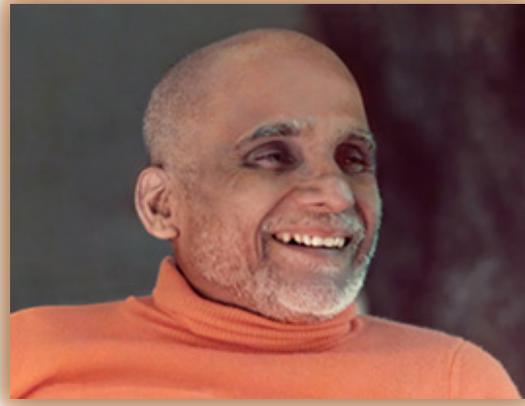


THE PATH TO FREEDOM: MASTERING THE ART OF TOTAL PERCEPTION



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ABOUT THIS EDITION

Though this eBook edition is designed primarily for digital readers and computers, it works well for print too. Page size dimensions are 5.5" x 8.5", or half a regular size sheet, and can be printed for personal, non-commercial use: two pages to one side of a sheet by adjusting your printer settings.

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Publisher's Note

This is a series of informal talks that Swamiji gave during the months of May and June in 1970 to visitors of the ashram.

Chapter 1

THE ASPIRATION FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

My proposal is not to take up any particular scriptural text, inasmuch as people attending these classes may be here only a few days in this season, and having a fixed topic with relevance to the previous discourses would not help them much. Therefore, I thought it more proper to give an outline of the spiritual practices of *sadhana*, which is of greater consequence to mature minds with some knowledge of spiritual life.

Hence, this series which I am commencing will lay special emphasis on the practical aspects of the mind's adjustments with spiritual values, because most of us are mature enough to realise the importance of practice. While it is quite true that everyone knows that practice is important, very few would be clear as to what this practice is. It is easy to have a general idea of something, but to have a more specific knowledge is difficult.

We have a general idea of God, of the world, of life, of Self-realisation or God-realisation, but when it comes to actual experience in day-to-day life, we realise that the mind stands apart from Reality. We have always a tremendous problem in life, a singular problem that faces every human being – the incapacity of the mind to adjust itself with the facts. *Sadhana* is nothing but this adjustment of the mind with Truth.

Many of us may have some knowledge of truth in its academic or philosophical sense, but this knowledge is only mental knowledge. All scientific or academic understanding is mental, psychological and rational. It is an

understanding of something, a kind of information that we have gathered. But we know very well how far information is removed from the reality. We may have a lot of information about a bag of rice in a shop, but it is not going to appease our hunger. There is no practical connection between our knowledge and the object to which that knowledge is supposed to be related. The highest object of spiritual *sadhana* is God, as we all know very well, and only if this object is properly related to our mind and our consciousness will it become *sadhana*.

Sadhana is not merely the concentration of mind on God at the very outset. This is a very big ideal, but it manifests itself in smaller ideals in our day-to-day life. Before we understand God, we find ourselves in the necessity to understand ourselves. We appear to have a very appreciable knowledge of God and His creation but very poor knowledge of our own self, due to which it is that we suffer in life. Pleasures and sufferings are connected with ourselves, and not with God.

We seem to be connected with facts, and to the extent we succeed in these adjustments, we are successful in life. People are failures in life in spite of their professions, their salaries, and their institutional career, and the failure may be in any field of life. It may be in education, in business, in a monastery; it makes no difference. One may be a failure merely because the ideal has set itself apart from the real. We have always been adoring and worshipping the ideal, and it has ever remained as an object of adoration. It has never entered our hearts or come near our hearth and home. God has ever managed to keep Himself apart from

us so that we may offer prayers to Him, and we must call Him every time as He is not always with us.

As I said, it is not merely the difficulty that we feel with God, Who is a distant Being; apparently, the difficulty is with small things in life, also. To understand this medley of human maladjustment and the incapacity of the mind to understand the objects that stand as its counterparts, it will be profitable to know something about the evolution of the mind itself. All things are related to the mind. We ourselves are an embodiment of the mind. The mind seems to be the thinking principle in us, and it does not get separated from our being. We identify with it, though in psychology we speak of the mind as an object of study.

It is really ourselves; we cannot tear the mind away from our body or our being. It sticks to us – and it is us – so when we study our mind, it may look as if we are studying ourselves. Therefore, it is futile to think that psychology is a kind of objective science. It is not a science in the ordinary sense of the term – unless, of course, we think that any systematised knowledge is science. It is an attempt at analysis of the processes through which one passes in life – not only independently as a psychological being, but also in relation to objects.

The crux of the whole matter is: In any field of life, to what extent can the mind take the object with it as an inseparable part of itself? We mostly think that the objects are away from us. The object of the mind is not connected with the mind physically, materially or in reality. Our friend is not a part of our mind. Our house is not a part of our being. Whatever be the intimate relation between ourselves and the objects that we hold dear, they are apart

from us, so if the time comes, we can forsake them, and they can forsake us. Our relationships are artificial in this sense. Such is the precarious situation in which we live in the world.

The world is supposed to be untrustworthy in a philosophical and spiritual sense. Many saints and seers have proclaimed this. We cannot pin our faith on the world, because of the small difficulty that we do not seem to be a real part of it. We really do not belong to our family, and the family does not belong to us, though for all practical purposes we may feel that we are integrally related. A time comes, perhaps in everyone's life, when one is torn away from family, society, business, from the position one holds, and so on. A time comes when one stands alone in a wilderness, as it were, with no relationships and the objects all cut away – a circumstance into which one can land at any moment.

The precariousness of life arises on account of this fundamental difficulty of the relation of the mind to its object; and whatever be the *sadhana* that we practice, whether it is *kirtana* or *bhajana*, *japa* or meditation, all these hinge upon this relation of the mind and its objects. When we chant *kirtana*, for example, it is not merely a word that we utter or a sound that we make; it has an object. It is not merely a mental operation that goes on when we are meditating; it has an object. We are not merely moving about here and there; our activities have an object. We will find that every blessed thing that we do in this world, psychologically or physically, has a counterpart as an object.

Now, this object has mostly remained like a kind of instrument – like a spade, a pickaxe or a knife – which we make use of and then cast away. Even people are used as instruments that can be cast away when they are not needed. It is unfortunate that these truths only become more and more clear as people grow older and realise the facts of life. They begin to know, slowly, after they have retired from their professions; they begin to realise in the maturity of their minds that the world is not as fond of them as they imagined, and the world is not going to help them as much as they thought it would. These are the types of realisations which would come to the minds of every person one day or the other. You realise when it is too late.

The *sadhaka* or the seeker is one who girds up his loins and prepares himself for the eventualities which he may have to face in life, even before they come. It is not enough to find swords and guns when the enemy is attacking. It must be our wisdom to keep everything ready even when at peace. No one tries to dig a well for water when the house is on fire. To try to do *sadhana* late in life, when everything is settled economically and physically, would be a folly because *sadhana* is not as easy as people imagine. It is not just commencing something at once. Even a business we cannot commence so easily. There are many factors involved in anything we do; and in spiritual practice particularly, the factors involved are many – not one, two or three, but many – the most important factor being our own self.

While in all the other activities of life we try to keep ourselves away as a reserve force and utilise others to effect our purpose, with *sadhana* we find that we have to use our

own resources, not imitations or borrowed stuff, because we cannot utilise other things. The more we grow in the consciousness of spirituality, the more also do we realise the intimacy that subsists between ourselves and our objects – the intimacy in an inner sense, not an external or social sense. Our approaches to things ordinarily are such that they do not bear any relation to facts. The history of psychological development of the human mind reveals that our mind evolves stage by stage. We do not suddenly become celestials or gods. The Puranas tell us that we have passed through 84 *lakhs* of *yonis* or births. We have been every blessed thing in this world before becoming human beings. This is what our scriptures say. Scientists all say that we have passed through various stages of evolution from matter to life, from life to mind, and from mind to intellect. From the pure inorganic level we came to the biological, and from the biological we came to the psychological and the rational.

Now we are supposed to be in the rational stage of life, and we think that this is the pinnacle of existence. Rationality is adored as a god. Well, every level is a god from its own standpoint, but it becomes inadequate when compared with something higher. I do not think that an animal would be conscious of its limitations; it thinks it is all right. It is only man that thinks an animal is inferior because of a comparison of values. In its own field, everything looks all right and complete in itself; and so it is that we regard our life as complete, and rationality as full-blown experience. If rationality, intellect, learning, and human wisdom were to be all and nothing more were to be there, then we ought to have been perfect beings.

We know how much we are perfect; each person knows in his own heart. Everyone knows what a confusion life is, and some of us know the causes also; yet, we cannot set things right due to factors beyond our control, which are the strings of human aspiration. There are certain things which are not visible to our eyes, but yet seem to be controlling everything. Our external actions, psychological aspirations, even social relationships, all seem to be guided and manipulated by a set of strings within us which do not become objects of our physical eyes. The intellectuality and the rationality which the human being has reached now at the present stage of the 20th Century [1970] gives a hint as to the existence of these immanent strings behind our rationality. Reason is a body of these sets of strings within, and as the soul operates behind a body, the strings operate behind every external phenomenon.

The mind evolves very mysteriously and this evolution cannot be known, just as we cannot see our growth day by day. We know that we have been growing from childhood – every day we have been growing a little, in every respect, but we cannot see this growth. Not only can we not see our growth, but we also cannot see the growth of another person if we are seeing that person every day.

Very mysterious, minute and subtle is this process of evolution. The mental process of evolution is, of course, subtler still. We have been growing psychologically, and not merely physically, organically and biologically. The earliest state of the mind is supposed to be that in which it gets lodged with matter, where there is no such thing as psychology at all. It is only inorganic matter. Mind getting buried in matter is the crudest state of mind. Fire is in the

matchstick, but we cannot see the fire. It is totally absorbed in the matchstick, which must be rubbed in order that it may be ignited. The condition of mind wherein it is inseparable from matter is the crudest form of matter. It evolves gradually, where it tries to extricate itself from the clutches of matter, and it begins to assert its independence, slowly, though not fully. It does not succeed in its assumption of independence, but it refuses to be totally controlled by the laws of matter.

In the field of botany or biology, the laws of physics do not hold good totally. They hold good as far as the body goes, but even plant life, for example, manifests a tendency which cannot be explained physically. No one has been able to demonstrate what life is. It has been taken for granted, as if it has been known very well; but we cannot define it, and we cannot demonstrate its variegated characters. The life principle that is manifest in plants and trees is the first assertion of independence of mind over matter, while in inorganic material it was apparently not there at all; for all practical purposes, it was dead.

Independence cannot be called independence until it is absolute. Relative, tentative, conditional independence is nothing. We go on complaining, grumbling, murmuring and so on when given only tentative and conditional freedom. We want to assert freedom in its completeness. Freedom, as the very word connotes, is the capacity to act independently, without any external factor. But if matter is to come and assert itself in our life – if things that really do not belong to us come every day and interfere in our life – we cannot be called independent.

So the life of the biological or botanical plant is not all; there is evolution still. An animal, for example, can think more independently than a plant, and it can move about. Moving around is a special characteristic that we see in the animal kingdom, and they can also instinctively react better than plants and trees. They can see what is in front of them and can understand, to some extent, the circumstances in which they are living. We know very well how advanced is the animal mind compared to the mere protoplasmic or biological element in the plant kingdom. We are more concerned here with understanding what higher aspiration is and what the higher values in life are, which question arises only in the human kingdom.

We have already transcended the stages of matter and mind, experienced these processes, and now we stand not merely different from these levels, but higher. An adult has in himself or herself everything that a child has, and a graduate has everything in him that an elementary school student has, educationally; this is what is meant by transcendence. Growth implies transcendence. It is not just jumping from one thing to another. In jumping there is no transcendence; it is only escape, running away, but in growth and evolution the lower is implied in the higher, and when the higher is reached, the lower is subsumed.

So in the human level we seem to be at an advantage over all other aspects of creation – animal, plant and inorganic levels. We have a freedom of our own. Although man is small compared to the gigantic machinery of the cosmos, he has a power in him on account of the psychological transcendence that he has achieved. Powerful animals in the forest can be controlled by one man; though

the animals may be many and man may be single, he may be in a position to control all the lions, for example, because of his psychological transcendence. He knows the workings of the mind better than the animal does.

Now this is the question we have to place before our minds: After having reached this stage, can we pat ourselves on the back? Life reveals that we are not so safe and secure as we might imagine ourselves to be. With all our knowledge, with all our transcendence of the animal level, our life seems to be insecure. We have fears of various kinds, and are not happy. Everyone knows it. Though scientifically it is true that we are superior beings, we sometimes have fears which haunt us more piteously. Even animals are not in so much fear as man is – especially today – because our umpteen fears are created by circumstances which are unnatural, while the fears of the animal are natural.

One reason for the increase in the fear in humanity is a peculiar characteristic in us which is absent in the animal, on account of which they are a little more blessed than man: egoism. Though the principle of personal consciousness may be in animals in an incipient, rudimentary form, man has an egoism of a different character altogether. It is not merely self-consciousness, it is self-assertiveness – assertiveness to the opposition to others and in the teeth of others' well-being.

This is something very peculiar and looks sarcastic when we study its nature. When we study human psychology, we come to grips with a certain peculiar difficulty on account of this strange human element called ego. Just as the mind is a part of our being, the ego is also a

part of us. We cannot separate the mind from our self, and so also we cannot separate the ego from our self. We are the mind, we are the intellect, we are the ego. We sum up all these elements in a single term 'I' which includes mind, intellect, ego and all other psychological functions in the evolution of the human mind.

While at the human level it has shed some of the instinctive characters belonging to the lower levels, it has placed itself in new difficulties due to its entanglements in the various forms which human egoism takes. Especially in spiritual practice, you will realise that it is egoism that acts as the greatest of oppositions, more than even the senses and the other psychological functions.

I began by saying that the mind evolves slowly and gradually from the extrication of the clutches of matter, and in one of its stages it plants itself in what is called egoism. In the lower levels of matter and life, the evolutionary process was, to some extent, spontaneous. We cannot say that there was any self-effort on the part of the plant to evolve to the human level. Up to the human level, evolution seems to be spontaneous and free from the necessity of personal self-effort. But when we come to the human level, there is felt a need for what we call effort, free will and the exercise of choice. We have the power and the freedom to do this or that, to choose one alternative or the other. In this freedom with which we seem to be endowed, we are better off than animals – true. But this freedom also, at the same time, is a great handicap. We are bound by our freedom, in one sense. When freedom is given to a person who does not know how to exercise freedom properly, it becomes a cause of bondage. The freedom that we have achieved is mostly a

freedom to do what we like, and not necessarily the freedom to do only the right thing. The vision of the proper thing to do is lacking, so when power is vested in the person who lacks perfect vision, this power is misused.

Vision and action have to go together. A gun is good in its own way, and a sword has its own purpose, but we cannot hand them over to a baby. Power corrupts, as they say, when vision is lacking. We have been endowed with a freedom in the sense of a license, and not in the moral and spiritual sense; so what happens is that we try to exercise our freedom for a purpose that is contrary to the law of nature. While the freedom in a miniature form given to animals and plants is used only for the natural purpose of self-subsistence and self-multiplication, the human being alone sometimes uses this freedom for destructive purposes. We never see the vegetable or animal kingdom using its freedom for destructive purposes. But man can contrive, and all his erroneous approaches to life are due to his incapacity to rightly adjust his mind with the environment. There is no use in merely being placed in a suitable environment, economically speaking. We also should have the understanding to put this environment to proper use with the simultaneous knowledge of our true relation to it. First we have to realise where we are.

If you go to a foreign land, what are the laws of that country? You cannot apply the laws of your country there, for obvious reasons. Likewise, the laws of the animal level cannot be applied wholly to the human level, and so instinct alone will not succeed; but we persist in living only on instinct. The freedom with which man has been endowed is expected to be utilised to evolve further into

higher understanding. Human life is one of the rungs in the ladder of evolution which is not yet complete. Though we have reached the human level, we have to move further.

It is like travelling to Badrinath; you have come from Haridwar to Rishikesh, but you have to go still further. We have to go further and further into higher realms. The Upanishads speak of various degrees of joy into which the human mind enters, until it reaches the final confirmation, the Bliss Absolute. Human joy is nothing; it is a jot, a distorted reflection of true bliss. And so there is evolution yet to be, which ought to be, through which our mind has to traverse. But if human freedom is mixed up with human ego, then evolution can be retarded at the human level. There is no retardation at lower levels, but at human levels it can be retarded; there can be stunted growth, and even reversal under special circumstances. There can be a demotion, as we have in offices. While human beings have special privileges as compared to animals, we have also special dangers which animals do not have. While we have a larger freedom, we have also greater fears and greater chances of going wrong, and man can suffer more than an animal does merely because of the mixture of freedom with egoism.

Unfortunately, what happens is that when we rise up from the level of the brute consciousness of pure animality into the human level, we do not wholly become human; we come with an inheritance of the animal instinct also, to some extent, and many times we mix up the human values with the animal instincts. Our visions get blurred. The lower mind is the instinctive mind: the id, the libido and so

on, as psychologists tell us. These are all the human's inheritance from animals.

We may say we have just one leg in the human level; that is why we have human aspirations together with animal instincts and passions. We can sting like a scorpion and bite like a snake. The human being has special features such as compassion, understanding, and cooperation, but the lower characteristics also show their heads, and we often make a mess of these two, perhaps every day.

We confuse the human ideal and aspiration with the animal way of perception. One of the animal ways of thinking is: "The world is absolutely unconnected with me, and has nothing to do with me. The world is so much removed from me that what happens to the world has no bearing upon my life." This is our inheritance from the animal level. "If the whole world goes to the dogs, it has nothing to do with me. Let all die, as long as I am comfortable; it makes no difference to me so long as I am happy." This is an inheritance from the animal level, again, but it is not a truth.

It is not true that we can be safe when the whole world goes to the dogs, yet sometimes these feelings come and we manifest them in our day-to-day life, in society, even in family, in business, in shops, on the streets, etc. We manifest these thoughts covertly. What does it matter to me if another man is hung, if I have absolutely nothing to do with him? This is only a specific way in which we think sometimes, though not always. And at least fifty percent of our life goes away in such thinking, which is going to bind us. It is this sort of thinking that is called selfishness. Selfishness does not succeed because selfishness is untrue,

though it asserts itself always. It is not true that the world is independent of us and that we are independent of it. It is here that the consciousness of higher life begins.

Up to this time we are in the animal field only. We think that we are completely safe within the four walls of our room. As long as we are content with thinking along these lines, we are in the subliminal level of animals and have not yet become true human beings, because we have not yet had the vision of truth. Spiritual life is supposed to commence with *viveka*, or understanding. The first understanding that blossoms forth is the understanding of the fact that there is some sort of connection between ourselves and the world. It is only the illiterate and untutored rustic that can immaturely go with the notion that the world has nothing to do with him, and he has only to exploit it as much as possible.

You know the saying, *satyameva jayate*: Truth succeeds, and nothing else – a great dictum. But what is truth?

The truth is that there is a sort of relationship immanently felt between yourself and the world, though outwardly there seems to be no such relationship. Apparently there is no connection between one person and another person. You can get up and walk away in any direction you like. But this is not wholly true. You may walk miles away from me, but yet you cannot have complete separation from me – not only from me, but from anything else in the world. Physical isolation is one thing, and truth is another.

You cannot be away from the truth of a circumstance merely by being physically away from it. You cannot escape facts by merely physically running away. The facts will

pursue you. The nature of truth is such that it can follow you like a shadow, and this truth expounded in the scriptures and by saints is that mysterious something that seems to be hidden behind the outer separations of life.

While in ordinary business you dupe people under the notion that you have nothing to do with them, the world will in turn dupe you some day because of the relation that is there already. It was your animal instinct that made you believe that you can do this, but the truth asserts itself and recoils upon you and stings you with an equal vengeance, which is sometimes called the law of karma and the law of action and reaction, merely because of a truth immanent in the so-called outer isolatedness and separation of life. Therefore, you will realise that in trying to dupe the world, you have unwittingly duped yourself.

The spiritual aspiration, the spiritual consciousness, rises like a small tendril, a small plant, and flashes forth like a spark when the mind of man begins to hazily feel the presence of some sort of thing masquerading behind the separations of life, and he becomes restless because of this hazy vision – like Hamlet in Denmark: He began to see something, though he could not explain what it was. Something is dead wrong, and something is hovering around us, from which we do not seem to be in a position to escape. This restlessness is the commencement of the spiritual consciousness in human life.

This is an incipient stage of spirituality, we may say: the recognition of there being some sort of defect in our ordinary attitude to life, though we have not been able to see what this defect is. Sometimes we do not feel all right; we feel indisposed. We cannot definitely tell what has

happened or what is wrong. This feeling of not being all right arises in the life of all persons, and we seem to be fed up with things, though we do not know the cause. When this sense of having enough with things arises, we may be sure that the spiritual is awakening in us. It is just awakening; the child is not yet born, but yet there is a possibility of it being born.

This goes also by the name of *vairagya*, scriptures say: a distaste that we feel for the ordinary satisfactions of life. It is a lack of taste for things, and has nothing to do with the physical distance of objects from things. It is a sense of enough with all things – a surfeit with all happiness that we had in this world, and we do not want it anymore. It is not that we cannot get things, but rather that we do not want them. There is a sharp distinction between *vairagya* and frustration – when we cannot get a thing, it is frustration, but when we can have it but do not want it, this is *vairagya*.

A very subtle distinction is to be drawn between spiritual discontent and psychological frustration. It is a very, very important distinction in spiritual life, so important that many people mistake one thing for the other. Many people are in serious difficulties, and they mistakenly think *vairagya* is dawning. Not so! *Vairagya* is something different. *Vairagya* is the absence of longing. Have we a longing for something? Would we like to have it? Will we take it if it is given? That is the question we have to answer. If we would not like to take it even if it is offered, well, that is something very worthwhile; but it is difficult. Nothing can be more difficult than to realise this distinction between the sense of spiritual discontent, divine discontent, and the submerged desires of the human mind.

Many a time, our desires seem to lie buried, with none on the surface, but it does not mean that there are no desires. They are just not seen: the thieves are not visible, but they are there. Desires can lie dormant like a coiled serpent; so small do the cobras become when they are coiled, but when anything touches them, immediately they expand themselves into furious activity. This is exactly what desires do. Blessed are those souls who can realise this difference between repressing a desire merely because of the inability to acquire their counterparts, and sublimating them on account of having had enough of them.

This having had enough of things also can be of two types: One is because a person has had and seen everything; or he may not be interested in anything on account of having understood everything. He might not have seen them physically, but he knows them. A doctor need not pass through every disease physically; he knows what the disease is, though he himself has not fallen sick. Likewise is a person with vision and insight. He sees through things, not merely seeing things. He can penetrate them like an X-ray, and see the structure behind the objects.

So *vairagyas*, as the scriptures tell us, are of two kinds: the *vairagya* of the person who has been through the ruts of life, passed through many a suffering, passed through *bramacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha*, etc., has seen all people and knows what all people are, and so he will not go to them again. That is one sort of maturity which the mind reaches and attains a kind of *vairagya*.

But there are some who are born with a longing for the eternal, though they might have not physically come in contact with tempting objects. This positive aspiration for

that which is permanent takes possession of them in an intensified manner so that nothing ephemeral can blow them away. This is the most stable kind of *vairagya*; but even the earlier one should get stabilised by the aspiration planted in the mind of the seekers by deep thought and the understanding of the nature of things.

So we have now come to this initial stage of the spiritual consciousness. The first stage in the development of spiritual aspiration is an inherent sense of dissatisfaction with everything in this world, and longing for things which are not visible to the eyes. This is *viveka* and *vairagya*, understanding and dispassion combined, and here is planted the sapling of true spiritual life.

Chapter 2

THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM

In tracing the evolution of the mind in the previous session, we came to a point where life seems to be a series of occasions when the mind feels an irreconcilability with its object. All our thoughts have corresponding objects before them. We think things, persons and various conditions. The anxieties and sufferings of life can all be boiled down to attempts on the part of the mind to reconcile itself with its object.

The mind does not always succeed with this attempt because it can never become the object, and the objects cannot become the mind; yet, there is an unsuccessful attempt at bridging this gulf, which is the story of all human history. Every attempt of one individual to overcome another, in any manner or any capacity whatsoever, is only an outer expression of the internal tendency of the mind to overcome its object.

Why should the mind try to overcome the object or reconcile with the object? Why not be independent of the object and unconcerned with it? Originally, in its evolution, the primitive state of mind thought that the objects are absolutely independent of itself, that the world has no relation to it at all. Animals react only to stimulus. There is no judgement of values, no understanding the world, no raising the question as to why there should be a stimulus from outside. The animal mind does not question because there is no purpose in questioning. Its purpose is to react to stimulus whenever it arises from the outside world. It is the

human mind that feels the difficulty in a greater intensity than the animal mind.

As I tried to analyse last time, our sufferings seem to be many times more serious and complex than the sufferings of animals. The reason is that in our level of evolution, Truth reveals itself in a greater degree than in the animal mind. When Truth reveals itself in a more extensive manner, it beckons the variety to itself in a more intensified manner. Our vision of Truth is vaster than in the mind of animals. It does not mean that we have a real consciousness of truth. The vision presses itself forward in our minds merely by the fact of the evolutionary process, not because of a self-analysis that we have been practising. This is not a deliberate invention or a discovery of the evolution of the Truth consciousness in our mind. It has pressed itself forward merely on account of a level that the mind has reached above the animal level. Somehow or the other we happen to be on a higher degree, just as we appear to be in a waking condition now which is more real than the dream world. The apparently higher level of the human mind drags itself forward in the evolutionary process, and together with it also drags the degree of Truth corresponding to its level.

Now, what is this Truth to which we seem to be awakened in the human consciousness? The Truth is that the vision or the perception or the sensory reactions of the lower levels were not wholly true. It is not true that the world is absolutely unrelated to us. It is also not true that we can get on merely by reacting to stimuli. We cannot live like animals for a long time because the stimulus is also a reminder from the outer expression of Truth. "I am here.

Look at me,” says Truth to the animal mind. But when there is this call from the outer expression of Truth, there is only a kicking back, as it were, which is the response which, in the animal state, the mind reveals in respect of this stimulus. There is no understanding of why this stimulus is there or ought to be there. Even on the animal level the pressure of Reality is felt, and it is this pressure of Truth that manifests itself as the urge for evolution. If there were no Truth, there would be no evolution at all.

“You are not fully ripe; you have to mature more and more,” is perhaps the inaudible voice from the cosmos. This voice from the Silence, as we may call it, urges us forward, pushes us, as it were, and never leaves us at any single given level. This is why we are never happy. Never can a single created being be happy, because evolution is not complete. We are moving, and we have to move further. Now, at the human level, a peculiar psychological difficulty arises which we call discrimination or discriminative understanding, wherein we rise above the primitive notion that the world is absolutely unrelated to us, and seem to feel, unconsciously though, that there is something hidden in the secrecy of things which is impossible to completely avoid in life. It is not possible to brush aside the realities of life totally in our self-centred existences. Selfish people have tried their best to live lives localised to their own bodies, but all these have been failures throughout history. No one who has been wholly selfish was successful in life because selfishness goes counter to the demands of the human mind, which the mind makes itself, which are necessary due to the very stage in which it finds itself by evolution.

The mind realises that it is somehow or the other dependent on the objects of the world for many purposes. If the world is absolutely unrelated to us, we should not be dependent on it, and there should be no commerce between us and the world. But the truth seems to be different; we have dependences of various kinds. From morning to evening we realise the extent of our dependence on the world. We want air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, people to talk to, and many other social relationships, without which life seems to wither away into an airy nothing.

The animal consciousness, or rather the notion that the world is not related to oneself organically, is not true. This fact comes into high relief in the human level of realisation. "I have to deal with the world," is the conclusion of the human mind in its higher evolution. And the manner of dealing with the world is the business of existence. The whole education of the human being is the process of the training of the human mind to understand the way in which it has to deal with the world. Thus, education is a kind of training in adjustment of values, and ultimately training in the adjustment of oneself with the world in its completeness.

Even now the evolution of Truth is not complete. While it is true that in the realisation of there being some sort of a value in the objects of the world we have risen to a higher level, yet there is a pinch felt from within that we are not independent after all. We are living a slavish life, as it were, depending on the things of the world, and nobody wishes to be a slave. We may pour milk and honey on a slave; yet, he will not be happy: "Oh, I am serving this person; I am

dependent.” The very consciousness of dependence gnaws into the vitals so that any amount of satisfaction otherwise given is not going to be complete.

Even the mere consciousness that the world has a relation to us in the sense that we are dependent upon it to a large extent is not going to satisfy us. We are not happy with this understanding. What is the use of knowing that we are slaves? “Can I become independent?” is the question.

So man tries to be independent. He struggles against the odds of life, and fights with nature. There are various types of struggles to overcome the dependence in which man seems to be involved. There is struggle for existence, struggle for life, which is another name for struggle for independence of the spirit. “Can I achieve independence in this life?” is the question of the human mind – a question it puts to itself, because the answer cannot come from anyone else. It is a question that is put by each one to one’s own self. Dependence is a kind of death: *sarvam paravasam dukham*, says the scripture. *Sarvam atmavasam sukham*: The more we are self-dependent, the more are we happy. The more we are dependent on others, the more also is our unhappiness. Whatever be the salary that we get, it makes no difference if we are dependent. We are subservient, and this makes the mind unhappy.

So it is not merely the possession of material wealth that can make us happy, but a sort of conscious independence which tries to assert itself even in a slavish mentality. Even a slave asserts himself one day or the other. There is an assertion of independence in each atom and in every cranny of creation. The process of evolution may be

described as a process of a larger and larger seeking of freedom; the more we evolve in life, the more also are we free in the expression of our consciousness. From matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to intellect is evolution, and also from freedom to freedom: from lower freedom to higher freedom, from more restricted to a more unrestricted freedom. The human mind is deliberately conscious of its situations. It can, to some extent, change its destiny with a free will – a freedom of choice. In this sense, we call it freer than the animal instinctive mind; but as we have seen just now, we are not really free. If we were, we would be happy also, because freedom is happiness.

Knowledge is power, but our knowledge has not led us to power. We have been crying for freedom for centuries and are wretched even today, in spite of our education. No one is free and happy. There is an agony in the heart silently felt as a permanently raised question, to which no answer is found. The whole life seems to be a big question mark. “What” and “why” are the questions, whatever be the object of the situation before us. What is the answer?

Nobody can give the answer. The life of the human being, the life of the cosmos, has remained an enigma, and may remain an enigma forever as long as the mind is the answerer of the question. So is this predicament of the human mind, where it is in a state of conflict between itself and the world outside: on one side, we cannot leave the world, because we will die without it; on the other side, we do not want to be dependent upon it. This is the great human psychological conflict. Conflict is of the mind with its objects, and a theoretical knowledge that its object is there and its character is such and such is not going to help

the mind much, because what the mind needs is not an understanding or a knowledge of the object, or scientific knowledge, for that matter. It is not this knowledge that we are seeking. We are seeking freedom. We do not want science, we want freedom, but what the world gives us is a kind of tempting information which today we call education. We want scientific advance in our life, bereft of the freedom which we are seeking. It is like taking food without appeasing hunger. I am given food, but I am not satisfied, for some reason. It is not food that I want, I want appeasement of hunger; so the problem is not solved.

We are given tinsel which appears to be satisfying. The knowledge which we are provided today is only a kind of promise that is being made – a promise which is never fulfilled. Therefore, the mind struggles to overcome this opposition, and in this the mind has been a failure. Mostly in all kinds of struggles of the mind with nature, it has been a failure; nature has won victory. The world has managed to keep the human mind under subjection. We are slaves of the world even today. No one can be independent. We are caught up in it so inextricably that slavishness is not the word; we are worse than that. But the mind is not going to cease its effort, and there is a push behind the mind to urge it forward. “Go ahead!” says the urge of Truth.

At this present stage of our analysis, we should not worry ourselves as to what Truth is. It is enough if we know that there is an urge. It is due to this urge that we go to sleep and that we wake up. Due to fatigue after this effort of the day we fall asleep, but what is the good of going to sleep and feeling a want to go to sleep forever? For, we sleep but again wake up. The effort is not complete, and the Truth

wakes us up. While it is the Truth that makes us fall asleep, it is also the Truth that wakes us up again for continuing the action that was left pending earlier. Therefore, human evolution is a continuous march of the human mind in search of freedom from dependence on the world, from the clutches of nature, from the agonising conflict of irreconcilability that it feels between itself and the world of creation.

The mind then tries to overcome this conflict by a trick. Many times we can imagine that we are free, and then we can be happy. Why strive for freedom when we can just think that we are free? This is a kind of self-deception into which the mind enters. While we cannot succeed in the battle of life, we can run away from it and proclaim victory because what is really necessary is a proclamation, and not real victory. So the mind tries to proclaim victory over the world, which it does not have. The world has defeated it. "Get away from me," says the world. "You puny mind, you cannot understand me."

But the mind's vanity is hurt: "I shall be called a fool for having returned from the battlefield defeated." So it proclaims victory by certain devices that it has manufactured. In psychology and psychoanalysis these are called defence mechanisms by which the mind deceives itself into a sense of satisfaction using a so-called freedom which is really not there.

The difficulty of the human mind is a set of relations it establishes with the world outside, which we call likes and dislikes. Our relations with the world can be summed up with the likes and dislikes of the mind. But on a further investigation we will realise that dislike is actually a liking

to avoid certain things, so ultimately there are only likes, no dislikes. There are various kinds of likes, or wants, or feelings of necessity. Connect the mind with the world and with the satisfaction of desires, and the mind tries to overcome the world or gain independence over it: “How am I dependent on the world? It is by my desires for the things of the world. This is what causes my dependence. If I satisfy my desires, I will become independent. Why not try this method?” And so the mind tries to satisfy desires in order to gain independence over the world.

Remember that the mind seeks independence and nothing else. So even in the mind seeking fulfilment of the desires, it is seeking only independence, because to desire is to be dependent. In the satisfaction of the fulfilment of a desire there is an apparent abolition of the conflict between the mind and the object: “The conflict seems to be resolved if I have the object of desire. How am I dependent on the object if the object is already mine? So why not have all things and thus become independent?”

These days, we regard independence as a state of mind where it is satisfied of having possessed everything on Earth. “If the whole world is mine, I am independent of the world.” This is how the mind argues. If the whole world is not mine, and yet I long for it, I am dependent on it. The longing for the world does not cease. To cease the longing, the attempt of the mind is to bring the world under its subjection. We have wars waged between nations. We have Hitlers, Ravanas, Kumbakaranas, and many others with this condition of mind where a specific form of desire called ego ran rampant – became wild, as it were, and wreaked havoc in the world in its attempt at subjugating things.

Desires are of various kinds, the most prominent of them being hunger, sex and ego, and it is these that become uncontrollable passions. While desires can be many, they can be reduced to these three instincts, hunger and thirst being biological, and ego being psychological. All the struggles of life finally will be seen to be the expressions of these three desires.

When they are in a mild form they go as preferences, likings; we like certain things, and so on. But when they become intense, they become wild passions, and then it is that they try to do harm to other people. When desires go out of bounds and cannot be controlled by even the mind from which they arise, they become like wildfire, and everything is destroyed. These are certain ways in which the mind can go off track in its evolutionary process, like railway trains can go off the track if they are run too fast or the engine goes out of order, and so on. If it moves along the track, it will reach its destination; otherwise, it will dash down, killing all people inside it.

The mind is supposed to evolve, not to run amuck. Horses pulling carriages are supposed to move along the trail, but if the horse goes amuck, it can throw the vehicle down into a ditch. The human body, which is like the vehicle pulled by the horse which is the mind, moves onward towards Eternity. A very beautiful image is given in the Kathopanishad: The chariot of this body is being driven by the horses of the senses, and so on. This chariot is supposed to have been driven to Eternity along the prescribed path. But if the horses go uncontrolled, they may run hither and thither and break the carriage to pieces. The destination will not be reached. The desires of the human

mind are basically reconcilable with the urge for evolution, but they get entangled with an unnatural relationship of the mind with objects and then become passions.

It is very difficult to understand the good and bad points of human desire. It is not that all desires are devilish, but they can become devils if they are out of control. Fire – is it good or bad? Water – it is good or bad? We cannot say. Water is good; without it we cannot live, but it can drown us also. Likewise is human desire. It has a basic rationality behind it which is explicable by the immanence of the Truth-consciousness which is the urge behind all human desires. So there is a divinity behind all human desires, but there is also a Satan together with it, walking parallel with the divine urge within. The Satanic element is the diversification of the desire – the horse going amuck, we may say. Instead of the horse moving along the path, the horse is running wild into the forest. So is the condition of the human mind in its attempt at fulfilment, not knowing what really happens.

The mind foolishly imagines that freedom can be had if all others are destroyed: “My freedom is challenged by the existence of other people. Then I shall see that they do not exist.” Hitler was such a person: “If anybody opposes me, I shall see that they do not exist, or I shall make them all into satellites.” The human desires try to convert the objects of the world either into satellites, subservient elements, slaves, subordinates, or it sees that they do not exist at all. These are the positive and the negative sides of human desires. In the cruder forms of desires, there is a feeling of restlessness without one’s knowing what is happening inside. But in the

finer forms, there is a deliberate attempt to do something with the objects.

We know the longing of the human mind to see that it is predominant in the field in which it works. Whatever be our field of activity, our instinct is to be the predominating person. Leave alone our being subordinate to others, but we would not even like to be treated like others. To feel that we are just like others is very painful, so the mind says: “Why should I be one amongst the many? I shall be superior.”

This desire for superiority is again an assertion of independence. The superior consciousness is larger in freedom than the consciousness which is treated equally with others. If it is subservient, then it is like death; it cannot bear it any more. In all the struggles of the human mind with the objects of the world, including with persons, it tries to bring other things around itself. This is what is called enjoyment. We possess the objects under our grip, physically or psychologically. We may physically hold the objects in our hand, which is one kind of control, or we may be paid honour and tributes by people, which is also a kind of grip because now they are subservient.

Now, under all these psychological conditions, the mind feels a superiority. The mind wants to rule in order to gain independence over others – to exert authority is to make satellites of others – because the primary urge is for the highest of freedoms, which cannot be achieved as long as there is a second. The moment there is another, there is a difficulty in adjusting oneself to it.

Dvitiyāḍ vai bhayaṁ bhavati (Brihad. 1.4.2): Where there is a second, there is a fear. If there is another person nearby, we have fear of him and cannot have peace. It may

be a person or anything else, but we cannot reconcile with it. "How can the consciousness reconcile itself with the object?" is the great universal, philosophical, spiritual question. Is it possible to reconcile them? Nobody has achieved this reconcilability. Always the object has remained outside consciousness, and even today it is outside; but as long as this reconcilability is not reached, the mind cannot rest in peace. We are defeated.

A defeated person cannot be happy; and so people in the world are miserable, their struggles are in vain, and the world is what it is, even after centuries. We are showing our teeth to the world in utter defeat, and only patting ourselves on our backs in our homes. But victory must be achieved because the victory of the mind is the victory of consciousness; and the victory of consciousness is the victory over all things which cannot be attained so long as the consciousness has an opponent before it, or external to it. The reason for human evolution is this.

Why should there be evolution? The reason is that there is an object before consciousness, so there is evolution. The mind struggles somehow or the other to make peace with the objects. "Don't fight with me, please. Let us be in peace," is the argument of the objects of the world. We have been struggling and fighting with the world and have not been able to gain victory. We have tried many ways of controlling the world, by making it subservient, by ruling over it, by enjoying it, and even by destroying it; all these methods have been tried throughout history, and all have failed. People who have trod this Earth with the aim of destroying things for the purpose of controlling them have not succeeded. The Caesars, Napoleons, and Alexanders

have tried to control the world, but in turn they were controlled and have been wiped out of existence.

The mind is defeated. It is not this person or that person that is defeated, but the human mind. The specimen of individuality is defeated by the structure of the Universal Cosmos. Therefore, the mind tries to make peace when the opponent is too strong. We have tried in vain all the while to fight with this enemy. So what is the alternative? We must somehow say, "Let us be in peace, let us not fight anymore." We have striven to put him down. We have fought tooth and nail and found that it is not so easy, so the alternative has come: "Let us make peace; you exist, and I also shall exist."

The recognition of the equality of human beings is a higher state of recognition of the human mind. The age of the law of the jungle, as it is called, is over: "If I am strong, I shall tear you." Man tried that law, and even today many are trying it, and they will not succeed. Then they come to the reconcilability with other principles of egoism: "Let us both exist, and let freedom be imparted to all." Today we call this the height of civilisation. If all people are treated equally in society and everyone is the same in the eyes of the law, and if justice in the legal sense is meted out to people properly, then we say we are in the zenith of civilisation. Today we are likely to consider ourselves so. At least the majority of people feel that it is good to treat all equally. Well yes, there is no other alternative; we cannot go on fighting, as the mind has tried this method and failed. We shall all be treated equally.

Originally in the instinctive level, the mind did not like to be treated equally. It wanted to assert its independence,

so it tried to wage war and subjugate the objects. When it did not succeed, it came back to its original level of thinking and thought that it is better to be in peace with these difficult elements. Today when we have no control over people, we try to be at peace with them. What control have you over me, or I over another? No one has control over another; each one is an independent ego, but there is a mutual agreement. This is what we call the law of human society. It may be family law, communal law, political national law, international law, etc. It is an agreement of people that they shall live in a certain way, and shall not do certain things. Then they set up governments to enforce this agreement. We have made law. We have made governments for the sake of our own good; otherwise, we will fly at each other's throats.

So this is the state we have reached today, in 1970: "Let there be a kind of agreement." We agreed with others in many respects. We respect in a large measure the sacredness of human life. We agree that others also are human beings like ourselves. We accept that they too have desires and aspirations, as we have. This is one kind of peace and culture that the mind has achieved – peace in the sense that we shall not physically wage war.

With all this, are we free? Again is a question. There is no war, we shall not fight amongst ourselves, we shall accede to the requests of others, we shall regard others as our own selves, etc.; well and good. Are we happy now, or do we want something else? Is everything all right? No, there is still something else we want. Everything is not all right. Political peace is not the ultimate satisfaction of the human mind. There seems to be an urge for further growth,

further integration. The mind has to reconcile itself with the objects in a higher sense than it had been visualising things earlier.

If all people keep quiet, it does not mean that they are in peace. Peace is not merely keeping quiet. It is a conscious agreement of the principle of ego with the other principles of egos in the world. Even if we do not fight among ourselves, we still are egos. The egoism has not gone. So in a state of the so-called international social or political peace, happiness is not really assured because of the permanent multitude of egos, among which there has not been a basic agreement.

“What is my relationship to you?” is the question of one ego to another. Do you just exist staring at me without doing anything, or do we have to interact? Now we are in a very advanced state of thinking. We are not thinking like animals, or even like ordinary human beings; we are thinking at a level of mind where it is accepted for all times that there should be no fighting because of the recognition of an equal value in human beings. It is at this level that further difficulties crop up – difficulties of a philosophical nature, we may say.

If all people have to keep quiet without talking to one another, there is no war, of course, but yet there is no peace. We will not like that condition, and will like a further growth of a more positive nature. Perfect silence of the egos is a negative peace, but we are not satisfied with negative peace, or negativity. If we shall be provided with all our needs – plenty to eat, plenty of clothes, a good bungalow to live in, and nobody will do any harm to us – yet, we will not

find peace, because this is not what we want; there is something else that is urging us to go further.

Psychoanalysis as a science of the study of the human mind realised that peace can be had only if the mind can adjust itself with the reality of other egos. Even in a peaceful society, there are erratic minds. They are not always happy. The minds become erratic on account of difficulty in fulfilment of desires. They want certain things, but they cannot get those things because others also want them. Therefore, even if there is social peace, there can be certain psychological difficulties. So what to do? We have already agreed that there should be no fighting, and yet we both want it; there is conflict of desire, again.

From conflict to conflict we seem to be rising, without being able to reconcile them. Even in a perfectly peaceful society, there are minds going crazy due to the incapacity to fulfil desires. If two persons desire the same thing and if one is to decide for some reason not to assert his desire, that desire is suppressed. There is a suppression or a repression of desires, as we call it: We bury the desire within because we have not fulfilled it. We have conceded the desire to another person, and the other is enjoying that which we would have liked to enjoy. So we have repressed the desire, pushed it down.

But this is not a solution, and it is not only one or two desires. We have a series of desires every day. We live for so many years pushing down these desires inside, creating a thick layer of cloud over our mind. It makes us moody; we want to talk, though we do not want to say what the problem is. People are very dejected because their desires have been frustrated, so psychoanalysts thought, "Why not

bring these desires out and make the person happy?” They have many techniques such as free association and dream analysis by which they try to pull the desires out of the patient’s mind. When the person is psychologically sick, the desires are pulled out, as a thorn is pulled from the sole of the foot, to make the mind normal.

It is the suppressed desire that is making us moody, melancholy and depressed. Pull the desires out. But how? By expression. How are these desires to be expressed without fulfilling them? We do not want to fulfil them, and yet we want to express them. Psychoanalysts have failed due to the difficulty of this technique. Theoretically, we try to find ways to extract the desires, but they are not like small bugs that can be pulled out. They are forces. Desires are forces, energies which seek satisfaction and which we have pushed inside on account of not being able to fulfil them. Now by a process of psychoanalysis we may pull them out. But what happens to them?

When we pull the snake out of the basket of the snake charmer, we will have to be very cautious. The snake was there inside the basket, and now we have brought it out, but what are going to do with it? While psychoanalysis is a very good as a medical science, it has not paved the way to human peace. With all we have learned and with all that we have, we are the same miserable fellows.

I previously explained the development of the human mind – not only in the process of evolution, but also in its definite advancements in the fields of education, science and psychology, and how all this has led us nowhere. Finally we seek asylum in the corner of an ashram. Nothing is all right. Everything has been tried, and it is all useless.

We realise this too late, when our teeth begin to shake, hair becomes white and there is very little time to do anything. But the day comes in the life of every person when this realisation supervenes, and we cannot escape it. We open a gate to a new vision of things.

Here it is that we study a new science altogether. It is a thoroughly novel approach which has escaped the notice of the sciences and the arts studied in schools and colleges, which have all tried their best to satisfy the human mind but failed. We know our educated persons today. Are they happy? Never. Whatever be the qualifications that we have, we are never happy because happiness and freedom are distinctly quite different from the fields of education that we are given. We are asking for something and are given something else. All the while we have been sidetracked, and have been taught that this is the way to what we are seeking. We have been searching and have found nothing, and are now retracing our steps.

For fifty or sixty years we have been walking along this path of traditional arts and sciences, and then we realise that we have missed the way. Freedom and happiness it is that we want, not art and science, food and clothing, power and authority. It is not these things that we are seeking. We want to go down to the crux of the matter, as good physicians in analysis of disease. We are mistaken in thinking we are asking for things of the world. We may be deluded under the notion that we want to be rulers, kings, emperors, etc., because we are under the grip of a phantasm.

What we really want is freedom of expression of the spirit, which is being denied to us every day, even with all

the possessions that we have. The spirit is seeking freedom. The maharajas are not happy, and have failed. Their freedom is checked by the various difficulties in their lives. All the glorious potentates that have trod this Earth have found that their spirit could not be expressed as they wanted. Yudhisthira, Vikramaditya, and tens and thousands of emperors much greater than these trod this Earth, but we know their fate. Time is inexorable, and it shall not spare any person. He may be a potentate, a ruler, the Trimurtis; even they shall be dissolved, says the scriptures.

The external methods which the mind has been employing in trying to grab things for gaining independence have failed; and if we are going to use the same methods today, we are going to suffer the same defeat as others have suffered throughout history. We have to open our eyes to things and be educated in a new fashion altogether, because education is the process of the expression of the perfection within us. The education we have had is not education at all. No perfection has been revealed to us. We know very well how imperfect we are. Where has been the perfection which education has been manifesting in our life? It has all gone as a will o' the wisp. The new version of things into which we have to open ourselves is what is generally known as the way of yoga – the practice of the knowledge of Truth.

The satisfactions of desires, the attempts of the ego, and the hope that our education will satisfy us have all failed. From all corners of the world we have tried to escape through different doors, and they are all closed, so we look

up to the heavens for redress of our woes. When everything fails, man looks to the heavens.

Spiritual consciousness arises too late in life. It does not arise easily in a child because the child tries other methods of escape. It must try other methods and get defeated, and then it shall come. Even a mouse will try all ways to escape. If it cannot escape, finally it will jump on us, but it will not do that in the beginning; first it will try other means – the doors, the windows, etc. The human mind tries escapes of various types, escapes from difficulties for the sake of freedom and happiness, but it cannot escape like that and has failed in its attempts. Then, like Draupadi looking up for Lord Krishna, the human mind opens. Everything has failed, everything is hopeless, and the world is not going to help us. The mind, of course, realises this very late, but once it looks up, it shall see the light of the heavens. This is the mind evolving not merely from the animal to the intellectual or rational mind, but even above the intellectual and rational level to the moral and the spiritual fields of existence.

Chapter 3

THE ESSENCE OF TRUTH BEHIND THE OBJECTS OF SENSE

In its search of fulfilment and perfection, the mind rises stage by stage to the higher levels of consciousness, but it is only in the human level that it consciously expresses itself in its relation to a society of kindred elements. There is no consciousness of society in the plant world or even perspicuously in the animal world because there is no rational understanding. It is only in the human stage of understanding that it can be said to have developed into a consciously understood structure: we know what society is, what we expect from it, and what society expects from us.

Now, here in this sense of the mind's affirmations as a society rather than an individual, we may say that we have made a great advance over the lower levels, but we have also committed a blunder. The good point is what generally goes by the name of humanitarianism, goodness, servicefulness, charitableness, etc.; the bad point is called *samsara*. While we have a good opportunity to express ourselves in society, we also have a highway constructed before us so that we may fall into the pits. Therefore, human society has a passage to freedom as well as a bondage manifestly expressed before us. We are in a state of perpetual suffering in society on account of the negative aspect of it, which we cannot easily distinguish from the positive side.

What do we mean by *samsara*, from which we try to rise? If the whole world, the entire human society, is a wholesale blunder, a delirium of spirit, a madness of

consciousness from which we have to free ourselves wholly and solely, then there would be nothing for us to do in regard to it. We would only have to flee from it, as if from a ghost or a devil. From one side, we are told that we have to be kind and charitable, good and compassionate, serviceful and considerate to people. On the other side, we are told that it is all a mesh of bondage, that we have to run away from it. Both these things are told to us by the scriptures, by masters and saints. Consciously distinguishing between these two aspects is called *viveka*. When we mix both these aspects together we are in a state of *aviveka* or non-discrimination.

Most people are not in a position to make this distinction between the positive, diviner element in society and the negative, baser element. The mind mostly seeks fulfilment of its desires, rather than opportunities for service and self-expansion. The mind seeks self-expansion in a very literal sense, not in the spiritual sense. Literally it wants to expand itself, as a dictator would want to expand his sway over people. This is also a kind of self-expansion, but it is the negative side of the matter. The world has been created in such a way that we have to find gold together with base metal.

The eyes see the world through the instinctive mind mostly. The motive force behind the perception of the eyes is the instinctive reaction of the mind for personal desires. Usually when we look at the world, we look at it with an eye of desire. Mostly, there is no other motive force in perception. The desire for the world has a principle psychological significance, a fix: "What does the world mean to me? What does it pay?" If we are asked to do

anything, generally we think: “What does it bring me? Why should I do it?” This is the great question that the mind raises whenever it perceives things of the world through the eyes: If it means something positive for me, I long for it, run after it, and try to possess it and enjoy it. If it does not have anything to do with me, I shall ignore it and have nothing to do with it. But if it is something deleterious to the fulfilment of my desires, I shall fight with it, take up cudgels against it and see that it is wiped out of existence.”

This is *samsara*, a beautiful Sanskrit word commonly known especially in India. “Oh, we are sunk in *samsara*,” they say. Many people say so, without even thinking as to what they are saying. Sometimes they even say, “I have brought my *samsara*,” when they have brought their wives! *Samsara* gets restricted to a wife. Well, they have their own reason for it. What they really mean is that they have got an appendage – something hanging round their neck, a kind of weight that they have to carry. That is why it has taken that connotation.

Samsara literally means a kind of aberration of the mind, a movement of the mind away from the centre, in which sense we can say that the dream condition of the mind is also an aberration. In dream the mind moves away from the centre of its true state into a reality constructed through its own imagination for the sake of finding satisfaction: “When I cannot find things to satisfy my desires, I shall create them with my mind. If nobody wants to look at me, I shall then create friends through my mind and have plenty of people who will like me. If the external world denies me something, I shall discover it in my internal world.” This is what the mind does in dream. It

achieves in the dream state whatever it cannot achieve in waking. So from the physical outer world, the mind withdraws itself into its own created subjective world.

As this is not a fact, and as it is not true that the mind really sees existent objects, we may call it a kind of *samsara* of the mind. Some such thing happens when the mind moves outside into societies of persons or things. We have slowly come to the realisation that the mind is evolving stage by stage from the lower levels of matter, life, etc., into the human consciousness; but now we realise that it is meandering horizontally also, not merely rising vertically. It is like a spring of water that may jet forth from the bosom of the Earth to the surface, and then spread itself everywhere outwardly on the surface.

The mind at the stage of the human being has not only reached a vertical ascent, but also finds an opportunity to move horizontally in search of pleasures. It deliberately becomes conscious of the existence of things which can satisfy its desires, and of persons who are akin to its nature. You may say that the animal also sees it, but it has a lesser understanding, while man has a more rarefied understanding. The pleasure centres are before the eyes of humans and animals, but the animal is cruder in its way of thinking; hence, it is satisfied with merely a reaction to a stimulus. It is the human being who tries to take the fullest advantage of the environment in which he is placed – fullest advantage in the sense of exploiting the situation and making use of, utilising or harnessing for his own purposes every blessed thing in the world – men, or animals, or even things. “The world should be mine,” is the desire of every person.

The tendency to rule, to exercise authority and to wield power is the instinct of the human mind, rationalised at the human level. This is the great stigma on human reason. While it is supposed to investigate into the nature of Truth hidden in human experience, it ramifies itself into channels of sensory satisfaction, becomes a handmaid in the functions of the ego, and utilises its powers not for a further ascent as it ought to, but for a horizontal movement for the sake of external satisfaction through the senses. “Why does it seek satisfaction?” is a pertinent question. “Why should there be seeking for pleasure at all? Why not go without it? How is it that everyone seems to be running after it?”

The reason is the great reason of creation itself. It is not pleasure that we seek, to clinch the whole matter with which I concluded the previous discourse; it is freedom that we are seeking. It is not things of pleasure that we seek, but freedom and happiness, and now it looks that happiness is only a form of freedom. Ultimately, it is only freedom that we are seeking. In our movements through the objects of sense, what we seek is a kind of freedom. We do not want the objects. As a matter of fact, when we have done with them we throw them away like tools that we have no further use for. Persons and things from whom we have extracted enough, who have done us enough service, are no more wanted because it is not the persons or things that we want. We wanted something through them and that we have got, and so we do not want the instruments any more. After we have climbed up to the terrace, we no longer want the ladder.

The search for pleasure is a search for freedom. The Spirit asks for further expansion. “I have become more free

at the human level, more free than I was in the plant and animal levels, and I want to be even more free,” is the Spirit’s asking. The Spirit is our innermost consciousness, and anything connected with our Spirit is called spiritual. What we call a spiritual life is nothing but a life which is in consonance with the nature of the Spirit. So the Spirit within us which is deep, so deep that we cannot fathom it through the mind and the senses, asks for a further expansion: “I want my freedom, and I shall not be satisfied with anything less.” The Spirit asks for a further ascent.

But there is a mistake committed by the mind at this level in not knowing that freedom is in an ascent, and falsely thinking that freedom consists in the possession of objects. Here *aviveka* creeps in. Man alone can be *avivekan* – non-discriminating. Instead of pursuing the right path, we pursue the wrong path. It is man alone who can rise and fall at the same time. Man has the power to stand on his own legs, and at the same time has the power to fall down and break his legs. He has the power to go upwards or to fall downwards. He has freedom, and no one else has it.

This freedom is like a double-edged sword; it can cut both ways. We are free to pursue the right course, and also the wrong course. This is the beauty of our freedom – most fortunate and also unfortunate.

But the reason of the human being plays second fiddle to the senses and works in accordance with them, which is nothing but the instinctive mind working. The reason works for what the senses report, rather than what it should independently do. The judge in a court, for example, has to take knowledge from the evidence given to him. He cannot depend entirely on the evidence alone; he has to use his

reason also. He has to sift the evidence, take the cream out of it, judge it properly, and then pass a resolution of his own. But if he merely hears everything that people say, contradictory though the reports may be, he would not be able to pass any judgement. He will only be in a state of quandary and confusion. If we would like to listen to many people and would like to fulfil the advice of all, then there would be no conclusion at all, no judgement made. We have to take the advice of many, but will have to pass our own judgement on the basis of our understanding.

This is what the reason is supposed to do after it receives the report of the senses. But what does it do? It merely receives these reports and wants to follow the course of these reports, never wanting to pass any independent judgement of its own upon them. The reason becomes a failure when it becomes a tool in the hands of the senses. We live in a sense world, not in a reasonable or rational world. Philosophically we may be living in a rational world, but practically we are in a sense world, bound to the core.

We have even gone to the extent of the rationalisation of sense experience. It is this rationalisation of sense experience that today goes by the name of scepticism, agnosticism, materialism, and so on. It is finding bad reasons for what we believe through instinct, as a philosopher said. We try to find bad reasons to support what we instinctively believe in, and this is our philosophy. But philosophy cannot be this. It should be independently thorough. It is the work of the pure reason, unadulterated by the reports of the senses. All people cannot be philosophical, therefore, because they cannot but think in terms of the senses. When we think, we think in terms

those things which the eyes have seen or the ears have heard. We cannot think independently of these. We may take the evidence of the senses, as I mentioned in the analogy, as a judge may take evidence from people. It is good and it must be done; but what is the conclusion? The reason, when it takes the reports of the senses, obtains some knowledge of the world, as a judge obtains some knowledge of a case before him, but what is the knowledge that we obtain? What is the sort of situation that we are in? What is this case before us?

The case is this: the senses tell us that all things are transitory. They do not say to run after the objects, possess them and enjoy them. This is not the advice of the senses. Like messengers, they come with reports of the phenomenality of things. When we open our eyes, what do we see? We see destruction, change, impermanence, and one thing transforming itself into another. We see, even with a telescope or a microscope, nothing but the transformation of things – oceans drying up and becoming deserts, deserts becoming oceans, today's millionaire becoming tomorrow's pauper, a young man dying instantaneously without any apparent cause, sudden upheavals of nature, sudden outbursts, revolutions and evolutions. What else do we see in this world? This is what the eyes tell us, but they also bring with them another kind of subtle report which is misleading. Together with the knowledge of the transitoriness of things which is obtained scientifically by perception, we seem to be subtly, through our reason, perceiving something which the reason longs for.

In the Puranas there is a story to explain our condition. When Garuda ran away from the heavens with the pot of nectar, he kept it in different places, and finally in a forest of dharba grass – a grass which is sharp and cutting. It is considered very sacred and is used by Hindus in all ceremonies even today, because it has been purified by its contact with Garuda's nectar pot. The snakes went after the nectar, thinking that it had been spilt on the dharba grass, and started licking the grass, cutting their tongues. The Puranas say that snakes have a split tongue due to licking the dharba grass. They did not get the nectar. They were suffering, and no nectar was found. This applies to our minds. Like a snake running after the nectar placed on the dharba grass, the mind runs after the objects on which the pot of the nectar is kept. Well, it is true that the pot is kept there, but we will not find the nectar, only the empty pot.

There is something which attracts us, just as the snakes were attracted by something which they thought was there. There is some Truth in the mind running after the senses, but it is mistaken in seeking what it wants. The pot of nectar which the mind instinctively sees behind the objects of sense is the essence of Truth manifest in all things. It is the beauty that stares at our face. In all the manifestations of the world, God's face shines through, it is true. This face of God that beautifully shines and smiles through the objects is the pot of nectar. It is in contact with the objects, in the same way as the pot was in contact with the grass. The instinctive mind cannot make this distinction. What is it that it sees there? And why is it that it will not get it, even if it sees something there? This is the way the mind sees objects and gets entangled in them. It seeks a perfection

which is not there, yet which promises satisfaction, perfection and beauty.

When we see our own face in the mirror, can we grasp it? No, we cannot, because it is really not there. So it is possible to see certain things that are not there. Philosophers, saints and sages have given analogies and examples of various kinds to explain this situation. Some say the mind's seeing pleasure in the objects is something like a person running after his own image in a mirror; some say it is a thorough misconception, like seeing a snake in a winding rope; some say it is like seeing water in a mirage; some say it is like seeing silver in mother-of-pearl. All these analogies convey a single purpose, that while we see something, it is not really there. And yet we run after it because we see something. It is not necessary that the things should be there. It is enough if we see it. What we want is perception, not substantiality.

Why does the mind in dream run after the pleasure centres? Don't you have a good dinner in dream and quench your dream thirst with dream water? Are you not satisfied with a *bandara* in dream? Don't you feel happy if you become a dream emperor? Why should non-existent things not satisfy you? Satisfaction can be had even if the counterpart is not there, if only the mind can imagine that the thing is there. The mind is the creator of freedom as well as bondage. *Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha-mokshayoh*: The mind can free you and bind you. It can do both.

What we are trying to analyse is the mental situation at the human level: what the good points and disadvantages of human life are. The good point is that we can think better

than animals, so we can free ourselves; the bad point is that we can bind ourselves through the very same knowledge. Our rope can be used to tie our cow so that it may not go astray, or we can hang ourselves with the very same rope. We can use it for both purposes.

The mind at the human level is a boon and a gift of God, which has been the point emphasised in many of the scriptures: rare is human birth, and difficult is it to get this. Even Devas are supposed to come down to the mortal level to free themselves. So much praise is offered about human life, but together with this beauty of human consciousness, it is also most unfortunate that it is only at the human level that we can slip and fall down – not at other levels. Just imagine where we are standing and how cautious we have to be, how carefully we have to walk through life, though we should be happy that we have been blessed with a human life.

While we have been well armed, yet we move in the thick of enemies. Very cautiously we have to move in this world. The human consciousness psychologically analysed is this complex structure of thinking, part of it being rational and part being irrational or instinctive. The instinctive part of the mind asks for the forms of perceptions, while the rational part of the mind seeks the spirit behind the perception. In most of the activities of the day we run after the forms of perception rather than the spirit hidden behind the perception. We cannot see the spirit; we see only the forms. All our experiences are good educators; they teach us a good lesson of life, but we do not learn the lesson because we do not see the spirit behind the

lesson. When we are given a slap on the face, we feel only the pain of the slap, and not the meaning behind it.

The child cries when the mother gives a spanking. It does not know the reason or rationality behind it; it sees only the pain. So is the mind's reaction to things. Nature teaches us a lesson by the very process of the evolution of things, and in this process, we are given the positive and the negative types of experiences, the pleasurable and the miserable, but we forget the lesson behind it. The intention of nature is not to give us pleasure or pain. It is to educate us, train us and make us ascend further, but if we forget the spirit of the teaching and emphasise only the pleasure or the pain of it, then we are in *samsara*. The world is *samsara* when we take only the form of it into consideration, but it is a field of education and an occasion for a higher experience if we receive it as a teaching.

Before a spiritual seeker approaches a Master or a Guru for initiation into the mysteries of spirituality, he is supposed to be equipped with certain other fundamentals, one of them being *viveka*, or right understanding. And, what this right understanding is, I am trying to explain in these few words. The understanding called for is the capacity to distinguish between the spirit of experience and the form of it. The objects of sense are the form, but there is a meaning in perception. The meaning is the lesson.

I shall give one concrete instance of what the spirit is, as distinguished from a form. In perception of an object, the form is that we are cognising something in front of us. Is it good or bad? It is mine or not mine? Should I run after it or run away from it? This is the form of experience, and this is *samsara*. If we look at an object only in this spirit, we are in

samsara. What do I see? I see a person. What kind of person? Is he a person to whom I shall move, or is he a person from whom I shall move away? Can I get something from him or would he harm me? What is this thing? Shall I get it or shall I throw it away? These considerations in regard to an object of perception constitute the form of perception. The external circumstances in which the mind is entangled in relation to the objects constitute the form of perception. This is *samsara*.

But there is a spirit behind the perception. The spirit is that we are conscious of the object. This is the lesson that is given to us. The lesson behind the perception is not the object or its relationship to us, for or against. The spirit of the lesson is not whether the object is ours or not ours, good or bad, this way or that way; the spirit of the teaching is that we are conscious of the object. That consciousness is present in perception. Without consciousness we would have not perceived the object. The consciousness is in us and, therefore, we are conscious of the object. The consciousness is also between us and the object; therefore, there is a link between us and the object. The consciousness is also immanent or hidden in the object; therefore it is that there is a kinship of two objects, ourselves and the other, and this is what we call perception. So this is the lesson that nature tries to give us in perception – that the spirit is present equally in the subject and the object and also in the process of perception.

In all experiences, sensory or rational, we are taught the universality of consciousness, but this spirit of the teaching is missed every time. We only run after the form. *Nama-rupa* attracts us, not Satchidananda. The scriptures tell us

that every object has five elements: *asthi*, *bhati*, *priyam*, *rupam*, *namachit*, *amsapanchakam*. *Asthi*, *bhati*, *priyam*, *rupa* and *namachit* are the five elements or principles present in every object. It has a name and a form, a characteristic, a feature, a relationship; but apart from that, it exists. It is capable of being made an object of our consciousness, *bhati*. *Asthi* is existence, *bhati* is the shining capability of being made a constituent of our consciousness. It can also give us *priya*, pleasure; it is also dear, we long for it, we want it. We ask for it, and want to enjoy it.

There are three other characters in objects: existence, its relation to consciousness, and the capacity to invoke pleasure in our mind. But, it has also name and form. The name and the form may be compared to the pot of nectar. The nectar is *asthi-bhati-priya*. It is only the pot that is coming in contact with our mind; the nectar is inside. *Asthi-bhati-priya* is existence-knowledge-bliss, we may say in English. The essence of existence-knowledge-bliss in every object is the nectar. But, it is hidden, covered by the walls of a vessel, as it were, which is *nama-rupa*, name and form. We do not see the nectar, but we have a hint at its existence. Because of the hint at its existence, we run after the form. We are told there is something inside, but we see only the outer form. The senses are attracted by the name and the form through which the nectar shines.

Asthi-bhati-priya, the form taken by the Supreme Reality, shines through the name and form of the objects. And because of the shining character of the objects, the mind instinctively runs after them, but the mind goes and hits itself hard against the surface of the wall of the object,

not finding the contents. The content is hidden within and can be contacted by a means unknown to the senses. Sensory contact is not the way of contacting Truth. This is what *viveka* tells us. The intention of the mind is to contact Truth – *asthi-bhati-priya* – for permanent existence, permanent omniscience or knowledge, and permanent joy, but the mind, when it runs through the senses to the objects, is in *samsara*. While the intention is good, the method employed is wrong.

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions,” said Milton. What is the use of mere good intentions? The result is contrary. We have a good intention of getting perfection through the objects, but we run into the abyss of things, contrary to what we expected. People run after things of the world and entangle themselves in various kinds of social relationships, thinking that the nectar from them can be snatched and drunk. But they see no nectar; they have been only experimenting and experimenting, and finding nothing. The world seems to be deceptive. It shines, but it provides us nothing.

The shining is the attraction in the world, but it is not true that there is nothing. If there were nothing, it would not attract us. We commit a mistake in the analysis of the perception of the world. There is some element of Truth in the world, and also an element of untruth. The element of Truth attracts us, and the element of untruth repels us. While the element of truth keeps us hoping for more and more perfection in things, the element of untruth perpetually defeats our purpose. While we hope and hope till we die, we get nothing from the world.

If there is nothing in the world, why do we hope at all? How is it that we say that tomorrow shall be a better day? Though we have received so many kicks today, tomorrow shall be better, is our hope. What makes us hope? There is something tempting, but this remains only an unfilled hope. See the mystery of life. How juggling and how beautiful it is! It keeps us hoping till the last breath; we hope and yet till the last breath we are given nothing. The hope never dies; even after the death of the body, the hope continues.

Satya and *asatya*, truth and untruth, are both mixed up in the objects of the world. The world is *samasara* and *moksha*, both. From one point of view it is *moksha*, from another it is *samsara*. It is the *moksha* aspect of it that tempts us, makes us hope. It is the *samsara* aspect of it that defeats us, makes us weep, propels us from birth to death. This is *viveka*. And when this *viveka* dawns, there is *vairagya* towards the untrue elements, and aspiration for the true element alone.

That which is true in the world should be our only concern, and that which is said to be untrue should be abandoned. When we seek Truth and abandon untruth, we are in a state of *viveka* and *vairagya*. Spiritual aspirants are those who long for Truth and not for untruth, but spiritual aspirants, being human beings yet, cannot be wholly free from the chances of falling back into the old notion that the objects of the world can bring satisfaction. Again and again we are likely to revert into the old way of thinking. Though the *viveka* may direct us to the Truth, the senses dump the mind back to the untrue aspects of things, and they want pleasure through the objects. Truth, being universal, can

never become an object of consciousness. Hence, it is futile on the part of the senses to seek Truth in objects. The way to the realisation of Truth is another way altogether.

Anyatsreya anyatu preya (Katha Up.): The path of blessedness is one; the path of bondage is another. The path of bondage is what we are usually pursuing: the path of pleasure and contact with objects. The Bhagavadgita warns us that all pleasures born of contact of senses with objects are wombs of pain. They are misery only. Do not run after the pleasures which involve contact of senses with objects. But, what are these pleasures? They are these contacts. All our pleasures are born of contacts. And the Lord speaks the Eternal Truth in the Bhagavadgita when He says they shall be only miseries for us, one day or the other.

Yāvataḥ kurute jantuḥ (Vishnu Purana 78), says a famous verse in the Vishnu Purana. As many are the pleasure centres of your mind in the world, so many are the thorns that are pricking your heart. Remember this; it is as though an arrow has been run into your heart when you make pleasurable contact of any object. Hṛdaye shoka shankavaḥ: Arrows of agony shall put you to suffering if your heart goes for any object of sense because the objects of sense, while they are tempting and promising, cannot provide what they seek because they seek the Universal which is True Freedom, and which cannot become an object.

Viveka tells us that the Universal Truth, not being an object, cannot be contacted through the senses; therefore, all sense contact is contrary to spiritual life. The spiritual seeker abstains from sense contacts as much as possible because all sense contacts are titillating to the nerves. They

pamper the ego, stimulate the senses and then make the mind revert to the old way of thinking – that there is pleasure in the objects of sense. Hence it is that the spiritual seeker is asked to live in seclusion, at least for some time in the beginning, and not in the midst of sense objects, so that he may have ample opportunities to free himself from the clutches of sense perception. In order that he may have opportunities to strengthen the mind to think independently rather than through the senses, the spiritual seeker has to learn the art of independent thinking – thinking through the pure reason alone, unadulterated by sense perception.

We should never listen to the voice of the senses or the ego, which shall speak a different voice altogether to bind the mind. *Viveka* and *vairagya* are the prerequisites of true living. True understanding of the state of things should reveal to any thinking mind that while there is an element of Reality in the world, God is immanent in all things, yet He cannot be sought through the act of perception. God is not a sense object and, therefore, we cannot see Him through the eyes. This is why in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, when the Visvarupa is shown, the Lord speaks to Arjuna: “You cannot see Me with these eyes. I shall provide you with a new vision to see this wondrous form of Mine!” because this is the Universal Absolute Form, not a physical object like a mango or a cow.

“Arjuna, you cannot see the Supreme form with these fleshy eyes. I am not an object. You can see Me only with intuition, which is the integral vision, not externalised partial expression of perception,” said Lord Krishna. The Universal can become an object only of the Universal

consciousness. It can become a content only of the consciousness that has achieved the state of Universality. Universal consciousness is intuition, and its content is God. This is Virat-rupa or Visva-rupa, or whatever we may call It. And towards this end it is that the *viveka* of ours should direct us. But the *aviveka* would drag us into the *preyas* path again and again, whispering into our ears the poisonous words, “Here is pleasure.” How difficult it is to tread the spiritual path! We may think over it and see how hard a life it is. The sixth chapter of “The Light of Asia”, which is a book written by Edwin Arnold on the life of Buddha, describes beautifully in exquisite poetry ‘the tussle of Buddha’s mind in meditation’ – how he was tempted, and what difficulties presented themselves in contemplation. The realities of the world persist again and again and hammer upon our mind, “We are here, don’t leave us.” The more we run away from them, the more they will pursue us. Sometimes they try to overtake us, catch us and bring us back, and we may yield. Even Buddha was tempted, but he had a very powerful mind. He was made of a better stuff, and he knew what it was. All the things which he had abandoned appeared in front of him physically, concretely, visibly.

All this will happen to every one of us, because the mind which has its lower as well as its higher aspects is one complete, compact mass. We cannot take only half of the mind and leave the other half. Together with the instinctive mind, the rational mind also speaks. Simultaneously they speak, but it is up to us to choose only that which is good and reasonable, rather than that which is pleasing and tempting. The path of *sreyas* and the path of *preyas* – the

path of the good and the path of the pleasant, are the two paths that we have in the world. We may tread any path we like. Do we want the pleasant, or do we want the good? We ask mostly for the pleasant. The good may be painful; it is a bitter medicine, but the good is to be sought.

Only the discriminating, only the *dheera*, as the Upanishad calls him, chooses the good rather than the pleasant. *Kaś cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛttacakṣur amṛtatvam icchan* (Kath 2.1.1): A very rare hero alone will shun these temptations of *preyas* or pleasure and seek the blessedness of the good, the Supreme Good, which is the reason behind even the temptations of the world, and which summons us when we run after the things of the world. But we run after them in the wrong manner. Instead of running to the Universal, we run to the external. This is the mistake that we commit. The distinction between the Universal and the external is the distinction between *viveka* and *aviveka*.

Chapter 4

THE AWAKENING OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Only at the human level does the understanding become fit for the reception of spiritual knowledge, not before. Spiritual consciousness, even at the human level, does not suddenly drop from the blue, and the difficulties of a spiritual life are many. Perhaps nothing can be more difficult than to be aware that there is a spiritual ideal in life, and it is not possible to be conscious of this opportunity of its own accord. While we have risen spontaneously, as it were, from the lower levels to the human state, the ascent higher than this has a difficulty felt only at the human level, and not before. Due to clogging of the consciousness in animal instincts, and to being enmeshed in a very translucent form of consciousness, animals and plants cannot be conscious of a spiritual life because the consciousness of a spiritual ideal is something quite different in quality from the consciousness of an object.

While we are all conscious, we cannot be conscious of the Spirit, or of spiritual values. Therefore, there is a sharp distinction between ordinary consciousness and spiritual consciousness. To be aware of something is not spirituality, because everyone is aware of something. There is a very subtle distinction, and it is this subtlety between the two types of awareness that makes it almost impossible for people to be spiritually conscious.

We may be well off in many respects, but we cannot be spiritual for the very simple reason that the distinction

between ordinary awareness and spiritual awareness is not an object of our knowledge. At the human level particularly, the mind gets distracted in many directions and runs hither and thither, like a mass of water restrained by a bund bursting forth and running everywhere because of its force, without having any particular direction to its movement. This happens only with the human mind because of its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of the human mind, as I pointed out last time, is that it feels for the Truth more than the lower levels. The call of the Infinite is felt more pulsating and more acutely in the human level. The call is very acute, stringent, impossible of turning a deaf ear to; yet, the eyes are blindfolded so that we cannot see what it is. It is like a child that is being called by the mother, yet it cannot see her.

There is a summons which we inaudibly hear from within us and from without us, and it is this summons that keeps us active, moving and asking for more and more of things in life. We ask for more and more because the limit of our asking hasn't been reached.

In the previous session I said we have a hope which keeps us alive, and this hope is another name for this 'more' that we ask for, which is infinite. But what we are asking for is not clear to our vision; we feel a necessity and ask, but the nature of this necessity is not clear. We are in a very difficult position. We know that there is something that is pinching us and making us restless, not allowing us to rest in peace; something tells us that we have to march forward, to achieve something higher, and yet we do not know what it is. It is like a person falling ill and not knowing what the disease is. We are restless, agonised, and cannot be at rest.

The human mind is in this position where it feels the push and pull of a higher value, and yet cannot be consciously aware as to the direction in which it has to move.

There is a mixture of two types of instinct and understanding in the human level. On one side there is an urge, a push and a pull; and on the other side, it is impossible to know what it is. This is why it is often said that man is a crossing of God and brute. We have the godly element in us, as well as the brute element. It is the godly element that keeps us hoping, keeps us moving, active and asking for more and more of freedom and happiness; but it is the other aspect in us that keeps us in the dark, not allowing us to open our eyes and see the daylight. We have two elements combined in us, the divine and the demonical, as the scriptures tell us – the positive and the negative, the upward pull and the downward pull – the *sattvic manas*, the *rajo-guna*, and the *tamasic manas* – the *daivi sampat* and the *asuri sampat*. The Pandavas and the Kauravas, we can say, are both in our body. There is a tussle perpetually going on in our subtle being between these two forces which speak in different languages and tell us these two distinct things.

Dūram ete viparīte (Katha Up. 1.2.4). The destinations to which these two direct us are poles apart, as it were. If one directs us to the north, the other directs us to the south. They do not even run parallel. They are opposed to each other, pulling upward and downward. Now, this characterisation of our situation is a mixture of the upward and the downward, something like our feeling that we are down below on the Earth. If we think about this, we will realise that we are as much in space as any star or planet is.

We are not down below. There is no such thing as 'down below' in space. There is no up and down in space. It is only tentatively from the point of view of our Earth-plane consciousness that we say that we are below and the stars are above, though it is not really true. We are as much above as the stars are. We have to place ourselves in a proper perspective in order to understand the situation. The ideas of above and below are tentative, relational to the position in which we are.

Likewise are the psychological upward and downward. What is this upward and downward pull? What is ascent and descent? Is it really a movement upward in space, or has it any other significance? If it were really an ascent in the physical sense, then spiritual progress would be a movement physically upward in space. We would have to go higher and higher, perhaps in a jet plane. Is this the ascent in the spiritual sense? And what is descent? Is it to go down into the bowels of the Earth? What are the nether regions and the celestial regions? Neither the up nor the down consciousness can be interpreted in this manner.

To be ascending in evolution is not to be rising into space, into the higher realms of the astronomical worlds, nor is descent a kind of entry down into the earth of the physical part of creation. Evolution is not in space and time, because space and time are part of the evolutionary process. We are not moving as a leaf moves in the wind or a train moves on its track. It is not this kind of movement that is meant by evolution. It is a new type of transformation that takes place, a novel situation of consciousness – a crisis of consciousness we may call it – which is every step in the process of evolution.

At the human level, the mind finds itself in a situation where it has to face a peculiar set of problems, on account of which it is difficult to lead a spiritual life. The problems are the ways of our own thinking. We have been taught from our very childhood to think in particular forms. We are taught in kindergarten and primary school, “This is a cat, this is a dog, this is a hat,” and so on. This kind of thinking is implanted in our minds. A kind of object lesson is provided to the mind from the very inception of human evolution, and we think in terms of objects. We are given ‘object lessons’ in the literal sense of the term. The human mind particularly has the capacity to get entangled and to think in terms of qualities and relations. Every thought that is generated in our mind is in terms of certain qualities of things and their relation to other things.

Close your eyes for a few minutes and just imagine what you think daily, from morning to evening. All your thoughts are in terms of certain qualities, characteristics of objects and their relations to other things, persons or objects. It is impossible for us to think, except in these terms of relations. Thought is in terms of relations alone. This is why sometimes we are told that this is a world of relativity. Everything seems to be related to something else, at least in our thoughts, and we are thus bound up psychologically with the objects of the world. It is this psychological bondage which keeps us earthly conscious and not spiritually conscious, because to be spiritual would be to be aware in terms of the Spirit, not in terms of the qualities and relations.

Last time I mentioned that the Spirit is such that its thought is intuitive in nature and not sensory, intellectual,

or even rational. Intuitive vision is the name given to the way in which the Spirit knows itself and its environment. It is quite different from the way in which the mind thinks in terms of senses and objects. It is difficult to be spiritually aware, spiritually conscious or to lead a spiritual life because it is not possible for us to abide by the laws of the Spirit.

We are embodied beings. We live in bodies, and our contacts are with other bodies in the world, so we have a bodily life – a related life, an Earthly life, and life which is tethered to the consciousness of space and time. Not for a moment can we be spiritually conscious because we cannot be free from the clutches of these relations. The mind is a part of creation in this sense that it is related to every other object in creation.

Space and time, qualities and relations, are the limiting categories of human understanding; and whether one is a child, an adult or matured person, he will realise that everyone equally thinks in these terms alone. Rare, therefore, is that person who can be spiritually awakened. To be spiritually awakened is not to be moving in space, up or down, but to bring about a transfiguration within oneself, an evolution consciously brought about within us, a florescence of consciousness itself, something like waking from a state of deep sleep. When we wake up from sleep, we do not move into space, and yet we know the joy felt when waking up from a bad dream. We have not moved in space, not even moved in time; yet, what a vast difference it has made in our life. We have awakened into our own consciousness.

When a person who has had no eyesight can see, when a person who has been dreaming bad dreams wakes up, when a person who has been suffering from a bad disease gains health, he feels a change which cannot be explained in words. We must be very ill and regain health to see what a joy we feel. Only those who have been suffering with the flu would know what it is; when we regain health, it is as though we have been reborn into heaven, though we have no physical possessions at that time.

To come to one's true nature is the symptom of spirituality, and this activity of the mind, this attempt of the human understanding to come to its own Self is prevented by its entanglements in terms of space, time, qualities and relations. The mind is the cause of our bondage in this sense. Our condition is more pitiable than other beings because of our not being able to know what our actual difficulty is. What is our problem?

There is another mysterious trouble into which we descend in human life when we mistake an erroneous consciousness for the requisite knowledge of truth. For example, we all make the mistake of thinking that we are conscious of truth. The world is truth, the objects in the world are truth, the activities in which we are engaged are real, and we make reference to this reality whenever we want to judge the objects of the world by the standard of truth. We are in a world of reality when we wake up from dream. What is this world of reality? It is the world of these objects, these persons, these things, these temptations, these positive and negative attributes. We have not only been caught up by the inextricable activities of the external qualities and relations, but at the same time we make the

mistake that this entangled consciousness is consciousness of reality. Hence, blessed indeed should be that person who can wake up higher still from this state of entangled consciousness.

Ordinarily, no one can be aware that there can be a consciousness above, beyond or transcending Earth consciousness. The trouble is that when we are in a state of mind, that particular state of mind appears to be true, real. We cannot compare one state of mind with another when the higher one has not yet been reached. In the state of waking, for example, we may compare our waking life with dream life and say that dream life is unreal; but we cannot compare waking life with another higher reality because we have not yet reached that state.

This waking life is the standard of comparison for us. Everything is compared to this waking life and the waking values. This cannot be compared to something else. This is final. This is one of our difficulties, that there is no comparative value in waking life. It is an absolute value for us and so we take it for granted that it is the thing that we have been asking for. The freedom that we have been asking for has been achieved, and we are in a state of true happiness. So we search for happiness in this world of variety. We seek freedom in this world of qualities and relations, while we have been caught up by the very same qualities and relations. By the term 'we' I mean 'the centre of thinking'. It is the mind that has been caught.

It is the attitude of consciousness, the way of thought that determines our state of evolution. The mind, which is a form of consciousness working in space and time, so much identifies itself with the qualities and relations that we

cannot for a moment remain as witnesses of the world situation. We are involved in the world situation and we are the world, and many a time it appears that what happens to the world happens to us. Our joys and sorrows are connected to world situations. We are living an external life, an objective life, a life of sensory perception. We live in terms of qualities and relations, not in terms of our own Self. Thus, from this point of view at least, no human being can be said to be spiritually conscious; everyone is bound. It is not possible to be spiritually conscious as long as the mind has not come back to its own source and as long as it has not realised that it is tangled in the relations of objects. The mind cannot achieve freedom so long as it mistakes objects for truths, so long as it mistakes objective perceptions for true knowledge, because the very idea or notion of freedom is itself fundamentally erroneous.

To be free does not mean to possess the things of the world or to have the license to do whatever one thinks or likes. Freedom is independence, non-dependence. Where we are dependent, we are not free, and we are said to be free only when we are absolutely independent. We have curious notions of independence today. We think that we are free merely because we have enough to eat and drink, enough clothes to put on, a bungalow, and so on. These are supposed to constitute our freedom. How can we call this freedom, when we are dependent on them? This is not freedom or independence; one thing is hanging on something else.

The great Narada approached Sanatkumara and asked, "What is Freedom?"

Sanatkumara said, "Infinite is Freedom."

“But what is this Infinite?” asked Narada.

“The Infinite is that where you see nothing else outside, hear nothing else outside and understand nothing else outside,” Sanatkumara said.

“But on what is it based? Where does it stand? What is its support? What is it, outside which there is nothing, of which you speak?” questioned Narada.

“How do you expect this to be supported by something else? Here in this world,” said Sanatkumara, “one thing is supported by another, one thing hangs on to another, one thing is dependent on another. One’s freedom is restricted by the freedom of the other. Not so is the Infinite. Its basis is Itself.”

Man cannot be really free, because of the very existence of other human beings. My freedom is restricted by your freedom. The very existence of another is a limitation on my freedom, so there cannot be absolute freedom on the part of any human being. It is futile to cry for freedom when freedom is not possible. The very situation of the human mind is such that it cannot have freedom. The constitution of the human mind is such that freedom is unknown in the human level because human thinking is a peculiar entanglement of consciousness in relations.

The mind is another name for a kind of conscious relationship with objects. We are living in a relative world, not only physically but also psychologically. Even psychologically, intellectually, rationally we are living in a relative world – relative in the sense that the mind is hanging on something else, some other object. The mind cannot think without an object. This is the reason why intellectual knowledge has been regarded as lower

knowledge, and spiritual knowledge is always regarded as something different from intellectual or ordinary knowledge.

The knowledge that we obtain from the world is regarded as inferior because it is relational knowledge, depending on external objects for its information. It is knowledge of things outside – a relativistic knowledge, a comparative knowledge. We compare one object with another and try to have some kind of knowledge about it. We know ‘A’ in terms of ‘B’ and ‘B’ in terms of ‘A’; we have full knowledge of neither ‘A’ nor ‘B’, so relative knowledge is false knowledge in one sense. When we hang ‘A’ on ‘B’, and ‘B’ on ‘A’, we do not have a perfect knowledge of either one. If we require the assistance of one for acquiring knowledge of another, what else can be our knowledge but relative knowledge? It is workable knowledge in a pragmatic world, but it is not an absolute knowledge in a real world.

This is the reason why we cannot be free in this world. This is the reason why, also, we cannot be really happy in this world. All this is because we are not spiritually awakened. To clinch the whole matter, no unspiritual mind can be happy; no unspiritual mind can be free, and all the questions of the human mind are answered by a single principle, the principle of the unitariness and the infinitude of the Spirit. Even today, with all our learning and the information that we have gathered, people have a very poor knowledge of what spirituality is. Even today, at this very moment, it can be very boldly said that people’s knowledge of spiritual living is very meagre, poor and apologetic, all because we try to import our relative knowledge even to the

spiritual realm, and try to understand God and the Absolute in terms of the education that we have gathered in our schools.

I said that all our knowledge is relative in the sense that our mind is related to objects. Every object is related to everything else: qualities and relations hang heavily on the mind. Now, this way of thinking is utilised even in understanding the nature of the Spirit, so we question about God, creation, etc. There are certain so-called learned people who raise very big questions about God, creation, etc., and these questions arise merely because logical values which pertain to the world are misapplied to the realm of the Spirit. The way of thinking that obtains in the world cannot be applied to the life of the Spirit. The questions which appear to be intelligible and meaningful in ordinary life look absurd when they are applied to the Spirit because the spiritual attitude to life is something quite different – one hundred percent different – from the normal attitude of the mind towards objects and things. So our appetites, our likes and dislikes and our intellectual prejudices, whether scientific or logical, should never be allowed to interfere with that higher aspiration that rarely blossoms in our heart, the aspiration for spiritual awakening.

Scriptures have hammered into our minds the necessity of seeking a Master of the Spirit, an adept of yoga, because this knowledge cannot be acquired by ordinary means. In the Mundakopnishad it is said, “All that we know and all that we can know is lower knowledge.” It is not knowledge of the Truth. It may be knowledge of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and all the sciences that we can conceive of, but all this is lower knowledge.

Narada, the great Maharishi, knew everything. There was no science in which he was not proficient. There was no art in which he was not an expert, but he had no peace of mind. Knowledge did not help him because the knowledge of the Spirit, which alone can bring peace, is different from the knowledge that can make us comfortable in life. So what is that knowledge that man seeks? What is this freedom that we are crying for every day? Where is it found? Is it possible to find it at all?

Sometimes we live in despair, in a state of melancholy and moodiness, for everything looks dark and gloomy because of the insistent urge within us. But, at the same time, our ignorance is preposterous. This should awaken us again to the need for following the proper path of action for leading a spiritual life. The life spiritual is not one of the ways of living; it is the only proper way of living we can choose in life because it is the presupposition, the precondition of the very existence of the human being himself. It is more real than our activity of breathing, more necessary than the immediate calls of our life, even the creature comforts, because without it life becomes meaningless. The life spiritual is the way in which consciousness interprets life in terms of Reality, and without some sort of a hint at least at what Reality is, we cannot be spiritually conscious. We cannot even become spiritual seekers, aspirants or *sadhakas*.

Therefore, the first thing we as spiritual seekers would have to do is to shed all prejudices. When we approach a spiritual master, we should not go with prejudices of our earlier learning, imagining that we already know something. We might know something, but it might be a

blunder which could put us on the wrong track and not help us at all. To approach a Spiritual Master, first of all one has to place oneself in the position of a seeker of Reality, and have *viveka* and an amount of *vairagya* – the nature of which has been discussed earlier – and have a clean heart, and an empty mind. “Empty thyself and I shall fill thee,” said Christ. We must empty ourselves of the old ways of thinking, because what binds us is only the way of our thinking. We have no iron chains that bind us. We think in certain ways, mistaking that thinking for the right way of thinking, and this binds us. We are unhappy because the mind is unable to reflect Truth in itself. The mind is harassed by certain obsessions, and it is these obsessions that become the objects of the mind’s thinking every day. Because of this harassment from the objects of the world, the mind’s powers get dissipated; like troubled waters which cannot reflect the rays of the sun, a troubled mind cannot reflect the light of Truth.

The mind that is dissipated or distracted is like a light that has been split into many parts, as if through a prism. The mind’s way of thinking, generally, is of the nature of a split personality: becoming conscious of oneself in many ways. When we are objectively conscious, our mind gets distracted; it has to flow in different channels at the same time, and then it is that we feel weak. In order that we can be in a position to attend to many things at the same time, we concentrate our mind on many objects. This is very difficult, and our resources are not enough to meet these demands. When the pull from the objects of the world is manifold and when the mind has to run in terms of these variegated pulls from objects, it has to draw sustenance

from its own source, and our energies get split over the objects of sense. Thus a sensuous person is also a weak person – morally weak and also physically weak. He cannot have a good sleep, good digestion, or even a good power of expression because his energies have been depleted through sense perception and sense enjoyment.

So, first of all, the spiritual seeker is asked to control his senses in order that he may become fit to enshrine and entertain a mind that can reflect Truth. A sensual mind cannot be a spiritual mind. The mind that is wedded to the objects of sense cannot be in a position to receive the knowledge of Truth. The control of the senses is the first prerequisite of spiritual life, and must be performed.

Sense contact is an erroneous movement of the mind towards objects, which allows the mind to run away from its centre, which means away from Truth. To think of an object is to think of untruth because while the essence of the object is, as I mentioned last time, the fundamental essence of Reality, the shape and form (*nama-rupa*) that it has taken is the untrue aspect. We are running after the name and form of the object, not the essence. We like or dislike the name and form, and are committing a tremendous mistake in either asking for a thing or running away from it. Hence, essentially, to be sensorily conscious of any object positively in the form of love or negatively in the form of hatred would be to tread the path of untruth.

Therefore, the spiritual seeker is asked to control the senses, to withdraw the mental consciousness from its operation on objects. To control the senses is not to close the eyes or plug the ears. It is to withdraw the awareness from the awareness of things. What do we think in our

mind? That will tell us what we are. Our dress, our position, our speech cannot tell what we are, but what we think in our mind from day to day, from morning to night, determines our evolution. Whether we are spiritual or unspiritual can only be known by the way in which we think, not from the way we look. The outside appearance is no criterion here. Our feelings, our reactions, our attitudes, our longings, our aspirations, will tell us where we stand in evolution.

To control the senses would be not as many people imagine it to be, to physically manipulate the organs of sense, to starve the physical organs. Not so. Rather, it is the abstraction, as yoga psychology calls it – *pratyahara*, the withdrawal of the mental consciousness of objects. There are two ways of this withdrawal. Firstly it is an emotional withdrawal; and finally, withdrawal in a higher sense – we may call it philosophically. In the beginning we should have an emotional withdrawal, and then later a philosophical withdrawal.

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, these two types of entanglements, the emotional and the philosophical, are called the *klista* and the *aklista kleshas*. We shall try to know what these are at a later date but, for the time being, it is enough to know that the control of the senses involves a double withdrawal of the mental consciousness – emotionally in the beginning, and later on in a deeper spiritual sense. To be emotionally withdrawn from an object would be not to crave an object or hate an object. We may have tremendous attachment for a particular person or an object; emotionally we get disturbed by such things, and our heart begins to move by the very perception of certain

persons or things. That would be emotional relationships. Our feeling would be in a state of turmoil when certain things are seen, whether we like or dislike them. We may be in an emotional turmoil due to either affection or hatred.

To subdue the emotions, to free the mind from such emotional relationships in terms of objects would be the first stage of sense control. When we see an object, we should not be agitated, for or against. That would be the initial *vairagya*; but that is not enough. The practices in spiritual life require a higher kind of withdrawal where alone pure meditation is possible. Philosophical withdrawal is where we are not to withdraw the mind merely in terms of love and hatred, but also in terms of objectivity of perception.

We make two mistakes when we look at things, say our scriptures. The first or primary mistake is to be conscious of the thing itself, and the second mistake is to love or hate it. To be conscious of an object and the externality of things is itself a mistake in the philosophical sense or higher sense. But in the lower sense, to love or hate is a mistake: we may be conscious of it, but not love or hate it.

When there is God-vision, for example, there is celestial vision. When there is *Isvara-bhava*, *Narayana-bhava*, *Atma-bhava*, what we see would be regarded as a transformation of the spiritual Reality rather than an object to be considered independently of its own accord. All this is the simple background of spiritual life, which is built on the superstructure of spiritual practice. The practice that we are called upon to do in spiritual life is of various kinds, and the practice varies from person to person. If you ask me what is spiritual *sadhana*, the answer would be in terms of your

temperament, your state of mind and the circumstances in which you are placed.

Generally, broadly speaking, all *sadhana* is of a similar nature, but the specific details differ from one condition to another. There are *samanya dharmas* and *vishesha dharmas*, general characteristics and specific characteristics in spiritual practice. We have to follow both of these. While the specific characteristics may vary, the general characteristics may not. What are the general characteristics which everyone may have to follow, though the specific relationships here may vary?

The general teaching of spiritual life, for all humanity, for everyone, is that the many has to be seen in terms of the One. Our interpretation of the manifoldness of life should be in the language of Universality. It is on the basis of this concept that people strive for human brotherhood, world peace, international solidarity and understanding, and so on. These are all outer expressions of the inner acceptance of the unitariness or the singleness of life, whose expressions are the varieties of activities. Spiritual *sadhana* as an evolutionary process is a very gradual movement from the lower to the higher levels. It is a movement, not only from the outer to the inner, but also from the lower to the higher. From the physical, the earthly, the bodily, the sensory life, the mind slowly rises into the psychological and rational fields of understanding, and then it is that it becomes spiritual in its perspective and vision. Externally, there is a gradual withdrawal from the love of physical objects, attachment to things, to the values that are hidden in things.

There is a difference between an object and a value hidden in an object. Crude minds, like that of children for example, cannot make a distinction between the value and the object that has the value. A rupee, a gold coin, a bar of gold is an object. A crude mind, an untutored mind, a materialistic mind will see gold itself as the meaning in life. The gold or the money is not the meaning. There is a value hidden in it, and it is the value that we are asking for. Our attachment to that object is due to our acceptance of the value present in it.

So from the particular, we go to the more general in our evaluation of things. Instead of loving a beautiful object, we start loving beauty itself. That is a higher state of mind. In Plato's dialogue, we read the way the great philosopher has made a study of the rise of the mind from the gross to the subtle, especially in artistic beauty. Running after the beautiful things, instead of beauty, is the first stage of the mind, says Plato. That is a very crude state of mind where we want the object also, together with the beauty. Our affection is not for the object, but for the beauty, so we have to make a distinction between the object and the beauty when chasing a beautiful object. That is the first stage of discrimination, the first stage of understanding of the difference between the object and its content.

When we are able to realise that beauty is different from the beautiful object – it is not the object that we want, but only the beauty – we go higher up, from particular beauty to general beauty. It is not this form of beauty or that form of beauty that we want, but beauty as such. As we say, it is not a rupee, a dollar or a pound that we want, it is money that we want. From the actual currency note or gold coin,

we rise to the consciousness of economic value, which is what we are asking for. We do not want gold or a currency note; we want its value. If it has no value, we will not want it and will throw it away. So it is the value of the rupee or the dollar that the mind is asking for.

But then we go higher still into general economic value of life as a whole. This analysis can be applied to any kind of life: artistic life, economic life, political life, family life, psychological life or spiritual life. The point that we have to understand is that we have to rise from the particular to the general, from the more concrete to the subtler, from the external to the internal. This is the way in which the mind has to be taught the lesson of abstraction, *pratyahara*, or detachment. The philosophical mind is more detached from the ordinary crude mind. Sometimes we say when there is suffering, "Take it philosophically." Or, "Oh, that person took it philosophically, though his child died," by which we mean that he took the particular instance in terms of a general occurrence. That would be to take a thing philosophically. To take a thing as it is particularly, localised, restricted from its own point of view would be to think like the ordinary man in the street, which is not thinking philosophically.

To think philosophically is to generalise concepts, to broaden views, or to put it succinctly, to introduce the universal value into the particular element. The highest universal is God. There are many stages of the manifestations of the Universal, which we call the degrees of Reality. And when we interpret the lower in terms of the higher, we are said to be philosophical and spiritual, and moral. To be moral is to be able to interpret the lower value

in terms of the higher value. That would be ethics or morality, and philosophy, and also the principles of spiritual living.

As I said, the highest of determining principles, the highest of universals, is God Himself. So when the element of God is brought into life, and that is made to be the standard of reference and judgement, and we begin to interpret everything in terms of that principle – when God becomes the judge of all things, when we begin to see things as though through the eyes of God, as it were – then it is that we are spiritually awakened.

Now, this does not necessarily mean being God-conscious. To interpret particulars in terms of universals, even in terms of the universal God, Ishvara Himself, would be to learn a way of thinking. It is quite different from the state of God-realisation; that is a higher state, still. Now, I am trying to tell you how to train the mind first. The realisation is a different thing. It will come, by God's grace; of course, when it will come, we do not know. It has to come, but the mind has to be trained to think along these lines first. Before reaching the destination, we must know the direction in which we have to walk towards it. We gird up our loins and move towards it.

This is a spiritual or philosophical viewpoint of life, and is definitely capable of bringing about a tremendous transformation even in ordinary life, business life and workaday life. It is bound to bring about a transformation to such an extent that even the work done with the sweat of our brow will become an article of worship. This is exactly what is meant by Karma Yoga. The drudgery in which we seem to be entangled will be seen to be mysteriously

transformed into an article of affection – a thing which we love, a thing which we convert to an object of beauty and endearment. This is what spiritual awakening can do. It is like a philosopher's stone, by whose touch base metal gets converted into higher metal. The base metal of ordinary, bound life gets transformed into the life of consciousness, of freedom, into the awareness of a higher value in life, and finally a confidence that God does exist.

The confidence that God exists will itself be sufficient to give us inner strength. The strength does not come from material possessions, but from the confidence we have in our mind. All confident people are also strong people, whereas diffident people are not. The confidence that we receive with this affirmation of God's presence is so potent that nothing can stand before it. All the woes, all the sorrows, all the grievances of life will evaporate before this confidence that God does exist, and knowing that He does exist, all shall be well.

Chapter 5

THE PURUSHARTHAS – THE FOURFOLD AIM OF EXISTENCE

Our reactions to objects of perception are the primary consideration in any of our enterprises in the world. It is not so important what things are as our reactions and attitude towards them and the extent to which we can understand them. Ultimately, the concern is not of things, but of ourselves. Whatever be the primary substances we encounter in our daily life, and whatever be the truth about them, we seem to be concerned with the manner with which we respond to these things in the different degrees of manifestation.

What we are really concerned with in life is the manner with which we are concerned with things. This is very difficult to understand because mostly we mix up attitudes with things on a daily basis. Our attitudes to things are mixed up with the things themselves, which causes all the pleasures and pains of the world. It is difficult to distinguish between the things themselves and these psychological factors involved in the perception of them.

No ordinary human mind can make this distinction. Things get reflected in the mind and the mind pervades them, so that we do not know where the boundary is between the inner and the outer worlds. We often see ourselves in things, and we cannot know that it is we that see and ourselves that are seen: we are seeing ourselves. The identification of the perceiving mind is so intense and is worked in so effectively that we cannot know what we are seeing. We take our projected psychological conditions for

realities and then we work upon things of the world so as to improve them, to manoeuvre or direct them in certain ways. In truth, what happens is that we try to bring about a reconditioning of our own attitudes in respect of things of the world.

No man has seen the world as it is, and no one can see it, as long as we have eyes with which we have to see, and a mind with which we have to think. The mind conditions all perceptions, as the eyes condition the visualisation of all objects. Hence, the ancient seers to whom our scriptures were revealed, in their deepest intuition of things, discovered practical ways of approach to the problems and questions of the world – the way to freedom, which is the subject we have been discussing all these days. The way to freedom means the way to freedom from something. From what is it that we want freedom?

To ask for freedom is to say that something is limiting us: something does not allow our freedom. Who is it that does not allow our freedom? To free ourselves from that factor would be freedom. If somebody is catching hold of our neck, freedom would be to free ourselves from the clutches of that person.

Generally when we think of freedom, we imply thereby a consciousness of something which denies us freedom. Just as it is difficult to be aware of the borderland between the inner world and the external world, where one meets the other, and just as it is difficult enough that our minds and visions condition things of the world to a large extent, so also it is difficult to know what it is that makes us ask for freedom.

To ask for freedom is to accept that we are bound, we are limited, and we are aggrieved; this is the reason why we are asking for freedom. But what is our bondage? The nature of bondage again is the nature of the manner in which the mind reacts to things of the world. My bondage is different from your bondage. My difficulties may not be your difficulties. It is not that everyone is in the same kind of bondage. Types of bondage differ from person to person, from condition to condition, and in accordance with various other factors. Taking into consideration all this complexity of our situation, it appears that freedom is called for.

It seems difficult to know the way of freedom. We cannot easily say from whom or from what are we to be free. Do we want freedom from the world? Then why do we run after the world, if it is freedom from the world that we want? Nobody who asks for freedom really wants freedom from the world, because everyone sees some value and significance, some meaning in the world. He who wants freedom from the world will not run after it.

There are rare occasions when we seem to be fed up with the world. When we become old and have seen enough of things, and have a good understanding of persons and things of the world, often we feel in our private life that we have had enough. This means to say that we will not again run after things; but yet, hard is this attachment. Whatever be the maturity of our understanding of the world, we cannot free ourselves from persons, from things, and from our reactions to things. Wherever there is a perception, there is also a reaction. We cannot merely see things and keep quiet, because seeing is a reaction.

Reaction is a very peculiar and unintelligible condition which takes place in our own personality. It is the way in which the mind answers or responds to the nature of things presented in front of it. In some way it is a kind of judgement of things. We evaluate things, hold an opinion about things, and would like things to be a certain way. That is what is called reaction in regard to things.

Now, are we asking for freedom from our mental reaction to things, or freedom from the things themselves? If we push these questions very pertinently and pointedly to their logical limits, we will find that we cannot get an answer; we will be in a muddle of thought and will not know what we are asking for. We will be crying, not knowing for what.

In every set of circumstances there is a mix-up of factors. There is no single event or cause for anything in this world. Every occurrence, every situation is a conglomeration of many factors, just as no disease is caused by a single factor. Many cumulative factors combine to produce a single event or effect. This applies to everyone and everything in the world. There is a series of causes – ‘A’ causing ‘B’, ‘B’ causing ‘C’, ‘C’ causing ‘D’, ‘D’ causing ‘E’, and ‘E’ being ourselves – so our circumstances have been caused by a multitude of factors preceding our present condition; therefore, we cannot say which is the cause for a particular effect.

This situation is also the explanation of any human being at any given condition. We seem to be very wise as long as questions are not pushed to their logical limits. Every question can be answered halfway, but ultimately no question can be answered fully because we cannot reach the

ultimacy of anything in this world without also touching the bottom of our own being. When we attempt to touch the ultimate cause, the ultimate substantiality, the ultimacy of anything, it will appear to come back upon us as a boomerang because we are touching our own selves.

We seem to be involved in the ultimate consequences of everything in the world, but we do not seem to be so involved when we touch the border or the surface of things. We seem to be an independent person, unconcerned with others, judging all people with our own whims and fancies so long as we touch only the surface, but when we touch the bottom of things, we seem to be touching the bottom of our own self also. This is something very strange which comes up when we analyse the substance of things.

Even in ordinary parlance when we go into the analysis of the ultimate constituents of an object, we will realise that they are made of the very same constituents that we are made of, as scientists tell us. A table made of wood is made up of the same stuff as our body is made. Why is preference given to our own self in regard to the table? This is an example of the many incidents that crop up as answers to our multitudinous questions in regard to life.

But actually, in regard to life, there is only one question, not many questions. There may be many questions written in our diary, but all these are forms of this one question – one which we do not seem to know how to answer because we do not want to touch the ultimate stuff of anything. We do not want to go to the root of anything, and cannot go, because to touch its root would be to touch the root of the cosmos. This is the great problem that presents itself before everyone when seeking freedom in a life of this kind and a

world of this character; and we are cornered from different sides with various queries, as we may be questioned from many sides by lawyers in a court proceeding, for example.

When complex situations arise in life, like questions that pose themselves from all corners, we do not know what to do. We do not know what the freedom we are asking for is, whether we are intelligent in asking at all, or if we are confused. In the beginning stages, spiritual seekers seem to be very clear in their thoughts, but after taking a few steps they are caught. In the initial stages everyone is in a state of enthusiasm, emotional ecstasy and immature feeling that everything is clear. Things are not really clear, but they think so. This is the immaturity of thought of an adolescent or a child. When we press the problem, we know where we are.

To answer the great query of life and to satisfy the fundamental inner demand of the human being, to take things in their practical relationship to people, the ancient seers formulated a system called the Purusharthas, a Sanskrit phrase which means the aims of human existence. When we have pursued these ultimate aims of existence, we are supposed to have pursued the ultimate values of all creation. The pursuit of the Purusharthas is nothing but a pursuit of freedom, but freedom from what?

The answer would be, "Freedom from anything and everything that restricts our consciousness of freedom." Our consciousness of freedom must be the criterion of freedom. We must be conscious that we are free; then only we can be said to be free. Are we conscious that we are free? Anything that limits the consciousness of freedom is the cause of this bondage.

Freedom ultimately seems to imply freedom from any kind of false relationship to things of the world. Our relationship to things of the world determines whether we are bound or free. It is not the world that binds us, but the relationships that we have with the world. We may call them attachments or detachments, whatever they may be. The thread that connects us with the outer world will tell us whether we are free or bound.

The ancient seers' technique is the Purusharthas, the four aims of human existence: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. These are terms with which we are familiar, but few have adequate knowledge of them. *Dharma* is translated in many ways, sometimes as law, order, system, harmony, method, etc. Perhaps it is all these, and none of these independently. Such is what is called *dharma*.

Artha is supposed to be the pursuit of material values; *kama* is the pursuit of desires; *moksha* is the pursuit of freedom as such. Now we will realise that *moksha*, which is one of the four aims of existence, is really not the fourth in the sense of the fourth leg of a cow, in which case the other three legs have no relation. It is not in this sense that *moksha* is the fourth. It is fourth in the sense of the fourth standard of education, where the three standards below are included. The fourth standard is not the fourth materially, but inclusively.

Likewise, the principle of *dharma* is not only one of the four, but the determining factor of all the aims of existence. It is the principle on which we take an action – a step. If we take a step on a principle that is going to make us free in a larger sense, that is *dharma*; but if we take a step in the direction which restricts our freedom, that is *adharma*. To

move towards lesser freedom is *adharma*; to move towards larger freedom is *dharma*.

All this again is a very difficult thing to understand because most people mistake one thing for the other. We cannot know whether we are moving towards bondage or freedom because many times we mistake bondage for pleasure, and pleasure for the good, and the good for pleasure. While we pursue the pleasant, we may think it is the path of the good, and the path of slavery may seem to be the path of freedom.

The fourfold aim of existence is intended to touch the various ways in which we connect ourselves with things, and to achieve freedom. Whatever be the degree of freedom that we achieve, it should be a freedom which is complete, and not merely partial. It may be a lesser degree or a higher degree, but must be complete in its universe of discourse, as the logicians would say. In its own purview, in the ken of its own perception and activity, it should be complete.

If in a curriculum of studies we are reading in the first standard, the curriculum must be complete in itself, for the first standard. When we go to the second standard, again the curriculum should be complete, within the limits allowed by the system of education imparted in that level. So is the case with *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. They are rungs of a ladder in evolution, and they are rungs in a very peculiar sense, one touching the other, one overlapping the other, one vitally connecting the other, and one being impossible without the other.

They are not four items of existence with which we have to be concerned at different times. They are simultaneous questions that arise before our minds to which

simultaneous answers may have to be given. There are people called Ashtavadhanis who can attend to eight things at a time. Likewise, we have to attend to all these four aspects of life at the same time because tomorrow may never come, so it is not advisable to put something off for another day.

Whatever be the degree of the manifestation of the perfection, it should take into consideration all its aspects in its own level, and when we pursue these aims of life, or Purusharthas, we will realise that we are touching all the sides of our own personality. As a matter of fact, these Purusharthas are not outside in the world. They are not like things that can be purchased from a shop. They are values that can be recognised in everything, including ourselves.

We have various needs of our personal existence – the needs being a difficulty felt due to our being entangled in objects. This is the first difficulty. Everyone is entangled in something: in business, family, friends and enemies, in any blessed thing. Our body, as one of the things of the world, is somehow associated with the other things of the world. This is physical entanglement. The physical body has physical needs from physical objects and conditions. This is the condition of *artha*, one of the four Purusharthas. That which we call material value, economic value, practical value, pragmatic value and such other value is nothing but the outcome of our physical relationship with physical bodies. No one being conscious of physical bodies can escape this need. As long as we are lodged in a physical vesture, we are conscious of a physical world; and as long as we are in this condition, physical needs will be pressing, and the laws of the physical world will operate upon us. We

cannot escape these relations as long as the consciousness is limited to the physical body. This is the need for *artha*, and no one can escape it. This is one of the urges that spontaneously arises on account of our being physically related to things. Therefore, everyone living in a physical body shall pursue *artha*.

Artha does not mean money or grain, food, building, etc., as most people imagine. It may include this, but it generally means any kind of urge for a physical necessity which can only be attained in a world of physical relationships.

Now, these are spontaneous outcomes of our physical connections with the world, and no one should imagine that he can escape this necessity. Just as animals stand on four legs, we seem to be pressed by the four *arthas* – aims, or objectives – one being the physical objective, the need to collaborate with other physical systems, accepting and cooperating with them in such a manner that one body does not collide with another. This is physical cooperation, we may say – cooperation with the physical laws, or natural laws, that operate in the world.

But these are not the only things that we need to do; we have got many other questions. Even if these questions are answered and we cooperate and to receive cooperation from others physically, in the physical realm, we have other urges of satisfaction and fulfilment which are subtler in their nature. These are the vital forces surging forward to their destination. Just as there are physical forces, there are vital forces. Just as we have the law of gravitation which we may call the essence of the physical law of the world, there

is psychological gravitation. This is the determining factor of all our efforts at the fulfilling of *kama*, or desires.

Kama, or desires in general, means the urge of vital forces within us. They tend, as every force tends, to something else. As Newton said, one body tends to another, and he called this gravitation. Desire is a psychological gravitation. If physical gravitation is one body tending towards another body, psychological gravitation is one mind tending to another mind. This is what we call *kama*. Just as bodies do not keep quiet because they are being influenced by other bodies, minds are not peaceful because of their being limited by the existence of other minds. *Kama* is, therefore, a general psychological urge emanating from our whole personality. It is not desire for this or that; it is general restlessness of consciousness, a general incapacity of the mind to rest in itself. This is *kama* – a kind of evolution of consciousness, we may call it – something that tells us to move towards something else.

The objectives of the Purusharthas also provide for these urges. To what extent and in what manner we are to answer these urges is determined by the law, *dharma*. That which we call *dharma* is the law behind the need of our personality to collaborate with physical bodies, as well as with minds. While our collaboration with physical things in the pursuit of *artha* is to be determined by a particular law, *dharma*, so is the very same *dharma* to regulate the mode of our relationship with other persons and things. So *dharma* is behind *artha* and *kama* both. It is not something independent.

As I mentioned, we cannot pursue *dharma* today, *artha* tomorrow, *kama* the day after, and so on. They are vitally

and inextricably connected. Thus, *dharma* is the governing factor determining the way in which we have to relate ourselves to physical things, as well as minds, in the world. Now, inasmuch as it is difficult to understand physical relations, much less mental relations, we can understand how much more difficult it is to understand what *dharma* is. Who can know what our problems are in their completeness? We cannot know our own problems. How can we know others' problems?

Our physical, social, and psychological relationships with other people in the world are difficult to understand. We should not judge a human being merely from outer relationships, but from ultimate relationships. If we are concerned with only the immediate relationships, that would be sociology. Philosophy goes deeper than sociology and tries to understand the deepest relationship possible among human beings and things. To answer an ultimate question, one must be a good philosopher in the sense that one must have a good insight into the nature of things.

Artha and *kama* are determined by *dharma*, but what connection does *moksha* have to these things? Does it come in the end? Not so, as I mentioned. It seems to be immanent, already present in all these things. In every bit of the lower objectives we will find the principle of *moksha* immanent. The higher is implied in the lower. The lower stages of education take into consideration the objectives that have to be achieved in education as a whole. A particular step taken by a government official, for example, takes into consideration the system of the entire government. He is not independently acting from his own point of view.

There is no point of view for a person in a universal setup, because any point of view which we may take is in consonance with the general system of things. The general system of things is *moksha*. And the particular manifestations of the system are *artha* and *kama*. The determining factor of all these things is *dharma*. Just see how one thing is hanging on the other, how we cannot explain one thing without the other. The ultimate guiding factor, the principle that underlies as the basic motive force is *moksha*, even within *artha* and *kama*. Why should we have physical relationships or objectives? Why should we fulfil our desires? The 'why' can only be answered because of the existence of *moksha*, not otherwise.

There is something which speaks in different languages through different things in life. As I mentioned, for example, it is the government that speaks through the different officials. We cannot see the government, but yet we know it is there. We see only its manifestations because the government is invisible, working through different personalities and sets of principles. *Moksha* is something like the principle of a government; we cannot see it with our eyes, and yet it alone works through all the particulars. *Artha* and *kama* are the particular manifestations of relative life of the principle of *moksha* as the value.

Thus, we can very well appreciate the wisdom of the seers who formulated this system of Purusharthas in such a way that they are all necessary, and yet they have to be transcended for the purpose of *moksha*. We can only imagine how wise was this person or these persons who thought of these four objectives. There is nothing else that we can want in life. It is these four that everyone has to look

to, and yet with the judicious insight that the lower should not assert its independence. Again to come to our illustration, no official of the government should imagine that he is the whole government. He is not, and he cannot be. Nothing of the nature of *artha* or *kama* can be substituted for *moksha*.

So we can imagine that we are well placed in this world merely because we are well placed economically, physically or even psychologically, but that would be a very serious blunder. Fulfilment of *artha* or *kama* may be necessary in the same way as consideration is to be paid for the particular in pursuit of the original, or the universal, but it does not mean that the universal can be exhausted in any particular. *Moksha* is immanently present in all things of the world – in *arthas* and *kamas*. Yet not one of them can exhaust it or see it wholly in its originality. Our asking for material comforts and craving for vital satisfactions are only crude forms of our cry for *moksha*. We do not want things of the world. It is not these that we want. It is not particular desires that we are asking to be fulfilled. It is ultimate freedom we are seeking, and unfortunately we are seeking the ultimate in the particular.

The people who instituted this fourfold aim of life know very well that the lower cannot exhaust the higher, and it cannot contain the higher wholly, and yet the higher can be reached only through the lower. The demands and the laws of the lower have to be fulfilled before we step into the realms of the higher. The higher is not to be seen in the lower, and yet we cannot reach the higher without the lower. How beautiful, and how scientific! Without some sort of consideration to *artha* and *kama*, we cannot reach

moksha, and yet we should not be involved in *artha* and *kama* wholly. That is not the aim, though it is a kind of necessity.

Examples are given. If a thorn pricks our foot, we remove that thorn with the help of another thorn. Afterwards, we throw away both thorns. So is *artha* and *kama* a kind of thorn that we use to remove another thorn that is pricking us, the thorn of longing for things of the world – the thorn of physical limitation, the thorn of hunger and thirst, and so on. Many other difficulties are removed by this thorn of tentative satisfaction.

“Renounce also that by which we have renounced all things,” says the scriptures. Renounce the thorn with which we have removed the thorn pricking our foot because we do not need it any more. The vital satisfactions of life and the social obligations, the physical enjoyments, etc., are no doubt temporary necessities, but they are bondages when they are carried to extremes. No need should be carried beyond a certain limit, because that which helps us can also bind us when it is improperly used. Here we have to apply the principle of *dharma*.

How can we know the extent to which we have to fulfil *artha* and *kama*? People go to excesses, and till their death go on satisfying the *arthas* and *kamas*, forgetting the principle of *moksha* because *dharma* has been cast away. If *dharma* is not to determine *artha* and *kama*, then it can become a bondage. That which has been instituted as a help for the higher ascent of the mind in its evolution can also pull the mind down into the lower recesses if *dharma* is not to guide us.

Dharmāvīruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'asmi bharatarṣabha (Gita 7.11): “All *kamas* are My own manifestations where, of course, *dharma* does not oppose these.” It is very necessary to understand *dharma* before we understand the nature of spiritual freedom and *sadhana*, because when that is known, we will also know what *artha* and *kama* are and the measure of satisfaction with which we can regard the world. It is not that we should be cynical always, and go to extremes in our condemnation of things. One can go to the extremes in anything. We should not be pessimistic or foolish in our optimism. The wisdom of life is a *via media*, a middle path. It is not taking a step to the right or the left.

Dharma is the harmoniser of things. It is that which prevents us from having extreme views. There are people who take extreme views either on the side of *moksha* or on the side of *artha* and *kama*. The materialists, the *charvakas*, the happy-go-lucky's are one type. The self-abnegators, the cursers of the world, the denouncers of life are of another type. *Dharma* is the harmony between extremes of thought.

Buddha said there are two extremes: “Everything is as it is,” is one extreme; “Nothing is,” is another extreme. It is not true that nothing is, and it is also not true that everything is as it is. The truth is in the middle. This is what Buddha said. This middle truth is *dharma*. In the Pali language they call it *dhama*. The Dhammapada is a textbook which means the path of *dharma*, or the path of the middle course. Hence, it is also called the Madhyama-marga in Buddhist psychology. These people who follow the Madhyama-marga are called the Madhyamikas, who went to extremes later on, but the original intention was good. The Madhyama-marga is the path of harmony, the

path of *dharma*, which the Buddha thought and taught, and which every saint and sage taught.

If we can know what *dharma* is, we can know what life is, what we are, what our relationships with others ought to be, and how we can be happy even in the worst of circumstances. *Dharma* will come to our aid. But what is *dharma*? It is like the great question which Pilot put to Christ, "What is Truth?" We put the same question, because *dharma* and Truth are the same.

Satya and *rita* are Truth and righteousness. When one is known, the other is known; one is the face of the other. Spiritual life is a consummation of the fulfilment of the laws of *dharma*, and to be a spiritual seeker, one should have a good understanding of what *dharma* is. Many a time we try to force *dharma* on others as a kind of rule and necessity. *Dharma* is a general principle applicable to everyone, including ourselves, not a law that we can apply only to others. It is not finding fault or seeing defects, nor is it an application of force. It is a very subtle principle.

It is very difficult to define what a principle is, what impersonal action is. Impersonal action is the action of a principle of a general nature. The law of gravitation is a very good example. Gravitation has no friends and enemies, no partiality. Due to the operation of this law, a friend or an enemy will all break a leg if they fall. The law of nature has no sides; it applies to the subject and object equally. *Dharma* also applies equally and harmoniously to both the subject and the object.

Our fundamental mistake in life is to regard objects as complete in themselves, without knowing that there are subjects relating to the objects. Blunders in the fulfilment of

dharma take place because of a purely objective vision of things. We look upon persons and things as objects, rather than things and values related to subjects. When we are objectivists, we are like materialists, and material values alone seem to prevail. In materialism, *dharma* fails. In a purely objective view of things, *dharma* does not work properly because *dharma* is the principle of harmony of values. It is the equilibrator of all processes in the world, which keeps the balances of the world in order so that the balance may not tilt this way or that way. Not to give too much value to either the subject or the object is the function of *dharma*. To weigh both the subject and the object on the balance of equality and to treat the subject and the object on a par would be the way in which *dharma* works.

But this again is a little difficult to understand. *Dharma* does not regard a person or a thing as another – that he is somebody and this is something. For *dharma* he is not somebody and it is not something, because *dharma* does not judge a person or a thing as we do. For one to judge another is to deny the universality of the principle. The very principle of universality implies that the person who judges and the person who is judged are governed by the same law.

It can apply even to our government law. The same law governs the judge and the person judged, because we do not have separate laws for judges. But in our ignorance, we imagine that we are the judges and that we have laws we can wield of our own accord, and that the laws of the objects are subservient to us. We want to create a difference where there is none, while the law is homogeneity and impersonality.

To apply the principle of impersonality in every judgement is to apply *dharma*. This would be a very good definition of how *dharma* can be applied. Can we apply the principle of impersonality with impersonal judgements of value? Can we imagine that when we say something or do something in respect of another, we are also involved in it? Can we forget this? If we do forget this, then we do not know *dharma*.

My judgement of another, my remark about another, my understanding of another also involves my personality in it; but no person can think this way because we are taught to think in a different way altogether. We always think as persons unconnected with other persons or things. When I judge a person or thing, I judge them as if there is one law for the objective world and another, separate law for the subject. Not so.

One cannot be a good judge from the point of view of *dharma* as long as there is a purely objective valuation of things. *Dharma* is subtler in its purview and action than objects. Objects are not the same as the law that determines them. The principles working behind the objects of the world are subtler and more pervasive than the objects. *Dharma* is the principle governing objectivity, and the principle that equally applies to the subjects. *Dharma* is the value that connects the values of the subjects as well as the objects, in *artha* as well as in *kama*. In religious language we may say *dharma* is the way in which God works in this world.

Chapter 6

THE FIRST TWO ASHRAMAS – BRAHMACHARYA AND GRIHASTHA

The supreme objective of life has been conceived as a fourfold aim of human existence. The fourfold aspect is merely to facilitate its understanding and approach, and not because it has a real fourfold division. The great Reality of life cannot have divisions or degrees in its content, but our understanding of it has stages of approach regarded as a fourfold effort in the form of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.

I explained the importance of the concept of *dharma* in the evaluation of the other aims of life, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, and also their inter-relations – how one is linked to the other and draws sustenance from the other. When we understand this fourfold objective in this manner, we also understand at the same time that the four *arthas* or objectives are complimentary to one another in the sense that when we evolve intellectually, morally, psychologically, spiritually, and even materially, we seem to be dragging with us all these values of existence. When we advance on any path, we seem to be parallelly advancing on other paths also.

All these four paths or aspects are so intimately related to one another that we cannot ignore any one of them, but to take them into consideration in our daily life is to also understand the law called *dharma* which operates in terms of them. As I told you last time, *dharma* is a universally applicable rule of conduct and it applies to each and every

person in every walk of life, in every stage of existence. Only the method of its application may vary.

The goal of our diet is to appease hunger. Though diets may vary, the principle behind them is to appease hunger. Likewise, there is a single principle behind the observation and the practise of the conduct of *dharma*, but its application varies from stage to stage in the development of the mind. It begins to be felt at greater and greater intensities, and its necessity becomes more and more stringent. Also, the laws which we have to abide by become more and more rigid, as it were, and more inescapable when we rise higher and higher in our evolution. There seems to be some sort of condoning, some pardon or exception, etc., in the beginning, but all this is an apparent permission given to us, something like the exceptions that we give to children in the rules of life. It is not that these rules do not apply; they do exist, and operate inexorably. The conduct which is expected to be demonstrated in one's life is not merely an outward behaviour but a real expression of an inner feeling and participation in the law.

Dharma is not a compulsive force that is expected from outside; it is a voluntary acceptance of the operation of the necessary law. In the beginning, morality appears to be a kind of outer compulsion: We fear the law and then abide by its mandates. Whatever be the type of law that we operate under in the world, in the initial stages it comes upon us as a kind of necessity or compulsion from outside, a kind of 'ought'; but in its real form, it is not a kind of external 'ought' but a voluntary acceptance.

An acceptance of a necessity cannot be called a compulsion. When it takes an internal form, *dharma*

becomes a conscious acceptance of eternal values. As long as we live in our bodies, we are wedded to the external objective world, chained to the necessities and needs of physical existence, and we appear to be controlled by an external law. All law is ultimately a copy of the law of nature. Nature presses itself upon us both outwardly and inwardly. The law of nature is a very comprehensive term. It includes all existing laws operating everywhere. In the beginning, it appears to be an external law. It may appear to be the law of gravitation, or the law of health, physically; it may appear to be the rules of physics, chemistry and biology. These are external laws of nature, but nature is not exhausted by these external operations. Nature is also inside us.

In Sanskrit a very beautiful term, 'Prakriti', is used to designate nature. Prakriti is nature, and the law of nature is the law of Prakriti. This Prakriti is outside as well as inside. We are made up of it in every way; every fibre in us is constituted of Prakriti. From the outside, when viewed in terms of space, time and causation, the law of nature or Prakriti may come pressing upon us like the waves of an ocean inundating us. From inside us, it tries to work as a kind of inflorescence of flowers. While there is a pressure involuntarily exerted upon us from outside, there is a natural growth, as it were, from inside. This law is not merely physical, biological and psychological; it is also intellectual, moral and spiritual. Finally, it is the law of the Absolute operating in this universe, and it is this law that is called *dharma*.

Last time I mentioned two terms, *satya* and *rita*, found in the Vedas. *Satya* is the Truth, which is the Absolute, and

rita is its expression – the cosmic order. The cosmic order is also the natural order. Truth is Eternal Existence, and *rita* is its expression. The law, the method, the symmetry and the system that we seem to see operating in the cosmos is the expression of Truth being universal. Its pressure is felt both in the outer phenomena and in the inner psychological realms. It is because of this difficult complexity of the manifestation of *dharma*, the intricate manner in which Truth expresses itself in creation, that the ancient seers visualised the necessity for the fourfold classification of our approach to this fundamental reality of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.

Now, closely related to this universal classification of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* there is also a subjective classification of the stages of life, which we call the Ashramas. Ashrama here does not mean a monastery. It means a stage of life, an abode literally speaking, but an abode of the soul in its evolutionary process. The Ashramas are related to the Purusharthas; just as we have *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* as the Purusharthas of life, we have the four stages or grades or degrees of the development of the human mind in one's life called Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. These classifications signify the different types of discipline that we have to undergo in the pursuit of the objectives, the Purusharthas.

Truth in its pristine nature is difficult in its comprehension. Hence, we were asked to look upon it as an object of the fourfold effort. To minimise the difficulty in understanding and approaching it, now we are told that the Purusharthas themselves are difficult to approach and

practice unless we individually, each by oneself, undergo a system of discipline in our life. The discipline called upon every individual is the system of the rules of the Ashramas. We are familiar with these terms Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa, but their inter-relationship may not be clear. It is not merely a social order, as many would take it. It is not a convenience that we have introduced into society for certain practical ulterior purposes. Not so. The Purusharthas are not merely a concoction of some brave genius; these classifications have some close relationship with Reality in itself. So also, this grouping of the stages of life has something vitally to do with our practical conduct in relation to the Purusharthas.

The aim of our existence is single and indivisible: the realisation of the Supreme Being. There is no other purpose in life, but this purpose appears to be manifold on account of the limitations of our personality. It is the nature of the degrees of the entanglement that determines the degrees of our ascent from stage to stage. The orders of life and their relations to the Purusharthas are so beautifully conceived that in the performance of the duties in respect to these, nothing seems to be excluded. It is a complete approach.

The sowing of the seed in fertile soil is the beginning of the gradual growth of a tendril into a tree which bears fruit later on. The concept of the Ashramas, beginning with Brahmacharya and ending with Sannyasa, is also a concept of the gradual growth of the human mind in its maturity of experience. These classifications into the stages of life are more psychological and spiritual than social and external. Therefore, they relate more to ourselves personally than to others socially.

The whole setup may be regarded as a system of the stages of the conservation of energy. All moral conduct aims at conservation of values in terms of energies, forces which constitute everything in nature, including the internal as well as the external world. The purpose of all rules in life is the conservation of energy, not only with the Ashramas but also with the Varnas, or the classifications of society – and for the matter of that, any system of ethics and morality. In India especially, great importance is given to the conservation of the forces which constitute individuality.

We, as individuals who aspire for perfection, are embodiments of force. This concept is generally attributed to a philosopher in the West called Leibniz. It was he who thought that everything is made up of forces. But before the birth of Leibniz, in India people had already discovered this necessity of regarding every unit as a centre of force. As individuals, as bodily encasements, as physical embodiments, we are bursting energies – energies seeking release, asking for expression, wanting an escape, never being able to rest. This is the nature of energy. Energy cannot be bottled up for a long time. It can be restrained for some time, but not always.

The very meaning of energy is force tending towards expression. Force has to be harnessed for a particular purpose, and for the time being we may confine ourselves to the understanding of individuals as centres of force. While everything in the universe is a centre of force, now we are particularly concerned with our own self as individuals aspiring for perfection. Because we are energies seeking release, we have to be cautious about our own self.

By 'we', I mean each individual designated by 'I'. Everyone as a subject, pure and simple, is a centre of force, and this force has to be harnessed. If it is not scientifically and logically harnessed, it shall seek its expression in its own ways.

If we are not able to utilise the water of a river that is locked up behind a bund or a dam, the water knows what to do with itself: it shall break through the dam and seek its expression anywhere it likes. It shall burst open by force. If our energies are not properly utilised, the energies shall find a way out, like a soda bottle bursting. The purpose of the analysis of life into the Ashramas and the Purusharthas is to see that the individuality does not take the law into its own hands and act as it would like, but be directed to move along a definite course of action.

From the very beginning, from childhood, the fundamental institution of the Samskaras, for example, is conceived in such a manner that it is always in view. We have the beautiful system of the Samskaras from Garbhadhana, Pumsavana, etc. These are not just ideas of ritualistic people, but beautifully thought out systems of the expression of the human energy in practical social life. Today we have lost knowledge of all these sciences, and look at them as superstition. It has become a fashion nowadays to look upon every blessed thing of old as a superstition. It is not so. The system of Samskaras, which forms a part of living life according to the rules of the Ashramas, has a meaning in the conservation of human values.

Today, if our students run riot, there is a lot of complaint about them. The truth is that their energies have

not been systemically channelled. Their energies go hither and thither like bursting soda bottles, and they do not know what to do. Their energies are linked with human intelligence, unfortunately, and when the energies go astray, the intelligence also goes astray.

It is like a bullet: The bullet contains fire, so when a bullet hits the target, it is fire that is hitting, not merely a lead ball. It is the force that penetrates. Likewise, when energy is channelled in a particular direction, intelligence also gets channelled. It is like a poisoned arrow: Together with the arrow that shoots forth, there is also the poison that is attached to it.

Human energies are not harnessed properly these days on account of defective systems of education. The manner and system of discipline of the human mind and intelligence is called education. And if we do not discipline it properly, well, like a comet shooting into the skies, it shall shoot forth anywhere it likes, and carry the energy with it. This is a part of the explanation of social misery these days. There is no proper education.

No one knows the aim of life and, therefore, one can attach to any community, any system of thinking, and can do anything at any time. This social chaos seems to be threatening us even today, at this advanced stage of our civilisation. All this is because of a fundamental error in misconceiving, underestimating and disregarding human values, considering human values as meaningless, as nothing at all and without any significance, and together with it brushing aside all eternal values of life. When we become irreligionists, become atheists, become materialists and lose the sense of the sacredness of life, then we begin to

live not a human life, but a kind of vegetative existence that somehow drags itself forward blindly and dashes against anything that comes in front of it.

This cannot be called life. It is called dragging on, pulling on, getting on somehow or the other. Are we to get on, pull on in life, or are we to live it? As human beings we are supposed to always regard ourselves as superior beings, *Homo sapiens*. Are we not to live intelligently? To live life is to understand it in its correlation to other life.

All study is comparative, in one sense. We cannot have a bifurcated study of anything. Every subject bears a relation to some other subject and some other thing in the world. In this comparative study of human values, which bears relation to eternal values, we come to regard ourselves as very sacred units of experience, understanding, and relationship with others. It was this concept of the eternal relationship of human values that gave rise to the concept of the Ashramas and the Purusharthas. Glorious is this culture that conceived these ideas, because they have Eternity as their background. Hence, sometimes this *dharma* is called *sanathana dharma*: a *dharma* that is eternal, a *dharma* that will not perish in the process of time. It cannot perish because its roots are in the Eternal. These eternal relationships of human value have given rise to the concept of the Ashramas and the Purusharthas.

The Ashramas, commencing with Brahmacharya, are the systemised training of the individual for the harnessing of energy. What is energy? Energy in one sense is universal. It is everywhere like electricity, but it manifests itself in a certain intensity when it is associated with certain magnetic fields. Electricity is everywhere, but it is more keenly felt in

a magnetic field, as every electrician knows. Likewise is energy; it is everywhere. The human system is a kind of magnetic field, in which it expresses itself palpably; and when we realise it as a magnetic field, visibly felt, palpable, it is then that we have to be careful about its operation. We do not go into a magnetic field without caution.

Energy in a general sense is everywhere, and we are not very much concerned with it; but when it becomes part and parcel of our own nature, we become very much concerned with it. This energy that is magnetically bottled up in us and seeks expression has to be dealt with in a particular manner. When we grow into an adult, into a mature mind, our energies become more and more intensified and uncontrollable. They seek expression, but in what way are they to be expressed?

Before trying to express our energies, we have to try to conserve them. The conservation is the preliminary process. We cannot expect fruit from a tree immediately. In the beginning it has to be tended with great care. The tending of this growing tree of human energy and taking care of it with great affection is the stage of Brahmacharya. One is very cautiously brought up in this stage, so that there is no contamination by unspiritual values, forces which are antagonistic to growth – forces which may repel it and break it open. When it is tended and taken care of, it grows like a lion cub – very powerful, potent in itself, and it has the tremendous potency of power to become a lion one day.

Likewise, the body grows. We should not regard it as meaningless. It is something that grows, and our purpose is to enable it to grow and not to dissipate the energies in the very beginning. In ancient days when people were supposed

to live for at least one hundred years, this classification was done into a fourfold group of twenty-five years each. Twenty-five years of Brahmacharya was very diligently practised. This number of years may not be strictly applicable now, but the principle behind this classification is that a very large part of our life is to be utilised for helping growth, rather than expecting the child to start doing something. It is not the time for that, it is the time to grow and become something. We have to be something, in order that we may be in a position to do something later on.

So the stage of Brahmacharya is the stage of becoming something in oneself – gathering strength from all corners and not allowing the energy to leak out. The energies are not to be used in the stages of Brahmacharya. They are only to be tended, conserved and enabled to grow until they become powerful enough to meet the buffets of life, the challenges of existence – and then, the question arises of relating oneself to the Purusharthas.

Every stage of life is a stage of education. In the Chhandogya Upanishad we are told the entire life of a human being is a life of a studentship: a process of studying nature and understanding its laws. Nature includes everything – not merely things, but also laws and relations. Hence, when nature is regarded as a complete system in itself, organically related in its parts, we are also to regard human life in a similar manner. All the parts, not merely as things but also relations, constitute a complete whole. Our life is a composite structure – Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*. All these are so intimately related to one another that we

cannot ignore the existence and the operation of any while we are engaged with another.

The conservation of energy, Brahmacharya, enables us to become strong physically, mentally, and morally. Remember, just as nature is everything, Brahmacharya is everything because the conservation of energy is outside as well as inside. So a Brahmacharin is strong internally as well as externally. He is physically tough and morally strong because of the equalised energy in the body.

When there is unequal distribution of economic forces, for example, we have what are called the rich and the poor. This is a sort of imbalance in society; likewise, there can be imbalance in our bodily system when energy is centred in any particular part of the body, especially the senses. It is the senses that channel the energy and drag it to certain external things or objectives. Not to allow the senses to meddle with the energies inside is Brahmacharya. The eyes, the ears, the nose, the palate, etc. – all the senses connive to put this energy of the system to use in some particular manner. Therefore, the Brahmacharin is a sense-controlled, self-controlled person.

The energy of his system is equally distributed physically, vitally and morally; he is energy from top to bottom – unreleased, unharnessed energy. Because of this, the Brahmacharins are called *agni-manavakas*, fire lads. They are like fire, fire which will only burn when interfered with, and not otherwise. This is a very beautiful term, *angi-manavaka*: a lad who shines like fire, glows with *brahmavarchas* – effulgence – because of the equidistribution of the energy in his system. He looks beautiful on account of this.

When this is achieved in an appreciable manner, the question arises in facing the Purusharthas. The actual living of the practical life commences with Grihastha. The Brahmacharya is just a preparation for it. We face life in the Grihastha stage, and the energies that we have conserved in the stage of Brahmacharya will help us in the stages of life, just as the money that we have earned will help us in living life. If we earned nothing, then we will have to live a beggar's life.

The Grihastha *dharma* has a direct relationship with the fulfilment of *artha* and *kama*. Two of the Purusharthas, *artha* and *kama*, bear immediate relationship to Grihastha *dharma*s. *Grihastha* literally means one who lives in a house. *Griha* means a house, *tha* means one who is there. One who is a householder, in one sense, is a Grihastha – which means to say, one who regards and respects material values, and has something to do with vital values. The Grihastha *dharma* is a stage of education again, and it is in this stage that part, but not all, of the energy is utilised for an educative purpose.

It is not a stage of enjoyment. This should not be mistaken. A Grihastha should not be living a life of enjoyment. It is as much a period of training as the life of a Brahmacharin, but it is a different kind of training altogether. He has to confront material values and material existences, and face them. In facing them he may have to battle with them and spend some of the conserved force.

Now you may be wondering, why this institution of Grihastha *dharma* at all? Is it necessary to utilise the energy conserved in the stage of Brahmacharya, or can we rise up straight to *moksha*? This question has also been discussed

in our scriptures. Two views have been held, something like the debate of the homeopaths and the allopaths that we have these days. There is some truth as well as drawbacks in what the allopaths say, and the same applies to homeopathy also. We cannot universally support everything that someone says. Everyone says some truth, though not the whole truth.

Likewise, our scriptures have conceived the necessity of having two types of approach to eternal values: the direct and the indirect. Sometimes in Vedanta *sastras*, these paths are called the Suka-marga and the Pipilika-marga – the path of the bird and the path of the ant. The bird flies direct, whereas the ant has to crawl slowly, and may go round-about. Both may reach the same destination, but they take different lengths of time. If they have to go to Swargashrama, the bird will fly directly across the Ganges, but the ant will have to go around via the bridge. It will take a lot of time. The direct path is the Suka-marga, or the path of the bird. This is being directly concerned with eternal values from the very beginning itself.

There have been very rare souls who live such a life. They never allowed even the least dissipation of their energies in terms of objects. Such were those who never lived the life of a Grihastha. Suka Maharishi was an example, from whose conduct this name of Suka-marga has come – the path of Suka Maharishi. It was all consciousness of God, from beginning to end. He began his life with God-consciousness and he ended his life with God-consciousness. To live such a life is difficult, but even an approximation to such a life is called Suka-marga, whatever be its measure of success.

Some of the Upanishads also collaborate this view of those who take to the path of *nirvritti* directly from the stage of Brahmacharya, and directly enter Sannyasa. This is Nirvritti-marga throughout, from beginning to end. This also is permitted in some of the Smritis and some of the Upanishads for exceptional souls whose minds are perfectly mature and whose *vasanas* and *samskaras* are not *rajasic* or *tamasic*, who are made of a *sattvic* nature, who glow with a lustre of God alone and nothing else, and who want nothing else but God.

Few though they may be in number, such people exist even today. We cannot say the world is bereft of them. Such are the Nirvritti-margins who take to the path of the Eternal, the Absolute, the path of God, the path of devotion, the path of knowledge, the path of yoga. Such are those Nirvritti-margins rising, shooting forth like a star from Brahmacharya to Sannyasa.

But, unfortunately, all are not birds with feathers and wings; in this world there are many other things created by God, and they too have to move along the lines accessible to them. Those who have wings can fly; those who only have legs have to walk; those who have no legs may have to crawl. We may have to roll sometimes if we have no limbs – but move we must.

Everything must move towards the same goal, consciously or unconsciously. It is not the human being alone that tends toward this consciousness. Everything in this universe cries for God. The sun and the moon, the winds that blow, the rivers that flow, the ocean that bubbles, all cry for God. Every motion of even a leaf in the wind is supposed to be a longing for God. Hence, there is

nothing which can be completely free from this longing or aspiration. Something may be conscious of it or unconscious of it. We may be unconsciously dragged or consciously moving; this is the only difference. But everything does move towards a single destination, not many destinations.

There being many a method of approach to the same goal, many systems of practice may have to be allowed. So apart from *nivritti*, there is also the path of *pravritti*, and this fourfold classification systemically and diligently practised, without missing even one link in the chain, would be the *pravritti dharma* of the human being. But remember it is also *dharma*; *nivritti dharma* and *pravritti dharma* are both *dharma* in the sense that it is a law that has to be followed – a law of the same Truth that operates everywhere.

The Grihastha is allowed certain satisfactions, not for the sake of satisfaction, but for an expression of a part of his desire and energies for the higher purpose towards which he makes a preparation. The fulfilment of desires, pursuit of wealth and material values in Grihastha life are all intended as an educative means of plodding onwards into the Vanaprastha and Sannyasa stages. The Grihastha is one who cannot completely conserve all his energies, who cannot sublimate all these desires in one stroke. He is one who tries to control by appeasing. A little of satisfaction sometimes helps us in exercising control. This is a law that may be found to be applicable in many walks of life.

We cannot be one hundred percent in everything. A little leniency is sometimes allowed, merely with a view to exercise more control. The intention is not leniency but

self-control. The channels of expression are, therefore, intended as helps to self-control in the end. There are many rules enjoined in the Smritis, for example, of how disciplined the Grihastha must lead his life. Even the little satisfaction that is allowed to him through the senses is a very regulated one. There is space, time and causal connections limiting these satisfactions. It is not that he can do anything he likes. While the Brahmacharin is not allowed any sensory enjoyment because his stage is supposed to be one of conservation of power, the Grihastha is allowed a certain amount of satisfaction for a higher purpose. When this higher purpose is to be kept in view, the satisfaction ceases to be a satisfaction.

When we are studying for an examination, racking our brain, going through our textbooks to prepare for tomorrow's examination, we may drink a cup of tea or have a good dinner together with our preparation, but our mind is not there. It is only an aid. The food that we take and the satisfactions that we have are only a part of the training, and we do not take them as satisfactions at all. But we know the necessity of these satisfactions; they help us in the training.

In the Anugita of the Mahabharata, we have a beautiful monologue of King Janaka. He speaks about the way he rules the kingdom. King Janaka was an ideal Grihastha. Those who can properly understand the way in which Janaka lived his life will know the way in which a Grihastha should live. Lofty the thoughts of Janaka were, so lofty that many of us cannot reach that state of thinking. He was questioned by many people, "How do you regard it compatible to be a Brahma-jnanin as well as a king at the

same time? Where is correlation between the type of knowledge that you possess and the type of life that you are living?” He was tested many times and was questioned thus.

His answer was a great lesson to all seekers of Truth. “I do not enjoy, I only experience,” was the answer. “I do not know what is enjoyment, but I do have experiences. When I experience a state of consciousness through the nose, it is not I that have this experience; it is the divinity that is presiding in the nose that experiences this,” said Janaka.

The human personality is presided over by principles of consciousness. These are called *adhidaivas* in our theology. The eyes are supposed to be governed by the Sun, the Moon governs the mind, and so on. Every limb of the body is governed by some cosmic principle. The individual is a part of the cosmos, and the whole governs every limb of the part. That which is in the whole is also in the part; that which is in the cosmos is in the microcosm, so it is quite intelligible and natural that the principles governing the cosmos should also govern the individual.

“Why not take things in that principle?” was Janaka’s answer. “Why should there be a Janaka at all? I don’t see a Janaka here. For me a thing like Janaka does not exist; it is only a name that has been given to a system of working, of a group of principles called deities, or *adhidaivas*, who perform their duties. Indra works through the hands, the Sun works through the eyes, the Dig-devatas work through the ears, Varuna works through the palate, and so where is Janaka? To whom do you put the question?”

Janaka's beautiful answer indicates the way in which an ideal Grihastha should live life. It is not a life of enjoyment – far from it. We are so much wedded to enjoyments and

pleasures that we do not seem to be in a position to think in any other way. The education provided to us by nature is free from the concept of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain do not come into the Truth of Reality. These are merely values that we have introduced by thinking in terms of the senses. Truth cannot have any relationship either with pleasure or pain. When we think independently of the senses, the idea of pleasure and pain drop off. So it was that Janaka replied.

This was a reply to all the queries of the Grihasthas and those who do not find an answer in life: To introduce cosmic meaning into individual life would be the method of living a Grihastha life. So the Grihastha is a wise person who supports life while not enjoying it, and contributes personal values to social values. Sometimes the Grihastha's life is supposed to be pre-eminent on account of his contributing personal value to social value, and supporting it while not enjoying it. Conceived thus, the life of a Grihastha is glorious. But difficult it is to live like this because few people are educated in this matter. We have to think in a new way altogether; and when it is properly taught and lived in this way, the life of a Grihastha becomes a preparation for God-realisation, as it ought to be.

So there is a very gradual growth from the stage of Brahmacharya to Grihastha and then, being done with all social relationships, one is supposed to withdraw completely into the stages of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. These are interesting things I shall touch upon next time.

Chapter 7

THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE AS A MEANS TO REACHING THE ETERNAL

The exuberant growth of the plant of Brahmacharya into the strong tree of the life of the Grihastha is intended to yield the ripe fruits of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. The energies seeking expression get subdued gradually by progression and retrogression, by steps taken forward as well as backward. The intention achieved is as in a long journey – many a hill and dale to cross, ups and downs, ascents and descents – yet indicating an onward movement in the journey.

The growth of the energies of the human being is in this sense a very complex movement, extending in almost every direction. The growth of the human system into a state of perfection that it aspires for is not a march in the sense of walking in one direction along a road to a fixed destination, but a different type of movement altogether. It is impossible to compare the way in which it grows or expresses itself internally. It is a simultaneous expansion in every direction, touching every point of the compass and taking into consideration every aspect of existence. In this sense, it is different from the ordinary movements of physical bodies. The movement of vital forces, the movement of consciousness, is impossible of judgement through logical categories. We cannot know how we proceed in the path of evolution. Our intellectual powers are not equipped to measure the extent of the inner response of the individual consciousness to the call of the Universal Spirit.

I began by saying there is a kind of inner relationship of the four Ashramas or stages of life with the four Purusharthas – *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. These are indicative of destinies the human soul reaches, and the ways of pursuit, which are quite different in structure and content from anything we can understand in this world.

The most difficult of all things is to understand one's self because the self of ours, the self of any individual, is inextricably involved in all the processes of creation. When we touch our self, we seem to be touching all the vital strings in creation. The difficulty in understanding one's own mind lies in the fact that we made a very sharp distinction between our own self and our environment.

Our intellectual powers are unsuited to understanding the soul because the soul is organically related to the structural reality of the whole creation, whereas the intellect is so made, fortunately or unfortunately, that it can bifurcate the characteristic of objects from the objects themselves whenever it tries to understand them. This logic of bifurcation of the objects from its adjectives and predicates is applied by the intellect in the understanding of the Self, God, the Absolute, etc.

We are often told that intellectual logic is no help in understanding Reality. The reason is that the Real is the soul of the cosmos in some sense, as we have a soul in our own body. When we talk of a soul, we do not mean a single unit, a point in space, etc., though this would be the usual notion of the soul. When we talk of the soul of a body and when we speak of the souls of things metaphorically, we cannot help imagining a centre in space – enlightening and luminous though it may be. But the soul is not a shining

centre, like a spark of fire. This conception of the soul is again due to a false application of intellectual logic to Reality.

This has become the reason for even our localising the concept of God to space. Everything for us is in space. We are in space, our soul is in space, God is in space. Nothing can be external to space. This difficulty has arisen on account of the fundamental error of our subjugating ourselves to the limitations of intellectual things; and so organically are we involved in this process of thinking that, for us, rationality is the soul. There were philosophers, in the West especially, who thought that the soul is a rational being; hence, rationality is the soul of man. Not so. The soul is super-rational. If at all you can associate the word 'rational' with the soul, it is super-rational in the sense that it includes within itself everything and anything that rationality can comprehend.

But it has in itself something unique which the intellect cannot comprehend, unique in the sense that the perception of the soul is not understanding, but a vision which is superior to understanding. This vision is, again to reiterate, what is known as intuition. We have heard so much about intuition, the correct grasp of Truth as it is. This intuition is the vision of the soul – the soul seeing directly, independent of the instruments of the senses, the mind, and the understanding. This direct apprehension of the soul by the soul is called intuition; therefore, the movement of the soul towards this destination in the process of evolution cannot be comprehended by intellectual sciences. Quite obvious is the reason behind it: Who can know the presupposition of the rational function

of the intellect? It is faulty to imagine the soul to be a unit like a particle of dust or a spark of fire, or anything else that may be located in space and time.

The soul thus represents the transempirical reality. It is the Eternal that is shining through us. The soul is only a name that we give to the manner in which the Eternal expresses itself in the temporal. It is the Supreme Being that is speaking in a language unique to itself through the mortal coil. How can we restrict the soul to a concept or an object that is a part of creation? The soul is not a created object. Inasmuch as it is not a part of creation, the evolutionary part does not touch it vitally, and so it transcends human understanding.

Anything that is worthwhile, anything that is of momentous consequence in our life is not an intellectual affair. We know this only in the deepest recesses of our heart. It is something which we cannot express through language because it is the 'I' in us. We love it so much. So substantial it is that everything seems to evaporate into airy nothing before it. The language of the airy nothing is not spoken through our tongues, and so it is often said in the scriptures that the soul of the cosmos – the Reality behind all things – is beyond logic and intellectuality.

Hence it is that the path of the soul to its destiny is so secretly guarded by mysteries. This knowledge is the Upanishads – not in the sense of a written text, but in the sense of a secret apprehension of Truth, a knowledge which is identical with its Being. A soul's revelation to itself is the Upanishads. When we speak of the soul's evolution to its Self-realisation, we speak of something we cannot understand. Often we do not know what we are saying

about the matter. It is because of these difficulties in associating the soul with anything that happens in the universe that we feel it hard to associate social life with spirituality. We are bound by social restrictions. Our bodily relations are socially tethered to rules and laws of many kinds, but we have a soul which refuses to be a social unit, which asserts itself as something absolutely independent of all social laws, and we often feel things have a Reality whose meaning social laws cannot explain.

We cannot bind the soul with any kind of law. Therefore, it is above all law, and all laws are made for its sake. Even the law of evolution, the highest of laws, is intended for explaining the meaning of the soul's expressing itself into its own pristine nature. The march of the soul is thus not a movement in space. Universal movement is not spatial movement. And inasmuch as spiritual life is connected with the soul's movement, spiritual life is independent of scientific formulations, social regulations and intellectual logic. Thus, spiritual life is peculiar to itself – explicable only through itself, and not by any other means.

The spirit can explain itself only through itself. It is intuition growing and expressing itself in the form of the progress of the movement of the world we call evolution. On account of this mystery hidden behind the cosmic evolution in which every one of us seems to be involved, the life of the individual becomes difficult to understand. Many a time we are face to face with problems which we cannot answer because they are not created by people, by things, or by laws and regulations. They arise simultaneously with our nature, which is bound up by the nature of the world.

Our nature is intrinsic to us, and an answer of a spiritual character can only come from within, not from without. All spiritual growth is an inner growth, like the growth of a tree. It is purely internal, though in its internal growth it draws sustenance from external forces. The individual centre, which is a unit of force, seeks expression and gathers within itself a momentum, like a river that flows into the ocean. The human individual's evolutionary act may, to some extent, be compared to a river flowing to the ocean. In the beginning it is a droplet like the Ganga at Gangotri or Gomukh, and we cannot even see it, so insignificant it is in the beginning. But though it is small rivulets, yet even at the very beginning it has a tendency to move towards its destination. Though this tendency is not visible outside, it is inherent within, and it gains momentum by moving further. It gathers its tributaries into itself and gains more strength; and in this gaining of strength, it also gains further momentum to rush through the plains, inundating villages, sometimes destroying things, caring not what it confronts in its way. Somehow it finds its way to its home in the ocean, where it shall gain peace forever. When the river reaches the ocean, it rushes no more. It wants nothing further, for its purpose is served.

Likewise, human energies are forces that cannot rest quiet until they reach their consummation in the sea of forces. Though the waters of the river are akin to the waters of the ocean in substance, the manner of their working is different. While the ocean is calm, subdued and magnificent in its profundity, the river is restless and cannot find peace anywhere. It is universal force in comparison with individual force. As a river seeks its peace

in the vast expanse of the ocean, the forces that constitute the unit of individuality rush towards the sea of force in the cosmos. All our hectic activity throughout the day is an attempt of the segregated units of energy to find their attunement in the ocean of energy. We have been isolated from home, and we ask for an attunement with it. Now in this process of the reuniting of the individual with the cosmic, many a mistake may happen, as in the rivers trying to find their way to the ocean. The river may have to face mountains obstructing its path, due to which it may have to run in a thousand directions, splashing its waters hither and thither and wasting itself in the effort to confront the barrier, overcome it, and find its way to the ocean.

The human individual may have to face the same situation. It is not that the human energies flow calmly, majestically into the ocean of universal force. We are obstructed by circular motions of force – whirls and coils of energies which may catch us on the way and suck us into themselves, wherein we may either get caught up or lose consciousness of our destination. This happens when the ultimate purpose of the movement of the universal force, manifest as an individual, is coupled somehow or other with personal desire.

I mentioned earlier that we have two kinds of energies, the Deva and the Asuric, the higher and the lower, one pulling us up to our universal home and the other tethering us down to the universal campus. The forces that tie us to the body are called desires; the forces that try to escape the limitations of the body and seek their expansion in the ocean of force are the aspirations for freedom. The Ashramas of life – the stages of Brahmacharya, Grihastha,

Vanaprashtha and Sannyasa – are intended to sublimate this riotous force in our personality, riotous because it can get involved in desires of the body.

The onward journey of righteousness, therefore, oftentimes gets smothered by the downward pull of desire. To obviate this, the ancient seers have instituted this life of the Ashramas, where all stages are equally important. The Ashramas are inter-related, one sustaining the other, one having meaning in the other, one fulfilling the other, as also holds true for the Purusharthas. The stage of the Brahmacharin is the time intended for gathering momentum, gaining strength for further fulfilment. The Grihastha-dharma is an obstacle on the way that has to be confronted and overcome. In this confrontation of the mountain in front of the rushing river, it may waste some of its water breaking through the dams; it may even destroy things, but it shall fulfil its need. So the Grihastha-dharma is a kind of dam that is faced by the movement of this force. Necessary or unnecessary, it is something that it faces.

The Grihastha-dharma is not merely a social institution. The stages of life – Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprashtha and Sannyasa – are not social institutions created by man for his own whim and fancy. They are external names of forms taken by certain psychological necessities, and they have a tremendous reality behind them. They may take an external form in society for the internal training of the individual.

The whole purpose of the four stages is a gradual release of the energy that is in an incipient stage at the birth of a child. A child is born with desires of various types, of which it can have no knowledge on account of its immature mind.

As it grows, the Ashramas act as an educative process for the child. They tend, protect and enable the incipient budding energies to grow with a purpose rather than wildly like trees in a forest.

Hence, the Ashramas are a process of education of the soul. The soul is something transempirical, as I mentioned already, unconnected with intellectual processes and sciences. Inasmuch as this process of education is so intricate and internal, it becomes difficult for us to understand what it is. We mistake it for the arts and sciences that teach us how to get on well in life. This is quite different. The education of the soul, which is the purpose of the Ashramas, is an inner process not merely in a scientific psychological sense, but in a more profound sense – so profound that it is inseparable from our own self.

We look at even our own self as we look at others, because we still have the habit of conceiving things in the form of objects. Even the soul is an object for us. It is really a non-objective principle, incapable of objectification. We cannot analyse or understand it with our intellect; it is ourselves. Who is to understand his own self? We are the understander. How can we know the soul, and where can there be a definition? Who is to define the soul when the definer himself is the soul? Such being the complexity of the soul, such being the difficulty of apprehending it in its pristine purity, so difficult also is the education of it. Therefore, a unique type of education called the Gurukula system was instituted.

Due consideration was given to the demands of the soul in the expressions of the energies in space and time in the form of desires. Remember, we have the Devas and the

Asuras in us. The tremendous battle between the two is going on always – one asking for nectar, the other for poison. Both are struggling for victory within our own selves. Many times we lend our eyes either this side or that side. It is a Herculean task in the path of *sadhana* to strike a *via media* between these two calls, the higher and the lower, and often it can look that the life of a *sadhaka* is a miserable one.

Painful is the life of *sadhana*; therefore, we do not know which of the two directions to go. When we are asked to move both ways and are in the lower forms of mental expression, in the counter form of evolution, we are likely to listen to the call of the lower nature. It is easier to flow with the current of the river than to swim across or move upstream. The tendency of the lower Prakriti is to move towards the objects. The lower Prakriti, the Apara Prakriti, is the totality of the objects of the world and the forces that tend towards these objects. The lower nature of Apara Prakriti calls attention of the desirous mind; the higher aspirations, though they may be present even in the lower levels like fire hidden in a matchstick, are smothered and not visible.

No one likes to deliberately commit a wrong, but everyone unknowingly does it because the inner voice of the conscience which speaks in the language of Truth is misdirected by the illusory light that is shed by the senses that direct the mind towards the objects. So this Gurukula educational process of the soul took into consideration the lower and higher sides of the human individual.

Tremendous self-discipline was imparted to the Brahmachari. Especially, he was asked to live the life of the

Golden Mean; otherwise, energies which are opposed but not sublimated may do more harm than if they are let alone. The Grihastha-dharma has been instituted after the stage of Brahmacharya merely to act as a resting place on the onward journey of the soul. It takes rest, but after the rest it has to move further. Even the period of rest is a period of preparation, not a period of mere slumber or woolgathering. It is the time given for the soul to recollect its memories, to gather more strength than it might spend in the life of Grihastha for the sake of a complete subdual of the forces in the stages of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

The forces that were incipient in Brahmacharya express themselves in Grihastha. They are then collected in Vanaprastha and Sannyasa, and focussed into a determination to reach the goal. Hence, the lives of the Vanaprasthi and the Sannyasi are lives of meditation in various forms. There are various types of meditations. As we have arts and sciences as types of education, likewise we have the many types of collecting the mental forces, all called meditation, to be done gradually, systematically, stage by stage, from the grosser to the subtler forms.

Thus, the relation to the four Purusharthas – *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* – is a final attunement of the individual forces with the purpose of creation. The purpose of creation is lost sight of on account of the insistent demands of the human desires. We do not want to know what the purpose of creation is. We have our own individual purposes and private business in which we get entangled so much that the final purpose of all the activities is lost. Very pitiable will be the condition of that mind whose vision gets constricted to its private concerns, taking

them as its ultimate goal and missing the point at which it is really aiming.

All individual purpose, whatever it be in life, is a form tentatively taken by the universal purpose. The daily duties are miniatures of life's duties. It is not that our daily duties are one thing, and our life duties are another. As minutes make the hour, our many duties make the life duty. In a likewise manner, the life duty is the duty of the cosmos. The life of the individual is intended for the fulfilment of the purpose of the universe. Inasmuch as all individuals are equally constructed and shaped, it follows from this that there should be a collaboration of individual purposes. There cannot be conflict of social forces or personalities because the purposes of individuals, though they appear to be different, are determined by a single subjective aim which directs itself into cosmic aim.

This is the purpose of spiritual education, which is the sum and substance of all education. It is the precondition of all processes of training of the mind. To be in tune with our own self is the ultimate purpose of learning anything in this world. What is the use of learning many things if we are not in tune with our own self? A person who is not in tune with his own self is called insane. All training that is consciously directed, called education, is intended to bring us nearer to our own self in its various expressions.

It is difficult to know what the self is. Again and again we will go to the old grandmother's idea that the soul is a small spot in the body. Not so is the soul. It is not a dot shining in the heart. It is something different altogether. We cannot understand, and it is not supposed to be understood.

“Who is to understand the understander?” said Yajnavalkya. The soul is not to be understood by the methods of logic. Hence, collecting of energies through the stages of the Ashramas is meant for bringing the soul nearer to itself in the various stages of self-expression, and it is only by a gradual transcendence of these stages that we can know what the soul is. No one can be taught what the soul is; therefore, any teaching of this kind will only confound the mind. Hence, in the beginning we have to treat every human being as a child. Concrete forms should be brought in front of the minds of children. If we only say, “One and one is two,” it would not do. We have to bring concrete things like two sticks, for example. “Here is one and there is another. How many are there – one or two?” “Two,” says the child.

Hence, we are gradually brought to the subtler and subtler theoretical forms – from arithmetic to geometry, from geometry to algebra, etc. The gross form of the Self is what presents itself to us before our eyes, and even with Herculean effort we cannot get rid of this idea. Who are you, sir? “I am Mr. so and so,” is the definition of the soul, given even by educated people. Hence, the bodily self is taken as the base of understanding, which is outgrown gradually by what we may call the Socrates teaching method of induction and deduction in such a way that one does not know that the teaching is being injected at all. Everyone resents being taught because everyone feels, “I am wise enough.” No one likes to be taught or directed. As nothing seems more painful than being taught by someone else, the right type of teaching may be the Socratic Method.

Sometimes a teacher does not assume the role of a teacher at all. In the process of psychoanalysis, this is also sometimes adopted. At first we enter into the psychological condition of the student and study the student's life. The teacher comes down to the level of the life of the student, lives as a student for all practical purposes, and then it becomes easier for the student to imbibe the character of the teacher. If the teacher is always on a high pedestal, the student may not reach the level of the teacher. There should be harmony between the student and the teacher, which can be done only when either the student rises up to the level of the teacher or the teacher comes down to the level of the student.

There should be harmonious movement between the forces that teach and those that receive the teachings. This is the principle behind the Gurukula education – the contact of the teacher and the student – wherein the teacher is both the teacher and the guardian. Nowadays parents and teachers are different persons. The teacher has no parental affection and the parent has no capacity to teach, so there is a gulf between the two things that the student needs. There are many difficulties in the processes of teaching. The expression of the soul through the gross form of the body is taken as the base of instruction. It is taken through the family and the society, and in a later stage it is taken to its vaster expanse of creation that we see before our eyes. Yet, we know the self we see is taken for a kind of object.

The self is so much identified with objectivity that we mistakenly think events take place in relation to our own self. The bodily pain is regarded as the soul's pain, bodily pleasure is regarded as the soul's pleasure, the family

pleasures and pains are regarded as the person's pleasure and pain; likewise is it in the other planes also. We have the bodily self, family self, patriot national self, world self, and so on. Even when we speak of the universal Self, it is still in a state of objectification; we regard it as a kind of power that is inherent in all things with which we have to be united. But that is a very advanced state, which very few people reach.

Hence, very few have been able to receive this lofty education of the spirit, but this is the intention of the education through the Ashramas. In the stages of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa, full maturity is reached and the true nature of the soul becomes apparent to the higher mind, which is not apparent earlier. In the two earlier stages of Brahmacharya and Grihastha, a kind of guarding from outside is necessary, and rules are enforced to restrict their movements and activities; there is external morality to a large extent in those stages. But internal morality flourishes in the Vanaprasthi and Sannyasi, where they abide by the law of their own accord and effort, and not because someone else asks them to. So there is a voluntary expression of the law of creation in Vanaprastha and Sannyasa, while in the Brahmacharya and Grihastha there is a compulsion, to some extent.

Whatever be the reason, the law is to be respected; whether by compulsion or impulsion, the purpose is the same. It appears to be a blind movement where we are taken by the hand, but later on it becomes a conscious movement with open eyes and clear vision. Thus, the internal purposes of the stages of the Ashramas are related to the universal purposes of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and

moksha, and when these become apparent to our minds, we become mature seekers, and not otherwise.

Thus, we feel a need for knowing Truth. The call of the spirit is audibly heard and we cannot rest without responding to it, so we go to a master or a teacher. The Guru is approached by the disciple only when this wisdom dawns and when the need is felt as an inner impulsion, a conscious necessity, and not merely directed by external causes.

Now, the nature of the student on the spiritual path who approaches the Master or Guru is again worthy of consideration. The disciple is rare, says the Upanishad, and the teacher is even rarer. The giver of knowledge is a wonder, and the receiver of knowledge is also a wonder. The Kathopanishad says, *āścaryo vaktā kuśalo* (Katha 1.2.7): Shrewd should be the recipient of this wisdom. “Dhīraḥ are these seekers,” says the Upanishad. *Kaś cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmāna* (Katha 2.1.1): It is for this purpose that people take to the lives of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

It is not a social order, again to reiterate, but a psychological maturity of the mind wherein it becomes fully conscious of its purpose in life. It is not merely partially aware, and its mind cannot be diverted in any way. Like an arrow that moves to its target, the mind of the seeker here asks for Truth, and Truth alone: Truth in its pristine purity. Then it is that a disciple approaches a master, fed up with all things of the world.

Who is to be the disciple and the student? One who has carefully examined the world through the pros and cons of its processes, who has seen through the world and not merely seen the world, who knows what the world is made

up of and what the world can give. The world and that which are attainable through action or effort have to be carefully examined by the student.

What are the things of the world that are obtainable through effort? It is all that accrues to us in this life, or the other life, through efforts that we make. We do so many things throughout our life trying to obtain something. We have been working very hard for years together, in many a field of life. What have we got? We cannot say what we have got; yet, we have been sweating and toiling. Here the eyes get opened. We realise this in the last stages of life, to our own misfortune: substantially, the world has given us nothing. The fruits of our action in life seem to be nothing – hollow pretentions, tinsels that shine like silver and gold.

Realise the hollowness of all the fruits that have accrued from your hectic activities. You must get tired of all life – tired not from frustration or because you cannot fulfil your desires, but tired because you have seen everything. You know what they are and what they can give you.

It is wisdom that makes us tired of things, not frustrations. This tiresomeness, this weariness of the spirit makes us open our eyes to the fact that the Eternal is not to be reached by anything that is done in this world. All our efforts seem to be a waste before it. All the sleepless nights, all the midnight oil we burned seem to be meaningless before that Eternal call. All the many things we have done cannot achieve That which is not manufactured or done. The non-eternal cannot make us reach the Eternal. Therefore, we cannot reach the Eternal by any non-eternal activities. We have to approach the Guru who is well versed in all the knowledge of the scriptures and personally

established in the Supreme Being, who alone can save us from this confusion, this misery, this bondage to action and desire.

Chapter 8

CONTROLLING OF THE MIND AND SENSES THROUGH THE SADHANA-CHATUSTAYA

The preparations that are requisite of a student of spiritual life, particularly when approaching a preceptor for the reception of knowledge, are difficult enough of acquisition. When we come to these considerations, we begin to come nearer to the truths of our own being than when we were merely facing facts of life as if they were external objects.

To study a thing when it is outside us is easier, but when it comes to us in a personal manner, very often we hesitate to say anything about it, and especially to tackle it. Personal matters are difficult to explain and solve. We treat the world as a kind of object, and we would like to treat spiritual life also as a kind of object. Then it is that we seem to get on very well with it. God and His nature, the path of spiritual *sadhana*, the difficulties on the way – all these things are instinctively taken by us as certain objects in the world, as articles we can collect and throw away. But we realise when we take things more seriously that our vision was incorrect and spiritual life is not so easy as we once thought it to be, because of a very simple reason that it is concerned with our own self. It is not even concerned with God as a super-transcendent creator. It is concerned with us, and that is why it is so difficult.

If it had been a matter concerning someone else, we would have solved it easily; but it is a matter concerning us. Who is going to solve it? With *viveka* and *vairagya*, the characteristics of which I described in the earlier discourses,

philosophically equipped and intellectually well informed, the student may appear to be ready for higher knowledge. But unfortunately, he is not ready for it because there are certain other things which the student must cultivate before this unique knowledge can be received from the wondrous Master. The further qualifications that one is called upon to nurture in oneself are more personal than intellectual or philosophical.

The personal aspects of spiritual *sadhana* are the psychological and moral training that we have to undergo as a necessary qualification. Whatever be our intellectual training or scientific upbringing, there is something more that we have to equip ourselves with before we approach a spiritual adept. These are equipments, not merely intellectual or qualificational in the ordinary sense of the term, but very personal, moral and psychological – and thus, very secret. Here we touch the bottom of our own being and try to sweep the dust-ridden enclave of our own heart.

These are what the scriptures and the Masters have spoken of as the *satsampat*, or the sixfold qualifications of an emotional and personal nature. The human being is not merely an intellect, but also an emotion. So our equipment should not merely be rationalistic. The equipment should also include a moral preparation, which has many hidden sides, sometimes hidden even to our own vision, which has to be brought to the surface of consciousness if spiritual knowledge is to be received. It is to be remembered again that spiritual knowledge is not of an ordinary kind. It is not knowledge at all, as we know knowledge to be. It is not information that we gather. It is not knowing something, or

knowing about something. This is the peculiarity about this knowledge. This is why the scriptures say, “This knowledge is a wonder!” It is a wonder because ‘wonder’ cannot be explained.

We look upon it with a kind of awe, in consternation. Everything connected with it is a kind of marvel: on one end of it, there is God the marvel, on another end there seems to be the marvel of the teacher, and on the third side there is the student, who is also a marvel. The knowledge is a marvel and the goal is also a marvel. It is all a marvel; in all ten directions it is a marvel. We cannot explain this mystery which is this wondrous secret of secrets, into which we are trying to enter when we tread the path spiritual.

Imagine how honest one has to be to tread this path. It is so serious a matter, so momentous, that one has to understand its importance for one’s own self. The first and foremost psychological qualification required of us is peace of mind. We should not approach a Guru or Master with a troubled mind, such as grief over a dead child or a gone-off husband, and so on. With these ideas we should not approach a spiritual Master, because the ideas that are uppermost in our minds are what count most. One may have lost a job, been demoted, been cast out into the streets; there may be many kinds of problems in the family and personal life. It is not with these notions that we would approach a Master of the Spirit; nor should we go with the burden of these ideas, trying to unload all of them, because then the very purpose of meeting the Master would be defeated. The path of the Spirit is the way to the Spirit alone, and nothing short of it.

So the humdrum, toil, worry and business of life, which have their impressions formed in our subconscious and unconscious levels of mind, should be cast out first by tranquillity, which has to be acquired with tremendous effort. The mind has to be tranquil, first and foremost. It is called *kshama, shanti*. There should be a feeling of subdual of personality when approaching a spiritual Master. We are required to offer nothing to him. We are only to present ourselves before him as a subdued person, which means to say that the mind is like the limpid waters of a calm lake, which can listen to what is heard; else, we would be like the many people who would rather talk than listen.

A few of us have the habit, perhaps, of going to people to listen, but really we end up by saying something. We have many things to tell about our own selves, our problems, our difficulties and injustices, the wretched world and so many other things, and we want to hear nothing. And if someone starts talking, we start saying something else, so that the person cannot continue.

These are some of the weaknesses of people in the world. But with these weaknesses, the Spirit is far off. There is no use of trying to make a compromise between moral foibles and the dignity of the Spirit. Either we want it or we do not want it, that is all. There cannot be any *via media* between Mammon and God. Those who have trodden the path of the Spirit were strong in a particular sense because they knew what they wanted. Many of us do not know what we want.

We may honestly search our heart and end with a sob and a sigh, "I do not know what is wrong with me, and I do not know what I ought to do." This is a psychological mess

that we create in our minds. We cannot know what we want. If we cannot know what we want in this world, then what else can we know? All this difficulty arises because we have not been psychologically trained and morally prepared. Our training has been a kind of commercial training, for earning a living. Unfortunately, psychologically we have not been taught, and this is the difficulty we feel in day-to-day life. We cannot confront anything because to do so is to confront a mind. It is difficult to confront a mind because minds are intelligent, and they react.

I mentioned in earlier lessons that minds are like magnetic fields. We cannot try to touch them or approach them with impurity. We have to guard ourselves properly, insulate ourselves, as it were, before we try to handle or manipulate them. The world is ultimately made up of minds, manifest or unmanifest. The human being is obviously a reactionary type of mind, and we have to live in a world of human beings. When we live in a world of such a character and makeup, our study and our training should naturally take into consideration these essences behind the so-called objects of the world, which we generally study.

We have indications of there being subjects behind objects, minds behind bodies. In the study of spiritual life, we cannot afford to continue taking persons as mere objects. Some employers treat their subordinates and employees as mere tools, but they are not. They are human beings, and we cannot go on treating human beings as tools. Even well informed persons, elevated in society, unconsciously treat other people as tools, because our instinct is to utilise another person for our purpose. We

may do it in many ways – by directly taking or extracting something, or by not taking something or being indifferent. By all these means we can utilise people as tools.

Now, these attempts of the subjective mind to make itself comfortable in a world of this nature heaps *samskaras* or psychological impressions on the mind, and its life becomes one of anxiety. We walk with heavy hearts on account of the load of the impressions that are in our minds. It may not be physical weight. We may be well off, but our minds may be heavy due to many an incentive for further actions that it has gathered in the history of its life in this world. As long as there are impressions in the inner layers of our hearts, our minds cannot be in peace.

There are two terms used in our taking stock of the *satsampat*. I mentioned ‘*kshama*’ and ‘*dhama*’, as they are called: the control of the mind and the control of the senses. These go together. *Kshama* and *dhama* may be said to be the internal and external control, respectively. The subdual of the mind is *kshama* and the restraint of the senses is *dhama*. We cannot say which comes first and which comes second. It is safe to conclude that both are to be taken simultaneously in measured importance because the senses and the mind are correlated.

The student of the spiritual path is, foremost, called upon to be subdued in the senses and the mind. A self-controlled person alone approaches a Master for the knowledge of the higher life. The *sadhana-chatustaya* is supposed to precede *shravana-chatustaya*. *Sadhana-chatustaya* is a Sanskrit word which means the fourfold qualification of *sadhana*: *viveka*, *vairagya*, *satsampat* and *mumukshutva*. *Viveka* is discrimination, power of

understanding, the capacity to discriminate the real from the unreal; *vairagya* is dispassion, the lack of taste for the objects of the world due to the recognition of their essence; *satsampat* is what I am trying to explain now; and the last one is *mumukshutva*, the yearning for freedom.

After these qualifications it is that the *shravana-chatustaya* or the other set of four is said to follow, which means: *shravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana* and *satshatkara*. *Sravana* is listening to the teachings from the Master; *manana* is reflection, deep consideration over it, thinking deeply over what is heard; *nididhyasana* is profound meditation; and *satshatkara* is realisation. These come after *sadhana-chatustaya*.

The third of the *sadhana-chatustaya* is *satsampat*. Two of these I am trying to explain now, *kshama* and *dhama*: tranquillity of the mind and control of the senses. The seeker of Truth, the student of yoga, should have sifted his mind properly before taking to the spiritual path. It is not any Tom, Dick and Harry that can tread the spiritual life. In the spiritual path, no one need be in haste, because nothing is going to be gained in taking hasty steps. Haste makes waste, as we know. We have to sift our mind properly and understand whether we are ready for it or not. But how are we to know if we are ready?

What are your feelings at the bottom of your heart? They will tell you what you really are. The whole difficulty about this matter is that another person cannot know your feelings, nor are you prepared to express your feelings in public. Hence, each one has to judge one's own self, calmly in a dispassionate manner. I cannot tell anything about you, nor can you tell anything about me. Each one has to open

the inner eye of insight in calmly considered processes of thought and pass judgement on one's own self: "What is the cause of my asking for God?" You may be asking for God, nobody is denying it, but why? Why do you want God? Now, the answer to questions of this kind will say something about your nature. Why is it that you want the spiritual life? What do you know about it? What has made you get attracted towards it? Many an answer will come to these questions and each person will have something to say, peculiar to one's own self.

Well, whatever may be the answer to why you want God, I may point out one very important aspect of the matter, which each one has to remember. The details may be variegated, but there is one very essential point to remember: Your want for God should be a positive longing and not a negative retreat. You should not say, "The world is wretched and, therefore, I would like to go to God. I have been defeated in life; therefore, I must turn to something which may give me solace."

It is said that there are Dhurvas and Prahaladas. A Dhurva goes because he is kicked, and a Prahalada goes because he loves God and because he is God. Kicks in life may be of some help. Everyone receives a kick of one type or the other, and lessons of this kind have a value of their own. But they are not all, and cannot be regarded as everything, because the momentum of these kicks lasts only for some time. Unless we go on receiving kicks perpetually, it is difficult to maintain proper balance. The world will not go on giving kicks like that eternally.

Hence, we should not depend on these kicks for maintaining our balance or poise of spirit. We should be

something within our spirit of understanding, and our want of God should be on account of what God is, in His essential nature. *Mumukshutva* is supposed to be pre-eminent among the four qualifications. Even if all the others are there and this is lacking, it will be a waste. There may be a kind of control of the senses, the power of the mind to concentrate, a certain amount of philosophic analytical understanding, and so on, but there may not be a longing for freedom – longing for God in its essential nature. If that is lacking, then there would be a lack of vitality in the approach itself, and it will not last long.

The tranquillity of mind that one has to acquire and the control of senses that one is to achieve should be a natural outcome for God-realisation. It should not be merely the power of will exerted over one's self. Control of the mind cannot be achieved by the power of the will because the will is a part of the mind that we are speaking about. When we speak of the mind and mind control, we speak of all that is the psychological setup, so we cannot exert effort on the mind and try to control it. The mind can be subdued only by having a higher, nobler ideal.

The mind is not a fool always. It can understand what we are presenting it with. It cannot be cajoled and sidetracked for all times, though sometimes it gets deceived. The mind asks for satisfactions in its various levels of development, and the higher the objects we present before it, the easier it would be to control it. We can pocket a person when we give him what he needs or asks. Similarly, we can pocket anything, even the whole world, provided we can offer to the world what it wants from us.

This is the case with everything, perhaps with God also, but He needs something extraordinary, and we cannot offer Him what He needs. The mind cannot be subdued by ordinary means of *tapasya* – by dieting, vigil, studies, walks, and so on – though in the beginning it appears to be subdued due to employing such tentative methods. Nothing on Earth can control the mind because the mind is not entirely of this world. It is of a different realm altogether. It is very subtle, subtler than the objects of the world, so the objects of the world cannot be put to use in the control of the mind, and methods which are physical in their nature are also not of much avail in psychological subdual. The mind is subtle, ethereal impetus: *pramāthi balavad dr̥ḍham* (Gita 6.34), as the Bhagavadgita calls it. It shall drag away any person, and it is strong enough to drown the consciousness of a seeker.

Such being the structure of the mind, the achievement of *kshama* and *dhama* is a Herculean task; but considering the knowledge and the glory of the Spirit that we are going to receive from the Master, we have to put forth all our energies in controlling our mind and senses.

We are all beginners in the path of the Spirit, and I should naturally speak only in that trend. None of us can be regarded as adepts. The beginners in the spiritual path should carefully avoid temptations of all kinds, physical and well as psychological. We are mostly caught by temptations. As long as temptations are before us, the control of the mind is not possible. But what is tempting us? It is difficult to know what temptation is, because temptation ceases to be temptation when it is known. A thief is no more a thief when we detect him. Temptations come unaware, and

would not come announcing themselves to be such. "I am a spy, sir!" Nobody will say such things, for otherwise he will not succeed.

The attractions of sense and mind, which we call the temptations, are not merely physical objects, though mostly they are; and we find ourselves in the midst of these tempting things day in and day out. The objects of sense are everywhere. They are in the temple, in the forests, in the streets. We cannot avoid them. We can go into the bowels of the Earth or the top of Mt. Everest, but there also are the objects of sense. The objects of sense are spread out everywhere in creation, so we cannot just escape them by retreating from one place to another. This retreat may have some effect tentatively, like an injection that is given, but it cannot cure the ultimate illness because while we have escaped the immediate temptations by running away from them physically, circumstances will be so created that the very material around us, even if we are in a far-off place, can act as temptations. The objects are not the temptations, but they are used as temptations by the power of our own mind.

The mind person is a magnet. It attracts things towards itself, those things alone which it can utilise. Often, it can convert things into tools of satisfaction. This is why physical isolation in forests, caves and so on is generally advised. It has a great significance in the sense that things that are attracting us, worrying us, annoying us, tempting us, are avoided for the time being, for we are now in a new atmosphere altogether. But what is this new atmosphere? It is made up of the same substance which, under given conditions, can be converted into tempting objects again.

There is nothing which we would not like in one circumstance or the other. We should not say that we have given up all the things that we have liked, because there is nothing that we will dislike always; we will like it sometimes. In every place, even in a forest, we will find something which we will like under given conditions of the mind, and the conditions will be brought up by the mind when we deny satisfactions to it. We have denied all satisfactions by physically being away, but now the mind will create circumstances, converting itself into a magnet that pulls towards itself the very same objects. Even if the objects may be in Vaikunta, it does not matter, it can pull them towards itself.

So the tranquillity of the mind and the control of the senses that we are speaking of ultimately boils down to a kind of training of the mind in its relationships with objects, and not merely a manipulation of objects from outside, because the temptations have their seeds in our minds. If we do not want, nothing can tempt, but when we want the objects, they will not leave us. The objects are pulled. They can even be pulled from thousands of miles away, if we really want them. Our psychological asking for a thing will bring an object even from a distant realm. The asking is what matters more than the outer form of the physical object. It is very difficult thus to prepare oneself morally and psychologically for the reception of the higher knowledge. Many methods have to be employed for the training of the mind.

We should not be under the impression that we are well placed and properly guarded. Whatever be the guard that we put around ourselves, it may be insufficient when we are

attacked, because the forces that attack may seem to be stronger the more we have starved our mind of all satisfactions. Things which would not have attracted us earlier, under normal circumstances, may attract us now on account of the mind being starved.

If we have observed an *ekadasi*, we will know our hunger the next day. Whatever may be offered to us, even dry bread, will appear tasty and we will swallow it, but otherwise we will not. So hunger would attract anything; they say it can digest even stones. Likewise, the mind which is starved, deprived of satisfactions, kept under guard for some time, will wait for an opportunity to jump upon its satisfactions, and it will find an opportunity one day.

We cannot always be guarded. Who can be guarded all the twenty-four hours of the day? At an opportune moment we will find things sneaking into us, finding a lodging in our minds. Those who have led a spiritual life will know the difficulty. If we approach *mahatmas* or even *sadhakas* who have lived this life for years and years, and struggled hard, they will be able to tell us what the difficulties are. They are all inexplicable in their nature.

The psychological biographies of a seeker are the most interesting biographies to read. It may be difficult to get them, but if you meet people, you will know something about the problems of the inner world of a seeker of the Spirit. They are very interesting – even more interesting than all the wonders of the seven worlds. The subdual of the mind and the control of the senses being the primary and initial requisites of the spiritual seeker, these preparations have to be made with a kind of initial *sadhana*. We cannot call it real *sadhana*; we may call it an initial

preparation for *sadhana* that may help very much. One of these is to keep oneself aloof from the things which are unnecessary. Those things which we do not need are not kept near us. Those things and persons who are not going to be of direct help to us in our spiritual practice are not to concern us, and we are to be contented with what we really need.

We have to make a careful distinction between needs and luxuries. We cannot usually make this distinction easily, as today's luxury may become tomorrow's need. Tomorrow we may say it is necessary, though today we say it is not necessary. Likewise, we may be trapped. It is very easy to get trapped, and it is also very easy to lose sight of the goal and become completely oblivious of the purpose for which we have started. And we will be completely engrossed in the minor details of the path, not knowing anything of the distant goal for which we have girt up our loins earlier.

Objects and persons, circumstances, conditions or whatever they be, which are not going to directly help us in our *sadhana* are to be kept at arm's length. We are not to befriend them. We may observe *mauna* with those objects and persons. The first and foremost thing that we have to do as spiritual seekers is to keep only those things which are absolutely essential for our living – absolutely essential, without which we cannot get on – and not to concern ourselves with persons and things that are a kind of luxury for us. This may look silly, but it is very important because it is these silly things that may catch us one day.

Secondly, a little time has to be set apart for reading elevating literature. We cannot always be meditating, nor

can we always have the company of *mahatmas* as it is difficult these days, so a kind of *satsang* with lofty souls may be had by the study of such stupendous literature that will enlighten us on the path and shed light on the goal that we are seeking, such as the Moksha Sastras. It is not just reading any book that we have in the library.

Svadyaya is a very disciplined study, not a slipshod way of reading – a disciplined study, conducted daily, without remission, of a specific type of literature which can elevate us to the heights of supernormal understanding, and not distract or depress us. That is *svadyaya*. If we make it a point to read such literature every day, the ideas contained in the text will create such an impact on our mind that we will start thinking along those lines alone, instead of the usual way of thinking. A day should come when it is impossible for us to think in any other manner because we have been saturated with those ideas. We have read them so many times, with such intensity and devotion, that we cannot but think along those lines. Later on, we will start speaking only those topics if we meet people.

This is a kind of meditation in the sense that the mind is lifted up from distracting thoughts, objects, persons, etc., to unifying processes of thinking, leading to the Realisation of the Spirit. Physical isolation from tempting objects is one part. *Svadyaya* is another. *Japa* of a mantra is the third. Now, *japa* is not an old grandmother's way of leading a religious life, as some scientific minds may think. It is a very potent method of self-control. The mantra *japa* is itself a great *sadhana*, and it should be advised to any spiritual seeker. Before we try to take up some higher methods of meditation, we have to gather some energy and strength in

ourselves which will be very much aided by *japa* of a given mantra. The mantra should be such that it should not ask for any physical things. There are mantras which say, “Destroy this man!” and “Bring me this!” These are not the mantras that we should chant.

The mantras should be impersonal in the spiritual sense. We are asking for spiritual strength. The Gayatri mantra, for example is a great specimen. It asks for nothing except illumination of understanding. There are many mantras of this kind which help us in gathering psychic energy and generating spiritual force – such as the Guru Mantra, a we may call it. We may get initiated into a suitable mantra of a spiritual nature by a competent teacher and perform *japa* of this mantra daily for an hour at least. It should not be less than that because we are speaking of true spiritual seekers, and they should have some time, at least an hour a day.

An hour's *japa* of a constructive mantra will create a force of its own in the mind. *Japa* can do many miracles. First of all, the mantras are the insights of *rishis*. Every mantra has a particular *rishi*, and we invoke the grace of that *rishi* when we chant the mantra. So the grace of the *rishi* is there the moment we take up *japa* of a mantra. There is also a *devata* of the mantra, so we have the blessing of the *devata*. There is a metre or *chandas* of the mantra – the way in which the letters of the mantra are juxtaposed and joined together so that in their joint collective form they generate a new energy, like chemical elements reacting among themselves. Every letter of a mantra is like a chemical force.

So the *rishi*, the *chandas*, and the *devata* combine in helping the *sadhaka* create spiritual energy within. Our own *sadhana shakti*, of course, is already there – the longing with which we do the *sadhana* – and this devotion with which we chant it has an effect of its own. This is why mantra *japa* conducted for a long time with devotion, with correct pronunciation of the syllables of the mantra, is a great help.

If we actually do this *sadhana*, we will know what change it brings. There is no use listening to discourses on this, because it will all look theoretical. I am speaking of practical hints of day-to-day life in spiritual *sadhana*, and the effect will only be felt when we actually enter into the waters. So *svadyaya* and *japa*, and to have physical isolation from tempting things as far as possible, are some of the important preparations for control of the senses and subdual of the mind.

There is another very important and potent factor in the control of the mind and senses: prayer to God. Very few people know what prayer means, but really it is an inner contact established with God, whatever be one's concept of God. It may be that our notion of God at present is inadequate. That cannot be helped. But whatever be the idea of God that we have, what matters is devotion – the ardour with which we offer our prayer, and the force with which our heart goes for God. It matters little how we think of God, but it is important that we regard God as the All.

Our god should be all, everything, and nothing else should be there behind and outside it if that god of ours is to beckon our heart and soul. Though our god may be a finite god, the infinite God is behind that finite god like the

ocean is behind all the rivers' mouths. We may draw the whole ocean through the river if we like, because all the rivers are connected to the ocean, and all finite things are connected to the Infinite in some way.

So one need not be afraid that one's idea of God is incorrect, and so on; let it be, it does not matter. It is somehow or other connected to the Infinite, and we can draw the energy of the infinite through the avenue of the finite, if only our devotion to it is whole-souled. That is very important. *Prarthana* or prayer, which is offered by our soul and not merely by our lips, will also help us in controlling the mind and senses because we are really asking for help. If our asking for help is honest, then that help shall be provided. But our asking should be genuine, and not otherwise.

I will tell you a story. There was a woodcutter. Every day he had to eke out his living by going to the distant forest, in the heat and rain, to bring sticks and sell them for a few *annas*. He was fed up with life. One day he thought, "If Yama [the god of death] comes and takes me, it is good." So he cried out, "Oh Yama, please come and take me!" throwing down the bundle. "I am fed up with this wretched life."

Immediately Yama appeared and asked, "Why did you call me?"

The man was frightened. "Nothing, nothing. No, nothing." He said. "Really nothing, I just wanted someone to pick up this bundle for me." When the actual situation he requested was granted, the man became frightened.

Many of us may be in that position. It is difficult to ask for purely God's grace. To many people, God's grace looks

like an empty receptacle, having nothing within it, devoid of attraction. We do not know what God's grace is. We want God's grace to bring with it something else also, like a vessel containing something. Why should God's grace contain something else? But it is difficult to pray without this secret longing. "Oh, God bless me with your grace!" This means bring with Your grace some content, is the heart's asking, even for some educated people.

It is difficult to understand God's grace because it is difficult to understand God. How can we understand grace if we cannot understand God? Who can tell us that God is all the content, and grace is all that we need? Grace is not a vehicle to convey something else to us. It is not a cart with which we can load all things, homestead and cattle. It is not so.

One of the difficulties of the spiritual path, perhaps the most difficult of all problems in spiritual life, is the problem of understanding the significance of what we are asking for in spiritual life. We may glibly ask for God and His grace, but we do not know what we are really asking for. God is not a person coming with some gifts for us. Not so. All these ideas enter our minds because of our immature understanding of the goal before us. When God's grace descends, it does not bring anything with it. It need not bring anything with it, because there is nothing outside it. It is all. The grace of God is God Himself coming. Do you want God to bring something with Him when He comes?

The God that is All cannot have something to bring. There is no need of asking for something. With such an open heart, may prayers be offered for God's grace, which itself is the supreme content that we need and not a mere

vehicle to carry our needs. Such prayers may help us. If we cannot pray without words, we may offer prayers with words, chants, mantras, hymns, *stotras*, etc., because the *stotras*, in words, convey prayers or thoughts for our sake. When we cannot express our thoughts, the hymns help us in generating thoughts of a particular type.

There are many other things which may be individually prescribed in detail, varying from person to person. The difficulties of one person may not be the difficulties of another, but whatever be the difference in details, the general characteristics will be the same – namely, a moral character, a clearness of thought, speech and action, and a genuine asking for God and not anything else, which aspiration can be intensified by *svadyaya*, *japa*, isolation from tempting objects and persons as much as possible, and freeing oneself from those luxuries which are not real needs. With these equipments, which are purely of a psychological nature, one can build up one's inner personality.

The strength that we have to wield in the spiritual path is an inner one. We may have to exert peculiar kinds of strength as we advance in the path of the Spirit when we encounter new problems. The problems will not cease until we reach the destination, but they become subtler and subtler as we proceed further and further. They become, perhaps, more and more difficult of control and subdual as we advance further. The physical problems and difficulties are easy of overcoming, but the subtler and more difficult ones are the mental problems and the psychic opposition from nature.

Still, the grace of God is there and the meritorious deeds that we performed in the past will also help us. Remember, *na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścīd durgatiṁ tāta gacchati* (Gita 6.40): If we honestly aspire for the good, we shall not be defeated. God will help us. Therefore, *sadhakas* should go with confidence of mind that the world is behind them as a help and not as an opposition, because God will speak through the faces of nature. The divinities that preside over the corners of the world shall act as a leaning staff to the plodding soul in its march to perfection, if only its longing is genuine and the aspirations come from the heart.

If these requirements are fulfilled, subdual of the mind and control of the senses, *kshama* and *dhama*, will follow as consequences. We need not exert much. These are perhaps the most prominent of moral qualifications, and there are a few others of importance such as *uparati*, *shraddha*, *titiksha*, and *samadhana*, about which I shall speak another time.

Chapter 9

THE MEANING BEHIND OBJECTS

To search for the Spirit is to seek a meaning or significance, rather than a substance or an object. This is a very subtle import for all spiritual seekers. We often make the mistake of thinking that when we ask for God, we are asking for a thing, a person, an object or a substance. While our notions of God and the Spirit have some significance in our search, they all fall short of the Real and the True, inasmuch as there is something deeper that we are really seeking than what comes to the surface of our mind.

To give a concrete example of what a meaning is, rather than a thing or a substance, when we ask for food, for all outward purposes it looks that we are in need of some substance. When I say I need some food, you may think that perhaps I need some wheat, rice, vegetables, butter, milk, etc. These are generally interpreted to be food. But there is something in this asking for food, a meaning or significance behind this asking, which does not become apparent to our mind.

Truly speaking, it is not these articles of diet that we are asking for. We are asking for a meaning that is hidden behind them. They are capable of conveying a significance in our personal life – here in this instance, our physical bodily life. If this group of articles is not to convey any significance to bodily existence, they will not be the things that we ask for.

Whenever we look at an object, we read meaning into it: it means something. This habit of reading meaning into it is so familiar that we cannot think in any other manner.

We do not think first and then read meaning afterwards. Thinking and reading the meaning go together. Or, to put it in psychological terminology, understanding and feeling work simultaneously in our perception. When we think an object, we also feel something about it. In other words, it means the recognition of an object in terms of the significance it conveys to our lives.

It is this significance that misses our attention in our search for values in life. It is really a set of values that we want, and not objects or things. The meaning behind an article of diet is to appease hunger. That is what we need, not bags of rice. It so happens that when a certain quantity of rice comes in contact with our physical body, it is in a position to appease the state of biological reaction which we call hunger. Otherwise, it would be something else that we would ask for. So it is not any particular object that we seek; we seek only the value that is hidden in the object.

So is the case with money. It is not coins that we are in need of, but the capacity to provide us with purchasing power. The power of purchase is called money, not gold and silver or notes. That is the meaning behind cash value – and so on and so forth with every blessed thing in the world.

There is a significance in our asking for things, a significance and a meaning behind our relationship with things, a meaning behind the way in which we talk, the way in which we conduct ourselves in society, the way in which we think and feel and act. All these things have a hidden significance, a meaning; and it is this meaning which we are in search of. Unfortunately, we confuse this meaning with the outer form of objects, and it looks as if we are in search

of objects rather than values. Not so. When we speak even in ordinary language we ask, "What is the spirit of the teaching?" We make a distinction between the letter and the law, for example. The words that I speak and the spirit in which I speak are different. So even in common parlance we use the term 'spirit' to signify a meaning rather than an outer form.

As is the case with ordinary life, so is the case with our cosmical relations. There is a Spirit behind our very existence as individuals. In the previous examples, the concrete substances such as articles of diet or currency notes have a significance behind them, which alone we are in need of, and not the things themselves. If the meaning is absent, we will not go for it. For example, if the present system of government changes, the system of currency will change, and our asking for money would be asking for something else afterwards. The meaning of the present currency has been lost, so we ask for something else with the same meaning.

In particular individual life there is a Spirit which we have lost in the midst of the clamouring particulars. Though we have heard this word 'Spirit' uttered many a time, we cannot help contemplating the Spirit as some object. We have to learn to think a little impersonally when we tread the spiritual path. We have been too much wedded to personalities, things and concrete substances, so we have been taught to think only in terms of these physical entities. We cannot think impersonally. It may be my person or somebody else's person, but all our thoughts are personal. The impersonal is hidden behind all personal valuations of

things, and it is the impersonal that we see even through persons.

The general is hidden in the particular. The impersonal is hidden in all the particulars. The implicit is present in all the individualities. There is a gradual rise in our aspirations from lower particulars to higher particulars and, for the time being, the higher particular acts as the general or the universal for the lower particular.

Therefore, in the search of the Spirit, we do not search for any existent object because the Spirit is not an object. To come to our examples again, the spirit of the law is not a thing that we can see with our eyes, yet we know what it means. The spirit is a very intangible significance which makes itself felt not to the senses but to something which seems to have a kinship in our own being. The Spirit of things cannot be seen through the senses. It is not appreciated even by the understanding, which always works in terms of the senses.

We have in our own individualities something which can be said to be the meaning of our own existence. What we call the 'I' is the meaning hidden in what we regard ourselves to be. The same analogy can be applied to our own personalities. The Spirit of my being is different from my bodily existence and the encasements of other bodies, other people, etc. So when I ask for the Spirit, what do I ask for?

“What is spirituality?” is the moot question. Spirituality is that condition of the consciousness where it asks for the Spirit of things rather than the forms or bodies of things. That is spirituality. We no longer interpret things in terms of objects and persons, and our evaluations of life no longer

depend on persons and things. We learn to think in terms of the generals and the universals rather than the particulars and bodily existences. This would be spirituality, whatever be its degree of expression.

When we learn to be spiritual, we live more and more as generals rather than as particulars, which means that we begin to comprehend values in existences that we were not able to do earlier. In our present state of our bodily existence, our bodies are restricted to our own physical needs: my hunger, my thirst, my sleepiness, my difficulties, my problems, etc. These engage our attention so much that we cannot exceed the limits of our bodily needs. That is the lowest aspect of human life, where one's thoughts and feelings get so restricted to the bodily encasement that there is no thought and feeling beyond that. But when one becomes capable of recognising the significance of the lives of other people in their Spirit rather than in their form, and at the same time learns to associate one's personal values with the values which appear to be external at present, then one's self becomes enlarged. What we call the Self is nothing but the Spirit behind ourselves, and behind all things.

When we talk of the Self, we are most likely to think of it as a kind of substance. Many a time philosophers have defined the soul as a substance, but it is not a substance in the sense of anything that we can understand. It is not a tangible object. It is super-sensible, as our scriptures are not tired of saying. Super-sensible is the meaning of our personality, the meaning of all creation. It is super-sensible, which means it cannot be seen. It cannot be touched by the hand, it cannot be smelt, it cannot be heard, it cannot be

tasted, and we cannot have any kind of intelligible relation with it. Such is the Spirit of things.

Who is to understand the Spirit? What do we mean by spiritual aspiration? If the Spirit would mean the meaning of all life, and this meaning is so abstract to the senses that it cannot have any meaning to the senses, that meaning appears to be meaningless to the sensory operations. The Spirit of life is present in our own bodies. It is not far from us, and so it is possible for us to reach out to the Spirit of the cosmos – not through the senses and the intellect, but through something which we are.

That which we are is the eternal meaning hidden in us. It is not that temporary meaning that we seem to exhibit in our day-to-day life that we can call our own self. There are tentative local adjustments that we generally make, but these are not our real meaning. If we are divested of all physical and psychological associations, what remains? That would be our true meaning. If we have no body and no mind, what would be our condition? What would be the sort of relationships that we might establish with other existences? How can we exist without a body and a mind?

Every day we enter into a condition where we are not aware of either the body or the mind – such as in sleep, for example. In deep sleep we have no awareness of either the body or the mind, and yet we seem to exist as something we do not understand. What is that something? On a careful examination, that something into which we seem to enter in deep sleep appears to be more meaningful than our outward bodily relationships. That is why we run to our beds every night. We would like to enter into this condition as many times as possible. Whom are we going to

contact there? Why such a zest for entering into this condition?

People who have not been able to sleep properly will be able to know what such a condition is. There was a *raja*, a wealthy person, who had chronic insomnia. He announced, "I will give half of my kingdom to that person who would make me sleep at least one day." Such was his craving for sleep, poor man! A state of sleep is not some silly occurrence of our daily life which we can brush aside as nothing. It is the most consequential of all occurrences in our life.

If, after waking from sleep, we have time enough to think for a few seconds about what our feelings are, what our situation is, we will realise that there was some experience which cannot be compared with the experiences of waking life – which seems more solid than the most solid of rocks, more pleasant than all the satisfactions of the world, and more necessary than the emperorship of the world. We may give up all other ambitions and cravings of life, but we cannot give up the longing for this one event. What is the meaning of sleep? What is the harm if we do not go to sleep? Nobody knows why we should sleep and why we feel so wretched if we cannot sleep.

No one can answer this question because it is so intimate to our person. We are pulled by force, as it were, into sleep – compelled to enter that state, because that state is more vital to what we really are, to our Spirit of being, than our outer associations. Again and again we are reminded of what we really are. It is a daily reminder that we are not prepared to heed. We get many kinds of reminders in life that there is something wrong with things,

but we do not listen to them. We think that everything is all right.

We cannot know the ostensible problems that we have to face in this mysterious world, merely because we are not conscious of them. It is the pull of the Self, the pull of meaning, the pull of the Spirit that takes us into sleep, and because it is the Spirit of things that calls us, it is an irresistible call. It is not some object that is calling us. It is not some person that is sitting in our heart, calling us: "Come, come!" There is nobody to call us in person. The meaning of all things is lying there, hidden in our heart – the meaning not merely of our personal life, but the meaning of all people. It is my meaning, it is your meaning, it is everybody's significance hidden in our heart.

It summons us. It is like the father trying to call the prodigal son. When we are not prepared to turn to it, it will be difficult to be conscious of the pull. Then the pull is automatic, and so much are we enamoured of the colours and sounds of the world that when we are pulled back to it we do not want to see it: "I do not want to see you. Why do you call me?" This closing our eyes to the Spirit of things is what we call sleep, and the opening our eyes while we are there is Self-realisation or God-realisation. If we go to sleep with open eyes we will see God; but we go there with closed eyes, so we see nothing. Yet, the presence of something there is felt.

So we are kept there as long as possible and released after being bathed in nectar, as it were, having drunk deep of some essence which we cannot forget; but we seem to be rising up from it only to be again distracted by the tinsels of things. We are taken to a royal palace, kept on the king's

sofa and served a royal dinner, but all while blindfolded. We do not know where we are, who is serving us, who is talking to us; nothing is known, and then we are again brought back to the jungles from where we were taken. That is life.

Every day we are taken to the mysterious palace of the Emperor of the Cosmos, blindfolded, and we are released in the wilderness of life when we wake up. So we know only the wilderness, and not the royal grandeur into which we were taken when we were fast asleep. It is this grandeur that is the significance of all life; that is what we call the Spirit of things.

You may be thinking that this so-called Spirit of things looks like an abstract meaning – not something substantial. It looks to be abstract – a psychological interpretation rather than a physical contact, due to our habit of coming in contact with objects beyond abstraction. Actually, the so-called concrete objects are an abstraction from it. When we contact the Spirit, we do not contact air or space or a non-existent something. The mind is unable to think it; that is why it reads an abstraction into it.

The existence of all things may be regarded as the Spirit of all things. Divest all things of their existence, and what do you see in them? When the mind tells you that the Spirit is only an abstraction and the objects are more concrete, try to tell it, “My dear friend, the Spirit is the existence of everything that you regard as concrete. Minus existences, what are these concrete substances?” Free all things from their existence; there is then only non-existence. They become non-existent. The concreteness vanishes. The so-called concreteness, tangibleness, hardness, substantialness,

solidity, etc., is a way of sensation. It is the way in which the senses react to the Spirit. That is what we call tangibility.

There is no tangible object in this world. We are deluded. We are touching the Spirit even when we are touching solid objects like a table, but it looks that we are touching some other thing altogether. That so-called thing which attracts us and which makes us feel that we are contacting a tangible object is the Spirit itself. The substantiality and the solidity of the object are due to the mutual reaction of the Spirit within and the Spirit without, differentiated through space and time. The world is the drama played by space, time and causality. If these three things were not there, there would be no such thing as the world. There is no such thing as the world, objects, persons and things apart from the trick played by the union of space, time and causal relation.

It is not possible for a mind to understand how the world can be equated by these three, because we see again and again the solidity of things. Apart from space and time, we see solidity in objects, but the solidity is due to the Spirit behind things, and if it were not to be there, there would not be any solidity. This substantiality of the Spirit is more solid, if we could use such a language, than the most solid of all things.

The reason why this substance behind all substances, this meaning behind all meanings, appears as an object outside while it is really not, is because space, time and causal relations play havoc. Our mind is torn into two pieces, the seer and the seen. The seer is the Spirit, and the seen also is the Spirit. The Spirit sees itself in all perceptions, but it looks like a differentiated perception of

an object on account of the intervention of space and time. Divest meaning of space-time, and we will see the reality of the cosmos.

The hardest thinker will recoil to think along these lines because the mind is not taught to think by freeing itself from the relations of space and time. Vedantins and philosophers have been telling us that God is, and the world is not. The world is nothing but God's face. How could it be? It can be possible only if every existent object in front of us can enshrine the Spirit of God in them even now, in their sensory externality; and if God had not been so near to us and if God was not so real, it would not have been possible for us to think Him, ask for Him or even aspire for Him. It is the nearness of God to our own being that makes it impossible for us to rest, impossible for us to be in peace; and our asking for Him is resistless. If God were a distant object, we should have taken time to think of Him. We should have said, "Let us see tomorrow." But it is such a pressing necessity that we cannot leave it until tomorrow. It is nearer to us than even our own throat, and so immediate that our concern with it comes first, and our concern with anything else is afterwards. But in this concern of ours with the Spirit of all things, we confuse it with objectivity, and we run after the objects rather than the Spirit behind them.

While our asking is genuine, our running after it is foolish. The intention is good but the activity is deluded. This is *samsara*, and the Spiritual seeker has to exert his *viveka-shakti* with a tremendous power of will to distinguish between the Spirit of life and the forms. The forms tempt us because we are wedded to a sensory way of thinking. Unfortunately, we are born into a world of sense,

which knows only to look outward, and not inward. The senses cannot see their own cause; they can only look to what is external to them in space and time. When the mind subsides into its own bottom, ceases from running through space and time, and settles down like troubled waters that become calm, then the dirt that is part of its activity will also settle down and it will become capable of reflecting what is behind it.

It is as if we are so busy with seeing things that we do not know that we have eyes. Can anyone see his eyes and think that he has eyes? If we have got no eyes, how can we see? Unless we have some pain in the eyes, do we even imagine that we have a set of eyes? We are so busy seeing through the eyes that we have no time to think that we have eyes. We want to exploit them fully.

The same applies to God and the Spirit. It is through the Spirit that we are doing all that we are doing. It is through it that everything is seen and heard and done; therefore, it cannot be seen and heard. It is very difficult to give a comparison to what the Spirit is. The Spirit is behind us, but we cannot stop long enough to see it. So busy is the mind that we have no time to even think that the Spirit exists in this world.

So is it with God and the Spirit. Just as we cannot see our own back, we cannot see God's existence. We know it is there, but we cannot see it because our eyes cannot look back. The eyes that are projected in one direction cannot look at that which is behind them. The Spirit, or God of the universe, is so near that to see it would not take a split second, but we have to open our eyes to it and not look beyond it or away from it. The eyes which see in one

direction have to be taught not to see in any particular direction of space, but to see the cause that is behind them.

There is a light that passes through the eyes, and the eyes get so identified with the rays of light that they cannot know that it is behind them. Like the sunlight falling on a mirror may reflect the objects in front of it, the mind and the senses receive the light of the Self, the Spirit, and with the help of that light they behold the objects of the world – yet, they do not know that there is a light.

In broad daylight, any solid substance may be seen because of the light that is shed on it. We see the object there because of the light, and yet we cannot make a distinction between the object and the light. The light so shines upon the object and is identified with the object in such a way that we confuse the object and the light. We do not say that the light aspect of the object is different from the object.

So are our perceptions of things. The light of the Atman, the Spirit, is what acts upon the objects of the world and makes us feel their presence. The intelligibility of anything is due to the light of the Self that emanates through the mind and the senses, but we mix up that light with the objectivity. Just as we do not make a distinction between sunlight and the object upon which it shines, so also we do not make a distinction between the object of the world and the light due to which we are able to cognise it. To extract this light from objectivity, to differentiate the Spirit from the externality of perception would be to understand in terms of the Spirit, rather than in terms of the objects.

When we try to understand things in terms of the Spirit, we will realise that all things assume a uniform meaning, just as the sunlight is equal for all objects. The sunlight makes no distinction. Whether it is shining on a temple or a latrine, it makes no difference to the Sun. It will shine upon anything.

Likewise is the Spirit behind all things. The distinction that we make is due to the incapacity to distinguish between light and matter, light and shade. But when we start thinking in terms of this generality behind objects, we will realise that objects themselves assume a uniformity of structure and meaning, and our liking or not liking a particular thing or set of things gets diminished in intensity. We begin to enter into the Spirit of things. It is then that we begin to realise the meaning of objects and life as a whole, and in this life of the kinship of our own Spirit with the objects outside, we become enlarged in our consciousness.

When consciousness expands, the sense of freedom also gets expanded and simultaneously, our joy is enhanced. The wider is the ken of the activity of our Spirit, the deeper is the sense of freedom in our life, and the more intense is the joy that we experience. We know that our consciousness has expanded when we feel intense satisfaction and freedom within us. The only test of our true progress in spiritual life is freedom from the shackles of other objective existences and a joy that we feel in our heart when we are alone.

If your happiness is the most intense when you are absolutely alone in the solitude of your own room, that would perhaps indicate your inner growth and progress

along the Spiritual path. But on the other hand, if your joy seems to enhance only by seeing people, if your joy expands the more you run about, the more you see things and the more you go about here and there, that will not indicate spiritual growth.

The more you are alone, the more you are near to your Spirit. This aloneness of your life is to promise you greater satisfaction than all your social contacts. That is the test of your spirituality because the Spirit is not capable of coming in contact with everything, and its joy cannot be enhanced by contacts; on the other hand, all contacts are a restriction of its expression.

Joys of the Spirit get diminished by sensory contacts; that is why we are unhappy in this world. We think that we are going to become more happy through contact of the senses; rather, we are going to become more wretched because we are restricting the expression of the Spirit by contact with things. It is universal, so why do we want to tie it down to particulars?

All our attempts at trying to come in contact with persons and things are the attempt at tying the Universal to the particular, which the Spirit would resent vehemently. All people in the world are unhappy because they would like to pull down the Universal Spirit into small objects of the world. Hence, the retreat into the Spirit is the withdrawal into the all-pervading Universal. The Spirit of life is the Universal present in all the objects of the world. This is what is called God. This is the supreme Absolute, the meaning behind things; and when we tread the path of the Spirit, we have to be cautious that we are not treading

the path of the senses while, for all outward purposes, it may look that we are treading the path of the Spirit.

Public acclamation is not the test of our progress. The whole world may proclaim us as the saviour of mankind, but that would not be the test of our progress. People would have not understood us, and they may be engaged in such erroneous notions because we take this contact as a test of our progress.

Whether contacts are physical or psychic, all these contacts are to be avoided in the search for the Spirit. As a matter of fact, psychological contacts are more dangerous than physical contacts. It is the mind that works havoc. The mind thinking a sense object is more vicious than physical contacts of body with body. If the mind is not working, the physical contacts mean nothing.

All psychic contacts with objects should be withdrawn. In this withdrawal, in this true *uparati* of the senses and the mind, if we can feel a release of all tensions – if in going to the bottom of our own being in the solitude of our life we can feel a freedom and a happiness which the world knows not – then we are really treading a spiritual life. If nobody sees us and we are happy, that would be the test of spirituality. And if we feel like a fish out of water because nobody sees us, then that would be the contrary of it because the Spirit is alone. It wants nobody, and it wants nobody's help in this world. It is so complete and full that we cannot add a cubit to its stature by multiplying all the existence of the world before it and giving to it the whole cosmos.

In arithmetic, for example, in the number 10 or 100, the number one is before the zeros. All those zeros mean

nothing without that number one preceding them. So it is with the universe: The universe is a zero, and the number one is the Spirit. It may be one, but if the one is absent, there are only zeros; that would be this world without this Spirit. Adding the one would be the meaning that we assume in our life if we enter into the Spirit.

So let no spiritual seeker be despondent with the wrong notion that when he stands alone, befriending the Spirit, he is perhaps losing the joys of the world. Not so. The joys of the world are the joys of the Spirit, scattered in a distorted manner. A little of the honey of the Spirit is sprinkled over the objects of sense, and then it is that we are trying to lick the objects. Even the objects look tasty because of the Spirit. But for that, there would be nothing in the objects; they would be corpses.

So when you stand alone by the Spirit, you stand by the Absolute – That which is universally present in all things, That which is the meaning behind the very same objects after which you are running. You can imagine what God is, what the Spirit is and how reasonable it is that you should be happy when you are alone. This aloneness is not a physical aloneness, like in a jungle. This aloneness is the aloneness of your consciousness, where it stands unconnected with the objects. It can contemplate itself alone, independent of all things, and this would be true spiritual independence.

Chapter 10

SELF-RESTRAINT IS FREEING THE SELF FROM THE NETWORK OF VIBRATIONS

The act of self-control in spiritual *sadhana* needs not merely great understanding, but also power of will. The force of volition that is exerted in self-restraint is really like the dynamo that generates the power, without which the vehicle of spiritual practice will not move. Though we have heard a lot about the power of will and its importance in every activity of life, when we come to spiritual practice, we realise that it constitutes not merely a psychological function but something deeper, and seems to reflect in itself a power which cannot be equated with mental activity.

In Sanskrit we use the term *buddhi-shakti* to understand what generally goes by the name of will power. As a matter of fact, there is no proper equivalent in English to designate this particular force which, at a particular stage, reveals itself to be an agent of a deeper energy within us, rather than a reaction set up on account of the perception of an object. There is a great difference between the will which is merely a psychological function, and the will which is *buddhi-shakti* or the power of understanding. Our capacity to discriminate, understand and judge plays a dual role in every walk of life.

We have, as it is usually said, a lower nature and a higher nature. The lower nature is what may be regarded as the sum total or the cumulative effect of the sensations and the perceptions in which we are involved daily. The sensations and perceptions in terms of objects of the world get sifted in the act of intellectual judgement, and the

essence of these sensations and perceptions crystallises itself into what we call understanding. From this point of view, human understanding is not independent of sensory reaction. We do not act as independent judges of the objects of the world if our judgement is based on the sensations and perceptions which are conveyed to us through the senses. But there seems to be within us something which is independent. Sometimes it is called the pure reason – not the ratiocinating power which plays second fiddle mostly to sensory reactions, but a pure, unadulterated capacity to understand which knows things directly in an immediacy, rather than indirectly through the mediate process of sensations and perceptions.

When we say we lack the power of will, that our will is weak, and so on, we generally complain of our incapacity to judge objects and situations independently. In other words, it is equal to saying that the objects control us, rather than our controlling the objects. The impressions produced by the processes of sensation and perception sit so heavily upon our understanding that they may be said to cloud it and prevent a larger understanding; and if our understanding is to work at all in terms of these reactions of stimuli received from outside, its function will be in terms of these impressions which are already embedded on its surface.

It is like the sun peeking through the clouds, to give an example. When the light of the sun passes through a thick layer of cloud, it appears to go through a transformation in terms of the quality of the cloud and the way in which they are arranged, and so on. In the same way, the understanding, which really is a kind of light within us, gets

so influenced by the impressions heaped upon it that for all practical purposes it is only a handmaid or a tool of the impressions that seek expression.

The impressions which are produced in the process of objective sensation and perception bear an intimate relation to the objects of the world. The objects react upon our minds and produce these impressions, and the impressions, again, have a tendency to move towards the very same objects, or objects of similar character. There is a kind of vicious circle created in our process of perception: objects producing impressions, and impressions again tending to contact objects of the world. In this vicious circle, if our mind is to get involved, then naturally our will is weak.

Where is independence in this process of psychological functions? We are wedded to objects. The objects determine our thinking and feeling, and as long as we are restrained by the chains of objects of sense, so long we are in *samsara*, and so long also our will is incapable of working except as ordained by the objects of the world. But when we speak of the power of will, in spiritual *sadhana* particularly, we refer to something different and markedly distinct in its constitution because here in this spiritual activity of the exercise of the will, we utilise not the impressions produced in our mind through the processes of sensation and perception, but the light of the understanding directly.

There is a mistake that we commit when we contact objects of sense, on account of which it is that we become generally weak in our will – the mistake being our attunement with the objects, rather than with what we

really are. The mind is midway between the objects of sense and what we truly are in our own subjective essence. We are not a description of merely objective references. What we call ourselves as the Self is something which cannot be equated with merely a bundle of sensations, perceptions, etc. There is something asserting itself within us, and this assertion is something which our understanding is unable to explain through its logic. It is this indomitable assertion within us which is responsible for all activities within us, psychological as well as physical.

The mind receives a push from a force that is behind it, and it is also pulled by the senses, so it receives an impact of a push and a pull, simultaneously. The force within pushes it forward for a particular purpose, and the objects outside pull it in the direction of the senses. Now, where comes the question of will?

What is will? The will would be that particular activity of the mind whereby it brings about a reconciliation between this push and pull and understands its true position, midway between an essence which seems to be its background and the temptations standing before it as the objects of the world. If the mind is to be interpreted always in terms of desires for objects, then there is no question of independent exercise of the power of the will. There would be only a yielding of the mind to the demands of the objects. To flow with the current of the river is easier than to run upstream. The senses naturally tend towards the objects because the objects and the senses are constituted of similar essences, called the *tanmatras*. In Sanskrit we call these *tanmatras* as *sabdha*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*. It is difficult to know what these *tanmatras* are, but suffice

it to say they are the subtle essences out of which the physical universe is constituted, and are subtler than even electric force. To these *tanmatras*, even the *pranas* are gross. Such are the *tanmatras*.

These subtle essences constitute the forces which subjectively form the sensations within us, and objectively constitute the physical objects. So there is a mutual friendship between the objects and the fivefold senses. When we live in a sense world, therefore, there is no question of power of will. Sometimes we appear to be exercising a kind of freedom of choice, while really that freedom is listening to the voice of the senses.

Hypnotised patients appear to have a kind of freedom. The patient acts exactly according to the instructions of the physician, who by the power of his will hypnotised the mind of the patient. The patient will move in a particular direction, do certain things, perhaps speak certain words, all with the notion that he or she is doing this independently out of freedom of choice, not knowing that all these activities are directed by the will of the hypnotist. The patient will not know what is happening.

Similarly, there is a likelihood of the mind getting hypnotised by desires for objects of sense, such that we are likely to mistake dependence for independence, slavery for freedom, subjection for exercise of independent power of will. This is exactly what is happening in the world. No man can be said to be absolutely free, though each one thinks he is free, to a large extent. The freedom is only to be dependent on others. That is all the freedom that one has. It is not possible to be truly independent as long as we work

through the senses, as long as we live in a world of objects, and as long as we live in a relative world.

To be related is to be dependent. There is a mutual relation between the mind and the objects, one influencing the other, one determining the other, one being impossible without the other. So in this circular motion of the objects and the mind thinking the objects, there cannot be freedom. This circular motion is again what is known as *samsara*: movement in a whorl, being caught in the current of this vicious activity of subjective tendency in the form of mind, and objective form in the shape of the things of the world.

As long as we are caught up in this vicious circle, there cannot be independent judgement. Desires shall control us. For all practical purposes, what we call this 'us' or 'we' or 'I' is a bundle of these psychological functions. It is on account of laying too much emphasis on this aspect of individual personality that many Western psychologists do away with the notion of the Self, thinking that the self is all that there is, which is nothing more than a bundle of sensations. They cannot understand that there is an Atman, or can be an Atman, behind the groups of sensations and reactions of perceptions.

What do you see when you analyse your own self? You see only thoughts, feelings and ideas, and all these are in terms of certain things outside. What are you then, independently? The sceptic Hume of England concluded that, "When I look into myself, I see nothing but a bundle of these threads of thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas; and if these threads were to be cast aside, rent asunder, there would be no self." This was the conclusion of the

master sceptic that the world has produced – as, for example, if you cast away all the threads of a cloth, there will be no cloth. What is cloth, independent of the threads; and what is the self, independent of the thoughts, feelings and these psychological functions? This is the empirical self that we try to analyse.

All human beings live in an empirical world. We are all empirical beings, whatever be our aspirations from the bottom of our hearts. We cannot get rid of the idea that we are bodies and, therefore, cannot free ourselves from the clutches of the objects of the world which bear a relation to the body in which we are encased. The body is pulled by the objects and vice versa, with a gravitational attraction, as it were; and the mind lodged in this body is again influenced in terms of these attractions.

This is why astrologers tell us that planets can also influence minds. You will be wondering how the mind can be influenced by planets. They indirectly influence the mind by the influence they exert on the bodies. If the mind were independent of the body, there would be no such influence of the mind, but the mind is so much dependent on the body that whatever happens to the body seems to also happen to the mind. So if there is a magnetic pull of the planets over the bodies, well, they should also have the very same influence on the minds, which are dependent on bodies.

But there is a great secret in the way in which the will is to be exerted in the practice of spiritual *sadhana*. We have to turn the tables round when we enter into the field of spiritual activity. It is as if we start looking at things

through a new set of spectacles. We begin to see things in a new way altogether.

What is this new way, this novel method? This method is not to think in terms of objects, because to think in terms of objects is the opposite of self-restraint. Self-control is the attempt at thinking in such a way that the mind does not depend on objects for its thinking. It can think even without objects, and even if objects are to be there in front of it, it need not be interpreted in terms of objects. When we are constantly tempted from all sides by objects of sense, self-restraint is almost an impossibility because to restrain the self is to restrain the tendency of the mind to think in terms of objective description.

Every *sadhaka* should find a little time daily to think along these lines. “Do I think? Yes. But what do I think?” Questions should be very precise, incisive, and the answers should be to the point. “When I think, what do I think at any given moment?” And our answer would naturally be that we think something that is external to the mind, outside the mind – perhaps, in most cases, an object. “But why do I think this object?” may be our next question. First of all, our question was, “What do I think?” Now our question is, “Why do I think this?” which is a more difficult question to answer because we cannot know why we think an object.

Why do I think this call-bell in front of me? This question can only be answered if I know what thinking is. The analysis of the structure of the process of thinking would promise a kind of answer to the question of why the mind thinks objects at all. And on the basis of the answer that is obtained in this manner, we may gain some strength

with which we can wield self-restraint; otherwise, self-restraint would be only talk.

We can restrain anyone or anything in this world, but we cannot restrain ourselves because we are made in such a way that we move towards objects of sense. We may wonder, “Do we really move towards objects?” Now, we are being seated here in the hall. Or, we may be in our *puja* room; we are not physically moving, so how could we be moving towards objects?

The physical body is not such a compact, localised substance as it appears. To give an example, the flame of the lamp is at one place, it is not everywhere, but the flame can shed its rays around to some distance. In this sense we may say the flame travels, though the flame really never travels. If we keep the lamp on a table in the centre of the room, for example, the flame is just there on a particular spot, occupying only one square inch of area, but it can reach up the walls of the room through the light that it sheds. But what is this light? It is the flame itself moving through its own constituents. The constituents of the flame move, and this movement of the very structure of the flame is called the movement of the rays of light.

Sunlight travels, we may say. Sunlight impinges on our body, touches the surface of the Earth, and the influence that is exerted by the Sun on the Earth is exactly a kind of contact subtly established between the constituents of the Sun and the body of the Earth. This process of physical contact continuously takes place through vibrations. Instead of a ray of light, we may call it vibrations. It is on account of the presence of what we call vibrations that we are asked to have a *satsanga* and not *dussanga*. “Do not

keep bad company,” we are told. We should not even sit with an evil-minded person because we may be influenced, though the person might not speak at all.

Now, what is this influence? The influence is a kind of emanation, we may say, from the body and personality of another, which has an impact on our personality. There is a physical contact, perhaps even a psychological union. This is the rational reason behind the favour of *satsanga* and against *dussanga*. Well, this is by the way, to explain what *dussanga* is.

Now, when we are in the midst of objects of sense, there is an emanation mutually taking place between our bodies and the bodies outside us. The very presence of bodies stimulates our senses, and the senses become activated; they become alive. They rise up and gaze at the objects through an eye which is not physical. The senses have a peculiar way of contacting objects even without our consciously knowing what is happening in our mind. The way in which vibrations work is subtle; secretly, in the deeper recesses of our personality, activities may be going on when we are completely oblivious of what is happening. We may only return with a disturbed mind without knowing what the cause of our disturbance is. There are some people who are very sensitive and when they go to certain places, they immediately get influenced by the vibrations of the place.

If we go to a burial ground, we will be influenced in a particular manner, though we may not be aware that it is a burial ground. If we go to a holy place, the influence will be altogether different. It is said that Gauranga Mahaprabhu came in search of the real birthplace of Sri Krishna, and when he approached a particular spot which today goes by

the name of Brindavan, he felt thrilled and said, “This must have been the place of the birth of Sri Krishna.” It is called Madhuvana, in ancient tradition. There was the receptive capacity in his mind to feel the vibrations subtly working in that atmosphere.

In this way, generally speaking, we should conclude that we are living in a world of vibrations. Though we appear to be living in a world of what are called objects, when we really go deep into the matter, we would realise that we are made up of vibrations. Our body is made up of a bundle of vibrations, and the objects of the world are also constituted of similar sets of vibrations moving hither and thither in search of their counterparts. The positive attracts the negative, and every set of vibrations attracts its counterpart. Hence, there is a pull mutually exerted by bodies and minds in the world. To restrain oneself from such influences would be real self-restraint.

“What is self-restraint?” may be another doubt that may occur to the mind. What is meant by the term ‘self’ used in the compound ‘self-restraint’? What are we going to restrain in self-restraint?

As I mentioned, the restraint is merely of the tendency to move towards an object. Everything is an object from the point of view of an observer. I am an object to you, and you are an object to me from my own point of view. I am a subject to me and you are a subject to you from your point of view. For you, self-restraint would be checking the tendency of the mind to think in terms of me as an object. And, likewise, self-restraint for me would be checking my mental tendency to think in terms of your personality as an object, and so on in terms of any object in the world. Again,

there should not be any kind of involuntary tendency in our body because that would be slavery, not freedom. There should be no involuntary process in terms of objects of sense. Defining sense control and self-restraint in this manner, one would realise how difficult self-control is. No one can escape thinking in terms of objects.

Self-restraint is intended for Self-realisation. We restrain one kind of self and realise another kind of Self. The whole of *sadhana* is nothing but this dual process of self-restraint for Self-realisation. And the restraint of the self is nothing but the freeing of the true Self from the entanglements of the network of these relationships of vibrations.

When the true Self gets involved in the meshes of these involvements of forces called vibrations, then it is that it becomes a *samsarin*, a *jiva*. A *jiva*, or an individual, is nothing but this true Self getting limited in its functions to the localised activities of a group of vibrations called bodies. There are no bodies really; they are all vibrations, one moving towards the other, trying to enter the other, to commingle with the other and become the other. This is a world of forces, on account of which also we are said to be in a world of relativity.

This is the essence of the life of *samsara*, where we are caught up in the cosmic currents which take us outward, far, far away from our centre, and make us feel a sense of perpetual agony and grief, knowing not what is the cause. Spiritual *sadhana* therefore, in all its stages of practice, is a deliberate attempt of our understanding to appreciate its position in the midst of these sets of vibrations and free itself from their clutches – stand independent and think not

in terms of them, but in terms of its own true being. When we can think in terms of what we are rather than in terms of what we would like to have, then we have gained one step in the ladder of spiritual evolution.

But all this would be next to impossible when understanding is lacking. Understanding is at the background of the power of will. If understanding is Siva, will is Shakti. They work mutually. One is the base, the other is the expression. In self-control, therefore, while on one side we have to exert hard by the use of our will in checking our tendencies to self-expression in terms of objects, on the other side we have to see that we are illumined through our understanding. And it is this light of illumination from within that has to help us to live a life of independence. Otherwise, we would be brooding over the objects of sense, though physically we are free from them. The Bhagavadgita calls such a person a hypocrite. To restrain oneself externally while brooding over the sense objects internally would be far, far away from spiritual *sadhana* because self-restraint is not physical detachment from other objects, but a psychological retention of oneself from contact with them. So if the psychological functions are always in their relations with objects, indulgence goes on perpetually.

Therefore, the *karmendriyas* are not as important as the *jnanendriyas* in the act of self-control. The *karmendriyas* may not be in actual contact with the objects, but the *jnanendriyas* may be again thinking of them alone, and so we are in contact with objects. What disturbs our personality is not physical contacts, it is the mind's contact with things. When the mind is agitated, the whole

personality is disturbed. Like milk becoming curd, the whole of our being may get dissipated by agitating forces emanating from objects of sense and influencing our mind. This is contrary to spiritual practice.

So in the understanding of what self-restraint is, and the appreciation of the extent to which the power of will has to be exerted here, the *sadhaka* has to leisurely ponder over the entire situation of his individuality, take into consideration all aspects of his quest, and not underestimate his desires. We should not say, “I have no desires,” because if we have no desires, then there is no need for self-restraint. There is nothing for us to restrain. The desires are the psychological contacts that we have established with the objects. It is these psychological contacts that are called desires, and they have a tendency to act independently without asking us. They take the law into their own hands, and we, many a time, or perhaps often, dance to their tune. This is life in the sense world. Hence, to restrain oneself would be to subdue one’s personality, to bring down the forces emanating from oneself in relation to the objects of the world, revert them inside, make them tend towards the centre, and sublimate them into a power which goes by the name of Soul-force, *atma-shakti* – something higher than *buddhi-shakti* or *vishaya-shakti*.

When this soul-force gets generated within us, a tremendously alchemic process also takes place simultaneously, which we have often read of in textbooks on Brahmacharya, for example: the conversion of bodily and psychic energy into what is called *ojas-shakti*. The energy of the body tends towards the objects as long as we think of objects. This is the purpose of Brahmacharya, to

speak in general terms. All tendency of the mind towards objects is an expression of desire for objects, and a counter activity that is attempted within would be to divert the course of this energy back to its source so that it rises, as the *hatha yogins* and the *tantric sadhaks*, etc., say, to the *sahasrara*, or the crown of the head – which means to say, that energy becomes understanding. Shakti becomes Siva, says the *tantrics*, etc. Shakti becoming Siva, *kundalini* becoming one with the *sahasrara* – all this means the extroverted will getting united with the understanding, becoming one with Being, the world merging in God, man returning to the state of immortality, or whatever we may call it.

It is, therefore, fundamental in spiritual practice to free this dual application of the understanding and the will from any kind of emotional tangle because while it may look that the understanding functions well, it may be vitiated by an emotional tangle from within, secretly working at the bottom. We know very well that our contacts with the world are mostly emotional, they are not intellectual or volitional. And when emotional contacts cease, all other contacts also cease. It is this emotional contact that is called *raga-dvesha*, and in self-restraint, the tendency to *raga* and *dvesha* ceases.

As a matter of fact, there is only one tendency, *raga*. Even *dvesha* is a part of *raga* itself. There is no *raga-dvesha*, there is only *raga*. *Dvesha* is only a negative avoiding of factors which are contrary to the fulfilment of *raga*. So it is *raga* alone; the whole world is *raga*, desire. The strongest impulse of emotion is what is called *raga*, and this is our actual contact with the world. To free our emotion from

objects would be to free oneself from *raga*, or attraction for things.

Here comes the role of understanding. We cannot free ourselves from affection for things as long as the understanding is weak. We have to understand the situation under which we have been tempted by objects of the world. Why do we love an object? The love is an emotional act, and we cannot sever the emotional relationship from the object unless we exercise the understanding simultaneously.

Thus, in self-restraint, understanding, will and feeling all work together. It is not merely one aspect or function of the psychological organ that works in self-restraint, but the whole of it taken collectively. It is the self that is being restrained by the power of the higher Self. The doctrine of this is very beautifully described in the Bhagavadgita: the higher Self restraining the lower self, and the lower self getting transmuted into the higher.

Evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam (Gita 3.43): We cannot control *kama* before we know that Higher Being. Evaṁ buddheḥ: not before that. The lower self cannot help us because the lower self is a bundle of *kama* itself. The very tendency towards the objects of the world is *kama*, and the whole of this lower empirical self is made up of these threads of *kama* scattered in various directions. So the higher Self has to come to the rescue of the lower self.

This mahāśano mahāpāpmā (Gita 3.37), as the Bhagavadgita calls it, this terrible foe of man – the only foe of man perhaps – is *raga* for things, affection for the world,

bondage to *samsara*. This contact can be snapped only by that higher understanding which is nothing but that light of the higher Self in us, God working. And no success can be achieved in this world unless we start interpreting our activities in terms of God. That is the only positive element in the world; everything else is negative. The whole world is made up of negative values. The only positive principle in creation is the God element. And only when we take resort to this supreme positivity of all creation will we be able to control ourselves and free ourselves from entanglements in these negative values we call worldly existence.

We live today a hopelessly meaningless life of negativity, and that is why we have sorrow. The whole of our life is one of sorrow, grief. Why? Because there is nothing positive in us – no substantiality in us. We are empty of content because the only content which is meaningful is God. So in all spiritual *sadhana*, particularly in this context of self-control, we should remember that great verse of the Bhagavadgita towards the end of the third chapter where we are admonished to take the help of the most positive of meanings, the higher Self in us, which is God, and subdue the lower self in such a way that it gets transmuted completely; then *raga* or *kama*, desire for external things, gets converted into aspiration for the Universal, and the pleasures of the world vanish into the bliss of God.

These considerations should give enough strength to the mind of man in spiritual *sadhana*. In self-restraint, *vichara* also should go side by side. Every day we should find a little time to do *vichara* in this way. The human being standing independently on his own legs cannot stand

the onslaught of the oppositions of the worldly forces. Unless the Higher comes to the aid of the lower, the lower cannot win victory in this world. Lodged as we are in the lower self, we cannot hope to win victory in this battlefield of life unless the Eternal Krishna comes to our assistance and we surrender ourselves, as the Pandavas did, to the Supreme Radiance of the Eternal, which spoke the Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata, which guided the destinies of those souls called the Pandavas. We all stand in similar positions, similar situations, and these epics are written for us as mankind in its completeness.

Thus, taking the examples from those lofty minds that lived before us, and using our higher understanding side by side with the will in its coordination with understanding, freeing emotion from its subtle subterfuges and relationships with longed-for things, the *sadhaka* should learn to live a life of dependence on the Self within and free himself from dependence on what is outside. When self-restraint gets deepened, it becomes meditation, and meditation deepened still is Realisation. These sum up the essence and the principle elements involved in spiritual practice.

It need not be added that caution should be the watchword of the seeker because it is easy to be duped by the forces of the world which take concrete shape as objects of sense, and we may become unwary and mistake the object for the subject, the thing for the Self, and things that we love as our own self. This mistake is again *samsara*. We do not know that we are in *samsara*; that is the very meaning of it. The very moment that we become conscious that we are in it, we also have the power to get out of it.

Such inward consciousness should be generated within us by rightly directed understanding, will and emotion, and ultimately prayer to God.

Chapter 11

ATTUNING OUR PERSONALITY WITH THE FORCES OF THE WORLD

Last time I concluded with the thought that self-restraint, which is so pre-eminent in spiritual practice, is ultimately dependent on our reliance on God. Humanly it is impossible for an independent approach to this technique of self-control. As the self is entwined with many other factors in the world, it is almost an impossibility to try for an independent technique of self-restraint. It is like a person who has borrowed from so many people in the world that he cannot show his face to anyone. We owe so much to the various parts of creation. We are indebted to them to such an extent, and there seems to be so much demand from us on the part of the various things of the world, that to attain independence by self-restraint would be like a person freeing himself from the demands of several creditors whom he has to face in the world.

We are born with various kinds of debts, say our scriptures – so many kinds of *rinās*, as they are called. Sometimes these *rinās* are boiled down to *deva-rina*, *rishi-rina*, *pitri-rina*, etc.; but in fact, we owe *rina*, or a kind of obligation, to everything in this world, and no one can save us from these obligations.

Our debts to the world are of such a nature that they are incapable of repayment. Our dependence on the abundance of God's creation is such that we cannot repay this debt, so it would be futile on our part to stand independent to all our relations to things.

Therefore, absolute self-restraint would not be possible merely on the basis of individual human effort. This is perhaps one of the reasons why we read in our Puranas, Epics and other scriptures the difficulties which even great Rishis faced in their penances, *tapasyas*, or processes of self-restraint. Sages of indomitable will such as Visvamitra, Parashara and others whom we hear of in the Epics and Puranas practised *tapas*, which is a single term that we use for self-restraint. *Tapas* is a term which I explained on earlier occasions, into whose details I do not propose to go now. Suffice it to say that *tapas* is the generation of that internal heat of the totality of energy in our system that rises up, focussing itself on its target.

The problems that the *tapasvins* in ancient days faced in the practice of self-restraint were the very same ones that we face today. While the questions seem to vary because of the various languages used, really the question was one and the same: the subdual of the forces that emanate from the human personality, tending towards the objects of sense. This was the problem, this is the problem, and this shall be the problem forever and ever because a human being is a specimen of all mankind, and the problem of one person should be the problem of every other person, truly speaking.

While to a certain extent we can exert our will, this power of will cannot always work because, as I mentioned last time, it has its own limitations. Many times our will tries to enter the enemy camp and make friendship with the enemies themselves. When we cannot fight the enemy, the best thing would be to become friendly with the enemy. The will oftentimes does this, and we do not know what

tricks it plays. The stories we read of such sages as Durvasa, Visvamitra, Parashara, etc., are instructive in the sense that they do not merely teach us of the magnificence, the glory and the greatness of *tapas*, but also its difficulties and the hardships which one has to undergo in its practice. While it seems to be resplendent like the distant heaven, it is also equally inaccessible.

Now, the main question at hand is that the problem does not really lie in the extent of our performance in the act of self-restraint, but in the very initial tuning of our mind itself. Many times we are unprepared for the test, and we embark upon large responsibilities. This is one of the mistakes of most seekers on the path. We are incompetent in the very beginning itself. We have no strength to take even the first step, and yet our ambitions soar so high that we would not take on anything less than all that God has created. The difficulty in our taking the initial step is the difficulty in parting with our prejudices, particularly our prejudiced way of thinking. I am not talking of emotional prejudices here, but pure general psychological prejudices. We may call them logical prejudices of a general character – our weddedness to particular ways of thinking, and the incapacity to think in any other manner.

Previously, I tried to point out how we are entangled in the meshes of psychological relations with the many things of the world, due to which it should be difficult for us, perhaps impossible for us, to practice self-restraint in its completeness. But there is one recipe which seems to work wonders, to the surprise of our understanding, our will and all our learning. Sometimes a very unexpected, small drug will work miracles in curing an illness, though we may have

tried many injections, tonics and such other things. Many big things may have not worked, but a simple thing may work a miracle. Likewise, a small thing seems to work a miracle in the practice of spiritual *sadhana*; and to ignore this small thing which plays such an important role in our *sadhana* is our folly.

We always try to count how many doors and windows there are in Buckingham Palace rather than know how many doors and windows we have in our own home. Our learning today is of such a nature. We know many things of the world, but we do not know how many steps there are in our own premises, and who is our next-door neighbour. Sometimes, we do not know who is living next door, but we know many things about other countries by reading newspapers. We make some fundamental mistake. 'Fundamental' is the only word for it – something hidden beneath our own self which wreaks havoc and spoils all our effort, whatever be the number of years we have spent in our so-called meditations and attempts at self-restraint. To our surprise, we realise years later that our achievements are nothing. We have been sweating and toiling, spending a lot of time, no doubt; but if we weigh the result, we will find that it is almost nothing. We have been sowing seeds, but not a single seed has germinated. When we have been working hard in the heat of the sun, perhaps watering the fields, and so on, why do they not germinate? Likewise seems to be our personal problems in spiritual practice.

While from one point of view the spiritual ideal is supremely universal, applicable to each and every person and everyone in the world equally in all respects, from another point of view spiritual life is purely personal. It is

meant for you, and you alone, and no one else is concerned with it. It is difficult to understand the relation between this Supreme Universality and supreme individuality, in which the spiritual task seems to be involved. This is the reason why mystics say it is the flight of the alone to the Alone. It is one alone flying to One Alone. Neither in the beginning nor in the end does the question of another arise. We are one in the beginning, and we are One in the end. It is a purely personal attitude of the deepest consciousness in us, which is the beginning of the spiritual way of living, which effloresces later on into spiritual universality of experience.

Self-restraint, therefore, is again a personal matter, though it has a relationship with God Himself and the Supreme Reality. It is a gradual ascent of the consciousness from its lower strata to the higher and higher reaches of its being, until it reaches its Supreme manifestation as Absolute Being. All yoga may be defined as different stages of self-control. *Yogaḥ cittavṛitti nirodhaḥ* (YS 1.2). *Nirodhah* is control, while *chitta* may be defined as mind, or mind stuff. It is our empirical self which we have to subdue in all practices of yoga.

Now, in this mysterious process of the ascent of the soul, in this difficult task of the practice of yoga, in this act of self-restraint which we are called upon to do every day, if we are dispassionate enough, we will realise that we have many a difficulty to face in this attempt. We will be pulled in ten different directions when we try any kind of self-restraint. The *Srimad Bhagavata* says it is as if a person has many consorts who try to catch him from different directions. If we are pulled from every side, from which direction are we to restrain ourselves?

The world pulls us because the world is in every cell of our body. Every part of our personality seems to belong to creation. This concept is elaborated in the great teaching that every part of our personality has a presiding deity. There is an *adhidevata* ruling over every part of our body, every limb, every sense organ, even the mind, intellect and so on, so that everything in us seems to belong to somebody else. Therefore, there is every reason why we should be pulled from different directions by the forces of the cosmos.

Our personality is a composite structure, not an indivisible something. It is made up of parts. We are composite in the sense that we are made up of parts – not merely in the physical system, but also in our psychological body. Our physical and psychological bodies are made up of parts. It is this fact that is conveyed to us by the instruction that there are *adhidaivas* ruling over our personalities, and the body is made up of the five elements, and the subtle body is again made up of the *tanmatras*, and so on. What are we, then, independent of what belongs to the cosmos?

We seem to be nothing independently. From this point of view, it would be difficult for a person to stand alone, in the strictest sense of the term. Therefore, to restrain oneself, in the literal sense, is impossible. But there is a spirit behind this letter, which we should not miss. There is always a great difference between the spirit and the letter. While the letter of the argument seems to make out that we have to extricate ourselves individually from the clutches of each and every force which constitutes the cosmos outside, the spirit of the teaching is something different.

If we merely follow the letter, we would be a failure. We cannot stand independent of the world because everything in us belongs to the world. But the spirit of the teaching is that in the act of self-restraint, what we are called upon to do is not so much an individualistic withdrawal from something which is real outside in the world, but a kind of attunement of ourselves with it. Yoga is attunement, setting oneself in harmony, bringing about a balance. *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (Gita 2.48): The yoga that we are striving to perform is the striking of a balance in our personality in terms of the forces of the world.

We cannot wrench ourselves from the world. That is impossible. There is no such thing as running away from the forces of the world. No one has done it, and no one can do it. So, self-control or self-restraint, or *prathyahara*, withdrawal, is not a possibility if it is to be taken in its literal sense of physical isolation or segregation from the realities of the world, and those who have attempted it have failed. They never succeeded. They appeared to succeed in the beginning, but later on the senses began to revolt and worked so vehemently in the reverse order that they found themselves on levels lower than those from which they tried to rise. When they fell, they fell with a thud, and perhaps broke their limbs because they tried to climb too high in an artificial manner without knowing the art of climbing.

The spirit of the teaching on self-control must be grasped properly if we are to succeed in it. We should not try any kind of foolish method in the control of the senses. *Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ* (Gita 2.60). *Jñānināmapī cetāmsi devī bhagavatī hi sā; balādākṛṣya mohāya mahāmaya prayacchati* (Devi Mahatmayam 1.55-

56). Thus says the Devi Mahatmayam: Even the wise person is likely to be distracted by the powers of sense. Balavān indriya-grāmo vidvāmsam api karṣati (Bhagavatam 9.19.17): Even a *vidvan*, a learned person, perhaps even a wise one is likely to be led astray by the impetus force of the collective activity of the senses.

Like the sultans of the Bahamani Kingdom, when the senses attack, they will all be together, though they are against one another. The senses join together if they want to set up a revolt. Hence, in our practice of yoga or *sadhana*, we must have always with us the result of a positive element, with which I concluded the last discourse. We should not always be on the negative side of what we call withdrawal, isolation, segregation, *vairagya*, etc., and should not always harp on avoiding something. It is true that scriptures tell us that we have to avoid certain things, but the avoiding is only a preparation for the development of a positive aspect in our own life.

We must always have something substantial with us to lay hands upon, to lean on in times of emergency. We cannot live on emptiness. If we go on withdrawing from everything, then what remains in us? The positive element in us is the spiritual element. Therefore *tapas*, or self-restraint, should be a spiritual element and not merely a practice of the will or a psychological exercise. Self-control, *kshama*, *dhama*, and *uparati*, whose nature we have been discussing, is not merely a feat of the will. It is not a circus of the understanding or any of the faculties in us. It is a very magnificent and graduated manifestation of the soul force in us.

While it is the restraint of the self from one side, it is the manifestation of the Self from the other side. While we free ourselves from the false self from one side, we gradually reveal the true Self in us from the other side. The more is the manifestation of the real Self in us, the easier is the practice of the control of the lower self in us. And, at every step that we take in the process of self-control, we have to take the help of the higher element in us, which is always with us, in us, and which we are.

Now, this brings us to the concept of God, with which I concluded last time. It appears that without some sort of devotion to God, whatever our concept of God may be, we cannot hope to succeed in spiritual life. We cannot get on merely with do's and don'ts in life. Mere ethical or moral mandates will look all right in the beginning, but they all become insipid later. We do not know what these do's and don'ts are, and what they are for. A time comes when we begin to search for some meaning in life. This meaning is the God element, the principle of Reality in things, the meaning of all meanings, we can say. Unless we have a permanent background of thought in our mind, to which we can withdraw incessantly like a tortoise in time of danger, we are not going to be happy.

There are many difficulties that we may have to face in life. When we are intensely agitated by forces that we cannot confront, we must have some home to which we can retire. If that is absent, we would be simply tossed into the winds by the forces of the world; we would be nowhere. It is very essential that every spiritual seeker should develop a background of thought which is permanent – strongly built, not built on quicksand – and this can be nothing less

than our concept of God. Our concept of God is a very important aspect to consider in our discussion on the nature of spiritual practice.

Every one of you has some notion of God and perhaps worship God in some form or the other, yet there are some people who deny the existence of God because God is not visible to their eyes. He is not a sensory object. We cannot think Him through the mind, we cannot understand Him, we cannot feel His presence. There is nothing that we can do with this so-called God. We want something which we can see with our eyes, smell with our nose, taste with our tongue, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, etc. But God is something which cannot be dealt with in this manner.

“Does God exist at all?” is a very valid doubt in many minds, but the question is wrongly put. Our question should be not whether God exists, but whether anything exists at all. If anything exists, then what is it? It is not very important to discuss whether God exists, because in our talks on the existence of God, generally ‘God’ means something which exists in this world. That is why we can dispense with Him if we like. We can take Him or not take Him. To us, God is a kind of commodity. It is on account of this concept of God, wrong as it is, that there have been people who have denied the existence of God. But God is not any such thing as they think. We cannot afford to either want Him or not want Him. There is no question of discussion about Him because it eludes all approaches to the human mind.

In the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita there are three verses which give us some hint of the various ways in

which people have tried to approach the concept of God. Very few people might have thought over the implications of these verses, but they are very significant if they are properly told.

Yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahetukam, atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam (Gita 18.22). The lowest concept of Reality is mentioned here. To take an effect for the cause, to take the part for the whole, would be the *tamasic* concept of Reality. Ahetukam: Untenable is this concept. Atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca: It is finite and devoid of substantiality. That would be the *tamasic*, or the lowest form, of the concept of Truth. But all people, perhaps 99.9%, conceive Reality in this way. For us, Reality is the world and its contents, scattered in space and time. It is because of this *tamasic* concept of Reality that our senses run towards the objects.

The senses run to realities. They do not run to phantoms. Nobody likes a phantasmagoria to be presented. When the senses want objects from the world, they go for them by convincing themselves that they are realities, truths. So the sense world presents the *tamasic* form of Truth. The god of the senses is perhaps described in this verse of the Bhagavadgita. The senses also have their gods, and all these scattered particulars of the world are the gods of the senses, and also the gods of all those people who live according to the dictates of the senses, who think in terms of the senses, who live a sensory life. For them these are the gods, the objects of sense.

If we interpret this verse metaphysically, the lowest concept of Reality is to regard isolated particulars as final entities in creation. We have examples of Vaisheshika

metaphysics and the Nyaya. In certain theological schools, where *bheda* or distinction is regarded as final, it is regarded as one of the real categories. The Vaisheshikas tell us that there are nine *padarthas*, nine *dravyas* or substances, and so on. They think that the segregated particulars constitute independent realities themselves – the Atman being one of the entities of creation. It is one of many things, not the only reality. So to think in this way, to imagine that Reality is manifold, multitudinous, variegated, scattered, unrelated in its parts, and with this notion run towards them for possessing them, enjoying them, etc., would be one type of philosophy. But there is a higher concept of Truth, which another verse of the same chapter tells us.

Pr̥thaktvena tu yaj jñānaṁ nānābhāvān pṛthagvidhān,
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam (Gita 18.21). There is a higher concept of Truth where we feel an inter-relatedness of things; things are not so isolated as the senses tell us. While the senses give us a report that everything is cut off from each other, there is only *nanatva* or variety. Reason rises higher than sense and tells us that there is mutual relationship of things, and it is not true that each is cut off from the other. There is a kind of mutual dependence of the entities that constitute creation. There is a correlativity and mutual dependence of things in the cosmos, and we cannot say which is the cause and which is the effect here.

When I pinch you and you pinch me, who pushes whom? There is a game where each one pinches the one nearby, and so there is a circular pinching. Well, in this game there is someone who starts pinching, but in this

world of causality, we do not know where the beginning is. Which is the first pinch? In a world of related mutually coordinated elements, we cannot say where it begins. To give an example, we have our own physical body. It is so very organically related in its parts that we cannot say where the body begins. Where does body begin? At the foot? At the fingers? At the nose? Well, it can begin at any part; it is all equally good. So is this mysterious inter-related cosmos.

Thus, from the notion of the particularity of Truth, we come to the inter-relatedness of it, a higher concept. But still higher is what is proclaimed in another verse of the same chapter in the Bhagavadgita: sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṁ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate, avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi sāttvikam (Gita 18.20). To visualise a single element in all these particulars as well as in this interrelated system would be to tumble on Reality. It is the report of the senses that everything is isolated, everything is disconnected: You have nothing to do with me, and I have nothing to do with you. That is one sort of philosophy of the senses, the lowest of philosophies. The higher philosophy is that there is some kind of cooperative principle moving amidst us. There is an interrelatedness of things. But this interrelatedness of things implies that there is a Universal Absolute element behind all relations.

What is relation? It is the consciousness of one thing being connected with another. This consciousness should be above this connection. It goes without saying if 'A' is here and 'B' is here, and I am conscious of 'A' and 'B' simultaneously, my consciousness of 'A' and 'B' should transcend the difference between 'A' and 'B'; this is simple

logic. So if there is to be an interrelatedness of things in mutual relation of everything in the world, the universe should be animated by a single Reality.

Ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham (Gita 9.15) says the Gita in another place: “I am adored as one, separate and manifold.” The approach is manifold in the beginning, distinct later on, and as one ultimately. A similar type of statement is also made in the Srimad Bhagavata where we are told that God is conceived in many ways: He is Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavan. All these are various ways of putting the same truth in different styles: that we live in the beginning in a world of isolation, separateness, and a consciousness of distinction of things. Then we slowly rise to the higher consciousness of the immanence of Reality in this variety, and in the highest reaches of our consciousness we realise its Absoluteness, a word which is difficult to define. So in the practice of spiritual *sadhana*, we rise from one concept of God to another.

Psychologically this is an effort, and spiritually it is an achievement. Inwardly taking *sadhana* as a personal exertion, an effort, a will directed in a particular way, it is a function of the psychological organs; but this function is connected to a positive Being, which seems to speak to us both inwardly and outwardly. God is within us as well as without us, and when we move in the path of spiritual *sadhana*, we live and move and have our being in God. So the more we advance in *sadhana*, the more also are our thoughts clarified in regard to our notion of God. We do not any more search for God as an object in creation, and we have nothing to say about Him, for or against.

But God becomes an indispensable something, without which existence itself has no sense. It is only a word, an appellation that we have used to describe That Which Is, as St. Augustine calls Him. We cannot say that nothing is. Something is. Even the atheist cannot say that something is not. And so, if something is, that something is God. The question is, what is? The materialist and the atheist may accept that something is, but what is it?

As I stated earlier, the scriptures seem to be a guide for us in our ascent from the lower concept of what is, to the higher and higher concepts of it. In the beginning we think that only sense objects are. For a child, what is? Whatever is in front of the child, that is, and that is all. This is the baby's philosophy of concrete objectiveness, where it takes the physical substantiality for reality and considers it, at the same time, to be absolutely disconnected from other things.

As long as we are wedded to the senses, we are all materialists. We may be spiritualists in our arguments and thinking, but in practical life we depend on matter for our existence. Hence, we are all materialists. Our body is material, the objects of sense are material, the food that we eat is material, the air that we breathe is material, the water that we drink is material, the earth that we walk upon is material. We cannot get out of the clutches of matter, so in practice it seems to be all materialism. This is a sense world. It only proves that we are still in the sense world, and we cannot get out of this interpretation of Reality in terms of matter.

Deep *manana*, thought bestowed on this situation, enables our consciousness to see a different meaning in this very thing called matter. It is not that matter is not there; it

is there, but what is it that we call matter? There is no point in abhorring matter as being not there, and so on. What we are expected to do is to understand what really is there in what we regard as matter today.

Sometimes the mother may put on a mask of a tiger or a ghost and try to terrify the child in play. She makes a kind of sound. Sometimes she covers her face with a cloth and then slowly creeps near the child to terrify it, and then the child cries out and runs away. When the mask is lifted, it is the mother. That from which the child cried and ran, now to that very thing the child runs in affection.

In spiritual *sadhana* also, the same thing will take place. That from which we have to withdraw in self-restraint and *prathyahara* will be the very same thing to which we have to run when we realise what it is. Therefore, it is essential that we sift our thoughts properly, both objectively in our notion of God and subjectively in our concept of *sadhana* and self-control.

We are walking on slippery ground, both ways. We are likely to fall down both in our attempt at grasping the meaning of what God is, and in our practice of self-restraint and yoga, because they are interrelated. Krishna and Arjuna go together. The concept of God and spiritual practice in its personal sense are inseparable. They are like the two birds perched on the same tree, as the Upanishad tells us, the two heroes seated in a single chariot, Ishwara and *jiva* working in unison.

This is why the Kathopanishad says that in this practice, we must be extremely diligent. *Apramatta-stadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau* (Katha 2.3.11): We cannot just walk carefree in this world, thinking that everything is all

right. What is death? Death is heedlessness as to our welfare. If we cannot know what our true welfare is, we will be heading towards doom. There is no other destruction or doom in this world.

Tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām, apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau (Katha 2.3.11), says the Kathopanishad: Yoga, to put it concisely and precisely in one sentence, is the adamant restraint of the senses in tune with the Self within, and an extreme watchfulness of this condition, because yogo hi prabhavāpyayau: Yoga will come and go. It will not always be there at our beck and call.

So difficult is the practice of yoga; so difficult it is even to entertain a correct notion of God; and so difficult again is the understanding of the processes of our own minds in relation to the objects outside, and ultimately in relation to the Supreme Reality.

Chapter 12

SELF-RESTRAINT VERSUS SELF-INDULGENCE

In the context of our study of *kshama*, *dhama* and *uparati* as essential prerequisites in the practice of *sadhana*, we came to the issue of the nature of self-restraint and the role that it plays in all spiritual practice. This is perhaps the crucial point in all spiritual effort. It would not be out of place to expatiate on this subject a little more, because when we come to the essence of the matter, we will realise that all yoga is self-restraint, and one who does not understand self-restraint would not be able to practice yoga or be a student of it.

The restraint of the self is a subject which we have been trying to understand for the last few days. We have been also attempting to know what this self is which has to be restrained, and for what purpose, etc. Now, when we go a little deeper into the nature of the process of self-restraint, we will realise perhaps, to our surprise, that there is a deeper rationale behind this great instruction on self-restraint as a part of yoga – a cosmic significance and a universally inexorable law operating behind it. We seem to be a failure in the practice of self-restraint because of our incapacity to understand the law that is behind the world.

We will realise, on a careful scrutiny, that restraint of self is not merely a moral canon. It is not merely an ethical conduct that we are asked to practise as a kind of social etiquette. It is something profound and related to the very structure of the cosmos. It is on account of this inner implication that it is so important in our life, and also so hard to understand.

To be good and to do good is generally regarded as a virtue. Most people regard virtue as a kind of character that we exhibit in our outer conduct, which may be praiseworthy in the eyes of people. If everyone regards my conduct as wonderful, I may be regarded as a virtuous person. So most of the moral rules go perhaps by the votes, by the plebiscites, and if the majority votes for it, it may be regarded as a virtuous act. But this kind of virtue will not hold water because the judgement of society varies, and has to vary from time to time in the process of the evolution of the human mind.

If virtue is based on such a criterion, then there would be no such thing as a standard virtue. Righteousness would then become a kind of commercial value which changes from time to time under different circumstances, like the rates of goods or articles in a market which go on changing. If today the cost of one kilo of rice is accepted to be two rupees, to sell it at two rupees would be virtue on the part of the shopkeeper, and to sell it at five rupees would be a black market price; we call that a vice. But if tomorrow it is publicly declared that the cost of one kilo would be five rupees, then tomorrow that would become virtue at five rupees and eight rupees would become black market or vice.

So we know the nature of virtue. We can change virtue into vice and vice into virtue according to our convenience, if this is the standard of the judgement of morality. If this is the way we have to look upon yoga morality, then God forbid we should practise any yoga, because that would have no permanent value at all. Then one would be regarded as a restrained person in a tentative manner, not

on any solid ground, and the character of self-restraint would compare to the virtue of the shopkeeper who is asked to sell articles or goods at the standard rate obtaining at a given time.

But this particular question which we are now trying to discuss, the nature of self-restraint as a great spiritual quality of a seeker, is not a moral value in this sense. It is not something with which we can play with our will, and we cannot say that we are self-restrained merely because it is certified by outer laws of human society. No such certificate can guarantee the virtue of self-restraint in its essential nature.

As I said, the yoga morality of self-restraint, which is the king of all virtues and moral qualities, has not merely a social grounding, as many of our virtues have, it has a cosmical significance in us and is endowed with a universal meaning. Hence, it cannot be handled or changed by times and circumstances in the course of human history. It is something outside the ken of ordinary standards of human virtue.

What is this significance? The moment we enter into the inner structure of the very makeup of things in this beautiful creation, we would be faced with many intricacies which do not really come to the surface of our perception. There are secrets and mysteries in Nature, as poets are wont to say. The whole creation is regarded as a mystery rather than a scientific formula. It is a mystery because it is constituted in such a way that the apparatus of our perception is incapable of fathoming it.

As it is given to us today, our knowledge of the world is such that it is really unconnected with the true nature of

things. Inasmuch as the nature of the knowledge is so hollow, irrelevant to the inner structure of creation, our laws obtaining in society do not seem to be really based on a universally significant law. We do not seem to be friendly with the natural laws, and this is the reason why we are unable to cooperate with the rules and the regulations of Nature in her completeness.

This is also one of the reasons why we complain against the occurrences of the world, the events that take place in creation. We complain against seasons, wind and rain, heat and cold, etc., and we seem to be incapable of appreciating what is happening in Nature. This is our complaint against our creation of God. We cannot appreciate natural events and conditions because our laws seem to be such, and made in such a way, that they seem to have no coordination with the laws operating in Nature. There seems to be a gulf between man and Nature.

To come to the point, self-restraint is something which we have to do in the very nature of things, and not merely because we are someone in society. Here in this difficult endeavour of the human personality, human society is no help. Nobody is going to help us in the practice of self-restraint, and nobody can be of any help because here we are face to face with another law altogether.

Now, what is this law? What is this system with which Nature seems to be working, which we are supposed to follow and abide by, whose knowledge we are at present not provided with, and whose ignorance is responsible for all our sufferings? We live in a world of our own, unconcerned with Nature. We live in a psychological world. But the cosmos is not merely psychological; there is also a

cosmological aspect of things. Or to put it succinctly, it may be stated that the universe reveals itself as cosmological and psychological values.

It is not merely man that constitutes the whole of creation. There are things other than man, and man should not forget this. The cosmological and psychological aspects of the manifestation of things come into high relief in our consideration of the nature of self-restraint and its necessity in human life.

Now, what do we mean by this distinction of the cosmological values and the psychological values? We need not go into the metaphysical intricacies of these themes, but when they are considered in a simple manner, they represent themselves as the object and the perceiver of the object. The representative of all that is cosmologically meaningful is the object of our perception, and the simple representation of what is the psychological world may be said to be the perceiving or the cognising subject, so we may say the whole of cosmology is summed up in the object, and the whole of psychology is summed up in the subject.

There seems to be some kind of misunderstanding between the object and the subject, and this expanded is the misunderstanding between man and Nature. We do not want to understand each other at all. Nature does not want to understand our whims and fancies, nor do we want to accede to her whims, and we also cannot understand Nature's laws.

Nature has a representative, as a nation may send an ambassador to another nation, we may say. Here in this world of ours, the ambassador of Nature is the object in

front of us. To speak to the ambassador would be to speak to the whole of Nature, which he represents. So to confront any particular object in this world would be to confront Nature, and to understand any particular subjective principle would be to understand the psychological world.

We are studying the nature of self-restraint, and in this study we feel a need to go into the details of the inner structure of our relation with the world; otherwise, we would not know what we are asked to do in the practice of yoga. Questions may arise such as why this self-restraint, what does this mean, and so forth.

Now you see the world is neither an object nor a subject. When we say there is an object and a subject, a kind of artificial difference has been created for the sake of understanding the nature of the consciousness of the world. When we take the world as it is, we cannot call it an object or a subject. We do not know if it is an object that is seen, or a subject that sees.

Can you for the time being place yourself in the position of Nature in its totality? Can you think in terms of Nature? Do not think in terms of a human being or a person. Just for a few minutes, try to think as Nature would think, or ought to think – as the universe is to think. Would Nature regard itself as an object? If it is an object, whose object is it? And if it is a subject, a subject of what?

Inasmuch as Nature is all things, obviously it cannot be either a subject or an object. Then from whose standpoint do we call it a subject or an object? That someone or something, from whose standpoint we may regard Nature as an object or subject, is again included in Nature. This would reveal the fact that this distinction between subject

and object is erroneous, faulty and artificially made. Inasmuch as this is false and not acceptable to the true nature of things, it does not succeed. This distinction does not obtain always, and there is an urge from within to abolish it.

Satyam eva jayate nānṛtam (Mundaka 3.1.6) is our great motto, nationally and spiritually: Truth alone triumphs. If Truth is this incapacity of Nature to divide itself into the object and subject, it shall assert itself. The untruth of the apparent distinction of the subject and the object within its own constitution shall be abolished and rendered negatory. There shall be a struggle within Nature itself to set right this apparent error. This is a perpetual effort on the part of the universal law to bring the scale into equilibrium by withdrawing this apparent distinction of the object and subject, which do not really exist. This struggle within the body of Nature herself is the explanation of why we should practice self-restraint.

Now we come to a kind of philosophical rationale behind the practice of self-restraint – yoga morality of self-control. You may wonder what is the relevance between the two themes. It is like this: The effort of Nature to unite the subject and the object is finally responsible for the pull that the object asserts on the subject, and this pull is called *kama*, or desire. Our desire for things is ultimately caused by the effort of Nature to abolish this distinction between the subject and the object. It cannot bear this difference because it is really not there, and we are unnecessarily imagining it. It brings the two together into a fraternal embrace. The power exerted by the totality of Nature in this attempt at union of the subject and the object is such that

nobody can resist it; therefore, no one can resist temptation, psychologically speaking.

This is the metaphysical explanation of it. We cannot resist objects tempting us. To resist it would mean to resist the whole of Nature. It is standing against Hanuman, as it were. We cannot stand before him, such power he has, and such power Nature has. While this is the meaning intended behind the pull of the object in terms of the subject, what happens ultimately is something else. The intention is not fulfilled. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," said a great poet. Our intentions may be good, but they should not lead us to hell.

The union of the subject and the object should be effected in order that there may be absolute experience. This is what Nature intends in her law. But what happens is that in this attempt at union, the union does not take place; there is only an agony created on account of the irresistible urge of the object. We are worse than we were before. Our intention is to unite ourselves with the object, because this unity it is that is *satya*, or Truth; but on account of a small difficulty intervening and interfering with our attempt, this unity is foiled.

No subject can become the object, and no object can become the subject. We have never seen one thing becoming another thing in this world. What you are, you are, and what anything is, it is; and yet, what is this pull? Why should the object pull us and tempt us?

As I said, the intention behind it is good, but behind this intention, or simultaneously with this intention, there is also a blunder committed. The mistake that seems to be coextensive with this attempt at the union of the subject

and the object is responsible for all misery following affection for things. Love for things seems to please us because the intention is good, it has the sanction of Nature; yet what follows this love for things is sorrow because the attempt at union has not yet been achieved.

What is the obstacle in the attempt at union? The obstacle is something again which our minds cannot see. When there is a pull of an object, this pull being called desire or passion, we are completely oblivious of factors which are external to this pull; we are conscious of only the object for the time being. Like a horse with blinders that moves along the street and cannot see either way, the mind of the subject which is pulled towards the object runs towards the object with blinders, as it were, concentrating itself on the object alone, thinking that it can unite itself with the object by enjoying it, as it is generally known, not knowing that there are other factors limiting it and obstructing it from achieving this attempt at union.

The obstruction is kept from us always, and we cannot know what it is. When we are conscious of an object – like the story of Arjuna being conscious of only the eye of the bird which was his target, and not seeing even the branch of the tree on which it was perching – our mind when it runs to an object of attraction becomes so engaged in the consciousness of the object that it does not know there is a tiger in front of it, over which it has to leap before it reaches the object.

If a child is drowning and the mother runs to save it, the mother may not even be conscious of a tiger in the way; she may even jump over it without knowing it is there because her mind is thinking of only the child. Likewise is our mind

defeated in its attempt at its so-called empirical union. 'Empirical' is the word we can use for it, for want of a better expression. What union is attempted is spiritual, not empirical. The essences of the subject and the object should unite. This is what Nature has intended and ordained for us in instituting this so-called pull of the object for the subject. But what happens? The essences remain covered by something else, and the forms try to unite. *Nama* and *rupa* try to get united into a blend of a single entity, but forms cannot be united. What are forms? If we know what a form is, we will know why one form cannot unite with another.

Only the essences can come together, but not the forms; the bodies, the structures which are visible to the senses, cannot come together, for obvious reasons. Obvious though they are, they are not perceptible to the senses or cognisable by the mind because these limiting factors of the formation of bodies are involved in the very structure of the mind and the senses. The mind and the senses, which are to observe the existence of these limiting factors, are involved in these factors themselves, and so they are incapable of perception.

As I told you the other day, you cannot see your own eyes. Though everyone has eyes, and the eyes are there to see, who can see their eyes? Likewise, it is the peculiar structure of form which is responsible for the body consciousness. And who can escape this limitation of form? The form, really speaking, is a name that we give to the way in which space and time operate. Physics students would understand what this means.

Space and time are responsible for the formation of an object, and if space and time are not to be, forms cannot be, bodies cannot be. Even your body and my body cannot be,

if space and time are not to be there. And today, scientists tell us that the body, whether it is a human being or inorganic matter, is ultimately reducible to certain formations of space-time continuum. When a body comes in contact with another body, when one form collides with another, when one person wants physical contact with another person or object, what really happens is that one structural form of space-time tries to come in contact with another structural form.

What is the distinction between one structural form and another? Why should there be two forms? The reason given behind this is that a form is a whirl of force. One form is distinguished from another form. My body differs from your body, on account of which there are two bodies because the forces that constitute my body whirl in one direction and the forces that constitute your body whirl in another direction. They are poles apart, like positive and negative posts in electricity, perhaps, so they cannot unite. One body cannot unite with another body for these scientific reasons. They are repelled rather than attracted.

There is a repulsion of forces, and this repulsion of bodies on account of this peculiar constitution of force in the bodies is responsible for the sensations of touch. It is this sensation of touch that is responsible for the pleasure of touch. When we touch a pleasurable object, we feel elated. This pleasure is caused by the repulsion of the forces constituting the body, or object, and our body. So really, there is no union, and we have not obtained any real pleasure by the contact of the senses with the object. We are only fooled. We are repelled rather than united, and in this repulsion we feel pleasure. Even if we are given a kick, we

feel we are adored and worshipped. This is what objects do – they kick us – but unfortunately, we feel they are embracing us.

In this befooled condition of the mind, the subject entertains itself and goes into raptures over the wonders of the objects which attract it, and then again runs after them. The more kicks we receive, the more is the love for the object. What can be greater foolishness than this?

Nature has been originally responsible for the pull of the object and subject because it does not tolerate this separation artificially created between them. With this intention of Nature to remove this separation, what has happened is that forms begin to collide due to the attraction. We are caught on the horns of a dilemma: on one side, we cannot resist the temptations of the object; on another side, we can get nothing from it and have to return like beggars. This is *samsara*. This is the suffering of mankind. This is the folly of the human mind, and nobody can save us from this folly. We are caught up in a current of force which pulls us and kicks us and pulls us and kicks us, alternately.

This unfortunate condition of the human being was studied very well by our ancient seers, and they tried to institute a method of freedom from *samsara*, this cycle of entanglement in forces of the world. This is the path of yoga, and I was explaining that yoga is self-restraint. Now coming to the point, where do we stand? And what is this self-restraint supposed to do in this circumstance of ours in this world?

Self-restraint is opposed to self-indulgence. Indulgence is the yielding of the mind to the pull of the objects. When

we yield to the pull of the objects, we are supposed to indulge in the object. We cannot resist this object because it has the sanction of Nature, ultimately. This is why it is so attractive. Nature creates beauty in the face of the object. It is this beauty of the object that tempts us and pulls us. It is irresistible. But, what is the remedy for the suffering that seems to be consequent upon this attraction? We are not going to be given anything. We are returning with nothing.

The Yoga System teaches us that we are not to yield to the temptations of objects. Though the intention behind this is a universal unity of the subject and object, there is a blunder involved in it. It is like a foolish person making a good plan. Perhaps Mohammad Bin Tughlaq was a good example. They say his plans were all very good, but they were not practical. Likewise, an unpractical good-intentioned method will not work, so there is no use in there being merely a metaphysical meaning in our actions. There should also be a practical utility and feasibility. What yoga tells us is, “My dear friend, there is nothing wrong in the essential intention of this union between the subject and the object. But there seems to be something definitely wrong, and there can be nothing worse than that, in your attempt at union with bodies – one body trying to unite itself with another body.”

This is called self-indulgence, and is not practicable. This again is against the law of Nature. While separation of one thing from another is against the law of Nature, a bodily union is also against the law of Nature. That also will not work. Nature is an indivisible being, and not merely a contact of two objects. It is not *samyoga sambandha* that Nature attempts in this pull of the object, nor is it *samavaya*

sambandha. Logicians know what this means. *Samyoga sambandha* is external contact, such as the contact of my finger with this table or, as logicians say, the contact of the stick with the drum that it beats. There is no real contact; there is only an external touch. Nature does not intend this kind of contact in its pull. Nor is it *samavaya sambandha*, or inherence, like the colour of the flower inherent in the flower. It is not Nature's intention that the subject should inhere in the object which it pulls. Nature intends union absolute. It is because of this difficulty that the nature of self-restraint in yoga is hard to understand. We oftentimes make a mistake in it, and fail. The restraint of the self is really the control of the tendency of the mind to bring into physical contact the subject and the object, while in a higher sense it is the attempt at the union of the spiritual essences of all things.

Previously I mentioned it is self-restraint from one point of view and Self-realisation from another point of view. It is a restraint of the mental self, bodily self, the empirical self, the physical self, the spatio-temporal self, but it is the attempt at the union of the universal spiritual Self. This is Self-realisation, the realisation of the only Self that there is.

On a contemplation on this mystery behind the nature of things, we would realise what the practice of yoga intends, and what it really is supposed to convey to us. It is far, far from our ordinary notion of yoga practice. When we deeply consider over these implications of yoga, we realise our ideas or notions are far from the truth of yoga. We have a very poor notion of it and we are so far removed from it

that we do not know how much time it would take us to come near it, let alone practice it.

Everyone is blindfolded, misguided, because of the weddedness of the mind to the perception of sense, and self-restraint in its spiritual connotation intends to free the mind from the clutches of sense and to restrain the mental tendency to bring the body in contact with other bodies. Sense indulgence is contrary to self-restraint. The urges of the lower personality are to be controlled. This is self-control. We have many an urge in our personalities, and these are the impulses or instincts, as they are usually called – the impulse to run after an object. Sometimes we run like an iron filing moving towards a magnet, without knowing that it is happening. To be under the control of an impulse is no wisdom. It is no understanding.

The pull of the object is to be overcome. This is the essence of the whole matter, and for that we have to understand where we stand in relation to the object. No person without understanding of the situation can be a true student of yoga. There is no use closing the eyes, plugging the nostrils and closing the ears, etc., in self-control. All these are of no avail. The impulses are not in the eyeballs, they are not in the nostrils, they are not in the eardrums, they are not in the sensations of touch; they are within you. You may be blind, deaf and dumb, etc., but may still have the impulses for objects. You may be craving for things, even if you cannot see them.

To give an example, what happens in the dream state? Are there any physical objects really? Why do we crave for objects? Where does the craving come from? How is it that we are running towards the objects of sense even in dream,

when the objects are really not there? Where are the senses? The eyes do not function, the ears do not function, all the senses are sleeping, and yet why is it that we are so very restless in our rushing towards the objects of sense? Who is responsible?

The impulses are awakened there, though the external organs are asleep. So self-restraint definitely has something to do with the impulses, and it has only to do with them, and not with the organs of sense outside. So it is of no use withdrawing the physical limbs but contemplating the objects of sense mentally.

Karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran, indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate (Gita 3.6): Far from yoga is that person who withdraws the external limbs in self-restraint but contemplates them in mental reveries and building castles in the air, and so on. Yoga is internal. It is not an outer demonstration of the physical body or outer moral conduct. It has something to do with what we are psychologically. So the attunement of our psychological personality to the law of Nature is essential in all attempts of self-restraint. It is difficult to understand what Nature is and what our role is in this process of evolution. We always make mistakes and it is difficult to understand Nature's laws because ultimately, Nature's laws are God's laws.

Therefore, it is difficult to practice yoga. Let no one have the complaisance to imagine that yoga is an effort of three days. This is almost an impossibility. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj sometimes used to say jokingly, "He can practise yoga who can extract oil from his own flesh, and with that oil he burns the lamp and waves the *arati*

before God.” This is an example given to show the difficulty of practising yoga. Gaudapada in his Mandukya-Karikas says, “It is easier to empty the ocean with a blade of grass than to control the mind.” We may empty the whole ocean with a blade of grass, but we cannot control the mind.

Control of the mind is self-restraint. Many examples are given to show the difficulty of self-control. The mind is like a wild elephant, they say. It is like a ravaging tempest; it is like a conflagrating fire; it is like a vast ocean; it is like space, and such other examples are given to tell what the mind is, what it is capable of doing, and how hard yoga is.

It sometimes looks that yoga is humanly impossible; it requires the grace of God. The great sage Dattatreya says, in the commencement of the Avadhuta Gita, Ishwara anugraha deva pumsam advaita vasana: It is perhaps Ishwara’s grace that brings us the tendency to think in terms of the unity of things. Who can bring us this consciousness? How can we say that it is our effort that has brought us this knowledge of God? Wherefrom comes this effort?

God’s grace is responsible, says even the Advaitan Sankara in one of his passages in the Brahma Sutras. “Who is the cause of the knowledge in the *jiva*?” is the question that Sankara raises in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras. We cannot say that it is the *jiva*, because the *jiva* is full of ignorance. How can ignorance be the cause of knowledge? Who causes the blossoming of the *jiva* into the experience of Truth? Can we say there is no cause? We cannot say there is no cause, and we cannot say that the *jiva* is the cause of the *jiva*’s illumination.

Sankara stumbles on the inescapable conclusion of accepting God is the cause. Some commentators say that here Advaita fails, and point out this mistake of Sankara's acceptance of God's grace in his scheme of Advaita. Well, it shows the difficulty in knowing anything in this world. It is not merely the difficulty in knowing God and His creation, but we cannot know anything completely, not even a grain of sand. We cannot fully understand even a flower that grows in the garden, because the poets tell us that to touch the petals of the lotus would be to touch the stars in the heavens, so intimately are the two related. These are the mysteries behind things, which speak the mystery of God in His creation.

So in our act of self-control and our attempt in the practice of yoga, we have to take a complete view of things. We should not be partial physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. We have to weigh the situation, whatever the situation be. Every step that we take should be a kind of all-round step. Yoga is a kind of moving equilibrium. It is moving because it is rising from one step to another step, and yet it is an equilibrium at every stage. Every stage of yoga is yoga, just as every rung of the ladder is a movement on the ladder itself. It is not movement from partiality to wholeness. In all yogas it is rising from smaller wholes to higher wholes. So it is not movement from untruth to Truth; it is movement from lower truth to higher truth.

In the yoga of self-restraint, the difficulty that we usually face is the fact that we are oblivious of the meaning behind the practice and get confounded by the outer attraction of things, mistaking one thing for the other. Even

advanced students make this mistake of thinking that they are well off in self-restraint, while they are really indulging in things. We may be terribly attached to a thing, and yet may have the notion that we are absolutely free because of a confoundedness of the mind – the reason being again, the incapacity to distinguish between the spirit behind the practice of self-restraint and the outer form it takes.

It is difficult to withdraw the mind from the form in which it is encased. The form and the mind are almost the same. How can we withdraw our thought from our body? It is difficult. It is like peeling our own skin, but yet it is said to be a feasible affair. When daily concentration on this is practised, we realise the distinction between the consciousness and the form with which it is entangled. Self-restraint is nothing but the withdrawal of consciousness from the form in which it is encased. The form, whether it is of the body or of the relation between one body and another body, or purely of another body, or again whether it is in the form of a social relationship – all these are bondages ultimately, from the point of view of spiritual aspiration.

Thus, in the practice of yoga, while teachers tell us that we have to practise self-restraint, we must be well up with *kshama*, *dhama* and *uparati*, equipped with the toughness within to concentrate the mind ultimately on the nature of the Absolute. To be initiated into this, ultimately we have to practice all the auxiliaries that are necessary for bringing about that condition of mind where it is prepared to accept this explanation of Reality. When we are in a state of passion, for example, when we are highly prejudiced for or against something, we will not listen to any logical

explanation because there it is that instinct tries to play its role. We try to adduce specious arguments and rationalise our instincts, which are all dangers on the spiritual path.

Here comes the Guru, the guide, who weans us from such tangles and frees us from the clutches of sense. The objects may not physically catch us, but their urges may catch us. The forms of the objects produce such an effect on the mind that they remain in the mind even when the body is cast off.

In a famous passage in one of the minor Upanishads, it is said, poison is not poison; to contemplate an object is poison. Why? What is the reason? Ordinary poison can destroy one life only, but this other poison can destroy many lives, because the sensory impressions will be so embedded in the mind that they will be carried from birth to birth, from one transmigratory life to another. Therefore, it is dangerous to contemplate the objects of sense. It is not the objects as such that are dangerous, but the contemplation of the mind on their forms.

This is briefly the philosophical foundation of yoga and particularly self-restraint, a very important subject not only in our spiritual life, but also in our practical day-to-day existence. It is essential for us to live a successful life in the world, and ultimately, to attain God. Self-restraint is the word. That is the motto in any field of activity: self-restraint versus self-indulgence.

Chapter 13

TITIKSH: FROM WILL POWER TO INNER STRENGTH

The qualities which a spiritual seeker is asked to cultivate in addition to *kshama*, *dhama* and *uparati*, whose nature we have been studying all the while, are *titiksha*, *shraddha* and *samadhana*. These are the power of endurance, faith, and the capacity to concentrate the mind, which form what are known as the *satsampat* or the sixfold virtues.

Of these latter three, *titiksha* comes first – fortitude, as we usually know it. Archarya Sankara defines *titiksha* in his *Vivekachudamani* as that character by which we complain not against existing conditions. Do not make an adverse remark about prevailing circumstances, and do not feel agony about existing situations. *Sahanam sarvaduḥkhānam apratikārpūrvakam, chintāvilāpara-hitam sā titikṣa nigadyate* (*Vivekachudamani* 24) is what Archarya Sankara tells us. *Titiksha*, therefore, implies withdrawal from a temptation to retaliate – a total absence of the sense of vengeance – non-compliance against the conditions prevailing, and absence of any kind of sorrow in the mind on account of external conditions.

Now, these are all very hard things indeed for people living in the world, because the very essence of human life is the attempt at changing conditions. There is perhaps none who would take things as they come and also see good in the way things come. The very essence of pragmatic life, so to say, is the effort to change circumstances, to convert the future into what we regard as better than the present.

The usual tendency of human life is to bring about a reorientation of things, to create newer and newer possibilities of life and create conditions of greater comfort and ease of living, and to put forth hard effort for this purpose.

But the argument of *titiksha* seems to be quite contrary to this usual predisposition of human nature. This would mean that to enter a spiritual way of living and to see things from a spiritual point of view, one has to remake oneself and not be satisfied with being an ordinary human being. There is no use taking things as the public usually takes things. The public eye is different from this subtle eye which sees things in their proper essences.

Generally, there is a perennial complaint against conditions outside. We have to protect or guard ourselves against unfavourable circumstances. This is a need that we feel throughout our lives. We build houses, keep arms with us, bodyguards, etc., and remain in a state of anxiety due to a secret suspicion that things are not all right; they ought to be better. Sometimes we call the world a dog's tail. But all this is not going to perturb the world. It has been what it is, and Herculean efforts of people, stalwarts that trod this Earth to change it, do not seem to have had an impression upon it. There might have been psychological satisfactions for people who have tried to amend it, but the constitution of the world has remained the same always.

The effort to change circumstances outwardly is no doubt the usual inclination or tendency of the human mind, but the spiritual law ordains that energy be not wasted in unnecessary contemplation of factors which are totally extraneous to spiritual fulfilment. There are many

more things for us to do in our spiritual life than the earthly life would demand of us. If all our efforts are to be wasted in creating comfortable circumstances, favourable conditions, avoiding what is unpleasant and so on, perhaps much of our time, or all our time, will go only in these attempts. There will be very little time left for us to construct an inner life of our own. While being busy with the facilities of outer life, we are likely to ignore the good of the inner life. But the argument may come forth: “Are we not to contribute our might to change conditions so that our lives may become easier and happier?” As I mentioned earlier, the spiritual attitude to things is a little different from the normal attitude of people in regard to the world. The spiritual attitude is supernormal and not the usual sensate outlook which the man in the street entertains in regard to his personality as well as to outer conditions.

There is a very famous mantra in the Isavasyopanishad which should come to our rescue in properly evaluating circumstances prevailing in the world. Kavir manīṣī, paribhūḥ, svayambhūḥ, yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ (Isa 8). This is something startling, no doubt, if we understand what it really means. What the mantra in this passage seems to make out is that the Creator, when He projected this cosmos, has so arranged the pattern of things that they do not need interference. The arrangement is complete to the core. Everything that is necessary has been provided. No one can meddle with it. No one can interfere with it. No one can change it. No one can improve upon it. No one can add to it or subtract from it.

This seems to be the meaning of the Isavasyopanishad when it says, yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāsvatībhyas samābhyaḥ: For all times to come, provisions have been made by the Creator in such a dexterous manner that they shall come to the people who are really in need of them at the appropriate hour. The universe is like a general store, and it has everything in it. It lacks nothing. There is no need to invent or create anything for one's practical existence. They have only to be summoned into action. The process in which these resources of the world are summoned into action in respect of the world or the created beings is also determined already.

The essence of the teachings of this whole passage seems to be that a complete change of things will not be possible. There is another very important factor which will throw a little light on this issue. There is what we call the state of omniscience. If omniscience is supposed to be a character of God, the Creator, we would notice that it implies foreknowledge of things. The knowledge of the future is implied in what is known as omniscience. What is going to happen is already known in the present. This is a part of omniscience. Whether it is God or anyone else who has been endowed with this quality, it makes no difference to us. If there is any such thing as all-knowingness, it should mean 'the present knowledge of a future occurrence', which also implies at the same time that the future is also fixed at the moment it is known. If the future is going to change, there cannot be omniscience, because something else may take place in the future, different from what is known now through omniscience.

It is said that in His omniscience, past, present and future get fused into a single eternal now and here. There is only presence, and no past and future for omniscience. And it is not a presence of a temporal nature; it is not a now that we can think of in terms of time. It is a transcendental Now which we cannot describe in terms of language because all language is temporal, limited to time. It is something which we cannot understand, but the implication of it is however that the future and the past commingle in the present, and there is only a single unitary knowledge. If someone, whoever it may be, can know the future, it would be enough argument against the possibility of any kind of interference with the existing order of things.

Yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyaḥ: Knowing this, cultivating this virtue of *viveka*, being contented with what one is being provided with, the spiritual seeker is asked to divert his or her attention to the acquisition of higher spiritual qualities rather than to the acquisition of material values for the sake of personal physical comforts.

Thus, *titiksha* is a power which the *sadhaka* cultivates in himself, by which the so-called unpleasant visions of life, the seamy side of existence, is seen in its proper colour and context, and thereby tolerated. Now, in the beginning, this toleration means bearing even what is unpleasant and ugly. This is a lower form of *titiksha*. Even if someone gives us a clout on the head, we somehow bear it. "Let it go." This is one kind of endurance. For spiritual aspiration, we may bear with these unpleasant things, but these forms of endurance will not stand us in good stead always because we cannot merely live by the power of will. The use of the

willpower is a kind of effort that we put forth to counteract forces which appear to be unfavourable to us at a given time. But this cannot be regarded as a normal kind of living. The normal life is that state of affairs where we do not think of the circumstances, where we do not have to think of them at all on account of them being favourable and equitable.

It is usually said that the best form of administration is that whose very presence is not felt by people. If we are constantly aware of a government on our head, it means that it is not working properly. Likewise is the nature of things in general. We are not to be bothered about things too much. We bear them somehow or the other; that is a different thing. But to be pleased with them, to be satisfied with them, is a higher quality. To see ugliness and yet not mind it is one thing, but to see beauty is a greater virtue. To see defect and entertain simultaneously a desire to overcome it and yet not mind its presence is a kind of *titiksha* or fortitude. But not to see the defect at all, and on the other hand to see a meaning which is coextensive with the nature of things, would be a higher quality.

So *titiksha* can be lower or higher. In the beginning, it is a capacity to bear unpleasant circumstances. We may call it power of will in the earlier stages. We somehow bear the cold of winter and the heat of summer, though we know it is very unpleasant. Sometimes we may even bear hunger, tolerate people who are annoying, irritating, unpleasant, etc.; but the spiritual form which *titiksha* takes and which it has to take, and which is really what is meant by *titiksha* in a spiritual sense, is that inner strength which one develops by a new vision of things altogether. This vision has already

been described under what is known as *viveka*, which is followed by *vairagya*. We have already seen what *viveka* could be and ought to be in our earlier studies.

With a correct appreciation of values and understanding of the true nature of things, the power to endure existing circumstances comes about automatically. We take things as normal on account of this higher and broader vision of things. We are not surprised at the events that take place in the world. Nothing makes us feel consternation. There is nothing that is startling in this world. It is startling only to those people who expect something different. But why should we expect anything at all? The mistake lies in the person who expects things. Either we have the extended vision of the whole of Nature, whereby we can know even things which are going to take place in the future, in which case again there is going to be no such thing as surprise, or if this is difficult or impossible, we expect anything and be prepared for everything. Be prepared for the worst. Nothing can be worse than the worst, and so when we are prepared for it, there would be nothing in the world that can agonise us.

Now, these characteristics which the spiritual seeker has to develop are very difficult things to cultivate, because the most difficult thing in the world for a person to cultivate is to look small before others. Nothing can be harder than that. It is only a small person who is content to be at the back, rather than at the front, and who can tolerate things. It is only the bigwig that cannot tolerate. But the smaller person who occupies a humble position in life and is satisfied with the lot in which he is placed will have the necessary strength to bear things as they come.

One of the reasons why we cannot bear things is that they often go contrary to our desires. The world is not ruled by our desires. The desires have to abide by a law that is already existing. Nature does not care for either this person or that person. It has no friends or foes. It is not the intention of Nature to satisfy us or to give us pleasure, so it is foolish to imagine the law intends pleasure for people. It is not so. The law intends good for people, not the satisfaction of an impulse of any particular person or group of people. Hence, to abide by the law of God, to put it properly, would be one of the ways of developing an inner strength by which the conditions of the world not only do not torment, but also assume a meaningfulness and a beauty, a system, an order and a method in their working, so that we become capable of enjoying the world as it is rather than suffer it.

How can we enjoy the world as it is unless we change it, convert it altogether? This is a new art of living. The art of spiritual living is the art of understanding, rather than the effort at converting things. The art of spiritual living is the technique of feeling with the inner law that operates behind any given circumstance, and to appreciate it in its proper context. Great saints alone can develop this character – and very great saints, even then, not ordinary ones, because that would be to see God’s face in the manifestations.

Who can bear the vicissitudes of life who has not developed a Godly life in oneself? Only God can develop God’s creation, nobody else. He alone can understand its meaning, and the more we are capable of entering into this meaning, the more also we are able to bear when Nature comes in its different colours and forms. *Sā titikṣa*

nigadyate: This is fortitude, a very important characteristic, because if we always have a complaining and detesting nature towards things, then that would also imply a similar attitude from the outer world in regard to us. The world is unfortunately made in such a way that it reacts towards us in the same way as we react towards it. Some poets and saints have compared the world to a kind of reflection that we see through a mirror. We see our own selves, as it were. If we smile, the reflection also smiles in the mirror. If we frown, it frowns; whatever we do, that it does in respect of us. There seems to be some truth in this great proclamation.

It is difficult to understand our duties in this world because we always stand as persons rather than principles of impersonal aspiration. It is true that we are persons, and nobody can escape this contingency. We are human beings – bodies. But we are expected, as humble seekers of God, to entertain an impersonal aspiration even in this personal body encasement. The impersonal aspiration it is that is to keep us alive in this world. That which expands itself to greater and greater extents would be the tendency to the impersonal. Well, what else could be the good of life, if it is not this tendency to develop oneself into the larger and larger extensions of impersonality? God is the highest of impersonalities; the Supreme Impersonal is God, and the spiritual aspiration is the tendency to the achievement of this impersonality of living.

The more we become impersonal in our attitude, the more also is the strength of our mind. And the lessons on self-restraint which we have been studying on earlier occasions would be guiding lights for us on our path, to tell

us how we can become impersonal in this manner. The bodily existence is the rudimentary or the crudest form of personality. From this crass personal existence of bodily living, we have to extend our vision to the mental and the intellectual levels where we are supposed to be more impersonal. A boor, an animalistic type of person living only for the satisfaction of impulses, cravings, etc., who lives wholly a bodily existence, may be the lowest unit of our evaluation. But a very cultured person, intellectually educated, psychologically trained, will not behave like that. The person trained in logical thinking and psychological analysis of life will be capable of greater self-restraint and maintaining social etiquette in life than a boor. This is a simple form of impersonality that people develop by education and culture. A cultured person, well educated, is more impersonal in attitude than an untutored village rustic.

But all this impersonality of ours is tentative. It is brittle and can break any day. Sometimes it is stifled by the passions of life, and our etiquettes go with the winds, even though we may be cultured. So this possibility is not ruled out in cultured and educated people. But it is a tendency of the mind, a good tendency which indicates its longing to become wider in its perspective and understanding than is the case of pure bodily living, by effort, through study, *satsanga* and contemplation. We have to develop this power of introducing into our personal life the system of what is impersonal because the impersonal, and not what is personal in life, is the signal of the real.

We cannot ordinarily see impersonality; we think in terms of bodies at all times. But some amount of effort is

needed to summon impersonality and become more charitable in our thoughts and feelings. This generosity in thinking and feeling is a sign of impersonality in our living. By self-restraint, by contemplation on what is immediately above us, we can develop the power of endurance – *titiksha*.

In any stage of living there is something above; we can never reach the highest at any time. If the effect rises to the level of the cause, that cause would be realised to be the effect of some other cause above it and so on, ad infinitum, perhaps. Every cause becomes an effect to a higher cause; thus every state of being has a determining factor about it, and morality is nothing but the determining of the lower by the higher.

If we are contented with merely what we are and do not want to abide by any kind of law that determines it, then that would be the law of immorality. But the moral sense is that state of consciousness which regulates the lower state of living in terms of the demands of the higher. In other words, the personal is to be governed by the laws of the impersonal. The effect is to be determined by the nature of the cause. The gross is to be regulated by the laws of the subtle, whatever it be.

Thus, the power to endure may be developed. But, what are we going to endure? What is it that we are going to tolerate and what is the reason behind this injunction that circumstances should be borne?

What we have to really bear, at the very outset, is the world in its physical form. The seasons, for example, may not be pleasant to us. We neither like heat nor cold. People around us may not be pleasing. We may neither like that person nor this person. Social rules and regulations may

not be satisfactory to us. We say that things ought to have been better, the present system has to be changed, and so on. These are our natural inclinations of thinking. Very few people can really put these ideas into practice. Everyone can say that things ought to be better, but it is difficult to see a person who can really make one thing into another. We cannot make or convert one thing into another thing. Many people have tried, but ultimately, if we read history, we would find those who have tried have been put to such difficulties, hardships, tortures and frustrations that in the end what happened was that they themselves were wiped out of existence. The world became too hard for them.

These people who got defeated by the forces of the world were those who tried to make the world an entirely different place from what it was. This may be a very praiseworthy attitude and a quality which a normal person in the world is expected to cultivate, but we are now considering the characteristics of a spiritual seeker – the pros and cons of a spiritual life and the prerequisites of spiritual *sadhana*. What are the obstacles that may come upon us on our way, and how are we to encounter them or face them? It is from this point of view that the great system called Sadhana Chatustaya was instituted and *sadhakas* are asked to equip themselves with these qualities.

The spiritual way of thinking is something quite different from the way in which people in the world usually think. Sometimes this novel way of thinking may look very cruel and out of line with the order of things; but it is a particular way of thinking which alone can set the mind of man in tune with the existing order.

Now, the existing order does not mean an order that is going to be sublimated by another order that is going to come in the future. The existing order of the world, to take it in its generality, is a particular face of the eternal order which regulates all things. It is not that the order has to go on changing every day. Sanatana Dharma, as we call it, is the eternal order of things. This is what is implied by the passage of the Isovasyopanishad that I quoted, which says: yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyah.

The day-to-day routine, the seasonal changes, even the calamities and catastrophes of life which may look very surprising ordinarily, form part of this eternal order. That we should have a fever, that we should have purging, that we should have stomach pain is implied in a single order, what we may call as the law of health – the law of the balance of the forces in our physical system. The law does not change. There is a specific determined law which ordains the physical body of ours to live in a particular way. We cannot change this order. The law of health is one and one only, and it cannot become more than one.

But all the experiences that may follow, pleasant or unpleasant, in our day-to-day existence, physically speaking, will naturally have to be subsumed under this single law of bodily existence, or the existence of the psychophysical organism, or we may call it the law of health. In a likewise manner, there is an eternal law, the law of universal health, we may say, which expects things to behave in a particular manner, and when things conduct themselves in accordance with this existing eternal order, there is pleasure. This is joy. All joy is due to conformity to law. Where we violate law, whatever be that law, there is no

joy. When we violate physical law, we are sick. When we violate social or political law, we are punished. When we violate universal law, we know what happens: we have to undergo transmigratory lives, to pass through births and deaths. On the other hand, if there is conformity with the law, there is physical happiness, psychological balance, social solidarity, political equipoise, and finally freedom from even birth and death.

It is this which is to act as the controlling system of understanding behind the practice of *titiksha*, the power of endurance. When we actually come face to face with this problem of *titiksha*, we will find that the majority of people are not meant for it because they do not have this kind of understanding. It is difficult to expect this understanding; in all personal matters it does not come, and it cannot come on the nature of things because we live a sensory life. We think in terms of the senses, and so this understanding which is superior to the sensory way of reaction is hard to obtain in this world. This knowledge is difficult to acquire.

But there is a higher meaning of *titiksha*, a hint at which is very beautifully given in a verse of the Bhagavadgita, a verse which perhaps many do not stop to consider in its proper value and context. Śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt, kāmakrodhod-bhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ (Gita 5.23). This is a higher kind of *titiksha* which the Gita enjoins upon us as a seeker of Truth. There is another kind of endurance which is different from enduring the pairs of opposites in ordinary life such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst. We may bear heat and cold; we may sweat and shiver. That is one power of endurance. We

may not drink water for days together. This is one thing, the lower type of endurance.

But there is a greater difficulty threatening us than that which is outside our own self. Well, everything may look all right from the outside world, but there may be a revolt from our own selves. We are our own enemies and our own friends. It is to this problem that the Gita makes reference in this great verse, śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śārīravimokṣaṇāt, kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegarṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ. What we have to endure or bear, or resist, ultimately, is not heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, praise and censure, etc., but the impulse of desire from within, and the impulse to anger. This is what we have to endure, finally.

The urge for desire and the urge to anger are the two great demonical urges in us. Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ, mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam (Gita 3.37). This is our enemy, if at all we have any enemy in this world. Yudhisthira, in an incident from the Mahabharata, listened to all the discourses of Bishma for days together on *dharma*, which contained every instruction on righteousness. Even after hearing all this, having understood all blessed things on Earth from the holy lips of Bhishma, Yudhisthira began to complain that he is a sinner having gained a kingdom after bloodshed, having destroyed his kith and kin, and wept saying he did not know what lot is to befall him. When Sri Vyasa came and advised him that he is unwise in weeping like this, even Vyasa's advice was of no avail. This was the condition in which Yudhisthira found himself.

Sri Krishna came and said, “Yudhisthira, you are crying over a war in which you seem to have killed many people – your own or not your own, whatever it be. Now your mind is preoccupied with a war that has taken place. I now tell you, no war has taken place and you have killed nobody. The war in which you have to kill your enemies is yet to take place. A war is to break out still, and you must be prepared for it. In this war, nobody will help you – not Arjuna, nor Bhima, nor Nakula, not Sahadeva; not even the army is of any use to you. In this battle that is going to break out inside your own self, the enemies are not Duryodhana and his henchman, not the Kauravas; no human being is an enemy here. In this war, your mind is your enemy, and no weapon, no Gandiva, nothing will be of any aid. You will have to subdue the mind with the power of the mind alone. This battle is now pending, and what are you bewailing?”

The teaching behind this instruction of Krishna to Yudhisthira is that the ultimate solace of man is in self-mastery, and he who cannot understand the meaning of this great virtue cannot understand anything in this world. Whatever be the victory that we may win in this world, that has to be looked upon as little in comparison with the great victory that we have to win over our own self. Look at the lives of great people that have lived in this world – great, as we would define greatness. We will realise that either they were really great and their greatness consisted in their mastery which they achieved over themselves, or their outward greatness which history records was marred by inner weakness.

The person who cannot subdue his own weakness is not a victor in this world, because what we do depends upon how our impulses direct us. Who acts actually, who does anything in this world, but the impulses of man? It is on the basis of this psychological fact that some medical psychologists of the West have opined that man is not free. There is no such thing as human freedom because what we do is directed by impulses. We do not do anything, either good or bad. We are driven. So when we are driven by a force, how can we call ourselves free?

You may say that it is your will that has acted in this manner. Well, you may will, but can you will that you should will in a particular way? There is a Will behind your will. When the consciousness gets identified with a particular impulse, the impulse is mistaken for a freedom of choice, and yielding is erroneously taken for victory. The person has yielded to the temptation or the urge of the impulse. But the consciousness has so identified itself with the process of the impulse, and that consciousness is your self, so that self imagines itself to be free, though it is slavery that has made it act in a particular manner.

When consciousness stands as a witness of the impulses, it can know what true freedom is. But when it gets identified with the psychological processes of impulse, then it is difficult to make a distinction between the psychological act that has taken place and the consciousness that is behind it. Mostly, we are not free. We are free only to the extent our consciousness can stand apart from the urges of the psyche. While there are various types of urges, the principle among them is *kama* and *krodha*. It is these two that have been mentioned in the

Bhagavadgita. Śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt: he who can withstand the onslaught of these two urges from within even before departing from this body, *raga* and *dvesha*, *kama* and *krodha*; sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ: he is a Yogi. That person shall be happy, because yoga is not possible where the consciousness is incapable of attunement to the order of things. If the consciousness is attuned to impulses, it is *bhoga*; if it is attuned to the law of the cosmos, it is yoga.

Therefore, there cannot be yoga as long as there is the identification of the consciousness with the impulses of *kama* and *krodha*. The mind develops these two positive and negative tendencies in regard to the objects of sense, whose nature we have studied a little before. They blow like a tempest or a violent wind, like a gale or hurricane that can lift up any weighty object. *Kama* and *krodha* are like a tempest, and when they rush with tremendous velocity they can throw us up into the skies. We cannot stand on the ground by the firmness of our feet.

Whenever an impulse becomes too strong for the mind to control, the mind becomes one with the impulse. There would be no mind to think the impulse; the mind is the impulse, and vice versa. When this situation arises in the mind, one does not know what one does. The velocity, the impetuosity of the impulses towards objects is what is known as passion. An uncontrollable desire is called passion, and we call it a desire when it is tolerable. When it is intelligible, when perhaps it can be subdued, we call it a desire. When it is in a very mild form we call it a preference, or a liking. Preferring tea to coffee is a very mild form of desire. It is not a passion, but it is just such simple,

apparently harmless preferences which are like drops that become the ocean of impetuosity of violence and passion later on.

People who smoke or drink begin with drops, with preferences, with obligations in parties, etc., but later on it becomes a passion and the devil catches hold of the person. When desire gets out of control, then life becomes a misery. It becomes intolerable. We cannot live our own personal life. There are people in this world who cannot bear their own life any more, and when things go so bad, they attempt to end their lives; even these are not impossibilities. Such passions arise in the minds when they are given a long rope, without any kind of directive intelligence behind them. The preferences have to be subdued. It would be wise on the part of the seeker not to have preferences in the beginning.

There is a story in the Puranas of Takshaka and Parikshit. These stories are meant to give us instructions in spiritual life. It is said that Tatshaka came in the form of a very small microbe crawling on a lemon in order to bite Parikshit. King Parikshit was patting himself on the back in sheer defiance of the curse that Rishi Kumara had put on him, because the sunset of the seventh day has almost passed, and the curse had not been fulfilled. The king was very much pleased, and he found this lemon floating near him which had this very minute microscopic germ crawling over it. Parikshit took this lemon. He was laughing, "Oh, the time has come, and Tatshaka has not come." He announced in public, "Well, let this germ bite me today." It was a defiant remark. He arrogantly said, "It is said that my death shall be with this germ." So he took this small germ and kept it on his back, imagining that it is a joke.

Immediately that small germ became a huge serpent and bit him so violently that he died instantaneously.

Anything in this world can assume any proportion. This is a very important fact which seekers should realise. Nothing is insignificant. Everything is important enough in its own place, and everything will find itself in its own place, one day or the other.

Our point was that we should not even have preferences. These are like the microbes that may assume the proportion of Tatshaka one day, and they can become violent impulses of *kama* and *krodha*. Nothing can be so dangerous to spiritual life as the demonstration of *kama* and *krodha*. This is why Bhagavan Sri Krishna advises that the greatest endurance, or *titiksha sadhana*, would be the power to endure the impetuous movements of these two forces which are lodged in each and every person. *Kama* and *krodha* are everywhere, they are not only in one place and, unfortunately, they are inside, not outside. We carry these impulses wherever we go. They are in an incipient form when under unfavourable circumstances. They lie in ambush, as it were, and when circumstances are favourable, they rise up into a form of a tempestuous wind and unsettle the understanding of the person.

Buddhi nasha may take place, and the consequence mentioned is *buddhināśāt praṇaśyati* (Gita 2.63). The greatest *titiksha* would be the psychological, internal one. We are here concerned with the spiritual life of a seeker – how one can attune, train, embellish or extend one's consciousness from the lower level to the higher – because the psychology of the spirit is concerned purely with the nature of consciousness. When we have studied the nature

of consciousness, we have studied the nature of the entire existence.

So *titiksha* is one of the important virtues in *sadhana chatustaya* which we are called upon to cultivate. When we are appreciably equipped with this characteristic of the Spirit, which is *sadhana shakti*, then we may be said to be treading the path of the Spirit because, while *kshama*, *dhama* and *uparati* are important enough, they are not sufficient by themselves. We have many difficulties on the path and to face each problem or difficulty, we have to equip ourselves with a specific type of strength. These equipments are known as the Satsampat – *kshama*, *dhama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *shraddha*, *samadhana* – the six kinds of remedy prescribed for six types of problems that may arise in the spiritual life of a person, into whose nature we shall see again another time.

Chapter 14

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

When seeking the guidance of a Guru or a Master, a very important instruction to the spiritual aspirant is that we should have adequate faith in our own self. There should be no doubt in regard to the very objective we are seeking.

Often doubts assail the mind, even in respect of the existence of God Himself. A large number of students approach Masters for guidance with a doubt in regard to the very existence of that which is supposed to be sought through the aspiration.

It is true that the world is torn asunder with the ravaging tempest of thoughts which run in different directions. It is on account of uncontrolled thoughts that we begin to doubt that there is meaning in the world. Our problems and difficulties of daily life seem to be enough argument against the existence of God. The usual question everywhere in the world is, "If pain can be, how can God be?" as these two are contradictory in nature.

The *viveka* and *vairagya shakti* of a student, which perhaps appear to rise in the initial stages on account of the fructification of the meritorious deeds performed in previous life, get stifled at some point in time. Anyone can be in a state of doubt at some time. Pains come in an intensified form, almost to the point of death; such sufferings are not impossible in this world. When they come upon a person, it is then that the mind begins to doubt the existence of meaning in life. The psychology of history will be ample proof to tell us how many people the

world has produced who thought in this manner, and suffered as a consequence thereof.

The student should not approach a Guru or Master with this attitude: God may be, or God may not be; I may be successful or I may not be successful; the achievement may be of value or not be of value at all. With these debatable attitudes, the student should not approach the master. Faith, *shraddha*, is regarded as a very important quality or qualification of a seeking student. The student has to convince himself of the meaning of his aspiration.

Our aspiration should not be a meaningless pursuit. We are not trying to experiment with God or to put the meaning of life on trial: "Let me see if there is some meaning or not." If we try to put Nature on a trial to see if there is any meaning or significance behind it, we will find that there is no meaning at all. It has no significance. Then we will return with a complaint that we have seen nothing because the doubts that arise on account of an apparent meaninglessness of our actions and modes of living life are due to untrained thinking. Our present-day way of thinking is incapable of seeing through the meaning of things – the reason being that to realise or visualise the meaning of an object, the mind which seeks this meaning in the object should be set in tune with it. If the object and the mind which tries to understand the object run in different directions, as poles apart, there will be no union between the two, and the mind cannot understand the object.

Whether God exists or not is a question which the mind raises. This question arises because of the mind's observation of Nature through the activities of the senses. We must be aware that such doubts can come upon any

person; we can get these doubts even though we are apparently acquainted with the primary modes of spiritual life.

All faith can be shaken by the winds of suffering when suffering comes in a form which cannot be tolerated by the frailties of the body. It is faith which can stand us in good stead, which can follow us even to our doom. If the turmoils of life can shake our faith, then it would mean that the faith has not been born of conviction.

There is a faith which is prior to conviction, and a faith which is posterior to conviction. The faith which comes to us early in life, due to having been born under certain circumstances – for example, in a religious family, a good society, etc. – is one kind of faith. From our childhood our parents might have been telling us that God is. It is quite possible that our parents are religious persons, temple goers, believers in the presence of an omnipotent Creator of the world. As such, it is quite possible that we, children of such parents, are taught to believe in the existence of a Supreme Sovereign of all creation, and due to this instruction that has been given to us since childhood, we develop a kind of faith in the existence of a kind of Supernatural Being. This faith has not come to us due to conviction, understanding, analysis, observation or study.

We have been told that something is; therefore, we believe that something has to be, merely because we have been told so. This is one kind of faith – the faith of the majority of the people, we may say. But the mind grows, evolves and develops an independent attitude as it evolves in the process of its evolution.

When the mind begins to assert independence in its way of thinking, it seeks a satisfaction of the ways in which it is constituted. The mind is a logically constructed principle. It is not chaotic substance. It is not a bundle of blind beliefs. Though such faith and beliefs form part of its constitution, they are not the essence of the mind. The mind has perhaps many a layer forming its body, and while we try to uncover the mind layer after layer, we will begin to see that the mind is essentially constituted of a certain methodology of thinking. The mind is a name that we give to the total structure of the different ways in which we can think. The mind is constituted of thinking. Thought is mind. And, if we would like to understand mind as a kind of substance, which it really is not, we may tentatively agree that the mind is the sum total of certain given processes of thinking which are precisely logical, by which we mean that thoughts proceed in an order.

There is a system in the development of our ideas. We do not think at random. It is not that we think something now, and something else immediately afterwards, without any correlation between thoughts. When we delve deeper into the system of our thinking, we realise that there is a method, and the mind wants to subject its objects to this methodology of thinking. We may call this the strength or the weakness of the mind.

It is impossible for the mind to take anything for granted. It has to cast everything into the moulds of its own logic, and by the logic of the mind, we understand the way in which the mind deduces one thing from another. Everything has to be deduced; otherwise, the mind does not get satisfied. This logic is even applied to the existence of

that which originally has been accepted as an article of faith. And so it is that we demand arguments of proof for the existence of God, because God has to be deduced.

If logic is the way of thinking, if logic is the law of thought, then every object of thought has to be subjected to the modes of logic. When this attempt is made by the mind to scrutinise everything logically, then everything, even the concept of God, becomes a question which has to be analysed, argued about and deduced from certain premises. The existence of God no more becomes an article of faith but is summoned to the court of reason and analysed threadbare, and proofs are called for; and if no proofs come forth, the existence of God is dismissed from the universe of thinking.

Here is the great argument of the mind: God does not exist because of the ill-logicality that we observe in the world. The mind becomes unhappy whenever it cannot apply its way of thinking to the world and to the objects of its thought, and the Providence that seems to be operating in the world with no intelligible system behind its working makes the mind unhappy.

Therefore, we begin to doubt anything and everything when it cannot be deduced from premises that are acceptable. This is the usual way in which the mind thinks. We are told, generally, that logic is the law of human thinking. If the human mind is to think of God, if it has to accept God as the content of its thought, then there can be no other way than to subject God to the test of logic. This has been done in the past, and is being done even now.

But in this effort to analyse the nature of God, the mind forgets that this peculiar nature called God, which it is

trying to understand, is not capable of an analysis along the lines of logic because while we may accept God as a kind of object, and may even call Him the Supreme Object, He is not an object of the mind.

It is on account of this difficulty involved in the thought of God that proofs have failed to establish His existence. Unfortunately, God is the presupposition of all logical proofs. But the mind of the seeker is a human mind, so whatever be the decision of an initial enthusiasm on the path of yoga, it is likely to be disturbed by the obtrusive logical moods that arise in the mind occasionally, and we are prone to put a 'why' before anything that is presented before us. Why should it be like this? Why should God create the world? Why did God create a meaningless, painful, chaotic, material world? And why should there be this distinction of high and low, gross and subtle, in a world of equality created by God? These are some of the 'whys' that occur to our minds, questions which cannot be easily answered because who is to answer them? Before whom are we posing these queries? We cannot put these questions to other human beings because they too think like us. Whatever be the question, it is a human question, and no human being can answer these ultimate human questions. We are all human beings with common frailties.

Hence, conviction lacks while faith begins to argue in its own way that something has to be, something ought to be, because we have been told that something is.

When we approach a Guru for initiation into the mysteries of yoga, we are asked to be thoroughly convinced as to the nature of the objective that we are seeking. If it is God, we should be convinced that God is. Now, how are we

to be convinced that God is? Another person cannot convince us, because all persons are made in the same way. Our own observations should convince us. As certain observations in the world seem to have created a doubt in our minds regarding the existence of God, certain other observations may prove the existence of God.

Pain and suffering are not the only things that exist in this world. The world does not contain only ugliness and defects, poverty and sickness, death, transformation and change. It contains something else also, together with these unfortunate things with which the mind is dissatisfied. While we seem to be unfortunate to have been born in this mundane world of perpetual suffering, we seem at the same time to be fortunate that we have been born in a world of this kind which, simultaneously with all this suffering, also hints at the existence of something positive as an answer to all the questions that the mind can raise. All the questions arise from the negative side of things, and the answers have to come from the positive side.

The world has two sides, the positive and the negative. When we look at the negative side of things, we begin to weep, and when we see the positive side, we begin to laugh. The world contains both these things, so there are people in this world who weep, and there are also people who smile and laugh because of the different observations that they make.

We may take the standpoint of the common man that everything is subject to destruction. Everything dies, everything perishes. Every person has to leave this world one day or the other. This is a world of transformation – change. One question is: Can there be a God in a world

which is in perpetual change? This is one of the doubts that may occur in the minds of people: If everything is impermanent, can there be permanence anywhere?

The question itself is pregnant with the answer: Because everything is impermanent, something has to be permanent. The question carries the answer together with it. The very fact that we observe change and destruction everywhere, we have answered our own question. Who can see impermanence, if there is nothing permanent? Who can be conscious of the fact of death if there is nothing presupposing the process of death? Who can be conscious that there is a finite object if there is not something exceeding the finite? Who can be aware that something is an effect if there is no cause behind it? And how can we seek redress from sorrow? How can there be a standard of moral values if there is no such thing as positive goodness? If everything is bad, we cannot know that there is such a thing as bad. The very fact that we say that there is something bad shows that there is something good. It looks that all of our questions have their own answers inside them.

We cannot say that everything is dead wrong. The very fact that we make such a statement shows that there is something that is not wrong; something is all right. If we are not subtly and at the background conscious of a standard of judgement with which we compare the vicissitudes, pains and shortcoming of the world, our judgements themselves would not be. All judgement is comparison. There is a standard with which we compare things and then say it is this or it is that. When we say we

do not like this, it means to say that we like something. It is not that we do not like anything.

All expressions of thought carry with them two sides – the positive and the negative. While the world with all its deficiencies and shortcomings may be said to be the negative side of experience, God is its positive side.

If God cannot be, the world also cannot be. If we accept the existence of the world, we have to accept the existence of God because we cannot accept one side and cancel the other side. Our aspirations are enough proof for the existence of a permanent value in life. Everyone asks for something which is enduring. We ask for perfection and happiness for a very long time, not for a few years; we want it perennially. This is the tendency to eternity that we have in our own minds.

We would like to have things for all times to come, and we would like to have as many things as possible. These are the two sides of our longings – as many things as possible and for as long a time as possible. Quantitatively and qualitatively, we seek perfection. But these subtle hints behind our longings get smothered by the ravaging, clamouring voice of the senses. The senses shout so much that these subtle whispers of the inner Reality within us get drowned and we begin to doubt and ask questions in terms of the senses, not knowing that we have also the answers behind these questions.

This is the reason why the *sadhana-chatustaya*, particularly in its aspect as *satsampat*, wants us to cultivate the qualities of *kshama*, *dhama* and *uparati*. The mind should be calm in order that we may be conscious of the existence of a meaning in life first and foremost, and in this

subdued attitude realise that there is a permanent value which we seek in the world. It is said that we should develop a faith which will not be shaken by the logic of the world. It is with this faith that we have to approach a preceptor. The arguments should no more be in a position to shake us. We ought to have thoroughly argued everything for ourselves, considering the pros and cons. We must be such good logicians that other logics cannot shake us. If someone can say something else and disturb our thoughts, it means our conviction has not been good, that we are not a logical thinker. We have not sifted the problems properly before coming to conclusions. We should weigh our thoughts thoroughly, argue them, sift them and come to a definite conclusion, so definite that there should be no sublimation of these thoughts, no necessity to change our ideas. With this conviction it is that the student should approach the preceptor. We must be sure as to what we want. We should not go and ask the Guru, "I do not know what I want, please tell me!" Many students today put these questions: "I am not all right; I do not know what I want; please tell me."

Conviction is the first thing – a faith born of conviction. A faith born of conviction is unshakeable. Faith is supposed to be threefold, or sometimes fourfold. Faith in the existence of God, who is the supreme objective of our seeking, is one thing. Once we are convinced about this, we are not to put further questions. We have only to be initiated into the mysteries of the meditation on God, for which we go to the Guru. That is one aspect of the matter.

The other aspect of faith is said to be faith in the Guru himself. We should not doubt his methods of instruction

and initiation. The importance of the Guru in spiritual life cannot be overestimated. Suffice it to say that the path of the Spirit cannot be trodden independently by a person merely with a logical attitude. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā, proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha* (Katha 1.2.9), says the Kathopa-nishad. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā*: With logic we cannot achieve this goal. *Proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha*: There is no way at all unless we are taught by another who is competent.

The weaknesses of the mind will prevent it from taking an independent stand in matters such as this. Moreover, it is difficult for the student to know his own mind. The mind has many layers of manifestation and while in one layer it may appear to be longing for God, in another it may be secretly working for the satisfaction in the world of sense. It is only the Guru who can know this turmoil in the mind of the disciple. We may be in a state of conflict even while we are approaching a Guru, while for all practical purposes it may look from outside that we are well off in spiritual *sadhana*.

Conflicts again are conscious or subconscious. If there is a conscious conflict, perhaps we may be aware of what our difficulties are. But there are subconscious tensions, and these become obstacles in our study, as well as in our meditations. The unconscious tensions are the results of past desires which have not been fulfilled, desires which might have arisen many years ago, perhaps in childhood, which we could not satisfy and had to thrust inside by force due to the taboo of society or some such reason. Such desires which wanted an expression, an outlet or an avenue for satisfaction, and which were forced inside, cause tension

in the subconscious mind. It is these tensions that disturb us in our meditations.

Many a time our meditations are not successful though we have been honest in our approach, the reason being that we have subtle tensions in our minds. Most of us have conscious tensions in our mind, and yet we cannot express them due to private reasons. Our minds are very complex, and each mind is unique. The way out cannot be known by our own selves, as a sick person cannot treat himself when he is really ill. All sick people go to doctors; to study some medical text and treat oneself is not possible. Likewise, a spiritual student of yoga approaches a Master, an adept who acts like a spiritual physician to heal the illness of *samsara*.

No one should be complaisant enough to imagine that one is well off in spiritual life and that one has the strength to stand on one's own legs. There are difficulties which one cannot foresee, difficulties coming from mostly within, and in the lives of spiritual seekers it will be seen that many a time they are suddenly brought face to face with certain experiences which they themselves cannot explain.

Desires of an intense nature may suddenly arise in the mind, in spite of years of effort to the contrary. We may be surprised how these desires have arisen in the mind when we have been doing so much *japa* and pilgrimage, *tirta yatra*, etc.

The reason is that we have not treated our mind in a scientific manner. The tensions of the mind are the illnesses of the mind. Psychoanalysts call these the conflicts, and so on, by various names. The conflict is really the disagreement between the inner condition of the mind and

the outer circumstances in which it is placed. When the two do not agree, there is tension. We have to loosen this cord, and the mind should be able to move in a straight direction. The knots of the heart which yoga speaks of are nothing but the knots of these tensions and desires.

Either we have to untie these knots carefully, or we have to cut them like the Gordian knot. Both these methods will be difficult. We cannot untie them, nor can we easily cut them, as Alexander is said to have cut the Gordian knot. They are hard enough.

Under these circumstances, a very good spiritual adept who knows the psychology of the human mind is necessary; such is a Guru. You should not doubt the competency of the Guru. After faith in God comes faith in Guru. If you doubt the existence of God, you know the consequences, and if you doubt the existence of the Guru, perhaps you will be worse. The Guru exists for you.

Some people say that there is no Guru at all. One British lady wrote a book by the name of *Hunting the Guru in India*. She went back very sadly disappointed because she hunted the Guru and found none. Nowhere could she find the Guru. She had gone to almost every ashram in India and wrote the book with very damaging criticisms. So we should not approach a Guru with a carping attitude. Just as we should not test the existence of God with our logic, we should not test the competency of the Guru.

Once we have taken him as our Master, he is our Master forever. There is no such thing as changing the Guru. I need not dilate upon the necessity for a Guru, what a Guru means in spiritual life, and why we have to be initiated by the Guru into the mysteries of yoga. The initiation is

necessary not only to learn the techniques of meditation which are not possible to gather from textbooks, but also because there is a particular meaning in the very process of initiation.

One thing is that we cannot know how to meditate, whatever be the number of books that we may read. The secret of meditation is very simple; unfortunately, we cannot find it in books. This is why we have to go to a person who knows this, and who has lived this life.

The other aspect is that there is a vital contact that is established in the process of initiation, on account of which initiation is regarded as compulsory and necessary. The thought of the Guru influences the mind of the disciple to a large extent. This is called *shakti-patha* in common parlance. Generally, *shakti-patha* is a term which is used to designate the way by which the power of the mind of the Guru influences or descends into the weaker mind of the disciple and works in the mind of the disciple. It charges the mind of the disciple, like a battery, infuses electric energy, as it were, into the mind of the disciple by the act of concentration, by the methodology of initiation, by means of the mantra or the formula or the technique into which the mind of the disciple is initiated. Such is the importance of the Guru and the initiation into the method of yoga.

Also, we are supposed to have sufficient faith in the words of the scripture. The need for faith in the scripture arises on account of our logical reason being incompetent to ascertain the nature of Reality.

A famous aphorism of the Brahma Sutras says *sastrayonitvat* (B.S. 1.1.3): God can only be known through the scripture. It is not that books can reveal God; this is not

the implication of the *sutra*. The meaning is that revelation is the only criterion in super-mundane matters. It is not logic, intellect, argumentation or reason that can be an aid in the ascertainment of Truth; only revelation, insight, and intuition can comprehend the nature of Reality. As Truth is all-comprehending, the method of knowing Truth should also be all-comprehending, integral. The methods of logic are defective in the sense that they separate the two terms of the argument into the subject and the object, whereas in insight there is no such bifurcation of thought from its object. God is Unitary Being, the Sole Existence, which means that in God the seen and the seer are blended together.

God is the seen, as well as the seer. As such, the methods of logic will not work there, where the seer and the seen are not different. To the processes of induction and deduction in logic, the seer is different from the seen, the subject is different from the predicate. But in God or in anything concerning God, Who is Unitary Existence, the Sole Reality, in Whom the seer and the seen come together into a fraternal embrace, logic is of no use.

Hence, scripture is the only aid. To realise the miracle of God, we have to pass through the process of initiation through a Guru and get the aid of the subtle teaching of the scripture. By scripture we mean the records of spiritual revelation. A scripture is not a book written by any person. It is not an intellectual work or a premeditated treatise. It is just a manifestation of Reality in the consciousness of a seer in the light of meditation. We have scriptures in all religions, all holding their scripture as a sacred revelation of God Himself. In our own country we have the famous

scriptures known as the Vedas and the Upanishads, which are often regarded as the expiration of God.

Sa yathārḍra-edhāgner abhyāhitāt pṛthag dhūmā viniścaranti, evaṃ vā are'sya mahato bhūtasya niḥsvasitam, etad yad ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo-'tharvāṅgīrasa itihāsaḥ purāṇam vidyā upaniśadaḥ ślokāḥ sūtrāny anuvyākhyānāni vyākhyānāni: asyaivaitāni sarvāṇi niḥśvasitāni. (Bri. Up. 2.4.10), says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. It is *apaurushaya*, superhuman, in its content. The scripture is regarded as superhuman because it pertains to matters which are super-mundane. The existence of heaven, etc., for example, is not to be deduced by logical argument, whatever be its intensity. However much we may argue, we cannot prove the existence of heaven, etc.

These are realms transcending human perception. The existence of such planes of being, the ways in which the law of action and reaction work – the law of karma, for example, and the process of transmigration – such things and many other topics akin to these are not to be discussed in a scientific way because science is an outcome of thinking in terms of sense, while these subjects pertain to matters which are super-sensible. Hence, the *sutra* says *sastrayonitvat* – God is known only through the revelations of the seer. These revelations embodied are called the scriptures – *shastras*.

Therefore, the student has to be full of this ardour, this faith, this longing which arises on account of the conviction of the existence of God and the competency of the Guru, as well as the veracity of the scripture. But there is another kind of faith which is mentioned in our text apart from faith in God, faith in Guru, and faith in our scriptures: faith in one's own purified conscience. This is also a kind of

faith. We must listen to the voice of our conscience, and not turn a deaf ear to it. Our conscience many times tells us what we ought to do. In the famous Manu Smriti the author discusses the roots or the sources of *dharma*: The sources of *dharma* – the ways in which we can ascertain what righteousness is – are the Vedas, then comes the Smritis, next comes the conduct of the wise, and then finally our own conscience.

Now, the conscience of a person is likely to get blunted by habitual misuse, and the blunt conscience which is not purified may not be able to manifest or express properly the deep intentions of the spirit within us. Hence, when we speak of the voice of conscience, we mean thereby the indications given by something which we are in our own selves, apart from what we have made of ourselves by way of circumstances, etc. We are something in our own selves – a very important thing that we are likely to forget.

We have to divest ourselves of all accretions that might have grown over us – for example, the name. Divest yourself of this name: Mr. Natraj, Mahavir, Swami so-and-so, Brahmachari so-and-so. We are so identified with these names that we cannot think except in terms of them. The name is only a fictitious word that has been uttered by some people in respect of us, and it has clung to us so vehemently, like a good friend, that it is not going to leave us till death. So deeply has the name gone into us that when we are addressed by our name even when we are fast asleep, we immediately get up, but if we are addressed by another name, we will not awaken.

The name is not what we are. This is something unnecessary that has grown around us. We have many

other unnecessary accretions that have grown around us like fungi – our name, social status, and the language that we speak. We can spoil our life with all these things. We know how friendly we feel towards a person who speaks our own language. What is the meaning behind it? What is the great importance in this language? Well, it is difficult to answer all these questions. Language is a tremendous obstacle to knowing what we really are. The society in which we live and the etiquette that we follow in terms of that society have gone deep into our minds and are another obstacle. Many other things of this nature grow over the surface of our minds and we become psychologically dirty.

A dirty mind cannot reveal the voice of conscience, so it is useless to say, “I act according to my conscience.” We cannot know what our conscience speaks. The conscience speaks in everyone and this conscience has to speak, but we must be able to listen to its voice. We have no ears to hear. When the voice of the conscience passes through the prism of our desires, it gets deflected into various rays of cravings for things of the world. And then we say, this is my conscience speaking: “I want this, I want that.” We may even go and hit someone and say that it is the voice of our conscience. Well, it is the voice of our desires, not the voice of the conscience. So the instruction is that we must depend on the voice of our conscience and trust it fully.

Faith in one’s own conscience is a form of faith. For that we have to be purified by the practice of *viveka*, *vairagya*, *kshama*, *dhama*, *uparati*, which have already mentioned. It is a graded series of training. *Viveka*, *vairagya*, *kshama*, *dhama*, *uparati*, *titiksha* are certain stages of training of the mind for the reception of the knowledge of the Spirit from

the Guru. And now we have come to *shraddha*, faith, which is the primary motive force behind concentration of mind, the ideal which the student of yoga seeks in the end.

All yoga is concentration, yoga *samadhi*, says Sri Vyasa in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras. All yoga is concentration of the mind, finally; and no concentration is possible if the prerequisites are not fulfilled.

Viveka, *vairagya*, and the other things mentioned culminate in the development of this staunch faith in the existence of God, in the competency of the Guru, in the truth of the words of the scripture, and in the meaning of the voice of one's own conscience. This faith it is that gives us the strength to concentrate the mind on the Ideal after the initiation from the Guru. Thus, the *sadhana-chatustaya* is a very systematic method of training.

The concentration of the mind is a very important subject, which I would not like to touch today. We shall discuss it sometime later. It is a very vast subject, perhaps the primary thing in all spiritual seeking. But there is another important factor mentioned in the *sadhana-chatustaya* together with *viveka*, *vairagya*, *kshama*, *dhama*, *uparati*, *titiksha* and *shraddha*, namely *mumukshutva*, aspiration for the liberation of the spirit.

This is a very difficult thing to find in most students of yoga. They may be discriminating to a large extent, very intelligent, educated, mentally sober, and equipped with an amount of *vairagya*, but with all that, we will find very few people in the world who really want liberation of the soul. It is all because they cannot understand what it means; and if we tell them, it would confuse their minds.

Very few people seek liberation from the thralldom of *samsara*. All people, for the matter of that, seek something else. We want something different from us, something outside us, some object of satisfaction. What does it bring? The question would be, "What will I get if I am liberated? What will it bring to me?"

One very ardent, simple and honest student came here and told me, "I will realise God in this very life, and I have come for that only." I said, "What will you do after realising God? What will be your profession after realising God?" He said, "I will go home, but I will not return until I realise God!"

Everyone connects ends with means and means with ends, and the freedom of the Spirit is regarded as a kind of achievement for some ulterior purpose. This is at the background of the mind: "After freedom, what next? What is afterwards? What am I going to do after I am free?"

Well, this is a fundamental misconception in the very idea of freedom, a topic we shall discuss a little later.

Chapter 15

CLARIFYING THE IDEA OF MOKSHA

We have been brought up in the tradition of thinking that everything should be somewhere, that all things should occupy some space. If something does not occupy some space, we cannot understand how it can be. Also, that which occupies space should exist sometime and somewhere. Only then do we say that a thing exists and attribute it with existence of a character of living. This is a very inveterate habit of the mind, and we cannot overcome this method of directing thought to objects. Whatever be our learning and capacity to understand things, we would boil down all our thoughts finally to the notion of something existing sometime and somewhere.

If we divest anything from its spatial location or temporal succession, then we would be nonplussed in our attempt at understanding what it can be. A thing cannot be, if it is not in space and time. It must be somewhere: here, there, up, down, right, left, etc. This is the natural way of the mind's thinking process, and these mental conditions should be regarded as almost the natural condition of all humanity.

If we speak of *moksha* or liberation, there should be no surprise if man is confronted with a dilemma. There are simple people in the world who imagine liberation as a kind of travel of the soul to another locality in creation. Even today we believe liberation to be such a transport of our soul from Earth to heaven. It may be to the blissful region of God Himself, but we cannot gainsay that this is our notion behind our liberation of the spirit – *moksha*. This is

also the reason why arguments come forward that liberation is a personal affair. It is either my liberation or your liberation because it is me, you or someone else who goes to the heavens or to God Himself. It is someone going somewhere, something going to some place. This is the way in which we try to understand and evaluate the condition of the freedom of the soul, the Spirit. Today it has gone to the extent of even being equated with a kind of personal achievement, to the exclusion of the good or the value entertained by the minds of other people in the world. We think in terms of business, commerce, exactly as shopkeepers think, in plus and minus; or sometimes we think like geographers, astronomers, economists, politicians and family men, etc. We cannot think in any other way.

But all these are children's ways of thinking. When we try to probe deeper into the mysteries of the longings of our own soul, many a mistake is committed at the very outset. One error is that something exists somewhere and everything has to be somewhere. The other error is that the soul is a substance, a unit of space, a unit of being, an object hanging in space. It may be luminary, an effulgent body; it may be like a flame, it may be like the sun, it may be like anything conceivable, but it is subject to the law of location. The soul is located in the body. God is located in the heavens, and freedom is a condition which the soul experiences in a locality of creation. This is our concept of freedom, as we think of freedom in the world.

Now, on account of this prejudiced way of thinking, a habit into which we have been born, we find it hard to understand what it means when we say, "The soul reaches

God,” or, “The spirit achieves freedom,” or, “One attains liberation.” All these proclamations of saints and sages regarding the freedom of the soul – *moksha* or salvation – look like declarations pertaining to the various conditions through which the soul has to pass: a being, such as the soul is, subjecting itself to a kind of experience by means of an action or an activity. To achieve *moksha* as a kind of activity of the soul would be our notion of the achievement of freedom. To reach God would be our general way of speech: the soul has attained God, reached the state of salvation.

By ‘reaching’, we generally mean a movement of something to some other spot. The soul has moved to the heavens. It has ascended to the realm of God. It has left the mortal coil. It has given up its connections with the Earth. These expressions convey the false notion that in freedom, in *moksha* or salvation, the soul, which is an object in space and now resides inside the body, leaves the Earth, gives up attachments to things outside it, and rises to an empyrean which is above. These expressions convey the idea of the soul being in space, its having to move in time, and its being subjected to the activity of self-transformation. This is the particular trend of thought of every person in the world.

Hence, the quality of *mumukshutva*, which is regarded as one of the prerequisites of salvation called *sadhana-chatustaya*, is least understood. It is the opinion among many teachers that *mumukshutva* is preeminent among all these qualities mentioned. It is the crown of *viveka* and *vairagya*. It is the fruit which is yielded by the tree of understanding and dispassion. It is the purpose towards

which the mind is directed by the practice of *satsampat*, so all these equipments of *viveka*, *vairagya* and *satsampat* have to culminate in *mumukshutva*, the yearning for the salvation of the soul.

This yearning is difficult to understand and, therefore, it does not generally engender itself in the hearts of people. Whenever our notion of salvation is defective, there cannot be an ardour in our aspiration for *moksha*. Just to place ourselves in the proper context, we can individually analyse our own ideas of freedom. To us, freedom is always freedom from something. There must be something outside the factor of freedom, only then there can be freedom. And there should be a condition beyond freedom, so the condition of bondage is different from the condition of freedom. Another factor is that the freedom is of someone. There has to be someone who attains freedom, which is a condition of that someone – freedom from something which is outside the achievement of freedom. So many associations that are spatial and temporal are connected with the notion of freedom.

Because of this cherished idea in our mind of having to go to some place in a particular condition, even enthusiasts in the spiritual field linger on the path and their progress is retarded on account of the pull of that from which they have tried to extricate themselves.

A very great law of life is that we cannot free ourselves from what is real. There is no such thing as freedom from Reality. And if factors causing bondage are to be regarded as parts of Reality, there cannot be freedom from bondage. Either we are totally confused in our minds in trying to achieve freedom, or our idea of freedom itself needs a

reorientation. “I have to free myself from the bondage of *samsara*,” is the first exclamation of a suffering soul, and this freedom from the clutches of *samsara* is regarded as *moksha*. “I will go to Vaikunta, Kailasa, Satyaloka, to the seven heavens. I shall reach another plane of existence where I shall enjoy life to my heart’s content, rid of all the botheration, turmoil and trivialities of this Earth.” Well, this aspiration of a soul to free itself from the clutches of Earthly suffering would be a wild-goose chase if the Earthly pull is a pull of what is real. Before trying to entertain an aspiration for *moksha*, we are asked to be *vivekins* first.

Viveka is that capacity to discriminate between what is real and what is unreal. *Moksha* is supposed to be the achievement of that realisation of what is real. *Moksha* is not different from experience of Reality. So *moksha* is identity of experience with Reality. Then bondage cannot be real; otherwise, Reality, including within itself bondage also, would make freedom from bondage an impossibility.

So from what are we going to be freed in our achievement of freedom? From what do we want freedom? From real things or unreal things?

We cannot be free from real things because the real can never perish. *Nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ* (Gita 2.16): There is no non-existence of what is really existent. We cannot abolish existence. We cannot abolish the existence of pain and suffering if it is true.

But what if it is untrue? Are we going to achieve freedom from that? Do we want freedom from what is not there? Or are we going to achieve freedom from what is there? Either way we will find that we are in a dilemma. We cannot achieve freedom from what is not there, because it

has no meaning. We cannot achieve freedom from what is there, because it will catch us.

Then what is freedom? What is *moksha*? To subject this thought of *moksha* to a critical analysis and come to a definite conclusion regarding it is called *viveka*. At least, it is a part of *viveka*. When we are not clear about what *moksha* is, we cannot honestly ask for it or aspire for it.

How can we ask for a thing when we do not understand? When we do not know what we are asking for, how can we seek it? Therefore, *mumukshutva* is not the first thing to seek. *Viveka* is the first thing we have to seek, and it comes first in the list of the *sadhana-chatustaya*; *mumukshutva* comes last. *Viveka* is the seed, as it were, and *mumukshutva* is the fruit.

It is because of this difficulty in understanding the nature of salvation that many a spiritual seeker has been handicapped in his meditative processes. What obstructs our meditations is the Earthly pull, the pull of desire for that which exists, and not that which does not exist. The mind somehow has a subtle subconscious feeling that in its seeking for *moksha*, it has abandoned certain other things which were regarded as causes of suffering. But together with this secret feeling there is another, similar feeling which insists that what has been abandoned is a part of the Real. We have abandoned the desired objects of the world which have promised us satisfaction on account of the world presenting us with a certain amount of pain also. We have weighed the pains and the pleasures of the world on a balance and have realised that, in our particular case at least, the pain has outweighed pleasure. This is why we say, "I will go for *moksha*. I do not want to live in this world."

But if pleasure had outweighed pain, it would be a different matter altogether. It is doubtful that we would seek *moksha*.

Suppose it is all pleasure and no pain; would anyone ask for freedom from this world? The pinch of pain becomes the cause of raising our heads above the Earth. But this disproportion between pleasure and pain, wherein we have discovered that in most cases the pain is more intense and larger in proportion than the little pleasures of the world, which has now propelled us to the seeking of *moksha*, carries with it the subtle truth that something real is abandoned. The existence aspect of things presses itself forward. Even in the ugliness and pain of the Earth, there is this existence aspect.

While it is true that we do not want pain and suffering, we cannot say that we do not want existence, because it is a part of the indivisible nature of Reality. We are in a state of conflict when we seek liberation. There is a conflict of two forces, which on one side pulls us to the world of sense, and on the other side raises us up to the heaven which is supposed to be the ideal of our aspiration. The conflict is not going to cease as long as we make a distinction between *samsara* and *moksha*. If God is to be away from us, and to reach Him implies travelling a long distance from the Earth, our friends of the Earth are not going to leave us. They have a demand upon us; and the Earth which we have left for the sake of God, Whom we have visualised in a transcendent heaven, shall also pull us down. Like Trishanku, we will be hanging in the middle between the two pulls of the higher and the lower gravitations, and neither shall there be the pleasures of the Earth nor the bliss of God.

This predicament supervenes in the case of most seekers, *sadhakas* on the path. The outcome of all this finally happens to be coming down to the plane of the Earth, on account of the impossibility of the mind to rise to the transcendent heavens. The reason is that a proper balance sheet has not been struck with this world in which we are living, and we have left the world with a debit balance against us. This will not do. We owe a debt to the world in which we live, and unless there is a clear accounting of our relationship with the world, there cannot be a freedom from this world. We have to discharge all our debts in regard to this world. Only then can there be possibility of even a thought of freeing ourselves from it. We cannot free ourselves from a creditor. We can free ourselves from people only when they cease to be creditors, when we are not debtors. How can a debtor be free?

Wherever we run with these debts weighing heavily on our thoughts, we will find that we have no peace of mind, and these debts pull us. This debt to the world is of various kinds, the most subtle being the psychological relationships of our minds which connect us with the things of the world, which we are now trying to snap at one stroke on account of the larger proportion of pain that we have seen in the world.

These relationships that we have internally established with the objects of the world are our bonds that connect us with the world. We cannot snap them so easily because there is no weapon that can cut this thread. It is a thread which is made with a part of our own being. This is the reason why we cannot cut it. It is not made of a substance that is outside us. That thread that connects us with the

objects of the world, with friends of the Earth, is made up of our own sum and substance, our own flesh and blood, our own very being. We are connected with the world of objects through the substance of our own being. This is the reason why we cannot disconnect ourselves from the world. To snap such relationships would be a failure. Then we come to the question again, “What is freedom?” How are we to free ourselves from the sources of pain, namely *samsara*?

The way would be to disconnect our being from its relationships with the world of objects. This is not an easy affair. To give an idea of what this blood relation with the objects of the world is, we can think of the relation between a mother and child, to give a gross instance. What is the thread which connects a mother with her child? It is not a rope that ties her to the child, but that tie is stronger than a rope, stronger than even an iron chain. A part of the mother is in the child. The mother sees herself in the child and the child in herself. The soul of the mother is enveloping the body of the child. No doubt there is a physical difference in location of substance between the mother and the child, but there is a psychological unity. This is what we call the bond of relation. So while the objects of sense may remain physically isolated from us, they are internally united to us. We carry the objects with us even if we go to *moksha*, and there would be no freedom then. If the mother has to go even a thousand miles, she carries her child in her mind. The relationship with the child has not gone. The child is always there. When the physical child is not the bondage, the bondage is the psychological child – the mental relationship which she has established with the physical body of the child.

So it is with all things in the world. The rule applies to each and every thing of this world. And what are we seeking freedom from? To come to the example again, what would be the freedom of the mother from the child? If the mother is to free herself from the child, what ought she to do? She need not go anywhere, because moving to any place is not separating her from her child. Her bond is internal, and she is there by the child even if she is a thousand miles away.

It is difficult to understand what psychological freedom can be. Even the best psychologists cannot define psychological freedom. Who is to define this? The mind alone has to give us the definition. The mind cannot define its own freedom because of its entanglements which are a part of its own nature. The nature of *samsara* and *moksha* is difficult to understand, and inasmuch as the internal bonds of *samsara* seem to pursue us even in our travels to regions of apparent *moksha*, it would look that we cannot have freedom at all; we would become runaways to *moksha*. But this is not *moksha*. To negate something is to posit it in another way altogether. To deny a thing is to affirm it in another manner. Negation becomes a determination, many a time. When we negate the world, we assert its existence. If it is not there, we do not deny it. To deny bondage would be to affirm bondage. To ask for freedom from the clutches of what exists would be to assert the reality of the causes of bondage, which would be the denial of the very possibility of freedom from bondage.

These are the enigmas in which we get entangled when we try to understand what freedom is, what *moksha* is, and what it means when we say that we have to attain God.

These confusions are not jokes that we can simply laugh off. They will persist until our doom, and we will carry these confusions in our minds even to our next birth. Until the mind is clarified of its objective, it cannot achieve it and attempt to realise it.

Of all the items of the *sadhana-chatustaya*, *mumukshutva* is the most difficult to understand. While we may have some sort of notion of what discrimination between the Real and the unreal is, and consequently what detachment is, what the moral prerequisites are, we will fail when we try to know what *moksha* or liberation is. This is the last stroke that the aspiring mind deals in its march to perfection. Even when we discriminate between the Real and the unreal through *viveka*, we make a distinction between two aspects of Reality, like the *purusha* and *prakriti* of the Samkhya, for instance. To us, discrimination means differentiation – isolation of one thing from another. When we are asked to distinguish between the Real and the unreal, we imagine this distinction to be something like the distinction we make between one person and another person. This is our way of thinking. What is discrimination between the Real and the unreal? It is something like the discrimination between one thing and another thing. This is not discrimination in its true sense, because if we say, “He discriminates,” it means he becomes partial. It is not partiality that we show between the Real and the unreal. We determine the worth of the Real in its associations with what appears to be external to it. What do we mean by the Real? The ascertainment of the character of Reality is discrimination. The moment this is ascertained, the notion of *moksha* gets clarified. It is not from something that we

ask freedom. It is not that some existent thing is catching us. If that is so, freedom would not be possible.

We are caught by certain misconceptions. We are under a delusion that things are placed in certain relations, while the true relation that obtains among them is altogether different. The *viveka* that we would have to cultivate is to understand in its proper position that which we ultimately regard as real. And if bondage is to be real, the real element in it has to be distinguished from it.

That the Real cannot bind is very important to remember. That which is Real can never be the source of bondage. And if bondage is real, try to isolate that Reality element from what you call bondage. That would be a kind of *viveka* exercise in regard to bondage, *samsara*.

What is *samsara*, bondage? It is something restricting our freedom, something exerting an influence negatively upon us – or to put it precisely, something doing something adversely in respect of us. Something is doing something; that seems to be our bondage. Now we have to discriminate the real element in this something doing something against us, and keep apart what element there is apart from Reality. This is a Herculean task. It is brain-racking, and we cannot understand what it means even with the furthest stretch of our imagination.

How can the real element in the factor of bondage be distinguished from the essence of bondage? It is the reality of bondage that torments us. If the bondage had been unreal, we would not have been bothered about it. We understand what it means. The bondage happens to be real: I am really caught. If I am unreally caught, I will not cry. If I am merely imagining that I am in bondage, well, I have no

complaint. If I happen to be in a real bondage, this is why I say I want freedom. But the other aspect of it is that what is real cannot bind us. Then what is it that binds us? The real element in the factor causing bondage is something different from what really binds. It is not the existence of the Reality aspect that is the cause of bondage. There is something else which is mysteriously involved in what we call our state of bondage. It is a mystery. Our bondage seems to be a mystery ultimately. We do not know what is causing our bondage or suffering.

Some people try to explain the nature of *moksha*. There is an analogy which can bring us very near the truth of the reality of *moksha*: Suppose a king dreams that he is a poor man, a beggar. In dream he suffers from penury, starvation, and comes almost to the point of dying. What is to be done to appease the hunger of that poor man? He is thirsty, he is hungry, he is sick. Are we to bring medicine to free him from his illness? Are we to bring food for him to appease his hunger? Are we to bring drinks to quench his thirst? What is to be done when the king is dreaming that he is hungry, thirsty and sick? The answer cannot be that we have to fetch him food, water and medicine. That would be futile under the circumstances. We have only to shake him to wake him up, and we will find that he has no hunger, no thirst, and that he is free from all diseases. All his difficulties have gone by the mere act of waking him.

He may have had many problems apart from these three that I have mentioned. There can be umpteen problems in our dream condition. The Yoga Vasishtha has very beautiful stories of this nature – kings actually undergoing the suffering of beggars, and they needed

absolutely no remedy. They needed only the panacea of the adjustment of their minds to facts.

We can use the illustration of dreams to understand the idea of *moksha*. In dream, all travel over distance may look like real travel. For example, may have a plane, for example, in dream. We were rich in dream, and travelled some ten thousand miles. That travel is a possibility and a reality in the state of dream, but though it appears to be a movement from one point of space to another point of space, there was no such activity at all. The person might have been sleeping on his bed; he has not got up from there, and yet he is flying many miles away in a plane. He has the pleasure of many such things without moving an inch from the bed.

We can undergo all the vicissitudes of life positively or negatively, as an emperor or as a beggar, on the bed in which we are sleeping, in a small room of our house. These vicissitudes of dream life, in their relation to our waking existence, can throw some light on the relation that perhaps obtains between our present state of existence and the *moksha* that we are seeking.

In this illustration of dream, just as to free ourselves of the dream poverties, etc., we need not fetch the valuables or the treasures of the dream world, we have only to be shaken up and awaken to a new state of consciousness, to be free from the bondage of *samsara* would not be to acquire something of *samsara* itself. To be a rich person would not be to gain gold and silver. It would be to awaken to a new order of existence, a new state of consciousness, a new state of reality – which we have to remember is not spatially distant from that which we have left earlier.

To again come to the illustration of dream, our waking condition is not spatially away from dream. We have not moved to a distant place when we have awakened from dream. We are in the same place. We have not moved an inch when we have come from dream to waking. So spatial conditions are not involved in waking from the dream world to the waking world. No movement of that kind was involved. This illustration throws light on the fact that freedom from *samsara* is not movement through space. The Vaikunta that we are speaking of, the Kailasa, the Satyaloka and so on, are as far from this hall where we are sitting now as our waking condition is from our dreaming world. How far is it? How much time is needed to reach it, and how far is Vaikunta from this world? As much time is needed to reach it as is needed to wake up from dream, and so distant is Vaikunta from this place as our waking world is from our dream world.

This is why great teachers have proclaimed the identity of *samsara* and *moksha*. In one sense, waking and dreaming are identical. They are in the same mind, same place, same person. The identity of all conditions and the interpenetratedness of all psychological situations is a difficult thing for the mind to understand. We are told that this is a world of relativity, which means to say that there is interpenetration of values, frequencies and vibrations. One thing pierces through another, like the wavelengths of a radio, for example. Radio stations broadcast news and music through different frequencies of energy. They are all interpenetrating, one touching the other, one colliding with the other, and yet one is not knowing the existence of the other.

So are the worlds interpenetrating, says the Yoga Vasishtha. Svarga is cutting through us here, in this very hall itself. Vaikunta and Kailasa are penetrating through the air of this room where we are seated and yet we cannot see them, just as one frequency of a broadcasting station cannot see another frequency of vibration. They are there, and yet we cannot see them. The receiving apparatus alone can distinguish them. This receiving apparatus is our mind. It can attune itself to Vaikunta or to Kailasa or to hell, as the case may be. Hell and heaven, *samsara* and *moksha*, all the realms of existence cross each other at one point and we can experience any condition at any place, at any time, provided the mind is attuned to it properly.

So what would be *moksha*? What is *mumukshutva*, the point that we are discussing? It is clear that *moksha* is not moving from one place to another place. It is not freeing oneself from something that is really there. If at all it is freedom from something, it is like freedom from the hunger and the penury of dream. When a person wakes up into the consciousness of being an emperor, he may be said to be free from what caused him bondage in dream. But from what was he freeing himself? We know it was not something that was really there that caused him bondage. There was nothing except a medley of thoughts, a mess of mind, a confusion of understanding which caused the dream.

It is difficult to explain all these things except by analogies. Nobody can explain logically or scientifically what God or *moksha* is. The best way of teaching, they say, is image, comparison, illustration, analogy; and this is the reason why the Yoga Vasishtha was written, knowing well

that there was no other way of teaching these profound truths.

Sometimes stories, illustrations and comparisons convey the truth better than scientific demonstrations and logical propositions, because the mind cannot grasp these profundities. By the comparison we have made between waking and dream, we seem to have come to the point of understanding what God and *moksha* can be. Just as freedom from the sufferings of *samsara* of dream means not a spatial isolation of consciousness or a temporal movement from one place to another place but a readjustment of consciousness, so also waking is immanent in the dream consciousness though it is not palpable or tangible in the dream condition.

Likewise, God is supposed to be immanent in this world. He is Antaryamin. He is not in the seventh heaven, or far from us. Just as the waking state can be said to be hiddenly present in the dream condition – hidden in the sense that without it, dream would not be possible – the world cannot be, if God is not. In this sense of the immanence of the waking consciousness in the dream distractions, God may be said to be immanent in the world. He is present here, just under our very nose. But in the same sense as waking may be said to be transcendent to dream, we cannot see waking in dream. For all practical purposes, it is removed from the dream condition. Likewise, God is transcendent to this world.

We cannot even imagine that there is a waking condition while we are drowned in the sorrow of dream; likewise, when we are in this world of *samsara*, we can never imagine that there can be a God. He is transcendent;

yet He is here, He is immanent, just as the waking stuff is hidden, secretly pervading the very fibres of dream experiences.

These analogies throw a flood of light on the complexity of the relation between *samsara* and *moksha*. What it is that we are seeking when we ask for *moksha*? What is salvation? It is entry into the world of truths. When we speak of God-realisation, we do not speak of moving away from this world, running away from this Earth, escaping, as people think, but entering into a flood of those real values that constitute any meaning in this world. What value can there be in any object of dream but that which is in waking life? When we transcend dream into waking, we deny not anything that is substantial or real. We do not run away from anything. We enter into the true order of things. We attain the freedom of consciousness which is liberation, *moksha*. Therefore, it is something like waking from the sufferings of dream, which does not involve spatial movement or temporal succession, which does not involve avoiding something that is good or pleasant. So nobody need be worried that going to God means abandoning all the pleasures of the world.

Many people do not want to practise *sadhana* or think of reaching God for fear that the pleasures of the world would be left out here. What about all the good mangoes and the *kheer* that we have in the world? Leaving everything here, we go there? A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Here we have a bird in hand and there we do not know what we may get. There we are supposed to be given nothing. They say in the state of God, we want nothing and will get nothing; we will simply be sitting, mummy-like.

Well, when compared to the gorgeous beauties and the tempting attractions and tastes of this world, that state where we would want nothing cannot attract us. But that is a very poor definition of *moksha*.

Coming again to the illustration of dream and waking, to give you an idea of what God is, would you like to be an emperor in dream, for many years? Or would you like to be a simpleton in waking life rather than a rich man in the dream world? What is the good of ruling a dream world for years and years? Let me be a simpleton in waking life rather than a wonderful man in dream.

So are the riches, the temptations and the values that we see in this world. They would be worth nothing when compared to the higher reality of God, who is not far from us, again to remind you of this fact. It is not reaching something far in space; it is something hidden, immanent, here itself. So to attain *moksha* would be to enter into the world of Reality. We call it God-realisation, here and now – not tomorrow and at some other place. It is not reaching something, but being everything. This is the distinction between the true meaning of *moksha* and the common notion of it.

There is a world of difference between reaching something and becoming everything. In becoming everything, we do not abandon anything. We become the Self of all, as God Himself is. So the Atmatva of the universe is the state of *moksha*. We become the Self of things, the very being of all that is created. We become the Atman of all humanity, for the matter of that. And there is no question of abandoning or gaining. Neither *raga* nor *dvesha* can be there. It is, as the Mundaka Upanishad very

beautifully says, *te sarvagaṃ sarvataḥ prāpya dhīrā yuktātmānas sarvam evāviśanti* (Mundaka 3.2.5): They attain everything, everywhere, at all places, in every manner. This is *moksha*, and the thought concerning *moksha* should be clarified before we approach a Guru for being initiated into the secrets of yoga.

Chapter 16

ATTAINING UNITY WITH THE OBJECT

In every external relation the object stands outside the subject, and hereby the implication is carried that there is no proper relation of the object with the subject. This is the paradox of all earthly relation where, while there appears to be a connection of one with another, there is really no such intelligible relation. In our contemplations of all objects in the world, we make a mistake on one side and cherish a desire on the other side, creating a confusion in our own minds and thus gaining nothing by the objective contact.

The purpose of concentration and meditation is to release this mental tension between the subject and the object – to establish a proper relation with the object so that there may not be any strained relation between the two. The strain and the effort comes about on account of the relation being an artificial one. It is artificial because the object does not really yield to the dictates of the subject. The object refuses to become a satellite of the subject. While in all relationships the intention of the mind is to convert the object into a kind of instrument in its personal endeavours and satisfactions, no one wishes to be subordinate to another. This is the principle of individuality reigning supreme in every person and thing, animate and inanimate. Even a pebble would not like to be a satellite of another. It has a status of its own. Now, this status that every object enjoys is the obstruction of its relation to any other thing in the world. If each individual unit of creation has an independent status of its own from

its own point of view, it cannot be subjected to the necessities of another.

The contemplation of the object by a subject is, in one sense, a proclamation of a feeling that the object is to yield to the needs of the subject. Else, there would be no need to think of the object. Why do we contemplate an object? We wish that it acts in a particular manner in relation to us, but this wish itself is unjustifiable from the point of view of the object itself. If someone wants us to yield to their wishes, that would not be justifiable from our point of view because thereby, we would be losing our status. A status is an affirmation of one's personality, and that is surrendered when there is an objective relation with anything else in this world.

All objective relations are external relations, all external relations are artificial relations, and all artificial relations are doomed to end in failure. All our relations are bound to crumble one day and assert their real nature. That they do not exhibit their true nature always is not to be taken as an argument that there is some substance in their relationships. The natures of objects are not always demonstrated, for various reasons. Sometimes there is a sympathetic communication between the subject and the object. This is what psychologists call *en rapport*. A sympathy of feeling can make it look that there is a real relationship, a community of purpose, between one and the other.

If both of us are travelling towards Badrinath, there can be a community of feeling between us. It is not that we are identical with each other, not that we shall agree with each other in every respect, but in this particular respect we are

one: we are travelling in the same direction for a single purpose. In this analogy, there may be umpteen similar reasons in this world, on account of which we may appear to be agreeing with one another. The sympathy of minds is due to a commonness of function, engendered by similarity of objective. If the objective is to differ, then there would be no similarity in any of the characteristics between the two, and there would then be a separation: You go your way and I go mine. Therefore, the relationship of objects is a temporary association.

In the famous verse of the Mahabharata, we are given an eternal truth of social relation: All rise is only for a fall, one day or the other. All union is bound to end in a separation, and all life is bound to end in death. This is a universal truth of things related by external contact. External contact is again defined in the very same epic, the Mahabharata.

What do we mean by external relation? The meeting of two logs of wood in a river may be regarded as external relation. They touch each other, commingle with each other, perhaps look like friends and family relations, but then the wind blows and they are cast in different directions. The winds of universal law bring people together, and the winds of the same law shall also separate them.

So the unions and the separations of things in the world are meaningful only as long as their ultimate cause is not known. This law operates not merely in the galaxies and the stellar systems in the astronomical universe, but also in the tiny molecules of an atom. Thus is the law of external relations bound to end in a separation of characters and

constituents merely because the relationship is not genuine. It is makeshift, a friendship that has been brought about for a particular purpose. Here the union is not an end in itself, but a means to another purpose. If the purpose is served, the union is no more.

We sit together for a particular purpose, and if the purpose is over, we go our way and no longer sit together. The union of members in a meeting is not a real union, and so are our purposeful unions with objects in the world. The mind's relation with an object is such a purposeful device contrived for a temporary fulfilment of the mind's ideal. When the fulfilment is either complete or frustrated, the union is no more. If we come together on account of a friendly relation, the relation is for a purpose, and when the purpose is over, the relation is also over. If we cannot agree with each other, then also there is no union. So either way, we do not seem to be destined for permanent happiness in this world. This is a very unfortunate fate that seems to have befallen mankind and all creation on account of this peculiar situation.

This situation has to be changed. The tables have to be turned. The union attempted should become a real union. This is the purpose of Yogic meditation and concentration. The power of this concentration through yoga is such that it can unite even broken glass. There is nothing which it cannot bring together because the way in which this unity here is established is not external, but by means of an internal understanding. The external relationship is merely a contact temporarily brought about by means of characteristics obtaining only in space and time. But there are bonds which are not spatial and temporal. These bonds

sometimes exhibit themselves in what we call love for things in the world. They are not properly exhibited, but hiddenly present in what we call affection or love. That people overcome the arguments of reason and set aside intellectual convictions when love overpowers them is an indication that there can be a bond superior to logical understanding.

But inasmuch as this love for things gets vitiated by space-time relation, it does not succeed, but it gives a hint of there being a possibility of union. It can be taken as an instructor, pointing our way to a true possible union. That there is a moral urge for rectitude which transcends logical reason would again indicate that there is a righteousness that rules this world. There is a principle that conducts itself uniformly everywhere. Likewise, there is a principle of union among things. This is psychologically called affection or love which, as I mentioned, gets foiled due to its connection with objects that are in space and time. If love is to stand independent of objects, then perhaps it may succeed; but it gets tangled in objects and then as the objects go, the love also goes. Hence, earthly love suffers.

Together with the objects that go with the passage of time, the love of the mind for things of the world is a teaching to us, as it were, to point out the existence of a superior bond among things. This indicated bond is to be materialised independent of objects. This would be the spiritual fraternity of people. This is the love of the saint and the sage. This is perhaps also the love of God, which transcends objects and external relations, and peeps through the egoism of human beings when it marches forth in its longing for objects of sense.

Yogic concentration and meditation is a technique of freeing the principle of union among things from objective relations. In the beginning the object is taken as the target of concentration, and then the object is ultimately given up and the principle behind it is extracted. The principle is the principle of union. That I contemplate the object, that I wish to have it and I like it, is a principle involved in my relation to the object. But the principle is involved in the object. That is the difficulty.

The purpose of Yogic meditation is to extract the principle out of the object. The object is the vitiating factor. It spoils the relation, and when we judge anything in terms of objects, we seem to be selfish in our ways of approach. We should not weigh principles on the scale of objects, because principles survive and objects die. So when the objects die, the principles may also die if we are to connect the principles with the objects.

Now, here we are concerned with the supreme principle of the universe, namely the union among things. That there is such a principle existing among all things is clear to us even in our daily activities. We long for a coming together of things, and we long for happiness by means of union and contact. Just imagine the ideal that we place before ourselves in life. Our ideal is always happiness, nothing short of it, and nothing else. This happiness we try to seek through contacts. All happiness is sought through contacts of some kind or other. If we live independently, alone, there is no contact, and naturally we are not happy; we feel lonely, and run after union of various kinds.

The fact that happiness is our ideal, and that we try to seek it only through union and there is no other way at all,

shows that a kind of union is permissible in the universe. Perhaps that special type of union that is at the background of our minds may bring us eternal joy. This is the ground on which the yoga technique bases itself and conducts operations in such a way that there is a gradual extrication of the principle of unity from the objects in which they are caught. The object is attractive on account of the principle getting involved in the object.

As I stated earlier, when the mind influences an object, the object looks beautiful and attractive. It is purely on account of the mind's influence on the object that it is so. If the mind is to be withdrawn from the object, there would be no attraction. In usual Earthly relations, there is not only the mind's influence on the object causing attraction of the object towards the mind, but also there is a tendency of the object to influence the mind, due to which it is that we are restless. Our restlessness is due to objects around us influencing us.

We cannot think independently. We always think in terms of something. That something is the cause of our agitation. Now, neither should the object be influenced by the subject, nor should the subject be influenced by the object. This is the aim of Yogic concentration, finally. There is no kind of mutual influence because any kind of influence would again be an external relation. What are the subject and the object, independent of these influences? Their status should be affirmed in a spiritual, fundamental way, independent of which mutual influence, the object and the subject reveal their true character.

Some biologists say that we can see the real colour of a leaf on a tree only in pitch darkness because when we shine

a light on it, the colour changes. Light influences the leaf; light influences the objects. We cannot see anything in pitch darkness, but we cannot see the true colour in the light. So are the object and the subject in their mutual relation. We cannot see them in their independent status. They are never independent. Always they are mutually related, influencing each other, as with the planets; there is always a perennial mutual influence between the planets, a gravitational pull. Similarly, there are always objects disturbing the mind, and the mind influencing the objects. This is the difficulty involved in the practice of concentration and meditation.

We have never learned how to think independent of an object. Inasmuch as we have never learned this technique, and this is what we have to achieve in the end, we utilise the object itself to transcend the object, as a diamond is cut by a diamond. The object of concentration is enabled to transcend itself in the process of concentration. When the object is concentrated upon, when the mind fixes its attention on the object, the nature of the object receives the impact of a wider and wider scope of action and influence. It reveals its inner relationship with other objects. Instead of a single object influencing the mind, a wider relationship of things outside seems to influence the subject in meditation.

The student of yoga confronts a wider field as an object, rather than a single unit of concentration. The knot is getting untied and loosened, as it were. An object is nothing but a knot of force. It is a knot of energy, and this is to be loosened by the concentration of the mind.

This coil of force, sometimes called *kundalini* in certain Yogic language, is to be made to uncoil itself. The coil of energy is the object – a whirl of force. On account of energy getting located at a point in space, it looks like an object. When the energy is released, when the *kundalini* opens, when the coil opens up and releases itself, the force coalesces with the other centres of force called objects, and then it is that they have an internal relationship among themselves, rather than merely a possibility of such a relation indicated in the external contacts.

Even when the objects are locked up in their exclusive relations, their internal urge for union demonstrates itself in the restlessness which they exhibit within themselves. Scientists tell us that every rock vibrates with moving atoms, and there is no static rock. Every cell in our body vibrates and tends to grow and change. This is the restlessness exhibited in every body, tending towards an uncoiling of energy or force for the sake of an internal union with other objects. Concentration of mind helps in the releasing of this energy from its locked-up locations and makes it move smoothly towards other centres, which are also made up of the same force.

The *kundalini shakti* is nothing but objective energy which is present not only in our own selves, but also outside in bodies. It is the solidity of a stone, the liquidity of water, the gaseous character of fire and air, the emptiness of ether, the restlessness of the mind, and the affinity of objects chemically, biologically and also psychologically. All this is *kundalini* operating, which is nothing but the universal energy located in certain points in space – externally as objects, internally as centres of thinking.

Now, the mind is also an object from one point of view. When we think of untying the objective energy, we do not mean merely a physical object outside our bodies. The mind is also an object insofar as it is locked-up energy. The world is not merely physical. There is an astral or subtle world internal to the physical world, and subtler still is the causal universe. The mind is an object in the subtle world, while the so-called objects that we contemplate are the things of the physical world. It makes no difference finally whether the object is physical or psychological. It becomes an object obstructing the release of energy when it is located in one point of space.

The mind is, for all practical purposes, an object, inasmuch as it thinks in terms of an object, assumes the form of an object, and has all the characteristics of an object: transiency, perishability, and fickleness of character. When the mind is focussed on an object, whether external or internal, a kind of heat is generated – not heat in the sense of fire or atomic energy, but a force exerted. In its gross form this force is called *prana*, and in its subtler field it is called thought, mind, etc. The *hatha yogins*, *kundalini yogins* and *tantrics* feel that the energy that has its impact upon the object of concentration is *prana shakti*. This is why some people practise *asanas*, *bandhas*, *mudras*, etc., to lock their limbs in such a way that the *pranas* are not allowed to move in their proper channels and are directed to a particular spot in the body which is said to be the location of the *kundalini shakti*. This rule may apply to any object, for the matter of that. The concentration need not necessarily be a point in the body.

This advice should not be given to a novice. Beginners in the field of yoga should not concentrate on centres of the body because it could cause a dislocation of personality or even psychological aberration. We should regard it as proper for beginners in yoga to concentrate their minds on an external object or a concept. Even if it be a concept, it should be of an external ideal. In the beginning of yoga practice the object of our concentration should be outside us, and not inside, because here the emotions are not disturbed. We may get disturbed emotionally and psychologically if we are to abolish the concept of the object at once, because nobody can live without an object. Our life is objective, and so we have to take care that we do not disturb our minds by abolishing the concept of the object and concentrating the mind internally on centres of the body. Therefore, let the object be external in the beginning, and let it be a beloved object, an Ishta Devata, so that the emotions are kept intact. The object is there, and our affection for that object is also there.

Now we begin to concentrate. How do we concentrate? Generally we never concentrate on anything in this world. We always think in an impersonal or general manner. When we look at a person, we do not look at any particular part wholly. Though it is understood that we are looking at the person, we do not gaze at a person's eyes, nose, forehead, ears, etc. It is a general glance, and that is all. Likewise, we recognise an object by a general perception or cognition. We never have the occasion to concentrate our attention on any object, even a small thing in the world. We just look at people in front of us, and at objects; this is general cognition of things.

But concentration is a different thing altogether. It is not general perception or cognition. We are not merely casting a glance over the objects. It is not surveying things, but focussing, fixing the mind only on the object in such a way that we become conscious of every part of the body of the object. This is concentration. We begin to concentrate on every detail of the constitution of the thing. Whatever be that object, we begin to concentrate on every detail of its structure, its colour, its shape, its size, its weight, its location, its meaning, its duration of existence, its meaning for us, and so on. We concentrate upon it in a way that we generally do not do when looking at the ordinary things of the world. We have to concentrate on every blessed characteristic of the object. It is then that the characteristics unleash themselves.

If we go on gazing at a person, the person may get up and go away. He won't sit there; he would think there is something wrong. So it is with an object; when we gaze at it in concentration, it will reveal its true nature. It won't be there any more. The object itself will cease to be.

The concentration is an analysis of the constitution of the object. It is not merely blindly looking. It is a penetrating look of the mind into the structure of the object, by which we begin to have an insight as to what the object is made of. And when every character of the object becomes an object of concentration, the characters which constitute the object stand apart, while earlier they used to stand together to constitute the illusion of the object. The object is really an illusion; it is really not there.

It is rather an objectness that we see, than an object. That would be the proper way of defining what we see. It is

an objectness, a character of something being external to us as an object. There is really no object, truly speaking; and if it had been really there, it would never come under our control. We can do nothing with it, gain no access into it, and have no knowledge of it. It is not really there.

Do you really believe that there is an external object in your dream world? Look at a mountain in your dream world. Is it really there? Yes and no, both are the answers. The mountain in a dream world is really there, and the dream person can hit himself against a dream wall and have dream bleeding, dream pain, dream suffering, dream medication, and so on. A dream person may find it difficult to climb a dream mountain; but is the mountain really there?

Now, the question can only be answered from the standpoint that we take. If we take the standpoint of the dream itself, yes, the mountain is there and we cannot climb that mountain, it is too steep. We can fall down from a dream tree and break our legs. But if we shift our standpoint and look at the phenomenon from another angle of vision, we will find that the mountain that we see in dream is constituted of something which is no different from what is in our mind in the dream world.

We never imagine for a moment that the dream mountain is made up of mind. We think it is made up of stones, mud, thorns, trees, etc. Can we even think in dream that the dream mountain is made up of mind? Yet mental substance has appeared as an object, and there is no real mountain. The mind has taken the form of the mountain. The mind which is our own thinking nature has taken an external form, and that external formation of the mind

itself is the object. So, it is only an objectness and not really an object. The mind has assumed an objectness, as it were, in dream in the form of a mountain and many other things, while the things are not really there.

So are the world's objects. They appear to be there, as objects can be there in the dream world. We think that the mountains in our waking world are constituted of stones, earth, solid mass and so on, which is the same way that we thought in our dream world. We can never for a moment think that the world is made up of forces, as we can never imagine in dream that the objects there are made up of mind. When deep thought is bestowed upon the object, it will be noticed that it is made up of a substance which is akin to the subject.

This is the reason why we can have an intuition of things. How could we have intuition of another thing altogether, which has no connection with us? The truth is that it has a connection with us because fundamentally, the substance out of which our thinking principle is made is the same as the object, as is the case with the dream objects and dream minds. It is on account of this fundamental possibility of union that yoga becomes successful and meaningful.

Hence, in the concentration of the mind, just for the sake of argument and analogy, place yourself in the position of a dream subject meditating on a dream object. What would happen? You would wake up from dream. If you start meditating in dream, you will not be in dream. You will wake up because all phenomena exists on account of external relation, and concentration is a breaking up of that relation. When the relation is broken, there cannot be

phenomena. The whole phenomena of dream vanishes. You wake up, wiping your eyes.

So is this external relationship of things to be broken through by the power of concentration of mind, and the objects will shake themselves up and reveal their inner structure as something different from what we think them to be. The objects of the world terrify us, just as the tigers in dream may terrify us. But, fortunately or unfortunately, the tiger in the dream is only made up of our mind, and yet it can so terrify us that we can scream and wake up. So are the things of the world, part of which we look on with fondness and part of which we look at with dread and fear. But they are made up of a universal substance which can be brought together into union by a technique of concentration of mind. The purpose of concentration, therefore, is to disturb this locked-up energy. In dream, for example, energy has been locked up in the form of a mountain. We have to unlock that energy. The mountain should be shattered so that it may once again merge itself in the mind of which it is made.

A whirl of mental force, under a stress of aberration, alienated itself from the principle and became an object in dream. To bring it back to the status of the thinker from that of an object thought, it would not be enough if we merely gaze at it with affection or hatred, but we have to focus upon it. In dream also we have love and hatred, but that does not awaken us from dream. Something catastrophic should take place; then we wake up or become conscious that it is dream. Occasionally we begin dreaming that it is a dream, and that also seems to be a part of the dream itself.

Likewise, philosophers in the world are supposed to be conscious dreamers. They are dreamers, like others, but they know that it is a dream, while others are caught up in the dream. This is a difference between a philosopher and a naïve person in the world. While both dream the world, one is aware that he is dreaming the world and the other does not know that he is dreaming. So the dream mind, as it were, should focus itself on the object and fix itself in such concentration that the external relationship is broken. The mind's contact with the object in terms of love and hatred ceases. In concentration of the mind, we neither love the object nor hate the object. It is not emotional relation; it is a purely impersonal contact. It is like a scientist observing an object in a laboratory. He neither loves it nor hates it.

Likewise is concentration an impersonal focussing of mind on the object for a definite chosen purpose. It is not that we wish to acquire anything out of it, or we want to abandon it. The mind fixes itself on the object in concentration, continuously. If we hold the flame of a blowtorch to an object, say a piece of glass, it starts melting. Usually glass will break, but before a blowtorch, it starts melting. Similarly is the object in concentration. While ordinarily it offers an opposition to us and acts as a counterforce, challenging us and demanding love from us, and controverting our dislike of it when we apply this force of concentration, the objects behave in a different way altogether. There the objects are neither friends nor foes. They are units of creation, impersonally existing, and ready to unravel their mysteries for us.

The Yogi, therefore, is like a great scientist who confines himself to a single effort of the concentration of

his mind on a given subject and focuses his attention on the object so that the effect is felt not only on the object, but also on the mind that is meditating. The transformation that takes place in meditation is not merely a change that is taking place in the object; a simultaneous change takes place in the mind also, because the mind and the object are mutually related. When we disturb one, the other is also disturbed. Whatever happens to one happens to the other because the mind and the object are two terms of a single relation. Hence, in the act of the concentration of the mind, whether it is done objectively or subjectively, the purpose achieved is twofold. There is a regeneration of mental consciousness inwardly, and an unravelling of the mysteries of the object externally.

As a matter of fact, intuition of the object is not a function of the mind in its cognitive process because intuition is not a cognition or a perception. It is an entering of the structure of the mind into the structure of the object. In intuition, the substance of the mind communes itself with the substance of the object. They evolve simultaneously in the process of meditation. Whatever change may take place in the object of concentration has also a simultaneous and parallel impact upon the mind that concentrates. They move together. We cannot extricate one from the other. We cannot take one, independent of the other. But mostly we are not aware of what is happening in our minds. We are so engrossed in the objects that we are unaware of internal transformations, but changes do take place without our knowing what is happening.

It is said that in the case of Buddha meditating, he never knew what was happening to him even a day before his

illumination. His was almost in a state of despair that nothing tangible was taking place. But inwardly he was growing and there was a readiness for an outburst of consciousness, of which he had no knowledge. It was an internal manifestation of consciousness, an inward growth silently taking place, and outwardly the form of the mind was maintained.

So in the Yogic process, the mental transformations do not always become the object of our awareness. It is not always that we are conscious of what is happening to us when we have taken an object as our ideal of concentration. But suffice it to say, if we have gained some sort of control over our thought of the object, we can rest assured that we have gained a parallel control over our mind also because it is our mind that has gained control over the object, which would be impossible if the mind had not evolved itself to the position of that object.

Thus, there is a movement of energy, vertically we may say, tending towards a union, like the union of two sides of a triangle at their apex, while they are apart at their base. The object and the mind concentrating evolve simultaneously in their structures, loosening themselves, becoming more and more intimate between themselves while they stood apart earlier – becoming intimate between themselves on account of a conscious realisation of there being a fundamental affinity between them, like two people recognising each other after a conversation, examination, etc., of their situation. In the beginning they did not recognise each other. Then they began to enquire: “Who are you? From where are you coming?” And then finally

they realise that they are relatives. “Oh,” they say, “I never knew.”

Likewise is the object in meditation. It was so far, far away, unconcerned with us, and we were struggling with it, for or against. Now slowly accosting the object, we begin to realise that, after all, it was not an unconcerned, unaffiliated object in the world; it was a very old friend whom we have treated very badly. Now the friend comes and says, “I am your old friend, sir,” and there need be no more of this tug of war – no competition of the object trying to exert influence on the mind, and the mind trying to exert influence on the object. This is the tug of war, competition.

Let there be no such competition, no mutual influence, but a confluence, rather, a coming together which is possible only when there are characters of a similar nature. But this does not take place immediately. There is a lot of struggle to be undergone in the beginning, because the real nature of the object does not reveal itself at once. The *raga* and *dvesha*, the love and hatred element in our minds, does not quickly leave us. Always we are in a state of agony, anxiety, frustration, etc., even when we sit for meditation.

This leaves us with great difficulty. This is the reason why we take so much time in achieving success in meditation. If that were not there, there would not be much difficulty. The old *samskaras* work so strongly within us that they also get released together with the release of energy. It is not only the good within us that is released, but also the bad. They all rise up. When we sweep a room, all the dust rises up and covers our eyes. Likewise, when we clean our mind in meditation, the dust in the form of *samskaras* rises up and blurs the vision of the object. Then

it is that we do not know what is happening to us, and we become confused.

The dust has to settle down or go out. The *samskaras* have to find their way out of our mind by means of sublimation. They become part and parcel of the mind or the object, and no more exist as vitiating elements within us, as toxic matter annoying us. The *samskaras* always exist as some kind of encrustation on the mind, which should not be the case. The *samskaras* are, after all, mental forms, and they are not really outside the mind. Just as an object is a whirl of energy, the *samskara* is a whirl of mind. So you have to set right this whirl, make it straight and make it come back to the mental source, which is called sublimation.

The sublimation of *samsakaras* or desires is the process of setting right these whirls of energy of the mind in the form of desires, etc., making them straight, and making them come back to the original source so that there is only a single indivisible mind. It is this indivisible mind that reflects the Truth consciousness in it wholly.

Thus, by gradual effort of establishing an affinity of oneself with the object of meditation, the disparity between the two principles gradually gets diminished. The two come together by force of habit and there is ultimately a spiritual union which was only hinted at in our loves of the world, earthly affections, longings, and so forth.

That union supreme and par excellence, which we achieve in the spiritual realisation of the cosmos in meditation, is indicated faintly in earthly affections. We should take hold of this indication as a guidepost and, with its aid, we should enter through the object, and not merely

love or hate the object. We should enter through it, because it only indicates; it is not itself a destination. It is like a messenger of the Eternal that is speaking before us. This messenger's voice has to be heard properly. He Himself made the guide for us, and He shall take us by the hand and take us to That which speaks through Him. This is what is achieved in meditation by a gradual diminishing of the distance between the subject and the object, by concentration free from external thought, wherein the consciousness is wholly engaged in the given concept.