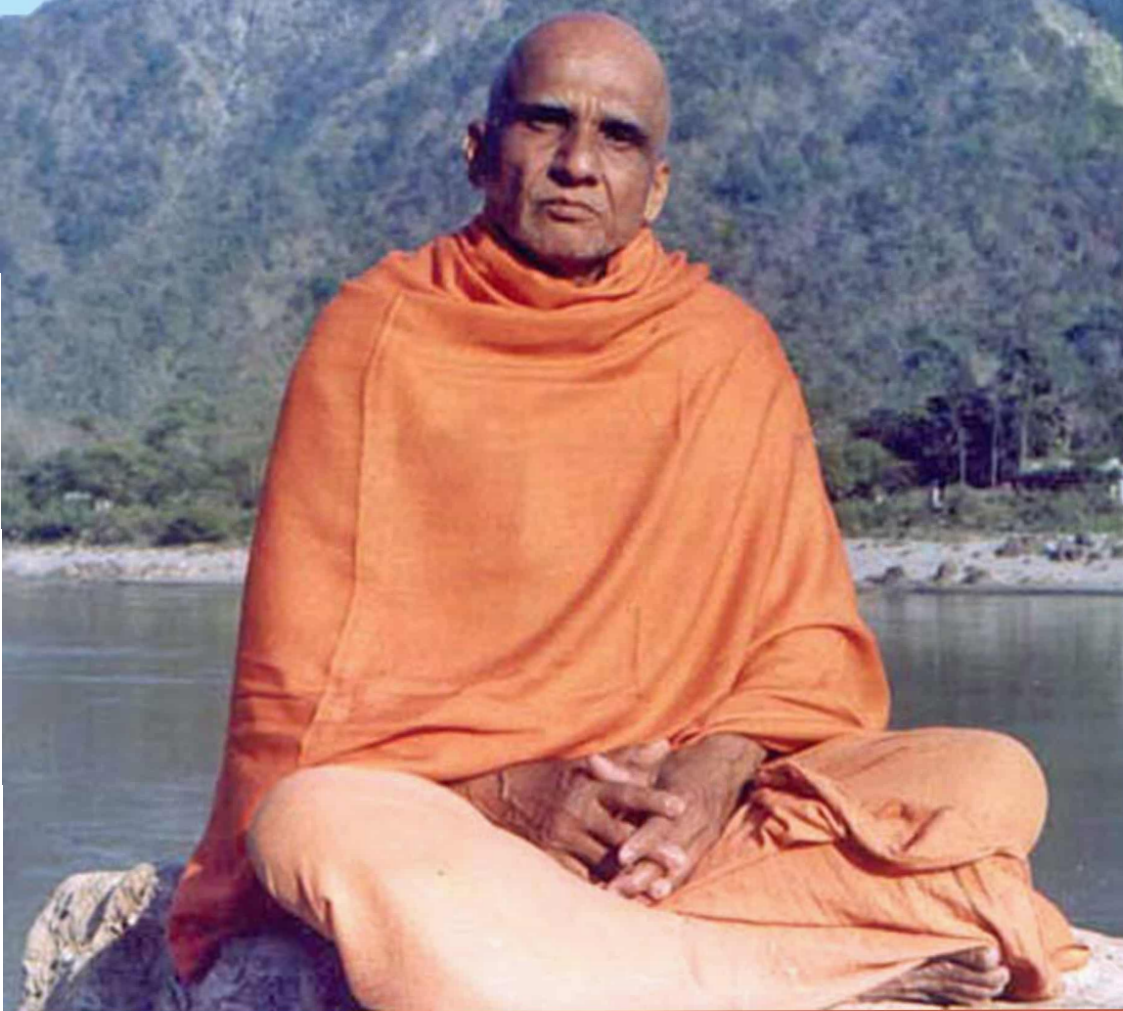


THE HEART AND SOUL OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



Swami Krishnananda

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Sri Swami Krishnananda



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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

Swami Krishnananda was born on the 25th of April, 1922 into a highly religious and orthodox Brahmin family, and was given the name Subbaraya. At an early age, he had become very well-versed in the Sanskrit language and its sacred texts. Through the study of scriptures such as the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads, he was drawn more and more to the Advaita philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya.

The longing for seclusion and the mystical call from the Master pulled him to Rishikesh, where he arrived in the summer of 1944. When he met Swami Sivananda and fell prostrate before him, the saint said, “Stay here till death; I will make kings and ministers fall at your feet.” The young man wondered how this could ever be possible, but the prediction would eventually prove true. Swami Sivananda initiated the young Subbaraya into Sannyasa on the sacred day of Makara Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1946, and gave him the name Swami Krishnananda.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda found that the young disciple, Swami Krishnananda, was well-suited to general writing tasks, the compiling and editing of books, and other sorts of literary work. In the beginning Swami Krishnananda confined himself mostly to his work and study and did not have much contact with visitors, so that many visitors to the ashram did not know of his existence. Eventually Gurudev asked him to do more serious scholarly work. Swami Krishnananda’s first book, *The Realisation of*

the Absolute, was written in a matter of weeks when he was still only a young man in his early twenties.

Swami Sivananda nominated Swami Krishnananda as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society in 1959, which position he held until his resignation in 2001 due to poor health. Swami Krishnananda handled this demanding position with great skill, and at the same time was able to serve as a teacher and guide to the thousands of people who came to him over the course of many years. He was a master of the scriptures, and he gave inspired lectures in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy as well as extensive talks in the ashram itself. Swamiji is the author of over forty works, and these books cover a wide variety of subjects—primarily in the areas of Sadhana, philosophy and yoga. Only a genius of the highest calibre would be able to accomplish this intellectual feat, given the enormous volume of work which came to him as General Secretary of a large institution.

Swami Krishnananda was a rare blend of Karma yoga and Jnana yoga and a living example of the teachings of the Gita. He was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. “Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda,” Swami Sivananda would say of him. Swamiji continued his service to the ashram for forty years as it grew from a relatively small organisation into a spiritual institution widely known and respected throughout the world. Despite failing health in his later years, Swamiji continued to devote himself to ashram administration and to providing spiritual guidance to the many devotees who flocked to him. Swami Krishnananda attained Mahasamadhi on the 23rd of November, 2001.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY

All of you should consider yourselves as blessed because an opportunity has been provided to you to come to this place, this sacred Rishikesh, and this holy ashram of Worshipful Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. His benedictions are upon you all abundantly, which is demonstrated by the fact that it has become possible for you to come here. Here is an ashram which, in its atmosphere, will direct you along a path that will bring you peace of mind and enlighten you along the way of making you a true human personality—strong in yourself, satisfied in every way, and complete, so to say, from every angle of your vision of life.

The great Master Swami Sivananda was a complete person. He lacked nothing. You may be wondering how it is possible for anyone to be complete, since it is seen that everything in the world is incomplete. There is no person, nothing whatsoever, which is complete in itself. Everyone, everything, lacks something. There is an inadequacy characterising every person and all things in the world, whatever they are. But by a method which usually goes by the name of 'yoga', into the meaning of which you are going to be introduced through the course of these teachings, this great Master integrated himself into a structure of personality which stood far above the shoulders of all humanity, and he became what can be designated as a superman. To such a place you have come.

It is not merely that you have come to a place. You have come to an atmosphere, a circumstance, which distinguishes itself from the usual conditions of humdrum city and town life with which you are acquainted. Stay here for some time and see the difference it makes in your mind, your feelings—your vision of things, generally. This is in order to acquaint you with the techniques that were followed and practised by this great Master—in a way, to show you a path, treading which you may approximate the completion that he has achieved, so that if you yourself do not actually become a superman, you will at least have the satisfaction that you are moving towards that ideal.

Education is a progressive march in the direction of the completion of life. So here, you have an opportunity to attend a course of teachings which will highlight the aims and objectives of this ashram, and the great will of the Master who founded this institution. Education, enlightenment, knowledge—these were the things which were emphasised first and foremost by this great saint and sage, Swami Sivananda. Everything else comes afterwards. Your mind makes you what you are. And, what is the mind, except a process of thinking? The manner of your thinking will describe the nature of your whole person. Inasmuch as it is the wish of everyone to get enlightened more and more into the style of one's own personality, it is education that comes first and foremost in the careers of one's life. Economic, political, social needs are important enough, but they pale into insignificance when your mind is not sufficiently educated in understanding yourself, understanding the conditions in which you are living, understanding the society in the midst of which you are living, and understanding several other factors connected with this issue.

First and foremost, a person seems to be concerned with himself or herself. The most pressing issue in life, if you consider it deeply, is yourself. If something has no connection with you, you do not seem to be interested in it. "I am here, and I have to live." You have to live; this is the first issue that comes to your mind, and you have to live comfortably, not merely in the material sense of the term. You may be a wealthy person from the material point of view, but that would not make you a true person unless your mind also is educated. An idiotic person may be physically strong and materially wealthy, but do you consider that person complete?

Your aspirations are multifarious, to make you satisfactory in every sense of the term. You are worried about yourself. You are conscious of your inadequacies. You are thinking of yourself every day. "How will I get on? How will I live?" And you are also conscious of the irreconcilable issues also in life, in the midst of which you have to get on. You are disturbed, you are anxious, and you do not know how to proceed further in your life. You look at the world—a huge expanse of indescribable and incredible thing you call this world. "What is this in front of me?" You are here; and in front of you is a majestic panorama spread out that you call this world. You have to live in this world. You have to get on in this world, and you find it very difficult. Don't you feel it is difficult for you to get on in this world?

There are problems galore and you do not know how to proceed with things. You are worried; and if you are the type who is accustomed to deep thinking, you will be wondering as to how you came into this world at all, how this world has come; and you look up and conclude, in a vague and indescribable, indistinct manner, that something must be

there. "How are things going on? How am I alive? Who has brought me into this world? How has this world come at all? There must be something!"

So, there is a principle which is yourself, there is another principle which is the world outside, and a third principal which beckons you into a wonderment of some superb being. "Something must be there. Something must be there above me. Something must be there above this world. Something must be there, but I do not know what it is. It is neither me nor the world. It is something more than both of us!"

In religious language, we call this God Almighty. There must be a God. There must be a supreme power. Otherwise, how are things going on? "How am I living in this world? How do I breathe? How does my heart operate? How do I digest food in my stomach without my participating in this activity? How does the sun rise—systematically, with mathematical precision? How do the seasons come and recede? How does the sun rise, and how does the sun set? What are these stars that seem so high above us? Are we in the middle of the stars? Wonder, wonder!" Philosophical investigation primarily commences with a wonderment about oneself, about the world, about how things came into being at all.

There are three great issues in life, three principles which attract the attention of any thinking mind: God, world and the individual. Everything—whatever may occur to your mind in any manner whatsoever—is included within the relationship that obtains between the three great principles I mentioned: God, world and the individual. You may say there are many things in the world, but all these many things are included within these three principles; they merge themselves in these principles. There is nothing for you to study at any time in your life except the relationship of these

three great principles, whose cognisance cannot escape your notice. Can you forget that you are? Can you forget that there is a world? Can you forget that there is a great wonder which is superintending over the whole of creation? And all your office work, your factory-going, your clerical job, your family—every kind of blessed thing is included in this mighty relationship of three fundamental principles. You may call these principles by any other name, if you like. Usually, philosophically, from the point of view of religion, these principles are recognised as God, world and the individual—yourself, myself and everybody.

Do you not find it interesting to think like this? All the multifarious issues that attract your attention are now boiled down to three things only. There are not many things in this world. An omnipresent controlling power which seems to be operating this world, including yourself, is a wonderment. And the world itself is a wonder! It has not been understood by you properly. You are living in this world. Every day you look at it but you do not know what you are seeing. You may see a mountain, you may see a river, you may see trees, and you may see people walking about, but this is not the world. This is a manifestation, an expression in a diversified manner of something which philosophers sometimes call nature—the whole setup of things which you call this world, and from which you cannot separate yourself.

Are you in the world? As I mentioned to you, you are going to be introduced into a new way of thinking here—which is not the way you thought in your house, in your family, or on the streets. A great question arises in your mind, and it should arise in your mind: are you living in the world, or are you looking at the world as if it is outside and you are standing outside it as an observer of this world? You have

seen that it is a cosmic nature which works through you and through everybody. Your existence is conditioned by the nature of the world outside. You cannot go against the law of nature. If anybody behaves or conducts himself or herself against the principles along which nature is working, they are not a fit person to live here in this world. But it is not enough if you understand the world in which you may somehow, condescendingly, agree to include yourself. There is another great thing: how are you connected to this world? Let it be inside or let it be outside. Is the world sticking to you or is it standing outside you? How will you answer this question?

There cannot be a relationship between two things unless there is a third thing that cements these two issues. Let us say that you are inside the world, that the world is outside you. Let us take this as a given. But how are you connected with this world? What business have you got in this world? And what has the world to do with you? This question can be answered by the acceptance of a cementing link between yourself and the world—transcending both yourself and the world. Religion calls that principle God. Philosophers call it the Supreme Absolute, or any other thing which may come to the mind suggesting the inclusiveness of this principle.

Your life in this world might have taught you that you have to cooperate with this world. Life is a one-hundred-percent cooperative activity. In no manner whatsoever can you live in this world independently. People require your cooperation, and you require the cooperation not only of people but even of air, of sunlight, of the food that you eat. Your body does not manufacture food. Food comes from the world. Air, sunlight and water do not get manufactured by your body. Unless you are set in tune with these principles

which constitute the world, you will not be a happy individual. You will be complaining against everything.

Firstly, the conclusion is that you have to be in harmony with the world of people and nature. Much more than this harmony, you have to be in harmony with the power that dominates your life and the whole world outside. What would you conclude from this analysis that you are controlled by that which controls the world also? Is it not good for you to be friendly with that great Being? Hundreds of questions will arise in your mind. “How will I become friendly with It?” Omnipresence is the nature of that superintending principle which controls the world and, incidentally, yourself. How will you be friendly with what is omnipresent? Affection, love and consideration are the characteristics of a successful life. Can you oppose another person and be comfortable in life? Can you oppose anything in nature and be comfortable? If not, you cannot be comfortable unless you are in harmony with this omnipresence also.

As the cause conditions the effect, the first determines the second and the second determines the third. The omnipresent controlling power conditions the world, and the world conditions you. Finally, you are conditioned by the omnipresent Being, whose existence automatically gets accepted by the very nature of the life that you are living in the world. Affection succeeds in this world; opposition does not succeed. Cooperation succeeds; war, strife, do not succeed. Friendliness succeeds; enmity does not succeed. This principle of cooperation, love, affection, friendliness and at-one-ment with what determines you is called for. Firstly, it is with what is around you—people, things and nature. Then, primarily it is with that which determines the world and yourself.

So, if love succeeds—and everywhere it is love that succeeds, consideration that succeeds, affection that succeeds—then it will succeed with God also. Love of God includes love of the world, love of your neighbour and love of yourself. Do not wrongly imagine that you can love yourself and be comfortable in this world without your love for That which determines you in this world, and That which also determines the world—God Almighty. I am introducing you to a system of thinking which is impossible to avoid in your life. Logic, argumentation, conflict, strife, fear, battle and war—do they succeed finally? An amiable nature, a smiling face, love, consideration, goodness, acceptance of the nature of another person, acceptance of the nature of the world as a whole, and an acceptance in your heart of the nature of God—that is what succeeds. I am particularly going to introduce you to a way of living which is determined by love of God. You may be wondering what is the meaning of ‘love of God’. To introduce you into the very concept of God is a hard task in the beginning.

If you are logically minded, philosophically minded, and investigative in your nature, you would have followed the few words which I have just spoken—that it is impossible to exist in this world as a person without understanding the world and without also understanding That which determines the world. A foolhardy, idiotic person cannot be comfortable in this world. He must be enlightened into the nature of the conditions prevailing outside and everywhere, as a total. Please think deeply. Do not forget what I have told you in these introductory remarks. You will find that you are well guarded by That to which you belong. Who will protect you and guard you? Only That to which you belong. If you do not belong to something, how will it protect you? You have to

belong to people. You have to belong to the world. And you have to belong to That which rules this world of people, of nature, and yourself.

Here is the necessity for love of God. Devotion works wonders in this world. Devotion—maybe to God, or even to a friend, a human being—the path which is called devotion, or love, will introduce into your own self another thing, which appears to be outside you. If I really love you, you become part of me; you do not stand outside me. Your soul enters my soul, and my soul enters you. Love, truly speaking, is about friendship. With friendship, though it may be very deep, there is a possibility of separation because most types of friendship prevailing in the world are conditioned by social circumstances, personal prejudice included. But love is supernal in its nature. It arises from the depths of your spirit in the recognition of the spirit that is the people outside, the spirit that is operating in the world as a whole—the Supreme Spirit, God himself.

Do you accept my point of view that love succeeds? A tiger is a very fierce animal; you cannot go near it. But, have you seen a tiger's cub sitting on the body of its mother and licking her ears without any fear whatsoever? Why does not the mother tiger fiercely attack her little cub, as she would do with anybody else? There is that biological unity, a soul-to-soul communication. They do not stand apart, due to the affection that is between the two, arisen out of various factors, including biological and psychological, and they seem to have one soul.

Nobody can harm you in this world if you have no instinct in you which can harm. This is a difficult thing to think in your mind. A religious person is not an out-of-the-way, queer individuality disconnected from the usual way in

which people live in the world. Religion is the supreme cementing factor in every aspect of life. These words—‘religion’, ‘devotion’, ‘God’, etc.—have been abused by teachers of philosophy and religion who did not explain them properly, in a manner that is satisfying to the soul of the person who listens to them. Religion has somehow been segregated from the normal way of life, as if it is one type of living disconnected from the kind of life that other people live in the world. It would be good for you to coin your own word to describe that way of life which includes the lives of other people. Service, love, social welfare, communion with nature, and love of the Supreme Absolute—all these are included within the purview of what religion truly means, not religion as it is denominationally understood by people or understood by fundamentalists, as they are called these days. Religion is the aspiration of the soul of the human individual. It is not one of the ‘isms’—Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, and so on. These are only ramifications of a sociological character arisen from the true consciousness which can be called religious consciousness, which supersedes the concept of ordinary denominational religions.

This subject into which I am introducing you is hard at the outset to understand, appreciate, and make your own, because this way of thinking practically revolutionises your way of life in the world, as if you have woken up from a dream and seen the daylight of a new world altogether—not the world in which you have been living up to this time. An enlightened world is found tearing at you, and life is not as you thought it to be. There are more secrets in life which have escaped the notice of most people in the world, and things are not what they seem, as the poet tells you. You must now try to understand things as they are, and not as they appear.

Briefly, I have brought you in contact with a vision of life, a way of thinking which will finally startle you, which will bring you into a state of wonder and completely stir your personality into a circumstance of life which will make you a better person, a good person, a happy person, a serviceful person, a divine person, to mention the least. God bless you!

Chapter 2

LOVE OF GOD

What I am going to tell you has a background which is purely philosophical, though I am not going to touch that aspect of the subject. I am taking up a more practical side of spiritual living, but practice is preceded by a theory or a structure of philosophical background, which is called the Vedanta philosophy.

The metaphysical foundations of the relationship between God, world and the individual, to which I made reference earlier, are to be found in the Vedanta philosophy. You will find it easier to steer the course of your life towards its wondrous destination—highest peace of mind and, in the end, Immortal Life.

Actually, what I am going to tell you is the final conclusion of all learning, and everything else to which I made reference is a preparatory procedure. It is implied that you have a good knowledge of the preparatory stages through other aspects of philosophical thought. You have to bring them together into a holistic way of approach so that all knowledge becomes one knowledge in the end.

I am principally emphasising the aspect of love of God. Here is a mysterious but highly elevating, soul-transforming picture before you. Such a thing as the love of God escapes the attention of most people who may be religious in their own way, because to love God is not enough if you are merely religious in the ordinary sense of the term.

Religions that are known to the world—the ‘isms’, as they are called—are the outer form taken by an inner significance which is the quintessence of spiritual aspiration. Actually, you will find that to love a thing is different from doing something in regard to that thing. You may do several things in regard to a particular object, but that is not necessarily the same as to love it. There is an action of the soul taking place in every form of affection. A mother knows what it is to love a child. There is no need for ceremonies or gestures for the mother to show her affection to the child. It is there, and that is enough.

Whoever has experienced what it is to love will know how it differs from any other occupation of the mind. In love, you do not simply think. It is different from thinking something. Also, you are not going to do anything. What happens, then? You will find it difficult to adjust yourself to the necessities that go together with this so-called act of the soul you call love. A lost friend, as it were, whom you have not seen for years together, your bosom friend, your alter-ego with whom you lived for long as one soul in two bodies—such a friend has disappeared for some reason, whatever that reason be. After years you are seeing him in front of you. You run up in ecstasy: “Oh, you have come!” You lose all your sense and apparatus of thinking with which you may express your feeling on seeing that friend who is suddenly there before you after many years. You do not know what to do at that time. Are you going to embrace him? Are you going to hug him? Are you going to request him to be seated comfortably? Will you entertain him? Will you speak to him in a sweet tone with beautiful words? Will you enquire about his welfare? At that time, you do not know what to do. You are torn into pieces of feeling, and the surge of your being

rushes forth in the love that you are unable to express by external means. This is what you feel when your friend who had been lost is standing before you.

In the midst of a large gathering or a crowd where there is a stampede, a mother loses her little child. Where the child has gone, nobody knows. People are running helter-skelter, as we have seen in the Kumbha Mela. The child is lost. The mother does not know whether it has been killed in the stampede. She strikes her breast with great grief, strikes her head on the ground: "My dear child, the one alone that I had, is gone!" Many days later the child runs to the mother, screaming, "Mummy! I am here!" What does the mother feel at that time? Does she perform any ritual to express her love for the child?

What does God want from you? When you love something immensely, you want to make a gesture of offering something to it because you do not know in what other way you can express your love for it. In this world, rarely do people feel love. In so-called affections and friendships in the lives of people, we find a commercial relationship—a give-and-take policy. "If you do this, I will like you. If you do not do that, I will not like you." This kind of liking is not love. Will you tell God in the same way, "If you give this, I will love you. If you do not give this, I will not care for you"? Would you deal with God in this manner?

The importance of the principle of the existence of God will free you from this tangle of confusion as to how to relate yourself to God. Mortal expressions of human thought cannot understand what love is. There are, however, instructions in scriptures dealing with this path of love—how to gradually move in the direction of this ultimate consummation of the meaning of love. Nobody has seen God. Certain things which

you would like to have, you might not have seen with your eyes. Unseen longings sometimes disturb your soul. “I would have liked to have that, but I have not seen it.”

There is a difference between the act of the soul and the thinking of the mind and the actions of the hands and feet. Inasmuch as the depth of the spirit of affection to God is not clearly intelligible to the ordinary mind, stages of approach to this goal have been prescribed by ancient masters and seers who loved God truly. The saints and the sages about whom you might have heard, about whose lives you might have read and have observed the way in which they lived, would perhaps be great instructors to you on the path of love of God.

There are types and types of devotees of God. I would like you to read the lives of certain saints known as Nayanars, who lived in what today is called Tamil Nadu, and Alvars—Vaishnava saints. I cannot describe to you how they loved God! You have to read, with great concentration of mind, how these great masters of divine devotion lived and manifested their love for God. The Nayanars were principally devotees of God in the form of Lord Siva, and the Alvars were devotees of the great Almighty in the form of Vishnu—Narayana. There are 4,000 Tamil poems, called Narayana Prabandham in the Tamil language, which record the expressions of the love which these great Alvars had for this Supreme Being. Those who have studied it and appreciated it consider Narayana Prabandham as equal to the Veda itself; it is called the Ardhavedam. Similar is the case with the lives of the Nayanars. You will be stunned and breathless when you read the lives of these great people.

How do you call God? Do you know how you can call God? “Oh, my dear!” It is not enough if you say that. God is not merely dear; He is something more. “Oh, honey!—

ananda tene!” There was a great saint who described God as the bliss of honey, or the honey of bliss. You become crazy when you love something. You get drowned in honey, in nectar. You get drowned in your own soul! You get drowned in the soul of that which you love! Read the life of Saint Mira, of Varendar Das, of Tukaram, of Kabir Das in addition to those saints who I have mentioned just now.

The difficulty is proverbial. How do you love God when He is an omnipresent being? This concept of omnipresence is hard to entertain in the mind. So, there is a prescription for you. Begin your devotion with actual worships that you can perform; apply the concept of omnipresence to a lesser degree, such as a portrait of God that you have in your mind—which, also, it will be difficult for you to entertain for a long time. Do you not keep with you a photograph of the person whom you love—a memento connecting yourself with that person whom you love? You hang a photograph of your deceased father on the wall of your house. It is a portrait. The father is not there, but it represents the father who lived once upon a time.

Temple worship, for instance, has been prescribed as a means of developing devotion to God. Even temple worship is not an easy thing. You do not just ring the bell and offer flowers and wave *arati* and go away. This is not what it stands for. The temple is the diagram of the way in which the universe is operating in front of us. The whole universe is there in this little area occupied by the temple. Even to build a temple is not easy. There are scriptures, known as the Vastu Shastras, which describe in minute detail how to construct a temple. You do not enter into the holy of holies suddenly. In well-constructed temples there are several *prakaras*—seven corridors—one inside the other, one outside the other. They

are comparable almost, as they say, to the sheaths of this body. Similarly the levels of existence: *bhur loka*, *bhuvar loka*, *swarga loka*, *mahar loka*, *jnana loka*, *tapa loka* and *satya loka* are, in a cosmical sense, almost comparable to the physical body and its layers: *anamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*—inside which is the Atman, the Light in the holy of holies.

In all temples you will find that in the holy of holies, in the innermost *garbhakuda*, it is dark. It is not lit up with electric light, though today some of the temples have electric light also, which is a tragedy. It should not be. It is a dark *anandamaya* of the cosmic existence in which there is a limpid lake of illumination—the shining Atman. I am not going into great details of the pattern of the structure of temples; I am coming to the main point of what you do when you actually worship in a temple.

The Bhakti Shastras tell us there are four ways of worship. There can be many other details of this fourfold way, but principally they are designated as four, known as *chariya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. We have a temple in the ashram—the Lord Vishvanath and Lord Sri Krishna temple. There are people who worship the divinity by collecting flowers from gardens, plucking *bael* leaves from outside, cleaning the temple—keeping it neat and clean, spic and span. This is worship of God. It is worship of God because you want to keep the area of this holy abode of God neat and clean, as your mind should be when you worship God. These persons do only this work. This is one stage: *chairya*.

Kriya is an inner cooperation in the offering of worship, such as keeping the lights of the *arati* neat and clean, dipping the wicks in the oil, placing it in the proper position and lighting it up—putting camphor on it, then creating a flame

—and offering this lamp to the person who actually performs the worship. An internal *seva*, the inward cooperation in the performing of worship, is what is called *kriya*. The external cooperation is *chariya*. But before reaching the pinnacle of the actual performance of worship, there are two more stages. The one who is outside has done his duty in picking flowers, offering *bilvapatra* and keeping the temple clean, and the inner one has done his own job in providing all the necessities to the performer of the worship by arranging lamps and other things.

But what does the performer himself do? We call them *pujaris*. *Pujari* is a very poor word. He himself is an incarnate divinity. As I mentioned to you, very unfortunately these days everything has become commercial. It has become a routine. Mechanically, like a bulldozer moving they do worship, and the mind is somewhere else. It becomes an act without a thought, much less a feeling. This should not be. You should not disregard temples. They are representations, visibly before you, of the miniature structure of the cosmic operations of God. You must feel a thrill when you enter the temple. It is not like entering a police station or a railway platform. See the difference.

Where there is no movement of the heart, there is no affection. A stone heart cannot love anything. Love is a melting process of the very being of yourself. The performer of the worship does a miracle before he actually performs the worship. He does what is called *yoga*. As I mentioned, there are four stages: *chariya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. What is this *yoga*? *Yoga* is the identification of oneself with the form of the deity to be worshipped. These ways of identification of oneself with the deity, and vice versa, identifying the deity with oneself, is known as the performing of *nyasas*.

Anganyasa and *karanyasa* are the principal ways of *nyasas*. What is *nyasa*? It is the placement—fixing—of the parts of the form of the deity in your own personality. “The head of the deity, of the beautiful divinity, is my own head, and my head is the head of the divinity.” Intensely he feels and thinks in this manner so that the mind of the divinity enters the performer. Every part of his body gets identified with every conceived part of the divinity—the hand with the hand, the feet with the feet, the heart with the heart, the face with the face; everything is set in tune. Do you know what happens when you practice this kind of meditation? The performer of the worship, in deep meditation, considers himself as a replica of the divinity that is worshipped. God possesses him—at least, He is expected to possess him. And, he is possessed of God.

This technique is applicable in various other fields of life also, such as thought transference, telepathic communication and such other things with which you may be acquainted. If there is any other person to whom you want to transfer your thought, think like that person. You become that person. You lose the consciousness of the form of your body as this Mr. So-and-so; you become that person. Who is thinking? You are not thinking; that person is thinking, whose mind has to operate according to your wish. This is about telepathic communication, thought transference, etc. This technique is also employed in the case of God, in worship. Sometimes the worshipper trembles if he has really equipped himself with this process of self-identification with the parts of Lord Siva, Lord Krishna, Lord Vishnu—whoever it is. The cosmic superstructure of the Almighty is represented in the form of the image of the

portrait that is worshipped in the temple. The whole cosmos is vibrating there.

Inasmuch as God is everywhere, He has to be present in the idol also. There are some people who decry idol worship. They say it is stupidity. It is not stupidity. If God is everywhere, he has to be even in your pencil, your fountain pen, the pig that you offer in sacrifice in *homa*, and in the idol that you worship, in the portrait, in the *yantra*, in a diagram—everywhere He has to be. Otherwise, you cannot accept the omnipresence of God. People who consider idol worship as a kind of stupidity and a meaningless caricature of divine devotion do not understand what God is. So this performer of the worship gets possessed due to this self-identification of the structure of his being with the structure of the divinity whom he is worshipping.

There is another stage, called *jnana*, in the process of worship, along with *chariya*, *kriya* and *yoga*. I have explained to you briefly what *yoga* is in the course of performing worship in a temple. If it is not in a temple, it may be on an altar in your own room. Some people have a mini-temple or altar of worship in their own *puja* room. The same process takes place in your adoration of the deity that you have, in a mini-form, on your *puja* room altar. While *yoga* is identification of yourself with the form of the deity and identification of the form of the deity with your own self, *jnana* takes you a step further.

When God possesses you in the act of the *yoga* that I have explained, you cease to be yourself. The energy, the power, the consciousness, the form of God has entered into you and taken possession of the whole structure of your being. When you act, It acts. When you speak, It speaks. This occurrence is sometimes called *avesha*—the superabundance

of being possessed by the deity. You can be possessed by anything if you love it deeply.

Why do you find it difficult to love anything? The hard ego prevents you from giving any concession to another person. The ego says, “I am all-in-all! Who cares for another?” It is not possible to love anything when the ego adumbrates its hard, single point of view and carries on a political affection, as people have in a parliament. There, every member has affection for another member, but you know very well what kind of affection it is. They are broken pieces struggling to get united. Such a thing is not affection.

To love God, you have to love everything. This also follows as a consequence of the love of God. *Yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pashyati* (B.G. 6.30) is a line from the Bhagavadgita: “When you see Me in everything, you also see everything in Me.” The presence of God in every nook and cranny of creation makes you feel a divine presence in everything in the world. I have already mentioned that it is not easy to love God. I have to repeat this again and again. Until your stone-like heart melts—unless your ego melts—this will not be possible.

The lover of God—the true lover of God—transcends the realm of shame. When you love God, you may become something which will not be understandable to society, the public of people. Nobody could understand Mira, the queen of a kingdom, dancing in the streets. What did the king feel about it? “My wife, the queen, dancing in the streets like a crazy lady?” When true love emanates from the personality of a person, the difference between the lover and the beloved ceases. I am not going to that side of the matter just now; I shall touch upon this after some time. What actually is your

relationship with God? When you love God, what is your position? And what is the position of God?

Sometimes it is said that there is a duality of concept in the *bhakti marga*, or the path of love of God. It may be so in one sense of the term, because when you love something, you behold it before you as a ‘something’ which is not yourself exactly. But in the case of God, it is not ‘something’ that you are loving. It is all things. So the duality which is generally said to be in the *bhakti marga* diminishes, and it becomes a non-dual love. Thus, *bhakti* leads to *jnana* in the end. Non-dual love—can you conceive of it? Whom are you loving in non-dual affection? Are you loving God? Or are you loving yourself? The lower forms of devotion, known as *apara bhakti*, have the appurtenances of items of worship, gestures and performances of different kinds, but in the higher *bhakti* you love in such intensity that the purpose of love is fulfilled in its consummation.

Do you know what is the consummation of love? What do you want from the object that you love? What is your expectation? You want it to be very near you. You want to touch it. You want it to enter into you. You do not want it to be separate from you at all. “My child is me!” cries the mother in love. It is not any more ‘my’; it is ‘me’ only. The ‘my’ becomes ‘me’.

Inasmuch as you have to accept that the presence is in all things—accept His omnipresence—loving such a thing is loving the entire creation at the same time. *Apara bhakti* becomes *para bhakti*, which is identical with *jnana*. *Jnana* does not mean learning. It is not academic knowledge. It is the actual apprehension of the true being of God himself. It is not the object called God, but the very Being of God—inseparable from yourself also, because God is omnipresent.

In this tremendous ecstasy of the identification of the omnipotence of God with one's own self, *puja*—worship—becomes consummate. In heightened forms of worship, the performer, the *pujari*, waves the *arati* before the deity; he goes in circles—round and round, round and round. Finally, in certain forms of worship, he waves the *arati* to himself. Mostly, you might have not seen such a thing in temples. In the ecstasy of his performance he ceases to distinguish himself, his existence, from the existence of the God that he is worshipping; the *arati* turns to himself. I have heard it said that Swami Vivekananda was once performing worship. In his ecstasy, he turned the *arati* to himself—to the chagrin and shock of all people. “Are you worshipping yourself or are you worshipping God?” Only a worshipper knows what worship is.

Whatever I have told you just now is the inner significance of the fourfold types of worship: *chariya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. And I also mentioned that you must read the lives of these saints: Saint Mira, Saint Haridas, Saint Varendar Das, Saint Kabir Das, and the Alvars and Nayanars.

Chapter 3

THE APPROACH TO GOD

Often it appears that the world is totally different from us and we bear no relation to it. For instance, if someone is felling a tree in a forest, we do not feel that anything is happening to us at all. If someone dies somewhere, we do not feel any effect of the demise of someone far away. Many events take place in the world, but we are unaffected by those things. All this observation may make us feel that we are totally independent individuals because the world was there even before we were born and it will be there even if we leave it. These observations may make us conclude that the world is totally independent of us. But, if we go deeper into the circumstance of life, we will also observe that we are dependent on the world. We are not as independent as we may assume. Our very existence in the world is totally determined by the operation of nature.

We are determined by the society around us and we cannot disassociate ourselves from society. We cannot live alone, literally, disconnected from human society; social cooperation is necessary for our survival. Apart from this fact, there is a more important issue which makes it obvious that we cannot live in the world without cooperating with nature. We breathe the air that is outside us, and we breathe it in such a way that it appears to be part and parcel of our very existence itself. So is the case with other things like water, air, sunlight and food, which are not manufactured by us from within our body. That there is an organic relationship

between ourselves and the world is very clear on a deeper analysis of the situation. This is another side of it. The third truth that will come out from a further, deeper analysis is that the world and ourselves are not merely interdependent; we are just one only. The world is existing in us, and it is the world that is operating through our so-called individualities. There is no totally independent existence of anything. It is the world that exists, and we are just *it*. These three points of view, all of which are absolutely correct in their own way, have given rise to three schools of philosophy known popularly as Dvaita, or dualism, Visishtadvaita, a qualified monism, and Advaita, absolute monism.

The approach to God, which is the principle aim of life, has to take into consideration these three facets which we have to encounter in our daily life, whether it is personal, social, or, carried further, universal. We live in a dualistic world; we also live in a cooperative world, an organically connected world, and finally a time comes, on the deepest analysis of things, that there is only *one* surviving Being. It is not qualified by anything else, because anything else does not exist. The world *is*, and it need not be qualified by something outside the world. Even society is a part of this creation. One Being alone *is*.

These three aspects are highlighted in our operations every day, whether we are able to pay sufficient attention to it or not. Because of this threefold impact that the world seems to be having upon us, we have different moods in life. We do not think in the same way always. There is the dualistic emphasis which makes us feel that we are, out and out, centralised individuals with no concern whatsoever with the world in any way; and often we feel that there is a vital relationship. These days there is special emphasis laid on the

preservation of nature. Ecological considerations are now coming to the surface of man's awareness—how even the trees in the forest, the plant kingdom—has a vital connection with our own selves, apart from animals and human beings. Though these facets of our life operate every day, we generally, with a blinkered view of things, look at the world only in one way at a time and shift our point of view according to our convenience. We are not always philosophical in our life. Nobody thinks philosophically in practical day-to-day life, though one has to accept that it is necessary to think philosophically because to think philosophically is to introduce the element of Ultimate Reality into our existence—without which, or ignoring which, life would wither into shreds of lifeless pieces.

We love the world. We want to preserve creation. We wish that humanity should survive. But, at the same time, we become careless about the events that take place in the world, and we mind our own business. When things come to brass tacks, we mind our own business; let the world go to hell. But that it cannot go to hell so easily is not acquiesced due to the ego, the central nucleus of our personality, asserting itself vehemently in terms of this bodily existence. The body is everything. It can survive by itself. What we need is physical comfort and biological security, mental peace in an individualistic sense, though often, with tongue in cheek, as it were, we accept that other people should also survive and they should be as happy as ourselves. But this is not taken seriously when matters come to a crisis; then we feel that we are more important than other people. Each person feels, "I am more important than others. I have to survive, even if another may not survive!"

These issues that I am presenting before you have relevance to the subject that we are discussing, namely, our attitude to God. We cannot jump on God suddenly, like a fruit falling from a tree. We have to pass through various stages of experience, even suffering and unexpected thunderbolts of experience, because of our variegated relationship with the degrees of reality manifest in creation. It is not that we just think God and He comes. It is not so easy a matter, because we cannot think God unless we know our relationship to God. We have a difficulty in knowing even our relationship to the world—to people outside and the trees and plants—so how will we know our relationship to higher realities?

Considering these aspects of spiritual practice, seers have taught us that there are three ways of looking at things, looking at reality itself. One aspect is that the world is perpetually active. We are also continuously active. Every cell in our body is active. Every atom is vibrating, and no atom can be quiet. Due to the impetus of cosmic activity continuously taking place, directed towards some destination which one cannot easily decipher, we are compelled to act. You act in this world not because you are pleased with the work that you are doing; you have to work because of the impulse that is planted in you by the very structure of the universe that is part and parcel of your existence. Is it very pleasant to work—to do hard work in the world? You would like to have more and more holidays from the necessity to work. Why do you want holidays? Because work is not pleasant. You want recreation and want to be yourself, and not to be identified with work. Yet the compulsion from nature demanding you to cooperate with it in its purpose of the evolutionary process requires that you have to work in a dexterous manner. This dexterous working is called *karma*

yoga: *yoga karma sukoshalam*. It is not enough if you merely work; you should work dexterously. Adroit and very wise should be your movements. What is wisdom in action? It is *buddhi* yoga, on which the *karma* is to be supported, as the Bhagavadgita puts it. You have to work with understanding. Dexterous, wise action based on understanding, which is called *karma* yoga, is a cooperation on your part in the work of nature rather than an independent working for your own personal benefit. There is no such thing as personal benefit; this has to be understood first of all. There is no personal benefit accruing to any organ of your body; the benefit goes to the entire organism which is the personality. There is no personal benefit, so-called, because all benefit that may accrue to you is a consequence of the cooperation of multifarious forces of nature. You must know that you cannot even breathe unless the whole world operates through you and cooperates with you in many ways. You cannot lift a finger if the organism is not in harmony with the forces of nature.

Knowing this fact that you are part and parcel of the evolutionary process of creation, while you feel compelled to act, do not act as if *you* are doing it, because nature abhors ‘you’ and ‘I’ issues. There is no ‘I’ in nature, no ‘you’ in nature, no ‘it’ and ‘this’ and ‘that’. These are all concoctions for our human convenience. It is just what it is. Can you imagine how difficult it is to do a wise work in this world, with no reaction following? Do you know that every action produces a reaction? What is reaction? It is the Bhagavadgita’s doctrine that it is possible to act without producing reactions. You must know this. You must have read the Bhagavadgita several times, but I do not know how far you have understood the secret of this non-reactionary action.

Usually, every *karma* produces a result. Why should it produce a result? The result is nothing but a kick struck upon you by nature outside when you are not in harmony with it. When nature reacts against you, it pulls your ears, pinches you and makes you feel a certain pain and, like a good schoolteacher, punishes you, as it were, when you are not a good student in the school of life. The whole of the Bhagavadgita is the wondrous gospel of cooperative activity in terms of the participation required on your part in the universal evolutionary process. You have to work. Nobody can sit quiet without work, but that work is not meant for your benefit, because you cannot stand outside nature. The bodily insistence on its importance, from which even a saint cannot be free, requires that some work is necessary in this world. But work is not everything. Why do you work? Because nature compels you, as you say. But why does nature compel you? Because it has a purpose. What is the purpose?

Now comes the next step of understanding in your spiritual career. It is correct—accepted—that nature propels us to act. But why does it do that? Is it crazy, or has it any understanding? Nature is very wise. It is all eyes, all ears, and all mind, knowing everything in every way. It is moving in one direction. The movement of the cosmic process in that given direction, which you cannot understand, is the next step in the way of living a spiritual life. It is accepted that you have to work; but, you cannot work purposelessly. You may have a selfish purpose such as earning a salary, maintaining a family, becoming a wealthy person. This is a foolish idea of the purpose of action. The purpose is to satisfy nature—to be one with it, and to move with it for the fulfilment of a purpose which is its purpose, and not yours. Where does nature take you? It takes you to the Self-realisation of itself. All

evolution is a process of the Self-realisation of the universe. It is moving towards God. This movement towards God is an ardent feeling present, as it were, in the whole of nature. Nature—the world—loves God, as it were, and it is rushing towards it.

Aristotle told us that the pull that God exerts over the world is like the lover pulling the heart of the beloved. The lover-beloved relationship seems to be between God and the world. Restlessly the movement of nature takes place, as a lover would restlessly work, sleeplessly be active and never keep quiet until his purpose is fulfilled. What is this impetus to move towards the fulfilment of the purpose of life? It is an action of the soul taking place for the realisation of its own higher dimension—God. What is God? Where is God, actually speaking? Can you imagine? It is the highest dimension of your own self. You are asking for your own higher nature—the higher Self being sought by the lower self. As Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions to us in the sixth chapter of the Gita, the Atman is being pulled by the Atman. The higher Self is the beloved. The lower self is the lover. He is restless. Why should you not be restless when your real nature is calling you: “Come on! I am here!” And you are here, wretched, creeping on the surface of the earth as a lower nature. If your own higher nature calls you, will you keep quiet without responding to it? You are calling your Self. This is love. It takes a dualistic form as two persons—two things. At one stage it takes an organic relationship, and at another stage, finally, it takes one unitary face, indescribable in its nature.

There are feelings described in the Bhakti Shastras, scriptures on devotion to God. Devotion is a kind of feeling—not an ordinary psychological operation in a

reckless manner, in a careless way, but a deep root of your personality surging forth to reach up to its own state of perfection. These feelings, in regard to the higher Being, or call it your higher Self, or God Almighty—these feelings are called *bhavas*, emotional attitudes. Do you love anything in this world? I have touched upon this subject a little before. There is no one who cannot love. You love a tinsel, a corpse or something worthless, or you love something better—but, nevertheless, you love something. At least, you love yourself.

The *bhavas*, or the feelings generated by the operation of love, are multifold. Whom do you love in this world? Think over this matter. You must be a little wise, and not be simply a work addict, only doing things but not feeling anything. You have love for your father, is it not? You have love for your mother. You love also a good boss in your office who is a perfect gentleman. You like him. “Here is a wonderful man.” Like the headmaster of Rudby in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*—a perfect schoolmaster. The students like him. They love him; they adore him. They offer presents to him; they observe his birthday, and so on. You love your father and mother. You love your boss, your master. You love even a good servant who serves you. There was a judge in the High Court of Allahabad who had a servant from Bihar. This servant served the judge so affectionately, considering him as more than his father, that even after the judge retired, the servant clung to him. “Master, whether or not you are a judge, it does not matter. I love you. I will serve you till death.” I have seen the judge when he came here, and the servant also. The servant clung and served this judge until he died. That is the love of the master. Sometimes we are given the analogy of Hanuman loving Rama—love of the master. You love your child. You know how intensely you love your child. If the

child is not visible for some time, especially if you have only one, you experience how intensely you love your child. The wife loves the husband and the husband loves the wife. In what way do they love? There are cadences—differences—in the intensity of affection. The love for the father is one kind of love. It cannot be identified with the love for the child.

There is a limitation in certain forms of love, and there is no limitation in certain others. Love is an action of the soul; it is not a mental activity. To the extent the soul operates, to that extent your love is unselfish and genuine. Often commercial love may take hold of us and we may find ourselves in a tragedy later on when the business fails. It is impossible not to love your father. It is impossible not to love your mother. It is impossible not to love your superior. It is impossible not to love your child. It is impossible for the husband and the wife not to love each other. But these loves, in the mortal world, have limitations. If the father dies, you weep. If the mother goes, you feel even worse. If the child is dead, you do not know what to do. So is the case with all other things. Tragedy follows from mortal affection. In order that this affection may become immortal, you are supposed to divert it to a form of sublimation to God Himself.

You do not know where God is—maybe, accepted. But you can imagine that God is your father, and love Him in the same way as you love your father. This is called *shanta bhakti*, *shanta bhava*—the perfected, philosophical love, which you have towards your father. Even in your love for your father and your mother, there is a difference. You do not love your father in the same way as you love your mother. You know what it is; I need not explain it. Though both of them are objects of your affection, there is some difference. There is a difference in all these affections. Because of the

fact that loves end in travesty, tragedy, bereavement and sorrow, teachers of the *bhakti marga*—love of God—have pointed out ways and means by which we can turn our affection to God. You can love the Almighty God as much as you love your father. He is really your father; it is not merely an imagination. *Mata dhata pitamahah* (B.G. 9.17): “I am your grandfather; I am your father; I am your mother,” says the Almighty Lord, as we have it in the Bhagavadgita.

The scriptures point out that you can move along these *bhavas* in a graduated way or you can take them all together, at the same time, if you are an adept in the path. Sometimes it is also possible to choose one aspect of the *bhava*, and not all of them together. Consider. You love so many things—father, mother, child, wife, husband, and so on. Among all these things, which one attracts you most? Think over this matter. It is not that you love all of them in equal measure. You will not be able to decide this issue so suddenly, so quickly. You will make a mess in thinking. If you are unselfish in the analysis of your personality, you will know there is something which takes you above yourself. The nearness of the object of love to yourself is the test of your intensity of affection. Is your father closer to you, or is your mother closer? Who is closer? Decide for yourself. Is the spouse dearer, or is the child is dearer? Is your office superior a better object of affection, or is your spouse a better object of affection? Think over this matter. Do not make a mess of your analysis. Be careful in this matter.

We pass through all these experiences in our life. No one is free from them. Every one of us has these *bhavas*, these feelings of affection, every day. Often they are smothered by certain pressing activities which are of a personal nature. We have to go by the injunctions of the great masters who lived

intense spiritual lives. It is better to follow the path of these great men than try to understand things by ourselves. Follow the path of the great men. *Maha-jano yena gatah sa panthah* (C.C. 17.186): Which is the way? The way that was trodden by the great masters of yore, that is the way. You cannot independently judge yourself. You do not know which you love more, which you love less. You make a jumble of all things every day, and you are unhappy from moment to moment because of the impossibility to judge what you want, finally. You like your spouse, you like your boss, you like money, you want wealth, you want prestige, and whatnot. You do not know what you want, finally. You want everything. Is it true, or is there something more?

The transmutation of human affection into spiritual affection, which is called devotion, is a great art of psychological operation. This psychology of the human being is what is called the work of the *antahkarna*, or sometimes known as *chitta*, the root of our psychic activity. In the language of yoga teachers like Patanjali, the root of our psyche is called *chitta*. But in other cases we classify the functions of the *antahkarana*, the inner organ, into four facets: the thinking, the self-asserting, the understanding and the memorising activities. But there is a root of these fourfold activities. The root has to be taken into consideration and get transmuted completely. It is not sufficient if you merely think of God, or remember God in a psychological fashion, or accept that God exists. Your root has to accept that it is so. When you love anything, it is the root that loves. It is not the ego that loves, not the memory that loves, not mere logical understanding that loves. There is a root in you which comes up to the surface of action and wells up in great intensity.

Very rarely can people bring this principle of affection and love to the surface of their activity.

Wholly we cannot love anything. Partially we love. Our love is finite. Devotion to God is an entirely complete form of affection, outside which nothing can be. It is all-in-all! You may feel sometimes, "My child is all-in-all; I may die for the child." Your father is all-in-all. Your mother is all-in-all. "My wife is all-in-all." "My husband is all-in-all." You may say that, but they are not really all-in-all if you go deep into the matter. There is a condition put on this affection. These affections are limited by certain circumstances. The father loves the son—accepted. The son loves the father. But they are conditioned by certain circumstances. The son would expect the father to behave in a particular manner. The father would expect the son to behave in a particular manner. Otherwise, there is a great rift between father and son. The father asserts independence. "You quit this place!" he tells the son. And the son does the same thing to the father when there is no collaboration of feeling and attitude between them. You may say the love of husband and wife is very intense, but even that is conditional. There is a reciprocation, a give-and-take policy even in the husband-and-wife relationship. It is not true that they love each other one hundred percent, because if the condition necessary for that love is broken, see what happens.

This should not happen in the case of love of God. Inasmuch as in all objects of love in this world there is a limitation imposed upon these objects, they are not complete in themselves. God is complete Being. We may define God in this manner. Whatever complete Being is, that is God. Complete Being means a Being that has nothing outside itself, because if there is something outside, then the Being

becomes finite and it is not complete Being. You have to adjust your consciousness with dexterity to place before your vision the presence of such a complete Being, and then move towards it. The *bhavas*, or the feelings of love to which I made reference, are categorised in five or six ways, as I mentioned, but some are more intense than others, as you yourself may feel.

In mortal affection—human love of persons and things in the world—there is an expectation from the object of love. Unexpected, total affection is not seen in this world. When I love you, I expect you to love me also in some way. It is not that I unilaterally love you, whatever be your behaviour. That is not seen. If there is a give-and-take commercial policy in affection, naturally it ends in tragedy, bereavement. Can you love anything unconditionally—let that do anything, let it be anything, in whatever way? Have you seen such affection in this world? No. The partners in affection can separate on the slightest of suspicions and doubts arisen between themselves in their relationship. This can happen everywhere—in the office, in the family, and in every way of your life. Bereavement is the necessary consequence of worldly love. But, love being an essential ingredient in one's nature, it cannot be set aside. Though it does not work well in this world, it has to work somehow, as in the case of your activities in the world. Though every action has a defect, you have to act somehow by freeing it from the limitations that may be imposed upon it.

Though every love in the world is defective, it has to be there somehow. You cannot exist without it. In a morbid form of affection which finds that everything that is its object of affection is lost, it turns itself upon itself and becomes

narcissistic love. You love your own self, afterwards. You become a maniac of self-love—a megalomaniac, sometimes.

It is a great art to turn the affections of human circumstance to God. I mentioned to you to choose one form of your affection which will be turned towards God. “Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come....” is one form of prayer. Usually religions consider God as a father, for whatever reason. Sometimes God is considered as a mother also, especially in Indian circles. God as mother, God as father. Sometimes God is treated as a brother-companion-friend, as in the case of Arjuna who had the companionship of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, whom he knew as divine and yet he was a colleague and a friend—an equal, as it were. How will you turn your love to God?

All aspects of love should come together into a focus of single attention in the case of love of God. When such a thing becomes difficult at the outset, people take to one side of affection and become devotees of God in terms of ordinary worldly relations, chosen one by one, or all together, or only one at a time. Bhishma of the Mahabharata is said to have had the attitude of a son of the Supreme Father in respect of God. He was a philosopher, so he philosophically conceived the Supreme Being as his original Source, the Parent of all things. Hanuman is reputed for his *dasa bhakti*, love manifested in a servant towards his master. Mother Yashoda, renowned in history as the mother of Sri Krishna, was fond of Sri Krishna as a baby. Prahlada also considered God a parent and accorded him such affection. Arjuna’s love is an example of the love of companionship—friend to friend. In the case of the *gopis* of Brindavan, it was an apex of affection. Affection becomes complete and it reaches its climax when the lover

loses his self-consciousness. As long as you are existing as a lover, your ego is also preponderating at the same time. In an intense form of love, the lover loses consciousness of oneself and merges into the consciousness of that which is loved. The lover *becomes* the beloved. The *gopis* had this experience. They hugged a tree, embraced a dry stick, kissed a leaf. They could visualise their beloved in all these things when they found that they could not actually, physically, see their beloved.

Sri Rama had that experience, as we have it in the Valmiki Ramayana, especially when he lost Sita. He cried, wept and ran hither and thither asking, “Where is my beloved?”—asking the trees, asking the twigs, asking the leaves, asking the animals, “Have you seen my wife?” It was Rama’s experience in the wilderness; so was also the *gopis*’. This is *madhurya bhava*—love which is sweet in its nature, which is apart from the logical love of the master and servant, the love of friend and friend, etc. They become, in this form of ecstasy of sweetness of love, commensurate with all creation, practically. They become *sahaja*, as it is called in Vaishnava theology. *Sahaja marga* is a form of devotion to God where you become equal to the object of love. We do not actually become the lover of the object; we ourselves assume the role of the object of affection, so that we do not know whether the two mingle as two distinct things, or one looks like two things. We do not know, in the *sahaja avastha*, whether it is the beloved loving the lover or the lover loving the beloved. If water in two tanks is on par on the surface level, we do not know which water moves to which tank. There is a pair of companion-tanks in Brindavan called Radha-kund and Krishna-kund. There are two tanks; I have seen them. It appears that no water moves from one tank to

the other. One cannot make out from which tank to which tank the water is moving. There is a little passage of movement of water from one tank to the other.

Likewise is this devotion in its heightened form of *madhurya bhava*. Who loves whom? You cannot find out. When this *madhurya bhava* is taken to the apex of perfection, is God loving you, or are you loving God? Can you understand what it is when God loves you? When you love God, it is called *bhakti*. When God loves you, what is it called? There have been great masters who compelled God to love them. That is a greater devotion than your loving God.

As a diversion from the main subject, here is a story, for your information. There was a *sadhu* who was known to be a person capable of conversing with God daily. He would talk to God at night. People knew that he was capable of conversing with God every day. A lady from the vicinity used to come daily to this *sadhu*, prostrate herself before him and put a mud pot of *kheer* before him, then leave without uttering a word. This went on for about one year or so. The *sadhu* did not utter a word as to why this *kheer* was coming. The lady also did not say anything. When a year passed, the *sadhu* asked, “Mataji, why do you come every day with a pot of *kheer* for me? What is the matter?”

The lady cried out, “I did not want to say anything; I thought you knew because you talk to God. I have no child, though I got married twenty years ago. I wish to be blessed with a child. Please ask God tonight, in your conversation, whether or not I can have a child.”

“I will talk to God tonight and tell you tomorrow,” replied the *sadhu*.

The next morning, the lady came. “Maharaj, what is the order of the Almighty God?”

“I have talked to God. He said you cannot have a child,” replied the *sadhu*.

“Wretched is my life!” she exclaimed.

She ran along the bank of a river, intending to commit suicide by jumping into the water. Along the way she found another *sadhu*, looking like a crazy man with billowed hair. He saw this lady running in distress and asked, “Mother, Mataji! Where are you going? What is the matter?”

She said, “I have had no time to talk. I am going to end my life!”

“End your life? Why? What is the matter that you are ending your life? Tell me,” the *sadhu* said.

“I don’t want to say anything. God has refused my wish,” she replied.

“God has not refused your wish. It cannot be possible. God does not refuse the wish of anybody. Tell me what the matter is,” insisted the *sadhu*.

“I wanted a child. God has denied me,” said the lady.

“Oh, that’s all—simple matter. You will have. . . . How many children do you want?” asked the *sadhu*.

“One,” she replied.

“One? You shall have two,” he said.

Though God has denied everything, the psychology of the human being is very peculiar. One good word from a person satisfies; it cools the heart. When the *sadhu* said “You will have two,” the lady withdrew her intention to end her life and went back and wept in the house.

It so happened, after a long time, the lady had one child, and after that she had another child. A year after having two children, she took the two children to the very same *sadhu* who said that God had denied her a child. She went to the same *sadhu* who used to talk to God, and prostrated herself before the Mahatma with her little children. He recognised the lady.

“Who are these children?” the *sadhu* asked.

“Your own, your own,” the lady said. “They are your own.”

“Heh? These are mine?” he said.

“Your children,” she replied.

“No, it is not possible. God had denied you, yet here they are!” he said.

The *sadhu* was angry with God. “I shall quarrel with God tonight. How has God insulted me and told lies to me? No, it is not possible. I shall quarrel with God and tell him how He has blackened my face!”

That night he said, “What have you done to me? You have painted my face black. Oh! She has got two children when you denied even one!”

Then God told that *sadhu*, “What can I do, tell me? You are running after me, I know very well. You are my devotee. But that one, who told the lady that she can have two children—he is the person after whom *I’m* running! So what can I do? I have to accede to his wish.”

Here is the power of God!

Chapter 4

THE ART OF MEDITATION ON GOD

It is important to understand the art of meditation on God. Loving God is actually a great meditation on God. Your heart concentrates itself on the Supreme Being. You make yourself *en rapport* with this mighty existence. How will you succeed in doing this great sacrifice of meditation on God?

Ordinarily, in every human being, the consciousness, which is the nature of the soul, gets diverted to the sense organs. Even when we close our eyes and plug our ears, the senses operate. A sense is not the physical eardrum or the retina of the eye; it is a sensation that is perpetually taking place in us. The manner in which the mind operates will indicate to what extent the sensations are active. Close your eyes and then start thinking. You will think only in terms of the memory that you retain of the objects of sense. So even if the eyes are closed, sensory activity need not cease. The sense organs are not the culprits. They are only the vehicles through which consciousness emerges in terms of the objects outside. This habit of the mind, or consciousness, to think always in terms of what is outside us has to be checked. This is what is known as self-restraint or sense-control. You cannot think God correctly unless your senses are controlled.

When Sri Krishna, as we have it in the Mahabharata, proposed to go on a peace mission to the court of the Kauravas, Dhritarashtra, the blind king, hearing the news of the coming of this great person, summoned his minister Sanjaya and asked, “What kind of person is coming? Can I

behold him?” The minister Sanjaya, the wisest of people at that time, remarked: “You cannot see him unless you are a *kritatma*. An *akritatma* cannot behold this great person that is coming to the court of Your Highness.” What is *kritatma*, and what is *akritatma*? *Kritatmata* is to be blessed in a spiritual sense to be able to restrain the operation of the sense organs. Such a person can behold Sri Krishna, who is the master of self-restraint.

This is a symbolic statement indicating that the vision of God is the cessation of sensory activity. God is the soul of the universe and, therefore, only your soul can contact that universal Soul. The senses, the mind and the operations of the psyche normally cannot hope to contact God. There is no such thing as contacting God, really speaking, because contact implies the coming together of two elements. The soul of the human being actually is the replica of the Soul of the universe. It is a miniature presentation of the universal existence which is the *paramatman*, as it is called—Supreme Soul. So only a soul can behold the Soul. The effort that you have to exercise in this regard is something to be deeply considered. You cannot desire God when you desire something else. The desire for another thing different from the supreme existence of God is a diversion of interest. The diversion of the mind to something which is other than the great objective of your meditation—such a devotion is called *vyabhicharini bhakti*. It is a dishonest way of looking at God and trying to deceive Him, as it were, by making it appear that you are concerned with Him while you are really concerned with the objects of the world.

Why are the senses so strong? Why has it become so difficult for us to restrain them? What is the matter? When a clarified understanding suggests to you that the inclusion of

God's being in your own person is going to give you whatever you want—superabundance of everything that you can conceive is in the very being of the great Almighty Lord—knowing this, why should the senses move here and there? The reason, apparently, is the search for as much joy as possible. Is there no joy in union with God? The power of the sense organs, which find joy only in outward objects, influences the mind to such an extent that when you think, you think with joy only of that which is outside you. It is not easy to control the sense organs. The secret of their success, the source of their power, is in the attachment that consciousness has with this body. Though omnipresence is the nature of reality, location is the nature of this body. The body is in one place only and, therefore, it wants only one thing—connected with each sense organ.

You have to learn the art of meditation, first of all. Many of you must be practising meditation. And each one of you should honestly feel for yourself how far you have succeeded in pouring your entire personality into the consciousness of God's existence. Meditation is not a routine. It is not a mechanical performance of religiosity. Meditation is not an activity in the ordinary sense of the term. You are not 'doing' something in meditation. Your being wells up into a heightened form of performance. You do not know whether you have got a soul at all. How many of you think that there is a soul? You think it is just 'me', this physical body, and, with some concession, it is this mind, this reason, this intellect—the psychological operation. Have you got a soul? Actually, you do not *have* a soul, you *are* the soul! So do not say "the soul in me", and so on. If the soul, which you *are*, is *in* you, then what are *you*? Are you something other than the soul? Remove this idea from your mind, first of all. You do not

have a soul inside you, as if you are outside the soul. You *are*, yourself, the soul.

But, what is the soul? It is consciousness. Where is consciousness? It cannot be tied down to the little barrier of the physical body. Consciousness cannot have a limitation. The very consciousness of the limitation of consciousness implies that it is everywhere. You must be a little bit logical in this context. Deep thinking and analysis is necessary. If consciousness cannot be limited, it cannot be only inside your body. You have to work like a schoolmaster, like a teacher who goes on repeating the same thing again and again to the children, the students, so that what he says enters their minds. Repeat it again and again. This repetition of the formula of the soul's actual union with God is sometimes known as *japa sadhana*.

You know what is *japa*. You take a name, conceive a formula—a kind of expression describing the nature of God. You call it a mantra because it is holy. Repeat it again and again: “Almighty Lord, I seek You! Almighty Lord, I seek You! Almighty Lord, I seek You! I seek You *only*! I want You only! Thou art everywhere! I seek *You*, That which is everywhere! May my heart melt in the Ocean of Your Being!” Go on telling this to yourself. I am not giving you a mantra here, but a formula to think. You can think and recite the formula of God's existence in any manner whatsoever, in any language, because language is only an expression of feeling, of your intention. Loudly call the Name of God. Let it be That. Your senses will be hushed completely by the sound that you make in calling the Name of God. The noise of the senses, of course, is very intense. They clamour; they cry. They create a big hullabaloo. They will not allow you to

think, even. “I want this! You give this to me! I am not satisfied!” say the sense organs.

While there are many ways of compelling the senses to come down to the level of the soul’s action and being, one of the ways I am suggesting is loudly calling the Name of God. Nothing can succeed like this method, because you yourself are hearing what you are speaking. When you hear, your mind hears. And when you repeat this kind of calling, the soul will feel what the mind has been thinking. It is not merely muttering something that is called *japa*. It is a serious activity you are engaging yourself in. “I have to do one thousand *malas* today,” people say. They are thinking more about the number of *malas* than the quality of thought. You can have a thousand *malas*, it is all right, but a thousand times you must be intensely thinking only this thing. Do not think of the beads, the fingers, and the time that you have taken for the *japa*. Remove this idea of time. “I have to finish it in three hours.” Why should you finish it in three hours? Why are you limiting your aspiration to the time? A few minutes of internal surge of love and concentration on God’s perfection is a greater *japa* than merely rolling the beads for a long time with a wandering mind and unsatisfied sensory calls.

All this is difficult. So, what you do in the beginning is to have a model of the presence of God, which may be in the form of a diagram that you can draw of the cosmic existence—a *yantra* or a *mandala*, as it is usually known—or even a picture of what you conceive God to be. You cannot conceive of God, of course. You cannot take His portrait; it is not possible. But you can imagine an extensive dimension of Being, including everything that is in creation. This kind of concept is adumbrated beautifully in the description of the cosmic form of God—Visvarupa *darshana*—as we have in

the Purusha Sukta of the Veda and the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita. It does not mean that God has arms, legs, feet, eyes, etc. But you cannot think of Him in any other manner. The idea behind this portrait, this picture of the omnipotence of God through the Visvarupa *darshana*, is to compel the sense organs and the mind not to think anything other than one thing. Various methods have to be employed.

I mentioned to you *japa sadhana*, loudly chanting the Name of God—calling Him from the bottom of your heart as if you are dying for Him. You must really want Him. This is very important. “I do not know whether it is possible in this life, or not. Anyway, I have not succeeded in having any vision of God up to this time. Twenty-five years of meditation have been for no purpose. I do not know. I have pain in the legs. There are many difficulties in this life. I have so many commitments. I have a family. I have to work hard.” These thoughts will come as vicious angels telling you that you are not meant for this. This is a predicament that you may have to face, but is something which great saints and sages have also faced.

“Take this vast kingdom of gold and silver,” someone whispered into the ears of Jesus Christ who was on a high mountain, in meditation. “Why all this waste of withering your body? You have attained perfection already. Get up,” said Mara to Buddha in meditation. When Dhruva of the Srimad Bhagavata fame, a little boy, went into meditation, it is said in the Puranas that he saw his own mother in his presence, just as Buddha saw his wife in his presence while he was meditating. It was not merely imagination—visibly, concretely, the figure of the wife was before him. “My dear Lord, why have you deserted me?” she said. A mother comes: “My dear child, this is not meant for you. Come on.”

Wherever there is an ardent effort to crush the senses, to divert them back into the mind and melt them in the soul, these obstacles will come like a ravaging tempest. Therefore, you should not try to do intensive forms of *tapas* when there are some lurking desires. Who does not have a desire for mundane things? If you are earnest in this practice, you must be as clear as a statistics officer, tabulating the desires. Make a list of all these desires that you have in your mind. They may be looking like a million, but they are really not so many. There are some fundamental impulses in you, and you are very well conscious of them. Make a list of them.

Can you fulfil these wishes? Sometimes there are some minor desires. Middling-intense is the form of certain desires. Some desires are very strong. How do you handle these desires? There are desires which can be harmlessly fulfilled. Do not go to extremes. There are harmless desires which are just requirements of the body. They are not luxuries; they are necessities, without which you cannot even survive. You must know what these needs of the physical personality are. Fulfil them in the measure that is necessary, without going to luxurious extremes. Certain desires are strong enough to worry your mind, especially when it is not easy to fulfil them. Some of the desires are beyond the capacity of your physical and mental existence, fulfilling which appears to be almost impossible in this life. They have to be handled only by direct meditation on God.

Remember, there is nothing that God cannot give you. The desires are foolish expressions of an uneducated mind. All that you want in this world, which is just a shadow of the realities of things, you will find in the Reality, in the kingdom of God. All the objects, all the persons, everything that you see in this world are shadows of a reality that is in the

heavens. Hence, you are pursuing shadows actually when you are after the objects of sense. No sense contact can satisfy you completely. There is agony following every form of sense indulgence. You cannot be indulging in sense objects throughout your life. The vigour of the body will diminish by dissipation of energy, and later you will find you have got nothing from this mirage of the appearance of objects. It was a dry desert looking like clean water.

Are you sure that God can give you all things? Does not the Bhagavadgita loudly proclaim to us, “Whoever is intent upon Me exclusively, without any external thought, I shall take care of your requirements appropriately, as you would need them.” You may doubt, sometimes, whether this is true. Has God ever given you what you need? You will complain, “I have got nothing from God. In spite of my worships, my *japas* and my prayers at the altar, I am the same miserable man.” Do you know why you feel like that? It is because you have not asked God. It is told to us by the great Master, “Ask, and it shall be given.” But you are not asking Him. Your mind is elsewhere. Your whole being should rise up into activity in asking from God. God is a whole Being and, therefore, He demands the whole of your being in order that He may respond. Asking is not thinking. It is the soul rising to the surface of intense action—unthinkable, indeed, what this could be. Intensely think that what you want is here with you.

Apart from the spiritual aspect of the certainty of God giving you everything, there is also a psychological side of it. If you intensely think that you want a thing, it shall come to you, but you should be intense and exclusive. One of the suggestions made by psychologists is that if you need a thing, feel that it has already come; that you are in possession of it. As everything is everywhere in this universe, it is not difficult

to actually obtain what you need by intense longing for it. You should not think that what you need is somewhere else and it has to gradually come near you. "It has already come, and it is with me, and it *is* me!" Needless to say, you are identifying yourself with the very thing that you want. If this process can go on for a long time, you will find everything getting materialised. If you want *laddu*, *laddu* will come. If you want oranges, oranges will come. It may look very foolish to think like this, but it is a fact. God can give you even a spoon of sugar for your tea. He is not incapable of doing that. There are stories in the lives of saints where these miracles have taken place. You have got doubt in your mind. "This is not possible for me." The devil is always whispering, "This is not for you, it is not possible." "These are all useless talks," it will tell you; and it will go on telling you continuously so that you may not succeed at all in your life. Vigorous concentration and intense longing is necessary. If you cannot think properly along these lines, read stories, anecdotes wherein you will see how God has blessed devotees.

I shall recite to you an anecdote, for your information; and there are many others of that type. There was a person, very poor, begging his meal from people around. But he was a great devotee of God and he knew that God will give him everything, that he will receive alms every day; that there would be no difficulty. He was an ardent believer in the proclamation of the Bhagavadgita: *ananyas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-ksemam vahamy aham* (B.G. 9.22). "Undividedly devote yourself to me; I shall give you whatever you want and protect all your belongings." He believed in this proclamation intensely. He had no doubt at all. And he was receiving

alms abundantly, every day, with no difficulty whatsoever. One day it so happened that he could not get anything. He was a poor fellow, with a wife and children. They were almost starving. He went hither and thither begging for food, and that day he could get nothing. This happened on the second day, and the third day, too. The children were crying due to the pangs of starvation. He could not imagine how this could be. “Has God forgotten me? He has forgotten me! He has not fulfilled His promise. No, I do not believe this proclamation. Tear out this *sloka*. Break this sentence from the Bhagavadgita.” In those days, scriptures were written on palm leaves. There was no printing paper at that time. He took a nail and struck that *sloka*—tore it in agony. “This is a falsehood! I am dying of hunger and nothing has come to me!” In agony, he went out of the house.

A few minutes afterwards, when he was away from the house, a boy came with two bags of rations and threw them on the veranda of the house, calling out to the missus, “Mother, your husband has sent these things for you.” His tongue was bleeding.

The mother came out. “From where have these rations come?”

“Your husband has bought these things and asked me to carry them. I have done so and am leaving them here,” the boy replied.

“But what is the matter? Where are these bags coming from? He is a poor man. And what is the matter with you that your tongue is bleeding?” she asked.

The boy said, “I was a little delayed in bringing these things, and in anger he tore my tongue.”

She cursed her husband, “You are a crazy man! This poor boy has brought these bags of rations and you tore his tongue!” In the evening when her husband returned, she exclaimed, “Have you gone crazy? You tore the tongue of that boy who brought rations.”

He said, “I have not sent any rations. I have not torn the tongue of any boy. I don’t know what you are talking about.”

But there, the bags of rations were lying. He closed his eyes, and wept deeply for the mistake that he had committed and the distrust that he exhibited in respect of God by not believing in the truth of His proclamation. There are many other instances like this.

Faith is the miracle-maker! Faith is everything! Nothing can work except faith. Actually, in faith you are digging deep into the very structure of existence. Faith arises from the soul itself. It is an operation of your truest being, and so it touches the bottom of creation, and the whole thing shakes with your faith. Though it is difficult to gather yourself into this kind of devotion to God in the humdrum life of day-to-day activities, you have to hit your head with your fist and strike yourself saying, “Don’t make a mistake!” You are one with this universe; you must remember that. Physically, ecologically, in the form of the working of nature, you are inseparable from the forces of the universe. So how will you lack anything? The forces will enter into you when you actually open the doors of your personality, and the energies will rush into you. Instead you have closed the doors by devoting yourself too much to the requirements of the sense organs. Open your gates!

It is true that whatever you ask shall be given, when you knock at the door of God it shall be opened, and whatever you seek you shall find. These three sayings of Jesus Christ in the

New Testament are a wonderful recipe for the malady of the soul. You have to believe it, and you will see how it works. God is not even one inch away from you. The omnipresence of God precludes His distance from you. Many a time we are like children, thinking that God is far, far, far away in the heavens. An all-pervading being has no space inside it, so you cannot say that it is something away from you that has to take time to come near you. Timeless is the existence of God. Spaceless is His Being, so He does not take time to act; and He is not merely *near* you, He *is* you, operating from the source of your being. This is true love of God, *bhakti* at its supreme form—*para-bhakti*, as it is called.

You are not here in the Academy to hear something that is being told. You can hear it anywhere. Here, it is an occasion to remake yourself and be another person altogether when you complete this course. You have to become another person, and not remain same person that you were when you came. You have to unite yourself intensely, as you have felt the need for attaining perfection. You have to adopt several methods of spiritual practice. I mentioned to you the mode of *japa sadhana*. You may not be able to go on with this for a long time, due to fatigue of the exercise. Take to another method, which is the study of scriptures. Read the holy scriptures. When you study the scriptures, you are, at that time, attuned to the great masters who wrote the scriptures. You are attuned to the ideas expressed in the scriptures. It is also a kind of meditation of a different type. *Japa*, *svadhyaya* or study, and direct meditation—you can adopt any method you like to place before your mind a concept or a form of God, and it is up to you to choose what it is.

Every day this practice has to be continued. You should not miss the link by forgetting to do it on any particular day. It

is like taking medicine for curing an illness. The doctor says you must take these medicines at regular intervals and you should not miss taking them on any day. Otherwise the link will be broken; the effect will not be there. Practice should be done every day—at a particular hour, if possible. The power of the time cycle helps you when you sit for your practice at a specific hour or time of the day. If possible, it should be at the same place in your house, facing the eastern direction or the northern direction, as it has been prescribed to us. The energy of the sun rises into action from the eastern horizon and you absorb the energy of the sun when you are facing the east. The northern direction is also prescribed because of the magnetic energy that goes from the North Pole to the South Pole. These are good prescriptions: same place, same time, same method of practice, and facing the same direction. Never expect a result immediately, because to expect a result would be to bargain with God. “I have done something for you and you are not giving me anything.” This feeling should not be there. Everything has its own time. “In due time you shall have everything,” says the Bhagavadgita.

There are three types of meditation to which you can resort: internal, external and universal. It is your predilection to choose which one is suitable for you. Many devotees feel like placing God in their own heart, or in the middle of their eyebrows, because they find that is convenient as it is easier to love that which is nearest than to love that which is away or far from yourself. The nearest thing is your own self, and you, to some extent, love yourself more than you love anybody else. So in order not to neglect your personality totally, place the presence of God in some location within yourself. During waking hours the mind operates at a point between the two eyebrows. In dream the mind operates in the throat, through

certain nerve channels. In deep sleep the mind enters the heart. During meditation, during sleep and at the time of death, the mind is in the heart. This is one form of internality of the concept of God and the placement of the great vision in yourself. It is quite good.

Otherwise, you can have an external arrangement for the purpose of meditation on God—an image that you place before yourself, any kind of form which you would consider as suitable for your particular sentiment and need. It can be a portrait, an image, even a *shaligrama* stone or a *lingam*—whatever it is, to your satisfaction. You should not think of the image at the time of meditation. It is only the placement which you have conceived in your mind for bringing the Universal Being into this point. The centre of the universe is said to be everywhere. Where is the centre of the universe? Is it far, far away in the skies? Everywhere, at every point, is the centre of the universe. Can you conceive of this? This is a feat of the exercise of the vision. Everywhere is the centre. If everywhere is the centre, there cannot be a circumference—which is another way of saying everywhere is the Soul, and all is Soul.

The image that you place before yourself is itself not to be regarded as God. Everywhere is sunlight, and you can focus it through a lens at any particular point. You do not bring God down to the form of the image, but raise the image to the form of God—the other way around. In the beginning you may feel that there is a location for God: God is in a temple, on an altar, etc. But later you expand your vision of God from the point that you have chosen at a particular place to something which fills all space everywhere. Everywhere you see that vision, just as you see the sun everywhere after you concentrate on it for a long time with your eyes open. As

the centre of the universe is everywhere, the image that you take up for your worship is also everywhere. Anything can be taken as a point of concentration. You can touch your body by touching any part of your body. Here, you will consider yourself as a person having the vision of God in this form. You observe, you see, you have a vision of God as a devotee, as a performer. That Being is to be considered as something in front of you, though it is everywhere.

One of the stages of devotion is this—where you do not identify yourself with That which is everywhere, but look at It spreading Itself everywhere. Everywhere you are seeing One Thing. This is an external form of meditation that is prescribed. The universal form of meditation is a still higher stage where the universe itself is contemplating itself. You are not meditating, because you have gone into the universe, as it should be. Who contemplates? The whole cosmos is being aware of itself. The highest meditation is the awareness of That which is everywhere—awareness of Itself only. The whole world, the whole cosmos, the whole creation is vibrating with the consciousness of itself. You are not meditating; That which is everywhere is contemplating Itself only. “I am what I am.” This is the universal meditation that is prescribed in the paths of yoga.

Chapter 5

PULLING GOD INTO YOURSELF

[Swamiji Maharaj leads the group in chanting Om.]

When you sit for meditation, chant Om beautifully, deeply, sonorously—from the depths of your heart—for a few minutes. Chanting Om in this manner will produce a vibration not only within yourself, but also externally in the atmosphere around, especially if it is chanted in a chorus as you have done just now. Its effect is immense.

All things in the world are only vibrations. Concretised, dense forms of subtle vibrations are the things of the world. Really, there is no solid substance ultimately in this universe. There is a hard granite stone in front of you which is a very concrete substance—heavy, and you cannot lift it. But this heavy substance is the form taken by a tremendous cohesion of molecules which form this object called the stone. There is gravity inside every object, which makes it appear as what it is. Else, the molecules will disperse in different directions and there will be no object at all. If the molecules are dissected into their components, they become atoms. If the atoms are dissected into their essential core, they become an electromagnetic force.

The nucleus of the atom is what controls the form of the atom, even as the nucleus of the solar system, which is the sun, keeps the balance of the structure of the entire solar system. The solar system is formed of the nucleus of the sun and the cosmical electrons, we may say, which are the planets moving along their own orbits around the sun. In our body, in

the objects of the world and everywhere, this activity goes on. The cohesion I mentioned is the principle of gravitation. We feel that we are a body, an indivisible, independent person, just as we say an atom is an independent unit by itself, differentiated from other atoms. The reason why we feel that we are this body, this independent personality, is because of a nucleus in us which pulls the periphery of this body structure constituted of several cells and molecular substances, attracting each one of them into itself as a magnet pulls iron filings. The central nucleus of our personality is what we call the principle of self-affirmation. In ordinary language, we call it ego.

The ego is not a solid object, though sometimes we may think that it is something like that. It is a centralisation of concentrated energy. We cannot know what the sun is made of—whether it is a solid object, or an atomic force congealed into a form, or whatever else it is. In a similar manner, there is a congealed centre in our own selves which we call ‘me’. So forceful it is—so vehement it is—in pulling things into itself that it is sometimes considered to be as hard as flint. The ego of a person is hard like flint. The nucleus of an atom is also equally powerful. That is how the electrons are kept in position; else, they will fly helter-skelter. This so-called hard quantity called the atom is only a concentration of force at a particular point. The whole world is force, finally.

This chanting of Om, to which you are accustomed, is actually a synchronisation of yourself to the great vibration that originated the so-called cosmos. The beginning of the universe was a huge centralisation of energy. ‘Energy’ is the word for everything. There are no things; even we ourselves do not exist truly as we appear to our own selves. Mistakenly we consider ourselves to be physical bodies because of the

illusion of solidity infused into this formation of centralised energy called egoism. Physicists tell us that the solid object that we touch with our hands is not actually a solid object. It is a sensation created by the molecular action of the so-called thing called the object, and the molecular action in the tips of our fingers. The reaction between two types of molecular action gives the impression that there is an object, a solid form in front.

If you analyse the structure of the universe in this manner, you will find that everything is everywhere. The whole universe is a large, unthinkable electromagnetic field. The whole universe is a kind of operation, a law that is asserting itself. A law is not an object; it is stronger than an object, as you know very well. A law can break things, though it is not a hard object.

I am placing before you this analysis to introduce you to the method of contemplating the whole cosmos as a pure, undifferentiated continuum of force. If this method of appreciation in your consciousness is possible for you, what will you desire in your mind? There will be no such thing as desire. It will be an illusory phantom. Who will you desire? Which thing? This context of yourself, as well as the things that you observe with your eyes, being just pressure points—concentrated energy centres of one continuous expanse of undifferentiated power—is what you may call God's power. It is not in one place. The power of God is not in one place, because here is a picture before you of the operation of cosmic power. Even the space in which you are living, which you erroneously consider as emptiness, is not emptiness, really speaking. You regard a thing that is not capable of being caught by the perceptual organs of the eyes as non-existent. Do you believe that radio waves, electromagnetic

forces and television waves are moving even now in this room? Do you see them? Because you cannot see them, can you say they do not exist? To us, the concept of existence is solidity in terms of visual perception. Otherwise, we think that things do not exist. People say that God may not exist because He is not a solid object that can be conceived or perceived by the sense organs.

The idea of God should be clear in your mind first before you say anything about it. No remark should be made without proper consideration and a justifiable, analytical concept. What do you mean by God? If the idea is not clear in your mind, you will not be able to meditate; you cannot concentrate. People always complain, “The mind is wandering here and there.” Where does it go? When you sit for meditation on God Almighty, the mind moves here and there. Where does it go? Why does it go? The mind wanders because it is accustomed to think only in terms of visual objects; invisible forces cannot become the content of the operation of the mind. This means to say that all our thought processes are irrelevant in the context of the Ultimate Reality, the ultimate nature of things. We are living in an irrelevant world, we may say in one sense. It is because of this meaningless adventure of the mind, in a meaningless panorama of presentation before it, that great philosophers have said the world does not exist. Something exists, but the world as you conceive it or see it with your sense organs does not exist. God, as you would like to think in your mind—as a huge person, as a solid presentation before the eyes and the mind—does not exist, but He is present much more than that. You also do not exist in the manner that you think you exist.

The Bhakti Shastras speak of surrender—the offering of oneself to God. This is the idea you may have in your mind

about surrender. What do you mean by ‘surrender’? You have a solid body sitting here, and are you going to offer this body to God? Who are you offering when you say, “I offer myself to God”? This pinpointed, illusory centre, which is the ego that asserts that it alone is and nothing else can be, this objectionable force of self-assertion has to be surrendered, offered, dedicated to a non-centralised cosmical operation, as wide as space, which is conscious of Itself. That indescribable widest expanse, beyond even the concept of space, conscious of Itself, is the only Being. This is why we say God alone is. If you feel disturbed by this statement that God alone is because you see the world outside—you see your family, you see your commitments and your own self—pull your ears, pinch them and tell this feeling in you that things are not as they appear. You have to practise tremendous self-control even to understand what God is—what to speak of actual dedication of yourself to God’s Being.

Do you not believe that God is in heaven, far away? The idea of God being far away is implicitly present in every centre of thinking because of your involvement in space which divides everything, one from the other. The concept of distance is introduced into the mind because of this spatial expanse called the sky. Actually, there is no such thing as distance. Distance is an illusion. As I pointed out to you earlier, there is no real distance between your head and the toes of your feet. You can measure the height of your body—six feet, and so on—but it is not distance. It is an organic inclusiveness that your body is.

In the light of what I mentioned to you in the context of energy being all things, you will find there is no distance in this cosmos. If that is the case, how far is God? If God alone

is—remember this point again and again—who will think God? Who will meditate on God? You can meditate on God as So-and-so sitting here if you are not included in this pervasive presentation of creation. Can you stand outside creation and think it?

I am trying to take your mind gradually to the point of what is known as supreme devotion to God—*para bhakti*. The *apara bhakti*, or the lower devotion, is the love of God as a huge person ruling in the heavens—far, far away from the concept of man. The lower devotion consists in chanting the Name of God as if He has a descriptive capacity or attribute by which you can explain the nature of God. Study of scripture, company of saints and sages, pilgrimage to holy centres, taking a bath in a holy river, and worship in a temple, on an altar—these are *gauna bhakti*, as it is known, a secondary form of devotion, which is very interesting, very important and very necessary. But even with all these appurtenances of devotion, your mind will wander. You will have a commitment. Simultaneously, in your mind you doubt the possibility of achieving anything substantially in spite of all the routines of your worship, fasting, visualising, etc. A fear creeps into the heart: “What is happening to me finally?”

This fear is due to the separation of yourself from the heaven which God is. You must know that the kingdom of God is within you, as it has been well said. Can you imagine a kingdom being inside your heart? Your heart is so small; it is of the size of your fist, as they say. And the kingdom—can you imagine how wide it is? How can anyone say that the kingdom of the universe—the kingdom of the Supreme Being, God—is inside your little heart? There is no ‘inside’ in this creation of God. There is also no ‘outside’.

Ask your mind again and again: “Do you really believe that only God exists?” The answer you give to this question reveals what kind of person you are as a religious or spiritual person. Do you really believe, from the bottom of your heart, that God is the only reality? You cannot believe it because you see things other than God. Do you believe that God created the world? Suppose that is so; let us accept the whole attractive universe of sensations was created by God. All right. Because of creation, you are moving hither and thither through your sensations. But, did God exist before creation? Put that question to yourself. I am introducing you to an analytic process of your own mind. Did God exist before creation? Naturally, you cannot say He did not exist. Where was He before He created? Was He in heaven? Because He created the heaven and the earth, God could not be in heaven before the creation of heaven. Then where was God? Your mind will get stunned by the thought of such a possibility. Your sins will be destroyed in an instant if you can think that God existed before creation. Then He will not be away from you, He will not be coming to you tomorrow; and, you will not know what kind of being He would be. We have such wondrous descriptions of the nature of God in certain parts of the *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana*—which you have to read with an eye of true insight and not like a story or a historical document, which the *Bhagavata* is not.

Another difficulty before you is a suspicion that God cannot give you all things. You, of course, cannot deny that God can give all things. You are afraid to say that. But the heart also has a heart inside. That whisper of the heart which is inside the heart tells you, “Beware! Don’t make a mistake! Who has seen God, and what has God given to devotees?”

Before you reach the borderland of God's existence, you have to pass through veritable hell, indeed. You have heard of hell, etc. They are not certain places, some locations of creation. They are certain conditions prevailing, some circumstances through which you have to pass under the order of this body which you consider as yourself. You will not keep these ideas in your mind for more than a few minutes. "After a while I will go away from this place. The bell will ring, and it will be lunch time." The whole thing has gone to the winds. Why? Because you have heard what has been said, but you have not bestowed thought on it. Merely listening is called *sravana*. Okay; it is very good. That is wonderful. But how far, for how long, can the ears retain the impression of what has been told? The impression of what has been heard has to go into the mind and you have to start thinking it deeply. "This is what I have heard." That is why I recommend that one should make notes during any lecture or reading, of salient points which strike one as important, because everything that is told or read cannot be retained in the mind. One-fourth of what I told you may be in your mind; three-fourths will vanish completely unless you take down, in your diary, some essential points.

Deep thinking of these truths that you have heard is called *manana*. *Manana* is deeper than *sravana*, which is just hearing. When what you thought, what you heard and the ideas you gathered into yourself get absorbed into your being, they become not merely ideas of your mind but thus become *you* only. Idea itself is you. You become the idea itself—the merging of the consciousness of whatever you have heard into your own being. Knowledge becomes being. This state is called *nidhidyasana*.

You have come to this Academy with a serious purpose. You have not come merely because you have free time or are on a holiday. Here you have an occasion to deeply think over what is the real blessedness for you. Are you to die in the same way as you were born, or will you go with joy in your heart? Will you leave this world with the feeling that everything has been achieved—“Perfectly all right, and I’m not going to lose anything”? Or are you to leave this world with the feeling of: “I have accumulated so many good things but I have nothing to carry with me. I have lost everything. Nobody wants me. I am in a wretched condition.” Are you going to say that, at the end of time? Or, do you feel that God has blessed you always, at all times, and He is not going to bless you only when the *prana* is leaving you? “I have many commitments. I have a wife and children. I have to work hard in the office. My salary is insufficient. I have trouble from bosses. I am suffering. My body has illness. My child is crying.” These thoughts are also important. They are not going to leave you like that so easily.

You have to find a solution to this kind of problem, firstly by attending to these commitments—which are very great, hard realities, no doubt—in the manner necessary. You are not going to reject your wife and children, or resign from your job suddenly, in a fit of emotion, which may lead to some trouble afterwards. Do your duty as it is necessary for survival in this body and mind. Destroy not your body. Do not kill yourself in the name of devotion. The Bhagavadgita is before you, a great gospel of integral thinking. Outwardly as well as inwardly, it has brought before you a complete picture of what your duty is. You have a duty towards everything. You cannot say, “I have no duty. I am totally independent. I care not for anything.” Nobody can say that.

You are breathing the air of the world; you are drinking the water of creation; you are living because of the mercy of people helping you. Thousands of things are permitting you to live in this world. You have a duty towards them. You have a duty towards all of nature which is giving you fresh air to breathe. And you have a duty to the divinities that are keeping your heart pumping always, even when you are fast asleep.

These duties are sometimes described in our ancient scriptures as *yajnas*, or sacrifices, known as the *pancha mahayajnas*. You have to do five great sacrifices—which means to say, you have five great duties. No person can say, “I have no duty.” This is impossible. You cannot even exist without some commitment in the form of duty. You are educated people. You have studied under a professor, a teacher. From where has this knowledge come to you? You owe a debt, at least mentally, in your prayers, to this great professor, this teacher, who has lovingly taught you the science, the art and the knowledge of your curriculum. You cannot say, “I have left the college. I left the school. I have nothing to do with him.” No. You owe him an obligation. “He has made me. My dear schoolmaster, my dear headmaster, my dear professor, principal, has made me, was kind to me. Today if I am thinking properly and I am a little enlightened, it is because of him.” You have a duty. You have a duty even to your parents who kept you on their laps and suckled you. They did not allow you, as a little child, to perish. They took care of you, fed you, loved you, educated you, financed you. You have a duty towards them. A humble, servant-like attitude is called upon you in regard to all these people. Your prayer for their welfare is itself a great duty, as you are indebted towards them. You have studied books. Who wrote these books? These authors deserve your prayers. You have

read great texts. You have read scientific texts and books on art, religion, philosophy, physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. They have contributed to your knowledge. These authors also are great *rishis*, you may say, who have made you what you are.

You have to consider other human beings as your own self. You are not the only human being and others are just dirt. You cannot think like that. They feel as you feel. They are hungry as you are hungry. They are grieving as you are grieving. They fear as you fear. They have needs as you have needs. If you have ample opportunity to serve these people and redress their grievances to the extent possible, it is a *yajna* that you are performing.

In the Upanishads we are told something more: you have an obligation even to animals and creatures. A little ant that is crawling on the floor of your house is not a wretched creature. It has a soul. It feels. It loves. It has a family. And it grieves, and is afraid. It wants to survive—like you. The ant's feeling in terms of the need for survival is as important as an elephant's feeling. The hunger of the ant is as intense as the hunger of the elephant. Touch not these beings in your house; do not crush them. Do not pound the ants because they are smaller than you. The Upanishads says that if these beings are considered by you as your own self, they will, after you depart from this body, protect you as you protected them. You will wonder how an ant can protect you after your death. The ant exists in the heavens also. Everything in the world has a heavenly existence. There are no ants, no creatures, no animals—they are all reflections of the forms of an original that they have in the high heavens. When you depart from this world, all these things which you have protected and served and shown love to will come there and protect you. If you

have eaten somebody, they will eat you when you go to the next world. Whatever you have done to anybody will be done back to you. This is the duty we have spoken of.

If these duties are performed properly, your attachments for the things of the world, your sensations, will diminish gradually because of your feeling of a loving heart and a good nature. Be a good person always. Be a good person! It is necessary to be a good person. Do not become a bad person. In the Manusmriti, the author says, “Say always: Good, good. Do good. Very good.” Do not say to anyone, “This is stupid.” Nobody likes to hear such words. Though really a thing is stupid, you are not supposed to say so directly in an outburst. You have to approach everything with an educational method—gradually, step by step, in what may be called a Socratic method of approach. Socrates was a great master of dialogue. He knew what was wrong, but he would not say it was wrong. Gradually, step by step, he took the argument through the mind and the mouth of the opponent or the student, and the answer came not from the teacher but from the student himself because of the gradual process of digging the truth from one’s own self. So love all, and harm not anyone. It is a great truth that you have to remember. If you harm anyone in a fit of anger or vengeance, you will reap the fruit of it in the next birth.

If you maintain all these moral injunctions and moral mandates in your mind, your sensations, the desire for objects of sense, will slowly come down—gradually, gradually. God will enter your heart. “Empty thyself. I shall fill Thee,” the great Master told us. God is telling you, “I shall fill you—but first you should empty yourself.” Empty yourself. What does it mean? This ego is asserting its independence, like Lucifer who rebelled against God and said, “I am—as much as You

are.” This Lucifer is your ego. It must be subdued and emptied of its content of the power of self-affirmation. When you become a vacuous content, the universal forces will rush into you. The *pratyahara* and *dharana* techniques of yoga are just these processes of allowing entry into yourself of the forces of the world. The windows of your personality are closed completely by the order of the ego which says, “Keep quiet. Allow none inside. I am the Master. I am the King. I am the Lord of all things! If worse comes to worst, you mind your business. Let the world go to the dogs.” This is the voice of the ego, which must be emptied of its content, which is nothing but self-affirmation—an incapacity in yourself to concede anything to other people. You will never concede anything to others. Everything is yours—yourself only. “I am what I am and what I say is final, and you don’t talk.” This is what the ego says. Why should they not talk? If you can talk, others also can talk. And if you have ideas, they, too, have ideas. Everything is everywhere, even in the psychological realm.

If you are sincere, honest in your heart, and if you want God truly, He shall come. Undivided devotion is called for—*ananya cintana*. Read this yoga of the Bhagavadgita: *ananyas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-ksemam vahamya aham* (B.G. 9.22). The whole of the Bhagavadgita gospel is clinched in this one single verse which hangs beautifully like a pendant in the garland of the verses of the Bhagavadgita. Trust God. He shall trust you and give you what you need. And the way of trusting is described in this verse: “For those who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, for those ever-united, I secure what is not already possessed and preserve what they already possess.” Something other than God should not enter your

mind. Another idea arises because you feel that God is not sufficient for your purpose. He is all-in-all, but there is another thing also which is good enough. That is the honey that the senses are licking in the barbed wire of the objects of sense.

Every day, find time in your house to be alone to yourself for one hour. Sit alone to yourself without any comrade or friend near you—alone to yourself, alone to yourself, alone to yourself. “Am I alone in this world, or have I got anything in this world?” Detachment—*vairagya*, non-attachment to things—will spontaneously arise in your mind if you think of the way in which you were born into this world. Helplessly you came; in abject dependence you were born. How did you become a king now, suddenly, when you have brought nothing with you? Are you going to leave this world one day? What are you going to take with you? “I have brought nothing and I am going to take nothing. How is it in the middle I appear to be possessed of so much wealth?” An illusion has been cast before you. Alone. Alone. Alone. You are just what you were when you came to this world—a poor, humble being, entirely at the disposal of the cosmic forces and God Almighty. Never forget that, essentially, you are not so independent as you are thinking. You live by the mercy of the world outside you, which also operates due to the centre of the cosmos—intelligently operating, without which no leaf in the tree can move. Finally when everything goes, what do you look like? Think about it. “I have no friends. I have no parents. They have left me. I have no family; that has gone. I lost my job. I have no penny with me, and nobody wants to look at me.” What do you feel at that time? That is your true nature. If at that time you are a great man, you are really a great man. When everything goes, if you can feel everything

has come to you, then God enters into you and you will be blessed.

I repeat once again: keep company of good people. Even when you are out of the classroom, when you are a little free, either be alone to yourself contemplating in the manner necessary, or keep company with a person who will help you in the entertainment of spiritual ideas—at least, who will not disturb you, or harm you, or make your mind go astray. Keep good company. If good company is not possible under certain conditions of life, be alone to yourself. Thus protected in many ways, guarding yourself in various forms of self-discipline, trusting in God, everything is possible in this world.

But one thing is not possible: trust in God. Firstly, it is because of the distance that seems to be there between yourself and Him; secondly, it is due to the suspicion of whether He is really going answer your prayer; thirdly, it is doubt whether you are meant for it or you are not a suitable candidate for this great adventure. Remove these doubts. Miracles will take place. You need not go to things; things will come to you. I told you a story the other day of when God runs after the devotee instead of your running after God. Can you pull God into yourself and make Him love you—let alone your intention, your being intent on loving God yourself? It is a great thing to pull God into yourself. This is a wondrous technique. If this could be successful, you do not know what you will be. Blessedness will be yours. God trusts you because you are the replica of God himself. He wants you more than you want Him. Do you know that? He wants you more than you want Him! It is said in the Bhakti Shastras that if you take one step in the direction of God, He will come running—taking a hundred steps. Your response is from one

side only, unilaterally from one individual centre, but His response is from all sides. Like a flood, like an oceanic wave, He will come and give you so much that you will have no place to keep it.

There is a Marathi saying that if with infinite hands God starts giving you, into your two little hands, how much will you keep in your pocket? Infinite mercy God has upon you. He has created you. You should really believe that you have come from him. You are a spark of divinity; God is the soul within you. The soul that you are is God speaking. The conscience, the soul, the essential root of your being is God Himself planted in you. He speaks from within, and also speaks from without, and speaks from everywhere. When God speaks, he speaks even from a leaf of a tree. You will be a blessed person.

This is what Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has told us for days and days, and months and months, and years and years, by his personal example of living, by his great writings and his great meditations for the welfare of the whole of humanity.

Chapter 6

A BRIEF SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

It is necessary to note that religion, in the true sense of the term, is far above the usual concept of it that people have—for instance, as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc. You think that religion means only this much; and in order to be religious, you have to be either a Hindu, or a Buddhist, or a Jain, or a Christian, or a Muslim, and so on. The truth is quite different. Religion is actually what you feel when you stand before God Almighty; and you do not place yourself before God as a Hindu or a Christian. Perhaps you do not place yourself before God even as a man or a woman. This is sometimes called religious consciousness rather than religion in the ordinary sense of the term.

The spiritual import behind the denominational practice of religion is the religious consciousness. It is what you do when you are absolutely alone to yourself. Philosophers have defined religion as that which you do when you are absolutely alone to yourself. When nobody is around you and you do not talk to anybody, when nobody speaks to you and you are literally alone to yourself—what you feel at that time is your religion. You shed all the accretions that have grown around you in terms of family and social relations, and spiritually naked, as it were, you stand before the great Judge of the cosmos. It is said that Truth is naked; it has no dresses, coats and shirts, etc. You do not carry this body to God. Therefore you do not carry anything that is associated with

this body either. You do not carry even your thoughts when you are face to face with the Almighty. How would you feel if you are face to face with the great Creator of the universe? You may ask me: “I have never seen this Creator of the universe; how will I place myself before Him?” Your mind has such a capacity that it can expand itself to an unending, limitless vision of a Total Power being there above this vast extended cosmos. It requires a little bit of imagination on your part, and a power of will to assert this feeling. The whole thing is in front of you. Inasmuch as bodily associations and kindred things do not go with you when you shed this body, you must know what it is that goes with you at the last moment.

In the Bhakti Shastras—scriptures of devotion, religious lore—different prescriptions are placed before us to conceive the presence of God for the purpose of meditation. The Vaishnava scriptures are particularly known for their classification of divine concepts into five categories, known in Sanskrit as *para*, *vyuha*, *vibhava*, *archa* and *antaryami*. *Para* is the transcendental concept of God, as God is uncontaminated by the evils of the world; He is above the world. This is one way of thinking of God. You cannot regard Him as involved in this world of defects and finitudes of every kind. To be untouched by every kind of evil characteristic of human life and the world here is transcendence. Many religions, or perhaps all the religions of the world, mostly regard God as transcendent perfection—far, far beyond even space and time. This places God far away from you in distance as well as in the time process. Where He is, you cannot know, and when He will come, you also do not know. You have to wait for His grace. *Para* is the word for this concept of the transcendence of the Absolute.

Vyuha is a concept which is novel, especially in Indian thought. I do not know if it is seen in other religious fields also. You visualise God in degrees. The well-known concept of degrees in Vaishnava theology goes by the nomenclature of Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This is pure Vaishnava theology. Vasudeva is Lord Sri Krishna, the Incarnation of God; Sankarsana is his brother, Balrama; Pradyumna is his eldest son; Aniruddha is his grandson. All these divine personalities are regarded as one group which represents the total power of the Almighty.

If we are to free this classification of degrees of the Vaishnava theological aspect and look at the same thing in a more philosophical form, we may compare this to the Vedantic classification of the Absolute known as Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat. Brahman is the transcendent, all-pervading, immanent, total Absolute. Ishvara is the potential form of the Absolute tending towards creation, dark with the power of externalised projection—dark because the light of externalisation has not yet manifested. Hiranyagarbha is a faint outline of the possibility of future creation. Virat is what you see with your own eyes—the fully manifest concrete form.

In a work called Panchadasi, in its sixth chapter, the author gives an analogy of how you can conceive these gradations. Think of a painted picture. In order to paint a picture, you require a cloth as its background. You cannot paint on ordinary porous cloth so you have to stiffen this cloth with starch in order that it may become a suitable background. A hard surface, practically, is necessary. First is the cloth only, as it is—pure, unadulterated. Then there is a stiffened form of that cloth. In the third stage the artist draws an outline in pencil of what he pictures the completed

painting to be. In the last stage he fills it with ink and colour. This colourful vision, which is the complete picture, is the Virat. The outline is Hiranyagarbha. The stiffened cloth is Ishvara. The pure cloth is Brahman itself. This is one way of looking at the degrees in the vision of God with reference to the concept of *vyuha*, or degrees. *Para* is the transcendent Almighty, above all things. *Vyuha* is this gradational concept.

The third is the *vibhava* concept. It is difficult for you to conceive the transcendent Absolute and these gradations, which are also of a cosmic nature. You require a more convenient form for your meditation. That is the Incarnation, *vibhava*—the glory. The glory of God is condensed in the Incarnation. It is before you in a visible form. It may be as Jesus Christ, or as Lord Krishna or Rama, as the case may be. Though these forms of the Incarnations are visible at a specific location, this does not mean that they are limited in their powers.

The whole energy of the Supreme Being gets concentrated in this localised form. The Almighty can speak through the Incarnation. These days, people extend this concept of the *vibhava*, or Incarnation, to the Guru also—to great people, mighty geniuses who are the representations of something supernormal in its nature. In the tenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita it is said that wherever there is the glory of excellence you must feel the presence of God. It may be a mighty mathematical brain, the mighty brain of a physicist, the mighty mind of an artist, the mighty mind of a musician—anything that is superb, beyond concept and expectation. Even if it comes in the form of a tornado which you cannot imagine in your mind, there is some unearthly power operating behind it.

Popularly, the Incarnation is the form God has taken according to your vision, in terms of the religion to which you belong. You worship the Incarnation. Even this is difficult for you. Transcendence is difficult. The conception of degree is difficult. The Incarnation concept also does not come to the mind easily, so you require a lesser concession for the purpose of concentration of the mind on God. That is *archa*, or the idol of worship—the form that you wish God to take, in the form of the visible thing that is in front of you. It can be an actual shape concretely presented before you as an image or an idol, or it may be a painting. It may be a diagram—any symbol whatsoever which inherits the power of the creative forces. Diagrams, which are known as *yantras* in Tantra Shastra, are supposed to represent the process of the creative act of the universe. They invoke the whole cosmos into this *mandala*, or the diagram, or the yantra.

Para is one concept; *vyuha* is another; *vibhava* is the third; *archa* is the fourth. The fifth is *antaryami*. There is something more about God than all these things that have been told. You cannot exhaust the glory of God by description. He is not merely transcendent. He is not merely capable of vision in degrees, not merely an Incarnation, not merely the idol that you worship, but an omnipresent, pervasive Being. That is *antaryami*. In every nook and corner, in every atom, you feel His presence.

These are some of the prescriptions before us for concentration on God. I would like you to close your eyes and meditate for a few minutes. Hari Om.

[Saying this, Swamiji leads the students through the chanting of Om.]

You will feel something entering into you if your concentration is good enough. You will feel some sensation

on your skin and in the cells of your body. You will feel a vibration, a tickling sensation, in the beginning. When the concentration is strong, you may feel a jerk even—a tremor of the body. This tremor, this jerk, this sensation is due to the mind having an impact upon the flow of the *prana*. Usually the *prana* directs itself according to the desires of the mind. When you see a thing intently, the mind passes through the retina of the eyes in terms of an object, and the *prana* moves in the direction of the mind thinking of a particular object. If you are gazing at a thing with tremendous concentration of the eye, your *prana* gets charged automatically with the form of that object, and the object gets charged with the *prana*.

But in meditation, what happens is something different. You are not charging any particular object outside you; you are charging yourself only. When this happens, the normal activity of the *prana* gets reversed in an inwardised direction. It is like blocking the flow of a river or a stream and making the water go back rather than allowing it to move forward, which is its usual nature. This happens in meditation. The mind always thinks of something outside, some object. Therefore, the *prana* is accustomed to move in the direction of that which the mind thinks. Now you are not thinking of any object in meditation. You are centralising your mind in its own source, so the *prana* turns back. At that time, because of the unusual pressure that you are exerting upon the *prana* due to the unusual way of thinking in meditation, you feel a change taking place on the periphery of your skin, in the cells, and you feel a shaking up taking place. After some time the jerks will stop because the habit of the *prana* changes completely. Usually, its habit is to go out. When you make it move inward, it feels a difference, which is why it causes a tremor. But when it is your practice to think only in that

manner and in no other way, it then becomes natural for the *prana* to rest in itself rather than to move outside. Then, after a long period of meditation, the tremors cease.

If pure, conceptual meditation is difficult due to the distractions of day-to-day life, you can take to *japa* of the mantra. You are generally told that mantra is a Sanskrit formula. It may be so, but it need not necessarily be that. It is a convenient formula that is adopted to allow the mind to concentrate on that which is beneficial in spiritual meditation. Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya. Om Namō Narayanaya. Om Sri Krishna Sharanamama. Om Sri Rama. Om Jesus. These are invocations of a type which will fill your personality with a larger quantum of energy and make you feel that you are in a level, a realm, which is lifted above the finitudes of ordinary life. But if you are intent purely on a spiritual way of living, God can be called in any way you like, in any language. Language is only an expression of your feeling, and, therefore, you can use your language of exclamation and intense yearning.

When you intensely yearn for something, what do you tell yourself? You call the name of that thing which you like, whatever that be. “Oh, my dear (this particular thing) I want you to come. Come!” If nothing is possible, just recite: “God, please come! Almighty God, please come! Almighty God, please come! Almighty God, please come!” Don’t chant any Sanskrit mantra. In your own language—Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Kannada, Tamil, let it be anything—say this: “Almighty God, please come!” You will see Him in your imagination, before your eyes. “Almighty God, please come! I am yearning for you! I want you! Almighty God, please come!”

This is how the saints and sages live the life of divine contemplation. The lives of saints also are to be regarded as regular scriptures. One of the thrilling, enthralling, ecstatic pieces of joyous invocation of God as one's own beloved is in Tiruvaymoli, a Tamil poem composed by a mastermind, a Vaishnava saint known as Nammalvar. It is also called Dravida Veda—a Veda by itself. It is in Tamil, of a tremendously complicated style. But now one great stalwart in Sanskrit as well as Tamil has instituted a body to translate into the Hindi language these wonderful poems of the Alvars—Narayana Prabhandam—some of which have been printed. Of course, the Hindi translation cannot bring the vivacity and the emphasis that you will find in the original language itself. Shakespeare should be read in only Shakespeare's language, Homer in Homer's language, Dante in Dante's language, and Nammalvar in Nammalvar's language. Anyway, this will give you an idea.

So, *japa sadhana*, mantra *japa*, is one of the ways. *Svadyaya*, study of scripture, is another because when you read a scripture like the Veda, the Upanishad, the Bhagavata Purana or the Bible, you are *en rapport* with the authors who are great divine beings. Their blessings are upon you.

You must believe that when you think something, it is before for you—in some measure at least, though it may be a modicum; but, if it is intensely summoned, it will be there. The world is rich and abundant in all potentialities everywhere, in every inch and corner of creation, and you can summon them by intense thinking. This is the significance behind mantra *japa*—the calling of the Name again and again. The Sanskrit mantras, especially, are supposed to have a special power of their own apart from the power of the feeling that is behind the chanting of the mantra, because

these mantras are composed in a wonderful way due to which the letters, when they are joined together, produce a kind of interaction among themselves—a chemical action, as it were—and a force is generated, like something suddenly emerging when chemical components of a similar nature are brought together. This is the *shakti* of the mantra. And attached to it is the *shakti* of the *sadhaka* also. Your power of thought is another assisting factor in *japa sadhana*. The mantra itself is powerful, plus your thought is also powerful and adds to its power. Then your thought of the divinity, the *devata shakti*, also gets added to it. Repeat the mantra, think deeply in your own mind with devotion, and summon the divinity. So a third factor also comes in, in the mantra *japa*.

Also, there is the *rishi*, or the seer of the mantra, whose blessings are also upon you. Whenever you recite the mantra, the *rishi*, or the seer of the mantra, is remembered, and it is said that you should not recite any mantra without remembering the *rishi*. The copyright, as it were, must be taken care of. The author is important; his great mind has produced the great work. All these combinations, the blessings, join together in mantra *japa*. *Svadhyaya* is study of scripture, where also the thoughts of the great ones are there, and in addition to that, the thought embedded in the scripture from the author himself also is there. *Japa*, *svadhyaya* and meditation—these three are the three prongs of the *trisula*, as it were, of spiritual practice.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's prescription is to keep a spiritual diary. You cannot easily know whether or not you are really progressing. Sometimes there is a dull contemplation, a mechanical recitation and a disinterested practice; you are agitated with something. So a spiritual diary is maintained. A specimen of it is given by Sri Swami

Sivanandaji Maharaj, but you can have your own questions and answers. “How have I fared this day? What is my difficulty, and how will I get over it? How far have I succeeded?” and so on. You can put various questions to your own self.

In addition to *japa*, *svadhyaya*, meditation and a spiritual diary, there is the company of good people. There are plenty of good people in the world; not all are bad. There are seekers of your type. You can frequent them. If you cannot find them nearby, go to a distant place and attend the *satsanga* of these great ones, wherever these *satsangas* are conducted. Sometimes a long pilgrimage is also very helpful. Life is boring, often. You cannot sit in the same place and do the same work always; a change is necessary. You can go on a long *yatra* to holy places. It not only rejuvenates you from the point of view of physical health, but also blesses you in a spiritual way because these holy places are charged with the presence of certain mighty things—a holy river, or even the sages and saints who lived there. Somebody lived there, in that holy place. Jnaneshwar Maharaj lived in Alandi. Tukaram lived there. Jesus lived there. Rama lived there. Krishna lived there. Ganga is here. Yamuna is there. So, all these places become holy due to the presence and impact of all these great divinities.

Continuous practice, without remission of effort, every day—even if it be for a specific period of time only—is important. You should not cut off the practice. If you find there is no time due to some occupation, then reduce it to a few minutes only, but let it be there in the memory. Do not forget it. *Lives of Saints* written by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is a big book, and it is available here. You can go through it. And there is another wonderful Tamil book, called

Periapuranam, which gives the life story of the Nayanars, some parts of which have been translated into English, but not the whole thing. You can find the lives of saints published in different places, and study them. Choose a particular saint for your purpose.

Have you anything to ask me? I have been unilaterally pouring something on you. Are you receiving it?

Student: Swamiji, what is the best way to court realisation?

Swamiji: You are a wonderful student. [laughter] And you are a good student, also. You are a wonderful student because you have asked a question on the very same thing which I have been telling you for so many days. [laughter] But you are a very good student because you are honest in your question.

What is the best way of reaching God? The best way of reaching God is *wanting* God. Tell God: “I want You!” Like a child, you cry. “Almighty God, I want You!” Get up in the morning and tell this: “Almighty God, I want You! Please come! I WANT YOU! COME!” If your heart is open, it will take place. Some miracle will take place in your life. It is very difficult to understand the mystery of these lives. That’s why I said to read the lives of saints. *Lives of Saints*. When the heart is pure, it comes. Impure hearts cannot bring anything.

There was a schoolmaster. In villages, the schoolmaster wants his birthday to be observed by the students. He asks, “What will you give me? What will you give me?” And the children are simpletons. They go and tell the parent, “My teacher’s birthday is tomorrow. What shall I give?” They bring something—a cucumber, a kilo of rice, or something, whatever it is—as a token.

There was one child, from a poor house. He asked, "Mummy, tomorrow I have to give something."

"What can you give? I have nothing to give," his mother replied. "Go ask Gopal Baba. He will give you something."

"Where is Gopal Baba?" asked the child.

"He is in the forest. Call him," his mother said.

The simple child, with honest feelings, went to the forest on the way to the school and cried out, "Gopal Baba, give me something for my teacher!"

A boy came and gave him a little *kheer* in a mud pot. "Give it to your teacher," he said.

The child went and gave it. People laughed. All the children were laughing at the mud pot. Even the teacher was smiling in contempt.

"Oh, this boy has brought some mud pot. Put it there," the teacher said. But the child insisted. "Please taste, please taste!"

The teacher tasted it. It was so wonderful. So delicious! "From where have you brought it?" he asked.

"Oh, Gopal Bhaiya gave it to me," the boy replied.

"Gopal Bhaiya? Who is that Gopal Bhaiya?" asked the teacher.

"He is a friend. He is in the forest," replied the boy.

"Let me see who has given such a wonderful thing. Take me there," said the teacher.

"I'll take you there," said the boy.

When they reached the forest, the boy called, "Gopal Bhaiya, my teacher wants to see you."

And he came, and the boy was seeing Gopal Bhaiya. “Here he is,” he said.

But the teacher saw nothing. “Hey, stupid,” he said. “You are playing jokes with me. Don’t talk nonsense.”

“No, no. He is here,” said the boy.

The teacher thrashed him. Immediately a voice came. “Foolish man, don’t thrash this boy. Your evil nature will not permit you to see me in this birth.”

There was a potter saint. He was not a learned man. When Jnandev, Ekanath and all these people went for a religious congregation, this simple man used to tap the head of each person with his stick to see whether or not the pot was ripe. For one of them, he said it was not ripe fully. I think it was either Ekanath or Jnandev.

So, read the lives of saints. Read the life of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. There is a little book, written by some devotee. And there is something called *Atmakatha*, or *Autobiography of Swami Sivananda*. But nothing will describe to you what he really was. Only those who have seen him personally can know what he was. He was a giant. Physically also he looked like a giant, and he was a big personality and a veritable incarnation of generosity, goodness, divinity. There is a book available here: *Man to God-man*. Read that book. It is a compilation by one of the devotees in the ashram. It gives you a succinct picture of the great life of the Master, Swami Sivananda. There are also many other books. Read the lives of saints! Read the lives of saints! Read the lives of saints! God bless you!

Chapter 7

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MEDITATION

It is well known that in all our worthwhile efforts in life, the mind plays a pre-eminent role. When you know the mind, you have known almost everything. Generally, almost all people feel that the mind is inside the body. Further, you make statements like “my mind”, by which you seem to imply that you are different from the mind and you possess the mind as if it is your property. In fact, there is no such thing as “my mind”. You yourself are the mind. The reason why such expressions are used is a subject for very deep psychological study.

The mind is not inside the body. This erroneous notion should be removed as early as possible. If the mind is locked up within the periphery of this little body, it would be aware only of those things which are taking place inside the body—but it knows even the existence of the stars. This is to say that it has certain peculiarities and potentialities not easily known by ordinary observation in our day-to-day life. If the mind is not really inside the body, and we ourselves are the mind, it would suggest to us that we ourselves are not inside the body. This is a very important analysis with which we have to get accustomed. The mind is ourselves, which is not like an object that we are holding in our hands or observing as operating inside. Can you imagine that you yourself are not merely inside the body?

There are certain limitations under which the mind works. It has tremendous suggestive potentialities due to

which it always keeps us asking for more and more things, and it manifests a desire to know more and more—endlessly. That is its potentiality, not easily available as a working process on its outer surface. It keeps us restless due to a clash between this call of the potential in the mind and its ordinary way of working through the sense organs. We seem to be, so to say, living in two worlds at the same time, and not just in one country, one land or one place. We are used to thinking that we belong to this world and only to this world; there is nothing more that we can have. If that is the case, a person who has almost all the things of the world should be a perfect person—free from anxieties of every kind. We have seen that even kings and emperors, who may be said to possess the largest estates in the world, are very insecure and filled with anxieties galore.

The ordinary operations of the mind, conditioned by the processes of sensation, get limited to sensory observations, and we think as we see, as we hear, as we smell, as we taste, and as we touch. A thing that has never been seen with the eyes, nor even heard, cannot be thought by the mind. Whatever thoughts occur to the mind are thoughts limited to the region of visual perception and sometimes auditory operation. The mind cannot think totally unseen and unheard of things. This is to say that the mind is practically a servant of the sense organs. But it should not be really that. Why should there be a mind at all if it is only to work like a servant? The senses themselves can do all the work.

The mind functions in a variety of ways. While the ears can hear and the eyes can see, and the other senses can perform their own individual acts, they cannot be harmonised into a single feeling of “I am seeing, I am hearing” and so on. This synthetic act which brings about a harmony among the

different sensations is actually the function of the mind. Mind is a synthesiser of the sensory activities into a coherent whole by which you begin to feel: “I am seeing, I am hearing, and I am this and I am that.” Does it mean that the mind is only okaying whatever the eyes see and the ears hear, etc.? Is there nothing more in the mind than merely a replica of the scattered particulars provided by the sense organs? A great analysis has been done in this respect by philosophers, both in the East and the West.

Actually, without a proper comprehension of the manner of the mind’s working, we cannot even be sure whether what we think we know is really knowledge, or if it is a trick played by the mind in consonance with the operations of the sense organs. Are we sure that we are in contact with actual knowledge? The mind is, of course, the primary faculty in us. Does it really contact reality when it thinks? This is a long, historical study of philosophy, both in the East and the West: does the mind really come in contact with reality? When you see, are you really coming in contact with that which you see, or you are imagining that it is in contact with you? That you are perhaps under an illusion and you are really not contacting the object, so to say, is proved by the consequences of perception—any kind of sensation—namely, a dissatisfaction continuously harassing your mind in spite of umpteen contacts that you can make in this world. If you are really in contact with the real thing in the world, that must satisfy you. But practical living—your day-to-day experience—shows that coming in contact with whatever you consider as an object of sensation does not satisfy you.

Even your attempt to contact an object through the mind and the senses seems to be defeated in its purpose. After some

time, when the illusion subsides, the things that you are apparently contacting through the mind and the senses organs do not satisfy you. Have you seen any person who is a hundred percent satisfied with the things that he has? He has a suspicion that there may be bereavement and the things which he seems to be contacting may run away one day or the other. Nobody can be sure that what one possesses can be always with oneself. Why is this anxiety inherent in the mind at all? Why are you so agonised in your mind, in your day-to-day life?

Tension is the philosophy of the mind; it is never free from this. The tension is, on the one hand, the compulsion to attempt contact with the objects, persons and things of the world, and on the other hand a failure to really achieve this contact. You seem to be contacting a mirage which looks like a real river flowing before you, but actually it recedes like the horizon as you try to approach it. The more and more you try to come in contact with a desired object, the more and more you realise later in life that it escapes you. You cannot grasp anything in this world because of certain other limitations of the mind which also have to be taken notice of. Where is this mind? It is now practically clear that it cannot be considered to be only inside the head. If it is not inside the head, where is it?

It has a vision of a vast space; and all the things that you are trying to come in contact with are located in space. Can you think of anything which is not in space—whatever be the stretch of your imagination in the faculty of your thought? Even abstract, conceptual objects that you can imagine in your mind force themselves to get located in a spatial context. Even God exists somewhere. This idea of ‘somewhere’ cannot leave you. Everything is somewhere, and it is at a

particular time. A thing is somewhere and it is sometime. It is at a particular time, somewhere, and you cannot free yourself from this condition of something being somewhere and some-when. Thus, the mind is seen to be not totally free as it ought to be, as you might expect. If you are forced to locate in space everything that you think of, who is forcing you? What is this compulsion? From where does it come?

Philosophers who have studied this subject have come to the conclusion that the mind also is a spatial object. It has to be considered as an object only, in a different sense, inasmuch as it locates itself, together with its object, in some place and in some time. It is not possible to think of anything which is everywhere, or for all time—endlessly. Endless existence you cannot think; and unlimited existence also you cannot think. Therefore, the mind is not free, metaphysically speaking. And even psychologically, it does not seem to be really free, on account of its inability to contact things which it wants to contact.

The great masters along these lines, who have spent a lifetime in this kind of analysis, have concluded that space and time are prior to the process of thinking. In philosophical jargon they call it *a priori*—not *a posteriori*, or after. The space and the time factors precede even your attempt at thinking, so your whole personality is a space-time juncture. You are not above this world of space and time. Therefore, you cannot imagine anything that is above space and time. This is because you are under the impression that you are the mind that thinks, and you do not know that you are anything more than the mind.

There is something in you which seems to be deeper than the mental process—without which, unending aspirations cannot be explained. Everything in the world ends. The

limitation of space causes everything to end somewhere. The limitation of the time process also causes everything to end sometime. This is a sorry state of affairs in consideration of the eternal longings of a human being. 'Eternal' is the word to be used—that is to say, unending and unlimited in every way is the longing that you have in your heart. Such a longing cannot arise from the ordinary conditioned mind working in terms of the sense organs. The 'you', the 'I', the 'this' or 'that' or 'it' has to be probed into and found out what actually it is. Statements like "I have a mind. It is my mind" also arise on account of a confusion between what you are really and the process of thinking.

Can you exist without thinking? Here is a great question before you. Many times people say, "I do meditation, and I do not think anything." Whether or not it is really possible to do meditation without thinking anything is a different question. However, even supposing that there are occasions when the mind stops thinking—at that time, do you really exist?

There is a daily example of going into deep sleep, when the mind does not operate. Nothing that is your personal character is to be seen in the state of deep sleep. Neither the bodily functions are objects of your awareness, nor is there mental operation. If you yourself are the mind only and there is nothing more in you, you do not exist in the state of deep sleep. Your existence is abolished. It is true, under normal conditions, that your mind cannot be separated from your being, that you are not only the mind but something more. This is proved by the fact that you are existing in sleep when the mind is not working.

Think over this matter a little deeply. Are you really existing in deep sleep? "I do not know. I was aware of nothing." You are sure that you knew nothing in the state of

deep sleep. Accepted. But do you believe that you did exist in deep sleep? You cannot deny that you did exist. A persistent memory tells you that you did exist. But memory is an after-occurrence which comes posterior to an experience which has to be prior to it. Unless there is an experience, there cannot be a memory. You felt something—you had an experience of something—that brings about a memory later on when you are in a conscious state in the waking condition.

Analyse once again the fact of memory. What is memory? It is the remembrance of what happened earlier. Deep sleep has become a content of your memory. And, if it is a content of memory, it must have been preceded by an experience which is to be identified with the state of deep sleep. What experience did you have in the state of deep sleep? Nothing. But, is it really nothing? Do you feel it is a great repose, comfort, freedom from anxiety that you experienced there? A rejuvenating process took place in the state of deep sleep. Even sick people feel a little better after they have a good sleep. Pains—agonies in the foot or parts of the body—you feel these less when you get up from a deep sleep. Some soothing, comforting influence seems to be taking place in the state of deep sleep. How does it happen, this condition which you do not enjoy in the waking state? All anxieties are abolished completely in the state of deep sleep. You do not know anything except that *you are*—a fact which you cannot overlook because of a memory of it. There must be an experience before memory takes place.

Now, having conceded this much, you must know what is experience. What is experience? It is a kind of awareness of something. That is your experience. Were you aware of something in the state of deep sleep? No. If there were no awareness of any kind, would experience be possible? No

experience would be possible. Minus consciousness, minus awareness of something, of some kind, experience is not possible. If experience has not been there, memory also is not possible. A memory speaks to you in a language of the existence of a precedence of a true consciousness. How is it that by a logical analysis you seem to accept that you were perhaps only conscious of your being, though it was not true, actually, in the state of deep sleep? Like the sun shining in the sky, covered with dark, dense clouds, making it impossible for the vision of the sun—that type of experience perhaps you had in the state of deep sleep. The sun must be there—illumination, awareness of consciousness—without which the memory of an experience in sleep would not be possible. “How wonderfully I slept,” you say. Who slept when you say, “I slept”? Who slept? This is also an object of further analysis. If you dispassionately analyse this situation without any kind of encumbrance of thoughts entering your mind consequent upon the waking condition, you will feel that you did exist as a pure, unadulterated awareness of being.

This unadulterated consciousness of being is indescribable because all description is a function of the mind, and the mind was not operating in that condition. Your true nature as true existence, coupled with an awareness of existence only, without any kind of attribute or externalised characteristic—that seems to be your real nature. The clash—the opposition set by this true nature of yours wanting its own Self-realisation with the mental operations of the waking state—keeps you restless, and you do not know where you actually are in this world. On the one hand, you have the conceptual world before you, the world of your eternal longings that get generated by the true being that you are as seen in deep sleep. On the other hand, the senses play havoc

by saying that this sensory world of perception is everything. The phenomenal, which is this world of perception, and the noumenal, which is the true being that you are, oppose each other.

The eternal and the temporal clash in their purposes. And as you seem to belong to both the levels, you seem to be torn between two sides. You belong to a noumenal, eternal realm, which is the world of your aspiration, which is never ending—asking for more and more, endlessly—and on the other hand, you belong to the world of humdrum activity, sensations and mental operations. What is your status finally, then? You are a cross-section of two different realms of action. Two different worlds meet at one point, which is hidden within. There are other things which are very intriguing in human nature, but the most prominent intriguing factor is that you are pulled by the world of sense on the one hand, and you are pulled by the eternity that you are on the other hand. The world that you are not is considered as yourself by the insistence of the sense organs. But what you really are, the eternal being that you are, calls you by a different name and suggests your goal to be elsewhere—in the high heaven of the true Self, which is not in space and in time.

When you meditate, these factors do not always come by way of analysis. But if you practise deeply, they will come suddenly as a vista opened up before your mind and you will find yourself pervading an area far beyond the area of this world. You will feel lifted up from your own self in this act of meditation. What are you meditating on? When you consider yourself as someone belonging to this world of space-time limitation, the object of your aspiration looks like something beyond you—a transcendental existence away from you—

which you have to reach by great effort. But if you are able to probe into the truths of your true nature, which is Being-Consciousness, you will find that there is no such conflict between your aspiration in meditations and the tussles which the mind presents before you. Two things take place in meditation—a pull from the world, and a pull from your true being.

The Yoga Shastras tell us that there are stages of the illumination of the entanglements of the mind in meditation. The entanglements have to be analysed first and foremost. The mind says that you are in one place and the thing that you are contemplating in your mind is in another place. Rarely can you identify the object of meditation within yourself. It is always somewhere.

There is a third factor, which is the movement of the mind towards the object of your meditation—a process of knowledge, as it is called. A triad act takes place psychologically. You are aware that you are meditating, you are aware that you are meditating on something, and you are also aware that meditation is going on. But there is something more, apart from this triad act—namely, thoughts which are irrelevant to the act of meditation. You would like to be free from certain thoughts which are not going to contribute to your meditation.

What are these thoughts? They are thoughts which engage your attention in the waking state, with which you are busy. They intrude because of the habit of the mind to think only in terms of this world of objects. You were born many, many years back; since that time, how many times have you thought of this world and things? Every thought produces an impression on the mind—an impression which, like a gramophone groove, repeats itself again and again for further

operation along the same line—and the mind cannot easily accommodate itself to the thoroughly reverse process in meditation. A new educational career is embarked upon in meditation. You are not the same person as you were when you were born or as you lived in this world. A new orientation of thought takes place.

The ordinary way of thinking is to bifurcate what you are expecting to achieve finally and the thing that you are seeing with your eyes. This bifurcation has to cease by many methods that you have to employ, and a general recipe to tackle this problem cannot be given at one stroke for the benefit of everyone. Since emotions and impressions in the mind, caused by perceptions in the world, vary from person to person, a single medicine cannot be prescribed for all people; they vary in detail, though generally they are common to some extent. So, in the state of meditation, in the earlier stages, at least, it looks like a struggle to pull yourself from the temptation to think in terms of things to which you are accustomed and, on the other hand, to raise the thoughts higher up to the realm of the comprehensive form of the object of meditation, which is your be-all and end-all.

Another difficulty which arises in the process of meditation is the fear arising from an indescribable and unclear relationship that you have with your object of meditation. “How am I related to this object?” Whatever your object of meditation and your relation to it may be, you have taken for granted at the very outset that it is going to satisfy you fully. The *ishta devata*, as it is called, is your dear object. That which is dear is capable of satisfying you entirely. Otherwise, it cannot be really dear. Hence, the *ishta devata* is the deity which is dearest to you.

The charm of the object of meditation makes you feel a little cautious in the choice of the object. In a highly philosophical sense, you can concentrate on any part of the universe and it will lead you to the entire structure of the cosmos. But this is hard in the beginning stages. You have to choose that which you love most and think is the best thing that you can satisfy yourself with. It is the whole thing that is there before you. The object of your meditation is not one thing among the many things in the world, because one thing which is only an item among many other things in the world will feel very humble and simple and neglected in the midst of the vast ocean of other things like it. It will not be pre-eminent or capable of satisfying you entirely, because there are other things also which are equally competent. One finite object is as good as any other finite object.

So if your object of meditation is one finite object, there is certainly a point in the mind running to other things. "When there are many other things which are equally good, as good as the object on which I am contemplating, why should I engage myself unnecessarily on this one object only? Why should I not go to other objects?" This is the philosophy of the distraction of the mind. But the choice of the object is to be such that it has to be above the finitude which is characteristic of things. In a sense, the object that you are contemplating is infinite in its possibilities and potentiality; it can give you everything.

Is there one thing in the world—think of it—that can give you everything that you want? You will find there is nothing in the world which can give you everything that you want. Everything can give you little, little things, but you cannot get all things. You have to find, by deepening your thought process, a thing which can give you everything

possible—that is to say, a point of concentration which draws into itself the forces of the whole of nature, like a magnet pulling towards itself every iron filing around it. The object of your meditation is capable of pulling towards itself the whole cosmos of energy. On this you contemplate as something which enters you through your thought process of meditation and energises you at the same time with such potency as can be compared with the potency of the entire creation.

Here you have to have the guidance of a teacher, because you cannot know what it is that you are thinking in your mind and what actually is the object that can satisfy you fully, entirely, eternally—for ever and ever. Normally, you cannot think of such a thing at all. This requires initiation by a competent master who knows the relationship between you and the entire creation around you. The problem is the relationship between you and the whole of creation around. However much you scratch your head, you may never know how you are connected with this world—this universe, this creation. Initiation by the Guru, by the mentor, by the teacher, by the guide, is a process of gradually, through an educational process, introducing you to the great concept of the cosmic relationship between you and the object of your meditation. Here is the sum and substance of the psychology of the meditational process.

Unless you know your mind, as I mentioned to you, you will not know anything because, somehow or other, the processes that you employ to attempt knowledge pass through the lens of the mind, which is partly a medium of thinking and partly a representative of the eternal object of your longing. Sometimes the lower mind and the higher mind are separated. The lower mind is that which pulls you toward

the object of sense, and the higher mind, the reason, with a superabundance of intense longing for the higher, pulls you in the other direction. You are pulled horizontally by the lower mind in the direction of sense objects and you are raised up vertically by the reason, which is a reflection of Cosmic Intelligence.

Here is before you an outline of the psychology of meditation. With this knowledge you will choose your object correctly and you will never grieve, under any circumstance, because this thing on which you are meditating blesses you with everything.

Chapter 8

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

You must have heard that there are four types of yoga. Actually, these supposed four are not like the four legs of a cow, each one standing independent of the other. The word ‘yoga’ suggests a harmonisation and union of all the facets of personality. The four yogas mentioned are four aspects of the working of your person. You are very active in your life. No one can afford not to be active, and this compelling aspect of your personality requires to be accommodated into the practice of yoga. You are a person with feeling, emotion and affection, you are a person with determination or will, and you are a rational, reasonable, intelligent being. Since the exercise of reason, will, emotion and the impulse to act are not four different, independent things taking place in you—they are there simultaneously in you—it appears there is only one yoga, as you are one single person and not divided into four things.

This aspect of your being a total individual highlights the importance of exercising great caution in the adventure of yoga practice. Immature minds—not properly tutored along the spiritual path—take a one-sided view and call themselves *karma* yogis, *bhakti* yogis, *raga* yogis, *jnana* yogis, and so on. You cannot segregate any impulsion of your personality; they have to be taken as a whole. You are all these things at the same time. Yoga is a total action of the whole of your being that is taking place.

In this context, I advise you to make a serious study of the Bhagavadgita. What does the Bhagavadgita tell you? All kinds of commentaries have been written. Some say it is pure knowledge that Bhagavan Sri Krishna is teaching. Others say it is work, activity; it is a *karma yoga shastra*. There are others who emphasise what may be called *raja yoga*—the Patanjali aspect. There are others, like Ramanuja, Madhva and others, who emphasise only the devotional aspect. If you read the original Bhagavadgita as it is, without having a predisposition to any commentary, and place before yourself the picture of the mighty Sri Krishna speaking to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kuruksetra—looking at it with your own eyes and with your own mind—you will find it is none of these aspects as have been emphasised excessively. “Act, do work”—this seems to be dinned into the ears of the hearer, again and again, in the Bhagavadgita. But, what kind of work? It is not a political activity or a social welfare work that Bhagavan Sri Krishna is speaking of.

Every action that is done with a motive behind it will have a reaction and bind you. But, can you think of any action without a motive behind it? You work in the office because you want a salary. If you do anything else, you expect recompense from it. A non-recompense activity is unthought of by the mind. It will become a drudgery, like counting the leaves on a tree, which is to no purpose. Why should you count the leaves on a tree, though it is also a kind of work? What is the use, the utility, of counting the waves of the ocean? You do not like to do anything without a utility behind it. This utility is called the fruit of work in the language of the Bhagavadgita. “Expect not the fruit,” is another injunction that follows the instruction that work is imperative and unavoidable. These two instructions seem to

be very terrifying because you seem to be pushed into something with which you cannot really reconcile yourself. If you go on telling a person again and again, “Do this work”, without giving him a chance to know why he should do it at all, what would be the condition of the mind of that person who is subjected to this kind of activity?

The whole Gita should be studied at one stroke, not chapter by chapter as if they are different limbs of its body. With great concentration of mind and analytic capacity you must study the verses of the Gita. You will find that every injunction is inter-linked with another injunction, which, independently taken, looks like a contradiction of something else that is said elsewhere.

Action becomes yoga. This is the great point made in the Bhagavadgita. Action becomes yoga only when it is non-motivated action. But such a thing is unthinkable to any one of us. Nobody will unnecessarily engage in a work which has no meaning whatsoever. Though there is meaning in work—it is, of course, very clear—it should not be a meaning connected with a result that is to follow remotely from it. Expecting the result of work is to expect something which is far away from the actual location of activity. There is a distance between the fruit accruing and the actual action, so it creates anxiety in the mind. The distance between your expectation and your performance causes distress in the mind: “Will I obtain what I expect from this work?” Secondly, there is an erroneous notion of how action produces a result. Mostly you have seen in your life that the expected fruit, or the result, does not follow from a particular enterprise. There is dissatisfaction and melancholy of the mind because the expected result has not followed.

An action is a kind of disturbance that you are creating in the cosmic process of nature as a whole; it is an interference. As nature abhors any kind of interference, it kicks up some dust, as you may call it, and produces a reaction equal in force to the force of the action that you have performed. Actions and reactions are equal and opposite. If you want to avoid the reaction following from an action, then you must know the art of performing such an action. You may ask, “Why should I not expect some reaction, which is, of course, very palatable to me. I expect a good result to follow from my good actions.” But what do you mean by “a good result”? And how do you judge the nature of an action in terms of being good or bad? Nature has no ethics. It has no human morality attached to it. It is a pure scientific organism, we may say. The only law that operates in the cosmos is cause and effect. If something is done, something follows. Apart from this law, no other law exists anywhere. Other laws are manmade for the purpose of social solidarity.

Sri Krishna’s emphasis in this connection is that you have to apply reason before you set yourself to any action or work. *Buddhi* yoga, the yoga of understanding, is expected to be at the back as a determining factor of every enterprise or work. It is not only work that is mentioned there; it is a rational work—action based on *buddhi*, or understanding. An unintelligent action is not action in terms of yoga. What is the understanding that is required before you embark on doing something? In the Bhagavadgita there is a gradational rise of thought from the first chapter to the eleventh chapter. You are taken stage by stage, step by step, until there is what may be called the apocalypse, or the final answer to every question, which is the eleventh chapter.

The bringing of your entire personality together into a single focus is something which is not known to you, to which you are not accustomed. Every day you may do something, think something—but fractionally. You cannot think and do anything in a total fashion. That is, you ignore certain aspects of your person when you are interested in certain other aspects. You are involved in certain types of conflict every day, from moment to moment, as it were, and the Bhagavadgita is an answer to this great conflict of life. You have to face something every moment. It is a war in which you are engaged. You are engaging yourself in a battle every moment of your life because you have to confront something. If there is no necessity to confront anything, there is no need for work. Your struggle to overcome the stress and strain of a confrontation in terms of conflict is the battle spoken of. You can never have peace of mind even for a moment in this world because you are always anxious about your future—the next moment. To see that the next moment is palatable and comfortable, you struggle hard to move earth and heaven to do something in order that a result may follow which will free you from the untoward reactions of your action. But, this is attempted in an unintelligent manner.

You are buffeted, to speak briefly, in four different ways. There is a push that you feel from human society outside. You can never ignore, even for a moment, that you are a unit of human society. In a mood of despair, agony or anger you may feel, “Who cares for this world of society? I am totally independent. I would like to be in an anarchical atmosphere.” You do not want to be controlled by anybody. This is only a word of despair that sometimes comes unintelligently from the mind of a person. You are not only an individual with a certain amount of freedom which you

seem to be having through the activities of your body and mind, but you are also a unit in society. What is society? Great studies have been made along this line, by specialists, to find out if there is really such a thing as society or if it is only a bundle of individuals. Do you regard society as a heap of individualities? Or, is it an organised system of operation for the welfare of each and every person? Society can give you comfort; it can also give you discomfort. You have seen this in your practical life.

This instance will reveal the fact that you are vitally connected with the existence of other persons. There is a community feeling, an interpenetrating influence exerted by one person on the other. You know very well that you cannot independently get what you want without the cooperation of other people. How will you get on with human society, which is often seen to be a wretched thing which is harassing people? Let us take for granted that society is a harassing medium which has no sense, sometimes. Yet, you have to live in the midst of this wilderness of human cooperation. You cannot discard this location in which you are placed. Your duty is dependent on the nature of the location in which you are placed.

A great thinker, Francis Bradley, wrote a tome—a huge book itself—on this subject: *My Station and My Duties*. Your duty arises from the circumstance of your life, which means that there are different aspects of duty. It is not that everyone will do the same thing. Everybody is a merchant, everybody is a warrior, everybody is an officer—it cannot be like that. The circumstance in which you are placed, personally as well as socially, conditions the duty that is called upon you. This is to briefly tell you the connection that you have with human society, of which you have to be very wary, and you cannot

ignore it. There is no total independence from social circumstance. Aristotle said that a human being is a social animal. A human being is like an animal, and this will come into high relief if total freedom is given to all people. Give a hundred percent freedom to every individual—let anyone do as they please—then you will see what follows. The subliminal potencies of the lower species through which they have passed will come up to the surface of action, and they will behave like wolves, as the great political philosopher Thomas Hobbes made out in a huge book that he wrote on this subject, called *Leviathan*—monster. He considers government as a monster because it can act like a monster if it so wishes—though it is not supposed to be like that if it is taken in a Platonic sense.

The Bhagavadgita is a way to find a recipe for being in perfect harmony with human society first and foremost, before you take a step in any other direction of yoga. The *yamas*—*ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacarya* and *aparigraha* mentioned in the *sutras* of Patanjali—are a recipe for how to act and behave in such a manner that you do not come in conflict with other people. You should not take anything for granted. *Niyama* is necessary though not so important, but *yama* is incumbent. *Yamas*—the five mentioned ways—are only ways in which you have to behave with people, and perhaps behave with yourself also. The *yamas* are nothing but ways of self-restraint, social as well as personal. You can be a friend of all people if you like, if you are intelligent enough to adjust yourself to the conditions prevailing in the world. There is no necessity to create enemies. The adjustment of personality with society is necessary even on the path of yoga, because otherwise if the society presses you in some

direction not comfortable to you, your meditation will not take place.

There is another aspect of your personality. You are living in this world of nature. If you go against nature, you will fall sick. You may become seriously ill if you go against the law of nature. There are laws of gravitation and laws connected with sunlight, air, water, food, etc., with which if you dabble erroneously, you will have to pay the penalty. You must know how society acts. You must also know how nature works. It is a large living body that is before us which is called nature—and you know how a living body acts and reacts. I will not go into details along these lines because it is almost clear to you how dependent you are on nature's contributions to your very existence itself. Even your body is made up of the five elements. The building bricks of this body are earth, water, fire, air and ether. If that is the case, you seem to be having only a borrowed existence. The bricks with which the body has been built are the substance of the five elements. And you are alive due to the contributions made by these five elements—food, water, air, sunlight and the like—which is like saying that you do not exist outside nature. It is working through you, as is very obvious.

There is a third factor, which is your own self. Let society be there, let nature be there. What about yourself? How are you? What are you made of? Maybe you are made of the five elements, but are you made of something else also? Are you only the body of five elements? You have faculties of thinking, which work in many ways. Sometimes your understanding does not go hand in hand with your feelings. The personality is not always aligned properly. There is non-alignment of the internal constituents, mostly, in persons. You may be a great, highly learned person—a

professor in arts and sciences, with a PhD, highly respected—but your emotions may be torn and you may be a very puny nothing in your house. You grieve and weep when you are alone, though you are a mighty learned person in outer society.

If your will, your emotions and your understanding do not go hand in hand, one with the other, you will be a torn personality, not an integrated one. A psychological cohesion of the parts of the faculties inside make you a whole being and not a sick individual. You may be physically sick, but the worst thing is to be mentally sick. To struggle with your own mind is worse than struggling with anything else. Today you think one thing; tomorrow you think another thing. Today you like this, and tomorrow you do not like it, without knowing why you are feeling that way. You may diagnose everything in the world, but you should diagnose your own phases of action inherent in the psyche. Knowledge of yourself is the greatest of knowledge, it is said. The knowledge of your own mind, to which I made reference previously, is greater than the knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology and astronomy. There is, on the other hand, your contribution to nature and society, which is very clear on the surface of it. But, what contribution can you make if you are a torn individual, with wrecked emotions?

The attempt to keep yourself in a cohesive, integrated mode—this attempt is highlighted and described in great detail in many of the *sutras* of Patanjali's Yoga Shastra. *Yama* is there, of course, but there are other methods. You are hammered in from three different sides. On the one hand, you seem to be confronting yourself every day and finding it difficult to manage your own mind; secondly, you also cannot easily manage your connection with people outside; and

thirdly, physically you fall sick in many ways due to interfering with nature's forces in an unbalanced manner. There is a fourth crowning factor in life—namely, the whole centre of the cosmos operating in you. There is an unknown factor behind everything in the world which is, perhaps, the deciding factor. All your efforts are decided, finally, by this Supreme Judiciary of the cosmos. Finally, it has to give assent to whatever you do, whatever you think.

There is a verse in the Bhagavadgita which mentions how your actions are determined by different factors and not only by your intention, individually, by itself. The condition of the body, whatever it is, decides to a large extent the capability of your performance. Every person has a different type of physical frame, fitted for a particular purpose. So the kind of contribution that you make through your activities is decided especially by the nature of your physical constitution. Secondly, there is another determining factor—namely, your capacity to resolve to fulfil the work and carry it on until the end. There are many people who start a work and then leave it in the middle, due to many difficulties. If they face a difficulty, they drop that work. To engage in some action and then drop it because of fear of troubles arising from it is called *tamasa*, or the worst kind of action, says the Bhagavadgita. This is another factor.

The third conditioning factor is the capacity of your sense organs themselves. If you are weak in your eyes, your ears and your sensations, your contribution to the world and contribution to your own performances, also, will be limited to that extent. Another factor that limits your performance is the diverse motives that you have behind your action. Why are you doing anything? Though you may think that the idea is clear in your mind, you will find that it is not always a clear

idea at all. Your requirements, as you think them, seem to change their moods and their nature as time passes and you advance in age and, perhaps, in the process of evolution. But, there is a final thing. It has to be sanctioned by the structure of the cosmos. Whatever you may do should be approved by the constitution of the government. You cannot go against it, saying, “That is wonderful for me. I shall do that”

This is the fourfold conflict that you are facing every day—social conflict, personal conflict, conflict with nature, and conflict with the Almighty Creator Himself. You are distanced from society, distanced from your own self, distanced from nature, and distanced from God. This is the tremendous war of the Mahabharata before you. Everything is pell-mell and chaotic, and you do not know what you are supposed to do. “I am helpless in this condition. My mind is not working. Tell me, what is my duty?” This is what Arjuna spoke to Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Intelligent man that he was, with great willpower, and having decided to do something, he collapsed when he was required to exercise a total type of understanding in regard to what he was expected to do.

The body shakes, the mind trembles and the emotions are fear-struck when you take to the path of yoga, on account of the associations you wrongly make in terms of these four facets of your relation. The Bhagavadgita is an answer to all these conflicts. It answers your query concerning your duty towards society. This is highlighted intensely throughout the chapters, and all other things are also highlighted, gradually. The eleventh chapter, which is the crowning edifice of all the teachings, tells you there is only One Person doing all actions in the world. “Everything is My view, My action.” Even if you lift a finger, it is not your action, finally. The muscles and nerves are there, of course. Your will also is there. But all this

that you have inside yourself, and what you are, is a replica of the original, which is far away—beyond space and time, as it were—and which controls you totally.

Who is doing anything in this world? If you are a good student of your relationship with these facets of philosophical theme, you will realise that there is a great truth in this wondrous statement of the Bhagavadgita, “I do everything; you act as an instrument.” This appreciation of One Being actually performing all actions—this acceptance from the bottom of your heart—will not only free you from conflicts of this kind, but will give you such a hope of possible perfection in your life that you will feel a sense of energy entering into you, energy which you had blocked by assertion of your personality or ego-ridden individuality. If you open the avenues of the entry of these forces which are operating throughout the world, you will find a peculiar strength arising from within. It is not the strength of the food that you eat, or the money that you have, or the esteem in which people hold you; it is another strength altogether—an intrinsic strength, you may call it. All other strengths that you have are extrinsic because they are contributed by factors which are outside you. But here, a total factor of the creative process entirely takes an upper hand. Here is the gospel of the Bhagavadgita for you. It is not *karma*, it is not *bhakti*, it is not *raja*; it is nothing of the kind. It is all things at the same time. Reason and will and emotion and action go together and make up one enterprise.

Sa brahma-yoga-yuktatma sukham aksayam asnute (B.G. 5-21), says the Bhagavadgita. It is not called by any known name. It is called Brahma-yoga, the yoga of the Absolute. Your personality rises into action, totally, in all the layers of your being—not merely the physical, the astral or

the causal. The entire spirit rises up as the sun in the sky dazzles in all its glory when the clouds of these sheaths of our personality—which are not solid objects, really, but are layers of condensed energy—are dispersed by the light of the sun of the soul that is illuminating and shining within you, for ever and ever.

This, I believe, is the gospel and the teaching of the Bhagavadgita. There is no need of reading too many books. As the Cosmic Being spoke the Gita, an individual person will not be able to appreciate much of its meaning. It was spoken by all mouths, all ears, and all eyes. The Mighty Person of the total cosmos spoke it and, therefore, a puny mind is unable to appreciate its connotations. Hence we require so many commentaries. The Visvarupa, as it is called—which is the whole of existence speaking from all sides—is the context of the gospel of the Gita. In a verse it is said that nobody knows what the Gita says. *Krsno janati vai samyak*: only He who spoke it knows what He spoke. Arjuna knows something of it. Actually, he forgot it totally. Later on he asked Sri Krishna, “I have forgotten everything that you told me at the beginning of the battle. Would you kindly recite it to me once again?” Sri Krishna’s answer was, “I cannot repeat it again. I was in union with the Absolute when I spoke that and you should not ask me to recall it again.” It was the Absolute that spoke, in a cosmic form, from every angle of vision. *Vyaso va vyasa-putro va*: Vyasa knows what the Gita is; he himself recorded it. Vyasa’s son Suka knows it, and Vyasa knows it. *Anye sravanatah srutva*: others only hear it as anything that is told to them. It does not enter the heart.

Make a thorough study of the Gita. Of course, you are free to read any commentary in order that you may be facilitated in forming an opinion about it. If God speaks to

you, you know how you will think at that time. Place yourself in the context of God speaking to you. “My dear boy, listen to me!” If God speaks to you like that, what will you do at that time? That kind of attention is necessary in order to do yoga practice.

Yoga is not a profession. It is not even a religion. It is not something that you are expected to do among many other things. It is the only thing that you have to do, and in that one thing that you do, every other activity is included. It is included because it is a comprehensive focussing through all the aspects of life to which I made reference just now. For a moment, think deeply; place yourself in the context of God speaking to you. That is the Bhagavadgita speaking to you. And God speaking to you is not yesterday’s matter, or tomorrow’s; it is just today’s.

So, I gave you a free and brief conspectus of the system of yoga which operates in various phases on account of the response emanating from the different aspects of your personality. Remember: the practice of yoga is everything. Meditation is all things. It is a wrong notion that meditation is somewhere, sometime in life, and all your other time goes to your duties. You think that all other things that you do are your duties, and that meditation is not a duty, that it is only a concession that you are making to some religious requirement. It is nothing of the kind.

All your duties are summed up in one duty of meditation on this stupendous theme of your placement within the context of the reality within everything. *Sarvatah panipadam tat, sarvato ’ksi-srio-mukham; sarvatah srutimal loke, sarvam avrtya tisthati* (B.G. 13.13): Everywhere It has eyes, everywhere It has ears, hands and feet. If you touch anything, you are touching His legs, His feet, His hands; your eyes

are His eyes; your ears are His ears. The whole of the Gita is this much. Its quintessence I have placed before you. The All-yoga—*karma*, *bhakti*, *raja*, *jnana*—everything is inside this.

Remember again—I want to repeat this once more—yoga is not one of the things that you are doing; it is *the* thing that you are doing, inclusive of all things. You will be a very good office worker, a very good cook, a very good sweeper, a very good soldier—everything you will be if yoga is operating through you at that time. You will be the best in every field of life because you are in the best of circumstances when you are in deep meditation. Be happy that you may be blessed and good days are coming to you!

Chapter 9

MEDITATION ON COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

To make the mind feel itself somewhere else, apart from its being inside the body, is a hard task, and it is the crux of the meditational process. You are contemplating something which appears external—away from yourself, beyond yourself, and not necessarily confined to only your particular bodily location. However much you may struggle, you will not easily succeed in this activity because the mind is like a leech. It will stick to this body as if a cement-like paste is acting as an adhesive force to powerfully inject itself into this body and make itself feel like this body only. The mind does not think that it is a mind; it thinks it is only a body.

Great care has to be taken in releasing this attachment that the mind has got to this one body only and neglecting the presence of any other body or any other thing in this world. Some of the simple methods in achieving this purpose are stated in the Yoga Shastras. You have to listen to me very carefully. Imagine that you are somewhere far away in mid-space, and from there you look at your body which is sitting here. “Far, far away I am in a distant place—many, many kilometres away from the earth—and from there I am looking back at my own body which is sitting here and meditating.” Great power of imagination is necessary to think like this.

Actually, who is meditating? Is it the body that does it? It is the consciousness—the mind, so-called, that is actually

engaging itself in meditation. So let the body be here; let it do what it likes—sitting. But, that which really does the work of meditation is the mind. Place yourself in a distant place, other than the location of this body. Very intensely feel that “I am in mid-space, away from this body where I am sitting for meditation.” There is a practical double-consciousness involved in this. On the one hand you feel that you are sitting here, as a little individual, meditating. On the other hand there is another aspect of this consciousness which takes you away—high, high, high, like a kite flying into space. There you are sitting. Go on telling yourself, “Where am I? I am here, in space. The planets are revolving around the sun. I am somewhere there—very far, very far, very far, very far away from the earth, away from the earth, away from that ‘me’ which is meditating on the ground here.”

This peculiar technique is highlighted in an aphorism of Patanjali: *bahih akalpita vrittih maha-videha tatah prakasha avarana ksayah* (Y.S. 3.43)—a very, very beautiful *sutra*. The *vritti* of the mind is the modification that takes place whenever it thinks anything. When the mind thinks anything, a modification takes place in the form of that which it thinks. This is called *kalpita vritti*, a process to which the mind is habituated, and it is a psychological function. But there is another process called *akalpita vritti*—not a psychological movement of the mind, but what may be called metaphysical, in philosophical language. It is difficult to understand what this metaphysical mind is.

The mind of a particular individual thinks of another object, another person—of something outside. But it is not easily noticed that such a thinking or even visualisation of something other than one’s own self is not possible unless there is something that connects the thinking mind with that

which it thinks. What is it that connects the object with the mind that thinks the object? You can think of distant things, like the stars in the heavens. How is it possible for the mind to transfer itself to the location of a distant star, or the sun or moon, though it is a psychological act taking place within the body itself?

This very strange method of being able to consider or visualise something other than one's own self is worth studying deeply. There is a medium between you and the object of contemplation which is present not only in you, but also in that on which you are concentrating; but you cannot know its existence because of the fact that it itself is actually the metaphysical mind, as I referred to—not the psychological mind which is working inside the body.

Here is an example. There is a broadcasting station where somebody speaks or sings. There is a recorded voice. The singing or speaking voice is transmitted through vast, distant space to any other location where there is a receiver set. That which communicates the speech or song from the broadcasting station to the distant receiver set is not itself a song or speech. There is nobody singing or speaking in the sky. Yet, that speech or song is communicated even to a very far-off, distant place, and it is converted once again into a song or a speech in a receiver set. What is there between the two? To explain analogically, that is the metaphysical entity, which is neither the broadcasting medium nor the receiving medium. It is transcendent to both. That transcendent thing does not speak, does not see, does not think, does not do anything, but it has the potentiality to manifest itself as anything. You may call this the cosmic mind in terms of the meditational process.

Apart from an individual mind, there is a cosmic mind, which cannot be known, cannot be visualised, cannot be seen because it is not an object. You cannot think the cosmic mind, because it is the thinker. It thinks both you and the object that you are supposed to think externally. In philosophical language, especially in Vedanta, this consciousness which is thinking, and the object which is being thought of, are known as *pramatr chaitanya* and *prameya chaitanya*: subject-consciousness and object-consciousness. There is a *chaitanya*, or awareness, in the thinking individual, and there is something which connects that object of thought with the thinking mind. If the object is totally material, as we generally imagine, then there could be nothing to connect the thinking mind with the object that it thinks. Consciousness cannot come in contact with matter. Yet, it appears that our consciousness comes in contact with a wall or a mountain. How does it happen?

This is explained. If consciousness is within the mind—in the mind, within the body—and seems to be contacting an object conceptually or visually, you have to explain how this contact takes place. Consciousness is quite different from materiality. Matter is a total objectivity, whereas consciousness is total subjectivity. How did subjectivity become objectivity? It is a contradiction in terms. The subject and the object are different in their characteristics; one cannot become the other. But how do you know that there is an object outside you? Your consciousness—your mind which thinks or knows—cannot contact that which is other than itself. This analysis amounts to saying that there is something in the object akin or similar to the thinking consciousness. Unless this is accepted, you cannot explain perception, visualisation or even thinking an object. This ‘something’

which is in the object also, akin to the thinking mind, is the transcendental consciousness. This is what I meant by saying ‘metaphysical mind’, or ‘cosmic mind’. When I tell you to place yourself in distant space, I am indirectly saying that you are sitting in the cosmic mind and not in the individual mind. This space which is so vast around you is a subjectivity for the cosmic mind, but an object for your individual mind. The world is an object for us, but it is a subject for the cosmic mind.

In creation, during the evolution of the universe, a wonderful situation is created, as is described in the Upanishads. The Universal Being gets concretised, as it were, in the evolutionary process, until it becomes what is called the hardened materiality of the universe. This consciousness is aware of this universal materiality, universal objectivity. Remember what I am saying. This consciousness which is aware of a universal materiality spread out everywhere, the whole universe itself, that consciousness is called Virat in the language of the Vedanta—Virat-consciousness. We may call it cosmic consciousness. This consciousness splits itself into individuals, like a ray of light becoming multiple when it passes through a prism. In a similar manner, a peculiar contextual, perceptive process takes place when this ideational, universal consciousness becomes multiple, individual centres of thinking. There is a great difference between the Virat being conscious of the multiple forms of the universe and the individual consciousness thinking itself as self-identical, as an individual.

For instance—again I come to the usual analogy—the body, assuming that it has a consciousness of itself, knows, at one stroke, the multiplicity of its limbs. It does not take time

to think ‘right hand’, ‘left hand’ or any other part of the body. It is a simultaneous awareness of all its multiple parts. That kind of simultaneity is analogous to the cosmic mind thinking the whole universe at one stroke. That is the Virat Purusha thinking, we may say. But when the individual sparks of consciousness are shot off from the universal consciousness by some kind of mysterious isolation in the space-time process, what happens is, there is an upside-down thinking. There is a vertical thinking, we may say, in the Virat-consciousness, but there is a topsy-turvy thinking in the individual consciousness. The Upanishad tells us there is a fall, as if the head is below and the legs are up. And, this fallen consciousness does not see the world or the cosmos as the Virat sees it, but sees it in a topsy-turvy fashion.

For the whole—for the Virat-consciousness, cosmic mind, metaphysical mind—the universe is identical with itself, as we feel that this body is identical with our soul or our individual consciousness. We do not feel the body is sitting outside us. It is *one* with us. In a similar manner, this Virat-consciousness experiences the whole cosmos as its body. This is why some philosophers say that the world is the body of God. The Virat, which is the consciousness of God, feels the universe as its own body, as we feel this body as identical with our soul. But, there is a difference in the individual thinking. The topsy-turvy falling down is explained in the Aitareya Upanishad especially—namely, that the object looks like a subject, and the subject looks like an object. This happens when there is a topsy-turvy thinking—your head is below and your legs are up.

How do you explain this? What happens is the severe agony that is felt when this severance takes place. The very birth of individuality is the original agony, we may say, of

individuality. What is agony? It is the feeling that the soul of one's own self is cut off from the real soul to which it belongs. Here I am reminded of Plato's imagery that we are actually in heaven, and we are shadows imagining that we are originals here. This is the nature of topsy-turvy perception. Immediately—to repeat what the Upanishad says—you are caught by the anguish of self-supporting effort, as you have lost contact with that which is supporting you, which has been supporting you, which was your very soul.

The individual soul severs itself from the cosmic soul by an agonising assertion of itself. Then sorrow, which is life itself, is bred, and a seed of it is sown in this very act of creation of the individual. Hunger and thirst, and a feeling of insecurity certainly advance themselves at the very birth of individuality. Every individual is conscious of the insecure type of life that it leads—always insecure in every way. There is no security for any individual anywhere in this world. There is fear and dread from all sides, opening its jaws as if death is yawning. Hunger and thirst immediately rise in this individual because the original cosmic soul, which was the sustenance of this individual, has been severed in its contact during the coming down of the process of evolution, and as the central government is not going to support this alienated individual, it feels difficulty in finding resources to maintain itself. There is a feeling of cold and heat, hunger and thirst, to mention the least. But, it cannot go on in this condition. It is in hell. It wants to create a heaven in hell itself. Unless a heaven is created in hell, you cannot survive there. You may perish instantaneously.

Hence, an artificial kingdom is created by that which has fallen into this hell of experience. What is this kingdom? It is the kingdom of the joy that it imagines to be there by

coming in contact with that which it regards as an object while it was the subject for the Virat. The individual thinks that the world is an object, while the Virat—cosmic mind, metaphysical mind—knows it is the subject. Can you feel that the whole world is you? That is the Virat thinking. But if you think that you are sitting somewhere and the world is outside you, you are thinking like a severed individual. Then hunger and thirst, heat and cold are felt because of this isolation—the severance of the individual from the cosmic sustenance. It tries to grab several media from what it considers as the objective of its perception—food, water, air, light and many other appurtenances to guard itself from attack from external sources.

When it artificially creates a kingdom of objective sustenance and feels for a moment that it has got what it wants—wrongly, though—immediately there is satisfaction. This is what is called sensory satisfaction. It is really not satisfaction. It is only an imagination that it has got what it wants which is created in the mind that is craving for security from outside. But, in this appeasement of hunger—the appetite of the soul—it has not really appeased its hunger. Perpetually you are hungry; perpetually you are thirsty; perpetually you are insecure from birth to death, however much you may try to appease your appetite by coming in contact with objects that you think are outside you, while they are really not outside you.

A tremendous mistake has taken place in the very beginning itself when the individual has fallen down from this great universal force. To free yourself from this tragedy, engage yourself in deep meditation on that very condition in which you were prior to your fall. It is impossible to think it. The mind cannot think that state which was there prior to its

coming down as an individual. So, great effort is necessary. Yoga is not a simple thing; it is a tremendous job. It is wrenching yourself from yourself and placing yourself in that context of the cosmic mind. You are struggling to think as the cosmic mind thinks, which is the real way of thinking, and to free yourself from this disease of thinking through the body-consciousness.

This is the significance deeply buried in this interesting *sutra* of Patanjali, *akalpita vrittih bahih*. The word *bahih*, or outside, suggests that when you are meditating as if you are outside your body, away somewhere, you appear to be outside yourself. Therefore, *bahih akalpita vrittih* means a non-psychological, metaphysical way of feeling that you are away from your own self, in another location of that mind which feels the whole cosmos as identical with itself. This little *sutra* is not understood by people. Even commentators bypass it because unless a person has practised yoga, he cannot understand the meaning of this *sutra*. It is not a professorial dictation or a lecture that Patanjali gives. It is a medicine for the illness of man.

Thus, here is a great task before you—to think as the mind of the cosmos thinks, and not think as your body thinks. Go on asserting this, again and again: how was the cosmic mind thinking before it fell as a bodily individual? A little study of Vedantic cosmology is very helpful here. It is necessary to know the cosmological process of creation so that you may know how to retrace your steps back, as it were, from the fallen state of this individuality to the earlier state, by a recession of consciousness from effect to cause. It is a difficult thing—very difficult. But once you taste this joy of being able to think as the cosmic mind thinks, that joy

knows no bounds. It is actually the borderland of God Himself thinking.

Can you imagine the joy if you can think as God thinks, and as the universal mind thinks, as Virat thinks? “Look at me!” says the Virat to Arjuna. Stunned is this ego of the individual. What will you look at? “Lo, it is terrible! You want me to think in a way other than the way in which I am thinking.” The Virat is compelling the individual to think as it thinks, and as it is in itself. He is flabbergasted. “Come down!” The individual mind tells the cosmic mind: “Come down! I shall think as my mind only. I want to see the cosmic mind as my mind.” This is what Arjuna prays for. “Come down! It is not for me. My body shakes. The mind is torn and I feel as if I am in flames when you are asking me to see you. What am I seeing? I am seeing only my stupid body; that is all. I cannot see anything more.”

Great effort is necessary. Nobody can see this vision. This is what Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita. Nobody can see this. Impossible! *Sudurdarsam idam rupam* (B.G. 11.52). Very terrible is this form. It is terrible because the ego feels it is terrible. Justice, law, operating perfectly, is a terror to the mischievous individual, who always goes against rules and regulations of any kind. So, the Great Justice is before you as a cosmic vision, and the ego is terrified because it is a thief before the great Cosmic Policeman. It says, “No! No, I cannot look at you! Go!” Though it is there, promising all the satisfaction of the whole universe, the ego says, “No, no, no, no, no, no! I want to see you as me! I want to see you as me! I want to see God also as I am!” This is what Arjuna says, finally.

But beware! You do not lose anything by thinking as God thinks. Let not the ego assert itself as if it is in joy.

It is in hell. “Better to rule in hell than serve in heaven,” is a line from Milton’s poetry. “Why should I be a subservient meditator on the cosmic, which is my master? I shall be a master of myself, here itself in this world. I have a large kingdom. I have a profession. I have money. I have a bank balance. I have great strength of army and police.” Does not the mind think like that? This is what is called creating heaven in hell. But if you are asked to think as the cosmic mind itself, it terrifies you. “No! I don’t want.” There is fear, fear, fear. Nobody, even a sick man, likes to take a bitter medicine. “Oh, I don’t want this bitter medicine. Let me be a sick man only. Don’t give bitter medicine.” “Don’t give me an injection,” the child cries.

This is what you are doing, actually. You have to transform yourself completely into a divine context in order that you may be really able to meditate. Do not think meditation is just closing the eyes and chanting something. It is not like that. It is a complete burnishing of your whole personality, because who can think like the cosmic mind? This itself is the very secret of meditation. Virtually you are thinking like God Himself, the metaphysical mind—that which is thinking through you in terms of yourself as well as the object, on account of which it is possible for you to know that there is a world outside. Great difficulty, but great joy! Would you like to be transformed into the emperor of the whole world? Can you contain such a situation? You will be torn even to think such a thing. And still greater is the joy to think that you are emperor of the whole cosmos—of all the stars, sun, moon and everything, everything that is created. You are thinking like the Virat; you are thinking like the source from where you have fallen down. Think this again

and again. Strike it in your head, catch hold of your ears and chant the mantra of this analysis in your mind.

Here I have given a large commentary before you, which is not found any book, on this little *sutra* of Patanjali, *bahih akalpita vrittih maha-videha* (Y.S.3.43). It is *maha-videha* meditation, meditation on the non-physical, cosmic, Virat-body consciousness. It is non-physical—*videha* means non-body—yet, it is a body for the cosmic form. The moment you are able to visualise and think like this, even for a few minutes, that dark veil, the iron curtain that is before you, preventing you from being conscious of this cosmic whole, is immediately lifted up and torn: *prakasha avarana ksayah*. The hard iron curtain will melt into liquid and air and gas before the hot light, as it were, emanating from this Cosmic Being.

Is it not happiness? All your problems, all your suffering, will be solved in an instant. All that you want, whatever it be—gold and silver, rice and wheat, sugar, tea, coffee, whatever you want—everything is instantaneously poured into you the moment you become the Soul of this cosmos.

This is the highest type of meditation, for which many other techniques are prescribed—to which reference may be made at some other occasion.

Chapter 10

TANTRA SADHANA

There are people who say that this world of material existence is the only reality; there is nothing beyond this world of objective existence. We call them materialists. There are those who say the world does not exist at all; only God exists in heaven. There are those who feel that God exists and the world also exists; and these people try to bring about an organic relationship between God and the world—making the world, as it were, the body of God Himself. These are viewpoints. Which is the real thing, finally?

That is real which consciousness considers as real. Consciousness is real; it is something that has to be accepted. If consciousness is real—and you cannot regard consciousness as unreal—then whatever consciousness accepts as real, also is real. It can accept even an illusion as real under certain circumstances. You should not say it is wrong. It is an illusion because the consciousness, which is real, accepts it as real. There are people who, in a specific condition of the mind, say that they are seeing something, though you do not see anything. You may say, “There is nothing there,” but the mind of the person says, “I see it.” There is nothing against the statement: “I see it; that’s all. Because I see it, it is real.”

The definition of reality is very enigmatic. It can be a conceptual acceptance of a particular notion as very real, or it can actually be a physical, tangible object. Even what you think in your mind is real, because you cannot think unrealities. There is no such thing as unreality, because you

will not be able to assert that something is unreal unless you are visualising it before you. When you visualise it, it becomes real. So there is no such thing as an illusory perception. By comparing and contrasting it with another point of view, you say it is illusory or real. When it is perceived, it is real. Animals in the desert run after mirages, thinking that there is actual water and they want to drink it. There is no water in the mirage, but there is no use of saying so. "I see the water there, and therefore I will go for it." If the water in the mirage is not there, who will run after it? So when you perceive a thing, it is real. When you conceive a thing, it also is real.

Taking this issue very realistically, a particular type of spiritual practice has been developed—a very intricate process which analyses threadbare every kind of conscious involvement and does not take anything for granted. This is especially the case where people renounce things and imagine that they have no contact with anything. The idea of renunciation is a very subtle and intriguing issue. What do you mean by having renounced something? You have disconnected yourself from something. But if you are convinced that the thing from which you have disconnected yourself really exists, you have not really disconnected yourself from it. The consciousness of the existence of something will compel you to pay attention to it even if you do not like it. It does not mean that things that you do not like do not exist. And the very fact that they exist is a great problem before you. And every problem in the world is a real problem. There are no such things as unreal problems because if they are unreal, they cannot be problems. So there is no unreal problem. There is only the thing that you think in your mind as a question or problem before you.

The consciousness of something being there in any form whatsoever is a real question. "I have renounced the family and have become a *sannyasin*." This is an assertion of a particular type of consciousness. But is that consciousness aware of the fact of having renounced something which is already existing? The mind does not believe that the thing from which one has disconnected oneself does not exist. On the one hand, there may be a memory of having lived with something which was, once upon a time, a real object of personal contact. Even if personal, physical contact is not there, conceptional contact will be there. The memory of an object also is an actual contact of consciousness with reality. So, one cannot easily psychologically disconnect from anything, because the memory of that thing persists—and not only that, there may be a subtle lingering of the satisfactions of the life which one led at the time of real physical contact. The memory of the satisfaction of the past is a vicious element entering into the consciousness of actual renunciation. The very consciousness of externality has to be obliterated in order that the renunciation may be complete. We cannot understand what actually we are thinking in our mind, as generally we are accustomed to abrupt thinking and sudden conclusions are arrived at without actually going into the background of our considerations and thoughts. As we are impressed by certain ideas, we consider them as final ideas.

The spiritual path is not a mere imaginary movement along some idealistic lines with no consideration whatsoever in regard to that which the consciousness still accepts as reality. Though you may deny the world idealistically, you will feel it just in front of you. You cannot disconnect the consciousness from its being aware of that thing which you

reject as not being there at all. There is a conflict of consciousness in this process. There are circumstances which annoy us every day—like hunger and thirst, heat and cold, etc. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, do not really exist as objects. They are certain circumstances created in our body due to the molecular structure of the body not being able to cope with the circumstances prevailing outside in the world. When the energy produced by the molecular activity in the body cannot harmonise itself with the energy produced by the sun's heat, we feel that it is very hot. If the molecular energy in the body is more intense in the production of energy than the conditions prevailing outside in the atmosphere, we feel very cold. "It is chilly," we say. There is no heat and cold actually existing outside except the action and reaction taking place between outside conditions and the inner circumstantial structure of the body. So is the case with every kind of experience.

This novel path of spiritual attempt, to which I made reference, takes into consideration all these problems. And every problem has to be taken one by one until it does not exist even to the consciousness which otherwise accepted it as existing. The consciousness should not have even a memory of something existing—otherwise, it is really existing. You should not think that memory is an unnecessary intervention with your experiences. Memory is as active and consequent as actual perception of things. Memory can give you joy. Memory can also bring grief. It is not merely actual physical contact that brings about joy and grief.

Taking all these issues into consideration, a novel path has been chosen by a system of practices known as *tantra sadhana*. This is a highly misunderstood technique, because we always compare it with some secretive and unintelligible

behaviour on the spiritual path, especially as the prosaic perceptions and the ordinary socially conditioned concepts do not go hand in hand with this practice.

Every object, whatever it be—whether you like it or dislike it—is clinging to your consciousness. Just because you do not like something, it does not mean it is outside consciousness. You should not say, “I like only God and I hate the world.” Maybe; wonderful! But the object, which is the world that you hate, is sticking to your consciousness as vehemently as that which you love intensely—call it God, or whatever it is. The negative and the positive are actually one operation taking place; they are not two different things. You cannot love without hating, and you cannot hate without loving. They are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. The integral approach that is the true nature of spiritual evolution takes into consideration the pitfalls to which a person can be subjected by going to extremes of thinking, either by way of liking or by way of disliking.

Every action is a psychological operation. It is not a movement of the limbs of the body—the hands and feet. What is actually done with the hands and feet are not to be considered as actions unless the mind considers these movements as actions. The mind is the real doer of everything, and it is the mind that actually practises *sadhana*. It is not the body. Physical isolation from physical objects does not mean mental isolation from those objects. Like a medical expert diagnosing a disease threadbare from every point of view, the situation of a person in this world is to be analysed threadbare before one takes to spiritual practice.

What is it that you want, finally? You cannot answer this question abruptly. You will be stunned by the very question itself. What is it that you want, finally? You want everything;

there is nothing that you do not want. Even those things which some people reject as unnecessary may be very necessary for you, and what you consider as unnecessary may be necessary for somebody else. The objects of the world, or any human context in society, is not to be judged unilaterally from one's own particular point of view; the other side of the matter also needs to be taken into consideration. What you think about things and people is not the only important thing. What things and people think about you is also equally important. It is a mutual give-and-take policy of psychological action.

The *tantra* technique actually is a diagnostic method of handling human passions and prejudices which sometimes persist, even at the penultimate state of spiritual experience. You have heard of *tapasvins* who did great austerity and had powers of some kind, but the subliminal impulses would not leave them. For instance, intense passion and intense anger, and greed also, oftentimes, are demonstrated in the lives of certain *tapasvins* whom you can read about in the Puranas, Epics, etc. You should not be in a hurry when you take to the spiritual path. The first step has to be taken very carefully, and the second step should not be taken until the first step is firm and there is no chance of your regressing. Quickly you go, and quickly you fall, also.

The conditions of life are neither good nor bad. This is the dictum of *tantra sadhana*. The goodness and the badness with which you associate objects are mental judgments that arise on account of positioning the things in the world in a particular context, forgetting that they can be positioned in another context also. They say, "Dirt is matter out of place." When matter is not in the proper context, it looks dirty. A good thing can be an abominable thing—like cow dung, for

instance. It is a very nice, beautiful thing in the field which is tilled by the farmer. He will not consider cow dung as a dirty thing. It is very necessary and wonderful, beautiful and highly valued—because without that, the crop cannot grow. But throw the same cow dung on your dining table. How will it look? What was good? The context will determine the nature of the object. A paddy plant growing in a rose garden is considered to be a weed, and you pluck it out. A rose plant growing in a paddy field is a weed, and you pluck it out. So what is actually a weed? It depends upon the conditions in which a particular thing is located.

The *tantra* dictum is that you should not define things from your point of view, but define things from their point of view. When you love a thing, transfer yourself to the thing that you love and then see what happens to you. You cannot love yourself as an object. All love is directed to something which is other than one's own self. You do not run after your own self; you run after that which is other than yourself. Suppose you transfer your consciousness to that which you intensely love—your love will immediately cease, because love has become the very thing which you are. It is the same case with that which you hate. Transfer your consciousness to that which you hate. The hate becomes yourself only, and you cannot hate yourself. The transference of consciousness to the conditions—whatever they are—is one of the techniques prescribed.

But it is humanly impossible to think like this, because the habits of social involvement and psychological obsession prevent you from taking a liberal view of anything in this world. God has not created evil anywhere; otherwise, He would be the author of the evil of things. Do you say that God is of that nature? If God is not the creator of evil, then who

created evil? Are you the creator of evil? Then you are to be judged for that. Who are you detesting when you perceive an evil object? Are you detesting God who created it? Are you detesting yourself because you perceive it? You cannot even answer this question. Your mind is in confusion. That is evil which is totally disharmonious with a particular condition that is prevailing. A snake does not die though it has within itself a tremendous poison which can kill anybody. If the poison is so deadly, the snake should also die. So is the case with a scorpion's sting. It carries a terrible thing in its own body, but it does not die from it.

The identity of consciousness with a particular situation is the solution for that problem. You should not consider anything as totally outside you. The world is not outside you; this has to be remembered always. You are involved in the world. As you are involved in the world, you are involved with everything in the world, whatever it be—that which you like and that which you dislike. The power of meditation is so intense and capable of achieving such miracles that the problems vanish when you yourself become the problem.

The doctrine of the *tantra* is: that by which ordinarily you fall down—that very thing, when it is handled in a different way, becomes the cause of your rise. There is a poetic sentence, beautiful, worth remembering: “Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.” Misplaced virtue can lead to your fall. Properly understood situations which other people consider as sin, may cause the rising of your personality. There is no sin and no virtue because they are, again, evaluations from your point of view about a thing which looks like this or that. Who asked you to evaluate from your own point of view? The view must be from the other point of

view, the thing which you are visualising as being outside. What does God experience in this world?

Previously I mentioned the Virat-consciousness. The Universal Being visualises everything. Does it also see what you see with your eyes—all the dirt and the ugliness, corruption, stupidity and so on? Does the Virat-swarupa perceive it? It is itself that, so there is no question of perceiving it. The evaluation of things ceases when the things themselves become the person who evaluates it. The teeth may bite the tongue, but you do not file a case in the court against the teeth because they have cut a part of the tongue. If somebody bites your tongue, you will file a case against him. But if you bite, it is all right. So, you are the criterion. The identity of consciousness with any situation is the solution for that object. Actually, meditation is nothing but the identity of consciousness with a situation. The point is that you should not exclude any situation, so that the mind may not run here and there. The distraction of the mind that you feel in meditation is due to the fact that you are isolating other conditions from the condition that you have chosen for the purpose of meditation. This is the *tantric* doctrine.

You will be terrified. Therefore, nobody tells you that such a thing is possible, because *tantra* is a way of thinking which is totally different from the human way of thinking. You may call it a redundant way of thinking, a cosmic way of thinking, or whatever you like. But nobody is accustomed to this way of thinking. The heart will break. The brain will stop thinking and you can become crazy if you persist in thinking in this manner. Therefore, the Tantra Shastra is not given to an ordinary individual. It is never taught. It is usually called the great secret practice. Why is it considered secret? This is because it is akin to a formula for manufacturing an atom

bomb. You cannot go on telling everybody the formula for making an atom bomb. This is not done because the consequences would be disastrous.

Therefore, various stages of initiation have been prescribed in the learning of this technique of *tantra*. It starts with ordinary ritual which is acceptable to common sense and to emotion. They call it *vedachara*—the first stage in *tantra sadhana*. *Vedachara* is a ritualistic mode of approach to reality. You gesticulate physically in the worship of a particular object or a condition, and go on accustoming yourself to that object by emotionally identifying yourself with everything that the object is. That is actually what you do in worship.

The next stage is called *vaishnavachara*. The rituals come down and recede to some extent in *vaishnavachara*, which is the path of devotion. The path of devotion frees itself from the details of the ritualistic practice of *vedachara*. The next stage is *saivachara*, which is supposed to be the path of knowledge without any emotion attached to it—with pure understanding, as it is. There are several more stages, the details of which I am not going into here because I am not initiating you into Tantra Shastra. I am just mentioning to you that there is a total way of adjusting yourself to the circumstances of life.

You will be a great success. To all things you are adjusted perfectly, whether it be a boss or a subordinate, a cook or a driver, or whatever is around you, physically, psychologically, socially, politically, economically—any kind of adjustment that is called for. A dexterous spiritual practitioner is capable of adjusting his personality to every condition. He can go up to the heights of genius or come down to the level of a little child. A great spiritual hero can

behave like a child and be very loving to a little, crawling baby. He can be a lover of great learning and professorial knowledge, and he can be a genius in his own personal capacity. He will not stick to one condition. All things are his conditions. All people are the stages of his own development, through which he has passed or through which he has to pass in future. Thus he becomes a lover of all things. To put it in the words of the Bhagavadgita, *sarva-bhuta-hite ratah* (B.G. 12.4), he becomes a lover of every condition in life. To bring your memory back to what I said previously, think as God thinks. There is no boss, there is no driver, there is no cook, there is no this, there is no that in the Virat vision. They are all blended together into a consciousness of oneness.

This is achieved gradually, stage by stage, through *tantra*. It has never been understood by anybody. It has been only misunderstood, because of the distance that obtains between the normal way of thinking and this way of thinking. That which is impossible to accept for the common mind becomes an abominable thing, impossible to imagine. Things which are not at all acceptable become non-separate from your own being when those things which you consider as external are evaluated from your own point of view. A Guru is necessary in this practice. No one can independently read a book and go on with this practice, because it is dynamite which will burst in your face if you touch it.

Purity of mind—dispassion in a true sense of the term—is necessary before you step onto this path. If you have submerged desires, potential longings which you have brushed aside into the subconscious, they will rise up with tremendous velocity and break your personality. You should not touch this subject unless your mind is pure. What is meant by the mind being pure? A hidden impulse that contradicts

your aspiration in a particular direction is the impurity in the mind. The impurity does not necessarily mean what people consider as dirty. An evaluation in the mind which cannot be commensurate with the nature of the explanation you are holding before you—that is the evil you see; that is the impurity.

The psychological adjustment called for on this path is total, to say the least; and, no one knows what total thinking is. When you think, there is an object of thought. Since the subject that thinks and the object that is thought about are not two different things but are only two forces of a single situation, it is necessary for you to consider that particular aspect also, where the subject does not think the object—a situation is thinking both the subject and the object. This is the synthesis of the two contraries of what you call the subject and the object. You cannot do that. Nobody can do that easily, because you are either the subject or the object. The synthesis between the two is unthought-of. You can never imagine that you cannot think an object unless you are involved in it. So the subjectivity is included a little bit in the object also, and the objectivity is also included in the subject. Pure subject and pure object do not exist. Otherwise, they would be severed from each other and no one would know that the object exists.

That there is an element of the female in every man, and every female has an element of the male, is something well known to people. Total femininity and total masculinity do not exist. They attract each other because of the element of each present in the other. People with characteristics that are pure and unmixed with characteristics of the other gender cannot attract each other. If man is only man, and woman is only woman, there is no attraction. There is something

connecting them—which is the element of feminine nature in a man, and vice versa, the element of male in a female. This is to say, everything has some connection with everything else. Total isolation is unthinkable. And if you make the mistake of imagining that you can totally disassociate yourself from family, relations, your property, etc., and go to meditate in Uttarkashi, you may be a failure because your mind will harass you by compelling you to cogitate on the conditions that prevailed earlier—at least by memory—and a longing will persist even if the physical contact is absent.

The Bhagavadgita warns us that a person who physically disconnects himself or herself from objects of enjoyment, but mentally conceives them, is a hypocrite, because love is a mental action; it is not merely based on physical contact. Unless the mind operates, action does not take place. There are some beautiful verses near the beginning of the third chapter of the Bhagavadgita: “Do not make mistakes. Do not be hasty. Know yourself first. Do not misjudge yourself. Do not underestimate yourself. Do not overestimate yourself either. Know exactly what you are.” Often you cannot know what you are. You are under the pressure of prejudices. This is why the Guru is necessary—to tell you what kind of person you are. Your problems are yourself only. You have created the problems. God has not created them. You cannot even impute these problems to other people, although everyone says that others are the cause of their suffering.

I am giving you the information that there is such a thing as this kind of spiritual practice. It is not that you will be able to understand it, nor will you be able to practise it, since it is a highly advanced method where you have a total vision of all things in the world, and from that point of view only you take

a first step. Even the initial step is a total step. It is not a partial, finite step you are taking. They are wholes which operate in every step that you take along the spiritual path. The difference is between the lower whole and the higher whole, but not between two different things. No fraction is allowed in the spiritual practice. It is a whole practice that you are engaged in, though it is an initial whole.

How will you think these things? A Guru's perpetual presence is called for so that you may not slip and fall and break your legs. The *tantra sadhana* is a great information before you, which is startling; and I am mentioning this to you because I wish to be complete and not give you some fractional information of this side and that side of spiritual practice.

I made reference to purity of mind. You cannot understand what it actually means. Abandoning certain things which you consider as bad may be considered as purity of mind. I have already told you to be careful in judging things. What are the bad things in the world? Can you tell me what the bad things are? Make a list of them. You can never make a list of the bad things in the world. You will be flabbergasted even to think like that. You also cannot make a list of the good things in the world, because a very good thing may be a bad thing in another circumstance, and a bad thing may be a good thing in another circumstance. So total thinking is taking into account both aspects of the situation into the spiritual practice. You move as God Himself moves, as He would move towards His own Self-realisation. This is a completeness that characterises every stage of spiritual practice.

I have told you almost everything concerning devotion to God—*bhakti*. But I have added some more information so

that it may be accentuated by a greater strength, information culled from other ways of thinking—philosophical, even argumentative, physical, psychological, and spiritual. I feel satisfied that I have given you whatever I wanted to give you, and whatever remains afterwards will be an expatiation of the very same things that I have told you in brief. I have gone very fast in my discourses in order to give you brief principles involved in various types of spiritual practice. More elaborate considerations of these brief statements will be called for, to which I shall move by advancing on matters which I have not touched fully, but touched only briefly, so that in the remaining sessions of this course you will have something easier than these hard things that I told you in a strict, logical form, up to this time. From here on I will abandon this process of thinking and teaching, and make it more easy, friendly and pleasant for you. This is what I have to tell to you today.

Chapter 11

MEDITATIONAL TECHNIQUES

There is what is known as the exoteric way of thinking and the esoteric way of envisaging things in general. The prosaic way of looking at things, as you are accustomed to do in your daily life—taking things for what they appear to be and artificially adjusting yourself accordingly—is an exoteric performance on your part. But, as you know very well, things do not in themselves exist as they appear to your eyes, to your sensations. To handle things in the manner in which they are to be handled essentially, in the spirit of their own true existence, is the esoteric approach.

Previously I spoke to you on certain intricate psychological issues concerning the functioning of the mind and the necessity to understand this way of mental operation from the point of view of true knowledge. I mentioned this in the context of my explanation of what *tantra sadhana* actually means. As it was a little difficult for you to understand, hearing about it for the first time in your life, I am continuing this theme, almost repeating the issue that I raised previously—namely, an attempt to know the inner secrets of mental operation.

Spiritual seekers, students of yoga, are well known to have determined to renounce irrelevant things which act as a hindrance on the spiritual path and to pursue what they regard as the spiritual way of living. Previously I highlighted the difficulty in knowing what it is that you are going to renounce

and what it is that you are going to make a part of your own being in this spiritual quest.

The consciousness of something—whatever it be—is the connection of consciousness to what is called an object. Spiritual renunciation, or a life of austerity, is connected with non-attachment to things; but what are the things that you are going to renounce? What do you mean by a ‘thing’, first of all? For the purpose of the analysis of spiritual psychology, we should consider that as an object or a thing which is a content of consciousness. If the consciousness is aware of the existence of something other than itself, that can be regarded as the content of consciousness; that is the object thereof. Objects do not necessarily mean things like mountains and rivers and the like, because the entanglement of consciousness in the process of earthly existence and bondage does not seem to so much be concerned with the existence of mountains and rivers or things in general but with an operation of consciousness itself within itself, dissecting itself into two parts, as it were—the awareness by itself, and that of which the awareness is aware.

There is no such thing as awareness of awareness. Such a thing has never been seen because awareness, or consciousness, is pure subjectivity and it cannot know itself as another or other than itself. That is to say, the seer cannot become the seen. Yet, a peculiar situation gets created in the consciousness itself where it contemplates an ‘other’ than its own self. That ‘other’ may be a physical object or it may be merely a conceptual condition.

What are you going to renounce in spiritual life? The bondage is not in the existence of the creation of the world by itself, but in the involvement of consciousness in a particular way to what it considers as a created object. There are more

things in creation than you can perceive with your eyes in this world. There are several planes of existence whose nature no one knows. Are you going to renounce those things also, about whose existence you have no knowledge? What are you renouncing? You may renounce known things in terms of sensory perception—objects, as they say—but is objectivity confined only to perceptible things in this world, or does the objectivity range beyond the human ken and rise into different levels of being? Even in *brahma-loka*, the apex of the operation of consciousness, there is an operation which is involved in a sort of subtle duality.

The persistence of consciousness to separate itself into the seer and the seen is what is to be investigated. Even when you disregard a thing as irrelevant, the consciousness is aware that there is an irrelevant thing. The irrelevance of a particular thing to be rejected in the process of renunciation is itself a content of consciousness because unless you know that something is irrelevant, it cannot become irrelevant. The moment you are aware of the fact of something being irrelevant, it has become a content of your consciousness. So, even that which you reject is a part and parcel of your thinking process itself. You have to free yourself of this tangle. There is no use merely going by the routine practice of abandoning what you consider as an obstacle, not knowing what is actually happening to the mind when you are engaged in this process. The bondage is not in the things, but in the peculiar arrangement of the mind with regard to those things. That modification of the mind—*chitta vritti*, as it is called—is the bondage; it is also the source of joy for you.

The entire story of the involvement in heaven or hell is taking place within the mind only. You are bound in your consciousness and you are also free in your consciousness.

Freedom and bondage are not something existing outside the process of your thinking; they are dramatic performances within the ocean of mental process itself.

Therefore, you should not take for granted that things are very clear to your mind and that you can go ahead, because when you appear to be moving forward, there may be a pull which is retrograde, invisibly operating behind you. You cannot know that something is operating behind you. Every object has a shadow. That shadow pursues the object. However far you run away from the shadow of your own self, you cannot get away from it because it is part and parcel of your own existence.

The negativity-consciousness is a shadow cast by consciousness itself and, in attempting to think that it is moving along the path of positivity, it forgets that it cannot actually become positive unless it has paid its debts to the persisting impression of negativity at the same time. A dual action takes place in the mind when it thinks. Total thinking is not understood. It is not known to anybody how one can include everything in the mind. The rejected thing also is a part and parcel of the process of thinking itself. This is what I mentioned to you last time, in brief.

If this peculiarity of mental operation is not known to you, there can be backward movement even in the so-called advance along the spiritual path. That which you have not understood can still be a part and parcel of your duty or entanglement. "Ignorance of the law is no excuse," is an old saying. You may not be aware of certain operations taking place, but that is not an excuse. You have to know them. Every law operating in the universe must be known; otherwise, the unknown law will act upon you and you will have to pay the price for being unaware of it.

The first and foremost of objects is the body itself. You always imagine that objects are somewhere far away from you and that they are not necessarily near you. But the biggest object is your body. It is as solid an object as anything else in the world. You can see it, you can touch it and you can operate it through the senses in the same way as you operate any other object. Can you disassociate yourself from body-consciousness? If this could be achieved, you have disassociated yourself from object-consciousness also. If your consciousness persists in believing that it is the body, then it will cast a shadow upon other mental operations also, whereby your apparent physical isolation from objects in the act of renunciation may not serve any purpose. This is because the attachment to things in the world arises out of the first and foremost attachment to this body. As long as this attachment continues, the other attachments cannot be visible. So hard is the ego, so strong is the personality-consciousness, but you may say you have renounced the whole world.

The cause of the very awareness of there being such a thing called the world of objects is your body-consciousness. Can you, in your meditational process, disentangle yourself from the feeling that you are a subject, though you are really an object? You have a subjectivity in you and also an objectivity in the form of the body. When you say 'I', you mix up two issues simultaneously—this bodily existence and also that which is conscious of bodily existence.

Some time ago I also mentioned how, in meditation, you can disentangle the mind from its apparent location in this body. I gave you the technique of placing yourself far away, somewhere in mid-space, and sitting there by the power of your imagination and looking back to your own body seated

in meditation on earth. It is a very difficult thing to do because you cannot see your own self as an object sitting somewhere. But, this has to be done. The mind is a great trickster. However much you may try to control it, you will find that it is controlling you, rather than the other way around.

I am repeating once again the meditational technique I mentioned to you. Place yourself in an expanse. Intensely, by the power of will, feel that you are away from your body—as far away as possible. You may be sitting in *brahma-loka* and visualising from there, at that distant point, the existence of your meditating body somewhere on the face of the earth. You are seeing yourself as an object. Normally, seeing yourself as an object is not possible. Here is a psychological technique of isolating the feeling of your existence from the bodily consciousness and, by the power of will, feeling that the body is away from where you are, so that you may look upon your body as you look upon anything else in the world. What do you think of this tree, this mountain, the people and society outside? In that way, look upon this body also.

Generally you do not appreciate this way of thinking because you think that you are the bodily subject, not knowing that the body cannot be a subject. It is necessary to wrench your mind from entanglement in this body as a subjectivity, which it is not. The body cannot be a subject, and yet you say “I am coming”, “I am doing”, “I am going”, and so on. Who is going; who is coming; who is thinking? Answer this question. You are again thinking in terms of the body—though it is not you, because it is a sense object. You can sensorily come in contact with your body, but the attachment of the mind to this particular physical frame due to what may be called the old *prarabdha* of actions that you

performed in the past—this involvement of the mind with the force exerted by the *prarabdha karma* is so vehement that you, for all time to come, cannot expect a release from this body-consciousness.

You have performed actions in the past. They rebound upon you as a boomerang and come as concrete presentations in spite of the fact that you thought that their reaction is far away. The reaction to an action is not distinct from the action itself. They are organically related. Therefore, when some disturbance is created by way of an action, immediately its brother comes up in the form of the reaction, and this necessity to pass through these experiences compelled by the reaction is what is called the *prarabdha karma*. It is intense. As long as it persists in this manner, you will go on thinking you are only the body. But, you are a yoga student. You are not an ordinary person in the world. And so, your true subjectivity has to be realised before you handle things in the world by way of renunciation of objects. Unless you have renounced this body as your own property, you cannot renounce any property in the world.

There are many methods of meditation, but one of the most important things I mentioned is: wrench your mind from this body and place yourself away somewhere. You are not here in this hall of the Academy; you are just now on the top of the mountain that you are seeing in front of you. Is it so?

I will tell you a humorous story. Two friends climbed a mountain in the Swiss Alps, and they got lost. There were many peaks, and they did not know which one they were sitting on. They looked at a map of the place. “Let us find out where we are. There are peaks everywhere.” Then one of

them said, “Yes, I know where we are, which peak it is. Do you see a peak in front—there? There we are sitting!”

Humorous though it may look, this is what we are actually doing in our daily life. Where are we sitting? You may say you are sitting in your room, but actually you are sitting in the location of the object which you are thinking in your mind. Though you may be in India physically, mentally you may be in America or somewhere else—in the high heavens. Where your heart is, where your thought is, where your feeling is, where your longing is—there you are really sitting, and not in your room or in your office, as you imagine.

This psychology has to be taken advantage of in the meditational process. Go on asserting in your own self that “I am as much an object of the world as any object is”. Then, what happens? The whole world of objects, including this body, will present itself before you and you will have a total perception of the total object, which is the created universe. At that time your body will not be persisting and coming with you in your consciousness, in this manner. It will go with the objects. Then where are you at that time? If you are not in this body at that time because you have transferred this object to the world of objectivity, where are you? You will be where consciousness is. You have already made it clear to your own self that you are not in this body—as it is an object and you do not like to be in any object—because that is the very principle of renunciation. If you have succeeded in alienating your mind from its location in this body and have converted this body to an object in the world as other things are, where are you at that time?

You, being consciousness only, are in consciousness. Who is in consciousness? Consciousness is in consciousness.

But, where is consciousness? It cannot be somewhere, because you have transferred all these ideas of ‘somewhere’ into the world of objectivity. You are not somewhere. The idea of somewhere immediately leaves you because of your transforming the body into an object of the world. You are not somewhere. If you are not somewhere, you are everywhere!

Can you think like this? A shock will be injected into you immediately if you succeed in thinking like this: “The whole world is an object of consciousness—including myself as an individual apparently sitting here. Therefore, as a yoga student, as an aspirer for liberation, I am visualising the whole objective cosmos. I am not in any particular place.” Because place is involved in objectivity, you cannot be in any place. You must be, therefore, outside the purview of the determining, limiting factor of space. You are in an unlimited status located not somewhere, but located everywhere.

This consciousness is the Virat-consciousness to which I made reference earlier. It is God-consciousness. If at all you can imagine how God thinks, this may be the way. The whole universe is visualised as presented before the one all-pervading consciousness. Since you cannot escape this conclusion in regard to yourself, you are touching the borderland of God Himself when you meditate in this manner.

It is necessary for you to keep this in mind again and again. Nobody thinks like this, generally speaking. “I don’t want anything in the world,” people glibly say. “I have left everything.” But, you have not left the body. Though physically it is not possible for you to remove the body from your mind, you can, by an act of will, meditate that the object has gone with the world and you are free from the world. This

is true renunciation. If this cannot be achieved, the renunciation becomes incomplete. Stick to this point. Assert it again and again. Speak loudly on this issue. Chant this mantra of your being an observer of the whole objective world as consciousness—not located somewhere, but everywhere. Go on repeating this mantra in any language that you can think of. And remember, the idea that you are a body will come again and again and persist and hang on you. Again wrench your mind from this location of the body. Place it somewhere. Tell the body, “You are no more me, because you are an object; you are a sense object. How can a sense object be me?” Tell this body, “Now you are one with the whole world of creation. You are not isolated from it as you thought yourself to be.” Thus, go on meditating.

This Academy course is not merely a course of lectures. It is a practical recipe that is furnished to you for betterment in your life. When God blesses you, you require nothing else. When the Ultimate Reality blesses you, you require nothing else. You may be afraid of what will happen to the world to which you are related, connected. It will take care of itself, somehow or the other.

There are other ways of meditation than the one I just mentioned, such as meditation on great, powerful masters. In a *sutra* of Patanjali it is said, *vitaraṅga viśayaṃ va cittaṃ* (Y.S. 1.37): Contemplate on that mind which has freed itself from all concern with objects. There are powers which are unthinkable, like the powers of Incarnations. Read the life of Sage Vasishtha, of Vyasa, of Suka, or of any other incarnation like Christ or any other, and see the might, the force that they exerted on everything. They thought, and it materialised itself as that which they wanted because they did

not confine their thought to the body which incarnated itself together with their coming into this world.

Yoga Vasishtha is one of the scriptures that describes the great process of materialisation of thought—the concretisation of feeling—and when you think “it should be like this”, it should be like that, because the idea that something should be like this is the determining of the object process by the consciousness which contemplates it.

You know the story of Visvamitra and Vasishtha. King Visvamitra wielded millions of weapons, and Vasishtha had nothing except himself. The power of the army was on one side and the power of thought was on the other side. The thought which disentangled itself from the particular body but visualised the whole universe as a total object had a greater power than the physical movements of an army or police. So is the power of Vyasa, Krishna, Jesus, and all the mighty ones. Hanuman—oh, what a strength! How did that strength come? It came because the energy of the universe entered into him.

Actually, what is called *brahmacharya* is the process of allowing the energy of the world to enter into you. You repel it, usually, by sensory activity. That *shakti* or *bhava* endowed Hanuman with immense energy. There are many other instances. If you think of an elephant, you feel like an elephant walking. *Balesu hasti baladini* (Y.S. 3.25) is one of the *sutras* of Patanjali. Think the elephant! You will see some tremendous change taking place in the cells of your body. The might, the energy, the potency of this animal called ‘elephant’, when it is thought of continuously, directly acts upon the mental process. The mind begins to feel a tendency to become stronger and stronger.

Think of the beauty of the moon, or anything that is most beautiful. Your mind becomes beautiful, and you become beautiful because you are the mind. Think of the tremendous roar of the ocean; indomitable power it has got. Think that, and you become the very same strengthening element as the ocean. You can think anything that you like which will infuse into you an energy that is much more than your own. The contemplation on the powers of those people who have freed themselves from *raga*, or attachment to things, is one of the methods of meditation. The god of your mantra is an object of meditation, whoever that god be, because that god who is the divinity presiding over your mantra is the medium of blessing that you have to receive. It is more than you, and it is also more than anything else that you are looking at with your eyes or are cognisant of.

You are meditating on Lord Ganesa, or Subramanya, or Narayana, or Surya, the mighty soul of the universe. Look at the sun mentally—not physically opening the eyes, but mentally. You can imagine the energy of the sun. If you have studied a little astronomy you will know what the sun is—incomparable, indomitable energy, radiance and purity. Nothing can stand before it. It burns all objectivity. Solar energy, heat and light are the object of your meditation. This is one of the ways in which the Gayatri mantra is chanted in meditation. It is the mantra of Surya Bhagavan. Do not merely chant it mechanically. The great cosmic force of Surya charges your mind with its own presence, and meditation on this divinity is actually accepting the presence of this divinity in your own mind. It takes its position in your mind. It rules you, afterwards. You are possessed by it and you perhaps feel and think like that only.

The *sutras* of Patanjali have various techniques, about which you have perhaps heard. Together with this art of meditation with which you have to get accustomed, you have also to know how to deal with the so-called world of objects. You can handle them effectively—if you do not believe that they are outside you—by the power of thought. If you wish it should be like that, it will be like that.

Since your final aim is liberation of spirit, *moksha*—God-realisation, as it is called—it becomes incumbent on your part to attempt, with all your effort, to place yourself in the position of this state of *moksha*. Feel that you are already liberated; you are in the state of utter liberation. Conceive what that state could be. “When I am totally freed from all bondage, where am I?” You have your own concept of *moksha*, or liberation, which is utter freedom from every kind of limitation. Place yourself, with great effort of thought, in that condition. *Moksha* has been achieved already.

One of the psychological secrets of achieving what is necessary for you is to assert that it has already been achieved. A thing that is in the future is an object of dread. You do not know what it will do to you, because it is outside you; it is far away. Assert that it has already come to you, that it is with you and it has been in your possession—without any kind of doubt about it. “I have got it; this particular thing that I wanted has come to me”—and it shall come to you. This is what is meant by the dictum, “Ask and it shall be given.” You have to ask by the process of your thinking itself—not merely verbally. The mind says, “I want it. I want it! Certainly I want it; and I have got it.” It is not merely wanting, because in wanting you keep the object away from yourself; in having it, the distance is eliminated.

You will be stunned by the power of thought. Miracles will take place if the thought is restrained from this unnecessary entanglement in feeling that it is inside one body only and not in other bodies. You are also present in every other body because you are a non-located consciousness visualising the whole world. This is sometimes called *brahma-abhyasa*, or the practice of meditation on the Absolute. Even if you utter the word 'Absolute', you get a sudden shocking experience inside. The Absolute, the Parabrahman, the all-pervading Sole Existence—the very thought of it will purify your mind. You do not have to take holy baths or do such rituals; the mind gets purified by the thought of purity itself. If you think of purity, purity has taken place.

But, you should not think of impurity at the same time. It is like a person being told not to think of a monkey when drinking milk; he will certainly think of a monkey at that time because he has been told not to think of it. You have been told that certain things are to be avoided, so they will immediately come to you. The idea of avoiding may be sublimated, together with that which you are meditating upon, so that objectivity is completely annulled. Pure universal subjectivity arises inside you. You-Are-What-You-Are, I-Am-What-I-Am, in the highest sense.

With that knowledge and with that practice, which you have to continue every day, you will find miracles taking place daily. Unexpected things will take place. You will not know how the whole atmosphere has become something quite different from what you have been thinking about it. Yoga is a great blessing. It shall take care of you more lovingly than hundreds of mothers. The Yoga Shastra says that yoga loves you more than hundreds and thousands of

mothers. It wants you much more than you want it because that is your real being. Your real being wants this so-called being of yours. That is why yoga is considered as a mother. It is not merely a word that you consider as yoga. It is an awareness itself. It is an acceptance on your part of everything being all right. When you accept that everything is all right, it has to be all right by the power of your thought, by some miraculous operations which you cannot imagine just now. Yoga is power, it is knowledge, it is abundance—and it is yourself, finally.

Chapter 12

THE TOTALITY OF THE INFINITE

During these last few days I have been highlighting the various aspects of the meditational process, since I feel that this is of crucial importance in everyone's life. You can know everything, but you cannot know yourself. That was one of the points which I tried to elucidate in various ways during these days. Why is it that you can know anything, even the stars you can count, but you cannot know your own self? It is because you are neither an object of sensory perception, nor are you an object of mental cognition. You are not able to know yourself because there is no one to know yourself.

In all processes of knowledge, there is a knower and a known. If you are to know yourself, here who is the knower and who is the known? Since you cannot stand outside yourself as an object, you cannot be the known. And inasmuch as you are the subject, pure and simple, where is the question of knowing yourself? The knower cannot know the knower because that seems to be a contradiction in the very operation of the knowledge process. Everything in the world—even in the high heavens—stands in the position of an object of cognition, thought and visualisation. But you are none of these things. You seem to be the pivot of all the processes of knowledge; and the pivot itself cannot be known, just as you cannot climb on your own shoulders. Yet, this great miraculous adventure has to be undergone. It is more difficult than Hercules trying to get the golden apples from the garden

of Hesperides. It is more difficult than Jason trying to harness the brazen bulls. Yet, it has to be achieved.

In the Upanishads there are certain anecdotes which spotlight this problem and try to detail, as much as possible, the way in which we can tackle this question. I relate to you one such anecdote from the Chhandogya Upanishad. There were six great learned people. They knew all the scriptures, all the *shastras*, all the schools of philosophy. They discussed among themselves, “We have heard that there is a thing called the Atman. Where is it located?” None of them could come to a conclusive answer. They heard that the king of that country knew the answer to this question. It appears that in ancient times, great secrets of spiritual wisdom were kept by the Kshatriya kings, more so than Brahmins who were learned in lore, because the knowledge of the Atman is not learning in lore; it is something quite different. It is a total topsy-turvy operation of the process of consciousness. Instead of the knower trying to have knowledge of the known, the table gets turned in this process. That is to say, the knower has to know the knower only. Know thyself—*atmanam vidhi*—is the dictum.

These great learned people, six in number, went humbly to the king of that country, who was a Kshatriya; and these seekers were Brahmins. They sat outside the palace of the king, seeking admission into his *darbar* so that they could speak to him about the purpose of their coming. The king thought that the Brahmins had come to receive some gift. Under that impression he spoke to them saying, “Tomorrow I am going to have a large sacrifice performed. You may come and participate. I shall give you a lot of *dakshina*.”

These six Brahmins said, “It is very kind of you to have told us that, but please give us what we want. We have not

come to participate in a sacrifice, nor do we want any gold coin as *dakshina* from you. Tell us what you know.”

The king was taken aback that they put such a question. He said, “It is not proper that a Brahmana should come and request a Kshatriya for knowledge. Actually the Kshatriyas, being lower than Brahmanas in the social hierarchy, should go to Brahmanas for knowledge. How is it that Brahmanas are coming to Kshatriyas?”

These six Brahmins said, “We have not come here as Brahmanas. We have come as students of knowledge. Please, initiate us into the technique of knowing that which you know and which nobody else knows.”

The king was surprised. “All right,” he said.

Generally when students go to a preceptor for knowledge, the Guru asks them to stay for several years, doing service and observing continence. But recognising the greatness of these people, he absolved them of this requisition and merely said, “Tomorrow you may see me.”

The next morning, they took their bath, put on new clothes and went to the king. The king asked, “Let us know what you know already.”

One of them said, “I am meditating on the sun as the Supreme Reality.”

The king said, “It is wonderful that you are doing this meditation, but the sun is the eye of Reality; it is not the whole of Reality. And you know that the sun is the presiding deity of the visual organ. Because of your meditation on the sun, the deity of the process of vision, you are seeing glory and abundance in your house; but you are meditating in a wrong manner. If you had not come to me and placed this

difficulty before me, you would have become blind. It is good that you have come to me.”

Like that, he went on asking all of them what kind of meditation they were pursuing. One said, “I have done (meditation) considering the earth itself as the footstool of the whole Cosmic Being,” and various other things were told.

The king said, “None of these methods of meditation are correct. Partial glory you are enjoying in your life because of this partial, finite form of meditation, but if you had not come to me you would have come to disaster. Some limb of your body would have gone. It is somehow a miracle—destiny and Providence working, as it were—that you have come to me for rectification of your defects. What are the defects? What is the mistake you have made? Your meditation is involved in two defects. Number one: you are thinking—whether it is the sun, or the earth, or whatever it is—that the object of your meditation is outside you. The object which you are trying to achieve is not outside. The second defect is that you are considering the object of meditation as being located in one place. But the truth is, the Supreme Reality is not in one place. Neither is it outside you, nor is it in one place. Now, can you adjust your consciousness to this position? The one thing on which you are practising meditation should not be standing outside you, nor should it be in one place.”

It is a feat of the exercise of the will and understanding to appreciate and adjust oneself to this technique. How will you think something in your mind by not placing it outside you, and also not placing it any one place, somewhere, in this structure of space and time? They were trained people, so they could grasp the intricacy and the significance of this instruction.

Does any one of you catch the point? Is it possible for you to think something by not placing it outside you, and also not placing it somewhere in the world? Great purification of the mind is necessary to think like this because the habit of the mind is to think everything as being outside oneself and also as located somewhere. Everything is somewhere, and everything is outside. Other than this way of thinking, what other way is there in your operation of concepts? The Atman cannot be known so easily, as you imagine, because it is not outside you, and it is not somewhere. Then where is it? Use your intelligence and answer this question to yourself.

In another analogy, the Katha Upanishad brings before you a wonderful, dramatic situation which arose when Nachiketas approached the great Lord Yama for knowledge. Nachiketas was thrown out of his home by an angry father for some reason, which you will read in the Katha Upanishad, in the beginning itself. The father said, “Go to hell!” When you get angry, you say that. Nachiketas, the little boy, felt within himself, “Why should I go to Yama, the ruler of hell?” Anyway, the imprecation discharged by the father had an effect on the boy’s soul, because he himself was a great sage of meditation. Because of this imprecation, the soul of the boy was skyrocketed to the abode of Yama, and he stood there for three days and nights without being able to have *darshan* of Lord Yama. For some peculiar reason which we cannot understand, Yama absented himself for three days and nights. Or rather, the boy was told that Yama would not be available to him for three days.

After three days and nights, Yama presented himself. “My dear little boy, I am very sorry that I have allowed you to stand here for three days and nights without food and drink and no one to talk to. As an expiation, as a recompense for

this trouble that you have undergone for three days and nights in front of my palace, I ask you to seek three boons from me.”

The intelligent boy said, “May I return to the world as one who will be greeted with affection. May all things in the world receive me with affection, including my father who was annoyed with me for some reason.”

“Granted,” Yama immediately said. “When you return, the whole world will receive you with affection.”

You know very well, nobody can be received by anything in the world with such affection. Can you imagine anyone being received by the whole world with affection? It is a transcendental boon that was granted.

“Ask for the second boon,” Yama said.

“My Lord, I have heard that there is a thing called heaven where people have no hunger and thirst. They do not have to sleep. They do not have fatigue. They are always blissful. There is glory everywhere. There, every desire is automatically fulfilled. Initiate me into this great technique of meditation,” asked Nachiketas.

“Here it is!” said Yama. “I grant you this knowledge.” And all of the methods of meditation on the cosmical setup of things were described. “Now ask for the third boon.”

The boy said, “I am glad that you have allowed me to ask for the third boon. May I tell you? People say the soul is, or perhaps is not, after it departs from this body. Please bless me with this knowledge.”

“Ask not this question! Do not speak to me like this! Not even the gods can answer this question, ‘What happens to the soul when it is withdrawn from the body?’ Ask for anything else,” replied Yama.

The boy said, "I do not want anything else. I have come to seek the highest knowledge of this mystery, which you say even the gods cannot know; and if even the gods cannot know it, it implies that you know it. Then will I go back defeated? I must have this knowledge from you!"

Yama said, "No, do not press me like this. I am very sorry that I allowed you to ask for a third boon. This is not what I expected from you. Ask for something else. I will make you the king of this whole world. The entire earth will be under your control. You will live as long as the universe lasts. All the joys of heaven I grant you as a boon that will manifest itself instantaneously. What else do you want?"

"Please, take all these three blessings back to yourself," said Nachiketas. "What is long life? You said 'as long as possible, as long as the universe lasts'—that long a life you can give me. But when the universe ceases to exist, the long life becomes short. So, do not tempt me with all these arguments. The longest life is short because when it ends, it is short—and it has to end one day or the other. Why do you tell me that I shall have long life? And you say I shall have the whole earth for enjoyment. What is enjoyment with the weariness of the sense organs which become old, decrepit, and perish by the very enjoyment that you are speaking of? No. There is no use for this boon of being a king of the whole earth. It is a temptation which is worth nothing—and long life is short. 'Ask,' you said. I have asked, and it is up to you to answer this question," said the boy.

"I am very sorry that you are troubling me like this," Yama said.

What was the difficulty in answering this question? Why was Yama reluctant? He was able to easily give all these wondrous boons like affection from the whole earth itself,

and the joys of heaven, but he would not say what happens to the soul after death.

Actually, if you go deep into the mystery of this question, Nachiketas was not asking what happens to the soul after physical death, because he knew very well what happens to the soul after physical death as he already knew the technique of enjoying cosmic life due to the second boon that was granted to him. So he knew that the soul exists somewhere after death, but he persisted in asking the same question again and again because the implied meaning was what happens to the soul when it attains complete freedom. *Mahati samparaye* (K.U. 1.2.1) is the word used here, in this context. He did not say, “What happens to the soul after ordinary death?” *Mahati samparaye* means, “What happens to the soul after the great death?” Great death means the abolition of the soul itself in liberation. At that time, where is the soul?

Now, this circumstance is identical with the other one, which arose in the query of the king before the six learned people. The difficulty in adjusting your consciousness to the circumstance of not placing anything, any object—even the object of meditation—outside you, and not placing it somewhere, that difficulty is identical with this difficulty in knowing what happens to the soul in liberation. Where does it exist at that time? Some say it does not exist; it is destroyed. Is it so? If the soul is really destroyed, then all the efforts the soul puts forth in its life are a waste. You try to do good things. You try to be virtuous. You want to lead a good life. What for, if your soul is going to be destroyed tomorrow? Your aspirations for being good, being virtuous, being charitable and so on imply that you will not be abolished tomorrow—otherwise, who would do anything at all in this

world? Who would lift a finger? There is something in you which tells you that you will not be abolished. “But if I am not going to be abolished, where I am going to be?”

All the philosophers of the West have failed in answering this question. I have met several Deans of Philosophy and Doctors of Philosophy from Western universities. I had conversations with them. When I led the argument to this point, they said, “This is something impossible to think in the mind, because if you say that the soul exists somewhere even after liberation, it would mean that it is located in space. Then it contradicts the requisition that the object of meditation should not be in one place. If it is nowhere, then the attainment of liberation has no meaning.” The Western mind cannot imagine that there is any significance in the merging of the soul in the Absolute. In the West no one, except some mystics, could grasp this great secret. Would you like to be drowned in the ocean of the Absolute? Maybe it is the Absolute, but who would like to be drowned? Would you like to be drowned in an ocean of nectar? Of course, nectar is very good. But who would like to be drowned? The idea of drowning is terrible.

So, these wonderful circumstances posed by the great master, Yama, and the king Ashvapati before these learned ones, is posed before every one of us. Inasmuch as it is taken for granted that we all want ultimate freedom, and ultimate freedom is only in the recognition of the imperishable soul in us, it becomes a lifelong task on the part of everyone—a dedication for the whole of life—because nothing can be more dear than one’s own self. Every action is, finally, a tendency towards the joy of the self, the knowledge of the self, and the imperishability of the self. There cannot be a fear greater the fear of self-annihilation. And there cannot be a joy

greater than the feeling that one is perfectly safe and no threat can be discharged against one's own existence. To live is a great joy, whatever be the kind of life that you live. Even a beggar would not like to die, though he is suffering with penury. A diseased person would not like to die. "Cure me," he will say, but he will not say "kill me". "Make me well-fed and happy," the beggar will say. No beggar will say "annihilate me", because the greatest joy is existence.

It is not merely existing like a tree, or a stone, or a pig. It is not that kind of existence that you are asking for. It is an enhanced form of existence. In what way can existence be enhanced? By adding consciousness into it. The existence should be attached to consciousness. It is a conscious existence that you want—not an unconscious existence like a stone. A stone also lives long. Would you like to live long, like a stone? "No. I want to be conscious." Would you like to be conscious for few minutes only, and then perish? No. There is another condition that you put forth: "I want to be conscious of my existence for all time to come." It means to say that you want to defy the process of time itself. But your physical location in one place, which is the finitude of life, is subject to destruction. Everything that is in one place will be destroyed one day or the other by the ravages of time; therefore, what are you asking for when you ask for existence which is unlimited freedom and consciousness? You are asking for the defiance of the limitations of time and the defiance of the restrictions placed by the spatial expanse before you. You do not want to be somewhere, and you do not want to be some-when. What do you want, then? Everywhere you should be, everything should be yours, and for all time it should be. Time has to go, space has to go, and

eternity should reign supreme. This is what you are aspiring for, finally.

The mind cannot grasp all these truths unless it is purified. In the Upanishads we have instances of great seekers humbly going to great Gurus. Narada is another instance, which we have in the Chhandogya Upanishad. There was no science or art of which Narada was not a master, but he had no peace of mind. Do we not have people here in this world who are rich enough to burn money and wield authority, but they are disturbed in mind, with no peace within?

This Narada, who was a master of all knowledge, art and science, went to the wondrous sage Sanatkumara and begged of him, “Teach me.” *Adhihi bhagavah iti* (C.U. 7.1.1): Teach me Brahman.

The great sage, Sanatkumara, said, “What do you know already? Please let me know.”

“I know cosmology, ontology, epistemology, psychology, astronomy, aesthetics, axiology, political science, economics, history, religion, and philosophy. But I have no peace of mind,” replied Narada.

“All these things that you have told me are only words, my dear boy,” said Sanatkumara. “Words cannot bring you joy. You may describe what gold is, but it does not mean that by a description of it you are a possessor of gold. A professor of knowledge is not necessarily a possessor of knowledge. That is the distinction. So, all these things that you have recounted before me are of no utility, finally. The peace that you seek is in your own Self, which is the Atman.”

“Tell me about the Atman,” said Narada.

By a long-drawn discussion—stage by stage, step by step—the sage Sanatkumara took the mind of Narada to the apex point.

“The great Truth alone is the source of peace and bliss,” said the sage.

“Tell me the Truth,” asked Narada.

“The Truth is the Infinite,” said Sanatkumara.

“Tell me what the Infinite is,” asked Narada.

“Where you see nothing else outside you, where you hear nothing else outside you, where you are not thinking anything outside you, that is the Infinite. Where you see something outside you, where you hear something outside you, where you are thinking something outside you, that is the finite. The Infinite alone is bliss. Know that!” replied Sanatkumara.

“Where is that Infinite?” asked Narada further.

Sa evadhastat, sa uparistat, sa pascad, sa purastat, sa daksinatah, sa uttaratah, sa evedam sarvam (C.U. 7.25.1). “Where is the Infinite, you are asking me. It is in front of you. It is behind you. It is to the right. It is to the left. It is above. It is below. It is everywhere. It alone is. One who knows this has freedom in all the worlds,” replied the sage. No passport is necessary; no visa is necessary to move in the realms of being.

Such a person who knows this secret becomes the Self of worlds galore. He becomes the Self of all beings. He becomes everything! Such a person is the centre of gravitation for everything in the universe. *Yathaika ksudhita balah mataram paryupasate evam sarvani bhutany agni-hotram upasate ity agni-hotram upasata iti* (C.U. 5.24.5). If that person who knows this secret eats food, the whole universe is satisfied. In

earlier days there was a concept of feeding Brahmins. The idea is that a Brahmin is one who knows Brahman, and if he eats, everybody is satisfied. This knowledge makes you such a potentate in the cosmos that the worlds—all beings—gravitate around you for blessing in the same way as children sit around their mother for food. “Mummy, give me food. Give me something to eat,” so children cry around the mother. So all beings, all creation—everyone will rally round you and seek your blessing because what you are, they also are. What you eat, they eat, and what you feel, they feel. Your joy is their joy. Your existence is their existence.

This is the import, finally, of this one wondrous story I mentioned to you of the six great people going to Ashvapati, the king, for the knowledge of the Atman, which is not outside and not somewhere, and that Atman about which Yama, the Lord, refused to speak. *Ascaryavat pasyati kascit enam* (B.G. 2.29), the Bhagavadgita also reiterates. “Wonder is this thing that you are speaking. It is a wonder!” The teacher who can explain this is a wonder. The student who can understand this is a wonder. The thing that is explained is a wonder. The whole thing is a wonder. The greatest wonder is the Ultimate Being called God Almighty, the Absolute. May this wonder bless you, is my prayer!

Chapter 13

THE FOUNDATION OF YOGA

Generally, *asana* and *pranayama* are considered by people as the whole of yoga. When you speak of yoga, you speak of *asana* and *pranayama*, and breathing exercises. Mostly this is emphasised, with a little bit of meditation at the end of it. It is very important to know the significance of *asana* and *pranayama* in the practice of yoga.

There are things which are known as non-essentials, yet they are necessary things. A non-essential may be a necessary item. In a similar way, *asana* and *pranayama*, from the point of view of true yoga, are non-essentials—but they are necessary. Though the hand does not contribute anything to the digestion of food by the stomach, the hand is necessary so that the food may go into the stomach.

There are different types of yoga *asanas*—those which are directly connected with meditation, and those which are indirectly related to it. The postures which are known as meditational poses are directly connected with yoga practice; but the other ones—*sirshasan*, *sarvangasan*, and so many, hundreds and hundreds—do not play an active, direct role in the practice of yoga, though they are essential in order to bring about flexibility of the body.

The body is usually rigid; it maintains one posture only. That it may be enabled to adjust itself to any kind of eventuality calls for such exercises as may keep the body fit and agile. That much credit has to be given to other kinds of *asanas*; but the meditational posture is the crucial one.

You have to be seated in meditation. You cannot stand and meditate, nor can you lie down and meditate. If you lie down and then start meditating, you are likely to doze off because of the relaxation of the body. If you stand and meditate, you may fall down due to not paying enough attention to the legs. *Asinah sambhavat* (B.S. 4.1.7) is the prescription of the Brahma Sutra. Sitting is the best position.

When you are seated, it is expected that the spine should be straight, because the spine is the vehicle through which certain nerves pass, affecting the general posture of the whole body. The spinal column has much influence on the health, as well as the satisfaction of even the mind, because of the confluence of varieties of nerves through the column of the spine. It is not very comfortable to sit straight with the head, neck and spine kept in a straight line, because generally nobody sits like that. If there is a difficulty in maintaining this posture as prescribed, the suggestion given is that, in the initial stages, sit leaning against a wall that is perpendicular to the ground. It will enable you to free yourself from unnecessary aches which may be caused by straining in the sitting posture.

When you are well-equipped with this technique of sitting, you may not need to have the wall or anything else to recline or lean against. The purpose of this meditational posture, *dhyana asana*, is to bring about a balance in the functioning of the nerves and the muscles of the body, so that any kind of agitation, friction or discomfort may be eliminated by a harmonious positioning of the muscles—which are connected with the nervous system also, at the same time. The advice of Sage Patanjali in this connection is that the suitable posture is that posture which is comfortable. The *sutra* is very generous in its prescription and does

not say that you must sit only in this posture. Whichever is comfortable and easy, that may be the posture that you may choose.

The purpose behind this seated posture, practised for a long time, protractedly, is to bring about a rapprochement between nature outside and the physical condition of one's own self. There is, generally, in daily life, an opposition between nature's operation and the physical body's whims and fancies. You are irked by the operations of nature. You do not like it when it rains, or when it is hot, or it is cold, or it is breezy. This type of weather is not pleasing to you, but you cannot give an order to nature to behave only in a particular manner. You have to, somehow or other, adjust yourself to what you may regard as the whim and fancy of nature's behaviour, though it has its own system and method—very scientific indeed. When you are seated in this posture, perfectly poised, the impact of natural forces is not felt as intensely as you generally feel otherwise. You may not feel even hunger and thirst as acutely as you would feel them when you are in a normal condition, if the posture is steady.

The *asana* is not merely a physical exercise; the mind has direct connection with the posture. To give an example, suppose you are in *sirshasana* but you are thinking of some problem; perhaps tomorrow you have to book a railway ticket or you have to fly on such and such a date. If these thoughts are in the mind while you are physically doing *sirshasana*, etc., it is not only useless but it is even dangerous. The mind and body go together. We are not physical beings; we are psychophysical beings. The mind is not somewhere, outside the body, unconnected with it. They are juxtaposed integrally, so that you cannot know where the body is and where the mind is.

Hence, it is the mind-body action that is taking place in *asana*, not merely the body. It is very important to remember that the mind has to be calm at that time. If the mind is agitated, the body cannot be calm. This is the reason why, in the Yoga Shastra, the stage of *asana* comes after the stages of *yama* and *niyama*. No yoga scripture says that first of all you must do *asana* only. *Yama* and *niyama* are the first and second stages, and *asana* the third, with *pranayama* afterwards. The reason is that when the emotions are not still, the body cannot be stilled. A torn feeling in the mind cannot get on with the attempt at positioning the body in a perfect way. We generally do not believe that the mind and body go together. There is no 'mind and body', really speaking; there is no 'and' between them. The mind is the body and the body is the mind, in one way. They are organically related, so to say. They are one and the same thing appearing as two phases of performance.

Therefore, do not imagine that you can think anything in your mind and go to the yoga class. You will be harming yourself. The conflict between the harmonising of the body in *asana* and the mental disturbance will be harmful in the long run. The mind and the body should not be in a state of conflict. If you position the body, in the *asana*, to keep it in a state of balance, but your mind is disturbed at the time, the yoga *asana* will not bring you any benefit; it may even harm you afterwards.

Yoga is a spiritual exercise, finally. It is not a mechanical behaviour of the body. Inasmuch as it is spiritual, it is integral. It is all things put together. You cannot say, "I will do only yoga *asana*, and later on I can do other things." There is no 'later on'; they are all interconnected in a successively advancing evolutionary process of yoga, and

you cannot disconnect one bit of process from another bit. To the casual observer, an organic movement in the process of evolution is made up of bits of process, no doubt, but they are vitally connected. There is life permeating through every bit of the process of evolution, and all the eight stages of yoga mentioned are organically related. You cannot say, "I will do only *asana* for two years, then I will do *pranayama* for three years." You should not think like that, because you are a whole being and your *prana*, your physical body and sense organs, and your mind and reason do not stand apart from one another. So, even the first attempt at yoga *asana* is a crucial and important process.

When you are seated in a meditational pose, the jerk that the body feels on the impact of natural forces gets gradually diminished. You can do it yourself and see what happens to you. Sit leaning against a wall, because you should not strain yourself even in the posture. Do not move at all, and slowly, imperceptibly, carry on the breathing process without thinking about the breath. Let the breath go on as it is accustomed to do. You should not think of the breath at that time. Breathe as you are normally accustomed to. Be seated, and breathe normally. Do not think that you are doing yoga and then interfere with the breathing process. You are just sitting comfortably. If you sit like this for a half an hour, the biting cold will be felt less intensely. Even hunger and thirst will not be felt at that time, because the metabolic process is also, to some extent, controlled when you are seated so calmly. The feeling of pain of any kind is due to the action of metabolism taking place inside. That is subdued by positioning the body in a meditational pose. The *sutra* of Patanjali is *sthira sukham asanam* (Y.S. 2.46): Comfortable posture is the suitable *asana*. Then what happens? *Tato*

dvandvah anabhighatah (Y.S. 2.48): The dualities of the forces of nature will not attack you as they do generally. In this positioning of the body, you are trying to be in harmony with the natural forces and not set yourself in opposition to them. This is the reason why you feel subdued, calm and quiet, even by merely sitting quietly. But again it has to be repeated: what is your mind thinking? Your desires will tell what kind of person you are. As yoga is a total approach of yourself to the total reality of the universe, your mind also should be in a total position, together with the total posture that is maintained by the body. Otherwise, there would be a jarring note created by certain aspects of your personality not going hand in hand with the other attempts that you are attending to. This much regarding the *asana* in meditation is quite enough information for you.

There are a lot of things told about the breathing process. Rightly or wrongly, people go on interfering with the breathing process, thinking that it is a kind of yoga by itself; and most people, in one kind of technique that they are initiated into, think that breathing itself is all-in-all. There is a great truth in saying that the breathing process, carried on harmoniously, has a very important role to play in the positioning of your personality. But, you have to be properly initiated into this technique. There are varieties of ways of breathing, called *pranayamas*, and at least eight of them are mentioned in the Yoga Shastras. These are not necessary, even as many of the *asanas* are not essential in meditation.

In the beginning what you should do is, while you are seated in this required posture, breathe normally, slowly, comfortably, allowing the *prana*, the breathing process, to move as it would like to move without your pressure on it. Never command the breath to move only in a particular

manner. As you are breathing now, for instance, you are not thinking of the breath at all in your mind. Your mind is thinking of what I am speaking and not thinking of the breath. Yet, at the same time, the breathing process is going on very comfortably and you are happy. Let it go on. This is the first stage: just allow the breath to move as comfortably as possible, without interfering with it in any manner whatsoever.

The next stage is, think of the breath—feel that you are breathing. What do you feel at that time? You feel the nostrils acting as passages for the movement of breath. Watch, first of all, whether the *prana* or the *vayu* is moving through the right nostril or the left nostril. Sometimes the breathing may take place through both the nostrils, though very rarely. Often, in a disturbed condition, the *prana* moves through one nostril only. When the right nostril becomes the avenue of the movement of the *prana*, you will feel warm. When the *prana* moves through the left nostril, you will feel cool, and if it continues for a very long time, not allowing the right nostril to operate, you may even catch a cold. The Ayurveda Shastra and systems of this kind advise us to sleep on the left at night, because when you sleep on the left side, the right nostril will start operating and this in turn will keep the body warm. When you sleep on the right side, the left nostril will start operating. As the usual heat in the body, which you feel during daytime, normally gets diminished in the state of sleep, it is good to keep the body warm by allowing the *prana* to move through the right nostril, which is the *surya nadi*, as it is called, the solar breath. This solar breath will heat up the system when all the activities are subdued to a large extent in the state of deep sleep. But if you sleep on the right side, you will feel chillness, and you may even sneeze. Generally when

you have a cold, you will find that the right nostril does not operate at all. There will be sneezing, and then liquid coming out from the left nostril due to the *surya nadi* not operating. This is incidental information.

So, watch the breath—how it moves through the right or the left nostril. Whatever be the way the breath is moving, allow it to move in that way. Take a deep breath inside. Now you are sitting. In this sitting posture, start inhaling deliberately and not just breathing automatically as you usually do. Deliberate, conscious attempts should be made to breathe slowly—inwardly and outwardly. You generally breathe in a shallow manner; your breath is shallow, not deep. It has to become as deep as possible. You cannot make it deep in ordinary life. Therefore, sufficient oxygen does not go into the lungs. It affects the health because more carbon dioxide may be there in proportion to the less quantity of oxygen, due to shallow breathing, and that is why you yawn sometimes—that is, the carbon dioxide pushes itself out, as you are not allowing it to function normally in its own way.

When this is carried on, take an inhalation—deeply, slowly, not with a jerk—and for one, two, three seconds, hold the breath. Not more than that—tic, tic, tic—for three seconds hold the breath, and then slowly exhale. I am not talking of alternate breathing through the nostrils. I am talking about a natural, spontaneous breathing the way it is carried on by the organism according to its convenience and practice. The only thing that you have to do at that time, with your effort, is to see that the breathing is a little deep. Draw the breath inside as much as possible, without making a jerk or anything—very slowly—and hold it for three seconds, and then breathe out. Every day, early in the morning, please do this, if not for yoga, at least for your health. For fifteen

minutes before you take your tea, coffee, milk, breakfast or whatever it is, after a bath if possible, sit like this in a comfortable pose, and deeply breathe in without putting effort on the breath, allowing it to move as it would like to do, but with the consciousness that it should be as deep as possible, and retain it in the form of a *kumbaka*, as the retention of breath is called, for a few seconds only, and then breathe out gradually.

You will feel very much energised if you do this. You will also be happy, because you are cooperating with the natural ways in which the body and the mind have to function for maintaining good health. Usually you are disturbed in your mind; you have anxieties of a hundred types. At that time you gasp, and oftentimes breathe heavily. This is a sign of total disturbance in the physical and mental system, which upsets everything, including digestion and good sleep. In the beginning, fifteen minutes of this practice will be sufficient. Deeply inhale through both nostrils, or through either nostril, and retain it for a few seconds, then breathe out. Let this practice go on for days together; perhaps for your lifetime you can do this practice in order to maintain health.

Later on, when you are well-equipped with this technique, you can increase the retention from 2-3 seconds to a double or triple period of retention without causing discomfort. You should never feel suffocation when the breath is held. If suffocation is felt and there is discomfort, it means you are not doing it correctly. Be happy and comfortable, always, even in the breathing exercise.

It is generally said that alternate breathing is good. This is called *sukapurak pranayama*. You are all very well acquainted with this process, so I need not go into the details.

Your yoga class instructor must be telling you all these things—the proportionate breathing, proportionate retention, and so on. You may do that. But for the purpose of meditation, that alternate breathing is also not necessary. Normal breathing is sufficient. This will contribute to maintaining good health. The harmonisation of muscular and nervous activity with the breathing process is the main point in question. But all this effort of yours—physically and in terms of breathing—depends much upon how you think in your mind, how you feel, and what you actually want.

Before you start doing yoga, ask yourself—what do you want? Most people cannot answer this question. What do you want? It is a terrible question. You cannot say what you want. Here, a little bit of philosophy is good. Philosophy is the art of finding the ultimate causes of things—not the immediate causes only, but the final causes. You want something just now. But why do you want it? You want it because if you do not get it, some trouble arises. That trouble arises because of a cause behind this feeling of immediate necessity. There is cause behind this cause, a cause behind that cause, until you reach a point where you cannot think of any further cause. A causeless cause is the state you reach, which is a state of perfect rest.

In this condition, adjust yourself gradually, and you will find that the agitations of the sense organs also cease, to a large extent, because the *pranas*, the breathing, constitute the dynamo which discharges energy for the sense organs so that they may move in the direction they like for the fulfilment of their desires. All desire is a disturbance of the system. Every desire is an attempt to move away from one's own self, and there cannot be a greater disease than the pressure to move out of oneself and become other than one's own self. In all

desire, or fulfilment of desire, you become other than what you are, and it is a wretched condition. So every person who has any kind of desire is unhappy. This clamouring of the sense organs to jet forth outwardly into the objects outside is also controlled by subduing the breathing process, because the energy for the sense organs to activate themselves comes from *prana*, or breathing.

You cannot maintain a posture of peace of mind, which is the necessary background for the practice of yoga, unless your desires are stilled. To do something or not to do something, to have something or not to have something—this is the desire. This must be stilled and brought to a position of poise. How is it possible? Either you fulfil all your desires, in which case of course there will be poise of the sense organs, or you have the understanding that it is not necessary to fulfil these desires. These two aspects have to be considered very well. Are you going to fulfil all your desires so that you may have peace, as you call it? Do you believe that the fulfilment of desires will bring peace of mind? This is a moot question. A person who drinks liquor feels that he is in a state of satisfaction, but that satisfaction creates another agitation to repeat that process of drinking more liquor, so that he may expect greater satisfaction. It goes on like this until the whole body collapses, and he ruins himself. Desire is a devil. It wants to extract blood from your body and reduce you to the level of a corpse, though you do not know that this process is taking place.

A metaphysical meditation, in terms of the ultimate causes of things, will make you realise that you are a fool in allowing desires to move along their own lines. Desires are deceivers and thieves of the first water. Either you realise this by your acute understanding, or you go along the

lines of fulfilling desires. You will be between the horns of a dilemma as to how you will handle this difficulty. For awhile you will feel that it is impossible to fulfil all the desires, just as if you dig a cave, more and more mud will fall and it will never end, and the cave will become wider and wider, and there is no end to this mud falling down. The cave of desire will go on expanding until it yawns to swallow you up. There is no end for your desire. Though you may unintelligently feel that you have only one or two desires, they are only the tip of the iceberg of your uncontrolled ocean of desires lying underneath, sleeping, in your subconscious and unconscious levels.

I have been telling you again and again that you cannot do this practice without some guide who has trodden the path and who knows what the difficulties are. Do not dabble with your *prana* or with your desires and imagine that you can perform austerities on your own without proper guidance. You want a light ahead of you to move along the path. You cannot move in darkness, not knowing what is ahead of you.

So, there is to be seen a living connection between your thought process, your desires, your longings, your positive and negative attitudes, your muscular activity, nervous function, breathing process and sensory activity. All are a simultaneous movement of hundreds of waves of the same ocean of your personality. This is a brief introduction on the very important subjects of *yama* and *niyama*—controlling the desire and setting the behavioural pattern in poise; *asana* and *pranayama*; and a difficult process called *pratyahara*, the control of desires by restraining the contact of the senses with the objects. Then comes meditation. So, do not think that suddenly you can meditate on That. Unless the ladder is firm, you cannot climb up to the pedestal of the meditational

process. This is the foundation of yoga, of which you have to be fully aware and exercise great caution. Move very slowly but perfectly, and be sure that all is well with you inside and outside also—everywhere, all is well with you.

Chapter 14

ATTAINING PEACE OF MIND

During these days I have practically told you everything that you are required to know. I have left nothing unsaid, and perhaps I spoke from every point of view of human life. We are now moving toward the conclusion of this course in the Academy.

It also is necessary to tell you that everyone should know the art of having peace of mind. A person with no peace of mind does not actually live, but just exists. Living is different from just existing. First and foremost the purpose of life has to be understood—why you want to be alive at all. Do you want to continue living in this world with distorted feelings, insecurity from all sides, fear that is gnawing into your vitals and dissatisfaction everywhere? Would you like to live such a life?

Every person has a common complaint that things are not as one would like them to be. This complaint is without foundation because things are exactly, even now, as they ought to be. *You* are not actually as you ought to be. The complaint, therefore, has to point in your direction and not in the direction of the world outside. We somehow forget that we belong to this wondrous structure of creation, which we look at as something that is staring at us as if we are outside it. The world, taken in its totality, never does wrong. It has its comprehensive vision directed towards its own goal. However much our learning and erudition, we cannot give up the prejudice of feeling that we are standing outside the world,

outside everything; we are inside nothing. We are totally disassociated from the world of nature, from its Creator. That which you call peace, which you erroneously identify with some fancy of yours, is a little different from what you think it to be. Can you define what you really mean by peace ? When there is no noise, when nobody talks to you, when there is nothing for you to see in front of you, when everything is calm and stands still—is that peace? When everything is dead silent from all parts of the world—nothing moves, no sound is created and nobody speaks—is that peace? Naturally you will hesitate to agree that this kind of thing is peace. When there is no disturbance from anything in the world, nobody speaks to you, no sound is created, nothing happens anywhere, why should you not regard it as peace? It may be felt subtly from within. Peace does not come from outside. If the external world is the cause of your disturbance, then the dead silence of everything in nature, or in general, should be considered as peace.

So, the world is not the source of your distraction and suffering. The reactions that you set up in respect of the atmosphere outside are the causes of what you are, basically. I have been telling you many a time that you must regard the whole universe as a single organism. When it is said that the universe is an organism, a living, single unit, complete in itself, it goes without saying, simultaneously, that everything connected with this total organism also is an organism. Little organisms make large organisms, but nevertheless even the little ones are organisms only; they are not dead fractions. Your self is a complete organism. The society outside also is an organism by itself. The governmental setup itself is an organism. Everything is to be viewed in the sense of a totality and a completeness in itself.

Thus we have a series of organisms, or forms of completeness, until we reach the completeness of creation as a whole. The peace that you are speaking of, or want to have, is the extent to which you are in harmony with the organism with which you are inextricably related. What are the things, actually, with which you are connected in this world? With those things, you have to be in a state of harmony.

The agitations of the mind, caused by various factors, produce repercussions in the external atmosphere, and it looks like social conflict. There cannot be social conflict unless there is individual disturbance and conflict in one's own self, because society is nothing but many people like you, like me, like anybody. If every individual is filled with inner peace, society will have a completely peaceful atmosphere around. It is no use saying society is bad. Things are worse because you are one of the things, and you are a unit of society. When you complain against the world, against society, against people, you are including yourself also as a target of this complaint. Whenever you speak, whenever you think and make any judgment whatsoever, you seem to be standing outside the atmosphere of judgment and perception. Unfortunately, that is not so. The judge is involved in the very circumstance of judging. A judgment is an organic action. It is not an individual's predilection, or thinking as one would like. The judiciary is an organism which includes the judge, the lawyers and the people who are connected with the case. They are not isolated units scattered out in a disabled manner, but they form a complete whole. If the judge knows that the whole atmosphere of judiciary functioning is a complete whole, the judgment also is a complete whole without any kind of partisanship.

This is a psychology that is applicable to every kind of experience in your life, every duty that you perform, every work with which you are acquainted. It is not possible to have peace unless you know the source of peace. The source of peace is the balance that has to be struck in your own mind. The balance is disturbed on account of the mind working as the medium of the sense organs, which move towards objects outside. The agitation of the mind is caused by the necessity to think in terms of external objects—distance itself. That which you call peace or harmony of existence is the situation that you establish between yourself and that to which you belong—namely, the universal whole. It begins with lesser wholes and then enlarges itself into larger wholes until it covers the whole universe. Until the whole creation is in peace, you cannot be in peace, because it is not possible for a limb to be healthy when the organism is suffering.

If completeness is the nature of the entire creative pattern, the peace spoken of in terms of this pattern of creativity is integral to itself. The universe does not require anything to happen outside it in order that it may be in peace. Remember what I told you: every part of the cosmic organism is also an organism by itself—including yourself. The universe does not require anything to happen outside it in order that it may be in peace. If that is the truth, then it applies to you also. There is no need for anything to take place outside in order that you may be in peace, because the law of the universe applies to every individual. The law of the universe is such that it needs nothing external to it. Then how do you expect anything to take place outside yourself, for the sake of your peace of mind? It is, therefore, actually a meditational activity taking place when you are aspiring for peace of mind.

Meditation is the attention of the total mind in the direction of that which is the total above oneself. The lower total adjusts itself to the conditions of the higher total. This applies to human organisms, society, government, and nature as a whole. Therefore, to sum up, peace is an outcome of the adjustment of oneself with the various wholes that are inextricably related to the cosmic whole. Suffice it to say, you are slowly being led to the conclusion that unless you are friendly with the whole cosmos, you cannot have peace of mind.

What is meant by friendship with the cosmos? You have to be adjusted in your total personality to the requirements of cosmic operation, the evolutionary process. The world does not contain unwanted things, because if anything is unwanted, it cannot exist within the jurisdiction of the whole of creation. Everything has a particular context, and in that context it is perfectly fitted to the cosmic requirement—as in a large mechanism or a machine, every little nut and bolt has a role to play. Nothing is unimportant, and every little contribution made by each part of the machine is a whole contribution, without which the machine will not move. Therefore, even your smallest act is a whole act. There is no such thing as a small act and a big act, in the same way as in a mechanical setup there is no such thing as a small part and a big part. Each part is equally important because there is a community of participation in the working of a total whole—call it a mechanism or an organism. This is to be remembered always. You have to be a very good psychologist, and you must have the power to apply this psychological conclusion in your deep meditation. Meditation is the art of setting oneself in tune with that which is

everywhere—call it society, call it family, call it government, call it nature, call it God.

If you are torn asunder—away from the total to which you organically belong and cannot unite yourself—then you cannot have peace. Peace is the *total consciousness* of *total existence*. We are far from it. We are torn individuals in every manner, socially and psychologically. We require, therefore, not peace of mind, but education. Education is the art of knowing oneself, first of all, before knowing anything else. You may know the stars in the heavens, but you may know nothing about your own self. You can count the stars in the heavens, but you do not know the number of doors in your own house. You have to look around to find out how many doors and windows there are. You know very much about the world outside, but nothing, practically, about yourself. But you must know that you cannot stand outside the world. So, knowledge of the world implies knowledge of the self also and, vice versa, knowledge of the self is knowledge of the world. *Atmanam viddhi*—know thyself and be free. This ‘thyself’, or the so-called ‘yourself’, is not one person, one individual, one unit sitting somewhere in a corner of the world, but is an integrally connected organism, though small in range, to the larger organisms of society, nature and God’s existence.

This is a point which you have to bear in mind when you sit in meditation. You require nothing in order to bring you peace of mind. You require only yourself. You are the master of yourself and you have to know how to tune yourself to the requirement of existence as a whole. The tuning of your personality, your existence, to the existence that is total is peace of mind; that is peace of consciousness; that is harmony of existence; that is blessedness; that is happiness;

that is bliss, you may say. What you call happiness, satisfaction or joy in the ordinary sense of the term is a fractional adjustment of yourself to a condition that is prevailing outside, though the adjustment may be for a few seconds only. You will not have satisfaction of any kind unless you are adjusted to the conditions prevailing outside. Unless you are well-adjusted, the family to which you belong cannot be well-adjusted, because every member of the family is just like yourself. So, you do not know what a family is. It is an organism of individuals like your own self. This little organism which is yourself becomes a slightly larger organism called the family. The family organism becomes a community organism. The community organism becomes a village, a state or a nation organism. The nation is an organism, a living body. The world, the country, the nation is not a bundle of trees and mountains and rivers and roads and buildings—nothing of the kind. It is a consciousness. It is an ideology. It is an adjustment of consciousness to a particular objective which transcends one's own self. That is what is known as national consciousness. That may be called social consciousness. That may be called natural or universal consciousness.

The whole play is consciousness only. You are the maker of yourself, which means your consciousness is the maker of yourself. You do not exist outside consciousness. What you are is the mind that thinks and the consciousness that operates. You are not the body. You are also not any kind of physical relation, as you imagine in your mind. You are the consciousness that you are. Can you imagine what you would be minus consciousness? You would be nowhere; you would be nothing. You would be a non-entity. The entity that you are, the meaning that you are, the significance that you

seem to have with yourself is the consciousness thereof. What kind of consciousness have you got? What do you think of yourself? Here comes the psychology of philosophical adjustment of oneself. You should not be under the impression that you can be very wise with people and be a poor man, a poor person, in regard to your own self. The world will see you better than you see your own self. The world is all eyes. As you are organically connected with things, the world will see you from all sides.

This is not religion, this is not spirituality, this is not any kind of esoteric doctrine, but a scientific fact of the law of nature that everything is cohesive and fitted into one another so that each one is everything and everything is each one. This is a highly developed consciousness of democracy, if you can think in this manner. It is a feeling that consciousness is an ideal that gathers itself into a cohesive force by which it becomes inseparable from what it regards as something that is outside.

Here is the characteristic of a saint or a sage. Nothing is outside the saint and, therefore, he needs nothing from outside. One should not want anything from outside, because the outside thing does not exist apart from you and you do not exist outside that thing which you consider as outside. The saints and the sages ask not anything. They do not require anything because they have got everything by being united with that which you regard as outside you. The thing which you want is inside you in the sense that it is connected with your body, your personality, your consciousness. The moment you think, the universe acts, provided that your mind is united with the cosmic mind. Here is the transcendental meaning of true meditation—which is not a doctrine or a teaching or a gospel from the textbook of a scripture, but a

scientific fact operating in the astronomical universe. Have you heard that the universe was, once upon a time, a cosmic atom? It was the source of the world. And do you believe that you have come from that cosmic atom? It was one integral whole. That requirement of integration which was characterising in that cosmic atom—*brahmāṇḍa*, as we call it—characterises everything that has proceeded from it. The larger whole produces lesser wholes, but not fractions. There are no such things as fractions in this world. Everything is a whole, though it is a modicum of a lesser order.

So, each level of wholeness gets identified with the larger whole of which it is an integral part, from which it cannot separate itself. This is the art of administration, the art of thinking properly, the art of education and the teaching process, learning—everything. This is the knowledge of the Self, as you may call it. It is said that the greatest knowledge is knowledge of the Self. But do not be under the impression that the Self is sitting inside the body. I mentioned to you that the Self is a wholeness that you feel within yourself, a consciousness rather than a limbed body with bones and flesh and nerves, etc. that you are not. You are the operation of consciousness. Remember very well—what would you be if consciousness were not there? You would not be there at all. If consciousness is not there, you also are not there. So when you are there, it is consciousness that is really there.

Satisfaction is not in you or in somebody else. It is in consciousness itself. Satisfaction is uninterrupted performance of consciousness. A larger satisfaction flashes forth when the unit of consciousness that you are operates as a set adjustment with the consciousness of other such units or centres. Who feels happiness? Who feels peace? Consciousness feels peace. It gets disturbed when there is no peace.

Who disturbs it? It is disturbed by the wrong notion that it is outside the thing to which it really belongs.

In essence, everybody is a cosmic being. There is no such thing as an individual person. Can you think for a moment that you are a cosmic being? Go on saying, “I am a cosmic being. This little ‘me’ is organically related to the cosmic being—which means to say, I am a cosmic being. And the others I seem to see outside are not outside me, just as I am not outside the cosmic being.” Go on asserting this with faith, with the power of will. “If I cannot stand outside the universe, I *am* the universe itself.” Who will disturb your mind, then? Tell me frankly: who is there to disturb your mind? Nobody can disturb your mind. There is no such thing as ‘your’ mind. There is only the cosmic mind operating. Can you think through the cosmic mind? When you are thinking now, who is thinking? It is not the student that is sitting here—not this boy, this girl, this man, this woman. No. It is the cosmic mind that is thinking.

This is meditation. If anybody asks you what meditation is, tell them this is meditation. Toward the achievement of this apex of meditational practice, you are given recipes of a lesser category so that you may adjust yourself gradually, stage by stage, in the higher wholes which are the dimensions of larger and larger wholes of consciousness. You are the maker of yourself. Your peace of mind is within you only. You are the culprit—if at all there is one—and, therefore, complain not. Complain against your inadequacies, your imperfections and the lack of power of will that you are sunk in, by which you are unable to understand how you are connected to the world, to people, to the atmosphere, to ecological conditions, to the world as a whole. Find fault with yourself only. Do not find fault with anybody else, because

the world is a whole, and wholeness cannot have imperfections.

Again I tell you, look at that wonderful Viratsvarupa, the cosmic consciousness, the description that we have in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Was any dirty thing there? If the cosmic consciousness—the universe which presented itself before Arjuna—did not have any dirty thing, ugly thing or unwanted thing, from where have these unwanted things come now before your eyes? You are the creator of the problems of life—nobody else—and you are not prepared to accept it because of the egoism that is so hard, flint-like, which says, “I am what I am, and I am right! And everybody has to follow what I think.” If everybody started asserting in this manner, there would be a social rift and warfare immediately following.

You should consider yourself as very blessed that you can think like this. You should consider yourself as blessed because you know where your blessedness lies. It is with you—the you that is inseparably connected to the creation as a whole. So, peace is in the cosmos, it is in God, it is in all the forms of wholeness that you can think of. Your blessedness, your peace, your joy, your satisfaction lies in the extent to which you can adjust the dimension of your consciousness to that which you wrongly consider as outside you. Make it your own. Make the atmosphere your own. Make that which you see outside you your own, so that you think as the thing thinks and not as you, in your own individual capacity, think. When you see an object, try to think as the object thinks, not as you think it. Turn the tables round; let the object become the subject. If you assert yourself in that way, in a minute you will find that you are transported into a world which is beyond yourself.

It is difficult to think like this because you have been born into a family and a cultural background which is totally unacquainted with the normal, subliminal way of the required attitude in human life. Everywhere you see evil and ugliness and wretchedness and enmity—everywhere. There is nothing good anywhere in the world. This is how we are indoctrinated right from the beginning. When a child is born, the parents say, “The other man is an enemy. Don’t go there. The next house is an enemy’s house.” You are told in the beginning itself, “This land is ours. That land is not ours. Don’t go there. They want to grab our property.” Animosity starts in childhood itself. “This is mine. That is not mine. This is yours. That is not yours. This is your friend. That is your enemy.” You go on thinking like this right from your childhood. Your blood is infused with animosity and a feeling of incompatibility with everything. You are incompatible with everything; nothing is compatible. You are never in union with anything; everything is at sixes and sevens. Nothing is good for you; everything is useless. You are, yourself, the best thing, and all others are totally extraneous to you. Let this change of the pattern of thinking be developed, and you will find God prevailing Himself from your side. There is no God in the high heavens; you are yourself constraining Him and covering Him with a bush—with a dark cloud of erroneous thinking—regarding yourself as a totally independent person, unconnected with anybody else.

Remember that you are not unconnected with even a little stick on the ground. You are connected with that also. The stick can know what you are thinking. It is not dead. There are no dead things in this universe. Little things, unimportant things, unseen things, uncared for things—they know that you are there; and It knows. It has eyes

everywhere. Everywhere eyes—the world is all eyes, everywhere. *Sarvato 'ksi-siro-mukham* (B.G. 13.13), says the Bhagavadgita. “Everywhere eyes, everywhere ears.” They say that walls have ears—well, maybe. There are ears, no doubt, but there are also eyes everywhere. Every atom sees you. It is not a dead substance as scientists may tell us. There is no dead molecule anywhere; it is a living organism, a living being like you. With that you set yourself *en rapport*—in mind, in intention, in determination, in meditation—and slowly, thought becomes reality.

The psychology of the mind has to be understood. Thought concretises itself into reality. Do you know that the cosmic mind has concretised itself into this world which looks so solid? The cosmic mind, externalised in the space-time complex, appears to have descended into the concrete, solid form of the physical universe. That is the story of creation. Every little mind is a great potency. It is like a minute atom bomb which can assert, and what it asserts will take place. Think, and it is there.

But you are dubious in your adjustment of thought. You are always under the fear that something else is there outside you which will not agree with you. When you have the feeling that something is outside you which is different from you and cannot agree with you, you are really not *en rapport* with it, and it will really not like you and it cannot agree with you. What you *think* you are—that you *really* are. You must remember that. If you demoralise yourself, condemn yourself as a nobody and a nothing, you are that only. But if you understand your status in this world as a citizen of the cosmos and not merely of a little country or of a village, and know that the country protects its citizens, then the whole world will protect you. The cosmic forces are at your beck and call.

This is spiritual meditation—or call it whatever you like—and be careful that you should not forget this.

I am not telling you all these things so that you may listen as a kind of entertainment. It is a recipe and medicine that is to be injected into your personality, so that the illness which is harassing you, day in and day out, may leave you slowly, gradually. This is a medical treatment for you. It is not a discourse that you have heard, as a professor speaks in a college. It is as a doctor speaks to a patient; and you have to be very careful to listen to it and take the medicine as it is prescribed, as it is necessary for you to take it.

So, briefly to say, you are really blessed souls. Everyone is a blessed child of the Immortal God. A child of God cannot be a miserable wretch. Do not think like that. How can the effect, which has come from the cosmic magnificence, become wretchedness? It is not possible. The magnificent divinity which is the cosmic whole reverberates in even the little divinity that you are. That may be a conflagration and you are a spark, but you are a part of it. With this confidence, take to meditation every day; but do not meditate as an exercise which is frightening and tiring, causing exhaustion and so on. You are inundating yourself. A process of inundating yourself cannot tire you. Meditation will bring you immense joy, not merely an ordinary benefit. You will be happy, happy, happy, happy! You will like to meditate more and more, because the more you are united with that ultimate level, the more is the blessedness that it will bestow upon you. This is what we call the grace of God—the grace of the higher total on the lower total. You may call this the grace of the divine omnipotence. Remember all these things as tiny processes of meditation with a different meaning altogether.

I have told you everything. There is nothing left now to speak to you. There are only a few days remaining until the completion of this course, and I want to thank you and bless you from the heart of my heart. I feel confident that I have done my duty very well, to the satisfaction of my own heart, and believe you have benefited immensely. Do not forget what I have told you, right from the beginning of the course until now. There are still a few more days, and when I see you again I will speak to you as it would be appropriate. God bless you!

Chapter 15

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIA

If you remember all the things that I told you during these days, that will suffice, provided you are able to keep all the necessary details in your mind. Today I shall confine myself to a brief statement of the historical development of religious consciousness in India—how, in this country, people found themselves in need of a vision of life and developed a sense of what is called religious awareness.

The first impulse that arises in a thinking mind is the perception of a wonder that seems to be characterising all things in creation. You cannot understand how things are happening at all. Why does the sun rise; why does the sun set; why are there seasons; why is there rainfall; why is there heat; why is there cold; why is there summer; why is there winter? Everything is a mystery; nobody can understand what all this is.

Yet, it seems to be a systematic organisation of nature. Things do not happen in a confused manner. So precise seems to be the working of things that you can predict future events mathematically. This sense of wonder arises from the feeling of the incomprehensibility of things in the world. How is it possible that things should happen in the manner in which they are happening? A happening is always attributed to a cause that brings about the happening. The cause-and-effect relationship is ingrained in the very principle of thinking itself. When we see something, we at once conclude that

there should be a cause behind this appearance or phenomenon projected before our perception.

The first phase of religion may be said to be a recognition of there being something behind the operations of nature. Everything is a mystery. So, every mysterious occurrence or phenomena should have some cause behind it. There is a cause behind the dawn, there is a cause behind the sunset, there is a cause behind everything. As the phenomena are multifarious, the simple, inquisitive mind of the human being attributed many causes behind many operations, many individual significant phases of human observation. Inasmuch as this cause is above all that happening in this world, and the causes seem to be many in number because the effects are also so many, the feeling of man presented a picture of a transcendent existence of these causes. The causes are not in this world. The strengths of operation are in a higher realm of the ultimate causes of things, and events take place here as if puppets are dancing.

Because of the imperishable nature of the causes attributed to these controlling factors of phenomena, they are also considered to be immortal. Because in the world, everything that is moving is perishable, and nothing is permanent, its cause should be something which is not impermanent. The perishable nature of the phenomena gave way to the feeling of the imperishability of the causes; and the causes are intelligent things because without intelligence, operation of any kind is not possible. Such an intelligent cause behind the occurrences in the world, transcendently operating, is a god—a divinity—and the realm which is above this world, where these divinities, or gods, are residing, is considered to be heaven. Here, religion starts. We worship gods who are in heaven.

In India the record of such an occurrence is in the Rig Veda Samhita or, generally, all the Veda Samhitas. There are prayers offered to the animating principles behind every occurrence in the phenomena of the world—thousands and thousands of gods everywhere. Every god is worshipped as a necessary controlling power behind everything that is happening anywhere. There can be any number of gods. Without understanding the significance of this stage of religion, historians of religion wrongly designate this stage as polytheism. Polytheism is not a proper word because it has a slight touch of something undesirable, and nobody likes to use the word ‘polytheistic’ in regard to this stage of religion where it is an honest recognition of the gods in heaven. No one who worships a god in heaven thinks he is worshipping a polytheistic individual. This is only a historical peculiarity of people.

This is a very long course of history, to describe which may take several days. Anyway, to mention briefly, the religious awareness which arose in this fashion went further and further, into deeper and deeper forms of this acceptance of there being gods; and wonder gave rise to a kind of doubt. It is said that philosophy begins with wonder. It also can begin with some doubt about the vision that originally one has attained. It is perfectly all right to believe that there must be many divinities, but that is the result of the wonder in perception. The doubt then arises: if there are so many gods, in what way is each one connected to the other? If each god is totally independent of the other, there is no one single, central force for controlling all phenomena. There was a feeling that perhaps they act together, as members in a meeting jointly act to come to certain conclusions. A group idea of gods arose; so many groups of gods are there—many gods, group gods.

Otherwise, if each god is totally independent, there would be no way of coming to a consensus in regard to anything. It is just like it is necessary for us to hold a meeting to come to any conclusion. We cannot do things independently without coming into conflict with another person. Thus, this group idea arose in the vision of religion.

But that also was not satisfying because the idea of a grouping of divinities does not finally satisfy the doubt as to how one group can be connected to another group. If one cannot be related to another, and a group is necessary, then something else is necessary to relate one group to another group. There must be a central government; otherwise, there will be many little principalities of gods, and things will not go on properly, and it cannot be explained logically. Slowly this idea arose to the conception of a single yet transcendent God. It is a great advance in the development of religious consciousness to feel that there must be only one God. But the idea that God must be away from the world does not easily leave the mind, because how can He be inside the world which is so bad, so perishable, with so much disturbance everywhere? So the transcendent idea of God persisted, and it persists even today. It cannot easily leave us as long as we see things in the manner we do.

Well, this is, in some way, the foundation of religion. But, we cannot recognise the greatness of something and just keep quiet. We have to express our admiration and respect for what we adore by some gesture, some method of performance. When we admire, when we want to worship something that is great, we automatically feel that there should be some kind of gesture from our part. "Oh, wonderful! I adore you! I adore you! Wonderful! Be seated.

What can I do for you?" These feelings become gestures, developing into what is called ritual—ritual of religion.

These rituals, which became necessary in one stage of the development of religion subsequent to the Veda Samhitas, are recorded in another set of scriptures, called the Brahmanas. This 'brahmana' does not mean Brahmin, the caste; it is a textbook, a section in the Vedas, which describes all kinds of performances, rituals, sacrifices, etc., to please these gods. It is a gesture. Mere thought, mere prayer, mere adoration in the mind was the characteristic of the earliest phase of religion in the Samhitas; and it then became a ritualistic expression, in a gesture, in the second phase. But when the love for a thing, admiration for a thing, the acceptance of the wonder and majesty of a thing rises to the height of recognition, your heart starts operating in a different manner: "I admire, I love and I am deeply concerned." When you think always of that thing—this God, this Divinity, this wonderful thing, the mind says, "Mere gesture, mere ritual, mere outward performance is not sufficient. I have also to think deeply about this great thing, because thinking about it gives joy. Merely moving the hands and feet and doing something ritualistically is not adequate. My mind has to be filled with satisfaction: Oh, I think about that wonderful thing!"

This contemplative state is recorded in the scriptures called the Aranyakas—forest scriptures, and is subsequent to the Brahmanas. In the early days, people who retired from all ritualistic life went to distant places, lived in a sylvan atmosphere and engaged themselves in pure contemplation only—no ritual, and no verbal prayer either. It developed further, deeper, into a total union of the feeling with that which they worshipped. In the Upanishads we have the

record of the union of consciousness with that which they loved and considered as the Supreme Being. Here is the fundamental rock bottom of India's religion: the Vedas, the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads.

But, that is not enough for religion. This is a highly specialised form of religious awareness. It has to be expressed in some other way also—by ecstatic expressions in some way or the other. You cannot merely say: “I like you! I adore you! I think of you! I am happy with you! Wonderful!” and then keep quiet. This is a meditation, but still it is not sufficient. You have to be in ecstasy over this matter. This ecstasy, this rapture, this struggle of the soul to express itself in as mighty a way as possible—to express what it feels in its ultimate recognition and acceptance of the Great Reality—took the form of heroic poems, majestic poetry which picturised the historical events in human society as a struggle of the soul to recognise the might and magnificence of God in greater and greater intensity. The more you think about it, the more you feel ecstatic about it—and there is no end for this ecstasy. The more you feel it, the more you want to feel more of it. There is no limit at all for your feeling, for the gesture, the joy, the satisfaction, and the jumping, as it were, of the entire soul within for wanting it expressed in every form of life. We have the great epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—where poetry reaches its limit. The heroism of expression of the soul reaches its farthest limit in epics such as the Mahabharata. Therefore, it is well said that you cannot know the Vedas as they are in themselves, in their true meaning, unless you also know the implication of the epics.

In one of the verses of the Mahabharata, we are told that it would be like killing the Veda itself if we practise a merely

theoretical, parrot-like recitation of a its mantras, or imagine that we are thinking it satisfactorily without knowing the implications and suggestions which bring the soul to heights of rapture. With the Epics and the Puranas, which are the highlighting factors of human history in a divinised form, these records add a special impetus to the rise of the soul to unending heights. Then only can one know the real meaning of the Veda, because, as I mentioned, originally the Veda mantras were prayers to the Almighty God in various forms. But, they are not only that much. The presence of an Almighty Being can be recognised through external perceptivity, internal feeling, as the operating force in human society and the law supreme that controls everything. All facets are included in the recognition of the God of the Vedas. So, the Epics and Puranas came later on as an expatiation, in more detail, in a more acceptable form to human sentiment and feeling. That is a further development of religion—Vedas, Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads and the Epics. The Bhagavadgita is a part of the Mahabharata.

The historical significance involved in these epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are accentuated further in the eighteen Puranas, some of which are very important. Inasmuch as the total concept of the Absolute is difficult to entertain in the mind, the feelings divided the concept of God into a tripartite recognition as the creator, the preserver and the destroyer, because this is what we see in this world. What does God do? He does not sit quiet, simply gazing. He creates; He destroys; He preserves. So God, in three forms, was conceived as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The creative force is Brahma, the preservative force is Vishnu and the transforming, evolutionary aspect—we may call it the destroying aspect—is Rudra, Siva. These Puranas are

eighteen in number, and six of them are devoted to Brahma and creation, six of them to Vishnu, and six of them to Siva. But, more than that, there are also many other details of historical significance in the Puranas. The Puranas are wonderful; but, they are all in Sanskrit. Many people who do not know Sanskrit cannot know what these Purnanas and the Ramayana and Mahabharata are. Fortunately, today we have English translations of these great texts. The whole of the Mahabharata has been translated into the English language, in twelve volumes; and the Ramayana, of course, is very famous. Everywhere, in every language, the Ramayana can be found.

Still, an inquisitive mind does not keep quiet. It always has to do something. However much you appreciate God, it is not sufficient. You have to appreciate God in many other ways also. Earlier you felt a need to gesticulate and perform rituals to manifest your feelings of devotion to God, and I mentioned these are all described in the Brahmana texts. The very same need was felt once again, later on, in a different fashion altogether. This is the stage of the Agamas and Tantras. They are rituals only, described in a different way altogether from the Brahmanas. The external and exoteric form of the rituals described in the Brahmanas takes an esoteric side in the Agamas and the Tantras, about which I have spoken earlier. This is how religious consciousness went on evolving.

Then there was a necessity felt to establish this truth by logical arguments. Mere feeling was not sufficient. Gesture and articulation by ritual was not adequate. The whole thing had to be logically and satisfactorily proved philosophically. For this purpose, the schools of thought called the Darshanas arose: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and

Vedanta. In these also, there is a gradational rise. It is not that each school says whatever it wants. There is a continuity of thought even in the Darshanas, or the schools of thought. For instance, there is a primitive, logical acceptance of the truths of God, world and soul in the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika systems. These schools, the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika, which can be clubbed together into a single phase of logical thinking, say that God is transcendent. He is an efficient cause, but not a material cause. Like a carpenter standing outside the tools and the things that he made, God stands above. The individuals are manifold.

In a purely empirical fashion, the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika take into consideration the multiplicity of individual souls; and the transcendent creator, totally unconnected with creation, operates in the world as a mechanic operates a machine or a carpenter makes a table, a chair, etc. This is, in a way, a very basic way of thinking in a so-called logical fashion to justify how the Vedas, Upanishads, Tantras, etc., have been helpful. But that is not satisfactory because it is difficult to believe that God is so far away, unconnected with this world, and that so many people are unconnected among themselves. Everything is in chaos, as it were.

The Samkhya philosophy took up this argument in a different way altogether and said it cannot be so, that gods are somewhere and people are distanced and unconnected. There are only two things in the universe—consciousness and matter. There is nothing else. You may call it God or whatever you like. You feel an awareness inside you. The consciousness which feels that there is something outside calls that thing matter, which is outside consciousness. That which recognises this material existence is consciousness.

Technically, the Samkhya calls this consciousness which apprehends material existence as *purusha*. *Purusha* does not mean man. It simply means the positive principle of awareness. As a negative principle it is perceived as *prakriti*. Due to a particular conjunction of consciousness and matter, everything takes place, and there is no separate God outside. There is no necessity for this because it is possible to explain the whole drama of creation by a coming together, in various ways, of consciousness and matter.

This explanation was also not satisfactory, because who brings about the union of consciousness and matter? How does it happen? Consciousness cannot stand outside matter and then attempt to get united with it in some way or the other. The union of consciousness and matter is not possible unless there is an operator transcending both—an umpire who judges the action and operation of two things. Two people cannot resolve their conflict; a third person is necessary to make a judgment.

Thus yoga philosophy, apart from its practical techniques of meditation, etc. recognised a God who dispenses justice and sees to it that there is meaning behind the coming together of consciousness and matter, *purusha* and *prakriti*—a deistic God, a God who does not have any practical connection with the operations of *prakriti* and *purusha*. That deity was envisaged—a *deus ex machina*, as it is called, a convenient requirement that was posited—though it was not seen then what kind of connection this divinity can have with the operations of consciousness and matter. It was just a position maintained to get over the difficulties created by the earlier schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika. Even that was not satisfactory. They had to go further.

Suddenly, a state arose when the human mind reverted to the old concept of many gods. The religious awareness, the historical development of religious consciousness, does not seem to be a unilateral movement on a straight path—walking, as it were, along a paved road. It was moving; there was progression. There was also a kind of retrogression because of the suspicions of the mind which arise in any kind of adventure in life. So, once again, there was a reversal of the thinking mind and it came back to the original requirement dictated by the Brahmana scriptures. A logical approach was envisaged to justify the rituals and performances of sacrifice, etc., that were originally dictated by the Brahmanas in terms of the many gods in heaven. This once again arose, only in a different way; logic was added to it.

This logical acceptance of the original concept of the Brahmanas in respect of the divinities in heaven became the Mimamsa Shastra. It is also called Karma Mimamsa. Mimamsa means an enquiry into the nature of Truth. This enquiry took the form of assuming that there are many gods in heaven and they have to be worshipped—the very same position that was maintained earlier in the Brahmanas, only with a justification added to it by logical arguments. This did not take the feelings too far. It was just a halting place and there seemed to be something more, which position was taken up by the Vedanta school. What is the use of reverting once again, though logically, to the original position which has been transcended?

The Vedanta is actually the Upanishads themselves. Difficult are the Upanishads to understand. The Brahma Sutras attempted to codify certain statements of the Upanishads in order that things may become clear, but that did not work well because many commentaries were written

on the explanation itself, which is the Brahma Sutra—and we are nowhere, finally. So logically, further foundation had to be laid for intellectual satisfaction, and for the satisfaction of the human reasoning, by developments of the schools of thought which ultimately, in a group, are called the Vedanta.

Any school that considers God as the ultimate reality is called Vedanta. The goal of life is the realisation of God. If any school accepts this principle, that can be called Vedanta. But for various reasons the schools differed from one another in accepting that God-realisation is the ultimate goal. These reasons were: “Maybe what you say is correct. Let us realise God. We accept that realisation of God is ultimately the goal of life. But, where is God?” There the differences arose. Once again the old habit of thinking crept into the minds of people. One said that God is transcendent only and He can be reached only by deep affection and love for Him. You cannot satisfy somebody merely by rituals. Your heart has to go with it. This is the Bhakti Marga of Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Ballavha, Krishna Chaitanya Deva, and many others.

The Advaita school of thought is something quite different. It tries to unify all these principles. Bhakti is necessary; it is perfectly right. God may be transcendent, in one sense of the term. He is also immanent, in another sense of the term. Love of God is the way to reach Him because without affection you cannot contact Him, really speaking. All these are accepted by Advaita Vedanta; yet it says there is something more than all these things—namely, there is no point in bringing into the vision of perfection any duality, any discrepancy, any conflict, in any fashion whatsoever, such that there cannot be a distinction even between God and the soul, because if distinction is maintained, you are once again reverting to the old concept of duality, multiplicity, etc.

While all the dualities converge into the perception of a single unitary action of the universe, there is a doubt about the relationship between the human soul and God. That doubt also has to go. In what way are you concerned with God? Are you totally outside, or inside? Are you a servant of God? Are you a friend of God? What kind of person are you? These are all human considerations transplanted from the earth and placed in the kingdom of God. The human feelings do not leave us even when we logical argue things. After all, what is logic? It is only man-made thinking. So Advaita gave the final touch to the superstructure of logical thinking and concluded that there cannot be distinction of any kind, anywhere, between anything. There must be a total, absolute unitariness, Being itself, Existence, pure and simple, which is conscious of itself. It is ultimate freedom, therefore. *Satchit-ananda* is its nature. That alone is. Nothing else can be. This is Advaita's point.

Still, some deviations from the original Agamas and Tantras arose in a religious fashion—not in a ritualistic fashion, but in a specialised form of Agamas known as Vaishnava Agamas, Shaiva Agamas and Shakta Agamas. It was not enough to posit only Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Later on it also became necessary to concede a power that is inherent in these gods—and each god had a *shakti*, or a force. In common Puranic style the *shakti*, or the power of Brahma, is called Saraswati; the *shakti*, or power, of Vishnu is Lakshmi; the *shakti* of Siva is Durga, Parvati. It was felt that this *shakti* is inseparable from the god who wields it because you cannot have your power somewhere, and sit somewhere else. When you say you have power, you are identical with that power. It is only a conceptual distinction; the actual power cannot stand outside you. When you say fire is hot, the

heat is not outside fire. It is fire only. Likewise, Siva-Shakti *samyoga*, Lakshmi-Narayan *samyoga*, etc. were contemplated in the Agamas, which are known as the Shaiva Agamas, Vaishnava Agamas and Shakta Agamas, to bring to a halt any further discussion in the matter of religion—to say, once and for all, everything about religious awareness throughout the process of its development, right from the beginning till the modern day.

Here you have the whole history of religious awareness in Bharata-varsha—in India.

Chapter 16

PARTING ADVICE TO STUDENTS

You have come to a very holy place, as you know very well. There are many holy places in India. In my opinion this is the most holy of all places, for various reasons. Great stalwarts in spiritual eminence lived here. Sometimes the name of this place is spelled as Hrishikesh, or sometimes as Rishikesh, for different reasons. Originally it was known as Hrishikesh, the name of Narayana Bhagavan, Sri Krishna—God Himself. Why is it called Hrishikesh? It is because this entire region—right from Haridwar up to Badrinath, between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna—is called Brahma-varta. In the Manu Smriti it is stated that the land between Ganga and Yamuna is dominated by the power of Brahman. Tradition goes that Narayana and Nara, or Nara-Narayana, are the presiding principles of this entire area—of the whole country, of course—and they are supposed to be invisibly present in Badrinath even now.

There are two mountains in Badrinath. These mountains are called Nara and Narayana. It is possible that for the mortal eye these great beings look like two hills, though they may be actual embodiments of the great masters. In the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana it is said that in all creation, right from Brahma onwards, there is not one person who is not affected by desire; the only ones who are totally unaware of anything called desire are the Nara-Narayana *rishis*. This verse from the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana says that not even the mightiest of people can resist the temptation of some

particular kind of desire—and here, they have burnt their desire completely. It is believed that the total God, the divinity complete, is incarnate in this Narayana Bhumi.

It is also believed that Vyasa, the great master, is still, in an invisible form, living in Badrinath. Vasishtha is also there. Physically you can see nothing because the universal force that is present there cannot be seen by particular, physically bound individuals. It is Narayana's place. Deva Bhumi is this place. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a great visionary endowed with insight, whose words cannot be taken casually. Whatever word he uttered has immense significance. He used to say, "Nobody can keep his or her foot on the platform of the railway station of Rishikesh unless he has performed some great good deeds in the previous life. Otherwise, up to Haridwar he will come, and he will have diarrhoea, and he will go back from there itself. He will not reach Rishikesh at all. That is his karma." Many people have had this experience. They would set out for Badrinath *darshan* but in Rourkee itself they would fall sick and go back. It is a great wonder that you have been able to come to this holy place and have stayed here for two months.

This area is also sometimes known as Rishi because so many *rishis* lived here. The name for this particular locality, Muni-ki-reti, is significant. *Muni* is a saint or a sage. *Reti* is the sand. The sands trodden by this group of great masters, here, is Muni-ki-reti. You will notice, if you are a little attentive, that when you come from Rishikesh and cross Kailash Gate or Brahmanand Ashram and reach this side, you will find a different atmosphere altogether. Rishikesh town has one atmosphere, and when you cross the Brahmanand Ashram area you will find that there is something quite different here. What is different? Only your heart can say

what it is. The whole area is sanctified. And the breeze of this Ganga . . . People die for a bath in the Ganga, and you have the *darshan* of all this. From the Vedas onwards, Ganga has been praised. In the Vedas, from such ancient times, there is a record of the mighty Ganga. We are breathing, looking, seeing, touching, drinking this holy water. Is it not a blessing? And you have come to this place.

Apart from all this, you have the divine protection of this great stalwart master, Swami Sivananda himself. So my request to you all is that when you go back home, live up to this ideal of the dictum of The Divine Life Society which embodies the very personality of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He was not merely a human being; he was impersonality incarnate. He was neither like a man nor like a woman. When we looked at him, we could not know what was coming. It was some ‘thing’ coming. It was like a thing that was coming, not a human being. Such was his stature. And here you are, under his umbrella. The essence of his teaching and the quintessence of the way in which he lived is to be lived always—a kind of integrated life. There should not be any kind of fractional thinking, and no partiality, either this side or that side. Everything has to be brought into a consensus of togetherness in some way or the other, whatever be the manner and proportion of this adjustment, so that you have the compassion and the cooperation of the forces of nature and of God Almighty.

When you go from here, you may find yourself in a different atmosphere altogether. When you enter the family, you have father, mother, sister, brother, relations and so on. They will not talk to you in the way we talk to you here. You may be studying, or you may have already completed your studies. You may be in search of a job, or you may already

have a job. So, your circumstances will completely differ from the conditions and circumstances of this place. It is quite possible that everything that you studied here will be forgotten in one day when you go and find yourself in a different world altogether. Some of you work in the night shift and cannot find time to meditate. You are exhausted. Or, apart from night duty, even if it is daytime, oftentimes you have to work very hard. Officials or people who work in factories, whoever they are, sometimes have to work until very late in the night with papers, files and whatnot—on every kind of problem. With that fatigue they come back to the house with no thought except to take rest after having a little food. Even then, you must find a little time for breathing. Just as you have time for breathing—you do not say, “I am tired, I won’t breathe”—in a similar manner, a little time should be devoted for your isolated psychological existence. Physically you cannot be isolated because you are in a family. Everybody is there in the office; so many are there in the family. But, psychologically, you can consider yourself alone.

You have come to this world as a single, isolated individual. You did not bring any family with you. You had no father-mother consciousness. Nothing was there. The totally helpless little baby that you were came to this world with no belongings, no sense of relation to anybody. And when the time comes for anyone to leave this world, the same situation—the second childhood—will come. The first childhood is over, and the second childhood will make you totally helpless; and in such a condition you will realise that, really speaking, you are the same thing even at the end of life that you were when you were born into this world.

When a person is departing, who wants that person? When people do not want you as they appeared to want you earlier, when the time comes for leaving this world, do you realise who it is that really wants you? The illusion of social relations, family circumstances, political conditions, etc. makes you feel that everything is all right, that all is secure. But all this security that you see in the outer world is a mechanical arrangement created by the give-and-take policy of ideas of people, and they are not reliable, finally. Empires fall, kingdoms perish. Great people, holding high power, go to dust. Such things are possible in this world. So who is your friend, and who is your relative, and who actually wants you? Who is your friend? Think over this matter. In spite of that, in spite of this conclusion that perhaps you are totally alone psychologically, you have to discharge your duties in this particular situation into which you were born—socially, personally, and so on.

You have, therefore, several kinds of duties. You have a duty to yourself as a lone individual who has to take care of himself or herself. You are totally alone, and you mind your business. As long as you are in human society, you have some duty to that also. Of course, when you were born and were helpless as a little child, through the goodwill of the parents you were cared for, educated, and protected in many ways; and whoever has given you something, to that person too you owe something. So there is also a social duty which you have to discharge.

You have a duty to God Himself in the form of the divinities. The sun that is shining in the sky is responsible for your eyes operating properly, and every limb of your body, every organ, is controlled by a divinity that is not known to you. This is called, in traditional language, *yajna*, or

sacrifice. Sacrifice is a dedicated action of yours which pays due respect to different things in this world—what is called *brahma-yajna*. You have been educated very well. What is this knowledge that you have gained? From where has it come? The teachers and the professors have brought you to this level of understanding. The authors of books which helped you are also responsible for what you are today as intelligent, educated people. You have to pay respect, honour and regard to these great things. The textbook is a great divinity that has told you something wonderful. The author is a brilliant person, and he has given you knowledge. So is the professor, so is the teacher. The adoration that you offer and the respect that you show to the great literatures, the authors, professors and writers of scriptures is *brahma-yajna*, which is a sacrifice or a worship that you perform by the study of holy texts like the Bhagavadgita, Upanishad, Bible, or whatever it is.

God Himself is kind to you. You are breathing, you are digesting your food, and you are healthy because of the mercy of the Almighty. It is not possible to live in this world by one's personal effort only. With so many troubles and difficulties galore, you cannot handle the world singly. You require the cooperation and blessing of many forces of which you are not personally aware. This is *deva-yajna*, or the sacrifice that you have to offer to the gods. You have not seen the gods, but you can know that they are existing. Unknown things also have a great responsibility over you, and you have a responsibility over them.

There is *manush-yajna*—taking care of human beings. You have the power to give something. No one can be considered as so poor that he has nothing to give to anybody. Something is there. Even a good word, a cup of water when

someone is thirsty—any little thing that you have, whatever it is—is the respect that you show to other human beings. This is called *manush-yajna*. And, you have a duty to be compassionate to those who are helpless—like animals, for instance. You cannot kill them. You should not think that they are unwanted things. The consideration that you bestow upon subhuman beings is called *bhuta-yajna*.

Brahma-yajna, *deva-yajna*, *manush-yajna* and *bhuta-yajna*—in all ways you become a charitable person. Give and it shall be given. Whatever you have given, that will be given back to you in proportion, in an appropriate manner. You will never get anything which you have not given. This is very important to remember. Do not say, “I want this. I want that.” You will get it if you also, equally, have a share in this participation which is mutual and cooperative. Be a good person. This is the first and foremost of all your requirements. Let people say, “He is a good man.” You should also feel that there is nothing wrong with you.

Then, if possible, you can cooperate with the spiritual activities of the branches of The Divine Life Society which may be near you. There are hundreds of branches of The Divine Life Society throughout India and you may be near one of them, and you can render your assistance and be benefited by those activities. But if you are so capable and have such energy and power of understanding, you yourself can start a study circle. I am not saying that you should start a branch—just a study circle. Call your friends. You may be working in an office. You may have friends in the office, or anywhere. Wherever you are working, you must have colleagues around. Make friendship with them. Bring them together. “Let us have a good talk. Let us study this. What do you say? How do you feel?” Like school children

talk together, and just as co-educationists compare notes with one another for the purpose of exams and other things, you can have a study group. It is not that you do not have any friends at all. There must be somebody. Even in the midst of colleagues in the office you will find some people who are like you; and you may do some good to them, and they will also do some good to you. Start a study circle. If no one is there, even members of your family will be sufficient. You have a capacity, by the impact of your knowledge and cooperating power, to bring some sense into your family setup also. This is one of the things that you can do.

As you have come now as students in a specified manner, you may also come as an individual student—as a visitor, you may say—and stay here for some time. Refresh your memory and stay here for some time—once in a year or twice in a year—and make this place a centre of attraction for your educational career. Your education is not over. You may have some academic qualification or degree; that is one type of education. The knowledge of how to live in this world—that is a new education altogether. After all the study in college, you will find that you are helpless and you do not know how to get on in this world. You have to live in this world; you cannot run to another world. Therefore, you have to be fully equipped with the methods and ways of adjusting yourself to the conditions of life which are there to help you, to cooperate with you. They are not your opponents. These are some of the little tidbits of ideas that I have in my mind.

These things that you have heard from the teachers here can be gathered once again, for the purpose of retaining in your memory, by reading these textbooks. What you have heard here can also be found, in a concentrated form, in certain scriptures—like Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Read them

again and again with a commentary, because even though you have heard so many lectures, certain things may not be clear to you. Read them again with a good commentary. Read the Bhagavadgita with a good commentary; read the Upanishads, read the Bible, or whatever it is.

Every day you may keep a program of three things: meditation, *japa* of the Divine Name and *svadhyaya*, or study of a holy text. *Japa* of a holy mantra, meditation and study of a holy scripture—these three things are perhaps the ways of actual spiritual practice, or *sadhana*. You are not merely a man of God, but you are a man of the world also. You have to combine these two things at the same time. The world and God should sit together and shake hands in your personality, which is actually the outcome of your education in the manner that has been indicated here.

All things are well. You will be blessed. I have concluded, and I pray to the Almighty:

*Om tryambakam yajamahe
sugandhim pushtivardhanam
urvarukamiva bandhanan
mrityor mukshiya maamritat.*

Hari om tat sat.

Chapter 17

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The founder of this ashram, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, was ancient and modern at the same time. Highly traditional was his approach to things, and it was also highly modern at the same time. While we have to move with the times, we also have to gather the knowledge of the times in which we are living. Often a view is expressed that there is what is known as Western culture and Eastern culture, based on Western philosophic thought and Indian philosophic thought. To me it appears that there is no such gulf, either in thought or cultural patterns, between the East and the West. They are only certain types of emphasis laid because of conditions prevailing in areas of the world called the East or the West.

Knowledge is a universal equipment of a human being. It does not belong to any person and, therefore, it does not belong to the East or the West, or to the North or the South. It was with this point of view that the teachers who participate in this Academy have been chosen. They are proficient in Eastern thought, Western thought, and a synthesis of the two, at the same time.

It is necessary to shed every kind of prejudice when we aspire for knowledge. It can come from any side and in any manner, and it can take any form. In the Manu Smriti there is a beautiful passage: “We have to grasp wisdom even from the blabbering of a little child, if it is worthwhile.” You have to learn conduct and behaviour even from your enemy, if he is

really great. Do you not pick up a nugget of gold even if it is found in dirt? So is the way you have to acquire knowledge from every circle, from every source from which you can gather.

We always believe, as Indians, that we have reached the pinnacle of knowledge. The wisdom of the East is compared and believed to be the final touchstone of all things. As I mentioned to you, there should be no prejudice. There is a peculiar, interesting feature in Western thought which the Indian way of approach may miss and, vice versa, the Western analytic approach may miss the wisdom of the East. I suggested, many a time, that it is good to bring before the students certain areas of the height of knowledge of Western philosophy—such as the circle known as the Neo-Hegelians, who come close to the highest reaches of Vedanta philosophy. The professors said the students would not be able to understand these things because Neo-Hegelian thought is highly penetrating and incisive in its approach to things, and the students may not appreciate what all this means and it may go over their heads.

I feel that it is good to know as much as possible. Even if you do not fully understand the implications of certain things, it is good at least to hear them. You will at least appreciate that there are wonderful things in this world, though you may feel that they are beyond your present comprehension. There is a thrill in the acquisition of knowledge. If you are not thrilled, you have not touched it. Knowledge is not a methodology of gathering information, but a way of entering into the depths of things, and it is that which makes it worthwhile and enriches your feelings. If your feelings are stimulated and rise to a level above normal when you receive instruction or teaching, you may be sure that it has entered

your very blood, your very nerves and your very being. Teaching, in the strictest sense of the term, is not conveying information. It has a vital connection with your own existence. So, philosophy is both the doctrine or the science of being, and also the art of living. Both these aspects have to be emphasised.

I conclude this beautiful course of the Academy with a prayer that all shall be well because God is in heaven and everything is beautiful in this world. May you be blessed for ever and ever.

