.

Intense feelingful expression of your wanting that is what is known as mumukshutva, and no other qualification from you is necessary. 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 to you: japa sadhana on the one hand, svadhyaya of the scripture on the other, and meditation, become the crowning feature of spiritual practice. These are the three prongs of the trident, as it were, of the Lord Siva of practice—Siva’s trident, they call it.

In addition to this self check-up that you carry on daily through a spiritual diary, you also may be resolved 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 vipasana meditation and have gone to a session of vipasana. There are others who are devotees of Lord Krishna and want only to take his name, or Rama. Or there are those who are those people who take to Bhagavata Katha and go on reading the Srimad Bhagavata like a saptaha. Every seven days they complete one round. Or there is the Sri Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas, etc. Whatever be your technique, it is perfectly all right. It does not mean that your method should change, but continuity is important. The sutra of Patanjali regarding this is abhyāsa vairāgyabhyaṁ tan nirodhaḥ (Y.S. 1.12): Practice makes perfect. The saying of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita is abhyasa: Practice makes perfect. Every day continue the practice of being seated in the posture of meditation, and whatever be the success, it does not matter. 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? Tensions of any emotional or social nature have to be taken care of. We cannot keep a disease unattended to and then imagine that we are robust in health. There are various factors in the world which keep us restless. Financially poor people are restless because they have no meal for the day. Or in the family if there is some kind of disagreement—the father and mother, brother and sister, and son and daughter have no agreement of purpose or policy—they keep themselves in tension. If there is some disagreement, it has to be tackled 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 as factors before you take adequate measures to free yourself from tension of any kind.

Any want from the feelings should be taken care of. There are sometimes reasonable wants and unreasonable wants—imaginary asking for the ego, and also necessary requirements of the personality. Fulfil them. All desires are not bad. It does not mean every desire is an evil. There are constructive desires and destructive desires, catabolic and anabolic 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 easily be able to 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 a practice, and a guide is important. All questions cannot be answered
by books, and your little personal problem 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 particularly by one’s own self, may be presented before a superior.

Therefore, whether you take to the raja yoga method of the eight limbs—yamas, niyamas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi—or the bhakti yoga method of sravanam kirtanam vishnum smaranam pada seva-nam archanam vandanam dasyam sakyam atma samarpanam, or you take to the karma yoga method of unselfish activity for the welfare of people, or mantra sadhana, japa only is your method; that is also fine. Take to these methods, be diligent in your practice, and trust in God.