

THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PURSUIT OF TOTAL BEING

This period of seven days has been designated as Sadhana Week, to be devoted especially to a continuous consideration of the processes of spiritual practice, with special emphasis on what we are actually to do, apart from a theoretical understanding of the *sadhana marga*. As the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in its eating. A pudding that we have not eaten is not going to benefit us. The meaning of the practice is to be clear before our mind before we say anything, or even think about it in a serious manner.

We perhaps may be under the impression that a practice is the process of doing something. Every one of us is doing something every day. We are busy with activities of various kinds, and this is a kind of practical living indeed. But spiritual practice has a different connotation altogether. The difference between these two aspects of practice—between ordinary doing in the humdrum workaday world and doing in the light of *sadhana* for spiritual attainment—is to be borne in mind.

Spiritual practice is actually the doing that emanates from our being, whereas ordinary activity in the world need not necessarily emanate in the same manner from our person. Works in which we are engaged in this world are mostly something like

a shirt or a coat that we put on, something that is mechanically foisted upon us, externally related to us, but not necessarily organically related with us.

This difference between organic relation or involvement and mechanical connections will be clear before our eyes. Spiritual practice is a doing that is vitally connected with our very existence itself—our being. We should develop *jnana chaksu*, or the eye of wisdom, the eye of knowledge, and know the difference between the eye of knowledge and the eye of perception.

Many of us seem to have a kind of knowledge. Anyone who has been educated may feel that there is knowledge associated with that educational process. But this knowledge is not wisdom; it is something that is characteristic of our perceptual processes, rather than what we are in our own selves. *Sadhana* is connected with what we are. Emphasise these words ‘what we are’ and not what we appear to be in terms of the sense organs, which perceive the world or engage themselves in any kind of external activity.

Many *sadhakas*, seekers of Truth, complain that after twenty or twenty-five years of practising intense meditation, tangible results do not seem to be before their mental eye. We seem to be the same people even after years of *japa*, *dhyana*, *svadhyaya*, *satsanga*, *guruseva*, and the like. The difficulty here is an incapacity on our part to distinguish between ordinary doing and the specialised form of engagement which is known as spiritual *sadhana*. Anything in which we are not vitally involved is not going to benefit us practically. If we engage

ourselves in any work with a reluctant, haphazard, complaining attitude, with a feeling of fatigue, we are not involved in it.

We are tired of work many a time. We get exhausted. This exhaustion, this fatigue, this feeling of tiredness in doing anything arises because of the fact that we are not wholly involved in the work. We can never be tired of ourselves. We must bear this in mind. We may be tired of somebody else, and we may be exhausted in doing work for the sake of something, somebody, externally, outwardly, but we will never be tired of anything that is really connected with ourselves. We can walk to Haridwar and back in the hot sun without feeling any exhaustion or fatigue if it is important for us, but we cannot even walk to Rishikesh if it is a work done for somebody else. It is 'me' that is involved here. To the extent that we are involved in a thing, to that extent success is certain.

The great adventure of spiritual *sadhana* is an adventure of the spirit in man. We have to bestow sufficient thought on this intricate issue before us. Let alone that great adventurous engagement called spiritual practice, even in our ordinary workaday life in the profession in which we are engaged, in the work that we do in our factory or even in our kitchen, to the extent that we are vitally involved in it, we will be actually performing a divine worship through that work. But if it is a job—a vocation for the purpose of earning our daily bread and limited only to a particular duration of hours, after which we will not be interested in it—then it is not connected with ourselves.

The most important thing in this world is yourself. To what extent you will be able to understand the meaning of this statement is left for each one of you. Do you believe that finally the quintessence of the whole of this life is yourself only? If everything goes, you will remain; and the endeavour of the human being is, finally, to maintain oneself and ask for the blessing of survival: If land, property and relations go, let me be alive. When you have a large treasure in your hand and are crossing a flooded river, will you save yourself and maintain your *prana*, or will you see that the gold that is in your hand is protected? The most valuable thing is yourself, and if this most valuable thing is not involved in the work that you do, everything that you do becomes valueless to that extent.

Whenever we are engaged in any practice or work, we should be wholly involved. Now I am adding another word, 'wholly'. In the beginning I said we should be involved, which is very important indeed, and now I am saying that we should be entirely involved. Very rarely are we entirely involved in anything in our daily life. We are fractionally involved in our workday. It is only to the extent that we feel a need for involvement in any particular work that a part of our personality contributes its might for the execution of that work. There is intellectual activity, where the intellect alone operates and the feelings may sleep at that time, and there are other things in this world where the feeling is predominant and the intellect may not be operating. Sometimes we work mechanically

with our hands and feet, without the brain or the feelings. These are fragmentary operations of our personality. Rarely are we wholly involved in anything. We, as a total, never come up to the surface of any operation.

Great masters have told us through their direct experience that on certain occasions we are wholly operative. For instance, in deep dreamless sleep, the entire being acts. That is why we are so happy in the state of deep sleep, which cannot be compared with even the emperorship of the world because the joy of a king is connected with possessions which are extraneous to his real being, and therefore the joy is also extraneous. It is something that is foisted upon him; it is not something that is emanating from his being. In deep dreamless sleep, the whole being operates—the total personality. When we are drowning in water and we feel that there is no hope, that the last minute has come, the struggle in which we will be engaged at that time will be the struggle of our total personality. We would like to catch a straw that is floating on the water, though we know very well that a straw is not going to protect us. Many of you may not have the experience of drowning, so this is only theoretical. If you have actually gone into the Ganges and felt that your life is going, that everything is over, you will know what this feeling is.

Imagine that you have gained the whole world, and have no opponent before you. It is said that in this condition of feeling and satisfaction, the whole being operates. And the other condition in which

your entire being may operate is when you have lost everything. If your last penny has gone, nobody wants to look at your face, the very ground under your feet is shaking and you do not know how many minutes more you are going to live in this world, what you feel at that time is the total action taking place in your personality.

In deep meditation also, this totality of person is to engage itself. You may sit in the meditation hall, counting the beads and thinking the words of the mantra. You may be honest and sincere in this, yet your whole being may not be there because many other extraneous thoughts also will be there, pouring around you: "For how many minutes more do I have to sit for meditation? What is next on the agenda? What do I have to do tomorrow?" These ideas and anything else, even that which is connected with your family from which you are away for the time being, will slowly intrude into your mind and distract your attention.

Are you pursuing God? You know if it is so. Every one of you will say, "In my *sadhana*, my endeavour is to attain God. My pursuit is God." Do you know what 'God' means? Here again, a fractional concept will not do. You have been told by *mahatmas*, saints and sages, and scriptures that God is Total Being. The whole of existence is God; there is nothing outside. *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat* (Gita 7.7): There is nothing external or higher than God. If the Total Being, external to which there can be nothing, is the object of your pursuit, what would you think is your relationship with that Being during the period of your *sadhana*? Think for

a few minutes: “What should be my attitude? What would be my attitude, what would be my feeling at that time, if I am in a position to entertain in my mind this concept of Total Being, which is God?” If you really feel it, your whole personality will shudder at that time, not due to fear but because of an immense, incalculable, uncontrollable happiness that you feel inside. You may shudder either due to extreme joy or extreme fear. An unimaginable, incomprehensible feeling of Total Being that you are will rise to the surface of conscious experience when you honestly contemplate this possibility of there being such a thing called Total Being. “I am pursuing that.”

If your pursuit is of Total Being, the means that you adopt for the attainment of that Being also should have the characteristic of Totality, and it should not be fragmented. You are not giving a penny of practice to God for the sake of attaining that total comprehensiveness. You know very well that God knows you much more than you know yourself or anybody else. Nobody can deceive Him.

The means and the end should be commensurate with each other. There should be an establishment of harmony between the means and the end. If the end is a total comprehensiveness of God-being, the means cannot be a fraction, a fragment, a part, a finitude. An element of infinitude should also be there in the practice for the sake of the attainment of the Infinite, which is *sadhana*. You may be wondering, “How would I succeed in introducing an element of infinitude into my

practical *sadhana*, which seems to be something that I am doing as a finite being?"

The concept of the Infinite itself is adequate for you. In this connection, you may bring to your mind the suggestion of Patanjali Maharishi in one of his *sutras*, where he suggests a method for establishing oneself with steady *sadhana*. *Prayanta śaithilya ananta samāpattibhyām* (Yoga Sutras 2.47): You are fixed in steady posture or *asana* by relaxation of effort and contemplation on the Infinite. This is a suggestion of Patanjali Maharishi. Distraction—inability to sit for a long time—arises on account of the consciousness of something outside you. Now the suggestion of the great sage Patanjali is to let there not be a concept of what is outside. Even the concept of the Infinite is adequate to bring about a steadfastness in yourself. A conceptual Infinite is a preparation for the actual experience of the Infinite. *Svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt* (Gita 2.20): Even a single step that you take in the direction of this achievement will be a great asset to you. Even if you feel in your heart, "I want only God, the Total Being," your sins are destroyed at that moment. *Jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā* (Gita 4.37): Mountains of straw can be set ablaze and reduced to ashes by a spark of fire emanating from a matchstick; such is the power of knowledge.

So, may I repeat to you once again, whatever be the *sadhana* in which you are going to be engaged, let it be the doing of your whole being. We have a great difficulty in manifesting our whole being in anything. Even when we speak, we speak

reluctantly, half-heartedly, shallowly, and our being does not come to the surface. If you speak—underline the word ‘you’—you do not need any vocabulary. Language and poetry will come automatically even from an illiterate person, in the ordinary sense of the term, provided his being speaks. Great poets, dramatists and literati in this world were, from the modern educational point of view, illiterate. Whether it is a fisherman or a carpenter, a Kalidasa or a Shakespeare, they are great masters whose poetry we cannot comprehend. There is an element of perfection in every one of us, and it is that element that is to be brought forward in our daily life.

You must remember that *sadhana* is a benefit to you in your ordinary workaday existence. Even in your factory, office, clinical job, management work, cooking or driving, you will be a perfect master. Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say, “My disciple is the best in everything. He can digest any food. If he starts sweeping, he will sweep the floor more cleanly than a sweeper does. If my disciple washes a vessel, it will be more clean than anybody else does. When he speaks, he will speak better than anybody else, and when he serves, he will serve more satisfactorily and with greater humility than anybody else. My disciple is best everywhere.” These are Gurudev’s words.

You are the best, because the element of perfection is in you. The drawing of the inner perfection in you is the requirement in spiritual *sadhana*. If the element of perfection in you cannot be drawn out and you remain the same ordinary

person that you were, your achievement also will be fractional.

What is your problem? I cannot concentrate my mind for a long time. I cannot sit for a continuous period of meditation. Everything is difficult, because the difficulty is myself only. I am the difficulty. The great difficulty is myself. I do not really want what I am supposed to be wanting externally, ritualistically, or in the way of routine practice. Even when we want a thing, we do not want it wholly. This is the malady with us. Even if we want something in this world, we do not want it wholly; we want it only fractionally. This is because when we want a thing, we should not want anything else.

Have you understood this point, this psychology? When you have love for a thing, require a thing, need a thing or want a thing, you segregate something else from that wanting, and there is conflict inwardly established psychologically, psychoanalytically, between what you want and what you isolated as something irrelevant, and then the whole being is incapable of acting. It is said by the great master, "Ask, and it shall be given." But who will ask? You say you have asked many times, but you as a whole being have not asked. Actually, there is nothing in this world which we cannot achieve and attain if our whole being asks for it. The universe is generous enough to grant in abundance that which we seek, provided we seek and our asking is honest, sincere and emanates from our total being.

These are a few ideas that came to my mind as a kind of introductory remark, which is very important before I endeavour to tell you something which is going to be a practical guideline for you during these coming days: what type of *sadhana* you can resort to according to the knowledge and capacity with which you are endowed at this present moment; how you can choose a particular path, and how careful you have to be in this choice; what your relationship with your master, Guru or mentor should be, and what mistakes you should not commit in your relationship with your master or Guru; what error you should avoid in your choice of the method of practice; what obstacles you are likely to face in your *sadhana*, and what benefits will accrue to you if you are one hundred percent honest. To thine own Self be true. With these few words, I close today.

Chapter 2

CHOOSING THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL

All effort is obviously in a direction of the pursuit of an ideal, and so it is in the case of spiritual efforts. What is the ideal that one is after when engaging in spiritual *sadhana*? What we consider as an ideal before us is something which fulfils all our requirements, all our needs, and fills us with a complete satisfaction; only then can it be regarded as an ideal.

It is well known to every one of us that our efforts are towards a satisfaction which has to be complete if it would be practicable—or, if not complete, it should at least approximate as much as possible to that completeness which is the object of our quest. It is certain that none of us are pursuing a little bit of something in a haphazard manner. We do not just pick up little grains here and there, as particles of our joy; and even when it appears that we gather only particles, our intention behind this effort is to make it a large quantum of immensity, to the extent of completeness. It should become a granary of satisfaction. Every ideal that we have in our mind is that which is supposed to promise the satisfaction that we are asking for.

It is also well known to every one of us that things in the world do not easily satisfy us because the objects, the things or commodities of the world, have their own limitations, as everything excludes something other than itself. The world is made in

such a way that its parts or constituents cannot exclude each other with impunity. The world is a complete whole by itself. Even this very Earth on which we are seated is a completeness. The Earth, this world, is not a fragment or a patchwork of little things mechanically dovetailed and made to appear as if it is complete. The Earth is an organic completeness, and so is the world.

Therefore, when we choose an ideal, especially as seekers of Truth, searchers for God, we should be sure in our own minds that the ideal we have chosen is satisfying. The satisfaction expected can be available only in that which is complete in itself. A fraction cannot bestow upon us a total satisfaction. If we want something in this world, that something should not be a fraction of the world, because there are other things which are excluded by this fraction and they will impinge upon the very survival and existence of this little fraction to which we are clinging, and make it miserable in its very being. A fraction cannot promise a complete satisfaction.

Are there things in this world which are not parts, and can promise a wholeness of satisfaction? Here, in consideration of matters like this, when we delve into a subject of this kind, we have to be very concentrated in our minds. These things are not easy to understand in a casual manner. Are there complete things in this world? Is there anything in this world which is regarded as complete in itself, so that when we have it, we do not want anything else? We have seen in our experience, and by the study of human history, that there was nobody in

this world who could catch something and say it is everything.

We have also noticed in our own practical, personal life—during the period of our tenure from birth up to this time—that while we have been pursuing ideals and ideas of different types, we were not fully satisfied with any of them. Suffice it to say that nothing in this world seems to be satisfying fully—though, to our blind eyes, it appears that things can at least satisfy us partially. But whether they can satisfy us even partially is again a matter of doubt. There also, we may be under an illusion.

Let us take for granted that partial satisfactions are possible in terms of possessing partially available finite things in this world. But spiritual pursuit is not a pursuit of partial fragments or finite entities. In a verse of the Bhagavadgita we are told: *yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahetukam, atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam* (Gita 18.22). The worst kind of knowledge is that which is *tamasic* in its nature; we cling to one thing under the impression that it is everything, like a mother clings to her child or a businessman clings to his money as if it is heaven itself. There are heavens of different kinds in this world which we hug under the impression that this particular thing is all things. One thing is everything for us, though such a feeling is a self-contradiction.

To go a little further in the analysis of the categories of knowledge under the scheme of the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita which I have mentioned just now, the Lord says that the

knowledge or idea by which we cling to one thing only, under the impression that it is everything, is the worst. Better than that is when we run after something with the knowledge that it is not all things, but it appears to be satisfying and has the impression of being everything on account of its interconnectedness with all things.

If we approach a Member of Parliament, we have a dual feeling regarding that person. As an individual he is only a fraction, one among the hundreds of constituents of the body of that Parliament and, from that point of view, we are approaching only a fraction when we speak to him; but at the same time, we have an undercurrent of feeling that he is related to the whole body of Parliament, so there is a totality behind him operating as a force that can act through the individuality of that single person, notwithstanding the fact that he is an individual, isolated from other Members.

This is the weakness as well as the strength of social organisations, including political organisations. The weakness is that each member is different from every other member. I cannot be you, and you cannot be me—I am what I am, and you are what you are—yet we can form a body called a social organisation. It may be a society, a trust, a business partnership, or it may be a state organisation, a parliament, a kingdom. It may be anything. Here, individually, each part looks like a fragment, no doubt, but it has the backing of a force which is called the organisational idea. This is a better kind of knowledge. This is *rajasic*, says the

Lord. For instance, if we approach a District Collector, we are approaching one person, and in that light it is a finite thing because he also is a human being like us; yet, there is a universality behind him, a largeness behind the appearance of his personality as a Collector, which is the governmental organisation. He represents not merely himself, but a total force called the government. We can touch the whole body of government through the medium of his personality. This knowledge, while it concentrates itself on one thing for a practical purpose, bears in mind at the same time that it is a part of a total world; therefore, it is a better kind of knowledge.

But the best kind of knowledge, the highest, is *sattvic*, where we do not cling to any one thing as an isolated, segregated part of a larger quantity of particulars, nor do we have to strain our mind to concentrate on the undercurrent of a force of interconnectedness being there behind an individual while we approach the individual. We can be directly in union with the indivisible wholeness, *akhanda tattva*. Undivided Reality can be the concern of our whole being.

Now I am slowly moving forward from what I told you yesterday. The wholeness of our being was a subject on which we bestowed some thought earlier. I just mentioned that according to Bhagavan Sri Krishna's analysis of the categories of knowledge, the highest is God-vision, *sattvic* knowledge, which will present before us an indivisible, undivided completeness—not a completeness of the organisational type where the

wholeness is only an appearance of the coming together of many parts, but a real indivisibility. What we consider as God is such an indivisibility. God is not made of little parts, God is not a social organisation, and God is not the head of a family or society. He is Existence, pure and simple.

This being the object finally in all spiritual endeavours, you have to properly define your ideal before you choose it for the purpose of worship and meditation. Religion takes the form of the worship of an ideal. In every religion, there is a prayer, a worship, a dedication, a search and a seeking—a deep bond. The speciality of religious aspiration, as distinguished from longings of other types in the world, is that the religious seeker is conscious right from the very beginning that the ideal pursued is to bring a complete satisfaction to the soul that seeks. The businessman does not think of his soul; he thinks of an aperture or a medium of perception which is narrow in its connotation and capacity. Our workaday world is concerned only with the survival of the physical personality, the family makeup, and every other relationship of a social nature. Who thinks of the soul? Has anyone the time to think that there is a soul within? When do we know that we are the soul? We are a Mr. or Mrs., we are this person or that person. All our definitions of ourselves are relative. If we ask ourselves who we are, or somebody asks us who we are, we will define ourselves as something connected to something else. We are the connection to our job, profession, business, wealth, property, family. There are umpteen things in terms of which

we can say we are such and such a person. Are we nothing by ourselves, apart from what we appear to be in relation to everybody else? Before God, do not speak like this: "I am the son of So-and-so." Are you anything else, other than being the son of So-and-so?

Neither the definition of God nor the definition of our own self can be relatively construed. God is also something other than the Creator of this universe, *srishti karta*, because God existed even before creation took place, so calling God the Creator is not a complete definition of God. What was He before He created? Even calling Him all-pervading, all-knowing, all-powerful is a relatively construed definition. Space, time and causation are brought before our mind's eye when we define God in this manner. If there is no space, *akasha tattva*, the definition that He is all pervading will be inadequate. If there are not many things which are the created objects of God Himself, the definition that God is all-knowing will also be inadequate. If there is nothing over which He has to exercise authority or power because creation has not yet taken place, the definition that He is all-powerful will also not be adequate.

So, what else is He? Only our soul can say what He is. As we cannot say what the soul is, so also we cannot know what God is. As we define our soul in terms of the body, we are defining God in terms of creation. Neither creation nor the body can be regarded as the proper media of expression in terms of a definition of oneself, or God Himself. There is a wholeness of our personality which is

seeking after a wholeness which is called God. We have to remember always that we want everything in a wholesome manner. The mind has to work in a wholesome fashion; if it cannot, then it is lacking in a complete picture of sanity or logicity. When the body is whole, we call it health, when the mind is whole, we call it sanity and logicity, and when the soul is whole, we call it perfection of being. Wherever this wholeness is absent, disease creeps in. We are irked by the feeling of something not being all right. If the mind is not operating in a wholesome fashion, it will not permit the body to work in wholesome manner. We will not have even a good appetite to eat our daily meal, due to a fragmentary operation of the mind.

Most of our difficulties, even physiologically, are psychologically constituted. We are mentally not happy people. How could the body be happy? How could it eat its meal when the ruler of this body, which is the mind, is distressed for a reason which it cannot understand? Little bits of operation in the mind seem to be our daily occupation. From early morning onwards till evening, small bits of mental activity take place, and we know what the little bits of thoughts are that occur to our mind. We have a business of life, which is made of various pursuits. We put them together into the basket of our outlook of life, and they remain there in that basket in a disorderly heap, one over the other. They are there, but they are not vitally connected, one with the other. If the vitality, the wholeness, the organicity of mental makeup is absent, we cannot be happy in this world even for one minute. There

is an agitation inside, a disturbance; something is rumbling inside and telling us that something is not okay with us, which is another way of saying that something is not all right with our mind itself. Put a question to yourself: Is something not all right with me? What is not all right is the incapacity to think in a wholesome fashion.

The ideal before us, as spiritual seekers, is that in which we can visualise a wholeness. Even the Guru is a whole before you. Most of us cannot imagine who a Guru is. That he is one person seated in front of you is perhaps your notion of a Guru, but the person seated in front of you is not the Guru. The person who envelopes you from all sides and rises above you is the Guru. The physical body of the Guru cannot so envelope you. But the Guru is not the physical personality which you see with your eyes. It is a force. I have mentioned the example of a District Collector. Physically he is seated in front of you, but really he envelopes you as a power pervading the whole district over which he has control—in which case he pervades you also, though you look like a person seated in front of him. Not only does he pervade you, he transcends you. He is above every individual in the jurisdiction of his operation. This is a practical example before you to understand how the so-called appearance of a person seated in front of you may also be something more than that person, larger than the dimension of the physical body of that individual—transcending, not merely enveloping.

Guru, God, or the ideal that we choose has two characteristics. Firstly, it is immanent as an

enveloping principle; it is also transcendent as something above what we are. This principle of the concept of our chosen ideal—Guru or God, or whatever it is—being something which is an enveloping, pervading power and a transcendent element at the same time will easily escape our notice. Therefore, in one important sense, we may say a Guru cannot die. As God cannot die, our ideal also cannot die, because what we pursue as an ideal of our spiritual aspiration is not a physical object. The Guru also is not a physical, physiological, anatomical personality. God also is not something that can vanish someday. If God is an ultimate consciousness, which is undividedly existing everywhere, Guru is also an undivided consciousness. Do not say, “My Guru is gone; now I am in search of another Guru.” Then you can search for another God also, when one God is gone. And when you die, you can become another person altogether. Neither do you become another person after the death of the physical body, nor does the Guru cease to be after he vanishes physically, nor is it true that God can become something else at different times. There is an undivided continuity of process—which this world is, which this creation is, which you yourself are, which your Guru is, which God is, which your ideal is. In your daily worship, even of the ritualistic type that we have taken as an instance before us, we have a system of bringing about an atmosphere of wholeness in the act of worship.

During these days of our consideration of the implications of spiritual *sadhana*, we will go

gradually, stage by stage, from the first to the second, and from the second to the third, as the final meaning of spiritual *sadhana*. The initial effort of a spiritual seeker, a religious aspirant, may take the form of ritualistic worship in a temple or church, or before an altar at home, where you place an ideal of an idol—a portrait, a diagram or some symbol which you worship. But how do you worship? Here again you have to bring into focus the element of a wholeness, which is necessary in the worship so it may become vitally charged. *Prana pratishtha*, as it is usually called, is done. You infuse *prana* into that ideal—the idol, or whatever you have kept in front of you as an object of your worship. Even this little ritualistic idol before you is not a piece of metal, it is not a framed picture or a diagram; it is vitality.

How does it become vital? What is the meaning of *prana pratishtha*? The interjection of vitality, or *prana*, or soul into the body of that idol is *prana pratistha*. If you enter into it, it becomes vitalised. If you stand outside it, it becomes an ordinary wooden piece or a stone. It will be a *shaligrama* without any meaning.

How would you enter into it? If you cannot enter into that ideal that you are worshipping as a little picture or an object of devotion, and it is something like a commodity or a property that you have in your pocket, it is not your god. It can be a god. Even a little *lingam* that you keep in front of you can become your god and protect you if it has assumed life, and it assumes life only when it becomes one with you. It becomes one with you in a twofold

manner—by immanence, as well as transcendence, to mention once again the principle of the largeness in quantity as well as quality of the ideal before us. It is a Guru before you. It can speak to you. When you read the lives of saints, you are face to face with the great, wonderful facts of devotees, *bhaktas*, being able to speak to the idol—which, to the crass material perception, looks like a stone image. Vithoba of Pandharpur spoke to Purandara Dasa, to Tukaram, to Jnanadev, to Eknath. How did he speak to them? To the material vision, the idol is the substance out of which it is made, but for a spiritual vision it is one thing with which everything else is also connected. It is a focusing point of a universal organisation called God-consciousness. That is why the whole universe affects it due to your capacity to worship it in that manner.

In temple worship you may have seen that the priests, if they are well-versed in the art of worship, do some gestures called *anganyasa* and *karanyasa*. I am not going into the details of what it means. The point is, they do something in the act of deep concentration of their mind. It is very important. The mind has to be concentrated, and it is not merely a gesture performed outwardly. With these gestures, the priests place the parts of the body of the ideal, idol, or deity in the corresponding parts of their own body. Its head is my head, its eyes are my eyes, its hands are my hands, its feet are my feet. All the limbs of the deity are my limbs, and the total of the limbs of the idol before me has entered into me. When this entry takes place, you are in a state called *avesha*. You become possessed at that time. If

this being possessed is true and actually takes place, you will be not able to contain yourself at that time. You will be ecstatic in your feeling of a transcendence that has taken possession of you. You will sing poetry at that time, you will dance to the tune of a voice that you hear, and then you will not be the worshipper; you are the worshipped yourself, if this *nyasa* has been done properly.

Even in this lowest form of so-called ritualistic worship, the identity of the ideal with the seeking soul becomes very important. The point to be emphasised here is that everything has to be a completeness. You never want a part. It is not one idol among the many idols that you are worshipping; it is the wholeness.

I bring to your memory once again the categorisation of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in terms of the degrees of knowledge. From the point of vision of the little idol, it is only one among many other idols you can have anywhere. But in the light of its being something which is charged with the force of its connection with other things in the world, it is an organisation of power, and it can work wonders, as one official can work wonders in an organisation of which he is a part. But, more important than all this is your being one with it. Then it will speak through you, and you will speak through it.

The choice of the ideal is the first thing before us, and the ideal has to be very clear. The clarity of the ideal includes the conviction that it is the only thing that you want, and it does not need something else also added to it to make it complete. When I say I want this, it means I want nothing else. If you

say you want this and also something else, this is not going to be complete. You will lose even the iron axe when you are searching for the golden axe. If you want one thing under the impression that it is only one among many things which are equally important and you may have them also after some time, you are giving scant respect to this particular thing. You are dishonest to it; you are not true to yourself, and that will not be true to you also. Then it is that you lose all that belongs to you. All your belongings will go, because they have not been properly respected. You cannot possess a thing for which you do not have real love and respect. "Well, sir, I love you, but there are other things also which I can love." "All right, if that is the case, you mind your business, and I will mind my business," is what the object of love will say. It may not say it verbally, but it will say from its soul.

Philosophers tell us that there is a dual way of connection of one thing with another thing in the world. One is called apprehension, the other is called prehension. Apprehension is the outward perception of a relation of one thing with another thing. When I see you and do not mind your being unconnected to something else, it is what is called ordinary apprehension. You know that you are one among the many people seated here; either you are connected to them, or you are not connected to them. But prehension is a different thing. It is a state of affairs wherein you appear to give the impression of the wholeness of attention to a particular person, while inwardly your mind is also elsewhere at same time. That particular thing—the

person or object—may not be apprehensively conscious of this subtle undercurrent of action taking place, but prehensively it will know that is not being properly respected.

There are no dead things in this world. Every little atom has eyes to see. If walls have ears, even a sand particle has eyes to see. So the soul of that particular thing, object or person will prehensively know that you are not honest with it. Your mind is also elsewhere at same time, which you can cling to if this does not operate. “If this goes, I will go to the other thing.” But if you think, “You are all things and I shall have nothing else,” it will speak to you in the voice of the whole universe.

Can you choose one ideal in this world, one thing that you can be sure is all things? Yesterday I mentioned the saying of a great master, that if you honestly ask for a thing, it shall be given to you. Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions in the Bhagavadgita: *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣām nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemam vahāmy aham* (Gita 9.22): The object of your love will come to you and protect you, and give you everything that you want, if you want it undividedly. But if your devotion is divided, multifold, your prospect of having anything in this world goes.

So, to come to the point once again, choose your ideal, whatever that ideal be, but do not be dishonest to that ideal. Let your heart, the deepest recesses of being, tell you, “I am not after anything else. This is all things.” And even when it appears to be only one thing, it can become all things by its

connection with other things in the universe by its being a focusing point of the cosmic forces operating everywhere through the five elements—finally, its being a location for the pervasion and entry of the Eternal Being Himself. Eternity is moving in time, and therefore that Eternal Being can be present even in this temporal object, which would otherwise be a little ideal before you. So the bringing together of eternity and temporality, universality and particularity, outwardness and inwardness, is the great task before you in the choice of your spiritual ideal.

Chapter 3

CONCENTRATING ON THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL

The object of concentration in our spiritual endeavour is the great ideal before us which we choose with great care and caution, the implications of which were already considered in some detail. The ideal that we have chosen is the object of concentration and meditation. We have to bring to bear upon our mind again and again the fact that the ideal that we have chosen is complete in itself—a very important point, which is always likely to slip from our mind.

The most difficult situation that we face in our process of concentration and meditation is half-hearted interest in the ideal. Though I tried to explain why the ideal should possess us entirely, the mind has its own ways of tricking the seeker, the student of Yoga, and whispering into his ear, “Whatever ideal you have chosen for your concentration or meditation cannot be all-in-all because, my dear friend, don't you see many other equally good ideals in the world which can satisfy you in many other ways?”

The multiplicity of ideals presented before the mind due to our old habits of seeing many things through the eyes will intrude again and again, and distract our attention. It will be difficult for us to accommodate ourselves to the required conviction that the ideal is all-in-all because we are

accustomed to think that nothing in the world can be all-in-all. With a force of effort and understanding—power of analysis—we have to convince ourselves that the ideal is complete in every way; it is not just one thing among many other things.

Suppose, for the purpose of a theoretical argument, that the ideal is one among many other possible ideals; notwithstanding this fact that this one ideal appears to be one among many others, it can take us to the total involvement of the whole creation. As I mentioned by way of illustration, one single official of a government can take us to the entire government by his interconnection, interrelatedness. Any object, any ideal, any picture, any thought, any god, any divinity, any beloved can take us to the Total, because the total cosmos charges itself powerfully upon every little part in this world. As every cell in the body is charged with the power of the whole body, every particle of creation is charged with the power of the whole cosmos. Therefore, we need not fear that we are catching a part, only one among many possible things. Even supposing that it appears to be one among many other things, there is no harm in pursuing that one thing. A river is only one among many other rivers in this world, and one river is not the same as another river; yet, through any river we can reach the ocean which consumes all the rivers. As all rivers lead to the same ocean, every object will take us to the cosmical setup of things, God Almighty, thus bringing into the mind a conviction driven forcefully every day, every minute, every

moment, that what we have chosen is perfectly good enough and there should be no occasion of distraction or diversion of attention.

What are you going to think in the mind, or with what kind of visualisation are you going to engage yourself in your concentration or worship process? Since looking at things, seeing with the eyes, is the usual habit of the human personality—pre-eminently more than the activity of any other sense organ because of the fact that the mind thinks mostly in terms of perceptible things—you may visualise your divinity, your god, your ideal with open eyes. What is that thing that you see with your eyes?

You are now in the most initial step of spiritual practice. You are taking the first step, second step or third step, as it were, where it is necessary for the mind to hang on something which is capable of visualisation in terms of perception through the eyes. This is why you keep an idol before you—a *mandala*, a diagram, *yantra* or a written mantra, a god in a temple or an altar of worship, a painted picture or a portrait or a sculptural piece—some holy atmosphere which is visible to the eyes. It may be a *chidambaram*, an empty space of godly atmosphere, yet it is something capable of visual perception.

It is not always necessary to open your eyes in order to concentrate on your ideal. But, inasmuch as the habit of the mind is to think in terms of visual perception only, and concentration practised by closing the eyes may lead to a super-lethargic condition and even a kind of sleepiness, the earliest

stages may begin with visualised, open-eyed perception of your god. When you see a thing that you like, you feel happier than when you visualise it mentally without actually looking at it. Would you not like to see a thing which you like, or would you prefer to merely think of it by closing the eyes? In the earliest of stages, it is better to look at it, embrace it, love it, praise it, sing its glories and say it is all things for you. This is how the great saints of Maharashtra, for instance, sang and danced in front of the idol Vittala in Pandapur. They danced in ecstasy because they saw what they wanted to see.

So, each one of you may choose whatever can be a visible pictorial form of your idol. Some god has to be in front of you, so that you may worship it. It can even be a sacred scripture—the Bible, the Bhagavadgita, the Ramayana, the Srimad Bhagavatam, or a written mantra. Even that is a god, a divinity, if you really have faith in it. But you can feel God as a person, which is the usual way of conceiving God, by letting that person be in front of you. The Universal Person has descended into a concrete form and centralised Himself in your presence in this visual presentation of a deity. It may be a painted picture or a sculptural ideal—whatever it is, you would like to have it. Feel that this thing in front of you is a ray of radiance which is coming from the sun, inundating the atmosphere of all creation. When you see a little ray of light passing through the aperture of the screen in your room, do you not feel that it is coming from the sun in the sky, and the entire sun's force is in that piercing medium of the ray that is peeping through

your window? The sun is behind that little incarnation of the sun in the form of the ray. So bring into the focus of your attention this fact that the cosmic person—God Almighty or whatever be the name that you give to Him in terms of Hinduism or Christianity or Buddhism, whatever it is—is that great person.

Maha Purusha, Almighty Lord, your Heart of hearts, your beloved Father in heaven, God Almighty is this object in front, which is the vehicle which carries the total force of that of which it is an incarnation. You are actually worshiping and are face to face with that total power of the creative energy in the visible form of the object.

It is easier to conceive God as a person capable of human feelings and human characteristics, though it is not always necessary to consider the ideal of concentration in human form only. As I mentioned, it can even be a diagram or a stone like a *saligrama*, a *sivalinga*, a *spatika*—or anything, for the matter of that.

But the weaknesses of the mind are also to be taken into consideration. We cannot love everything equally, on account of the absence of the human element. We can love a cow or buffalo which gives good milk, we can love the horse on which we ride, but we cannot love them as much as we love our father and mother, son or daughter, husband or wife, because we are human beings and we cannot entirely avoid the need felt inside to conceive things in a human form. That is why we say God, the Father in heaven, and do not say the Cow in heaven. Though a cow is good enough, of course, we cannot

think in that manner. This is a characteristic of human nature.

We have to move from manhood to supermanhood, from humanity to super-humanity, from the way of thinking as a human being to the way of thinking as a superhuman entity. This is the reason why we would like to have something before us which is conceivable in terms of human presentation. We sing the glories of God, not as a stone, a picture or a diagram in front of us, but as a great person in front of us. We may sing the glory of Christ or the Father in heaven, or Narayana, Vishnu or Rama, or whatever it is. Do we not sing the glories of these divinities in our own language in terms of scriptural presentations? That is human language that we adopt, acceptable to one who can understand the human style of speaking. When we sing in our own language, we know that our God understands that language, because that language which we speak is the vehicle of our feelings. Though our feelings are not always expressed in terms of language, when we speak or sing, we express the feelings in language. The Englishman's feeling and the Indian's feeling may be identical as far as the psychological function is concerned, but the expression is different because one will express it in English and the other will speak in an Indian language.

Scriptures have also given us certain instructions and guidelines as to how we can move our mind around the area of the location of our ideal. Taking for granted that the god in front of us can be concentrated on in a humanly conceivable

form, open your eyes and pour your love on it, as you pour your love on a large treasure which will entirely sustain you for a lifetime. What does a mother feel when her first child is born after twenty years of marriage? The whole world, the entire creation is scintillating through that little baby, and she will forget everything else. She will not like to eat or sleep due to the joy of having the great treasure of the cosmos that has come to her in the form of this little child after years of contemplation and prayers. Only a parent who has had no child for many years can understand what it means; otherwise it is a theoretical imagination. You must know what it means practically. A jobless man who has been walking the streets in the hot sun suddenly finds a job that will fetch him a fortune. Can you imagine that joy that he experiences? You must practically know it. If a starving person has a sumptuous meal, it will fill him with heavenly joy. Imagine what he feels at that time.

My love is my love. It cannot be effectively magnified by any additional qualification. When I say this is my love, I have said everything about it, and you should not add any further word or phrase to qualify it, because any additional qualification will not add to its glory; it will only diminish its content. In the same way, when you say God is, you have said everything. You should not say God is this and that. That is not adding to His greatness. So, the object of your love is the object of your love. There is nothing more to be said about it, and only you know what it means to love a thing which is

entirely flooding you with a complete satisfaction. But do not bring the devil's whisper: "No, this is not going to give me what I want. I can have another thing also. I can have another idol, I can have another Guru, just as I can have another husband, another wife." Then what is the good of your love? It is broken into pieces. This is dishonest affection, and it cannot be applied to God.

You have to be very careful. Either you want God or you do not want Him. Do not say, "I want you if, when, under these conditions, provided that. . . ." Then this will not work. If a husband says, "provided that," "under these conditions, my dear," to his wife, this is not a husband speaking. Neither can the wife say, "provided that." No 'providing'; it is a whole-souled dedication. This kind of whole-souled dedication is difficult to find on account of the treacherous movements of the subliminal layers of our personality which always see that we do not succeed in this world. The higher mind and the lower mind act together. While God speaks in one language to Adam, Satan comes and speaks in another language, and spoils the whole attempt.

Hence, to avoid this kind of pitfall, the most poignant form of which is the forgetfulness of the conviction that one's ideal is all-in-all, a continuity of practice is necessary. Every minute, every day, you have to go on hammering it into your mind. If you give scant respect to it or have little time to devote to it, the world of attraction and dissension will intrude into your mind and tell you that you are pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp, a mirage, and you are going to get nothing out of it. "After all, I do not

know whether something will come or not, whether this Guru has given me a proper instruction or this is the god I want. Why Rama? Krishna is better. Why Krishna? I will change the ideal to Hanuman.” All these ideas may come because the conviction that your ideal is the all has not been sufficiently driven into your mind. Your *bhakti*, devotion, should be undivided concentration on that which you have considered as everything. Otherwise, do not go for it. As I mentioned, either you really want it or you do not want it, but do not want it only in some percentage.

Place, time and method are three of the important factors that have to be taken into consideration in your spiritual practice: Where do you sit, at what time do you sit, and what is the method that you are adopting? There are also many other factors connected with success in meditation, but these three are predominantly important. Are you sitting in a marketplace, in a railway station, in a police station, on the street, in your house among a large number of family members, in your *puja* room, or in Uttarkashi, Gangroti, in a forest or on the bank of Ganga? Where are you sitting? The physical and geographical atmosphere around you also has some impact upon you. Though the external atmosphere is not all-important, it has some importance. The people around you, the air around you, the Earth around you are also important. So to the extent possible, under the conditions with which you are living, choose the best place for the practice of *sadhana*.

Now, the best may involve various other aspects which will not easily come to your mind. The place where you are located for the purpose of spiritual practice should not cause any disturbance, agony or anxiety of any kind. Suppose you have a vocation or a job, and suddenly, through an emotional outburst of love for an ideal of God-realisation you may like to resign, put an end to your career or profession, renounce everything and go to a distant place in the Himalayas and devote yourself entirely to God. This is praiseworthy, a very noble aspiration indeed. But, this person who takes such a decision is also a person, and not merely a ray which works impersonally without any connection with external conditions. There are the onslaughts of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and fear of death—which may suddenly rush upon the person as if from an ambush after days or even months of this step that has been taken.

Dharma, artha, kama, moksha are supposed to be the fourfold form taken by the requirement of a human being. Your want is not one-sided; it is a fourfold requirement. You require material amenities to the extent you have to survive in this world through this body. Spiritual practice is not a crushing of the body; it is a utilisation process of the physical atmosphere also. The energies of the body are harnessed and used for the purpose for which this body has been given, and not killed under the impression that you are doing spiritual meditation. This body has come through the karmas of the past. The karmas of the past—all those impressions created by your performance of

work or thought and feeling in earlier lives—have produced this form of the physical body to benefit you by way of experience through this body. A debt has to be discharged, and you cannot run away from it. Suicide is running away from a debt, and you will not be saved from it. You can go to the nether regions or the highest heaven, but the creditor will pursue you. As a calf can find its mother even in the midst of thousands of cows, your karma will find you wherever you are, even if you are in the thick of a forest.

So, do not be under the impression that you can destroy your body by wilful negligence of it, and go above it. You can transcend a thing, but you cannot bypass it. You can transcend a gatekeeper or a tax collector, but you cannot bypass him. You cannot tell them to go. That kind of thing will not work. There is a duty that the tax collector or the gatekeeper is performing, and you have to respect that duty. This body is performing a duty, and the duty is the means by which it exhausts the karmas of the past. You are benefited by that.

While the process of exhausting the *prarabdha* karma of this body is being discharged, certain other associated factors—desires connected with the very fact of having a physical body—will also creep in. That is called *kama*, which means the necessity to maintain this body requires certain amenities. The longing for the amenities necessary for the maintenance of this body, as long as it is to survive, is the *kama* spoken of. If this body is to survive, certain other things in the world are also to be associated with it, such as warm clothes in

winter, water when it feels thirsty, a little meal when it is hungry, and a place to lie when it is tired and wants to sleep. The desire is for some protection, some security. The word '*kama*' has a wide connotation. It means many things. For the purpose of our present context, we may consider *kama* as that psychobiological longing which is an obligatory expression of the personality of the individual for the purpose of security, survival and self-maintenance. The body has to be maintained as long as it is to be used as a tool for spiritual practice. A dead body cannot do meditation. The mind that has been forcefully wrenched from the body against its wish, in suicide or wilful destruction, will also do no meditation.

The will alone is not sufficient. Understanding has to go with will. *Rajasic*, *sattvic* and *tamasic* will and understanding are categorised in the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. You should not *rajasically* or *tamasically* apply your will minus understanding. I mentioned the three categories of understanding as Bhagavan Sri Krishna puts in the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Thus, the desire for material amenities to the extent of survival in the interest of spiritual practice is permissible, and the fulfilment of desires to the extent necessary for this purpose of the very existence in this world is also permissible.

But then comes another prescription—that the law of creation, which is called *dharma*, is to restrain your operations through the body and through the manner in which you express your desire for *kama*. You cannot go wild in the

expression of your desire. You cannot contravene and oppose a similar desire of another person just because you have that desire. While you have to survive, you cannot deny the prerogative of that kind of wish on the part of another person. You require freedom, but your freedom cannot intrude into the freedom of another. So, we can have only conditional freedom in this world. Our very physical existence is supported by various associations from outside—the people around us, the world around us—and you know well that you cannot exist singly in this world. The cooperation and help of other people—parents, family members, society, etc.—are also called for. Hence, *dharma* comes into high relief here even in fulfilling our desire in order to live in a justifiable manner through this body for the purpose of spiritual practice. *Dharma* is the law of the world, and is equally operative in all in a cooperative spirit, not in a competitive spirit. There is no competition, but cooperation. One thing hangs on the other for its very existence.

Now, inasmuch as this is the position, you have to see that in the expression of longing to maintain yourself securely for the purpose of spiritual practice and also the expression of your desires, you do not contravene the law of sanity of mind, the law of friendliness and welfare of other people, the law of your coordination with the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and sky, and the law of your final coordination with the existence of God Himself. Will God permit me to do this? If I am in the presence of God Almighty just now and He

looks at me, will He be happy about the way in which I am presently conducting myself?

Your duty, as I mentioned, is a blending of fourfold factors—*dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*. I have briefly told you something about *artha*, *kama* and *dharma*. *Artha*, *kama* and *dharma* coming together into a single concerted action is made possible on account of the operation of the law of *moksha* in all three, which is the law of God. *Moksha* is not the last thing that comes after the other three; it is a whole in which these three are included. The four aspects mentioned—*artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*—are not like the four legs of a cow, one disconnected from the other. They are something like the four quarters of a coin, which are inside the coin itself. A pound or a rupee coin can be divided into four quarters, and the four quarters are inside the coin. They are not inside like four legs of an animal; nevertheless, they are logically present in that whole. In that sense, the four aspects are capable of constituting themselves into a total vision of life.

There is another fourfold vision, apart from the need to blend together *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*—namely, the relationship that is to obtain between yourself and people outside; between yourself and the physical world outside, the world of nature; between yourself and the Almighty whom you are seeking; and among the very constituents of your individuality, the psychic composite structure of your being. A wholeness of approach is what we have been talking about and considering for the last two days—a hologram of

approach, to put it in modern terms. You should be a whole in yourself, a whole in your relationship with people outside, a whole in your relationship with the world of nature externally, and a whole also in your relationship to God Almighty.

Are you a whole, psychologically? Vedanta scriptures and studies in psychology say that there are layers of personality. Apart from the physical vesture which appears to be the outermost, there is the vital breath—the *prana*, as it is called—which is even more important than the fact of physiological functioning. There are various functions of the mind. Then is the reason, and there is finally the spirit, the Atman Supreme. Are they all stratified in a harmonious manner, or is there a nonalignment of your personality? Are you saying one thing and doing something else? Great people tell us to speak and do one and the same thing. The distracted, disassociated personality says one thing, thinks another thing and does a third thing. This second aspect is the characteristic of a disassociated personality, a dismembered individuality, not a whole person, who can neither eat a meal with joy nor sleep with satisfaction. He cannot utter one good word with kindness of expression.

So, a psychological holism or gestalt, an inward compound of being, has to be introduced into you. You must feel a sense of wholeness in yourself always, and then you are healthy person. You feel buoyant, light-spirited, and everything is a satisfaction.

This kind of analysis has to be carried on every day. As everybody knows, we have our own

worries, tensions and burdens of life; but we have to pass through them. They have come with us as our heritage at the time of birth itself. The problems of life are not to be escaped from. All problems are intended to be solved. You are supposed to untie the Gordian knot, not cut it. You cannot cut a problem, a knot, but you can untie it.

Hence, psychologically untying the knot of personality and making it feel a sense of alignment within yourself, which is the first requirement, will also enable you to be harmonious with society, with nature, and with God Himself. This is another set of fourfold requirement. In the same way as there is a fourfold requirement of *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*, there is also the fourfold requirement of harmony in yourself, with others, with nature, and with God. With these preparations already at the tip of your fingers, you can take steps to advance along the path you have chosen for concentration and meditation.

We began by saying that there should be an ideal before you, which you can visualise—a person in front of you, an image of a god or incarnation that is placed on an altar. Scriptures such as the Bhagavata tell us how we can move the mind along the personality of this deity in front of us. Look at each part of the body—the eyes, the nose, the ears, the chin, the neck, the chest, the arms, the hands, the trunk, the legs, the feet, and take the mind again from bottom to top. Move the mind from head to foot, and from the feet to the head. Let it move continuously like that throughout the personality of this ideal, so that the mind gets filled up into the

crucible of its form by the structural pattern of the object. Then you will be thinking only that, day in and day out, and even when you look around, you will see your divinity everywhere. The god in front of you, the deity on the altar, will become a deity present everywhere around you.

As devotees dance and sing, “Wherever I go, I see You only,” wherever you gaze, wherever you go, even in your workaday atmosphere, you will see this ideal before you because of the power of concentration.

Chapter 4

PLACE, TIME AND METHOD

We had an occasion to consider several associated aspects in connection with the choice of a suitable place for meditation. While a conducive atmosphere is essential, the time factor also is equally important. Where we meditate is one aspect of the matter, and when we do it—which particular period of the day would be beneficial—is another side. It goes without saying that since meditation is the devoting of a whole-souled attention on our spiritual ideal, the time selected for it should be free from any other distracting engagement. Else, the subconscious mind will create a rumbling sound within, pointing out that in a short while something else is going to intrude into our effort at meditation. While the conscious mind is engaged in meditation, the subconscious mind will apprehend a difficulty that is to be faced in the near future; this will be a mixing up of issues, bringing no tangible results. If there is some pressing engagement in the outer world which is important for various reasons, that engagement has to be taken up and dealt with in an appropriate manner so that one can do away with it. The engagement is over for another day, or at least for a half a day, and there is nothing likely to come into the picture before the mind as an obstructing medium.

Generally, we are told that morning and evening hours are suitable for the practice of meditation, but it is not that other hours are unsuitable. Any time is good for thinking of God, but there are minutes and hours when our mental and physical condition seems to be fit especially for our engagement in meditation. After we wake from sleep and before we enter into duties of the workaday world, there is a little field of transition when the *tamas* of sleep is no more, and *rajas* of activities has not started. So, in between we are neither in the torpid *tamasic* condition of sleep, nor we are pressed into the *rajasic* engagements of our daily duties. This in-between hour is naturally of a *sattvic* nature. We are conscious, but not exactly conscious of something outside.

When we wake up from sleep, for the first few seconds or minutes we are half-doing, semi-conscious, but not conscious of any particular thing. We are not sufficiently conscious of even ourselves immediately after waking up. Neither are we aware of our personal existence at that time, because the mind has not sufficiently come up to the surface of active thinking, nor are we aware of the outside world, because the *rajas* element has not entered into mental activity. So, a state where consciousness is active, but not active in any externalised sense—neither subjectively nor objectively conscious particularly—that intermediate hour between sleep and active engagement in work is a *sattvic* condition where consciousness can settle itself in itself. Then, spontaneous *chitta vritti nirodha* takes place

without much effort on our part. That is, the psychological functions are in a state of abeyance, yet they allow the operation of consciousness. It is an awareness that is not an awareness of any particular thing. This is the specialty of the early morning hours after waking up, whatever be the time of our waking from sleep.

Sleep is also a very important contribution to our psycho-physiological element. Enthusiasm along the path of spiritual *sadhana* should not prove in any way detrimental to our health. Health is wealth, and it is the greatest wealth. There are people who are overeager to cut short their sleep in order that they may be able to devote more time for meditation in the early morning hours. If our sleep is over, we will naturally wake up. We need not tell ourselves that we have to wake up. But if we require pushing or a ringing bell, our sleep is not over and we have to wake up by force. This is not healthy. For some days we may succeed in doing this. We may press ourselves into the activity of meditation by refusing to give adequate time for our sleep, but later on we will see an adverse effect following from this practice because in compelling the mind to do something against its normal wishes, we have gone against our own spontaneous nature, and there will be an internal revolt against what has not been given to the mind as its due.

The dues are of various kinds: food when we are feeling hungry, water when we feel thirsty, rest when we are fatigued, and so on. If there is a shortfall in any one of these items, then there will be a long duration of submerged dissatisfaction of

the mind, which will later result in a reaction of an uncondusive nature. The Bhagavadgita warns us: *yuktāhāra-vihāraṣya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu, yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā* (Gita 6.17). Balance is to be our attitude towards diet, sleep and activity. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogosti* (Gita 6.16). A glutton who always thinks of munching, eating throughout the day, and who goes to hotels and gorges himself on anything that is available cannot be a suitable medium for the practice of Yoga. Nor is a person suitable for the practice of Yoga if he over-starves himself. *Na caikāntam anaśnataḥ* (Gita 6.16). A person who is always asleep, lying down and dozing day in and day out, will also not be a suitable medium for the practice of meditation. *Jāgrato naiva cārjuna* (Gita 6.16). One who does not sleep at all, who cannot get sleep and does not want to sleep, is also not suitable. No extreme can be taken as a method of Yoga practice. Neither to the left nor to the right can we hang excessively in the balance of practice.

This suggestion that morning hours are suitable for meditation also applies to the evening hours, before going to bed, because prior to the actual time of going to bed, we are in a mood of the cessation of *rajasic* activity of the day. The work of the day is over, and we are free from engagements. People who are in a family atmosphere may devote a few minutes in calling the members of the family together for a short session of *kirtana*, *bhajana*, *japa* or prayer, and then after the work of the day is over, the family members can go to sleep. But you need not sleep at that time. The atmosphere of a

family with many members is also sometimes a kind of disturbance. When children are crying and other members are working, you feel a little distracted. Even if you are living in a family, it does not matter. After they go to sleep, you can remain awake for some time.

Usually, the sequence of practice in the morning hours would be meditation first, *japa* or the chanting of the Divine name next, and study of a holy scripture afterwards. Meditation, *dhyana*, *japa* and *svadhaya* may be regarded as the three prongs of a spiritual adventure. At night, you can reverse the process. First devote a little time to study scripture, then you can do the recitation of the holy mantra, and lastly go to meditation. You will find that many a time you will have no time to be alone to yourself to devote in this manner. Very rarely we are alone to ourselves, though in all types of spiritual *sadhana* we become, or try to become, alone in ourselves. We cannot be in a social consciousness when we are actively engaged in spiritual meditation.

The aloneness should be not merely physical; it should also be a feeling of psychological aloneness. Alone did you come to this world. You did not bring family members or treasure and property with you when you came. And alone you shall depart. *Ekaḥ prajāyate jantur eka eva pralīyate, eko 'nubhuñkte sukṛtam eka eva ca duṣkṛtam* (Manu Smṛiti 4.240). When one comes to this world, one comes alone, without any kind of external association, and one departs alone, without any kind of accompaniment. Alone do you reap the fruits of your actions.

Nobody will share your debts. Good deeds and bad deeds are your business. Whatever you have brought as your *karma phala* from your previous birth, that you will enjoy. If you have brought some good karmas, you will be happy; otherwise, you will be grieving. *Na-amutra hi sahāyārthaṃ pitā mātā ca tiṣṭhataḥ, na putradāraṃ na jñātir dharmas tiṣṭhati kevalaḥ* (Manu Smṛiti 4.239). Your parents will not come with you. Some people will come with you to the burial or cremation grounds, and some will not come even that distance. "Gone. He has gone." You will go on hearing these statements of people in the astral realms, and then your existence will be forgotten. Not only parents, but husband and wife, children and property will also not come.

What comes with you? That which you have totally ignored and rejected in this world will come with you. Tragedy shall be your life if this is your fate. What is it that you have totally ignored in life or to which you have given stepmotherly treatment? That shall be your last resort. Please think over this matter. For the years that you have lived in this world till now, what is it that you have clung to, day in and day out? That to which you have clung will not come with you. What have you loved in this world? Those things will not come with you. Those things that you have completely ignored and never even thought of, as if they do not exist, will come and vitally pursue you, as your skin will pursue you wherever you go. That is *dharma*. The law has arms as vast as the sky, and the *dharma* of the universe will pursue you wherever you go. Your longings are your treacherous friends, your

desires are your undoing, your property is your sorrow, and your belongings shall be your tears one day or the other.

You have forgotten that to which you actually belong. *Aum krato smara kṛtaṁ smara krato smara kṛtaṁ smara* (Isa 17) says the Ishavasya Upanishad, which means to say, at the last moment you weep and cry, and say, "Oh, please remember what I have done." You need not go on saying this. The mind will open up its treasures of all its karmas that were otherwise buried during your lifetime, due to the pressure of outward circumstances. What you really are is not known to you now because the conscious mind is actively operating under the pressure of outward circumstances, but the conscious pressure will be lifted at the time of death. The lid will open, and all the resources of the subconscious mind hidden inside, which you have completely suppressed by the force of conscious activity, will come up like a dustbin being opened, to your horror. "Oh, this was me. I never knew that it was me. I thought I was something else. Now I know what I am." To whom will you say this? Nobody is going to hear your words. You will cry to the wilderness. Go to the forest and cry; the trees will hear. No human being will listen to you. When you have lost everything that is valuable in this world, nobody will look at you. You will have the treasure of your karmas, which nobody will want to share with you.

Thus, though the early morning is of course a good time to go into a state of self-analysis, the immanent and impending engagements of the

future hours of the day will subtly intrude their tentacles and tell you that you cannot sit for a long time because of all the things that have to be done in the day ahead. But that difficulty will be less at night because you know the day is over, so you can devote more time for this purpose.

One of the instructions given is that when you go to sleep, close your balance sheet with a credit balance as if you will not wake up in the morning, as there is no guarantee that you will wake up. The lease of life granted to you can end any time without your knowledge. It can be withdrawn immediately, and you will wake up in another world the next morning. So, as far as it is possible, the instructions given to sincere seekers of Truth is that, when the day closes, let it be the closing of your life itself. "If I wake up in the morning, God be thanked for it. If it is written that I will not be able to wake up in the morning, God be thanked for that also. I shall wake up in another world." But do not go to sleep with a debt which you have not paid, thinking you will pay it tomorrow. You will pay it in the next birth. That which you have not discharged as your debt will have to be paid in the next world in the form of grief and difficulty of some kind.

The problems that you are facing in your life today in this world are debts which you have not discharged in your previous life, and you do not know why this harassment has come to you. Every day you have problems which have been brought from the previous life because they have not been discharged. How much have you taken from the world? To that extent you may also contribute to

the world. There is no such thing as charity, really speaking. Gratis is unknown to the cosmos. Gift is non-existent. Though it appears that you have been given a gift or a charity, it is really not a gift; it is something that is due to you from the conditions of an earlier life. If something is not due to you, it will not come to you, though it may look like a gift. Hence, let there be no sense of debt.

If you have renounced the world as a *vanaprastha* or a *sannyasin*, and seem to be free from the atmosphere of a family life, let the mind be assured that it has no obligations to the family. It has discharged its duties in some way or the other, for some reason or the other. But if something inside is telling you that the debts have not been fully discharged, it will undo your spiritual *sadhana*. If you have a doubt about your own self, then there is nobody to protect you or save you. The consciousness inside should be clear that you have discharged all your debts. Otherwise, you cannot become a *vanaprastha* if you go on writing letters to your family members. What is the use of being in Rishikesh when the mind is in Ahmedabad or New York? All debts should be cleared. If you have taken something that you do not deserve, you have to pay it back by some service. It may be a service that you do to people, or even to the world of nature itself from which you have taken something gratis.

Many debts are of a category that may not be clear to our minds. Householders perform a *yajna* called Pancha-maha-yajna every day—a fivefold sacrifice, a dedication. This is done every day so that their fivefold debt is discharged. You have been

educated; you have knowledge. But this education and knowledge has come to you by the effort of somebody else. Your parents have worked hard to educate you. The *pitris*, whether they are alive or not, and the textbooks that you read, are the blessings of the authors thereof. The scriptures that you study convey the blessings of the great masters who are embedded in these scriptures. From where does the knowledge come? It comes from the scripture, from the Guru, and from parental effort. You owe a debt to them. When you study these scriptures, these textbooks, remember the great masters, the authors, your Guru, and your parents, and offer your obeisance to them. If they are alive and you are with them, you may be of some help and assistance to them. If they are not alive, your humble prayers to the Almighty to bless them will also be a service. This is Brahma *yagna*.

The gods who superintend over your sense organs are responsible for your very existence as an individual who sees through your eyes, hears through your ears, etc. These *devas* also require your gratitude. They do not want anything material from you; the expression of your sense of gratitude is itself a great gift. If I express my gratitude to you, that is also a service. If these divinities are ignored, if the god that is digesting the food in your stomach as Vaishvanara is not at all remembered when you eat your meal, you are a thief, says the Bhagavadgita: *stena eva saḥ* (Gita 3.12). Householders especially, when they take their meal, are in the practice of putting a little food from the plate aside for the divinity, for the god, for this, for

that. A share is given to them as a token of one's remembrance of them. The quantity that is offered is not important; it is the feeling that is associated with it that is of consequence.

And there are other requirements. When you take a meal, if anybody is standing at the gate, hungry and expecting something from you, it is called *atithi yajna*. *Atithi* is one who comes without previous intimation, and is considered more important than an invited guest. It is divinity itself coming, God Himself coming, as it were, and he has to be taken care of.

Then there is a blessing that you have to bestow upon even subhuman elements such as cattle, dogs and cats, even to the ants, says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Destroy not the ants; they will take care of you. The Upanishad tells us that these little ants which seem to be nothings before you will assume a large proportion in the next world. They will come as elephants and protect you because you have taken care of them and not trampled them. Ants will become mighty agents of succour for you. The Garuda Purana and other scriptures say that even the cow that you loved, not for its milk but because of its sanctity and goodness, will come and stretch its tail across the river Vaitarani to help you cross it. Vaitarani is a river in Yamaloka which cannot be easily crossed. You will sink into it. But this cow will stretch its long tail across it like a bridge over which you can walk. Many other things of this kind are told in the Garuda Purana. Suffice it to say, you owe a debt to nature. In the early morning when you wake up, pray to the great orb Surya Bhagavan,

Narayana himself rising in the eastern horizon to vitalise your *pranas* and bless you with long life. Pray to mother Ganga, pray to the early morning Usha, pray to the sky, pray to the rain god, pray to the stars, which are all in an invisible way responsible for your very existence. Prayer is the greatest of sacrifices. It is the greatest *yagna* that you can perform.

With these and many other means that you adopt in your own way, discharge your debts before you go to bed, and go with the feeling that you are now going to sleep with no compunction in your heart, and no feeling of debt that you owe to anybody. Go to bed with a credit balance left in the accounts of life, but not with a debit. Do not sleep until your duties are finished. This is something about the time factor that you have to choose for the practice of meditation, apart from the place you choose.

The most important thing is the method of meditation. I mentioned three important aspects of spiritual *sadhana*: the choice of place, time and method. What is the technique that you adopt in your meditation? There are the usual Yogas, as they are called: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Japa Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Nada Yoga, etc. The Guru who initiates you into the methods of spiritual practice is also expected to tell you what kind of technique to adopt. Here you have to follow the instructions given by the Guru implicitly, with faith. Once the initiation is done, the path is shown to you and it is cleared of all obstacles.

In earlier sessions I said something briefly as to how we can actively engage ourselves in this world of duty and perform what is known as Karma Yoga in the light of the guidelines available from the Bhagavadgita. I also mentioned something about devotion to God, *bhakti marga*, where the nine methods known as *kirtanam*, *visnoh smaranam*, *pada-sevanam*, *archanam*, *vandanam*, *dasyam*, *sakhyam*, *atma-nivedanam* are employed.

In your love of God, which is the devotion spoken of, you transfer your human affection to God. If you love your father or mother intensely and cannot forget them, channelise this affection to God as your father or mother. The Almighty is your father. The Almighty is your mother. *Mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ* (Gita 9.17): I am mother, I am father, I am grandfather, says the Lord in the Bhagavadgita. So, why should you spill your affection on mortal parents? Let your love go to your immortal parents. How many parents have you had? Do you know? In this birth you were born to some father and mother, and are very much concerned about them. But who was your father and mother in your previous birth? Are your parents in your previous birth so very negligible that you need not think of them? You will also have the same attitude towards your present parents when you go to the next birth. They will become objects of neglect. If you have taken a thousand births you have had thousands of parents, and all of them have gone into the limbo of neglect while you cling to one particular circumstance of parenthood, brotherhood, sisterhood, etc. Therefore, these affections are

unnecessarily distracting media which have to be channelized to God. If you have a friend with whom you walk every day, feel that the Lord Almighty Himself is walking with you. God is your father and mother, and God is also your friend. If you are attached to any particular thing, let that attachment be diverted to God. Cling to Him for everything. If you are a servant, consider your master as the Almighty and you are his humble servant.

There is *dasa bhakti*, *sacha bhakti*, *shanta bhakti*, *madhurya bhakti*, and various other adoptions of the technique of diverting the love and affection that are poured upon things in the world to God finally. The highest love is that feeling wherein you lose consciousness of yourself. If you are aware that you are and that there is something else in front of you as your object of love, it is only *gauna bhakti*, a preparatory love. You have created a division between the lover and the beloved, and there is a gap between the two. Love effloresces into an experience of ecstasy and inclusive satisfaction where the medium that loves and the object that is loved merge into a coherence of compactness. Such an experience is rare in this world. It is called *madhurya bhakti*. The *gopis* and many other devotees who adopted this technique are taken as examples. Every other form of devotion is secondary because of the object being outside as something to be loved.

Priya, *modha* and *pramoda* are supposed to be the designations of love in the three strata of the nearness of the object of love. When you see an object of love, you feel one kind of happiness. It is

called *priya*. You are delighted to see the object of your love, but it is at a distance. When it comes near, the feeling of love increases in its intensity and you cannot contain yourself. You are in the state of ebullition, boiling, a welling up of your emotion. That state is called *modha*, more catching than *priya*. But *pramodha* is an experience, not merely a love. It is an experience in the sense that the object has become one with consciousness. The content of consciousness has become consciousness itself; the *sat*, or the existence of the object, has become *chit*, or the consciousness, which was earlier aware of it as an external something. *Sat* and *chit* have become one in the merger of the *sat*, the existence of the object, in the *chit*, the consciousness thereof. Ordinarily, such an experience is not to be found. We may read about *gopis*, but none of us can become *gopis* because of loves that are otherwise distracting and our *bhakti* being not sufficiently honest.

Many people are under the impression that Bhakti Yoga is a lower type of *sadhana* and Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga are higher types. This is a misconstruing of the whole position. Nothing can be equal to the love of God. If you want to know what love of God is, you must read the lives of saints like the Nayanars and Alwars of southern India. Read the lives of these saints, the Saivas known as Nayanars and the Vaishnava saints known as Alwars. They were not human beings; they were only entities. They did not think like men or women; their thinking was not of this world. Their behaviour was totally different from the

human way of behaviour, and sometimes they looked superhuman. Sometimes they would even look inhuman from an ordinary perceptual point of view. The devotees of God are as inscrutable in their behaviour as God Himself. What God will do the next moment, nobody knows, as you cannot know what the Ganga will do when she is in flood. To our minds it appears to be anything at any time, but actually it is a systematic action.

Bhakti marga is not a lower type of devotion. It is not a lesser *sadhana*. In a way, it is the highest. There is an element of love even in Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga, only the object is conceived in a different way from the manner in which love is evinced to the object in other paths. The contemplation of the characterisation or the definition of the object of love changes, but love continues in Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. But in Bhakti Yoga, the dimension of love becomes enlarged. The limitation is broken, and it becomes as wide as the sky itself. Hence, as an active Karma Yogin who sees God in all eyes, in all faces—*sahasraksah sahasrapat; janata janardana; manava seva madhava seva*—with all these types of outlook, you can engage yourself in the duties of the world as a master Karma Yogin as Bhagavan Sri Krishna was, or you may be an ecstatic *bhakta* as Tukaram, Eknath, Namdev, or you may take to the methodological technique of systematic meditation as it has been prescribed in the *sutras* of Patanjali, on which theme I shall have something to tell you another time.

Chapter 5

COMMUNION WITH THE OBJECT THROUGH YOGA MEDITATION

A standard way of conducting meditation is according to the well-known system of what is called Ashtanga Yoga, known also as Raja Yoga. Here is a highly scientific technology before us, whereby we are enabled to strike a coordination and a final unity between the world and the individual.

The world stands before us as an object of our perceptual consciousness. We are the seers of the world, and the world is there before us as the seen object. The whole problem of life is in the dissociation of the seer and the seen, and an erroneous coordination established in perception itself between the seer and the seen. While it is perfectly true that the world has nothing to do with us and what happens to the world does not vitally affect us—if a mountain collapses, we do not feel the pain of it, proving thereby that the world of Nature is dissociated from our consciousness—this is not the whole truth. There also seems to be a simultaneous association of the world with consciousness, without which we would not even know that there is a world in front of us. How do we come to know that the world exists if it is totally cut off from our conscious being? Confusion seems to be operating continuously between us and the world outside,

and this confusion has to be understood in its depth. How is it that we seem to be connected with the world in some way, and yet not connected in some other way? This self-contradictory position obtaining between us and the world is to be probed threadbare, analysed and solved.

This system of Yoga takes upon itself the task of solving this great cosmic problem. The Yoga system referred to is based on another system, called Sankhya, which enumerates the categories or the degrees in terms of which the evolution of the world takes place, or has taken place. Where is this world located? On what does it stand? The composition of the world of matter seems to reveal the fact that it is made up of internal components and it is not a solid mass, which is another way of saying that it is of the nature of the effect, rather than a final cause by itself. The changing character of things in this world proves that they are an effect of something which stands above them as the cause.

The Sankhya tells us that this world of physical elements is constituted of earth, water, fire, air and ether. This world of material composition is of a changeful character, and it must have a cause in terms of which it is undergoing a transformation in the evolutionary process. The cause behind the five elements is something like the causative factors behind matter that have been investigated by modern science. Behind the apparently solid masses of material substances before us, there are molecules which are also material in their nature but which are the inner components of the so-called

material substance. Molecules also are not hard compounds; they are capable of further dissection into atomic particles. Once upon a time atoms were considered as the ultimate principles or building bricks of the cosmos, but today we are told that they are not ultimate in their nature. Atoms are pressure points of electrical charges surrounded by an aura which fades away beyond the horizon of their visible existence. Investigations in physics tell us that the aura of an atomic particle extends beyond itself to such an extent that it seems to be touching the highest heavens. A little particle here can touch the stars, and the events in the world are cosmic events. The vibrations within a particle of sand on the bank of a river are motivated by a vibration emanating from the centre of the cosmos. According to the Sankhya doctrine, these vibratory backgrounds of the physical elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—are known as *tanmatras*, or subtle potentials. They are more subtle than electricity, and fade away into vitality, *prana*, energy quantum, which are not merely material in nature.

Above the physical world of the five elements, there are the *tanmatras*, known as potentials of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, producing reactionary effects in the form of sound, colour, taste, smell and tangibility, which are the essences behind the physical objects and not capable of direct physical perception. These potentials are not isolated particles of matter; they are super-matter, we may say. Electricity is

material, but it is more subtle than any ordinary solid object such as a brick or a table in front of us.

But these potentials, *tanmatras*, are also effects of something beyond them, that something being the cause of all causes. Both Sankhya and modern science tell us that space-time in a unified form may be regarded as an ultimate cause of things. The causation of things—the feeling that something comes from something else, that one thing is the cause and another thing is the effect—arises on account of the action of space and time, which is continued existence. They call it the space-time continuum. We are accustomed to speak of space and time. Nowadays, people say space-time, a blend of both together—not a three-dimensional space and a one-dimensional time, but a four-dimensional total, which is incomprehensible to the mind. We can think of length, breadth and height, and a linear movement of past, present and future as duration, but we cannot imagine the coming together of these two at the same time. A four-dimensional thinking is beyond our capacity. But there seems to be such a mysterious existence—a space-time complex and compound, a continuum—which gives rise to these potentials known as the *tanmatras*, which again give rise to the five elements—space, air, heat or fire, liquid or water, and solid or earth—and our physical existence cannot be separated from the existence of these mentioned categories. Our body or the body of anything in this world, whether material or living, inorganic or organic, is constituted of the same five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether as the world.

Questions arise here in this context: How is it that we see the world as something placed outside us, while the constituents of the world seem to be the very constituents of our body also? What is the reason for our feeling that the world is placed externally when it is not true? How could it be externally placed before our eyes, when the very eyeballs, the very sense organs, the entire organs of the body are constituted of the same matter as the world outside?

The Sankhya and Yoga systems tell us that egoism is the cause of this unwarranted feeling of the external placement of the world in front of our consciousness. Egoism is the archvillain in the life of all people. What is egoism? The Sankhya takes us beyond the space-time continuum, which is the last point reached by modern science. Modern science cannot go beyond space-time because it cannot analyse egoism or even understand what that principle means at all. Egoism is self-consciousness of a particular nature which asserts itself as being distinguishable from everything else.

The Sankhya, which is the basis of the Yoga practice of Patanjali, tells us that beyond the space-time continuum, which is the physical ultimate available for our perception, there is a principle of cosmic self-affirmation—the Universal *ahamkara*, the whole cosmos feeling “I am”. If the whole world, including ourselves as a part thereof, is to know that it is, that would be the universal ‘I’ asserting itself. Our I’s are all fractions of this Universal I.

How could there be two I’s? There cannot be two subjects in one sentence. Here is the clash

before every one of us. As you are an I and I am also an I, how would we tolerate each other? We cannot be friends even for a second, for the reason that you are an I and I am also an I, and they clash. I can somehow get on with you for some time by bringing you down from the level of your I-ness to the object content that I consider you to be. Unless I force myself into the belief that you are not an I but a 'you', I cannot get on with you for a moment. Otherwise, there will be a war between two I's, and nobody knows what will be the consequence thereof. And unless you feel that I am a 'you' to you, you will not be able to say anything to me or get on with me. The world is a clash between I's, but it does not dismember into smithereens because each I struggles to consider and convert every other I into a you, he, she or it—otherwise, why should there be words like 'you', 'he', 'she' or 'it'? These words have no meaning, because you never regard yourself as a he or a she. You always say 'I'. If you are an I, why should I call you 'he' or 'she'? Here is the problem before us.

This cosmic *ahamkara*, the Universal I, has no he, she or it before it. It is neither 'I' nor 'you'; all things are blended in that Universal menstruum, the melting pot of all possible contents. This Universal I is, as Sankhya tells us, *ahamkara-tattva*. Those who have studied the six systems of Indian philosophy know what Sankhya is and how it enumerates these categories in this fashion. The Sankhya also tells us that above this principle of cosmic self-affirmation, there is a cosmic consciousness called Mahat. These are technical

terms used in some of the Upanishads and particularly in Sankhya philosophy. Cosmic consciousness is distinguishable from the cosmic I, meaning thereby that cosmic consciousness is a general pervasive awareness of all things without any special emphasis on the I-ness attached to it. For us at the lowest level of Earth consciousness now, all this is only an absurd story and nobody knows what it all means. Anyway, even an absurd story has some entertaining effect; otherwise, we would not listen to it. There is something behind it which satisfies us. Later on, it will become a reality when we actually enter into it by our consciousness.

Mahat-tattva, or cosmic consciousness, is prior to and superior to the Universal I or *ahamkara*. The Sankhya goes beyond still, because it is not satisfied by tormenting us with these theories. It wants to crush us with the weight of this complication of the arrangement of these categories, so that we escape from it as early as possible. There is something called Prakriti, the material original of all things—the matrix. We do not know what it means. It is supposedly not a substance. It is a pervasive background, a dark screen, as it were, a liquefied universe, we may say, subtler than the liquids we think of in our mind, constituted of three forces. Science knows only two of these forces; it does not know the third. Dynamic and static are the two forces that science knows—*rajas* and *tamas*, as Sankhya calls it. The power of isolation, separation, activity, dismemberment, movement, motion, force, energy, action is *rajas* or dynamic. When motion is

absent, things are in static condition; that is *tamas*. These two forces are known to scientists, but there is a third force which Sankhya posits, called *sattva*—equilibrium. We have never seen anything in the world that can be regarded as an equilibrium of forces. There is always separation, isolation—one thing here, another thing somewhere else.

Prakriti is a balance of these three forces known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—staticity, dynamicity and equilibrium of these forces. It is only in the state of equilibrium of these *gunas* that consciousness can manifest itself. It is only in the cosmic *sattva* predominant at the time of creation, at the beginning of things, that it became responsible for Universal consciousness being reflected through a medium called Mahat, bringing thereby into existence what is known as cosmic consciousness, and so on. This is to state briefly the evolutionary process of this universe—how the world has come to be, what it is. Let it be what it is. We have understood this is the position. Now, what is the trouble with us?

The trouble is mentioned in the very beginning itself. We cannot reconcile ourselves with any one of these categories. Everything is outside—the *tanmatras*, earth, water, fire, air, space, and colour, sound, and so on. And about the higher states such as Mahat, the less said the better. We know nothing about it. What are we supposed to do with these things that are apparently outside? The outsideness of things is the problem before all mankind. Wars have taken place. History has been a succession of conflicts from day to day. Things come and things

go. There is birth and death, and the drama of life is perpetually drawn before us with picturesque screens. What do all these things mean to us?

The meaning is simple. There is a perpetual irreconcilability between what we are here and what is happening in what we consider as the world. When we speak of the world, do we for a moment imagine that we are also included in the process of the world? No. When we say that the world is so bad, do we mean that we are also a little bad? We cannot stand outside the world, but never for a moment do we imagine that we are part of it. When we say, "Oh, what has the world come to?" we are unwittingly saying, "What have I come to?" Are we condemning ourselves, criticising ourselves when we criticise the world? Even in this criticism, we keep the world outside and we want to go scot free. The Sankhya tells us this is not possible.

The Kingdom of God will be revealed before us if a rapprochement between us and the world can be established. All problems will cease in a flash, this second; and, as great saints, sages and masters sometimes say, heaven will descend on Earth and the Earth will melt into heaven. This is the function of the Yoga system of Patanjali. The *ahamkara-tattva* in us, the fractional 'I' in us, the ego that creates a chasm between ourselves and the world has to be eliminated by deep meditational techniques.

Meditation is the art of communion with that which appears to be outside us, and yet, on deeper analysis, is seen to be somehow connected with us.

Everything in the world—anything and everything—is of equal importance from the point of view of this method of meditation. Everything is a god for us, if the Sankhya and the Yoga systems are to be followed as our way. How it is so? Because every atom is connected to every other atom and, as it is said, touching even a flower in our garden disturbs the stars in the heavens. This poetic expression, startling in its effect, deeply touches the recesses of our hearts. If a flower that we touch in the garden can communicate its message to the stars in the heavens, we can imagine our relationship to the world! Our very skin is touching the black holes and the white holes, the Milky Way, the solar system, and the entire space-time complex of creation.

Techniques of meditation along these lines have been prescribed by the great sage Patanjali in various sayings known as the Yoga Sutras. *Yathabhimatadhyanatva* (1.39): We may take any object for our meditation. Any object—even this microphone, or a pencil, a candle flame, a flower, a dot on the wall, a diagram, a picture, an idol or a concept can be the object of our concentration. Anything may be taken as the object of concentration and meditation because of this system of the universe clearly placed before us.

How do we start meditation according to this system? Why does the object appear to be outside? One of the reasons is our incapacity to accept the existence of the objects as part and parcel of our existence due to the intense operation, the flint-like action of our egoism. The other reason is the very

structure and composition of the object itself. When we behold an object, says the Yoga System, we are not actually seeing the object as it is, nor are we thinking properly. It is a camouflage of the object that is presented before us; in philosophical parlance, this way of camouflaged perception of an object, chameleon-like in its nature, is called representative perception, secondary perception—not primary in its nature. The primary qualities of an object are not visible; only the secondary qualities are seen. We see the colour, the dimension, the structural pattern, the height and weight, but none of these is the object by itself. The thing as it is, is not merely weight, dimension, or colour. It is none of these. Minus these adjectival associations, what is the object? You are in front of me, and I can see you as a physiological arrangement of bodily parts. Bones and flesh, marrow, nerves, heart, lungs, and brain put together—do they make you? You will resent this definition of yourself, and feel that you have an importance that is different from the so-called importance attached to the physiological complex; yet I can see only this much in you, and nothing more.

The definition of the object in terms of these qualities and the notion that you have about the object act in coordination to prevent you from knowing what the object is in itself. The composition of the object, with its defining characteristics as mentioned, gives the impression that this object is nothing but a medley, a formation of these characteristics. Only the qualities are seen;

the substance is not seen. Can you isolate these qualities and look at the substance? With the effort of concentration, let the name and form associated with the object be isolated. When I see you, can I see you without knowing that you have this name attached to you? Forget this name, and also this form which is given to you by this physical personality. As you know very well, this formation of the physical personality is not really you. Can you take that person for what that person is, minus the notion that you have adopted in terms of the qualities? Then you will be in a position to establish some kind of correct relationship with that object. Would you regard yourself as a bundle of anatomical structures or chemical components? If you are not that, another is also not that. So who sees whom in perception?

Sankhya tells us that “Who sees whom?” is a difficult question. There is a mixture of Purusha and Prakriti taking place here. Consciousness, which is not to be identified with anatomical or physiological parts in the seer, beholds only consciousness—which is also the background of the object—which is also not to be identified with physiological and anatomical parts. Consciousness is consciousness, truly speaking, if you dispassionately envisage this situation. But when you see an object, it is not consciousness seeing consciousness. “I am seeing you.” Again this devil comes in and obstructs you from knowing what is actually taking place.

This attempted communion with the object is called Yoga union; finally it is called *samadhi*.

Samadhi is complete union with the object, which is made possible only if you are able to unite yourself in your essence with the essence of that which you regard as the object, dissociating both your delimiting conditions and the object of these delimiting conditions. It is not some individual trying to come in contact with another individual. Meditation is not the establishment of friendship in a social sense with the object of meditation. It is not just shaking hands with the object in a roundtable conference. It is an attempt at total merger of one with the other: this thing which appears to be there in front becomes you—you in a larger, enlarged fashion, because of the entry of the object into you—and you enter into the object so that the object becomes the subject, the subject becomes the object. In that condition of union, one will not be able to say whether it is the seer seeing the seen, or the seen seeing the seer. Whether the object is beholding the subject, or the subject is beholding the object, whether I am seeing you, or you are seeing me, both mean the same thing. There will be no 'you' at that time—it will be only 'I'—both in the context of the so-called object outside and the seeing subject.

This requires a Herculean effort on our part. We casually talk about people and things. You are so-and-so, and I am so-and-so; this is like that, and that is like this; the world is such and such. None of these statements we make about anyone or anything has any sense, finally. They are a slipshod way of definition, a meaningless comment absurdly made in utter ignorance, at least from the point of

true Yoga. As seekers of Truth, we have to understand this situation.

Therefore, the Yoga System tells us our attempt at meditation should go deep into the essence of the object behind these categories mentioned according to the Sankhya description of the evolutionary process, which involves us also at the same time. Deep concentration of this kind is also known to people who are accustomed to telepathic communication. This is an *enrapport* that people establish even with distant objects. We can look at a photograph of a person who may be five thousand miles away from us, and concentrating with a sense of total identity on the parts of the person in the photo with our own existence will communicate a message to that person, whatever be the distance.

Even if that person is in the other world, that message will be conveyed, like messages conveyed to us by radio. When someone speaks into a microphone in a radio station, a sound vibration is produced; but what actually travels through space is not sound. A particularised vibration which is the sound process created through the microphone in a broadcasting station becomes transmuted into a pervasive electronic charge through space by which it travels not as a sound, but merely as an energy and wave content, which gets retransformed into a sound process in the radio here. Likewise is the action that takes place in telepathy. Our concentration on the object, even through a photograph or a formation in front of us, is actually a mental action or activity taking place immediately in our physical location; but without our knowing

what actually is happening, our thought is communicated through the wider mind that is operative throughout the whole world—the cosmic mind, which is like the space between the broadcasting station and the receiving set or radio somewhere else—and it retransmits our message to wherever that object is located, whether in London or New York or the high heavens.

It is a great blessing to us that such things are possible, but the tragedy is that we think that this is not possible; we have to dovetail things artificially, and speak to people, and establish artificial relationships with them in order that we may get on in this world. Getting on with things is different from actually becoming one with things. How long can we get along in an artificial manner? Unless we are one with a thing, neither can we get on with it, nor can we get any benefit out of it; finally, a great sorrow will befall us.

In this manner you can take any object for meditation, disassociating both subjectively and objectively from the characteristics foisted upon yourself as well as the object in terms of the notion that you have wrongly adopted about it and the outer complexity of formation that is before your eyes. This is called Yoga *samadhi*. When I see you, I should not see you, but I should see through your eyes. Then I can control you, and you will do whatever I think in my mind. But if I see you as someone seeing me, I can never have anything to do with you because you are what you are, and I am what I am. I should never see you as someone seeing me, but I should see you by seeing through

you. I should see with your eyes, hear with your ears, speak with your tongue, think with your mind, and operate with your body. This is union.

I do not expect you to use this technique on any person, but to understand the science behind it—namely, that you can have mastery over anything from an atom to the cosmos if this identity can honestly be established by turning the tables around, as it is said. The object is turned into the position of the subject. The subjectivity in the object becomes the subjectivity in you, and it is no more an object. The whole point is this. The egoism of your nature prevents you from considering the other as an 'I'. You always hammer into your mind that it is a 'you'. "I am looking at you." "I am concentrating on that." Do not say you are concentrating on that. That has become you. You are concentrating on yourself only. A larger I emanates from you when the I of that thing on which you are meditating becomes you. Two I's become a larger I, and then many I's can come together, becoming a still wider I.

Finally, in this fashion the Yoga System will take us to the art of communion not merely with one person and one thing, but with the five elements earth, water, fire, air, space, time, and all that has been mentioned as the cause behind even these things. Finally, we are aiming at the supreme isolation of consciousness, *kaivalya moksha* as it is called, through the stages of identification known in this system as *samapatti* or *samadhi*.

Chapter 6

MERGING INTO UNIVERSALITY

As the path of Yoga is a way of salvation, great caution is to be exercised in maintaining this awareness as to why we are engaged in meditation. The practice of Yoga is not a religious exercise in the sense of one's wishing to be holy, sanctified or respectable in society. It is a super-social longing arising from a super-individualistic essence in every one of us. It is the whole of creation shaking itself at its very root for recognising itself as it originally was, as it really is, and as it ought to be.

A brief introductory note was struck yesterday concerning the methodology adopted in the system of Yoga practice while engaging in meditation. The object of meditation was regarded as very crucial because its presentation before the mind, and its relationship with oneself, have much to say about any tangible success in our practice.

In the *sutras* of the Yoga System, the detailed processes of gradual ascent through the evolutionary stages of the cosmos are explained, and in these guidelines and instructions care has to be taken to note that we take only one step at a time, and never take a second unless the earlier step has been firmly placed. Ashtanga Yoga is the name of what is otherwise known as Raja Yoga. *Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi* are the eight limbs, and we know very well how the earlier limbs of these

rungs of the ladder of the gradual rise into the meditational culmination are stepped over by gradual transcendence. Ethical and moral discipline, self-restraint, control of the sense organs, stabilisation of the breathing process, and restraining the operation of consciousness itself in respect of its sensory relationship with things are known as *pratyahara*. *Dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* are the quintessence of the whole practice. Everything that precedes them is a preparation.

The large final onslaught commences with the attention of the mind to the exclusion of any secondary thought. The necessity to entertain any other thought than that of the chosen object or ideal will not arise. As has been seen in our earlier sessions, we convince ourselves that whatever we need is before us in our object of concentration and meditation. A falsehood of attitude, and suspicion and doubt surreptitiously creeping in saying that the object, the ideal, is not adequate enough, will be our obstacle. A hundred times we may strike our head with our hands and tell ourselves that this is not the case. "What I have chosen as my ideal is all in all. If it is not all in all, it is better to give up the practice rather than pursue what is impracticable." The devilish whisperings of the sense organs will confront us from moment to moment, telling us constantly that something is wrong with us, that our ideal is shaky and our aim is not justifiable.

The identification of consciousness with this all-consuming ideal is, in the language of Patanjali's Raja Yoga Sutras, *samapatti*—the attainment, the acquisition, and a comprehension, identification

and unification of oneself with the ideal. Yesterday I mentioned how this unification can be established with the object of meditation in its essentiality, divesting it of what has been allowed to grow around it like moss, which does not form part of its being. The name-form complex of anything whatsoever is not the essence of the object. The name-form complex of even the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether and everything above—is not the essence thereof.

Meditation expands its dimensions gradually when deeper concentration is called for in the attainment of *samapatti*. In the initial stages it is any object whatsoever in the world. Anything and everything is good enough, because all things cannot be brought before the mind at one stroke in the initial stages, due to the mind's habit to be continuously engaged only in one thing at a time, and not more. Yet, there is a difference between an ordinary engagement of the mind in one thing in our workaday world and the engagement of the mind in one thing in spiritual meditation. The one thing in which we are engaged in ordinary worldly life is just a petty, finite thing, excluding many other equally good things in the world which we can take care of later on when the time for it comes. But in spiritual meditation, where we have taken one thing for the purpose of meditation, that thing is not one among the many possible entities available in the world, but it is *the thing* which can take us to all things in the world. A desire for other things lurks even when attention is paid to one thing in the ordinary working process of our life; but here,

while concentrating on the ideal in Yoga, desire for another thing will not be permitted. It will not even arise, because that other thing, so called, which is likely to distract our attention and call for further consideration, longing and promise, is also included in this very ideal or object that has been chosen for meditation. Even supposing that there are many other goodies in this world that are attractive and worth having, they are also concentrated in this very ideal, in this object that we have chosen. Our Isthā-devatā is our God, and there cannot be another God before us. There is only one.

The finite God that is before us in the form of the object of meditation is not finite, really speaking, because into that so-called apparently finite presentation, the whole universe of forces converges and impinges with a force capable of the whole creation. This is how we can accommodate ourselves to the fact and conviction within that any object that we choose for meditation is all objects, because anything is everything in the context of the structure of creation.

The *samadhi* technique rises into higher and higher reaches when the object becomes expanded in dimension into the area of the five elements themselves. Here, you are not concentrating on one particular thing, but the entire physical cosmos. You have to train your mind to some extent in contemplating in this manner. How would you be able to think of the whole world at one stroke? All the earth, the whole world, all that you see in the sky, all space and time—you have to roam your mind from one corner of this concept of the

universe to another corner of it, until you reach the summit of impossibility to go beyond the horizon of your thought. Take the mind above the skies, rise above, go further up, higher and higher, higher and higher into the topmost pinnacle of the roof of the heavens, until the mind is unable to feel anything beyond. Go down below into the nether regions; go to the right and the left and in all directions of space. Imagine that you are two or three thousand miles above the Earth in a rocket where the gravitational force of the Earth does not operate, and you can walk in space at that distance because there is no gravity pulling you down to the Earth. What do you see there? There is no light nor darkness, east or west, north or south, top or bottom; in that pinnacle of the centre of space, direction ceases. There are no events taking place. The sun does not rise or set; there is no day and night, and time cannot be calculated. You are in a menstruum of melting your personality itself. You have become all space—all the stars that are studded in the sky, everything that you can imagine as contained in this vast space. The whole time process melts together into a single compound of indescribable expanse in which you are located, into which you are entering, wherein you are melting down, and you do not know what it is.

This is one suggestion among the many other possibilities whereby you can contemplate the whole physical universe at one stroke, or beyond the earlier stage of taking one object only for your meditation. Here, in this technique mentioned, you are in union with the entire structure of your

environment, physically and astronomically. There is such a unity, such an identification, that you feel that the hills and dales, the stars, the sky, and all things have gone into your body, and you have entered into them. If this state, this stage, this experience, can at least be imagined with your strength of thought and power of will, that cosmical experience taken in a physical essence is regarded as *savitarka*, a technical term used by the sage Patanjali. You need not go into the meaning of all these Sanskrit words. Suffice it to say, it is a so-called logical argumentative process whereby you comprehend in your expanded thought dimension all that can be grasped at one stroke simultaneously, without anything left out.

This technique can be extended further into the higher potentials of the physical cosmos. You need not think of space, time and distance, right and left, top and bottom, and the dimensions, directions, etc. You can persuade your mind to contemplate on the essence of this situation which is just a sea, a vast ocean of energy. There are no stars, no sun, no moon, no mountains, no Earth. You are floating, as it were, in the sea of incomprehensible force. You have to know what a force is. It is a scientific term which means anything and everything to students of science. A force is that which is not a solid object. It is a pressure. It is an exerting, a commanding, an interfering, a possibility, a probability, fading away into mere thought finally, because there are no things to be thought by the mind in that condition—not even the starry heavens, not even the vast creative physical universe.

This is an attempt in imagining the *tanmatra* condition of the universe. Hard is this way of thinking. The egoism of human nature will not permit any such adventure. You will be kicked back with a blow from something which you cannot know, like Indra kicking Trishanku because he attempted to go to heaven when the gods felt that he was not fit for that, so he fell headlong, with legs up and head hanging below. This is Trishanku Swargam, as it is called.

Any attempt at this kind of practice with desires lurking in the mind, with emotions boiling, with loves and hatreds creeping into the heart and subtly telling you that they are also there—any attempt at meditation of this kind without purifying oneself of all the psychological dross of loves, hatreds, egoism, and such features will land you in a danger equal to touching dynamite, which may explode in your face. Many a meditator trying the impossible on the foundation of a weak beginning, not knowing his or her weaknesses, has come to sorrow. There will be the possibility of developing complexes in the mind, and you will not gain what you expected to gain. You may even lose what you already had before you started the practice. You may become an abnormal, crazy person if your ethical and moral nature has not been properly trained. If you are a lover of things and a hater of things at the root of your mind, and your emotions have not been subdued, and you are still Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so, this person or that person, if you attempt to go skyrocketing along this tremendous technique which is meant only for superhuman

natures, God forbid this attempt, and the Guru is to be your guide here.

You should do this practice; I am not saying that you should not attempt it. Everyone should be after God, and everyone should obtain salvation, and this difficult task should be undertaken by everyone. If one has achieved it, another also can achieve it—provided the same training and discipline is undergone.

A goodness which is the characteristic of godliness is to be the foundation of your spiritual practice. Perhaps you are trying to think as God would think. You can imagine how God thinks. If this outlook can be developed in yourself, you can go along these lines of prescription of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—the *vitarka*, *vichara*, *ananda*, *asmita samadhis* that he speaks of. These stages of *savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *savichara*, *nirvichara*, *sananda*, *sasmita*, and the other nomenclatures associated with this gradual ascent signify the rising of consciousness to the comprehension of the categories of the Sankhya evolutionary process mentioned by these philosophical guardians.

Yesterday I mentioned what these categories are. The Yoga System of Patanjali is a practical application of the philosophy adumbrated in the Sankhya, as mentioned. The consciousness widens its comprehensiveness as it slowly rises, and also becomes deeper and deeper. It is wider because its object expands in the area of its comprehension. In the beginning it was one pinpointed object, an ideal chosen as something located somewhere, and then it expanded itself into a larger area of many things,

including the whole Earth; further on it entered into the still larger area of the *tanmatras*, the pure potentials, etc. This is the way it expands its width or dimension. It also becomes deeper at the same time. There is a quantitative expansion, and also qualitative deepening in the process. We not only become larger, but also become greater, deeper, more profound. Our quantity increases, and our quality also increases, so that in these gradual ascents we seem to be nearing the possibility of the grasp of all that can be conceived as contained in this world but, because of the qualitative intensity involved, this grasping will not be just like the grasping of the treasures of the Earth which we can lose also at any time, but a permanent grasp.

A grasp by the sense organs is impermanent. The senses cannot unite themselves with the object of their contact or grasp. They stand outside. If a fragrant rose garden is near our house and we have enclosed it with glass walls, honey bees hovering around to collect nectar from the roses may hit their heads against the glass, not knowing that there is an obstruction which prevents them from actually coming in contact with the flowers. Many a time the bees even die by striking against the object that obstructs their coming in contact with the flowers. The senses reap this fate in their trying to contact objects of sense. They see something and want to grasp it and own it, but they cannot because the glass screen of space and time debars any kind of vital unity of the sense organs with the objects present outside.

As I mentioned previously, we have a camouflaged perception of these objects. We seem to be seeing them, but we are actually seeing only the obstacle giving a shape to the so-called real object. The senses do not come in contact with objects, though we are trying in this world only to achieve this contact of the senses with objects. Our life begins and ends with the search for an impossibility. Grief begins our life, and grief ends our life, and we live with grief. But in *samapatti* this Yoga contact, wherein our dimensions expand quantitatively and also we are qualitatively becoming fit for this grasp, we are not in contact with anything; consciousness grasps consciousness.

In fact our mind, our consciousness, can grasp only itself. We cannot grasp another thing. The otherness involved in the object prevents our actual grasp of it. We regard everything as 'other', and then want to make it our own. What we can grasp is only ourselves, and what we can possess is also ourselves. We cannot get anything more than ourselves in this world. But to the extent the world has become us, to that extent the world has ceased to be; and to the extent that an external object has permeated into our seeing, visualising, knowing consciousness, to that extent the world is ours.

Tasya lokah sa u loka eva (Bri. Up. 4.4.13), says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: In this state we not only own the world, we are the world. *Tasya lokah*: This becomes the world. *Sa u loka eva*: He himself is the world. In the beginning it looks as if the world is entering us, embracing us, surcharging us with its omnipotent existence; later we become the

universe itself. This is achieved gradually through these *samapatti's* mentioned by Patanjali in his *sutras* as *vitarka, vichara, ananda, asmita*. That is to say, in a grasping of consciousness of the reality of creation through these categories of the evolutionary process, the physical universe is first divested of its association with name and form, then the *tanmatras*, the pure potentials, are divested in a similar manner, freeing them from even the concept of getting involved in the space-time process.

The world appears to be inside space and inside time. Even Newton, a very great scientist indeed, thought that the world is inside space—that space envelopes the whole physical universe. But science has advanced, and modern day physicists tell us that the physical world is not inside space, that space is a part of the physical world. The physicality, the solidity, the extendedness of the so-called visible world is a condensation of space itself, so the world is not inside space.

I mentioned yesterday that there is a way of thinking in terms of four dimensions, and not merely in terms of the three dimensions of length, breadth and height. Thinking in four dimensions includes thinking not only in terms of time and space, but also includes a merger of the linear forces of time, in which condition the world ceases to be something inside space and time. That is to say, you also are not any more inside space. You are not in India, you are not in Europe, you are not on this Earth, you are not in space; you are in this immeasurable expanse of indescribable something.

You are not anywhere, but everywhere. You are not at some time, but at all times. You are not connected to something, but are related to all things. Space, time and causation converge into a single unitary awareness.

So, this world, this universe of perception as described through the evolutionary processes of the Sankhya, gradually becomes the objects of meditation. To repeat, first a single object, an ideal is placed before you for the purpose of meditation and worship, then all objects, then the whole physical universe of earth, water, fire, air, ether, then the *tanmatras*—*sabdha*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*—then space and time itself. Here the concept of the world ceases. You cannot go beyond this in your thought process. Any attempt to go further than the concept of space and time would take you inward into your own self, and your scientific adventure of probing outwardly into the mysteries of the universe will cease; science will not work anymore. As some people say, here science ceases and turns inward in a mystical contemplation of the scientist himself. The scientist no longer beholds the objects of observation and experiment, because the scientist is no more there to observe or experiment anything. The scientist has to probe into himself.

Here the outward pursuit reaches its limit of possibility, and directs its attention to the inward profundities of the beholder himself. If beauty is in the beholder, the world of scientific perception is in the scientist himself. The scientist is seeing his own mind finally when he attempts to behold the world

outside in his laboratory equipment. When you delve deep into yourself, turning the attention inwardly from the outward experiments that you have been carrying on up to this time, you cease to be a physicist, a mathematician, a chemist or a biologist. You become a psychologist. You become a philosopher. You become a mystic. You become a Yogi.

What do you find when you divert your attention within? These findings within will be commensurate with those higher realities mentioned in the Sankhya categorisation process—Ahamkara, Mahat-tattva, Prakriti and Purusha. They cannot be contemplated upon in the way you did earlier, because they involve you also. How could a scientist experiment with himself through the tools or instruments available in a laboratory? In a similar manner, how would you contemplate on the cosmic Ahamkara-tattva or the conscious principle which is Mahat or Prakriti when you are not anymore something that can be seen with the eyes, or even thought by the mind?

Inasmuch as it is not even capable of thought in an externalised fashion, it becomes a universalisation process. Meditation inwardly becomes a process of universalisation. Earlier it was an outward contemplation, and now it becomes an inward meditation leading to a merger of the outward and the inward in a universality far from any kind of rational comprehension. There is no need for the operation of the mind and the reason here. These are only ambassadors of the great government of the Universal Spirit, who are

recalled into their original souls, and the Centre reigns supreme. Here you contemplate yourself not as somebody, but the potential of all things at the same time: I am what I am.

Well said; but caution here again is the watchword of the seeker. Take time; do not be in a hurry, and do not go beyond your limits. When you feel exhausted and your mind is telling you, "Thus far and no further," it is time to rest.

There was a king who announced to the public that whoever ran the farthest distance would be gifted the land that he had covered in the race. People thronged to participate in the race for the gift of land that was being offered by the king. One person ran several miles, and he was gasping. He felt like he was going to die. His legs would not move. His breath refused to operate. He felt, "Let me go a little further. I can get a little more land, a little more land, a little more land." This person who wanted more and more land without the readiness to actually compete in the ordeal of running the race fell down dead, and he lost not only the land, but he also lost himself. No one, even Yogis, should commit this mistake.

A swami met me many years ago. His head was shaking perpetually. He was a very learned, educated, qualified person. I asked him why his head was shaking perpetually in all directions. He said, "I came to you to find a remedy. I tried to feel myself present everywhere in everything, and it has landed me in this condition." Anyway, I said something to him regarding where the mistake lay.

When we are after great things, we should not lose even the small things that we have, because of our unprepared manner of asking for great things. We can have great things if we are also great enough. A small comprehensive mind cannot go beyond its limitations. We must become large in order that we may obtain the large. The difficulty before us is simple; we are not totally free from sidetracking desires which will subtly tell us that there are good things in this world.

For this purpose, you must keep a diary, because all things cannot be remembered by the mind always. You have heard many things being told to you here, many interesting things of a beneficial nature. How many things can you remember even if you have taken down some titbits in your notebook? So, have your diary wherein you write what are the possibilities of committing a mistake in the future, one of the mistakes being the fact that there are other things also that are good enough for you. Let them be there. Accept this voice of the mind. "I agree with you that there are good things in the world, but they are included in this very thing, this ideal that I am pursuing. When I have my Ishta, I also have all things." Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Chapter 7

INVOKING THE DIVINITY OF THE MANTRA IN JAPA SADHANA

When we say a name, the form connected with the name comes to our mind spontaneously. In the Yoga of meditation, we try to invoke some kind of form into ourselves, but it is not always easy to directly visualise any form without defining it in some manner. It appears that a definition, which is actually the name that we give to the form, is not only very intimately associated with the form, but is also a great help to the *sadhaka* in calling that form into the mind for the purpose of meditation.

We can never think anything without thinking of its qualities. The name is actually a designation of the qualities of the object. In ancient tradition, the naming of a person was done according to their nature, so that the person is described by that name. But if the nature of the person is not clear, and therefore a correct naming cannot be conducted at the very outset, at least such name is chosen to suggest a nature that we wish that person to have in his life. If we go on calling a person, day in and day out, by the characteristics with which we would like that person to identify, that person may feel that these characteristics are part of his or her nature.

This is the psychological background and philosophical foundation of mantra *sadhana*, *japa* Yoga, or even meditation with a concept attached to

the object of one's choice. As a matter of fact, this system of invoking a name, which is what is known as *japa* of a mantra, is also the method followed in any kind of thought process, because the *japa* spoken of is only the repetition of the qualities of something indicated by what is known as the name of that particular thing or object. Independently, minus any kind of such association of a defining characteristic, it will be difficult to invoke any picture before oneself.

When we want to think a thing, we think it in terms of certain characterisations. Name and form go together, and such a name is chosen for the purpose of recitation as would enable the disciple to carry on meditation along those lines. The disciple is initiated into this formula by the teacher.

To take the specific instance of mantra *sadhana* or *japa* Yoga, we have to consider certain particular kinds of importance attached to it, apart from *japa* being merely the calling out of a name for the sake of invoking the form. The mantra is holy. It is not merely a secular name attached to an object, and not just anything and everything that we may consider as a name of something. The mantra is sacred because of various other factors involved therein. That is to say, there is definitely an object connected with it. Inasmuch as this object is the sole reality before us, it is our god. We have already bestowed sufficient thought on this aspect. Because it is our god, it is called *devata*. Therefore, there is a god behind a mantra. The godliness of that particular object consists in its being the sole reality before us and the only thing that we require.

The second aspect of the mantra is that it is a vision of a great *rishi* or sage. In deep contemplation and mystical union—Yoga *samapatti*, or Yoga *samadhi*—this seer, *rishi*, had intuition of this object which is the god or the deity of the mantra. The power of the sage's mind associated with this mantra cannot be separated from the mantra, just as we cannot forget the author's name when we read a book. The contents of a book are connected with the mind of the author who wrote that book. We will be continuously remembering the person who wrote the book, invoking that person's presence, and admiring the author's ability if the book has appealed to us. Similarly, we can never associate ourselves with the mantra minus association with the *rishi*. Just as the thought of the author is in the wisdom of his writings, the power of the mantra in which the deity, the *devata*, is embedded is augmented by connection with the power of the mind of the *rishi* who saw the mantra. Actually, during the initiation into mantra *japa sadhana*, we are instructed that the presence of the *rishi* should be invoked before we start reciting the mantra. Due respect has to be given to the author of that mantra who visualised it in his deep mystic meditation.

Thus, there is a divinity in the mantra, which is the *devata* spoken of; there is the mantra itself, which is the name or the designation of that divinity; and there is the *rishi* or the seer, whose mind is at the back of the mantra. There is also something more.

A mantra is a combination of certain letters, or it can be a combination of certain words. The speciality of a holy mantra, whether it is of the Vedic type or the *tantric* type, is in the manner of the juxtaposition of the letters or the words or phrases of the mantra, which, when combined, produce a new effect. Just as when different chemical elements are brought together and combined a chemical action takes place, two letters combined create a third effect that is much greater than the capacity of both letters to produce that effect. We have examples galore in our daily life of compounds of this kind.

Hence, when we start resorting to *japa sadhana* or mantra *purashcharana*, we bring to the focus of our attention first of all the deity that is the object of our worship and meditation, the *rishi* who is the source of all the blessing for our success in the mantra *japa*, and the mantra itself which is going to be recited continuously. The *chandas*, or the metre of the mantra, is what is known as the way in which the letters of the words or phrases are compounded into the form of that mantra. Then last but not least, there is the thought of the *sadhaka*. *Sadhana shakti*, *mantra shakti*, *devata shakti* and *chandas shakti* all join together to produce a total *shakti* in the process of mantra *japa*.

It is a great sacrifice that we are carrying on in *japa sadhana*. It is a *yajna* itself. That is why Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita: *yajñānām japayajño'smi* (Gita 10.25). Of all the *yajnas*, *havanas*, sacrifices, *homas*, *yagas*, nothing equals *japa*, because there is no need to collect

material for the performance of this *japa*. We do not require any object outside our own thought for carrying on *japa sadhana*. We do not require *ghee*, firewood, a special place, or any other such appurtenances as are necessary to perform a sacrifice in the ritualistic sense. We need not spend one penny if we want to carry on this great *yajna*, or sacrifice, of *japa*. It is a mental sacrifice. There were saints and sages who carried on this *yajna* in the mind, such as Agastya Maharishi who is mentioned in the Mahabharata as having conducted a tremendous *yajna* for years together merely through his thought process. As we know very well, the mind is stronger than material elements in the world, and all the materials used in *yajnas* assume an importance because of the mind or the thought that is connected with the actual performance—else it would be just empty ritual, minus life in it. No *prana* will be there if the mind is not associated.

While considering all these five aspects of mantra *japa*, even the thought of this wondrous combination will infuse a new energy into our system. If we think of how powerful a great *rishi* was, power enters us. Even when we go on gazing at an elephant for a long time, we slowly feel some energy entering into us. Our strength increases when we perceive an elephant for a long, long time. Energy enters us because of the energy of the *rishi* of whom we are thinking, energy enters us when we think of the power of the *devata*, or the god who is before us, energy enters us by the contemplation of the mantra itself, which is a mini-capsule of energy potential, and energy immediately enters us

when we are sure in ourselves that we have taken to the right course of action and we are going to succeed in achieving the desired result.

Calling on the name again and again, in the form of a formula, or a mantra, or a prayer brings you to the proximity of that object. If you go on calling something continuously, it shall be near you as much as possible. Things are really not distant in space, as you would have gathered from the wisdom communicated to you during this *sadhana* period. There is no spatial distance between even remote things. The distance between things is an illusion created by an artificial curtain of space. Therefore, when you call out a thing, it shall listen to your call. People say if you cry in the wilderness, nobody will listen to you. Actually, this world is not a wilderness. Even the trees will listen to what you say if you cry out loudly in the forest. Vana-devata, the deity of the forest, will listen to what you say; the leaves will respond, and the trees will vibrate. Hence, calling out a name which is the recitation of the mantra actually brings the so-called remote powers of the cosmos near us.

Mantras are of different kinds. There are small ones and big ones, connected with small things and with more important, wider things. There are *nicha devatas* and *uccha devatas*, as they are called—petty deities and higher deities—reference to which is made by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the seventh and ninth chapters of the Bhagavadgita.

Yajante sāt̥tvikā devān yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ, pretān bhūtagaṇāṅś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ (Gita 17.4) A *tamasic* approach also is possible in

japa sadhana. We can have *siddhi* or power over an inferior deity, a kind of mesmeric effect that we produce on lower entities by which we gain some power to materialise thought—produce effects materially—as we might have heard of in many cases. But here in our case, in the context of devotees of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj who aspire for spiritual perfection, the ideal of mantra *japa sadhana* is not contact with an inferior deity in order to obtain any particular power materially construed in this world, but it is contact with God Himself.

Such being the case, believing in the words of Bhagavan Sri Krishna that *japa* is the greatest *sadhana*—*yajñānām japayajño'smi*—and also believing that it is the most effective of all types of contemplation and meditation, and is the easiest to practise, involving the least effort on our part, we need not stand on our heads or put ourselves to the torture of extreme austerity of any kind, and focus on the mental process only. Here in *japa sadhana*, the only sacrifice we have to make is in the mind. As we are not poor in our mental process though we may be poor in other ways, and we are not poor in our words as we may be poor in material things, there should be no difficulty in taking resort to this highly wonderful, most powerful method of meditation, *japa sadhana*.

How does *japa* lead to meditation? They are intimately connected, as name is connected with form. As name is incapable of dissociation from the form, *japa* cannot be dissociated from meditation. What we recite is the mantra, the *japa*. What we

think at that time is the *dhyana*, the meditation. Here is the relationship between *japa* of the mantra and meditation on the deity. They go together, inasmuch as one process is vitally connected with the other. *Japa sadhana* becomes a potent force, leading us into higher meditation.

What kind of mantra, what kind of formula are you to take up for the purpose of this practice? If nothing is clear to the mind, it is up to you to approach someone who is competent in this kind of *sadhana*—a Guru or a master—and be initiated into whatever is suitable for your purpose. But if you have some clarity in your own mind and you know what you are seeking—who your god is according to your liking, who is your *Ishta*, your beloved, the deity whom you love most for any reason whatsoever—and you also know its name, you can take to *japa sadhana* of that particular name. As I mentioned, it can be one single compound letter such as *pranava* or *omkara*, it can be two or more letters if the mantra is constituted of so many ingredients, or it can be still more lengthy if many phrases or words are associated with it. It is up to you to choose. Once you take to the name it should not be changed, and you should continue chanting only that name.

Abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ (Yoga Sutras 1.12). The mind is controlled by renunciation and steadfastness in practice. The mind is very impetuous and hard to control, but it can be restrained by continued practice. Anything done continuously produces a powerful effect. As is the case with the meditational techniques that we

considered earlier, so also is the case with the technique to be adopted in *japa sadhana*. A particular place, a particular time and a particular method—this system applies to *japa sadhana* also.

When you take to *japa* assiduously, tenaciously, with great method, symmetry and system, it becomes what is known as *purascharana*. *Purascharana* means a concentrated attempt to carry on *japa* for as long a period as possible, with as much concentration as it is practicable. To assist in this effort, certain accessories are taken into consideration, such as only one particular place for *japa*. In *purascharana*, or this specialised form of *japa sadhana*, the place, the seat, is equally important. If you sit in the same place every day, that little spot on which you are sitting will have its own vibration. The place where you sit for *japa* produces a vibration of its own because of your seatedness. Therefore, if you desire a quick result from doing *purascharana* mantra, it would be good to sit in the same place every day and not change the place. Also, the same time should be the occasion for starting and concluding of *japa*. If you have started doing *japa* at a particular time of the day, let it be the time for every other day also, and not at different times. Else, the thread of energy, the continuity of the practice, will break. If a person takes medicine to cure an illness in a slipshod manner—one capsule or a tablet today and the next ten days later, then another the following day and another after a long gap—it will not produce any beneficial result. Similarly for concentration in the practice of *purascharana*, the seatedness should be

in the same place, and at the same time. It need not be emphasised that the mantra should be the same. You should not experiment with different mantras, else the continuity of producing an effect in the form of a force of *japa* will be broken.

The direction which you face is also important, and should not be changed. It is said that facing either the east or the north is best while being seated in *japa sadhana* because of the special energy emanating from the east due to daily sunrise, and the special effect being produced from the north due to the magnetic force that runs from north to south, as we all know. These two directions are supposed to be most conducive to face while seated for *japa sadhana*.

The posture, the place where you sit, the time, the direction, the continuity of the mantra—and lastly, the most important thing is the purpose for which you are doing this *purashcharana*. The purpose should be very justifiable. You should not do mantra *japa* to harm or destroy someone. While the worst kind of practice is where there is a negative intention or motive to destroy, even a selfish intention to gain some material end by *japa sadhana* is not considered very praiseworthy. God may give you a sword if you want a sword, but what will you do with it? Our askings are sometimes not well conceived. We do not know what is good for us. According to the ancient story, King Midas wanted that whenever he touched anything, it should turn to gold. He thought he would become very rich, not knowing what tragedy would befall him because of the blessing that he received. The

mind is so mischievous that even when it gets what it wants, it may come to ruin by the very acquisition of that want.

I heard a story of a *sadhaka* going to a great *siddha* and begging him, "Please bless me with the power to materialise whatever I think. If I think something, it should be there in front of me." If that blessing is given to you, you will think that you are the most blessed, but do you know the consequences of an uncontrolled mind wanting to materialise whatever it thinks? Anyway, that blessing was given. "All right, take it," said the *siddha purusha*. "If you think something, it will be there in front of you." This wonderful devotee suddenly became elated with the prospect of becoming a master of everything, not knowing that he had no control over his mind. He walked into a forest, sat under a mango tree and thought, "Let there be mangoes." Immediately mangoes appeared in the tree. "Let the mangoes drop," and they dropped. He started eating. Then immediately a thought came to him, "It is a forest, and a tiger may come." Immediately a tiger came, jumped on him and ate him. Whether it is King Midas or this wondrous disciple, if there is no restraint over the mind process, what is the use of having the power of materialisation?

Prahlada's instance is an example before us. When Lord Narasimha offered a boon to Prahlada, he replied, "Don't tempt me, my Lord, with this question. Give me what is best for me." Then the ball is in the other court. How can God give us what is not best for us? If we choose what is best for us, it

could be something like Midas or the other gentleman about whom I mentioned just now. Therefore, the intention behind the *japa sadhana* should be self-purification, purgation of all sins, repentance for whatever mistakes one has committed in the past and, ultimately, grace itself with the blessing of God.

After some months of practice you will feel the result in yourself, just as when you take a good meal every day you will feel the energy in your system after some days, and when you continuously take medicine you will see how you are being cured and your health improves gradually, stage by stage.

While all this is clear to you, one last point to be mentioned is that this process of the practice of *japa sadhana* should be carried on every day. As the same place, time, method and direction are advised, it is equally important to see that it is done every day because daily continuous practice produces a cyclic effect. At the particular hour of the day succeeding the day on which you started the *japa*, a force will be waiting to receive you. If you are not present at that time, there will be nobody to receive you and assist you. Somebody is waiting for you at that particular moment of time the next day itself, because of the time you chose for sitting on the previous day. That somebody is some invisible superhuman being, and if you miss it, you will not find it again.

It is said that the latchet of the door of spiritual practice is inside and not outside. At any time there may be a knock from outside, but if you have locked

the door from inside, the mistake is not on the part of the one who knocked. At midnight the call may come and the hour may be at hand. This friend who is ready to receive you at that particular time of the day when the *japa* has been started will be your guardian angel on successive days. There are guardian angels in everyone's life. "A divinity shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will," said the poet. The divinity is shaping our ends. Even if we ignore it, forget it any number of times, that *devata*, the guardian angel, is ready to guard us, protect us in times of agony, distress and insecurity.

This mantra *devata* will guard you wherever you go. In the thick of the jungle, in the depth of the sea and the heights of the skies, throughout this world you will find this guardian angel behind you, protecting you wherever you go, and you are perfectly secure with this divinity that shapes your ends, provided that your *japa sadhana* is consistent, sincere, honest, and is carried on with the pious aim of the realisation of spiritual perfection.