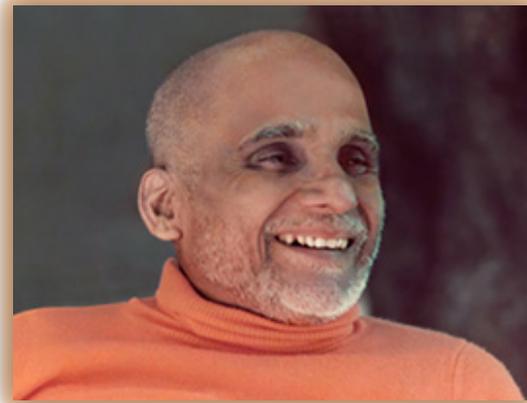


SADHANA THE SPIRITUAL WAY



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA
The Divine Life Society
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India
Website: www.swami-krishnananda.org



ABOUT THIS EDITION

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

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Chapter I

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

This is the week dedicated to the considerations on the details of *sadhana*, which means “spiritual practice.” The word “*sadhana*” in Sanskrit means “an effort exercised towards the achievement of a purpose.” In this sense, every effort is some kind of *sadhana*, because it leads to the achievement of some intended goal.

Here in the context of what is known as spiritual *sadhana*, what is it that we are aiming at? This question has to be put, each by oneself, to one’s own satisfaction. What do you want, finally? This clarity should precede the bestowing of thought on any other type of accessory in *sadhana*. If the goal is not clear, any means adopted to the goal will fall flat, like a huge structure raised on a weak foundation. Let each one of you put a question to your own self, “What am I seeking in the end?”

A chaotic answer, a hotchpotch type of response with no logicity behind it, will come up to the surface of your mind. You will never be able to easily answer this question, because when you decide that some particular thing is your goal, you will find, after a few days of pondering, that this chosen goal is unsatisfying; then, you will ask for something more than what you had earlier chosen as your goal.

The more you think over this matter, you will enter that the goal is receding further and further from your grasp; you will never be able to give a final answer to this question, because you yourself, who have to answer this question, are internally in a muddled condition. Our minds are confused

as to the purpose of their operations. Every day we make different decisions, not very relevant to our earlier decisions of the previous day.

There are moods and vacillating ideas which keep us floating on the surface of life, never allowing us to delve into the depth of the fathomless truth of existence. There were great *sadhakas* in ancient times, great masters who sought the nature of the Ultimate Reality of life. One of them is the well-known Narada Maharshi. He was a master of every kind of learning available in the world. He went and prostrated himself before a great master known as Sanatkumara, the first-born of Brahma the Creator. The great master asked him, “How is it that you have come? What do you require?”

“Master, I have no peace of mind.”

“Let me hear what you know already. After hearing from you an answer to this query, I shall tell you what I can.”

Narada opened his book of knowledge and narrated a list of the sciences and the arts in which he was proficient. “Master, I know every science and every art in the world: metaphysics, theory of knowledge, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, psycho-analysis, aesthetics, ethics, sociology, political science, culture, religion, philosophy. There is nothing that I do not know, but I have no peace of mind. I do not know myself.”

The great master replied, “All this that you have learned is a bundle of words, with no content inside. You have smeared your personality with a veneer of apparent knowledge, but you are quite different from that which you

have gathered on your personality. The shirt is not the person and, therefore, your learning is not what you are.”

What does this situation point to? If nothing that we know is of any final utility to us, why are we living in this world? From the nature of the answer given by the master Sanatkumara to Narada, it would appear that all our efforts in life are finally futile. They keep us in an illusion that we are getting on well in this world. A rich man, well-to-do man, healthy man, ruler of the world – they are under a delusion in thinking that they are such things as they are considering themselves to be.

The delusion has entered into the core of our being, as an incurable disease can become part and parcel of the very cells of our body. We cannot know that we are ignorant. We know nothing about the delusion in which we are sunk, because our very existence, the total personality itself, is made up of ignorance. Darkness is the substance of our personality. If there appears to be some light before us that we see in our daily life, it is a radiance penetrating through the mass of the cloud of ignorance.

Well said, therefore, is the answer of Master Sanatkumara to Narada: “Your learning is a brilliant radiance before you, as it were, but this radiance is muddled and is contaminated by the very process of its passing through the thick cloud of ignorance, of which you are yourself made.”

If the disease that has caught hold of a person becomes the very essence of the person, that person cannot even know that there is a disease at all. When ignorance is the substance of our existence, there is no way out. We require

a bolt to descend on our head, in order that we may awaken to the fact of what is happening to us.

Imagine for a moment: who are the happy and completely satisfied people in this world? Go on a world tour; go to every country, meet all people and ask, "Are you happy?" The answer you receive from these people is worth knowing. Sorrow gnaws into the vitals of human nature, and it is whitewashed by a smear of egoistic assertion of adequacy of oneself. As we cannot live like puny nothings in this world, we put forth great effort to parade in the eyes of people, and before our eyes also, that we are not what we are. Even if you have fallen down, you will say that your nose is not hurt.

That you cannot find a single satisfied individual in the world is a matter for deep consideration. What is wrong with us? How can we live by knowing that everything that we do and think and speak is wrong? We require the grace of a power beyond us to liberate us.

In philosophical circles, questions were raised: How does knowledge arise in the individual? Who manufactures knowledge? You cannot say that you have created your knowledge, because in order to create knowledge within yourself, you must be already possessing that knowledge. An ignorant person cannot have the seed of this knowledge. If you are not the source of the knowledge, who created this knowledge? Has it come from outside? It does not appear that it has come from you, because to manifest knowledge from your own self, you must have already, within yourself, the potential of that knowledge. If that is already there, then you need not seek knowledge at all.

The great Dattatreya Maharshi says in the very first verse of the Avadhuta Gita: *isvaranugrahad-eva pumsam advaita-vasana; mahadbhaya-paritranat vipranam upajayate*: The knowledge that frees you from the fear of life, the threat of death, does not arise by a slipshod effort on the part of any person. A miraculous occurrence in the very operation of the cosmos takes place, the pros and cons of which process we cannot know – just as we cannot know how we are born into this world.

We did not push ourselves into this world with our efforts; we were pushed by somebody else. Similarly, we will be pushed out of this world without our wanting it. If our coming and going is not in our hands, what else is? The beginning is not in our hands; the end also is not in our hands; how do we arrogantly conclude that the middle of our life is in our hands? That is equally beyond our control.

The entire life is superintended over by something which we are not capable of knowing by the apparatus of knowledge available to us. This is briefly the introduction to the liberating discourse that Maharshi Sanatkumara gave to Narada.

The difficulty is in not only knowing things outside, but also in knowing our own selves. Put a question again to yourself: What kind of person am I? In the midst of many people, you will not be able to think in this manner. Go to your room, shut your door, put down the telephone, close your eyes, and think for yourself: What kind of person am I? A revelation will emanate from yourself which is contrary to what you thought you are.

Bereft of social associations, bereft of any contact with the wealth of life, bereft of even a cloth on the body, sitting alone by yourself in a lonely corner with nothing around you to consider as your own, in that state of affairs, if you raise a question to yourself, “What am I?” what will you think you are? Misery will be the response to this question. You will enter that nothing seems to be in your hands. As you came, so you go, and so you live also. Your importance to a large extent depends upon social relations, the connection that you establish with people in the world. Minus these connections, what are you? When nobody wants you, when you have nothing for yourself to call your own, when the ground under your feet is shaking and you cannot stand on this earth, when you have lost everything with nothing left to call your own – what do you feel at that time? You will then know what you are.

An empty balloon, which was filled with the air of arrogance, has sustained man through his life. Arrogance cannot feed you; it depletes your personality. It draws your energy out into an area of perception which is misleading you. The more are you egoistic, the weaker you become, though the egoistic person imagines that his importance increases by the affirmations of his personality. Who are you to affirm yourself in this condition of affairs? Everything has been torn into the shreds of unimportance; even the body is trembling, and the mind is roaming around with a crazy power.

Something like that happened to the great epic hero Arjuna, as described to us in the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: everything has gone; nothing is left. You do not know whether you have to cry at that moment, or what

to do. You are sinking, you are breaking, you are crumbling down, and none wants you in this world. At that time, what is your importance? If any importance is left even in that condition, that is your real nature. If there is nothing left at all in you under these harassing conditions, you are in danger.

Sanatkumara told this to the sage Narada: you are in danger from your egoism of learning. In a series of declarations, the great master Sanatkumara raised the mind of Narada to the heights of larger and larger comprehensions. Here is an essential point for us to bear in mind. The process of *sadhana* is an adventure, whereby we move forward gradually, by degrees, in the comprehension of our own selves – but, what is meant by “comprehension”? Again, we should not fall into the pit of that list of learning, which Narada presented before the sage Sanatkumara.

The point driven into our minds in this context is that we are not a bundle of social relations, because these relations can snap at any moment, as we can see it in the process of history. Then, what remains? Only your body remains; but the body is unreliable – at any moment it can be snatched away by the icy hands of death.

You still will remain, as you know very well. You will never feel that you have been abolished even by the loss of the bodily personality and all the social relations. You will continue to feel always that “you are,” not that the body is, the mind is, friends and relations are, wealth is. Nothing of the kind can be called what you are, because now you are ridding yourself of the relationships, even of the bodily

encumbrance, and trying to know where you stand in this great environment of the universe.

Narada is educated by Sanatkumara like a great intelligent psychologist schoolmaster. He came to the astonishing conclusion that our happiness does not lie in acquiring anything at all. It is finally in the acquisition of our own selves. The previous considerations have shown that we can own nothing in this world, not even this body, or our friends and relations. Yet, we do exist, clamouring for an ultimate solution to our perilous predicament.

Sanatkumara's final answer is that we cannot know anything unless we know everything, just as a good physician cannot know the ache in a part of our body unless he knows our whole physical, anatomical, and physiological structure. The whole body has to be known before knowing what has happened to a part of it. If we can apply a similar diagnostic method to our own selves, we may conclude that we are asking for "everything," and not only "something," in this world. That is why anything that is provided to us in any abundance is not going to satisfy us, because we have a feeling that there is something more than what we have already gotten: Why cannot we have that also?

We would like to rule over the earth, if that could be possible; but we would not like to be merely stuck to the ground of the earth as its emperor, because we would be harassed again by our ignorance about the skies and the stars. They are above the air, beyond this world, telling us that we know nothing about them. We would like to conquer the stars in the sky, and all space.

There is no such thing as possession, is what we concluded. If that is the case, we cannot possess the earth, the sky and the stars. Then what do you mean by saying that we have to know everything in order to be happy? You have to know everything by standing inseparable from that which you are seeking, because if you stand separate from it, whether it is the earth or the stars and the skies, it will elude your grasp, just as anything that is outside you will escape from your grip. That which will not leave you, and will always remain with you, is that which is inseparable from yourself.

Then what does Sanatkumara say as a conclusion? “*Yo vai bhuma tat sukham.*” Here is the final Supreme Court judgement on the nature of human happiness: *The Infinite is bliss; the finite is wretched.* As everything is finite in this world, including our own body and personality, everything is ruled over by utter sorrow of the inadequacy of the finitude of personality. The inadequacy of the finite individuality is overcome by the infinitude that is reigning supreme within the deepest core of every finite being. There is an ocean roaring behind the drop that we appear to be on the surface of perception. That roaring ocean is the Infinite Existence.

The Infinite is not a large accumulation of particulars. One has infinite wealth, we say. This is not the sense in which we have to understand the word “Infinite.” Infinite wealth is an accumulated group of finitudes, but many finites do not make the Infinite. Therefore, the richest man, the ruler of the world, is not happy. The Infinite is That, outside which nothing can exist. You can behold nothing outside That; you will behold nothing outside yourself.

Nothing will be heard, nothing will be understood through the intellect as external to its own self. This is the great, glorious Infinite. Religions call this state God; philosophers call it the Absolute, Truth, the Ultimate Being. All these names are associated with this wondrous, miraculous, enrapturing, magnificent Truth that we are something more than what we project ourselves to be in our social life, in our public life, even in our private life.

A time now has come, therefore, to ransack our personality threadbare, and be honest to our own selves before we are honest to other people. To thine own Self be true.

Chapter II

ON MIND-CONTROL

The “mind” is a name given to the policy of affirming one’s finitude. The assertion of individuality is known as “mind.” It is a pressure exerted upon the limitedness of our personality, and there is no such thing as mind independently existing, as we may imagine it to be.

Childlike considerations may form the opinion that the mind is something moving inside the body, like a ball of mercury changing its position frequently, within the body only. No such thing is the mind. It cannot be located as “something.” It is, to explain it precisely, the body asserting itself: “I am.” This body feels “it is.” That vehement feeling of physical existence is termed the “mind” for purpose of easy comprehension.

Fickleness is the nature of the mind. It will never occupy a particular position because the physical affirmation spoken of is a tantalizing phenomenon, not sure of itself. The body does not finally know what it wants; that is to say, the mind, so-called, does not know what it wants. This is so because there is a contradiction between the affirmation of individuality through the physical body, and the infinite longings that seem to be there, lying at the back of the personality. The infinite longing contradicts the finite affirmation and, therefore, life is before us as a great contradiction.

Everywhere we see problems, and no problem is finally capable of solution. Kings and ministers, statesmen, work hard throughout their lives to solve the problems of life. But they go, and the problems remain, because life is

constituted of an insoluble contradiction. Inasmuch as the very basis of our existence is contradiction, no one can find a solution to it.

But, is there not a way? The very longing within us is a pointer to the problem capable of solution. Our longings are so firm, so convincing, so irrefutable, so unrelenting that we seem to be enshrining within our own selves a non-finite impulse simultaneously with the finite impulse of bodily affirmation.

The control of the mind is, therefore, equal to the finding of the relation between the finite and the Infinite. Great persistence, great understanding and capacity to discriminate is here called for. Ancient masters and seekers of truth, to one of whom I made reference yesterday, had their own way of solution. Sometimes the solutions seem to be very humorous, but very practical. The mind has to be handled in an intelligent manner, but persistently.

When we drive a nail continuously on the wall, without changing the spot, with the determination to drive the nail into the wall, it will go inside and yield to our pressure. But, if we strike at one place and find a brick, at another place a stone, in a third place something else, we will not succeed in driving the nail at all.

In a similar manner, several methods have to be adopted in a continuous determination to achieve a purpose. This determination takes various phases of expression. It is not that everyone can manifest this determination in the same way. There is a world under every hat, they say, and there is a different type of solution within every individual. My solution is not yours, and yours is not somebody else's. Peculiarity, novelty, and a

kaleidoscopic character of the method to be adopted – all these are some of the features of spiritual determination. There are some stories of humorous instances adopted by great saints and sages. We will be inclined to laugh at these analogies, but they are very practical and prove very useful.

There was a great saint called Swami Narayana. His followers are very large in the area of Gujarat, though he hailed from Uttar Pradesh. One day he observed some villagers struggling with a cow. They were unable to milk it because it was giving a kick the moment anybody approached it. They could not go near the cow. Whenever it felt that somebody was coming near it, it would kick with its foot.

Swami Narayana was not only a saint but also a seeker in himself. He told these villagers, “I shall find a way of stopping this kicking.” He took a long stick and, sitting a little away from the cow, slowly touched the cow’s leg with that stick; it gave a kick immediately. After a few seconds he again touched it; it gave another kick. He sat there for the whole day, without taking food from morning to evening, doing only one work – touching the leg of the cow with the stick. To the surprise of all the people who were witnessing this phenomenon, for a continuous twelve hours, this touching went on. How long will the cow give a kick? It is also a living being. It got fed up, tired, and stopped kicking. Then he told them to milk the cow; it never kicked afterwards.

The mind is turbulent in some way of this kind. It has to be treated in the same way as the *swami* treated the cow. Whatever we say, the mind will not agree. It has its own

voice and something else to say, quite different from what we are wanting it to do. If we say, “Do this,” it will say, “No, I will do another thing.”

There was a couple, husband and wife. The wife always did the opposite of what the husband said. If he said, “Today will you prepare some good meal with coconut?” she would say, “No, I will not use coconut.” She would make a thin, watery *dal* and give him. Then, he would say, “Today I am not feeling well, so don’t make any dish. I want only a little thin watery *dal*.” “No, I will make a good dish for you,” she said, and she made a sumptuous meal, and he took it. “Today some venerable guests are coming,” he said; “Will you cook some good meal for them?” She said, “No, I will not. I will give only water to the guests.” Then, after some days, when the visitors were actually expected, he told the wife, “Today I am not expecting anybody and I don’t think any special meal is necessary.” “No, I will make a very good meal for twenty people,” she said, and she cooked twenty people’s food; the visitors came and they were fed.

This is what the mind is telling us: “I will not listen to you. You may say anything, but I have some other way.” How will you deal with it? Use the same way as the husband or Swami Narayana handled the situation.

Sometimes, we may have failure when offering a frontal attack to the mind. A direct attack is not always going to be a success even in military operations. Great wisdom is to be exercised. We have to retreat, we have to move forward, we have to become invisible for some time, if necessary.

There was a fierce bull. If it saw any human being from a distance, it would make a hissing noise through its nose.

There was a gentleman who decided to control that bull. How will he control it, if he cannot go near it? What he did was that he built a fence around that fierce bull. Now, one step for success has been taken – the bull cannot go outside the limit of the fence. Previously, it could roam anywhere and attack anyone on the road; now it cannot go, because a fence is there. Likewise, do to the mind. It goes everywhere, roaming throughout the world, wanting anything and rejecting anything. Put a fence over it: within this limit only it must operate. Give it whatever it wants within the limitation; do not deny everything.

The bull was within the fence. The next step was that the gentleman took a bundle of green grass, thrust his hand through the wire fence and showed the bull the grass. The bull slowly came near. The man knew very well the ferocity of the bull – he could not touch it. But, because of the grass, it forgot the man outside and was thinking only of the grass. He fed it every day; daily feeding it with grass was his only work, so that the bull became acquainted with the personality of this individual. Every day it was seeing the same person. Then, with or without the grass he could gently touch the bull's forehead, and it would just look up. Then he lessened the circle of the fence and made it more restricted, so that it was not more than a few square yards; he could go on patting the bull with his hand continuously, and feeding it with green grass.

The acquaintance became so intense that the bull started slowly licking the hand of the gentleman. It developed an affection for him. Previously, fierce it was; animosity was its nature. It became friendly because of this affectionate treatment; it yielded to his touch. Then he

removed the fence and went near it with the grass. Without the fencing he went near it, touched it, gave the grass, patted it on the head, and even sat on its back. Can you imagine the success, to the surprise of all people?

The ways of saints, the methods adopted by masters and seekers of yore, are very interesting. They are not always logically rigid, but a beautifully construed methodology of handling the mind.

I have told you many years back, perhaps, a Sufi saint's story. There was a great mystic called Jalaluddin Rumi in the Middle Ages. He had many followers. He recited an instance of how a person can change himself by changing his circumstances. There was a Sufi Guru who had several followers and disciples, many of whom were poor Arabs, but very devoted to their master. One of them came in the early morning to pay homage to his master. The master asked, "How are you, my dear boy?"

"Master, I am living in hell."

"What is the trouble with you?"

"I have one room only, which is a small area where I have my family, my wife and two children. There inside I cook my food. I have a camel which brays continuously, and there is a dog barking all night. We cannot sleep. You can imagine our condition. Don't you think, Master, that this is veritable hell?"

The master said, "There is no problem; I can solve this difficulty."

The obedience of disciples to the master was so amazing, especially in ancient times, that they would not argue with the Guru. Though his suggestions may look funny, irrational, and sometimes unusual, the devotion and

submission to the Guru supersedes rationality. The Guru told the disciple, "Tonight you tie the dog inside your house when you go to bed." The man could not understand what kind of solution this was, but obedience is obedience.

The dog made matters worse. It went on barking inside the room and howled throughout the night. Nobody slept even for a minute. The disciple went to the Guru the next morning. The Guru said, "Hello, how are you?"

The man said, "I cannot say anything. It is worse than hell. The dog did not allow us to sleep."

"There is a solution for it. You have got a camel? Tie it inside."

He thought, "What is this? Am I going to be alive?" But the Guru is Guru, and he did not say a word against him. He tied the camel inside the room. There was no space to sit. The camel occupied the entire area, making kicks and jumps, and the dog was barking also, the fireplace was giving sparks, the children were crying, the wife was standing only, and he was also sitting.

The next morning he went to the Guru and said, "I cannot speak, Master. I am dying today. I think it is the last day for me. I thought it was hell; this is worse than hell."

"I will find a solution for it, the Guru said. Tie the camel out; put the dog also out."

He slept very well that night, no noise, no disturbance of any kind. The next morning he went to the Guru. The Guru asked, "How are you?"

"Heaven, heaven!" he said.

"Heaven? Hey! You came to me in the beginning, saying it is hell. Now how has it become heaven?" he asked. "Do not complain."

The mind is a great mystery. It can deceive you every moment and tell you everything is wrong – nothing is good anywhere, everybody is foolish, the world is a devil’s abode and it is better to be rid of it. It will go on telling all kinds of things; yet, till the last moment of your breath, the desire to live long will not leave you. You may be a patient with incurable disease, utterly poverty stricken, but you would like to continue the existence in this body as much as possible. Nobody would like to abolish the personality, destroy one’s individuality, negate one’s existence.

What is it that you are longing for? Stories of this kind, analyses of this nature, will tell you that again here is a contradiction in your life. Your opinion about people and the world, and sometimes about your own predicament, contradicts the endless longing that you maintain within yourself for anything and everything. Death is a terror. Nothing can be worse than that, because it is the end of your existence. You will tolerate the end of anything that you possess, but you cannot tolerate the end of your being.

So, your affection centralises itself later on into a pin-pointed existence of your own location: “I must be; I do not want anything else. Let the world go, let all things leave me, but may I live long, may I persist, may I exist for ever and ever.”

Who generates this feeling of endless longing, if not that which is your real nature? What kind of longing is this? In the beginning it is very nebulous and not clear to your mind. That is why you cannot answer the question of why you want to live long. There is no *why* for it; it is there, and it has to be accepted. For the final issue, there is no *why*. Whatever be your situation in this world, you would like to

live for any number of years. Even if you are granted a blessing of ten thousand years of living, that cannot satisfy you because when you are completing the tenure of 9,999 years, the fear will strike you that only one year is left – as powerful as the fear of death would be if you were to pass away earlier. So, length in life is not the solution, because how long will that length of life continue? It will end one day.

When the great seeker Nachiketas was offered longest life and all the glories of the world by the great master Yama, Nachiketas' reply was: *api sarvam jivitam alpameva, tavaiva vahas tava nrityagite*: "The longest life is short when it comes to an end." There is no such thing as long life because when it ends, it is short. So, what do you mean by saying that you want to live long?

Here again is a psychological contradiction before us. Actually, what insists on our continuing for a long time is not this body calling for a persistent existence, because the mind is clever enough to know that the body cannot last long. But, it wants to accumulate certain features that will give it the satisfaction of living long.

The central feature of this longing is the longing to have our own selves. "Know thyself and be free." Though we hear these admonitions a hundred times, we will make the common mistake of identifying the Self with this so-called person seated here: "Let me know my Atman." You will say "my Atman," as if you are going to possess it as a property. If the Atman is to be possessed by you, it stands outside you, like an object, like any other thing in the world. If you are going to possess the Atman, then who are you? Other than the Atman is the *anatman*. *Anatman* is non-existence.

Is non-existence trying to possess existence? Here is again a contradiction in our thinking.

Great discrimination, *vairagya*, is called for. Easily do we mistake the principle of *vairagya*. So many *sadhus* are there, so many *vairagis* are there. They have all renounced everything. You may ask a *vairagi*: You have renounced everything; what are the things that you have renounced?

The immediate, quick reply may be: "I possess nothing. I have left everything that I had earlier. I have left the world; therefore, I have completed my renunciation."

If you have abandoned the world, where are you standing now? Are you sitting in the sky? Standing on the ground that is the earth, you are saying that you have renounced it. The world blows a breeze of various types on your personality every moment, saying that you cannot renounce the world, unless you renounce yourself first. The renouncer has to renounce himself, so that the renunciation may become complete.

But where is the meaning in renouncing one's own self? If the self is renounced, what remains? This difficulty will suddenly take possession of our own selves. There is really no such thing as renunciation of anything, because nothing in the world really belongs to you. How can you renounce a thing which has not actually become your property? Are you renouncing somebody else's belongings? The world is not under your control; therefore, how will you renounce it?

Here, renunciation has to be understood in the spirit that is within it. Renunciation is not an abandonment in the literal sense of the word, but a spirit that is maintained within – a spirit of not belonging to anything, and a spirit

of nothing actually belonging to one's own self. In this process of the determination of the spirit, the world stands united with you because of the fact that you are made of the same substance as the world of nature.

All humanity is inside you, with you, within you, and has taken possession of you. The principle of every individual in the world is inside you also, so that on different occasions you can manifest the character of any person in this world. Anything is inside you; only the proper button has to be pushed. All humanity is potentially present inside you. The world is potentially present inside you, inside in the sense of that personality of yours which is clubbed with the whole nature at the same time, and not this Mr. So-and-so personality.

Here is the difficulty that the mind will encounter every day. We cannot think in this manner because our education is purely empirical, outwardly motivated, and physically conditioned. But you stand a master of all things by renunciation, in the sense of belonging to the whole world – the world belonging to you, and you yourself belonging to the world. The world stands, including all personalities and all individuals, all human beings, every created being, including yourself. The world stands renounced within itself. You become a world individual.

Such renunciates are world masters, because they are self masters. When the taste for things ceases, you have conquered the world; when the taste is conquered, the world is conquered. Taste of the tongue, taste of the eyes, taste of the ears, taste of the nostrils, taste of touch – all these are tastes of one kind or the other. They persist till our death almost, because of the fact that we never

succeeded in living as world individuals. We have never succeeded in maintaining the position of a world personality.

Can any one of you feel convinced within yourself that you are a world individual? “I do not merely belong to the world; it is not that the world belongs to me. I will stand as a meeting point of the world and the individuality of everybody.” Unthinkable is this situation. A master-mind we call such people; a super-man, an incarnation, an *avatara* – all sorts of names and nomenclatures are attributed to such achievements in a person who ceases to be a person and is at the same time a super-person.

Such renunciation precedes the understanding that is required to practise yoga, which is real *sadhana*. The essence of this situation is that you cannot entertain little petty desires and then sit for meditation.

When you are seated in meditation, a kind of infinitude enters into you, as is suggested in the *sutra* of Patanjali: *prayatna shaithilya anantasamapattibhyam*: Steadiness in posture is possible by a comprehension of the infinitude that this world is. Relaxation and the concept of the Infinite will enable you to occupy a desired posture. Relaxation – the nerves are tense, the muscles are tense, the mind is tense, the body is tense; they have to be released in a fashion akin to *yoganidra*. It is not *nidra*; it is so called because of its resemblance to non-perception of anything outside, similar to *nidra*, the condition of sleep.

Before you sit in a posture for meditation, lie on your back. Stretch your arms aside. Take deep breathing: take in air through the nostrils and breathe out through the mouth, as you do generally, automatically, when you are tired after

a long journey or hard work: “Oh God, the day’s work is over, let me lie down!” You are not aware of anything at that time except that you want nothing but total relaxation. As the mind is connected to the body intimately, the mind also gets relaxed at that time, together with the relaxation of the nerves and the muscles. For a few minutes you can meditate even in that posture. It is not necessary that you sit up with a rigidity of feeling at the outset.

As long as it is comfortable and possible for you to contemplate your ideal even in that posture of lying on the back, let it be; continue, because the mind will not enable you to concentrate on anything when the body is feeling any kind of pain or discomfort. When you catch hold of the mind, you cannot reject the body. The rider on the ass is connected with the ass, so you cannot displease the ass when you are riding on it.

Body and mind go together, as a psycho-biological individuality. You cannot say you are the body, or are not the body – you are the mind, or you are not the mind. These statements have no meaning, finally. It is a child’s definition of what you are. You are an integrated affirmation, wherein are blended both the mental structure and the physical structure. So, a kind of relaxation caused by satisfaction of having achieved an end should follow simultaneously with the effort at meditation.

But it is not an effort, actually speaking, because Patanjali has told you “*prayatna shaithilya*”: loosen your tension of effort. Don’t say, “I am doing something,” because this consciousness of doing something is again an assertion of individuality and a potential of egoism manifesting itself.

Just be in a state of complete psycho-physical relaxation, either by lying down, or in any other comfortable posture. Really, for the purpose of meditation, there is no particular posture prescribed. As is comfortable, so is the posture. The Yoga Shastra does not say, "Sit only in this posture." Though sometimes for certain reasons a particular seated posture is suggested, every rule has an exception. In a similar manner, this general instruction to be seated with spine erect and neck straight, etc., can be regarded as a very practicable posture, provided that you don't feel any discomfort in that posture. Dissatisfaction of any kind should not precede the effort at meditation. How the yoga practice commences is stated in this manner in the yoga texts.

I will repeat once again what I told you yesterday: be clear as to what you are seeking. The object of meditation is the final choice that you make in this world. You have selected it as the ultimate meaning for your life. There are people who cling to a certain thing throughout their lives and consider that particular thing as the be-all and the end-all of their lives. Rightly or wrongly, they have hugged that particular thing through their emotional clamouring. But this is a treacherous attitude of the emotions. It will leave you in the dark at any moment.

Nobody likes a thing continuously throughout one's life. That is the effect of the fickleness of mental activity. In the choice of the object of meditation, no fickleness is possible. You may take months to decide what it is that can give you true satisfaction.

There are devotees who choose the form of a divinity, the ultimate Godhead manifest before them in some form

which they regard as final. The reason why they consider that form as final is that they are sure that the infinite longing for salvation is centralised in that particular form of divinity, as the potentiality of the power of the sun is hidden in a single ray of the sun. So, the whole world is one object.

You strike one object to the core; an atomic bomb manifests itself. Strike it further; you will find the treasures of the world coming up from inside the very object that you have struck again and again by the hammering of the mental process. Strike it further; you will find that this mind which meditates is the meeting point of all the levels of creation commingling in one point, like the sea at the meeting point of a river, where the two become one. Even in this initial stage of meditation, you will see that you rise up from meditation as a new individual, as if something has entered you, has been injected into you.

Old habits still persist. A *sutra* of Patanjali tells us: Never feel satisfied with any experience, because any satisfying experience in meditation – sound, colour, perception of beauty, fragrance – should not attract you because it is as temporary and tantalizing as any other presentation in this physical world.

Actually, what you call heaven is only a rarefied form of earthly enjoyment. A highly potent form of sensory experience is heaven; the gross form of it is the earth. When such presentations are placed before you, don't smile, "Oh they have come. Wonderful!" No, it is a mask put on by a tremendous deceptive force before you.

The world opposes you in the beginning. Vehemently will it oppose you, and it will see that you do not succeed.

People will harass you, condemn you, criticise you, say that you are a crack, and the world will present further difficulties, causing you to tremble in your person, as if you have gone wrong. I have told many a time on earlier occasions, when you churn the mind for the sake of treasures that you seek, the treasure will not come; only poison comes, as illustrated in the story of *amritamanthana* in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Wanting nectar, you churn the ocean; deadly poison comes in the beginning.

What is this poison, actually? Wherefrom has it arisen? It is the potentiality of attachment still persisting at the last moment of the death of individuality. When a cobra is about to die, it becomes most poisonous; if it strikes at that time, it is a death strike. Likewise, the last kick that human desire gives you is a poisonous smoke of discomfiture and sorrow, and indecision of every kind. Do you know how many treasures afterwards slowly arose from the churning of the ocean in *amritamanthana*? Some fourteen gems are described there as the jewels of human love, tempting more and more as the succeeding ones rose up, so that the temptation to possess it rose in greater intensity. Finally, you know what happened to these people who wanted nectar in this enlightening story.

This is a story about our own selves – the gods and the demons, the ocean, the nectar, the treasures, the jewels, the poison. All these are inside us, inside in every sense of the term, outwardly, inwardly, and also in the blend of both sides. Knowing well that such things are possible before us, through the guidance that we have received from our Master, whom we should not desert till the end of our lives – knowing this well, march forward.

Chapter III

THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION: THE APEX OF THE COSMIC TRIANGLE

From all the considerations we went through during the earlier days, it would have been noticed that the adventure of spiritual life, yoga *sadhana*, is not anyone's individual affair. There is no such thing as "I shall do *sadhana*"; because *sadhana* is the very process of eliminating this "I," the "I" cannot do *sadhana*. Further, the great relationships that our so-called personality has with all things in the world prevent us from entertaining any such notion as that the achievement of yoga is the fulfilment of an individual purpose. It is not for "my" salvation, it is not for "your" salvation, because the "my" is only an adjective of "I," and "you" is a correlative of "I"; so, when the one thing goes, all the three go. Just as there is no such thing as "my *sadhana*," there is no such thing also as "my salvation."

If you persist in the old habit of thinking that "you" are engaged in spiritual practice for "your" liberation, insurmountable problems will face you later on, because the age-old question will arise: "When I attain salvation, what will happen to other people who have not attained salvation?"

If again you persist in your foolishness that the others are there and you are quite free in the highest heaven in the state of liberation, you will face another difficulty: in your omniscience attained in salvation, you will behold outside you many bound souls who have not yet attained salvation. When you can see something external to you, totally

unconnected with you, unliberated but related to a liberated perception, then that would not be salvation, because already it has been pointed out that salvation is the attainment of the Infinite, where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and visualises nothing else. The Immortal is sufficient to Itself, and It does not require the perception of somebody else. But, your omniscience in salvation would naturally present before you the whole world of unliberated souls, bound *jivas*, so the contradiction in your present worldly life will persist even in salvation! So, would it be better not to go for salvation?

These are not simple things that you can just bypass. This confusion in the mind that will persist till the end of your achievement will block your vision one day, and you will be like Trishanku hanging between earth and heaven – neither here nor there, confused, neither in this world nor in any other place.

Obstacles in meditation are supposed to be many. These obstacles do not come from anybody else. They come from your misconceptions about your own self and your relationship to other people, your wrong notion of God, immortality, and salvation. Discrimination, *viveka*, which is supposed to be a prerequisite quality in the practice of *sadhana*, clarifies this position, and it enables you to distinguish between what is proper and improper, what is right and what is not, what is real and what is unreal.

Each one of you should deeply probe into your own heart and raise this question to your own self: “For whose sake am I doing spiritual practice?” It cannot be for your own personal purpose. If not, then for whose purpose? Are you engaged in yoga practice for the freedom of your wife

and children? If not, is it only for yourself? If that is not the case, then whose is the salvation? Let each one privately answer this question to one's own self.

Your freedom is the only thing that you are seeking in all the walks of life. Everywhere you have found some kind of limitation, bondage, and insufficiency which you want to be rid of. For that purpose, you have come to listen to certain methods of practice, by which you will be able to free yourself from the tangles of wrong associations with things in the world. With these clarifications in your mind, gird up your loins for the practice of meditation, which is final yoga. The fundamentals of the practice of meditation have already been mentioned earlier, and their foundation has already been laid. If this foundation is strong, then it is easy to build the superstructure of the further stages of yoga practice.

In the beginning you absolve yourself from all connections, social as well as psychological. Then, take a relaxed position and occupy any posture that is convenient for you. What is suitable to you as a posture is to be chosen, each by oneself; one person's method may not suit another person.

Sthira sukham asanam: easy, comfortable, fixed posture is what is prescribed. It should be easy. Liberation of personal tension in effort, relaxation of the tension of the muscles and the nerves, and an easy mental position is the beginning, the initial step of meditational techniques.

On what do you meditate? Again I dilate upon what I mentioned to you briefly earlier: the object of your meditation is the dearest, nearest, most beloved, incomparable in its beauty, magnificence, and power to

fulfil. It may be that you have a chosen form in your mind – an image of a god, an idol, a portrait, a diagram, or a concept. Again answer a question to your own self: is this diagram, this image, this *lingam* or idol or portrait my dearest object in the world? You will hesitate to say that this is the dearest. How can a portrait be the dearest object in the world? No chosen object of this kind can finally be the dearest thing which you can hug for ever and ever, because you have other dear things in the world. Who can say that they are not there?

Now, prepare yourself for another adventure. Is it true that this ideal that you have chosen, the form that you have selected for your meditation, is certainly the dearest? It cannot equal any other beauty or magnificence in the world because of one central fact: This particular ideal that you have chosen for your meditation is a passage to the widest expanse of infinite fulfilment. This ideal individuality of the chosen object is a representation of infinite forces penetrating it, charging it, connecting it with all creation.

If you tap one object to the deepest core of its being, the topmost level of the universe has been tapped. The whole world will vibrate by the stroke that you have dealt on a little object in your meditation. The stroke is a mental effort of tremendous attention and unsurpassed concentration, a bombardment that you are engaged in upon this object. Bombard it by repeated concentration and attention and prevent any kind of distraction by a repetition of the belief that this is all-in-all for you, because here is a door to the infinite resources of the cosmos. The door may not be the Infinite, but it is a passage leading you to the richest

treasure of cosmic attainment. Then, all the dear things in the world will converge into that object.

As the apex of a triangle expands its compass further and further as it advances towards its base, likewise, imagine in your meditation that your chosen object of meditation is the apex of an inverted triangle. Even if it is a pin-point of the apex of the triangle, it has the seed of developing itself into the wider dimensions of the base of the triangle, which can extend itself to infinitude, to all space.

Imagine a triangle which is as big as this whole world – not a little Euclidian geometrical triangle that you draw on your mathematics notebook. This triangle is as big as you can conceive in its widest extent. And, the point in the inverted position is the object of meditation.

Proceed further, for the sake of your satisfaction, that the whole tree of the universe will rise up from this little seed of the apex of the inverted triangle. This will give you great joy. The whole *banyan* of the cosmic tree is here in front of you in the position of a little dot of the object of concentration. At the very outset it would be difficult for the mind to encompass the whole thing at once.

The choosing of an idol is not a foolish imagination. It is the touching of the cosmos at one point. All the points in the universe are everywhere; therefore, this point that you have chosen for your meditation also is a representation of all the points that are everywhere in the world. So, you have touched the whole creation by touching this little object of your meditation, even if it be a wooden idol, a stone image, or a triangle imaginarily placed before you by your mind,

or anything for the matter of that – a portrait of God Himself.

These detailed descriptions of what is going to happen at the beginning of your meditational process will raise your spirits at once to a height. You will not sit for meditation with a brooding, despondent mood. “It may be or may not be,” – that question will not arise. “It shall, it must, and it has to come, because I have rightly chosen the method. I have understood the whole process of attuning my mind to my purpose.” Thus, concentrate your mind on anything that you have chosen for your *ishtadevata*. It is *ishta* because you love it incomparably and infinitely; it is a *devata*, a divinity, because it is the adored god before you. Why is it a god? It is a mini-god who will manifest itself into the Infinite God. It is a little incarnation of the Vishvarupa of the Almighty in the form of this little *lingam*, this picture, this portrait, this point on the wall, this rose flower, this candle flame – whatever it is.

Thus, anything in the world is good enough for meditation; and if that is the case, any place in the world also is good enough to sit. All things are good enough and, therefore, all places also are equally good enough, but you should not be frightened whether this is so or not. Doubts tempt us like traitors, insinuating themselves into our heart and seeing to it that we do not succeed in our attempt. The whisper of the negative force will be heard continuously, together with our higher aspirations.

Rama and Ravana are inside us, and will be speaking at the same time. The positive and the negative are working together. The *daiva-asurasampatti* is within our own selves, as described in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

The pros and cons of every event in the world scintillate within our personality.

The entire history of humanity is shining forth within us. The whole Ramayana, all the epics of the world – the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Mahabharata – are taking place within us. They have taken place, they are taking place, and they will be taking place also, eternally. The epic movement is an eternal process. It is not something that happened earlier in ancient historical times. It is eternally taking place, just now at this very moment also. These stories are eternal descriptions of the cosmic process perpetually taking place in a timeless manner.

You must lecture to your own self, “This is so, this is so, this is so.” As you repeat a prayer again, repeat these descriptions to your own self, even if it be through an audio tape. It will be telling you the same thing: “Here it is, here it is, this is so, be careful.”

You require a mentor right from the beginning till the end. That mentor is supposed to be your Guru, who will take you by the hand from the earth up to the highest heaven. It is not that the Guru initiates you and then leaves you in the lurch to take care of yourself. The guiding hand of the real Guru, as you should conceive him properly, will follow you wherever you go, telling you secretly, “I am here; I have not left you.”

The higher soul is your Guru, and the Guru is your higher soul. How could you expect the higher soul to depart and enable you independently to move forward? The lower spirit advances simultaneously together with the higher soul, which also is your own self. The higher voice tells you, “I am always here. Never will you be deserted at any time.”

Thus, prepare yourself for the art of meditation. Chant “Om” deeply in a sonorous tone, beautifully in a musical voice, pleasing to yourself, to your own ears, so that the chant vibrates within your personality and energises all the cells of your body. Chant this Omkara, this mantra, for fifteen minutes continuously, beautifully, satisfactorily, musically touching your heart. What do you feel at that time?

The cosmos originated with a central point of vibration, as they call in the Tantra Shastra, a *bindu*. A point was this whole universe. Such a vast thing was only one mini-atomic point before creation. The whole *brahmānda* (cosmic egg, as the scriptures call it) was potentially present in this pin-pointed egg-like little atomic point which manifested itself in the form of this tremendous, inconceivable cosmos.

What happened then, we do not know. Something must have taken place; the scientists call it the “Big Bang.” What sound! It is the sound of cosmic Om – not a mere sound that you are producing, but a cosmic thunder with a lightning as bright as millions of suns, which expanded gradually, little by little, until it concretised itself into the physical space before you. Space is not an emptiness; it contains the whole physical manifestation of the universe. It is emptiness to the physical perception.

A tremendous vibration again takes place in this cosmic space, and this movement is what we call air – not just the air that we are breathing, but the very essence of *pranashakti* pervading this whole cosmos. By the friction that is produced, it ignited itself into the heat of the cosmic fire. It went on vibrating until it developed the tendency to gradually cool down into the liquid of the cosmic waters on

which, according to the scriptures, Narayana sleeps. God created the cosmic waters first, say all the creation theories of the religions of the world. Then the water gets narrowed down in its compass; slowly it solidifies itself into the physical universe. The Taittiriya Upanishad gives briefly the entire cosmological process. The Universal Being thundered into the spatial form of existence, and It slowly came down to the physical form of this world, from which manifested plantations, edibles, foodstuff, which formed the body of the human individual. Thus, we are born as this person, that person, in this world.

This is the real Omkara, of which our chant is only a symbol. It gives you a picture of what the original is like. Thus, chant Om. Visualise before your mind this entire magnificent object of your meditation. It is no more a little wooden idol; it is something else altogether. It is a mini-incarnation, a Vamana who can become an *avatara*, as we have it described in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Vamana was a little, mini-human form which was assumed by the Supreme Being Himself for a definite purpose. When the time for it came, that mini-individual expanded itself to the cosmic individual – the Virat Purusha.

These are some of the interesting things before you for starting your meditation. Take a deep breath; in the same way as you have chanted Om, so also calmly, pleasantly, undistractedly, breathe in and breathe out. Fill the chest with air. Breathe through both the nostrils easily, but fully, deeply inhaling, so that the lungs are completely filled with fresh air. You can hold it for a second, but don't hold it for more than one or two seconds. I am not describing any kind of nostril holding and *kumbhaka*, which is not

necessary. So, let this *pranayama* process of easy inhalation and exhalation continue for some time, until you are settled in your muscles and nerves of the body. At this moment, you will find that any posture is good enough.

Then, you have the stages described in the Yoga Sastras dealing with your sense organs, which present before you a picture of the world, even of God Himself, quite different, of course, from what they really are. What is sense perception? What are the senses doing? And, where are they? You may think that the eyes that see, the ears that hear, etc., are the sense organs. They are only organs, but not sensations. You have sensations, without which the organs will not get animated. A dead body also has these organs. It has eyes and ears but it has no sensation, so the eyes may be open, but there will be no seeing in a corpse. The seer is not the physical eye, but a sensation of visualisation, a form taken by the mind itself.

What does the mind do in this condition? The one integrated mind that it really is ramifies itself into five different rays – as sunlight, allowed to pass through the mouth of a pot with five apertures at the bottom, will be seen to project itself in five different channels. But, if the holes are fitted with certain lenses of a different structure and colour, the same sunlight which passes through the inside of the pot will project itself through these five apertures in five different manners. These five different manners of the projection of a single integrated mental process are called the sensations. So, we see colour through one sense, sound through another, etc.

Actually, the basic substance of colour, taste, sound, touch and smell is one and the same. There are not five

different things here inside us. They look like five different things because of the different lenses through which the single light passes. Thus, they give a wrong picture of things. If these contorted light rays through the five apertures are allowed to project further upon things outside, then the seer inside, which is the mind, will see the world of five-fold perception in a totally different manner from what the world really is. This is what has happened to us. We cannot see things as they really are. We see, we hear, we touch, etc., through the senses which are already conditioned by the structure or the avenues of perception.

In order that you may not be tempted by these Disneyland-like presentations due to these distortions of sensations, you have to practise a process called *pratyahara*, which means the abstraction of the sensory operations, and centring the energy of these sensations in their source, which is the mind itself. Difficult is this process. The sensations are rebellious. Illustrations are given in the Bhagavad Gita, telling how difficult this method is – though it is very simple to hear. Wild elephants, roaring lions, terrible tigers, bursting tornadoes and cyclones may be compared to the operations of the senses.

Vasishtha instructs Sri Rama in the Yoga-Vasishtha: “You can drink the whole ocean, you can shake the root of the mountain, you can drink fire, but you cannot control the mind.” Like binding air in a little bag is your attempt to control the sense organs.

Sensations are nothing but desires. They are not really connected with physical things. Wrongly do we feel that we love things, hate things, want things and do not want things, on account of the deceptive operations and the

reports of the sense organs operating in this manner. Wild dogs are these sensations. They bark and may attack you, also.

What do you do? You should not be carried away by the appearance of this tornado of the desire process. Here again a kind of self-analysis is called for. Sensations, as told already, are only desires manifesting themselves in these five formations. We want five things in this world: we want beautiful things to see, melodious things to hear, fragrant things to smell, delicious things to taste, soft things to touch. You have no other desire in the world except these. Though you may think that you have millions of desires, they are only five, basically.

Now you have to instruct your own mind. Do you want delicious things, beautiful objects, melodious music, a soft bed? Many people in this world may have these facilities, but still they are most unhappy people. Beautiful presentations, tasty dishes, melodious music, soft beds of velvet have not made rich people happy. What the senses are telling you is indeed mischievous. Even if you have all these sensuous things, you will still be the same miserable person as you were before. The sensations are terribly deceptive and you cannot trust them for a minute. You cannot trust what you see or hear, cannot trust any sensation. They are here before you to pull the Atman out and make It appear like an *anatman* or a dead object. This living Atman then starts clinging to a dead Atman outside in the form of the visible things in the world. Here is the drama of life, the way in which we are living.

Tell yourself again and again by bringing before your mind the experiences that ancient sages and saints also had

passed through. They had the same difficulty. They were the same small people as any one of us is; they became big because of the understanding they exercised and the success they achieved in the restraint of the sense organs. When you meditate you will see a totally contradictory thing just in front of you. You will see there physically present (not imaginarily conceived) things that you once loved. You will think that they are only visions, but at that time they will not be visions. They will materialise themselves into the form that you loved once upon a time, and the same person will be there in front of you, the same treasure placed before you: "Here it is. You have left all of us and come. Here we are." Don't say they are illusory visions. They are concrete forms of your own unfulfilled desires.

When Buddha was in deep meditation, he saw his wife in front of him sitting with a little child. He could not say that it was an illusory mental conception, because she was speaking: "My dear lord, I am here. You have left me and come. Here is your child. Don't you have pity? Why are you torturing yourself? See this beautiful baby. Am I not your beloved? Have you no compassion? Please, please, listen to me."

Buddha thought, "How is it that this lady has come here?" Then, "No, don't tempt me!" he told himself. "I know very well what this presentation is. It is my own earlier pleasure of sense life that has condensed itself into the very desirable object which I loved once upon a time. Break to pieces, shatter yourself!" he told himself.

"My dear master, what are you doing on the hilltop? Here is the treasure of the whole world before you – all the

gold and silver,” somebody told Christ when he was doing *tapasya* on a mountaintop.

There were ancient saints of Christianity who lived in the deserts of northern Africa. St. Anthony the Great is one example who struggled with his visions. He saw before him the arms of a beloved, and the treasures and the wealth of the Roman Empire. They were not visions; they were there in front of him. It took him to the point of death until he could realise that he had to overcome them.

These are not stories of somebody – it is everybody’s story. You are the Buddha, you are Christ, you are St. Anthony, you are the ancient master, in your own self. All these beautiful grand presentations will come before you, as we hear in the scriptures that Indra will come with all his retinue. This Indra and the retinue are nothing but the mind and the sense organs concretising themselves before you, giving the picture of solidity. You have to guard yourself.

This is to tell you briefly some of the fundamentals of *pratyahara*, the restraint of the sense organs. Once you achieve success in this practice, you have achieved success ninety percent, truly. Until this is achieved, it is all arduous struggle. It is a determination to swim across the current of a river in space. Later on, if you succeed in your attempt, the river will take an opposite turn, and the world, instead of opposing you, will flow with you. A great unthought-of joy will take possession of you. Struggle will cease, enemies will become friends, the material objects will change their colour and contour, and all shall be well with you, provided this awful, very painful process of the withdrawal of the sensations (not merely the closing of the sense organs) is

achieved, and the mind is charged abundantly with these energies which went out earlier and sucked the soul of the mind, making it fickle and uncontrollable.

The mind will be yourself later on. Instead of your feeling that it is “your” mind, you will feel that you are “yourself” the mind, a medium of the expression of the Atman Itself.

Chapter IV

SOCIAL WELFARE WORK AND CONCEIVING UNIVERSALITY IN THE ISHTA-DEVATA

From what you have heard earlier, you would have observed that yoga practice is also a social welfare work at the same time. The predominant trait of the human being is to misunderstand everything. Anything that is said, one distorts and takes in the wrong direction. Again, and again, the old habit of “myself doing the yoga practice” will persist, as if it has nothing to do with anybody else in the world. If you have properly gathered the harvest of the earlier discussions, you would have been able to give up this wrong notion that meditation is an individual affair. It is not only a cosmic affair, it is also a social affair.

In that sense, we may say that a yogi is the greatest social welfare worker. Nobody can do so much good to the world as a yogi engaged in meditation can do. You must know very well that the value of work depends upon what you think in your mind. There are millions of social welfare organisations in the world, many dedicated to society’s welfare, but, actually, what they do with their hands and feet is not so important as what they are thinking in their minds at the time of their working.

What does a social welfare worker think in the mind? “Let me do good to people.” And what kind of good are you going to do? You may give people clothing, food, water, arrange for electricity in their houses, also provide for medical attention; but why is a person so interested in doing this kind of social welfare work? There will be a very unintelligent answer in response to this question: “Just to

serve. I like to serve and be of assistance to people – help to remove poverty, ignorance and disease. This is what I am intending to achieve.”

Now, what do you get out of it, by your hard work in these social welfare circles? “I get satisfaction.” What kind of satisfaction are you deriving? “I feel that I have done my duty. That is a great satisfaction to me.” How long will you be able to provide the necessary means to a person? And, after all, what have you given to that person? Maybe you provide him with some academic education and the means of creature comforts of the body. Even after these attempts on your part, two consequences may follow. Due to your eagerness to work for the welfare of people, you may come in conflict with people – for some sentimental reason, society may not want you any more. To your own surprise, they can retaliate for your interference with a little sentiment of theirs, though you had a good intention of educating them, making them better human beings.

The great social welfare workers of the world were killed by the very people whom they served; they either shoot the man, or crucify him, or throw him out of their jurisdiction. Very few people go without this encounter with society. Reasons for this kind of unfortunate retaliation from people, against the very people who have done them good work, may also be of various types.

In the enthusiasm to do hard work for the welfare of people, you might not have properly understood their feelings, their needs, and their faiths, which may even be religious. Most of the religious people are fanatics. They will cling to some god, some temple, some fetish, some deity. If you interfere with these, all the good work that you

have done to them will be null and void in one day. History is a record before you for your appreciation of this tremendously tragic consequence following from even well-intentioned good work done to people. You know world history and national history, and you might have read what happened to the great stalwarts of social welfare. So, the work that we do for the welfare of people in a purely secularistic manner of outlook will finally end in some despair to the people, as well as to your own self, who has been doing so much good work: “So much I have done. After all, people are ungrateful. I will go to *ashrams* and lead a retired life.”

Politicians become social workers when they get fed up with political machinations: “They say politics is dirty. I will do good work to society.” Social workers are again in a state of despair toward the end of their lives, and want to go to *ashrams*. The reason is that they have not approached the problem of life properly. The sentimental nationality-bound attitude is so limited that it cannot cater to the essential needs of the human being.

Every person has a soul. This aspect is totally neglected by social welfare workers. Nobody knows if there is a soul in a human being. Nobody asks, “How is your soul?” It looks like a ridiculous question to the common mind. But, as is your soul, so is your mind and body. So, without the education of the soul, the education of the mind and the body and social connection is not going to bring much benefit.

The yoga student, the yogi who practices meditation, understands society much better than politicians and social welfare workers. He knows the secret of human existence –

not merely the operations of the mind and the bodily relations of people, but the yogi, through his investigational capacity, knows what a human being really needs.

As we have observed earlier, a person needs everything and all things. If you give something, he will feel that something else has not been given to him. And what has not been given will cloud his satisfaction that something has been given to him. "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is often buried with their bones," said Shakespeare. Whatever good you have done for people will be buried with your bones, but the wrongs that you have done will be remembered for eternity. This is human nature! You might have done ninety percent good, but ten percent of something unpleasant. People will remember only the ten percent, and the ninety percent will go to the winds. You have to understand people thoroughly before you deal with them.

Only a yogi can know the secret of human nature, in which the yogi also is included. So, the moment the yoga of meditation commences, a breeze of potential comprehensiveness blows from his heart and touches, through his deep feelings, the corners of the earth. It can satisfy even the gods in heaven.

Nobody has seen gods; we have seen only people and things. The meditational technique, being transcendental as well as personal and social, gets related to all things at the same time. Your meditations will stimulate the atmosphere and people around you, the world around you, and it will stimulate even the gods seated in their thrones.

In the earlier stages of this stimulating activity of the meditational process, there will be a surprised tumult both

in earth and in heaven because you do not know what you are doing, and why you are doing it. Because the intention of your meditational technique is not known in the beginning, there is a disturbance created, as it is before we have a cool and balming rainfall. It is a tumultuous uproar in the skies; thunders and lightnings strike from all sides, disturbing us and the whole atmosphere, only to end in the great satisfaction of rainfall. In a similar manner, deep meditations (I am not talking of ordinary shallow contemplations) stimulate the vibrational contents of the entire atmosphere. Everything will sense what is happening.

In the earliest of stages, there will be a kind of oppositional atmosphere created around you. This is because the sense organs, which have been habituated to a particular way of operation, when they are made to retrace their steps to their source, will act in a manner like an ocean that is pushed back from the shores by a powerful wind. Huge waves will rise in the ocean, because of this gale striking the ocean-waves back towards its enter. There will be a catastrophic rising of water waves, which will dash with double force on the shore, deluging villages, uprooting trees, and inundating the entire area; but that is only in the initial stage. When the wind ceases, they retrace their steps and then the ocean maintains its original position.

You might have read in the Puranas and epics and the yoga scriptures that gods themselves feel disturbed by your meditations. Though you may not expect to see gods directly in your meditations, their actions can be seen manifest in the behaviour of people in the world. The god is not an isolated far-off divinity, astral in nature. It is an

operative force in an ethereal region which can descend into the lowest region of the earth, so that a person just before you, around you, can act towards you in the same manner as the gods in heaven disturbed by your meditation. They can tempt you. You may say, Gods have not come, but you must know that people have come. They are the grosser media employed by the higher powers to carry out their intentions.

Ugly things will look beautiful. Tasteless dishes will look extremely delicious. A little thing in front of you will attract your attention. You may like to possess even a pencil, though earlier you had renounced the whole world. A little petty object that will not draw the attention of an ordinary householder will draw the yogi's attention because of the subtlety of the operation of the mind, and the subtle ways of the retaliation of the sense organs. Varieties of difficulties will arise.

These are not to be feared at all, if you are fully aware of the causes of these appearances. If you know what kind of illness you have, you will also be prepared to know all its manifestations through the body. Unprepared minds, suddenly exacting their will force, compelling the mind to meditate without proper understanding and discrimination preceding the act of meditation, will have to face problems. They can be thrown back to their original bound life in the world. But when you go deep into the structure of your meditational process, you will be touching your own heart.

Finally, it is the heart that meditates, not merely the mental conscious process. Where your heart is, there you also are; so, if the heart is elsewhere, the mental operations in the form of meditation will yield no benefit. If your heart

rises to the surface of activity in the form of meditation, it will touch the souls of everybody else also, simultaneously. There will be a turning of the tables round, and all opposition will be pulled down, like the cessation of a tempestuous wind.

I mentioned to you about the *amritamanthana* process where the desired result, which was nectar, was not coming up. Deadly contradiction arises to cause you a sense of defeat, as if you have done something utterly wrong. After that, you will have a side-tracking process going on in your mind, which will direct you to pay excessive attention to things which look like achievements and attainments in yoga. They are the jewels that rise from the ocean. Finally, you have the nectar.

Thus, when you are seated for meditation, have a clear mind first. *Viveka* precedes *vairagya* and *mumukshutva*. Understanding is at the back of your renunciation and your aspiration for liberation. This understanding should guide you always. All your performances should be based on understanding, says the Bhagavad Gita. “Establish yourself in *buddhi* yoga, the yoga of understanding,” which is the operation of the higher reason.

There are two types of reason: the lower reason and the higher reason. The lower reason is always attending upon the reports of the sense-organs. The lower reason says nothing new, apart from what the senses say. But the higher reason warns you, mentioning to you from moment to moment that there is a higher than what you are, higher than the world, higher than people, higher than even the gods in heaven. With this surety in your mind, sit for meditation.

When you are tired of sitting for a long time, do not continue the meditation. There may be an ache in some part of the body – knees, joints, back, spine, neck; even a slight headache may be there because of erroneous attention, erroneous concentration not properly analysed. At that time, stop the meditation. Lie down for a few minutes. Wash your face. Stroll on the verandah for a while. Take a few deep breaths and again relax yourself for some time. Then sit for meditation. You should not do anything continuously all the day. Persons who eat too much cannot meditate; persons who starve themselves also cannot meditate. Those who sleep throughout the day and night, or who do not sleep at all, also will not succeed, says the Bhagavad Gita.

Harmony is called yoga, balance is yoga – balance between the inner and the outer life. The extrovert and the introvert conditions of the mind have to be balanced in an awareness of your larger individuality. People who are always busy working, without even thinking about themselves, are half persons – only fifty percent. They are the extroverts. Those who have nothing to do with anybody in the world and only brood inside their own ideas in themselves in a corner of the world are also only fifty percent. They have severed a part of their connections with the world by this overemphasis on one side – either internally or externally. You should neither be an introvert nor an extrovert, but a balanced person which will produce a sense of cheer in your face – a smile, a kind of satisfaction which a healthy person has after a good meal, for instance. Such a satisfaction will arise in the mind.

“On what do you meditate?” is a question that repeatedly will come up. Devotees of God take to a form of God. After all, we have to worship only God. The idea of God is mostly made to arise in our minds by study of scriptures or company of saints. We have read the Vedas or the Upanishads, the epics, the Puranas, the Koran or the Bible, or some such thing which has compelled us to form a particular idea of divinity. According to the cultural background in which you have been brought up, even considering the ethnic impressions at the back of your mind, take to the concentration on that visualized form of the Supreme Creator of the universe.

Every religion believes in a Creator, but every religion differs in the idea of the Creator. We should not try to impose upon ourselves any new thought alien to our *svadharma* or *svabhava*, i.e., personal predilection or essential character. Don't try to introduce into your mind a concept that is alien to your belief and your faith. Take to that particular form of the higher ideal which is satisfying to you, because it is your faith and your religion, your culture: “My God is in front of me.” God is not necessarily standing in front, but the habit of the mind to conceive everything as existing outside persists even in divine contemplations. “Bhagavan, come! I want to see you.” This is how devotees offer their prayers. You would expect that divinity, God Almighty, to present Himself before you, and stand before you in the very form in which you expect Him to appear.

Conceive this form in your mind for as long a time as possible. If you cannot conceive anything in the mind because of the fickleness of the mind, have a portrait of that

conceived ideal of your divinity in front of you; concentrate on that form. From head to foot, from foot to head, contemplate on all the parts of this wondrous manifestation before you. Why do you meditate on this divinity? Because, it is all-power, all-knowledge, all-blessing. Then feel in your heart that Bhagavan Sri Krishna is standing, Rama is there, Christ is there – whatever your god be in your mind. Tremendously, deeply, adjust yourself to the feeling that beams of compassion and power emanate from this divinity, as if the great god is blessing you and a ray of hope, divinity, power and solace is projected from the palm of that great god, and it is flooding you all over. You are bathed in the waters of knowledge, in the satisfaction of the sweetness of the nectar, and you feel a sense of security that nobody can shake a hair of your body, because here is the protecting force before you, ready to offer you whatever you want. This is the initial stage in which you can adjust your mind to the concept of your *ishta-devata*.

But is your god only standing in one place? Anybody else, also, anywhere in the world, can meditate in a similar manner and that very god of yours will be appearing there also before them. Then, in a second step, you raise your thought and feeling to the presence of this very divinity in many places at the same time. In all directions of your room you will find this divinity gazing at you from all directions. Many are the forms of that great god. As the sun can manifest himself in millions of rays, so God can manifest Himself in millions of forms. This is a step in advance over the initial concept of God standing in front of you, alone before you.

Then, take to the third higher step of feeling the presence of this divinity not pervading merely your room or the nearby atmosphere, but even all the sky and all space. When you look up, you see nothing but this flood of the forms shining like brilliant stars everywhere; wherever you cast your eyes, you see only that god.

In the Mahabharata, towards the end, there is an event described when the Kauravas were overthrown, and Duryodhana fell. Dronacharya's son Asvatthama was bosom friend of the fallen hero. Asvatthama was full of anger against the Pandavas because they caused the death of his father, and destroyed his friend Duryodhana, as well as the whole Kaurava army. Asvatthama had a cruel feeling in his mind. When he was brooding as to the method to be adopted, he saw in the twilight during sunset crows attacking a corpse, and even animals that were about to die. He thought, "This is the lesson for me. I shall follow this technique." He entered the camp of the Pandavas in the night. Fortunately, the omniscient Krishna knew what was going to take place, and had told the Pandavas not to sleep in the camp that night. Only Draupadi's children, five in number, were sleeping there.

But when Asvatthama was about to enter the camp, he found that it was not an easy affair. He found a tremendous, fierce figure standing in front of him, extending from the earth to the heaven. Nobody could know what it was. Fire was emanating from its mouth. The great poet Vyasa says in the poem that by the sight of that form, even the mountains would break to pieces – such a terror manifested itself when Ashvatthama was just entering to do a heinous deed.

Not only was this form terrible to look at; millions of Krishnas started emanating from every pore of the body of this being. The whole sky was filled with Krishnas, the very thing that he hated and would not like even to think in the mind. Everywhere round about, top and bottom, all the sky was filled with Krishna. This fierce being was Lord Siva, an alter-ego of Krishna.

This is how you have to conceive your divinity as present everywhere, in all places. Suppose you see stars only everywhere, without any gap between one star and another star – just a flood of light everywhere, and then feel a thrill. In this way you contemplate your divinity, your ideal, your Rama or Krishna or Christ, whatever it is.

Then go a step further. If everywhere this divinity is seen, then where are you sitting at that time? You also have gone to the stars. You have become one of the stars; you have become one of the forms of this divinity. When the divinity has flooded the whole space, do you think it has excluded you? It has transformed you with the magical touch of its manifestation everywhere. You have also started shining like a star at that time. Stars are contemplating the stars, divinity is looking at divinity; God is meditating upon Himself. “I am what I am,” – not this little Mr. “I,” Mrs. “I.” It is the “I” of God, the only “I” existing everywhere, supreme *ahambrahma*, as the Upanishads say. This is a very high state of meditation, penultimate to merging completely, in which you do not know what actually happens to you. Several stages of your ascent have been described in the yoga scriptures.

Don't be under the impression that it is all so easy, as it has been described here. Your physical nature, your bodily

impulses, will prevent you from taking sudden steps of this kind. You have to be austere in your thinking and detached in your personality from all contacts in the world, and learn to be satisfied with your own self.

Each one of you should know: Are you completely satisfied in your own self, and you don't want any contact with anybody? "I am sufficient to myself." That sufficient individuality only is capable of taking such steps in meditation, as described. So the prerequisites come to our mind once again: *yama* (self-restraint), *niyama* (self-discipline), *viveka* (reasoning capacity), *vairagya* (non-attachment), *shatsampat* (sixfold moral virtues), and *mumukshutva* (longing for liberation). We should pave the foundation of cleansing before the meditation commences. A dustbin cannot meditate. There must be the clarity of a crystal, which is possible if the dirt of *kama-vasana*, *krodha-vasana*, *lobha-vasana* are melted down from their gross condition to the transparent condition of luminous spirit. Then meditation becomes possible.

This is the reason why the yoga texts tell you that meditation is not the first step. The earlier stages are not to be ignored (*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*), about which we learned something already. *Dharana* (concentration) comes later on; *dhyana* (meditation) is very far indeed. Though meditation is what you should practise every day, you must also have paved the ground of all the previous stages in your mind. Either you go stage by stage, or, with your power of discrimination and will, transform yourself through all the earlier stages also at the same time and become a giant of understanding. Either way is possible. One way is called the ant's process, another is

called the bird's process. The ant goes slowly, crawling, but it will reach its destination one day. This is how you go slowly practising *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana* for years and years, and then go to meditation. This is the ant's process.

But the bird flies at once to the point where it wants to reach. You can compress all the stages into your personality, if you have the power to do that. That power will be there if you have no desires in your mind. It is up to you to decide whether you are an ant or a bird. The bird has two wings; the ant has no wings, so you have to develop the wings of *viveka* and *vairagya* so that you may fly like the bird. Both things are possible, and in fact you have the capacity to do both the things. But if you are not sufficiently competent, don't endanger yourself by breaking your legs, running fast too early.

Chapter V

THE DESCENT OF CREATION AND THE ASCENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Yesterday I endeavoured to clear some of the major misconceptions that are likely to harass the mind of a yoga student, a practitioner of yoga. It was also necessary to clear up the enigmatic relation that one maintains with human society outside. I emphasised the fact that since we have been living like social units right from our birth, we are accustomed to think only in social terms. We forget that God is not a social being. He is not one among the many; but the human being is one among the many others like one's own self.

The existence of a human individual in society is tremendously influenced by the nature of the society around, so much so that one cannot easily, as a physical and psychological individual, wrench oneself from social relations. Society has become a part of our very skin, and to peel off social contact would be like peeling our own skin. Yet, some such super-normal adventure has to be embarked upon when we take to the practice of pure spirituality, or yoga.

The desires of the human mind, which are socially oriented, individualistically conditioned, as they have become part and parcel of our very way of thinking, persist in telling us: "How could you attain salvation, when society is clinging to you?" This question was cleared in our earlier discourses, and it is necessary for every one of you to bear this in mind, if you are really going to be a one-hundred-

percent student of yoga and not merely a half-hearted appreciator or participant in the work of spirituality.

The intention here is to purvey to you the spiritual background that exists behind your personal and social way of thinking and interpretation of things. The Atman or the soul that you are is not a part of human society. There is no society of souls. You will be wondering, "Is it so? But, what is society, then?" Society is a well-arranged pattern of psycho-physical individualities.

The Atman or the soul is not confined to your body. It is a consciousness, a pervading essence, of which we appear to be a little part, on account of our association with this body – just as, if the space contained in a little tumbler has the awareness of itself as being within the tumbler, it will think that the space which is largely expanding outside is external to it, due to the walls encircling this little space inside the tumbler. But, if the walls are removed, there is no tumbler space; it is one space all-pervading, omnipresent.

Therefore, the idea that the Atman attains salvation may not be associated with another wrong notion that an individual person attains salvation. The world is also a soul by itself; as there is an apparently conceived individual soul, there is a world soul which animates all existence in any form. The world soul may be compared to the wide space pervading everywhere, and the apparent individuality of our own soul inside may be regarded as something like the space contained, encircled by the wall.

Who attains salvation, finally? Neither you nor anybody else, taken in their individualistic sense, because the Atman attains salvation. It is not the body or the mind that goes to God in the state of liberation. When you say

that the Atman reaches the Absolute and reaches salvation, you immediately bring before your mind the notion of what the Atman is, truly. Too much explanation on this subject is not necessary, as you are practically aware of the essence of what was spoken to you earlier.

If the Atman is a pervading essence, as the so-called space inside a vessel is really the all-pervading space, the attainment of salvation by the Atman would mean the attainment of salvation by the omnipresent consciousness itself, which is called the Atman in terms of the bodily existence. Salvation is a universal attainment – universal in the sense that you cannot separate yourself from the environment in which you are located when you are rising up to the state of salvation or attainment of God.

The environment of human society is part and parcel of your existence here in society. In a similar manner, the entire nature is a larger society than human society, which is an inseparable accompaniment to your personal existence. Society and nature cling to you, not as external objects or things, but as your own wider involvement in the life of the universe. The attainment of salvation, therefore, is an indescribable, unthinkable achievement. Humanly conceivable methods of operation cannot comprehend this truth. For the time being, when you are an ardent student of yoga persisting in the salvation of yourself, you have to stand up as a super-human person. The yogi is not a person. He is a super-individual comprehensiveness, the meaning of which has to be clear. When you rise to the Almighty, the entire creation rises with you.

I have been mentioning another analogy on other occasions that when you wake up from a dream, all the

people in the dream also wake up with you; they are not remaining there outside you. It is not that you, separately from those people you have seen in the dream, have woken up. This phenomenon also is unthinkable. Society-bound mentality cannot understand this philosophical or spiritual connotation of spiritual experience. As all the world of dream experience rises simultaneously into a wider comprehension of waking consciousness, in a similar manner the world consciousness will rise up with you. If this does not take place, salvation has no meaning.

These precedents of consideration when you sit for meditation have to be taken care of very carefully. I have dilated upon the methods of meditation; some system of contemplation on the deity as you conceive it was explained: that was particularly an aspect of devotion (*bhaktimarga*). But there are other ways which certain yoga students may follow. They are the purely volitional methods of affirmation of will: it is not a devotion to any particular deity, but it is a devotion to a particular principle. This psychological method of contemplation is actually the attempt on the part of a yoga student to grasp the principles of operation in the universe.

What are the principles? You have heard in cosmological doctrines that the creation of the world as we conceive it commenced with a dark covering of potentiality for creation called *mulaprakriti*, the original matrix of the creative process. The methodology of the descent in the process of creation is very important to remember in the path of yoga.

The Universal Being appears to be clouded, as it were, with this darkness of potentiality for creation, as it happens

when we are fast asleep. The darkness of the causes of our sleep covers the potential Atman within us, so that even if we have the brilliance of the consciousness of the Atman within us imperishably, the darkness of the potential for sleep covers it, so that when we are fast asleep we do not know what is actually happening to us. It is only when we wake up that we enter that there was some obstacle, due to which we were not aware even of our own existence. The process of creation is similar to the process of waking up from sleep.

What happens when we are awake? Our consciousness of existence manifests itself and tells us that we are, and that there is a world of objects outside. Here in this waking perception, the Atman does not directly operate; if it did, you would not see the world outside. You would see a flood of light, but that does not happen in our waking condition, due to the fact that even when we are awake, the consciousness of the Atman penetrates through the darkness that covered us in sleep and, therefore, our waking understanding is a condition – rather a little bit distorted way of perception. This is the reason why with all our intellectuality, rationality, study and learning, we cannot understand the world correctly. We see it topsy-turvy and thoroughly mistake it for something different from what it really is.

Intellectual knowledge, rationality, philosophical or any kind of achievement is not of utility in the spiritual contemplation of the soul. All the great values of life that we enshrine in our bosom as very dear to us are of no worth finally, as you will know at the time of passing from this world. Great men and poor men die in the same way. Rich

man and poor man, known man and unknown man – death is a enter of everyone. Your learning has not helped in any way to distinguish you from a beggar or an illiterate man when you are actually dying.

Such learning is poor stuff, which has no essence in it. This happens because our present waking consciousness, through which we learn all things, is conditioned by the darkness of ignorance. The inward consciousness manifests itself in waking through the cloud of our ignorance – disturbed, scattered in many directions, as sunlight does when it penetrates through scattered clouds.

Therefore, the soul has to be distinguished from mental awareness. The awareness of the soul is quite different from awareness of the mind and the intellect, for the reason already mentioned. When the soul rises to action, you will find that a kind of bursting of your personality will be experienced. I cannot choose any other expression for this phenomenon. In our daily life, the soul never manifests itself. Therefore, we feel thoroughly grieved throughout our life.

If the soul had an occasion to manifest itself at least once in our life, we would not know what sorrow is. But it never manifests itself at all; it is always submerged within the dark cloud of ignorance created by unfulfilled desires of past lives, which we have brought with us when we have taken birth in this life.

With a tremendous attempt of understanding and will, we have to try to delve into what we really are. Very rarely, we become totally ourselves. It is said that sometimes, under certain circumstances, the entire soul takes possession of us – when we feel that we are in possession of

the whole world; when the world has entered into us; when we have become emperor of the world. Can you imagine the state of an emperor of the whole world? Such a person never existed in history, and such a person is not likely to exist, also. But at least in imagination you can feel what that person would experience when he is the master of the whole world. The total person will rise up to a comprehension of the total world. Indescribable joy, temporarily manifested through the calmed quality of the mind, will reveal, in a symbolic manner at least, what one would experience when the soul rises to action.

There are other occasions, it is said, when the soul will totally take possession of us. When we are drowning in water and we have no other alternative, the entire life process will get congealed into our experience. What anyone would feel at that time of drowning, only the drowning man would know. Others cannot know it.

At another time also the soul seems to be taking possession of us – when we are enjoying dreamless sleep (not disturbed sleep), stone-like sleep, log-like sleep. When you wake up, you feel tremendously refreshed. Even a sick person feels better after sleep; wounds heal in a remarkable manner after a patient's good sleep. You do not like to wake up after that experience because that joy of the fulfilment of your soul which pervaded your entire personality in sleep does not allow you to rise up from it, so you would like to sleep more and more. But, when the sleep is over, you have only a memory of that wonderful, blissful, relaxing sleeping condition, and then you begin to think. You begin to think only through this darkness of the potentiality of sleep.

In the creative process, some such thing takes place. The Universal Consciousness of Brahman, the Almighty, penetrates through this potential of *prakriti* which is the creative seed. The penetrating consciousness (though it is the Absolute), when it passes through the darkness of the creative potential, gets coloured by the conditioning process of the *mulaprakriti*. This Absolute-Potential is the Creator of the universe – as we call it Brahma, the progenitor of the cosmos. The Absolute Being, God as He is in Himself, does not create anything. He is All-in-All and He is alone and there is nothing outside Him. The question of something being outside gradually manifests itself when this Universal Being penetrates through this veil of *mulaprakriti*. That conditioned consciousness, universally spoken of, is called Mahat – the great universal Intellect of Brahma.

There is further down a manifestation. As sleep becomes the dreaming condition and the dreaming condition becomes the waking condition, this Mahat-Being, or the Brahma-principle, descends into a more clarified outline of the future-created universe. In dream we have an outline of the waking condition. That outline of creative thinking is called Hiranyagarbha, another form of the descended Consciousness itself.

When it comes down again into the waking state, it is called Virat and we are now in that condition. We are in Virat-consciousness just now – multiplicity is everywhere, projected awareness of things is at all times, but there is a great distinction, nevertheless, between Virat-consciousness and our personal consciousness of the world. Virat knows all this manifestation as itself only, as its own

body. But we cannot feel that the whole universe is our body. For us, unfortunate that we are, the world is outside us, apparently with no connection with us.

Then there is a perceptual process taking place. We cannot perceive the world as Virat perceives it, because Virat's comprehension of the universe is an "I," as we feel in regard to our own body in the waking state, as "I am I." But now, because in the waking state we begin to think through the sense organs, and project the consciousness in an external fashion through space and time, we wrongly think that the world is outside us and we have the necessity to function through perceptual facilities.

Now, in this type of meditation, a reverse order takes place. The first stage of this reversal process is to withdraw the perceptual faculties which externalise the world as if it is outside, and bring these faculties to concentrate themselves on the mind itself; then, with great effort of will, assert that you are an inseparable physical part of Virat-consciousness. You feel at that time that you have become a World Individual. Then, there are other stages, higher and higher, as above Virat there is Hiranyagarbha, above Hiranyagarbha is Ishvara, who is the manifested form of the Supreme Being through *mulaprakriti*; then there is God as He is in Himself – the Absolute.

This contemplation is prescribed by certain teachers of yoga like Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. There are certain Sanskrit descriptive names given to these processes of gradual ascent. The very first step of true meditation takes you beyond the concept of your individual body; the mind tries to permeate through the bodies of everybody in the world. It is as if all the world is meditating at the same time.

In a manner which will not be very clear to you, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras call this condition *savitarkasamadhi*. You don't need to be frightened by the word "*samadhi*," because it is just a simple name to describe an equilibrium of perception. When you behold all things in an equalized fashion, it is called *sahajasamadhi*. It is not a transcendent anaesthesia, as some modern materialistic psychologists define it. Psychology cannot understand what this state actually is.

The mind has to be rooted in this awareness for a long time. You must again be cautious here not to mix up your world perception with this world consciousness that is *savitarka*. Mortal world consciousness is one of externalising perception through the sense organs. Here in this new world perception of the *savitarka* state, there is nobody to behold the world through the sense organs. The world contemplates itself, though it be in a physical form. You can, with the power of your imagination, feel, for a few seconds at least, that all space-time, the stars, the sun, the moon, and all physical creation has entered into your body. You will not be seeing this world outside, because the whole world has entered you and it has become you for the time being. Thus, even the lowest stage of yoga achievement is far removed above ordinary sensory perception of the world.

These things have to be understood only at the feet of a great Guru, or master. Studies of yoga literature will not clarify your mind, because here are things which you have never heard of, and you will not easily hear also, when you are in your daily routines of work in the world. However, whether or not you are going to rise into this state in this

birth, I shall at least outline before you what will happen to you in the practice of yoga as described by Patanjali.

The world consciousness will melt down into a higher stage where it will not be in any way associated with even a tinge of sense perception. When we think of this world awareness in this condition of yoga, we may be under the impression that the world is visible to us. This error, therefore, is to be overcome. In another higher state called *nirvitarka*, which means essentially the non-contaminated visualisation of the whole world as inseparable from you, you are not merely a world individual, you are the world itself. You will be shuddering from the root of your being even to think such things. Your hair will stand on end; your body will tremble; your *prana* will stop the breathing process, and your heart will throb for a second because of this shock that you may receive in a response of this kind in meditation.

The still higher stage is *savichara*, a technical word that suggests the experience of the world as an ocean of forces, rather than of objects or physical things. The world is not made up of solid objects, finally. It is a congealed form of cosmic energy, far subtler than even electrical energy. You may call it *pranashakti*, which is more than the breathing process. All the universe is a vibration of force which gets condensed into certain formations when the physical consciousness arises. Can you conceive the whole universe, including yourself, as an ocean of energy only, and not as a heap of individuals?

But beyond this there is something, yet. There is an awareness of the fact that the whole universe is nothing but a sea of energy. This condition is that of the Cosmic Mind;

you may call it Brahma's Mind – all-pervading, Universal Mind contemplating Itself as the background of even the energy of the cosmos. *Nirvichara* is the next higher stage, wherein the contemplation process ceases and becomes bare experience. It is not so easy to apprehend what bare experience is, *minus* the thinking process.

Then comes the most magnificent state of *sananda* or universal happiness. All the joys of the world melt down into this one mass of happiness. Whatever joy we can conceive in this world, any type whatsoever, will all get centralised here in this enter which is everywhere, with the circumference nowhere. This condition is supra-transcendental.

There is a higher state still, which is called *sasmita*. It will not be even an experience of universal bliss, but just an awareness that “It is.” We are almost touching the borderland of God-consciousness: “I am not enjoying the happiness of the universal experience. There is no enjoying there; I am myself the joy.” If you yourself are made up of joy, what would you feel at that time? There would be no experience of joy. Joy experiences itself. This is Universal “I-AM-I.”

There is something more than that, too. It is the entering into the bosom of God, called *kaivalya*. It is the aloneness of God-Being, unimaginable for the human mind. God only knows who God is. God contemplates Himself, God knows Himself, God is what He is. This is liberation of the soul. It is salvation, it is *moksha* or *mukti*. It is not merely somebody going to God in the sense of an outer attainment; it is God Himself absorbing the whole creation into Himself, as He was before the creational

process. The creation ceases, and it melts down into God-Being. This experience is *moksha* – final liberation. Some such picture of our advance in the path of yoga is described in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Stop thinking for a second and feel what you are, now. If, by even hearing these truths, they have entered your heart, you should consider yourself blessed. Your sins are destroyed; all the *karmas* are gone. You are a polished, shining individual.

Chapter VI

SUMMONING THINGS INTO ONESELF

Close your eyes for a few minutes and do deep meditation. Delve into your own self and collect your consciousness in the manner it was described to you. Let this be done for a while.

When would you meditate? At what time of the day? This has to be decided, each by oneself. Though there is a general prescription that early morning hours are good, or midnight, or evening time, it is left to you to modify these general indications according to the circumstances of your life and the facilities that you have for doing your meditation.

If you are working hard in an office for eight hours and returning home at eight o'clock in the evening, you would not like to sit immediately for meditation because of the fatigue of the day. You may like to lie down and take rest for a few minutes. And perhaps you have something to tell the family members; if you have a wife and children, husband, brothers, etc., you cannot just keep quiet the moment you come back from the office. You may sit and have a little chat with your family. You may have a supper, or maybe you take late supper, depending upon your way of life.

If your supper is late, say, at ten o'clock in the night, then, after you have your ablutions and washing, you can sit for your meditation for an hour, in case you don't have any visitors that you are expecting at that time. Sometimes big officials have people coming to see them, even after they retire from their office in the evening. You have to dispose

of that duty also before you sit for meditation, so that when you sit, you do not have any kind of programme or commitment in the mind.

The mind should be entirely free. If that is not possible – you are occupied with your duties even in the night, for some reason – find some time before you go to bed. Actually, the length of time that you take in meditation is not so important as the intensity of your feeling during the meditation. If the intensity is not adequate, if it is shallow, then you have to sit for a longer time to make it go deep. This is one suggestion.

Oftentimes you will find that the mind is recalcitrant and will not yield to your wish for allowing it to meditate. If it is not at all possible for the mind to concentrate at that particular time for some reason of distraction, take up a scripture which is to your liking – an elevating literature which glorifies spiritual life – and read calmly a passage or two of the book. Rove your mind over the ideas expressed in those pages of the scripture. Several things of high value are mentioned there, and over each one of those ideas, you move your mind and bestow deep thought. After that, you can withdraw your mind from study, and directly do your contemplation.

If the mind is not willing, even after you have given sufficient time for study, then take a few deep breaths in and out, drink a cup of water, or stand up and walk on the verandah for a few minutes; then sit down. If you are accustomed to chant *kirtans* and *bhajans*, chant some *kirtan* loudly and do a *bhajan* by yourself, just to lift the mind to a level required for meditation. Then sit again for meditation.

A great assistance for the purpose of meditation directly is *japa sadhana* – reciting of a formula, a mantra, into which you might have been initiated, or which is to your liking – with a *japa mala* or without a *japa mala*, as the case may be. Loudly chant the mantra. Then, slowly moving your lips, recite the mantra. If the mind is wandering during mental recitation, then again start loudly chanting the mantra.

Actually, *japa* itself is a complete *sadhana*. That, by itself, is sufficient to purify your mind and allow it to concentrate on the divinity of your mantra. The mantra *japa* is not merely a recitation; it is also a simultaneous contemplation. Every mantra has an originator, which is a *rishi*. A divine sage visualised the mantra in his meditation, and so his thought also is present there and is charged upon the mantra.

When you read a book, you also know the mind of the author of that book; actually, you are reading the mind of the author. The book is not outside the thoughts of the person who has written the book, so you are in a state of attunement with the mind of the author; as he was thinking, so you are also thinking now. The book is only an instrument, a guide, to keep you in harmony with the thoughts of the great author of a scripture or book that you are reading. So, while chanting the mantra, you are in harmony, *enrapport*, with the great thought of the sage who visualised the mantra.

The mantra itself is a power. The words of the mantra are not mere haphazard letters. They are associated in a particular systematised manner, so that when they are recited in the proper intonation, the words combine and

create a new chemical effect, you may say, as, when you mix the acidic and the alkaline, there is a third effect following immediately. A chemical force is generated by the juxtaposition of the letters of the mantra, so that the mantra itself is a power. The other power associated with the mantra is the thought, the vision, the power of the sage who visualised it – so two forces are impregnated into the mantra.

There is a third power: the divinity which is the presiding principle of the mantra. The very mantra indicates a god. The thought of the god is also a communication that you are establishing between your mind and the presence of that great power in the divinity, so that through the medium of your thinking, the force of the divinity also gets charged into the mantra. The sage's thought is a power, the letters of the mantra themselves are a power, and the divinity's immanence in the mantra also is a power.

There is another thing called "metre." The way in which the mantra is composed is called a metre, just as in poetry there is a metre. By the recitation of the poem which is written in a particular metre, you are roused into a particular feeling which cannot be there if you read a mere prose, or a translation of that in ordinary vernacular. A tremendous power of all these kinds gets concentrated in the mantra. Knowing this well, feel that this combined force is entering into you while you are reciting the mantra.

There are other formalities that you may follow: the place that you choose for the chanting of the mantra, the direction you have to face, and the other attitudes that you have to maintain. Usually, you have to face the east, is what

the elders tell us, because the sun rises in the east. The moment the sun is about to rise, the whole atmosphere is charged with a new *pranashakti*. The Upanishad says that the sun rises as the very *prana* of all living beings in the world. In the entire direction of the east, the atmosphere is charged with *pranashakti* of Surya Bhagavan, the Sun. When you face the east for your mantra recitation, you are imbibing the impress of that force that is coming from the eastern direction.

Some people say that the northern direction also is good, because it is believed that there is an electromagnetic force that passes from the North Pole to the South Pole. For this reason, people say that you should not sleep with your head toward the north; otherwise, your brain can be affected by the electromagnetic waves that are charged from the north to the south. The force will pass through your head, through your body and go to the south. That is why you should not sleep with your head toward the north, it is said. But for meditation it is good because if the charge is on your personality when you are actually meditating, it will enrich you with more vigour. So, the eastern and northern directions are prescribed for this purpose.

But in places like Rishikesh, facing the Ganga also is very good; whatever be the direction, it is immaterial here. Here everything is holy and all directions are good. Facing the Ganga is as good as facing any divine emanation of force. If you are living on Swargashram side, you will face the Ganga in one direction; if you are here, you will face it in another direction. So, likewise, the direction is chosen and the mantra is recited in this manner with the concentrated feeling that you are in the midst of a

tremendous electromagnetic power charging you from all sides.

How long will you do the *japa*? As long as your heart is not satisfied, as long as you do not feel the presence of the divinity of the mantra, as long as you do not feel the effect of the chanting of the mantra, so long go on continuing it for months and years. You can go on doing it throughout your life, also. Many people take to *japa* as their only *sadhana* and do not do anything else. That is wonderful. What does Bhagavan Sri Krishna tell you in the Bhagavad Gita? “Of all spiritual sacrifices, I am *japa*.” No worship, no *yajna*, no sacrifice, no *havan* can equal *japa*. So, take to *japa sadhana*, the recitation of mantra; chanting of the divine name may also be through *kirtana* and *bhajana* as accompaniments.

As far as possible, choose the same time every day, because the time also has an effect upon you. As the time process is a cyclic movement, a particular time that you have chosen for a special practice gets charged by the very cyclic movement of time at that hour. Similar is the case with the place that you choose, because the particular location where you are seated for *japa* also gets charged; even the seat under you is charged with the divinity. Your whole body is divinised at that time.

In intense types of *japa*, an electric energy is produced in the body; a sensation of a peculiar nature will arise in you, and the energy will try to go out of your body and get down into the earth, if you contact the earth and sit on bare ground without any seat. It is, therefore, said, “Do not sit on bare ground, because the charge will go down to the earth.” The earth with its gravity will pull down all the

energy of your body. So, have a seat that is not a conductor of electricity; – it should be a non-conductor.

The same place, the same time, the same attitude, the same mantra, the same divinity – don't change these things experimentally. You should not change the mantra, as if something else is better. As every object in meditation is as good as any other object, every mantra is equally good, and there is no particular distinguishing factor among them.

In this yoga of *japa*, all the other aspects of yoga also will be found to commingle in some way or other. Inasmuch as there is a god in front of the *japa sadhaka*, *bhakti* yoga comes in, even in *japa sadhana*. You love your god of the *japa* mantra, your divinity; you pray, and you are deeply in affection of that god. This is the *bhakti* aspect of *japa sadhana*.

And you concentrate with the power of your will on this divinity, on the *rishi* (sage) and on the mantra itself. This is the *raja* yoga aspect of *japa sadhana*. You understand the immanence of this divinity everywhere, not that it is in one place only. The concentration on the immanent aspect of this divinity is the *jnana* yoga aspect of *japa sadhana*. So, *bhakti* yoga, *raja* yoga, and *jnana* yoga – all these are in *japa sadhana*. Bhagavan Sri Krishna has rightly said that nothing is equal to *japa* as a *sadhana*.

Whether you have to take a bath or not – sometimes this question will arise. These factors are irrelevant for yoga *sadhana*. If you feel that the bath before *japa* is very good, take a bath; and you feel refreshed at that time. But if you are ill and you are not permitted by the doctor to take a bath, or you have some reason that you should not take a

bath at that time, then there is no objection to your taking to *japa sadhana* even without your bath.

What about travelling in a railway train at that time? Let the train move – what does it matter? But you are not moving; you are in the same place, so forget the movement of the train. As you forget the movement of the earth and think you are stationary, like that you forget this also. Let the movement be there. It will not disturb you in any way. Thus, any time is good, and any manner conducive to concentration also is good in *japa sadhana*.

The *mala* (rosary) that you use is also very important. The *mala* has a twofold effect. Because of the continuous touching of the beads with the chanting of the mantra, the beads also get charged with a force, so the *mala* is very holy. You cannot just keep it on the ground or throw it somewhere. Many people put it on their neck, or keep it in a little bag secretly, so that it may not be soiled. Sometimes they tie it on the wrist, which is not proper because your hand does all kinds of things when you take food and wash yourself, etc. You touch all sorts of things, so it is not a good practice to tie the *japa mala* on the hand. It should be on the neck, or in your pocket.

Now, this *japa mala* is a reminder to you that you have to do the *japa*. Whenever you see the *mala* on your neck or in your pocket, you are reminded of a noble thing. When you see money in your pocket, you are suddenly reminded of some value; or if you have a pistol in your pocket, you are reminded of another idea altogether. But if you have a *japa mala*, a noble thought arises in the mind.

Generally, I would advise you to keep two things always in your pocket: one *japa mala*, and a small edition of the

Bhagavad Gita. These will protect you also – not merely act as reminders. They are wonderful things. They are protective forces. They will guard you, like a guardian angel. Do not be under the impression that this is a silly matter. There is a great value here. Some people have praised *rudraksha* beads also to that extent: as long as you have a genuine *rudraksha* with you, it will guard you.

There is a report that I read in a paper once. There were two gentlemen travelling in a railway train. One of them was a foreigner; another was an Indian from the south. This South Indian was praising the value of *japa* through a *rudraksha* bead and he was mentioning the varieties of *rudrakshas*. He said that it is wonderful: as long as you have it with you, you will be guarded from even great dangers and catastrophes. The foreigner was listening to all this.

This person who was listening to the glory of the *rudraksha* bead read a report in the paper as to what happened at that time: “There was a sudden bursting noise, as if everything was getting shattered. I knew nothing else after that. When I woke up, I found myself in a hospital. There was a derailment of the train, a great tragedy, and many people were injured seriously. One person only was free from injury – some gentleman from the south. Somehow he escaped. Everyone else was injured in this calamity.” It was the newspaper report which the injured one read while in hospital. Till then he was unconscious.

So, everything is wonderful in this world; all things are valuable and holy, and you should not scoff in a modernistic manner, which is very unfortunate for us, at things which are sacred, and regarded as sacred and protective forces by the ancient masters.

The *japa mala* is not only a reminder that you should do the *japa*; it is also a protective angel in your pocket. Keep it always with you. You tie a wristwatch always, but the wristwatch cannot protect you; the *japa mala* will protect you. You hang a mini-radio in your pocket; this is our modern culture. These are of no utility for you, finally. They are ultimate distractions. We have to live in this world beautifully, and not as tragic victims of dark forces. Take, then, to *japa sadhana* as a potent method of communion with divine forces.

Sankirtana also is a great yoga. Gauranga Mahaprabhu, Chaitanya Deva, was an ardent promulgator of *sankirtana bhakti*: Chant the divine name to the ecstasy of your spirit; loudly call God, Come! In your own language you can have a *bhajan* of this kind. And because you feel that He is coming and He is charging you with His presence, you feel sometimes like dancing with the *sankirtana* mantras. The people who dance in *sankirtana* are not foolish people. They feel a new energy in themselves, and that is what makes them jump as children jump in pure enthusiasm.

Why do children run here and there, and when you are keeping quiet are not keeping quiet? Something or other they are doing always because of the overabundance of energy in their body. This overabundance of energy in *sankirtana* also is a divine gift. Thus, this is one of the methods you can adopt if other methods are not suitable for any reason. Namadev, Ekanath, Kabir, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulasidas – all took to this path as the sole means. There is no other way in Kali Yuga, say the scriptures.

All these instructions and admonitions are to bring you to a focusing point that you have to lead a spiritual life in

the true sense of the term, and not as an isolated factor of your life. Spirituality is not something that is carried in your pocket that you take out whenever necessary. It is the vital breath of your life. It is the very skin of your personality. You carry it wherever you go. The spirit with which you live in this world, and act, speak and work, is your spirituality. Your attitude generally to anything is the spirituality thereof. It is not the scripture, it is what you think and feel throughout the day. That is your spirituality.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a great embodiment of this kind of inclusiveness of the powers of nature and of people in one single individuality. He was a lover of God; he was a lover of human beings, of nature, of the Himalayas, of the Ganga, of holy places like Varanasi, Badrinath, Kanyakumari, Rameshwaram. There is nothing that he did not love, and he could summon their presence into himself.

This is another interesting thing to hear. *You have to summon things into yourself; it is not always necessary to go to things.* It is possible that if you finally want a thing, it will come. It is a psychological secret that if you strictly believe that what you want has come, it should come and it has to come, because your resolution touches the object that you need and it gravitates towards you immediately.

There is a story of the power that was exercised by Sage Bharadvaja, which we have to read in the Valmiki Ramayana. Bharata went to the forest in search of Rama. On the way he passed through the hermitage of Bharadvaja, somewhere near modern Allahabad, as we are told. Bharata went with a large army – elephants, horses and soldiers.

When he found that he was nearing the sage's *ashram*, he removed his royal dress, removed his shoes, put on a *dhoti* and an upper cloth, and went alone to the holy *ashram*. The sage saw him and queried: "You are Bharata, coming from Ayodhya? What for have you come here?"

"I am in search of my brother who has left the palace and gone into the forest," said Bharata.

"He is staying somewhere near here. You can see him tomorrow. There is no objection. You have come alone, all the way from Ayodhya, like this?" asked the sage.

"No, Maharaj, I have a large army and retinue, and I did not want to disturb the sanctity of this place; therefore, I asked them to stay far away," said Bharata.

"No, call all of them here. You will all have supper. I will feed you," said the sage.

Bharata had a difficulty in his mind: "Is the sage testing me? He has nothing with him. He has only a water-pot, a walking stick and a *yajnashala*, and he is going to feed all these people?" Feeling thus in the heart, Bharata said, "Maharaj, I am very grateful for your kind words, but we do not require any dinner. I am going back."

The sage was omniscient. He knew all things in the minds of people. He thought, "This fellow is thinking that I have no power at all, that I am a beggar. Let me show my power to him."

"Call all of them," he said. When the sage thus ordered, Bharata brought the entire army, some thousands of them, with elephants and horses. This great master went to the *yajnashala* and poured a little *ghee* with mantras and all the divinities he summoned below. "Come Indra, come Varuna, come Ganga, come Yamuna, come Sarasvati,

everybody come!” Immediately rivers started flowing in front. Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati were flowing around and angels descended from heaven with golden plates filled with delicious dishes. Thousands and thousands of them started descending with brilliant bodies. Each soldier and official had a residence and palace in which to stay, with bathing *ghats*, gardens, and people to massage their tired bodies. The people wondered if they were dreaming. Food was served. Nothing of the kind ever was tasted by any human being, such a celestial, grand dish was served! All were given beautiful beds in different palaces.

The soldiers began to mumble: “Let Bharata go in search of Rama; we will stay here only. Why should we go unnecessarily? This is a nice place. Let Bharata do his work. What does it matter?” They all slept very well. The next morning when they awoke, there was nothing to be seen. Only the jungle was there and one *brahmana* sage was sitting alone with a stick and a water-pot. All the celestials had vanished. What do you think of all this?

The power of summoning – you have only to want it intensely and it is there. If you want the grace of Swami Sivananda, it is here. It will come now, not tomorrow or the day after, but your heart should be prepared for it. Oh it may come or not, I am a foolish man. I don’t know. He is very far away. If you think like that, he will be far away only. He will never come. Nay, nothing can come.

“It is near, it is all-pervading, everything is here; if I touch, everything comes,” – assert thus deeply from the heart. It will come. As everything is everywhere, you will receive also everything everywhere. You need not move from your seat. Everywhere you will find everything, in the

very place where you are sitting. Such is the power of the summoning that you can exercise by the yoga of Universal Attunement.

Chapter VII

DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA, MOKSHA: BRAHMACHARYA, GARHASTHYA, VANAPRASTHA, SANYASA

The attainment of spiritual perfection is like a gradual ascent in the form of a pyramid. It has a base and it rises gradually, step by step, until the apex at the top is reached. This pyramidal structure of human life is constituted of four aspects of life, the fourfold requirements for the very existence of a person.

The material needs of the body are a very important concern indeed. Whatever be your spiritual aspiration, you cannot ignore that you have a body. As long as you feel that you have a body and cannot ignore its presence or forget that it is there, then you cannot also forget its requirements. Everyone, even an advanced spiritual seeker, has certain needs concerning the physical body, like protection against heat and cold, hunger and thirst, sun and rain, etc. If you ignore these essentials, the body may perish, even though you may have an innocent spiritual aspiration. There is what is known as a total of material requirement, material need. Its importance is well known, and is known as *artha*, the material unavoidable.

Then, there is another thing: the aesthetic longings of the human personality. One cannot be happy merely by eating, drinking, putting on clothes, and having a house in which to stay. Even such a person will not be a complete person; there are other requirements which are of a vital nature – the desire-filled nature of the individual. A desire

is not merely the desire for food and clothing, though it is primary in some way. There are other insistent desires called *kama*, or vital wishes to be fulfilled, which are other pressures exerted by the biological personality, which, too, cannot be ignored, as they are part of oneself. Those who have lived a totally isolated life, unconnected with human society for a long period, will know the working of this kind of feeling in oneself. A disturbance of an unknown kind will take place inside the mind of the person, causing agitation of heart. Due to that difficulty in controlling this reason behind the agitation of such emotional feelings, a yoga student also may be subject to intense anger, continuous irritation, intolerance of anything, and a bursting forth of one's own personality in an anguished manner. This is the negative aspect of the unfulfilled emotional desires. They cannot all be fulfilled, and they also cannot be totally ignored.

The nature of this kind of urge or impulse is something that cannot be imagined by an ordinary mind; just as one cannot know oneself fully, one cannot also know all the desires of one's own person. Here it is that you are in danger and you require the guidance of a master, a superior person. Whenever you are agitated, disturbed and cannot control yourself, almost feeling that you are going out of your track in your mental operations, at that time you have to approach a guide and place before that guide everything that you are passing through inwardly.

Then, together with all these, there is also the aspiration for *moksha*, attainment of God, which is a fulfilment, finally, of the whole complex of desires, physical as well as vital. That also is to be taken care of with great caution, as

the one conditioning everything else. The method by which you can hook together these three types of impulse and the final aspiration harmoniously, that procedure of the cementing of all these sides of human nature is called *dharma*, or the law of harmonisation of the aspects of the whole of life, with all its relations in human society.

Dharma is sometimes translated as *religion*: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and others. *Dharma* is not denominational religion, necessarily. It is rather a law operating in the universe, by which everything is kept in a state of cohesion so that there is no dismemberment of the life of anyone or anything. You could be thrown into shreds of mental individuality, as if the mind has been broken and cast into the winds in different directions, with a feeling that you have lost yourself entirely, if *dharma* does not operate in you. Please forget the old definition of *dharma* as some religion. It is not any kind of ism. It is an ultimate law that keeps the universe in balance, keeps the body, the mind, your reasoning, society and everything in a state of perfect integration so that you feel that you are existing as a total individual and do not feel that you are a mix-up of several parts heaped together in a confused manner.

This definition of *dharma* is hard for an ordinary person to comprehend because we are always, right from the beginning, initiated into a wrong notion of *dharma* as going to a temple, worshipping a god, following a faith. I follow Christian *dharma*, Hindu *dharma*, Muslim *dharma*, is a common saying. This is a poor definition of *dharma*, which is something more than what one can easily think. It is the law prevailing eternally in the universe everywhere, in

every aspect of creation, in every degree of manifestation, including your own individual existence.

All these four facets of life have to be brought together into a focus of attention at the same time. These are known as the *purusharthas*, or aims of existence, the final objectives of life known popularly as *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, i.e., moral value, economic value, vital value and eternal value. None of these aspects can be ignored in our life. Mostly people emphasise *moksha* and ignore the other things and fall sick, and even become mentally a little aberrant. And, in the same way, you can emphasise wrongly one thing and forget the three other aspects by which you may turn into a shred rather than a total individual. All this is the foundation that you have to lay for your aspiration towards spiritual perfection, so that right from the beginning it is a rise from a wholeness of approach through gradations of wholeness of perception, until you reach the ultimate wholeness which is the Infinite.

One of the questions raised, perhaps, is the nature of the Infinite. If the Infinite is based on the Infinite only, where is the question of *karma*? *Karma* has no connection with the Infinite. It has a connection with the finite only. That which is located only in one place is called the finite. That which is everywhere is called the Infinite. Inasmuch as the Infinite is everywhere, it cannot perform any kind of individualised action; so *karma* cannot be attributed to the Infinite. *Karma* is a result of the reaction produced by individualised actions. The Infinite has no *karma*; therefore, our aspiration for the Infinite frees us from the bondage of action, also.

Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate, purnasya purnamadaya purnameva avasishyate: There was the whole in the beginning. From the whole, the whole universe manifested itself. Therefore, this universe in which we are living is not a conglomeration of little pieces of material objects or individual existences. Even now, it is a whole. The world works in a systematised, complete manner. From the whole which is the Infinite, the whole universe has come out in a whole manner – as a child is born as a whole entity, from its source which is also a whole. A little pin-pointed drop, as it were, which is the origin of the child, is not one drop among many other drops; it is a whole by itself, containing the wholeness of the child, as the little seed contains the wholeness of a large tree.

Thus, everything is “whole.” You are whole, and you are living a whole life, and you detest any kind of partition in your way of living. You like everything in a completed form. That is the internal meaning of this great Upanishadic mantra: That is full, and this universe also is full; from the whole, the whole comes as this creation. How can it be possible? There cannot be two wholes, or two hundred-percents. There can be only one hundred-percent, not two. So, how can a hundred-percent origin produce another hundred-percent of this universe? This is a mystery, which should suggest that no activity has taken place in the process of creation. It is not that one day the Infinite thought, “Let me become something else,” though such is the story we often read in scriptural narrations.

It is something like your whole mind becoming manifest as a whole dream. The dream is a whole thing;

your whole being is transformed into a world of dream experience, and this whole experience of the dream world has emanated from the whole which was your waking mind. Then, does it mean that the whole waking mind has transformed itself into a whole that is the dream experience? If a transformation has taken place, then the original would cease to be in the process of transformation, just as when the whole milk becomes whole curd, the whole milk ceases to exist any more. If such a thing has taken place in the process of creation – the whole Infinite Absolute has become the whole universe, like the modification taking place in milk when it becomes yoghurt or curd – then, inasmuch as the milk ceases to be, God also would cease to be after creation. There would be no Infinite for you to attain afterwards. There would be only this curd of the universe. But that is not true. You have not really become the world of dream because if you had really transformed yourself into it, you would not wake up into the original consciousness of the total waking mind.

This whole coming from the whole is a kind of appearance, like the whole face seen in a mirror as a whole reflection. You are a whole person, and you can see yourself in a mirror as a whole person. There are two whole persons – one that is there seeing the reflection in the mirror; another is the whole person reflected in the mirror. Are they, then, two whole persons? Can you say that one whole person has become another whole person here? For all perceptual practical purposes, the whole has become another whole through the mirror of reflection; but really, only the one existed. The *purna* (full) only is there when it has become another *purna* (full). Nothing has happened,

really, in the same way as when you are reflected as a whole person in a mirror, nothing has happened to you in fact. You are the same person, always.

Thus, having taken the whole from the whole, the whole remains. Nothing has taken place, which would mean that there is no such thing as creation as described in mythological fashions, in a dramatic way, as is presented before us by stories of creation in the cosmological narrations. Such being the case, our life also should be moulded according to this vision of wholeness. As wholeness has not ceased to be, we have never become individual beings at any time. We never got distracted into personalities that we are appearing to be here. We are the same wholes and, therefore, all fulfilment is here at the same time. It is not connected with a past, present, or future.

This is the vision that you have to develop before yourself, so that even when you take the first step in spiritual practice, you feel that you are a totally contented person, having achieved everything, right from the beginning itself, because a series of wholes or perfections rise from the lower to the higher degrees. In *sadhana*, the rise from the lower to the higher level is not a fraction developing itself into a whole. A fraction can never become a whole; the part always remains a part, and the whole always remains separate from the part. But here, a mini-whole manifests itself into a larger whole.

Your ascent in spiritual *sadhana* is your whole personality rising into gradual expanded forms of wholeness of your own personality, so that when you reach the ultimate pinnacle of this wholeness, you realise yourself

as a world figure, like the Viratsvarupa Itself. What is Virat? It is you, yourself, expanded to the ultimate pinnacle of the absolute universal.

This is how you have to bring into a state of harmony all your requirements through the otherwise dissected forms of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and the ideal of *moksha*. We generally think that *moksha* comes afterwards, and *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* are before that. That is to say, today is *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*; tomorrow is *moksha*. But *moksha* is not a tomorrow; it is just here, present immanently in *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* also. It is like the gradual regaining of health by degrees through the very same consciousness that is immanently present in your body. It is not that a part of your body is regaining health. A wholeness of health which was in a miniature form rises into a larger wholeness which is perfect health, perfect satisfaction.

This is how we have to consider the ways of bringing together the aspirations which are *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* in our practical life. Spiritual life is a wonderful, most satisfying, magnificent thing even to think of, so that wherever you are, in whatever condition, whatever you may be doing in your life, you feel that you are fearless, fulfilled always, and everything that you need is at your hand. Thus, these four aspects of your life should come together as a vital blending in the way of living.

In a way this is, to put it differently, the bringing together of the aspirations of a *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin* into a single fold. You will be wondering how all the four can be together. It is because these four stages of life are four kinds of preparation for a

single attainment of totality of the person. The *sanyasin* is not isolated from the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, or the *vanaprastha*. The *brahmacharin* is the seed that develops into the practical experience of a *grihastha* in life, which again matures into the detached existence of a *vanaprastha*, which again matures into the total comprehension of the spirit in *sanyasa*.

So, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* have some kind of connection with *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*. *Dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* are not like the four legs of a cow, unconnected; they are all one, like the four quarters of a coin, which cannot be separated because the coin contains all the quarters inside it. In a similar manner, all these four – *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* – are inside imperceptibly in the coin of your whole life. That also is the meaning of the apparently differentiated lives of the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*. They are also four aspects of the one coin of total development. Thus, always, you live a total life, whether you are living in one stage of life or another.

I have to repeat a few guidelines that I placed before you previously, which are of practical utility to you. You have to keep good company always. Even if you are a householder looking like a bound person, you can be a good person, an ideal individual, by living in the midst of a good community in a village, or even a little township of friends and cooperative individuals. Keep good company, as far as it is possible. If you can live socially, it is wonderful for you to choose your company, and be in the midst of those people only.

who are not compatible with your personal aspirations, you have to do one of two things. Exert your power over the atmosphere of dissident individuals and bring a kind of transformation among them also and turn them round into a good way of living. If that is not possible, ignore their existence as if they do not exist at all, and you are concerned with them only as a practical means of doing day-to-day work in an office, etc. These are some of the ways of adjustment that you have to practise.

And, how you spend your whole day is also something very important. This is the very meaning of the spiritual diary inaugurated by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. What do you do actually, right from the morning until you go to bed in the evening? Make a detailed analytical study of everything that you do on any day. If you are working hard for some reason, find out for how many hours of the day you are working hard. Deduct this number of hours from the total number of hours in a day. How much time do you need for sleep and rest? How much time for bathing, recreation, and for breakfast, lunch and dinner? How much for any other necessities? The balance is the hours that are available to you to attempt living a total life, even in the midst of your activities.

You may say that there is no balance left – the whole thing is a distraction. It cannot be like that, because nobody works all the twenty-four hours of the day, and nobody sleeps also indefinitely. Carefully if you analyse your life, you will find that some little balance is left, even if it be only one hour. That one hour is yours. Consider all the other hours as not yours; they belong to somebody else. This one hour is sufficient for you.

Your longing for spiritual attainment is what is going to lead to success and not necessarily the number of hours available – though the number of hours also count when your concentration of mind is not sufficiently strong. If there is a burning aspiration, *tivra-samvega*, with ardour in the heart, then God knows your heart much better than anybody else. All your sufferings, all your difficulties, all your problems are known to the Mighty Being. “Trust in God and do the right.” This is the old dictum before you: thus, lead your life.

Gradually, bear in mind that your householder-life is a preparation for a retirement from the occupations of a householder. It is not a retirement from work, necessarily. The occupation is inclusive of certain mental entanglements. A householder, actually, is not a person doing many things, but thinking in many ways. The entanglement is not necessarily physical, but mostly psychological. The psychological detachment should mature gradually in a family. You do your duty to take care of your family, but don't be attached to the family.

You may be wondering how it is possible to take care of the family with detachment. This is the difference between duty and work with desire. A duty is a necessity, an obligation, that arises from your very being in the circumstance of your life; it has to be done for the welfare of the whole circumstance of your life, including the society outside. Your obligation is not to be associated with a desirous action. Here it is that the Bhagavad Gita comes before you as a guideline. The gradual detachment, even in a householder, is a maturity of thought arising after the experience of the whole of life as an entangled individual in

society. In the beginning it is all entanglement. Then, later on, it is only an apparent entanglement through social relations; mentally it is not so connected.

Slowly begin to feel that your mind is a little different from the body and social relations. Then afterwards you will find that you can live a life in the mind only, and let the social relations be anywhere. You are a mind, rather than a social unit. You are a mind thinking, rather than a physical individual associated with the mind. Thought is the human being, so let this thought be your final concern, and live in your ideas.

Ideas rule the world. Every action is preceded by a thought. The world is not governed by the actions of people, but by the thoughts of people, by the ideas of the leaders of mankind. The ideas manifest themselves as activities or performances. The idea is the ultimate reality; thought is the final principle in the cosmos. Thus, you live in your mind, in your idea of total comprehension and satisfaction. Then, gradually, you will find that you are capable of living independently without bodily associations. Such a life is called the *vanaprastha* stage, which does not mean running away from the family. It is a kind of family life only, without the agonies and the emotional pressures caused by relations with people.

Mostly, what people do is that they go away to some holy places for some time, though they have not left the family. For three months in a year, the family man goes out on a pilgrimage, lives in a holy place, and entrusts the enterprise of taking care of the family to his grown-up children. Whether you are a businessman, or whatever you are, this is the first step that you have to take to detach

yourself. For three months you are not in the house. After that, you come back to the house and stay there for nine months, so that you may feel no uneasiness that you are without any contact with your family members. Gradually, if this process continues for some years, you will find that you are in a position to live unconnected with family life, because the members of the family are taken care of by the children, who are well placed. Then, you may increase your detached life into six months, nine months, then occasional visits to the family, only. Somewhere in a sacred place you live such a life; then your life and your idea that you have chosen takes possession of you completely. You become an ideal being, not a physical individual. Your meditation is thought thinking itself, as they say, idea operating on idea, the Cosmic Mind dancing in the centre of your own idea, whereby your idea becomes a focusing point of the Cosmic Mind, and you are a *sanyasin* at that time.

A *sanyasin* is not necessarily someone who has put on any particular cloth. The cloth is just an indication that he has achieved that state. It is a social insignia to distinguish the person from other people. The essential thing is what you think in your mind, so live in your mind only, afterwards. Your ideas are the seeds of the universal idea of God. A person who lives such a kind of life in his ideas only is a *sanyasin*. He has renounced truly.

What has he renounced? He has renounced the feeling that the world is anything but an idea finally, a mental operation, a cosmic dance of the Universal Spirit, in which condition, the question of attachment to anything does not arise at all. Hence the question of the so-called renunciation also does not arise. Automatically you are a healthy

spiritual person, just as when you have become healthy, you have not renounced illness. Illness has not been thrown away. In a similar manner, you have not thrown away anything in your renunciation through *sanyasa*. You have attained a perfect, total, developed maturity of spiritual comprehension. That kind of living of an ideal existence, free in every sense of the term, happy always, happy with anything and everything – such a person is a *sanyasin*.

These are some of the traditional features of a spiritual life – the methods of the harmonising of the principles of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* connected with the principles involved in the stages of the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*, all which commingle in a sea of comprehension which is the maintenance of God-consciousness. Such a person alone can be called a *sanyasin*.

These are, practically, all the things you need for understanding the nature of spiritual life. Right from the beginning till now, whatever you have heard in these sessions is a book of life for you. It is a gospel, a treasure house which you can keep with you as a godsend, which will save you in every way for ever and ever.

Chapter VIII

THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

The earliest record of human aspiration is available to us in the Veda Samhitas, the sacred literature which endeavours to visualise the reality of the universe as constituted of intelligent units filling the whole of creation – these intelligent superintending principles being addressed as gods or angels in heaven. The vision is indeed super in the sense that it attributes the character of intelligent self-hood to the pervading principles of creation and they become gods because of the fact that they are self-sufficient, self-contained and complete individuals, not requiring any accretion from the external atmosphere of creation.

Gods differ from human beings in a particular way. A god is one who does not need any support from outside (there is no necessity for filling the sense organs with the percepts of objects outside), whereas in human nature (in the case of human individuals), their very existence is made possible by the contribution made by the objects of sense. If we are not able to see things, if we cannot hear, taste, smell or touch, we would not be meaningful human beings. That is to say, the character of visibility, tangibility, audibility, etc., makes for the value that we attribute to our own selves, so that we are not pure subjects; we are also partly objects.

We require objective diet and objective sensory contribution from the world outside. All the comforts that we require in this world are entirely objective; they do not emanate from our own selves. They are material, they are social, and they are natural, and many other things. Human

existence, therefore, is partially subjective and, more properly, objective. We look at things, not from the point of view of the value that we may attach to our own selves, but from the point of view of the value that we seem to be attaching to things outside.

“What does this bring to me?” “What does this person signify in my relation to that person?” “How does this world contribute to my satisfaction?” “How do things in this world have a significance in relation to myself?” so that the significance that is attached to oneself is somehow a kind of imported commodity from the world of external perception; and every one of us knows to what extent we are dependent on objects outside in the world. Every little requirement of ours comes from the world. It does not emanate from our own selves inside, which means to say, for a person to exist in this world, the world has to contribute its own might; and to a large extent, the individual existence of a human being is the substance contributed by the values attached to things outside in the world.

The gods are different in their nature. A divinity is self-existent. The Veda Samhitas address their prayers to gods like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Aryama, and such nomenclatures are common in these sacred scriptures. But each one of these divinities is self-existent. A god is one who does not need anything from outside; sensory contributions are not called for. If you can live by your own self, you are a veritable god. But to the extent that you are expecting comforts from the outside world, to that extent you are an object rather than the divine subject.

The extent of subjectivity and self-sufficiency will determine the extent of the divinity that is in a person. The gods populating the cosmos as envisaged by the Veda Samhitas are these realities as envisioned by the sages of the Vedas, who exist as the souls of things in the world, including our own selves – the divinities are inhabiting even our own individualities. Everything in the world is inhabited and indwelled by some divinity.

The meaning implied herein is that there is a pure subjectivity of an enlarged nature inhabiting all things in the world, which is the reason why there is so much of love for one's own self ingrained in each person. Our love for our own selves is supreme. It is unmatched and unparalleled.

Why should we be so much enamoured of our own selves? Why is this self-love so predominant and persistent in every individual? Even an insect would like to love itself. It would not like to be trampled upon by anyone. Even a crawling creature has a love supremely attached to its own existence. It would not like to perish as an insect. You may say, "Why should the insect live for a long time? It is a miserable wretch. Its life is horrible. It is better if it does not exist." That is not the feeling of the crawling creature. It is a self-hood by itself.

The divinity that is pervading the cosmos is inhabiting every little speck and nook and cranny in this world, so that there is no place in space and time where these self-sufficient gods do not operate from inside.

Apart from the character of self-sufficiency of the gods, there is also another character which is the inwardness of the spirit which constitutes divinity. A god is an inward

existence and not an outward performance. It is more an existence and a being rather than a doing or an activity. Our existence is mostly a performance, a work. We attach a value to a person from the extent of worth or the output of performance of a person. “What does that person do? What is his work? What is his profession? What is his status in terms of the profession?” etc., is the way in which we many a time judge the utility and value of a human individual. But the gods are not to be judged in that manner.

It is not the work that the god does which is the defining character of a divinity. Its existence itself is the value, as, for instance, in the case of the sun that is shining in the sky. The sun is all value, and no value can be compared to the existence of the sun which controls, operates, every activity in the world and all the planets. But the sun does not work with hands and feet, with an office, with a secretary, with an appurtenance, with a bungalow. Nothing of the kind is necessary for the sun, though all these things that are so valuable to us are meaningful only because of the shining of the sun in the sky. The very existence of the sun is the activity of the sun.

The more you become self-sufficient, the more also you become divine; and conversely, the more you are divine, the more you are self-sufficient. It is not necessary for you to ask for anything in this world if divinity adequately manifests itself from yourself. *Mere existence is God*, and mere existence also is any kind of divinity which is a particle of this divine existence operating everywhere.

This is to give you a brief picture of the manner in which the great masters, the *rishis* of yore, envisioned divinity in the cosmos as gods pervading everywhere. The

rise of the sun, the early morn, the mid-day heat, the beauty of the sunset, the flowing of the rivers, the grandeur of the mountains, the beauty of the sky and the process of time – everything is a divinity because of the fact that each aspect of the manifestation of creation is indwelt by a divinity and it has a self-hood of its own.

Everything in the world loves itself. This is a very important point that everyone should remember. Everyone loves oneself; everything loves itself. Even an atom is a self-existent, self-love. It would not like to be split into parts, and segregated into dismembered individualities.

The capacity of the atom to maintain a cohesion by the action of the electrons around, due to which it becomes a unit of an electron or a molecule, is actually the self-hood that it is manifesting in itself. That which refuses to be other than what it is, is the self. And the cohesive forces of the world, call them physical or chemical or biological, all indicate the intense pressure exerted upon units in the world by their own self-hoods. That is to say, divinities, gods or angels are present in the hearts, in the core of the being of everything, though you may call it animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, as the case may be.

So is the way in which the Veda Samhitas may be said to be looking at the world. The translation of the Veda Samhitas into the language of your own culture from the point of view of language and grammar will not bring out the meaning of these great proclamations of the great masters. A poetry, an exuberance of feeling, a musical note, cannot be translated into prose grammatically or linguistically. The outburst of divinity which envisioned itself in all creation which we have as the record of the Veda

Samhitas is not to be translated in a grammatical fashion. All the translations that you have today are like husk, dried straw, without the essence in it.

One of the masterly interpreters of the Vedas has said that the meaning of the Vedas is in the heavens. It is not to be found on earth. The idea behind it is that a transcendent element is present in the outlook that is adumbrated in the Veda Samhitas and it is not to be seen with the physical eye of a written notebook or a printed literature. It is something that has to be felt inside.

Where the gods are abiding in the highest heaven, there you will find the meaning of the Veda mantras. You will not find it in libraries or linguistic or scholastic commentaries. This special significance attached to the vision of divinity in the world, whose verbal expression we have as recorded in the Veda Samhitas, became later on a cue to the austere contemplators of divinity whose performances and practices are recorded in a section of the Vedas known as the Aranyakas, which means a “forest treatise.” People used to retire to sequestered areas, jungles, in order to live an inner contemplative life of self-sufficiency detached from all the encumbrances of outward entanglement.

The vision of the Veda Samhitas is to be considered as an outward panegyric or encomium poured on God as manifest in this vision of the cosmos. The Aranyakas are an inward vision, a contemplation of the very same thing which was outwardly glorified in the Veda Samhitas.

There is a threefold way of envisaging reality – outward, inward, and universal. The three sections of the Vedas known as the Samhitas, Aranyakas and the

Upanishads pertain to these three ways of looking at the Ultimate Reality – outwardly, inwardly and universally. The inner contemplativeness of the Aranyakas ended in the deeper communion of the spirit as we have it recorded in the Upanishads.

Many of you might have come across most of the Upanishads and read them in original Sanskrit or in some translation. But as I mentioned, these scriptures are records of experience. They are not just school textbooks or a schoolmaster's notes. As experiences, as much as possible intensely recorded in verbal form, the Upanishads contain the quintessence of the Veda Samhitas and the Aranyaka texts. They try their best to portray before us the manner in which we have to commune ourselves with the Self-hood of the cosmos.

If the divinities are to be described as pure selves and if our own existence also is not to be excluded from this pervasion of the spirit, then to be true to the nature of reality or to be true to our own selves (it is always said, "To thine own self be true") and not to be untrue by transferring part of ourselves to the nature or to the outside, we have to commune ourselves with the spirit that is within us, the God that is indwelling us.

If the vision (whether of the Samhitas or the Aranyakas or the Upanishads) finally lands upon this great conclusion of the Self-hood of everything as the Final Reality that can be thought of, we would not be living a true life in this world if we are objectively conditioned. The more we require external appurtenances for our satisfaction and our existence, the more are we untrue to our own selves. We are sold to the outward world. We have become servants of

nature and we are obeying the commands of the natural processes of the physical body and the biological existence of ours, ignoring the spirit that we really are.

The love that we evince in regard to our own selves can be explained only in terms of something very valuable that is in ourselves. Otherwise, so much love cannot be there in regard to one's own self. "If everything goes, let me be alive at least." This is the final love of a human being, of everything.

Let all property go; let all belongings, everything, vanish, but life is the last thing that one can expect to be granted. Permission to exist is the last desire. Why is this desire persisting so much? Even a beggar would like to continue his existence; it does not matter if he is a beggar. He is living on alms from door to door. What does it matter? But he is alive. We do not want to be a dead rich man; we would rather be a living beggar. Is it not clear – the difference? Wealth that is dead is not what we ask; it is poverty that is alive. Life is the crucial point. What exactly is this life? It is the persistence, the continuance in the process of time of a peculiar identity, a self-identical consciousness which one feels in one's own self. God speaks from within us: "You are to exist, and you are not, not to exist."

This inward communion with the true reality of one's own self (which is the divinity spoken of) is also to be respected as present in every other living being also, because if we commit the mistake of identifying this divinity with our individual spirit, we would make also the other mistake of considering other spirits as objects outside. If my spirit is inside me, the idea of insideness would

preclude the inclusiveness of the spirit of other people and other things in the world, and the world would look like an external object once again. I would not be giving the same respect that is due to me, to others, also.

So, the mystical communion of the Upanishads is an advance over the worship of gods as we have in the Veda Samhitas and even the contemplations of the Aranyakas. The prescriptions of the Upanishads are difficult to comprehend. However much you may read them, very little meaning can come out because of this peculiar intricacy involved in the suggestions, the recipes, namely, everything has to be contemplated as a pure Self-hood.

“For the sake of the Self of a person, everything becomes dear in this world,” says a great passage of the Upanishad.

We cannot understand how this can be possible. Am I loving things merely because I love myself? Is my love for my land and property and my wealth and my relations just a manifestation of my own love of myself? Very difficult indeed it is to appreciate this kind of point of view. It does not look like that, easily. Well, it will not look like that, because of the fact that the sense organs rule us, mostly, and the spirit is dead in many individuals. The senses are very active and they are dancing to the tune of the biological needs of the human being, and the spirit is sleeping.

As the Bhagavad Gita puts it in a verse: *ya nisa sarvabhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami, yasyam jagrati bhutani sa nisa pasyato muneh*. When the senses are active in the daylight of their rejoicings through the objects of the senses, the spirit is asleep. When the spirit is awake to the daylight of its universal awareness, the senses are sleeping.

We are told that both Krishna and Christ were born at midnight, which may perhaps be a symbol of God manifesting Himself in the darkness of the sense organs. All the demons are sleeping at that time.

The inwardness of our spirit is also the inwardness of its existence in all things. The word inwardness has to be cautiously interpreted. It is not inside some person. It is the insideness of a non-objective character – that is, it is inside all things. Can you imagine what would be your experience if you are to contemplate an inwardness which is also the inwardness of everything in the world? If you make the mistake of imagining that people are sitting outside you, immediately their self-hood becomes an object of your perception and you are not giving sufficient respect to the spirit that is present in these individuals.

There is an inwardness even in the externality of things. In the same way as my spirit is inward to me, it is inward to others, also. So, my vision of your self, my perception of things in terms of the inwardness of my spirit, should not contradict in any manner the inwardness that you experience in your own self. This is a hard nut to crack, though it looks very simple when we read a translation of the Upanishads. There is no use of reading an Upanishad if this strange instruction of theirs cannot enter our heads. Otherwise, we would be worshipping an external god.

A transcendent divinity, high above in the heavens, creator-preserver-destroyer, far above space and time, inaccessible to mortal existence – this is one way of looking at God. Do you not believe that God created this world? And, naturally, the creator of the world should be above creation. And if the universe is so vast, with all its extended

space and time, the creator of this space and time should be above space and time. How far? How distant? Inaccessible, infinitely far and incalculably distant in time. How many years will it take to reach God, if you have to transcend time to reach Him? And how much distance do we have to cover if we have to overcome the limit of space? This is the childhood of human aspiration, which looks at things in terms of space, time and cause, which means to say, in the light of externality, duration and isolation.

There are only three things that are apparent to our vision in this world. Everything is distant (everything is away and far from me); everything is in some time and not always, and everything is separate from the other things. This is called "*desha-kala-vastu-pariccheda*" in the ancient philosophic terminology, a conditioning by space-time and individuality. Due to this involvement of perception in such threefold categories, we begin to look upon God as an infinitely inaccessible, transcendent, extra-cosmic creator.

To some extent, the Veda Samhitas also contribute to this view. But the divine character of God, which is this Self-hood, is taken notice of by the austere contemplators of the Aranyakas, and they give up the description of God and the manifested divinities in terms of a distant far-off existence and try to visualise the existence of these divinities in the hearts of all. But it should not end merely in a visualisation, theoretically. It will not suffice if I merely accept the subjectivity of the divinity in all people in the world. Acceptance theoretically is one thing, but a practical implementation of it in one's own life is a different thing altogether. That practicality comes in the Upanishads.

“*Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjithah ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam*” is the first mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad: The entire universe is indwelt, enveloped, covered by the Supreme Being, whatever this world be – moving or non-moving, living or otherwise. The second part of this mantra is a conclusion drawn from this vision: Live a happy life in this world. Enjoy your existence; do not suffer. Life is not intended to be a misery. We cannot expect God to have created a hell for us. Compassionate is He. It should be lived, and not merely got on as a drudgery. “Somehow I am getting on,” – this is not the way of living. There must be some meaning, significance, and satisfaction in one’s existence; therefore, enjoy – *bhunjithah* – enjoy. Live well, but in the light of what has been said earlier, the indwelling character of God.

Tena tyaktena bhunjithah: by renunciation effected in the light of the consciousness of the indwelling presence of God, enjoy this world. Do the gods enjoy? They do not eat and drink. They do not have any need for sense contact. Gods do not eat. They merely visualise by their consciousness, and they are satisfied because of the inwardness of the very object of enjoyment being in a state of unity with their own inner spirit. The object that I would like to enjoy is inseparable from the pure subjectivity of myself. This is the meditation of the Upanishads.

By a renunciation effected in the light of the all-pervading nature of God, you can live a life of happiness in this world. And you need not covet anybody’s property. Actually, all property belongs to the Creative Principle. There is no such thing as property, in the strictest sense of

the term. It is not possible to own anything, because all things are outside in space and time. The externality of an object precludes its being possessed by anybody. Even if something is within your palm and in your grip, you cannot say that it is yours, because it is outside and it can be dropped from your hand. Anything that is hanging on in an external fashion cannot be regarded as your belonging. Therefore, no one can own anything in this world. Property is a misnomer. It is a meaningless attachment which leads to misery; and everybody who owns, knows what misery it is to own anything at all.

Therefore, renounce this sense of ownership in the light of the indwelling all-pervasive enveloping character of the Supreme Being and then live a life of happiness. This is the crucial message of the first mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad. In a way, we may say, this is the seed sown for the entire gospel of the Bhagavad Gita.

I am trying to introduce your minds to the perspective of life as adumbrated in the Upanishads. The first mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad looks like a seed sown by the seer of that Upanishad for something that is to come in a more elaborate form later on, in the form of the *karma* yoga of the Bhagavad Gita.

The first half of this principal mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad is metaphysics – the philosophy thereof. The second half is the practical implementation of it. As the Bhagavad Gita tells you, there is Samkhya and yoga, knowledge and action, which both have to be brought together in a state of harmony for your beneficial existence. These two halves of the mantra tell the same thing to you. If God envelops all things and He is indwelling everything,

how would you live in this world? What kind of vision will be conditioning your perceptions? How would you deal with anything: With this little desk in front of you, with people around you, with this world of space and time – what would be your attitude?

If you are to live according to the Upanishads, if that is the aim and objective of your life – “I would like to live according to the injunctions of the Upanishads,” – if that is the case, you may have to look at things as you may be expected to look if God indwells everything. You will be veritably in the presence of God always. Is it a joy, or is it a sorrow to be in the presence of God?

Can there be a greater joy than to feel oneself at the feet of the master of the cosmos? Abundance will pour itself upon you. Everything will be given to you, not by somebody who is outside you as your potentate, but by your own communion with Reality. It is Reality that pours itself upon you.

The more you give out of your own self, the more also will be given to you by the abundance of the cosmos. How does it happen? “Give and it shall be given unto you,” it is said. “Give and it shall be given unto you in a greater abundance than the measure with which you gave.” How does this happen? Because of the largeness of the universe and the littleness of your personality which you have in large measure sacrificed by the performance you call *yajna*, which is the principal doctrine of the Bhagavad Gita, or the Vedas, or the Aranyakas, or the Upanishads. The entire culture of India we may say is contained in a capsule of the word “*yajna*.”

Yajno vai vishnuh; yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra loko 'yam karma bandhanah. God Himself is sacrifice, that is the meaning of this grand statement. And the other one that I quoted from the Gita says, "Every action is binding, when not performed in the spirit of a sacrifice."

What is the sacrifice that you are expected to perform? What is it that you are expected to abandon in the sense of this sacrifice? The abandonment of what is wrongly associated with your personality, and what rightfully belongs to the cosmos – these accretions of the five *koshas*, this physical encumbrance, this entanglement, this biological, psychological existence which we consider as our true spirit is to be sacrificed, because, if they are to be held intact, the inwardness of the Universal Spirit will be marred to that extent. The externality of our physical existence would diminish to the extent of the inwardness of the all-pervading nature of God.

If you always persist in asserting yourself as an outward individual (you are there and I am here), if everything is "elsewhere" and nothing is internally related "organically," then the inward indwelling character of God is marred. Hence, we are supposed to live in the light of the existence of God as indwelling – *isavasyam*. Or to put it in the words of the Gita, "Nothing external to me exists," says the great Master. And the Upanishad affirms the same thing: *isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat.* "Everything, all things, all living beings, even that which you consider as dead, has an incipient presence of consciousness sleeping there."

Therefore, activity is incumbent upon every one of us, because work we must. Everybody has to work, but what

kind of work? Work which is commensurate with the vision of the indwelling spirit of God. You should not, in your work, contradict the indwelling spirit of God. Each one of us should touch one's own heart and, deeply, closing one's eyes, contemplate how far we are successful in placing our daily routine in the context of this vision of the inwardness of God.

We are totally external, segregated, confused, scattered in our feelings and emotions, and we are more little pieces of individuality rather than an integrated personality. Wherever our thoughts are, there we actually are, and you can find out where your thoughts are. Somebody says, "I have to go to the railway station"; then, the mind is in the railway station. Another is somewhere else – some in the kitchen, some in the bank, some in the court case. The mind is in different corners of the world.

We are shreds of personality, fractions of individuality, as it were, in our daily life, rather than aligned, integrated persons. If these shreds of our so-called individuality persist in asserting their own individuality, we would be little, little individuals, like pebbles heaped on a roadside, and not individuals indivisible in our nature. Wherever there is indivisibility, there is joy. Wherever there is separability, there is sorrow.

The Upanishads are supposed to be attached to the Vedas as their conclusions. The inner secret of the Vedas is contained in the Upanishads. The word "Upanishad" signifies a secret teaching. It is not to be broadcast to the public, as the general mind of the masses will not be in a position to appreciate what this secret teaching is. It is so secret that you cannot even speak about it loudly. It is

generally communicated by a Guru to the disciple in a very intimately seated initiation process.

Another meaning of the Upanishad is “seated-ness closely.” “Close seated-ness” is also the meaning of the word “Upanishad.” “*Upa*” means near; “*nishad*” means sitting. The disciple sits close to the Guru in order to receive this compact concentrated teaching of a universally conditioned inwardness of consciousness. How difficult it is to entertain this idea! *The difficulty in keeping this consciousness, this idea of the Universality of God as harmonious with our inwardness, makes even great masters nod their heads in perplexity.*

In one of the Upanishads, the Chandogya, we have a description of five or six great *brahmavidya* masters questioning among themselves, “What kind of thing is this – this Atman of the Universe, on which we are supposed to meditate? Where is it situated? How is it located? How are we to contemplate?” Each one was a great expert in some sort of contemplation. They were not ordinary persons. But each one had a doubt. They had a partial comprehension of the nature of the Self-hood of the Atman, but the total conception was not there. This mistake could not be detected.

When the disease goes deep, it is not easy to discover where it is located. Even a suffering person cannot always say what kind of suffering it is, as it is pervading the entire personality. With these questions, these masters sat together one day and wanted to have a solution as to where this Atman is – how we are to commune ourselves with It in the state of Its true reality. They could not come to any conclusion. They had heard that the king of the country,

Ashvapati Kaikeya, is well versed in this knowledge. “Let us all go there and be humble disciples of this venerable king.”

In ancient days, *brahmins* were considered as superior to *kshatriyas*. *Kshatriyas* would be students of *brahmins*, but for *brahmins* go to *kshatriyas* for teaching and learning is something unprecedented. But so much was their eagerness and their intensity of aspiration for gaining knowledge of Truth, they, in spite of their being great persons themselves, humbly went to the king of the country and expressed their feeling, “We have come as your disciples.”

Chapter IX

VAISHVANARA VIDYA

Prajapati, the Creator, in his assembly hall, is said to have proclaimed, “Whoever knows the Self shall obtain everything.” This declaration was heard by the gods as well as the demons. They all felt that this is good news.

“Whoever knows the Self shall obtain everything. Then we shall know the Self, so that we may have all things. We shall learn what this Atman, this Self, is. We shall go to Prajapati and request him to initiate us into the mystery of the Atman.” The gods were represented by Indra, the ruler of the gods; the demons were represented by their leader, known as Virochana. Indra and Virochana, both, went to Prajapati and pleaded before him, “We have heard your great statement that whoever knows the Self shall have all things. We wish to know the Self.”

Prajapati said: “Yes, good. Go and stand near a reservoir of water and see what is there; whatever you see there is the Self. Go. I have initiated you into the nature of the Self.” They were very happy – this initiation is very simple, so Indra and Virochana saw what was there in the pool of water. What would they see, except their own body? Virochana and Indra saw themselves reflected in the water. Is this the Self? Well, Prajapati, the great Master, has told us that this is the Self. It must be. Very good.

Virochana was very happy, “I have understood the Self; now I shall have all things.” He went to his people and proclaimed to all the Asuras that this is the Self. “This very body is the Self because this is what I have learned from the master Prajapati. Decorate it, feed it, maintain it well, let it

be beautiful and gallant. This visible physical body is the Self.” Thus, Virochana was fully satisfied on a simple indicative statement of Prajapati that what you see with your eyes is the Self.

After all, what can you see with your eyes, except material substance? Whatever you have before you as things to be contacted by the sense organs are substances, matter; and even this body of your own is just matter. Materialism became the philosophy of the Asuras: All that you contact with the sense organs, including all that you see with your eyes, is the Self. Materialism proclaims that the visible is the real, the tangible is the real, the audible is the real.

Virochana was satisfied; but Indra, on his way, began to doubt the significance of this instruction. How could this body be the Self? It can decay; it can die also one day. Will the Self also decay and die? This body is subject to diminution gradually by old age and it is going to be annihilated by death. If this body is the Self, this Self is of no utility to us. There is something wrong with this instruction. Indra went back to Prajapati. “Great master, I have a doubt.”

Prajapati said, “Why have you come? I have already initiated you.”

“No, I am feeling that this self, which you have suggested is perishable (what I see with my eyes), does not seem to be the real Self because that is material and destructible. Please instruct me properly.”

“Yes, you can go back. What you see in dream is the Self.”

Indra went back. On the way, again, he had doubts: “How could the thing that I see in dream be the Self, because it is as futile, as oscillating and transient, as what I see with my physical eyes in the waking state? Practically, there is no difference in the character of dream objects as compared with the waking ones.”

Again, Indra went to Prajapati and said, “I don’t see much meaning in this dream self, because it is as transitory as what I see with my eyes in the waking condition.”

“What you experience in the state of deep sleep is the Self. Go,” said Prajapati.

Indra was satisfied. “Now I have better instruction.” But on the way, again, he had doubts. “What can I see in deep sleep? It is as if I am dead. It is darkness, annihilation, a kind of void, a nothingness. Is this the Self?” So he went back to Prajapati. “Sir, there is some doubt again.”

“What is your doubt?”

“This Self which you are identifying with the state of sleep is as though it is not there at all. It is a Self-annihilation actually, instead of Self-existence. Darkness and negation seems to be the nature of the state of deep sleep. How could that be the Self?”

“Now, sit here,” said Prajapati. “I shall tell you what the Self is.” After testing Indra three times, the real instruction came from the mouth of Prajapati: “Transcendent is the Self, which rises above the entanglements and involvements in body, mind and the causal condition of sleep. The Self is not what is involved in the body. It is also not what is experienced in dream. It is not what is happening in sleep. It is beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.”

How can you contemplate this so-called transcendency which is not to be associated with anything that we are capable of experiencing in this world? What is it that you are seeing? This body, this bundle of relations connected with this body, and the dream and the sleep. We pass through three states of consciousness every day. These three states are waking, dreaming and sleep. We do not have any other experience in this world. Nobody has seen what is beyond waking, dreaming and sleep. Now, if Prajapati, the Creator, is to tell us that the Self is none of these, what else is it?

This kind of question arose in the minds of six great learned people as we have it recorded in the Chandogya Upanishad. What is the Atman? If the realisation of it is the greatest of blessings which one can think of at any time, how are we to attain it? How is it to be contemplated or meditated upon?

I suggested to you that these great men went to the king of the country, Ashvapati Kaikeya, and requested him to initiate them into the true nature of the Self. The king queried each one of them, "What are you already doing? What is the practice that you are carrying on? What is your notion of the Atman? Let me first of all hear what you know already. Then let me see if I can tell you something more." Each one of them started saying what he knew.

"I consider this entire earth as the Self," one of them said. "The whole physicality that I can think of is the Self."

"This is what you think is the Self?" said the king. "This is as if it is the footstool of the Cosmic Being. As the entire physical earth is a part of the whole of creation, you are considering a part as the whole. The Self is the wholeness of

existence, and are you contemplating a section of the wholeness as the entirety? It is good that you came to me in due time for rectifying your mistake. If you had not come to me, your legs would have gone out on account of an erroneous contemplation on the footstool of the Atman.”

Then, the other people also had their own say. One said, “I contemplate the sun.” Another said, “I contemplate the whole sky or entire space as the Atman.” And varieties of such objective considerations of them were placed before the king as their own practices and processes of meditation.

The king, who was a master of the spiritual wisdom known as Vaishvanara Vidya, said, Every one of your statements is involved in a mistake. Whether you meditate on the earth, or the sun, or the space, or the ocean, or light – whatever it is, this cannot be regarded as a real concept of the Atman, because you are making two basic mistakes in your notion of the Atman. Whatever be the object which you are identifying with the Atman, the procedure that you are adopting itself is an erroneous one. What is the error?

“There is a twofold error. Firstly, you are thinking that the Atman is outside you. When you say it is the earth, it is the sky, it is the sun, it is the water, it is the ocean, it is the light, you are considering the Atman as something outside you. This is the first mistake.

“The second error is that you are thinking that the Atman is in some place, and not in all places. Whether it is the ocean or the sun or whatever it is, they are locations spatially and durationally and, therefore, they cannot be regarded as a correct conception of the Self.”

We have noticed in our considerations that the Self is an inwardness of experience and it is not to be associated or identified with anything that is outside. The outside things also have their own selves. This is, of course, to be granted and conceded. All people who are outwardly visible to the eyes, all things which are externally capable of contact with the sense organs, no doubt appear to be outside oneself. I am seeing you all seated in front of me and everyone is outside me as far as my perception goes, but each one of you has the Atman inside, the Self.

This Self, which is the indwelling principle in each and every person and each and every thing, is not cognisable either through the mind or through the sense organs because of the fact of its being the Self and not the seen thing. It is the seer, the knower, the cogniser, the perceiver, the experiencer. It is not what is seen or perceived or experienced, notwithstanding the fact that whatever is perceived or seen also has a self. How will you reconcile these two – aspects of your awareness of things in the world?

On the one hand, you appear to be sitting in front of me as external objects. On the other hand, it is to be appreciated fully that the Atman within me is also present in you. So, the knowledge of the Atman would not be equivalent to the perception of anything through the sense organs, but another kind of intuitive grasp, so to say, an insight into the Self-hood of the so-called external perceptions (persons, things, etc.) through a medium of contact which is other than sensory media. You have to adopt some means of the cognition of the Atman. What is the means that you are adopting in the perception of things

in the world? Eyes, ears, etc. – but these are inadequate for the purpose.

Something which is dissimilar in nature to the Atman cannot become a suitable medium for the experience of the contact of the Atman. Whatever is similar in nature to the Atman alone can see, experience or contact the Atman. Is there anything in us which is similar to the Atman? There is obviously nothing similar to the Atman. The Atman alone is similar to the Atman.

Gaganam gaganakaram sagarah sagaropamah; rama ravanayor yuddham rama ravanayoriva: “How was the battle between Rama and Ravana?” someone asked. What is the comparison? The sky is like sky, the ocean is like ocean. Rama and Ravana’s battle was like the battle between Rama and Ravana. You cannot compare it with anything else because they were incomparable occurrences.

So if you ask me, “How does the Atman look?” the answer is that it looks like the Atman only. And if you have any means of contacting the Atman, there is nothing in this world which can be an adequate medium of contacting it – not this body, not this dream self, not the sleeping self, also, as Prajapati has already indicated. Whatever you experience in the waking condition – the entire universe of physical perception – is insufficient for the contact of the Self. And all that you see in dream and sleep, of course, are good for nothing. And inasmuch as we have nothing here except these three states which you consider as useless, non-utilitarian and inadequate, what other means can you adopt in the knowledge of the Self? No answer can easily come to this question.

The Self alone can contact the Self. *Ascaryavat pasyati kascid enam ascaryavad vadati tathaiva canyah; ascaryavac-cainam anyah srnoti srutvapy-enam veda na caiva kascit*: A wonder is this great subject that you are discussing. A wonder is the person who can really expound it. A wonder indeed is the person who can actually understand what is being told. Wonderful indeed is the method adopted in the exposition of it. But in spite of this wonder which is the nature of the Self, even after hearing it a hundred times, nobody understands what actually it is.

How could you understand, inasmuch as understanding is a function of the intellect, and the intellect is a function that is operative, characteristic, only of the waking condition? The highest faculty available to the human being is intelligence which is manifest through the intellect, or the *buddhi*, or the reason, as we call it. But it comes under everything that is within the jurisdiction of the waking state. If all that is in the waking condition is not to be considered as a proper means of contacting the Self, then your understanding which is logical, intellectual, rational, also is of no utility here. All knowledge which is academic in nature, scriptural, linguistic, verbal, and grammatical, will not be of any use here.

The Atman is known by the Atman only. When you sink into the Atman, then you behold the Atman. What is the meaning of sinking into the Atman? And who is going to sink into the Atman? Is the body going to sink into it? No. The body cannot sink into the Self because the body is a perishable, material component. Neither can the mind, because that also is a rarefied form of matter only, nor the sleeping condition, for obvious reasons. The Self has to sink

into the Self. The Self has to know the Self. This “you” so called, the *sadhaka*, the spiritual seeker, the practitioner of yoga, the devotee, whoever that person is, is actually the Self, and not this body or even the mentation or the process of thinking.

Questions arise one after the other, “How?” This is a fantastic situation that is apparently before us. There is no go except to realise it. But there is no go also in the way of our adapting ourselves to the situation by which we can know it. The answer is self-control – *tapas*. *Tapas* is the way of the contact of the Self by the Self. This consciousness which is the nature of the Self pervades all things. Because of the pervasion of this consciousness through this body, we are feeling that we are the body. We feel that we are existing as this body. This consciousness of the body existing is actually attributable to the consciousness pervading it. If the consciousness is abstracted from the body, it will become a corpse. So, the feeling of the existence of the body is not actually a quality of the body; it is a quality of the Self, which is consciousness. But, inasmuch as it has got identified with the cellular structure of the physical body, it looks as if the body is the Self.

Suppose a long iron rod is heated until it becomes white with heat. If you touch it, it will burn your fingers. Are you touching the fire, or are you touching the iron rod? You may say, “I am touching the hot iron rod,” but the iron rod did not burn you. The quality of the iron rod, which was heat, was responsible for the burning sensation.

In a similar manner, this body has become red-hot, as it were, with the pervasion of consciousness, and that is why we feel that we are full of sensation and awareness. Every

part of the body is charged with consciousness. If the body had the character of consciousness by itself, even a dead body should be aware. Why is the corpse not conscious? If you are to imagine for the time being, as behaviourist psychology or materialism will say, "The body itself can manufacture or exude consciousness," why should it not do that when it is dead? This phenomenon you call death teaches us a very good lesson – namely, that the sensation of consciousness in the body is not a quality of the body. It is another thing altogether which is extracted out of it at the time of death.

Similar is the consciousness of thought. We say we are thinking intelligently. Thinking is a process which is charged with a consciousness other than itself. The process of thinking itself is not consciousness, in the same way as the physical embodiment is not consciousness. So is the case with the deep sleep. In the state of deep sleep, there is no consciousness, practically. But the subsequent memory that you entertain or you maintain of having slept the previous day is an indication of the fact that consciousness was there even in the state of deep sleep, but shrouded in ignorance.

Then, what is the outcome of this analysis? Consciousness is present in the waking and the dreaming and the deep sleep states, but it is none of these. Fire is present in a red-hot iron bar; fire is present in a burning fuel; fire is present in anything that is hot and burning. But it is none of these which are the media through which it is burning. If a lamp is burning through a wick, the wick is not the lamp. The flame is quite different from the wick.

In a similar manner, we have to adopt a means of extracting this consciousness from its involvement in all particulars, firstly by detachment from all things which attract us or repel us. The attractions and repulsions cause loves and hatreds, emotionally. Your likes and dislikes for one reason or the other are consequences of the attractions and the repulsions engendered by the nature of objects contacted by the sense organs.

It is essential to arrange the pattern of our thinking in such a way that we centre it in itself, so that thought thinks itself rather than it thinks something outside. As philosophers tell us: thought thinking itself is God; thought thinking other than what it is, is man.

Thought has to think itself; consciousness has to be deposited in itself, as it were, and it has not got to be deposited in the physical body or the objects outside. When you are awake, generally, you are thinking of something outside, only.

Now, inasmuch as outside-ness is not a quality of consciousness (its nature is universality and subjectivity, pure perception and not perceptible objects), think the thought but do not think that which the thought is thinking. Withdraw the consciousness from the object on which it is contemplating and sink it down through the body, through the mind, through the causal state, into itself. Or rather, to put it more symbolically, feel intensely that you are thinking *Yourself* – but not thinking yourself as a physical body. This difficulty also should be avoided as much as possible. This *Yourself*, so called, has a big capital “Y” and not a little “y.” The Self is not anything other than what it is; therefore, it cannot be any one of the objects. It is

just what it is. It is a pure subject, but it is a subject that is indivisible.

King Ashvapati Kaikeya mentioned to the six great learned men that the mistake that they have committed in the contemplation of the Self, the Atman, was that, first of all, they thought it is outside; and secondly, they thought that it is in one place only.

Now, can you imagine yourself to be in such a position where you are neither outside, nor in one place? This is a kind of circus feat of consciousness by which it is possible to withdraw the sensations through a process called abstraction, or *pratyahara*, in yoga practice, and it settles in itself.

It is not easily done because of the habituation of consciousness to think only of external things in space and time. But, by an analysis of your own experiences in waking, dream and sleep, you can go deep into your own Self – “I am not this physical body because of the location of the body in one place, and the objectivity of it on the other side.” Ashvapati Kaikeya’s instruction was that consciousness is not located in one place and it is not also something that can be seen with the eyes. This body can be seen with the eyes and, therefore, it is one of the material objects. This body is one of the material substances in the world; therefore, it is an objective something. Therefore, the error pointed out by King Ashvapati is applicable to the perception of the physical body, also. And it is, on the other hand, also located in one place. This body cannot be everywhere.

Anything that is in one place only and not everywhere and also which is perceptible by the eyes cannot be

regarded as the Self. So, you are not this body. This is very clear. Then what else are you? Are you the thought? The mind? No. What does the mind think? The mind also thinks something that is outside itself. Otherwise, what else is the content of thought?

You brood over things which are not you and, therefore, the thought process also is objective. Inasmuch as it is externally placed, the mind also is not the Self. And inasmuch as it is thinking only localised things, it commits the other mistake of locality. The mind also is not the Self, for the same reason why the physical body is not the Self. The body is not the Self for the two defects involved in it; for the same defects, the mind also is not the Self.

What else? The same difficulty arises which was pursued by Indra: is the deep sleep the Atman? No, because it is a negation of all values. The Atman is omniscient, all-knowing, present everywhere and conscious that it is present everywhere. It is not enough if you have wealth. It is necessary also that you know that you have wealth. Unconscious possession is no possession. So, it is an existence which is indivisible, non-objective, but conscious. This feat of contemplative process has to be achieved by every one of us in our meditations. This would be really meditation on the Atman.

Ashvapati Kaikeya, the great king, concludes his instruction to the seeking masters, saying, Whoever is capable of adjusting the consciousness in such a way that it can be considered as pervading all things, and yet be the Self and the deepest seer in the contemplator, attains the blessedness of eternity, infinity, immortality. *The Truth is the Selfhood of Universality.*

You need not have to enjoy things through the mouth, through your sensations. You will be enjoying all things through everything, everywhere, through all people in the whole universe because of your identification of the consciousness with all things in the world. “I am whatever I perceive.”

When you see something, feel your presence in it. If you see a sparrow pecking grains, feel that you are pecking the grains, not the sparrow. If you see the light burning, you are burning there. If you see a pillar here, you are standing here. There is no pillar; I am standing here. If you see a tree in front of you, you are there. If the river is flowing, you are flowing. If the sun is shining, you are shining. If the space is vast, you are vast. If the ocean is turbulent, you are turbulent. Can you identify your consciousness in this manner? This is to put succinctly the instruction of Ashvapati Kaikeya whereby, success being achieved, one enjoys life in all beings, in all the fourteen worlds, and in every self of every little thing in the universe.

What will happen to that person who achieves this great goal? The world will fall at his feet. Generally, we fall at the feet of the world. We go and beg; everybody is doing like this. The world will come and beg and fall at your feet. Whoever performs this great sacrifice of the self in the Cosmic Self, which is known as *agnihotra* in the Upanishad, becomes like a mother to all creation. As hungry children sit round the mother asking for their daily meal, their breakfast, their lunch and dinner, saying, “Mother, give us food,” – so will the whole world sit around this person and ask for his blessing. He becomes the parent of the universe, the centre of all creation – whoever knows this Self.

Such is the intricacy behind the teaching of Prajapati, the Creator, which was imparted to Indra, and the subtle secret behind the wonderful Vaishvanara Vidya instruction given by King Ashvapati Kaikeya to the great masters who went to him for instruction.

Chapter X

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

In the recognition of the true nature of the Self, there are before us three great impediments, due to which, rarely do people become successful in the attempt. These difficulties are so intense and involved in their nature that ordinary effort in the direction of obviating them would not be considered as sufficing.

We have a perception of our own selves as this particular individual which is vehement enough in its affirmation; this assertion of our personal individuality contradicts our aspiration for the true Self which we wish to realise.

Secondly, we have a perception of a society of beings outside us. Immensely are we involved day in and day out in our contact with society. The enterprises of the world, all the activities of mankind, are connected with social relation so that we may say that we live a social life much more than anything else. This again is an obstacle before us in our attempt to realise the Self.

Thirdly, we perceive a large universe in front of us. There is a vast sky and the interstellar creation, the cosmos of astronomy, which stuns our vision and which we are not in a position to handle expertly. These are the main basic problems before us and they should be called problems merely because of the fact that we deliberately identify ourselves with these threefold circumstances of personality, society, and the world. In the same way as we consider ourselves as individuals as very important, we consider

society outside also as equally important. Do we not consider the world of nature as important? Certainly so.

Do you feel that these perceptions are commensurate or in harmony with the nature of the Self as we could discover by an analysis that we conducted in the last two days? There seems to be no connection whatsoever with the essential nature of the Self – no connection in any manner with what the Self could be really. It is not an individual person, or anything like that. It is not a bundle of things like society. It is not even a physical universe. What else is it? These three problems are highlighted in a majestic, epic manner in the Kathopanishad.

Our discussion centred itself mostly in the Chandogya Upanishad and a corollary of that finding we will advantageously discover in the Upanishad which records the conversation between the god of death, Yama, and the exemplary disciple and seeker of Truth known as Nachiketas. There was in him, of course, an intense consciousness of himself. He knew that he was there as an aspiring lad. For some particular reason, he was made to encounter the god of death, Yama. And as an introductory information to us, the Upanishad tells us that the host was not there when the boy was standing in front of the gates of the Master. Yama was absent; he was out of station.

For three days and nights this boy stood there without eating and drinking and sleeping. On the completion of the three days, he had the *darshan*, the vision of the great god of death. The Master greets this little boy and says, “I am sorry that I could not see you when you were here on the very first day. It was not proper on my part to have made you stand here waiting for me for three days and nights,

starving. It really touches me. Anyway, the past is past. For the three days of suffering that you underwent, ask for three boons as a recompense.”

One of the boons that Nachiketas could think of as the first one was connected with his own personal individuality. “When I return to the world, may the world receive me properly, especially my father.” The returning to the world after encountering death is a spiritual phenomenon because when one enters the path of spirituality and sinks oneself even in the very initial level of Self-recognition, there comes a question of one’s relation to the world outside.

Do we feel today, at this moment, that the world is receiving us appropriately? Most of us are afraid of the world because we do not know how it will react upon us. Everyone is afraid of everyone else in this world. Somehow we make adaptations and adjustments with conditions outside and see that this fear arising from persons and things and nature outside is ameliorated as much as possible. It does not mean that anyone loves us, really, and nobody wants us also, perhaps, in the end.

If this is the nature of the world, how would you expect it to receive us in an affectionate manner? There is a disparity between our nature and the nature of the world, apparently. The world seems to be made of some structure or pattern of existence which is not identical with the way in which our personal individuality seems to be constituted. We do not behave in the same way as the world behaves with us. As the world may be expecting us to behave in a particular way, and we may also be expecting, on the other hand, the world to behave with us in some requisite

manner, there does not seem to be any kind of rapprochement between ourselves and the world. Neither we will budge, nor the world will budge. The world says: "You have to obey my laws, and I am not going to listen to you." But the human being says to the world: "You must obey my laws, and I am not going to listen to your pranks."

Man wants to conquer nature and nature wants to defeat man at every step. Who will win finally in this war? No one knows. Apparently, man does not win in this battle. He is finally kicked out of existence. He is annihilated completely. He shall not be in this world anymore when this war with the world continues to an extent of intolerability by the world. It issues an exit order: "Go." Nachiketas expects no such treatment from the world: "Let me be received affectionately by all people, by the entire nature."

This is possible only if the Self-hood, to which we made reference, can be recognised in all the things of the world, and the world also in its Self-hood will recognise the Self-hood in everyone's own self. That is, the Self of the universe should be in a state of harmony with the Self of Nachiketas himself. Yama, the great Master, says, "This boon that you have asked for is granted." When a Self-realised sage, having entered the nature of the Self, comes back to a world consciousness, he is received in a most affectionate, loving manner by every creature in the world.

We concluded by noticing that one who has the wisdom of the Vaishvanara is like a mother to the universe of all people; and as children sit around their mother asking for their daily bread, creatures, people, every living being in

the world will sit around this great person asking for his benediction. This is the condition of that super-person we call a *jivanmukta*. He will be received as he would receive himself. “This boon is granted. Ask for another boon,” said Yama.

The other boon coming is connected with the universe of perception. Personality and society were somehow brought into a state of adjustment by the granting of the first boon. Actually, the first boon included both these aspects of our difficulty – personality and society. The second boon is connected with the universe itself. What is the second boon?

“May I have the knowledge of the Universal Fire.” This is the same thing that, in other words, is known as Vaishvanara Agni. The Universal Fire is the Cosmic Will that has projected this cosmos and sustains it and also will withdraw it one day. “May I have cosmic knowledge?” This is perhaps the indication behind this asking for the second boon. Elaborately, in a ritualistic manner, the great Master, Yama, initiated Nachiketas into this cosmic mystery of one’s unity with the cosmos – omniscience.

But Truth is above even omniscience. Omnipotence, omniscience and even omnipresence cannot be regarded as Ultimate Reality because to be omnipresent, there should be space. But Truth is above spatial expanse. To be omniscient also, there should be many things. But Truth is above the manifoldness of things. To be omnipotent, too, there should be things over which one can exercise power and authority. But Truth is above the context of externality. So, even the definition of Reality as omnipresence,

omniscience, and omnipotence will fall short of expectation. “The third boon, please ask,” spoke Yama.

Now, Nachiketas brings the cat out of the bag. “Tell me what happens to the soul after it departs.”

“No, this question you should not raise,” asserted Yama. “Ask for anything else.”

“When the soul enters into something, departing from this body, where does it lie?” asked Nachiketas.

“Even the gods cannot answer this question, my dear boy. Ask for better things. Doubts regarding this question harass the minds of celestials in heaven. They have not come to a conclusion about what this mystery is. And you are asking me, little boy? Ask for glorious things.”

“What are the glorious things?”

“Longest life – I shall fill you with it. As long as this world lasts, so long shall you live.”

Nachiketas said, “What is the good of this? Even the longest life is short when it comes to an end. Is the longest life going to end one day, or is it not going to end? Let it be longest; what does it matter? But one day it ends. Take back this benediction that you have granted to me. I do not want to have a longest life, because the longest life also is a short life when it is properly considered.”

“All the wealth of the three worlds I grant you,” said Yama.

“Are they permanent or perishable in their nature?” asked Nachiketas. “If the whole cosmos is going to be dissolved one day, are the glories, the gold and silver and the riches, going to last?”

“All the beauties and the grandeurs and the majesties and the attractions and the delicacies of the whole world of

creation are here before you,” said Yama. “But ask not this particular question regarding the soul’s destiny.”

“What is the good of all these, again?” queried Nachiketas. “They wear away the senses.” “*Svobhava martyasya yad antak-aitat sarv-endriyanam jarayanti tejah; api sarvam jivitam alpam eva, tav aiva vahas tava nrtyagite.*” “Take back your dance and the songs and the beauties, great Master. I do not require any of these. But answer my question.”

Yama said, “I am sorry that I said you are free to choose three boons. Perhaps I ought not to have said anything at all. I never knew that you are so clever. You are catching me by this strange question which no god can answer.”

“But you have to answer,” said Nachiketas. “You told me, great Master, that even the gods cannot answer it, which means to say that you are in a position to answer. Having come face to face with a great genius of divinity like you, which fool will depart? I shall not budge from this place. I shall leave this place only after I get the answer. What happens to the soul, please?”

The very words that we have in the Bhagavad Gita, we have also in the Kathopanishad. “This is a wonder indeed. The Self is a wonder.” Why is it a wonder? Because, firstly, it cannot be seen anywhere. Even when you say that it is everywhere, you are making an understatement, because, as it was mentioned, the everywhere-ness is connected with space. So don’t say that the Self is everywhere. Don’t say that the Self is always, perpetually. By saying that, you are connecting it with the time process. It is not quite fitting to say that the Self is everywhere. Nor is it fitting to say that it shall be always. Neither is it a proper definition to say that

the Self is in all beings, because there are no beings before it. *Desha-kala-vastu-pariccheda*: the de-limitation caused by space, time and individuality does not apply to the Self.

No definition conceivable by logic can apply to the nature of the true Self. No organ available with us as a faculty of knowledge can apprehend it. We seem to be facing a wall in front of us – a dark curtain – and we cannot pierce through it.

Does anyone realise the difficulty? The difficulty is in the operation of our consciousness. It has involved itself into a tangle of perceptions shrouded in the three states of waking, dream and sleep. All these three difficulties mentioned are connected with the three states of consciousness, *jagrat*, *svapna*, *sushupti* – waking, dream and sleep.

Neither the waking nor the dream nor the sleep condition is the essential nature of the Self, as we have already noted. The Self is just as it is. It is Pure Being, Existence as such, Existence which is aware of itself. It is not existence like a stone's existence. It is a consciousness-existence, or rather, existence-consciousness. In Sanskrit, we call it *sat-chit*. The Existence which is aware of itself is *sat-chit*. It is not limited by any kind of conditioning factor in the world and, therefore, it is utter freedom. So, it is bliss, *ananda*. *Sat-chit-ananda* is the tentative nomenclature-definition which we associate with the nature of the Self, for want of better words.

Can anyone contact Being, as such? If this could be possible, one can contact the Self, also. Actually, there is no such thing as contact with the Self, because contacts are

always between two things and in the Self, there are no two things. No one is there who can contact it.

By hearing all this one can get frightened, as children are frightened in a place where they can see nobody outside them. A little baby cries because it cannot see anybody outside. It cries not because it is seeing something, but because it is not seeing anything. You place a baby somewhere where it sees nothing outside – nobody is there; it will start screaming. It wants somebody to be seen.

Our ego-consciousness will, baby-like, start crying in a state of consternation, fear arising from not something that is there, but from that which is not there. Each one of us can experiment with our own selves by living in a state of utter isolation for some months; and one can see what one feels at that time in one's own mind. You should not live in the midst of people. There should not be a second person next to you. Let us see if you can live alone in such a way that for several kilometres around you there is not one human being, and let this kind of life be lived for a long time. You will be frightened – not by something that is around you, but because of the absence of anything around you: Oh, there is nothing, there is nothing! There is then a shuddering of the ego-consciousness.

The ego-personality lives on account of contact with things outside. Any kind of non-contact is veritable death for the ego. You have to go on speaking; you have to go on seeing. These two things are very essential for your social existence. If you don't speak for one year, you will feel like a half-dead person. You will feel miserable to the core. And if you don't see anybody, it is still worse. And naturally when you are alone in that condition, there is no question of

speaking. To whom will you speak? Will you speak to the sky?

So, neither will you see anything, nor will you speak to anybody. What is that condition? Fear! In a few days you will run away from that place, to the nearest market where you will have somebody to talk to and chat with, and something to see with the eyes. The desire to see and to talk is the basic impulse in a human being. Otherwise, misery is the fate. But this sight that you are asking for, in search of, this God-realisation that you are speaking about, the great God who is the Self of all things – this Self cannot be contacted because there is nothing with which it can come in contact.

Unthinkable, imperceptible, is the way of yoga. The way of the yogi is like the track of birds in the sky or of fish in water, as they say. The track is invisible. So are those of fish in water; so is the path of the Spirit. It is invisible. The Katha Upanishad warns us again – sharp as the edge of a sword or a razor, imperceptible is the path of the Spirit – subtle, cutting, and you can slip down from it in a second. One cannot always be in a state of yoga for years. In a few moments one can come down and slip to the lowest of social existence.

This is so because of the fact that we are not prepared to face this condition of fearsome existence where there is nothing outside us. You can sit in this hall with hundreds of people seated here in the audience and yet negate the consciousness of their existence by the affirmation of your mind and feel oneself alone if you so like. In the midst of hundreds of people, it is possible to feel alone. But where

there are no people around, you can feel a city around you if your mind is so constituted.

If the mind is thinking of marketplaces, railway stations, bus stands, tea shops and societies, you are in a metropolis even if you are in the thick of a jungle. But even if you are in a large audience of people in a real city but the mind is withdrawn from the perception of the externality of these individuals, you are alone, still. Let them be there. There is nothing wrong with them. Let millions be there around you, but you shall not allow the mind to cognise them as external locations. Then in the midst of a large audience or even in a thickly populated street, you will find yourself alone to yourself.

Fear arises due to the aloneness of the mental operation at that time in the practice of yoga, and not necessarily because of the nonexistence of things outside. Everywhere there are things. How can you say that things are not there? It is a question of perceptibility or imperceptibility.

In the assiduous practice of yoga of the recognition of the Self, it is, of course, to some extent advisable to physically wean oneself away from human society; but this is not a solution to your problem, because in solitude also the mind can think of the world. You will at least think that you have come from such and such a place: "I have come from Rishikesh." There comes Rishikesh, even when you are in a state of utter isolation of mentality.

Physical aloneness alone is not a solution to the need for achievement of a real aloneness that is required for Self-recognition. Yoga is not a social practice. It is not a political administration. It is not a commerce. It is not a dealing with anything. It is non-contactual contact, impossible even

to perceive, to think. Even yogis are frightened by it. Yogis are frightened even to think of such a predicament as what you are describing – what to talk of common people? But you have to pursue it.

If you are persistent and tenacious and bent upon getting it and will not budge from that attempt – day in and day out – your mind is thinking, dreaming, and brooding over it: “When shall I get it, when shall I get it, when shall I get it?”; if you have no interest in anything else, and you have a faith that you are going to get all things by the invading of the ego into the Self, “Then blessedness be yours,” Prajapati, the Creator, said to the gods and the demons. “Whoever knows the Self shall have everything.”

The contact of things in this world, says the epic Mahabharata, is like the contact of logs of wood floating on the surface of the ocean. If two logs of wood somehow meet and touch each other by the force of the wind that blows on the surface of the ocean, and if you assume that each log of wood has a mind and a consciousness, it will think that a friend has come. Shake hands. “How happy to see you, my dear friend, my love.” And they will hug each other and live together, not knowing the fact that the contact has been caused not because of their effort but because of the wind that blew from above. When the wind blows in another direction, there is bereavement, “Oh, my wife died. My child has gone. My relations are dead.” Because the wind blew in another direction, the logs are separated. Neither birth nor death, neither coming together nor separation, is in anyone’s hands. It is the will of the cosmos that operates.

Contacts of any kind are not to tempt us to such an extent as to make us forget the true nature of the Self. All joys born of contact of sense organs with things are wombs of pain, says the Bhagavad Gita.

People who cling to persons will also come to grief by bereavement and death. People who cling to money and wealth and land will also come to grief by a loss of it. People who cling to this body also will come to grief when it departs. There is no one who will not be in a state of sorrow if clinging is the way in which we conduct ourselves in this world.

Non-contact is the nature of the recognition of the Self. Yoga of the Self – *atmasakshatkara*, or *brahma sakshatkara* – the realisation of the Absolute is the way, the art, the technique, the science of non-contactual contact. It is contacting oneself.

To contact yourself, you do not require eyes. You close the eyes, don't see anything, and yet you will know that you are existing. Let the ears be plugged; you will know that you are existing. Let there be no sensation of any kind through the organs of perception. You will still be conscious that you are there. There will be the existence-consciousness of the personality. You will know that you are: "I exist, and I am aware that I am existing." To have this apprehension, sense organs are not necessary.

Sense organs are not the means to practise yoga. It is not even the mind that is thinking the soul; it is something different from the mind that is asserting that you are existing. Even in the early morning when you have got up from sleep, and the mind is not very active, you will feel that you are existing. You get up from sleep – "I am." The

first awareness that is generated in your personality after waking up from sleep is “I am.” You don’t start thinking of the buildings and the walls and the things and the furniture in the room in the earliest of stages of waking. The objects become objects of consciousness only later on.

So, the first awareness is “I am.” How do you know that you are? What is the proof? Can you prove that you are existing? People who always ask for proofs for the existence of God should be asked to prove their own existence, first. How do you know that you are existing? You may say, “Why should I want a proof for that?” If that is the case, there is also no need of proof for the existence of the Atman, the Self, or God, because the Atman, God, Self mean the same thing. It is Self-identical consciousness of Being. As this kind of definition is beyond the comprehension of the human mind, it is considered as a wonder indeed if it could be really made an object of one’s apprehension. By sense-control, by the abstraction of the operation of the organs of perception, by freedom from desires that are mortal, deceptive and perishable, by contentment with whatever one has, by non-contact with people and having no attachment to anything, the Self reverts to Self-consciousness, the Aloneness that it is.

A gradual inwardness has to be practiced following the same process that perhaps Nachiketas adopted in his asking for the boons, rising from the personality and society and going further above into the cosmic existence, then finally centring oneself in the True Self.

This indescribable thing is our own Self. Myself, yourself, everybody, everything is the most important thing in the world. Don’t say that the most important things are

the gadgets of human creation. “You” are the most important thing in the world. The greatest value that you can discover anywhere is your own Self. This Self, that you call “Myself,” – this is the greatest of values. And if we can bring this Self of ours, which we consider as the greatest value, into the surface of actual, visible contemplation, direct perception, that would be the state of the practice of the yoga of the Atman.