

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE
OF SELF-CONTROL
IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



Swami Krishnananda

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Publishers' Note

This is a series of talks that Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj gave in 1972 on what self-control actually is and why it is so important for a spiritual seeker.

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Discourse 1

UNDERSTANDING OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS

In our effort to discover the true nature of things, several impediments, both internal as well as external, present themselves. Difficulties come both from within and from without. They are everywhere, and the seeker of Truth is almost at a loss to know what exactly is the way out of these problems galore, which day in and day out present themselves before him.

It is a tremendous truth that we are perhaps not yet ready to come face to face with the nature of Reality because the apparatus of our knowledge is conditioned by certain categories which prevent us from knowing Truth, because they are organically related to the structure of our own personality. Inwardly we saw that our prejudices, our emotions, our passions and our structural limitations obstruct the vision of Truth. Outwardly, in the world of nature, we have impediments in the form of space and time. The world, as far as we are concerned, is psychological as well as physical.

Psychologically our world of experience consists in the reactions that we set up through our emotions, our volitions, and our intellect, and physically the world that we experience is constituted of the network of space, time and cause. So either way, whether we approach with a psychological or a subjective attitude, or take a physical

or an objective approach, in either of these methods we are under the operation of heavy limitations.

Now, the crux of all these arguments and this conclusion is that our consciousness is impeded from proceeding further in its discoveries. All effort is an activity of consciousness. Without it, there is no work, no effort, and nothing of any value. But as consciousness itself seems to be restricted in its operations, within as well as without – inwardly through the restrictions consequent upon the structure of our own personality, and outwardly on account of the operation of space, time and causal operations – due to these reasons we are in a relative world, a world of temporality and mortality.

Then what is the significance of our quest of the immortal, that which lasts for unending time? If nothing worthwhile can be achieved through this mortal frame in this physical world of limitations to space, time and cause in this world of psychological passions and prejudices, and if this is the situation of the mortal human being in this world, what is the worth or the meaning or the significance of this aspiration for that which transcends mortality and the spatiotemporal limitations? What is our intrinsic worth in this world of death and destruction where everyone is a failure and no one can achieve anything substantial, where life begins with a cry, ends with a sob, and continues through vicissitudes of various agonies? In this world of sorrow and suffering, destruction and death, pain and grief, and weeping day and night, in such a world of samsara, what is of any

value? What is of any worth or meaning? Is there anything, or is there nothing?

That there is something, and that the world is not bereft of all value is the answer of our own super-logical urge from within us. We have a peculiar urge from within our own personality. This urge is unanswerable through logic or any kind of calculated argument. That we are not satisfied with the presentation of earthly glories is a fact. That neither the king nor the beggar is happy is true. Neither the rich is happy, nor the poor is happy – neither the tall nor the short, neither the stout nor the thin, neither one above nor one below. None is happy, though for different reasons. That we cannot be happy is a simple statement of limitations of human life. All our limitations boil down to the impossibility of having happiness in this world, but we ask for happiness.

Today we shall investigate the implications of this urge from within us. There is a difference between an urge and its implications. The urge is quite clear on its surface: we ask for that which is unlimited in every respect. We ask for unlimited knowledge, unlimited wealth, unlimited life in the process of time, unlimited suzerainty over the world and perhaps the universe. There is nothing that we ask for in a limited fashion. We never say a little will do. It will not do. When that little is given, we ask for a little more. This asking for more has no limit. When more is offered, we ask for another 'more' which is superior to that which is already offered. What is the implication of this so-called illogical urge for

that which is absolutely impractical in this world of transiency and limitations? It is impossible on the very face of it that we can ask for the immortal, the unending or the unlimited in this world.

Now, this quandary of perception is due to a difficulty in which we are involved internally and which is not visible to our consciousness. We are ever in a dilemma, and this dilemma is that we can ask and yet we cannot get it. If it is quite clear that we cannot get what we ask, then we will not ask. But we – the child, the adult, and the old included – ask with a hope which cannot be answered by the visible objects of sense. Our hopes are meaningless if they are weighed on a balance of visible perceptions. We would be considered stupid to ask for that which we cannot see or can even conceive to be existent anywhere in the world. Has anyone seen an unlimited object in the world? And why do we ask for unlimited objects. How can we ask for that which can never be? Is it not illogical, non-mathematical, absurd?

Yet this absurdity is the very soul of our life. This so-called meaninglessness of our question is the vitality that supplies the sap of our life. If this meaningless question is not to be, we would have been dead and gone up to this time. If it were clear on the surface that we cannot ask for anything in this world – that the world is merely what it appears to be, and it is just perishability, transiency, brittleness, death and destruction, pain and sorrow, nothing but that – if that were the all, well, the world would not have existed up to this day. We would not

have been alive here. We are alive today because of a hope implanted in our hearts which vehemently resists the answer given by the objects of sense that we cannot get anything here. The world tells us that this is a realm of death and pain. Have you seen anyone who is unlimitedly happy or lived defying the jaws of death? No one that was born ever lived forever, and yet we ask for unending life. No one ever left this world with a clear conscience, saying that all that was desired was obtained, and yet we ask for unending, unlimited possessions.

We have within our own selves a peculiar structure of being, which will not listen to arguments, a peculiarity which is not amenable to logical or mathematical conclusions, whatever be their precision: "You may argue and convince me that I cannot get anything in this world, and I should not have any hope. But your arguments are not going to convince me." Why? No human being can answer this question. Why is it that we cannot listen to any arguments of sense and logic based on sense perception?

This is because we have within us something which we ourselves are not able to see properly. Every one of us enshrines within ourselves some queer essentiality – queer because it cannot be compared with anything in this world. That queer structure or existence in us, a meaning, some value that is recognised in ourselves, keeps us hopeful and living in this world. This is only a statement of facts as they are.

But we are not to be merely listening to statements of fact. We have also to find a way out of quandaries and dilemmas, because a mere statement of the fact that there is a dilemma is not a solution to the dilemma. I can tell you that there is a quandary, and you all will understand it, but you will ask me how to get out of the quandary: "Is there a way?"

"Yes," is the answer. Our hope itself is the answer. We ourselves are the answer, to put it concisely. The answer does not come from books or scriptures. The answer comes from what you are, what I am, and what things really are in themselves. You yourself are the great answer to the great question of creation. No textbook, no thesis, nothing ever written can be an answer to this question. Each individual being is the answer to this question which is posed by mankind as a whole, by creation as a whole, and until we touch the bottom of our own being, until we learn to manipulate our own powers, we have not learnt the lesson of life. As long as we seek for advice from outside, as long as we seek to amass wealth from outside, as long as we want to perpetuate our worth through the process of time, which is moving from one condition to another, so long there shall be no satisfaction to the soul of man because the soul of man can be satisfied only by the soul of man. This is the point on hand. We can be satisfied only by ourselves, and by nobody else. This is why we are not happy. We are not happy because we cannot be made happy by anything else other than ourselves.

The question as to why, internally as well as externally, psychologically as well as physically, we seem to be hampered in our approach to Truth is because of the fact that we employ a wrong means of approach. The methodology is erroneous. The process of approach to the discovery of Truth is neither inward nor outward. It is neither psychological nor physical. It is not the mind approaching nor the world approaching. It is something different from both. That is why merely an individual's human approach does not succeed, nor will physical approaches of science succeed. We have seen both these working in this world; both have failed miserably.

We have seen the physical advance of science. Where has it landed us? We are still the same primitive apes as far as culture and satisfaction are concerned. We have not advanced an inch further than our primitive ancestral approach so far as the ultimate outcome of our learning and efforts are concerned. This is what we have obtained through merely the objective, physical, scientific approach of things. Nor has man succeeded merely by the inward psychological approach because both rationalists and physicists have failed. Rationality is not the answer, as physics is not the answer. Logic is not the answer, as science also is not the answer. There is an old saying concerning Frances Bacon, perhaps, that the greatest men were the meanest of men. They are the greatest in intellectuality but the meanest in the success that they have achieved in their lives, because while we

try to escape the limitation from one side, we are caught up by limitations from other sides.

Limitations do not present themselves from only one side in creation. Creation is not merely the world of physicality, or the world of nature. When we speak of creation by God, we look outwardly with our eyes. Not merely that, as mentioned in the Gita, *buddhir jñānam asaṁmohaḥ kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ* (Gita 10.4), etc., our understanding also is a part of creation. The way in which we think also is a part of creation. The way in which we try to understand creation is also a part of creation. So when we try to know the nature of Truth, to discover Reality, we are likely to be lopsided. The greatest defect of a scientific approach is lop-sidedness. Either we have extreme objectivity, or extreme subjectivity. There are people who completely withdraw themselves into a pure subjectivity of a psychological cave life. They are called introverts in psychoanalytic terms. They are not successes in this world. Nor are the extroverts successes – the pure humanitarians, philanthropists, social workers, politicians, scientists, and technologists. They too are a failure in life as much as the introverts. So you are a failure, I am a failure. Then who is a success? This is the problem, which is a hard nut to crack.

Spiritual life is not an inward life. It is also not an outward life. Spirituality is not withdrawal into a psychological cave; it is not introversion of the mind. It is also not running about outwardly in the physical world. It is neither a sensory approach to the outward nature of

things, nor a psychological approach to the purely subjective activity of the personality. Spirituality is another name for the character of Reality. What Reality is, that is spirituality. It is neither inward nor outward. It is neither within us nor outside us, while it can be said to be either way.

I am reminded of a famous statement of Buddha Gautama, who used to repeat to his disciples that there are two kinds of extremes of concept. "Everything is," said Buddha. This is one extreme: Whatever we see, is. This is one extreme of concept, which is not true. It is not true that everything is as it appears. The other extreme is that nothing is, which is also not true. So Buddha concluded that Truth is in the middle. It is not that nothing is; neither is it that everything is as it appears. Somewhere between these two extreme ideas there is Truth.

Can you catch it? You cannot catch it because you do not know where that margin is, that hairsbreadth of difference between genius and madness, as Shakespeare says. Between genius and madness there is only a hairsbreadth of difference. Likewise is this hairsbreadth of difference, which is Reality hanging subtly between what is within and what is without. To enter into this subtle margin of perception is to enter the field of spirituality.

Sadhakas who have girt up their loins to achieve success in the path of the spirit should be cautious in discovering this subtlety that hangs imperceptibly

between external perception and internal cognition. There is something very, very subtle, almost imperceptible to consciousness, occasionally coming like a flash of lightning between what we see outside and what we regard as ourselves inside. To catch that is to live in that imperceptible eternity. It is eternity because it is not in time. Eternity is a subtle existence introducing itself into our experience every moment of time, but we miss it on account of our engaging ourselves too much in either external perception or internal cognition.

Now, how are we to perceive this subtle imperceptible reality of eternity? This is the only way of freedom from the shackles of space and time outwardly and from our mental limitations inwardly. The process is called *atma-vinigraha*, or self-control. There is no spiritual life without self-control. Here, one has to be cautious again. Self-control does not mean austerity, as we might have heard. Self-control, sense-control, etc., are not unknown terms, but their meaning is not understood. It is an adjustment of consciousness. It is not mortification or suffering. Generally we are afraid of self-control because we identify it with suffering, starvation, fasting, getting up at two o'clock in the night, sleeping on a thorny bed, taking cold water baths in winter, and standing in the hot sun in summer. These are likely to be identified with self-control. Well, there is some meaning in all these, but there is much that is outside the purview of these ritualistic observances of restraint.

What is to be restrained is our consciousness. What has put us in bondage is consciousness. We are suffering due to our consciousness. This is a peculiar subtle truth which escapes our perception. We are happy or unhappy in this world due to the way in which our consciousness operates. If it is entangled in outward perception of objects, then it is limited to the laws of space, time and causal relationship. If it is limited inwardly, then it is restricted by the prejudices of the mind such as the passions, the *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *ahamkara*, body-consciousness, and all that is concomitant of body-consciousness.

In the Kathopanishad a very pointed caution is given, applicable to all seekers. *Apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau* (Katha 2.3.11): Be cautious; be vigilant; do not be asleep, because the state of yoga comes and goes – *yogo hi prabhavāpyayau*. We cannot be in a state of yoga even for a few minutes continuously. It slips from our hand, eludes our grasp, because consciousness cannot rest in a state which is neither inward nor outward. Such a state is unknown to us. We can busy ourselves in outward life. That is easy. We can also completely cut off all activity and hibernate within. That is also easy. But moderation of consciousness is difficult. Spirituality is moderation of consciousness. Spirituality is temperance, the golden mean, is to be applied even to the operation of consciousness. It is not an extreme of any kind.

Self-control is the answer. It is the secret art of manipulating our understanding in such a way that it does not get caught in the limiting factors of the inward and the outward world. The world is not the physical objects, but is what makes them appear as objects. We must understand the difference. The objects that we see with our senses do not constitute the world. They are not the cause of bondage. It is said that *ishvara-srishti* is not the cause of bondage. *Ishvara-srishti* means the world of physicality. The mountain and the rivers, the solar system, the buildings and the lands that we see are not the causes of our bondage. But what makes them appear as a mountain, a river, a system of galaxies, physical objects, the cause of our perception of things as physical externalities, these are the causes of our bondage. Bondage is a limitation of consciousness. It is not perception of objects. Let us remember this very well. The mere fact that we are aware of the existence of an object is not our bondage, or samsara; but that we regard it as an isolated entity located somewhere unconnected with other objects is a part of our bondage.

Space and time, are the most difficult of obstacles. The invisible enemy is harder to overcome. The enemy who is visible can be attacked, but the enemy whom we cannot see with our eyes cannot be approached because we do not know where the enemy is. Space and time are samsara by itself. What we call mortal existence is nothing but limitation through space and time, but when we look at the world, we do not see space and time

separately. They are mixed up with things, like poison that may be mixed up with our dinner. We eat it, not knowing that some undesirable element has crept in.

Hence, the art of self-control is adjusting our consciousness so that we do not live as foreigners in our own land. Consciousness can also be prejudiced, even in the practice of sadhana. We can be prejudiced even in our spiritual practice. We may be seekers of Truth, *sadhakas*, but we may have an approach to things which is wholly unwarranted, uncalled for. We can be mistaken even in a right activity. We may go wrong even in doing a right thing. This is not impossible. Mostly this happens. We do a right thing, but wrongly.

So in our efforts at sadhana, or spiritual practice and self-control, which is our subject, we may go wrong in understanding it, in applying it, and taking it impersonally. Spirituality is impersonality. It is not anything that is personal. It is neither yours nor mine; therefore, to live a spiritual life is not to live a personal life. There are some foolish people who think that spirituality is a personal, individual life of some person, some individual. It is not. It is not a matter concerning some person because it is an attitude of consciousness, which cannot be personal in its essentiality. Consciousness cannot be personal because to limit it to personality is to deny its real nature. Consciousness cannot be limited. The very consciousness of the limitation of consciousness proves that it is not limited;

therefore, anything that is personal is far from the spiritual.

The more you grow spiritually, the more also do you become impersonal. You overcome the limitations of your body, anything connected with the body. Our social, political, communal and individual status are overcome gradually when impersonality takes possession of us. In our daily conduct, we should try to become more and more impersonal. This is very difficult because we have never been taught what it is to be impersonal. Impersonality of approach is a peculiar character of consciousness whereby it takes into consideration all conceivable and possible factors in every judgment of value. This would be to introduce impersonality into our conduct.

Spirituality is thus impersonality. Spirituality is also universality. Spirituality is the same as the nature of reality. It is to be true to our own nature. To be spiritual is to be true to our own nature, not to be self-deceptive – to be true to our conscience, and to exhibit in our outer conduct what we are internally in our own selves. When we manifest outside in our daily activity and conduct what we really are within, we are heading towards self-control and a spiritual life.

Now, the internal life is not always manifest outwardly, nor is the outward fact of life acceptable to the inner structure of personality. So this is a tension in our existence. We are ever in a state of mental and nervous tension because of a double difficulty that the facts of

outward life are not wholly acceptable to us in our personal existence. Also, our personal constitution within cannot be wholly manifest outside in practical life. The two do not agree with each other, so we always live an artificial life. This is a part of samsara, to live an artificial life. Artificiality keeps us ever in a state of suspense and inward agony. We cannot go to sleep with satisfaction, nor can we get up from our bed with satisfaction, because we are in a state of nervous tension caused by this unavoidable conflict between the outer and the inner. To adjust the consciousness to the outer as well as the inner would be to enter the field of spirituality.

In this spiritual attempt, we practically cease to be an ordinary human being. To be a human being in the ordinary sense of the term is to retain our personality, to pass for Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so, etc. The first step that a *sadhaka* would take in leading a life spiritual would be to reduce his personality consciousness to the minimum state possible. The higher states of sadhana will take care of themselves later on. The first and foremost of our duties would be to reduce our personality consciousness as much as possible.

There are layers of personality. You have various conceptions about your own self. Now, conceptions about yourself which are not necessary may be shed. You need not daily, for all the twenty-four hours of the day, be conscious that you are an engineer, or a collector, or a judge, or a medical officer, and so on. This is an easy

method of shedding part of your false personality. That you are a judge or a collector may be part of your personality consciousness, but it is not a necessary part. It is not also the real part. It is a false association arisen on account of social relationships. It can be dropped any moment, and it will drop of itself.

The outermost associations should be dropped first because they are easier to drop. The inward associations are more and more difficult to give up, so that can be done later on. That you are an official or that you occupy a status in society is a personality-consciousness that you can give up easily. Give up this idea.

Then if you are successful in this attempt at the first step in self-control, you have controlled yourself partly. You have restrained yourself by giving up this false consciousness of being an official in society. The next step would be to give up the idea that you are a friend or an enemy of somebody. This is a little more difficult. You may forget that you are a collector, but you cannot forget that you are a friend or an enemy of somebody. This is more difficult, but it has to be given up. You must know that you are not born as a friend, nor are you born as an enemy of any person. That has cropped up later on artificially, again by social relationships. These artificial associations which were not born with you, nor will they die with you, should be dropped gradually. They are only here in the middle as tentatively workable necessities which have entered your consciousness to such an extent that they have become inseparable realities causing so

much misery. Forget that you are a friend or an enemy of persons. That you are not a friend of anybody, and you are also not an enemy of anybody, would be perhaps a higher stage in restraining your personality consciousness.

Then you may forget that you belong to any part of your country. Why do you say that you belong to Gujarat or Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana? Let this consciousness be dropped. Well, you cannot drop it so easily, though you may think and nod your head. You always think that you are a Gujarati or a Madrasi or a Punjabi, and so on. This is a false consciousness that has entered your mind. It is not your true nature. You are not a Punjabi or a Gujarati. It is not written on your forehead. It is all absurdity, a stupidity of the first water that you have unnecessarily created to increase your bondage, suffering and woe of every kind. Let this idea that you belong to a state be dropped. You belong to India. Why do you say you belong to Gujarat or to Madras? You belong to Bharatvarsha, India. This is very simple, but very hard to get over. When you hear your own language being spoken, you immediately gravitate towards it: "Oh, my own friend is there." If a Spanish-speaking man is seen, the Spanish-speaking man runs to that place. If a Gujarati-speaking man is seen, the Gujarati man will run there. If it is a Tamil man, the Tamil runs immediately. Why this attraction?

It is a peculiar *adhyasa* we have created in our own selves apart from that metaphysical *adhyasa* that

Sankaracharya is speaking of. That is something different, but we have got some other *adhyasas* created here which are as important as the other one, and perhaps more important, and causing the worst of sufferings in our practical daily life.

These are all important aspects of our sadhana. They may look like a joke, but they are not jokes; they are serious matters. Forget your language, your mother tongue, your state, your being a friend and enemy, your being an official in society. A large percentage of false personality has gone. Now you are coming nearer and nearer to what you really are.

Then there is another very hard difficulty, which is thinking that you are a male or a female. You cannot get out of this idea. You cannot get out of this, but it also is a false personality. It is not true that you are a male or a female. You are hypnotised into that belief by some association that has crept into you from birth itself. You are not a male; you are not a female. Though it seems very clear that you cannot get out of this consciousness, it has to be attempted. You must try to think that you are a merely a human being, not a male or a female. Can you think like this? You belong to mankind as such – humanity as such. Do not use the word ‘mankind’ because it excludes womankind. Simply say ‘humanity’. You belong to humanity, not to the male section or the female section. This is a harder method of self-control where you give up the attachment to that particular awareness that you are a male or a female.

This can be done only in meditation. You cannot get out of this in practical life, but in states of deep meditation and concentration you can forget that you are a sexual personality. You are merely a human individual, that is all, impersonal in its nature, and consciousness should be withdrawn even from that limitation to humanity. You are a part of God's creation. Why are you associating yourself with humanity too much? Has God created only mankind, humanity, or has He created anything more? When we talk of the world, we mean only humankind, and nothing else. Superhuman and subhuman beings are also there in creation. You belong to God's creation, not to a species or a genera. We shall not identify ourselves with any species: "I am not a human being; I am only a unit of creation in this cosmos." This would be a purely scientific perception, scientific in the strictest sense of the term. From the purely scientific point of view, we are all units of configurations of force, not human beings or anything of that kind. There is no such thing as human beings from the purely scientific point of view of perception. What is the definition of a human being? How would we define a human as distinguished from others? Scientifically speaking, this distinction cannot be drawn, though for all practical and social purposes we draw this distinction.

But we are trying to know Truth. We are heading towards the nature of Reality. We should not be satisfied by mere conventions – conventions of political life, conventions of social life, conventions of linguistic life,

conventions of family life. Limitations of this kind may be gradually given up.

Station yourself in a particular point in the cosmos, and gaze at the world as a part of creation. Do you know what a difference it makes to you? When you actually do it, you will know it. When you look in this manner, you do not see Rishikesh, Muni-ki-reti. This is not the real way of seeing things. Why do you say 'Rishikesh'? Rishikesh is only a name that you have given to a part of the earth. You could have given it some other name; it does not matter. You can call it Hollywood. It does not matter. It is only under your control. There is no such thing as Rishikesh, Delhi, New York. They don't exist. There is only a patch of earth which may be called by any name. So when you see, what do you see? You do not see Rishikesh. You see only a patch of earth, a mound of clay, a little water flowing. What else do you see?

We have created complications in our consciousness by calling things by particular names. This is Mr. Joshi. Who says he is Joshi? I can call him Narayan; I can call him John. What is the harm? Now the personality is associated with name also, and is another limitation. Do you know how deeply your name has entered your consciousness – even when you are asleep? If you call Brahmaji, immediately he will get up. But suppose I call him Karthikeyan, he will not get up. Even if the sound has fallen on his ears, he will not get up because deeply, in an unconscious level, he knows that he is not Karthikeyan. Just imagine how deeply you are attached

to even a name. It is not a silly joke. You are all caught up in these small things which have become like a huge ocean, and you are getting drowned in it. Your difficulties are not one or two, but thousands. It is like being caught by hundreds of creditors from all sides. You cannot show your face to anyone. You are suffering from the root.

Can you give up these associations of name? I am not talking of form. That is a higher step. Can you give up association of name, that you are not Mr. so-and-so? Who called you by that name? You could have been called by some other name. Do you imagine how simple a matter it is to understand? You were not born in this world with any name. Somebody gave you a name. Why do you give it so much importance? This is prejudice, sheer prejudice, which is not logical. You have no name at all. You were born without a name, as a simple individual. When a child is born, it does not know whether it is male or female, and develops that distinction later on. It is a pure living organism that is born, which has no name. It does not know to which place it belongs, where it is born. Slowly, individuality consciousness gets more and more concretised, and attachment and repulsions get associated with consciousness.

The analysis of consciousness is the study of life. Life is nothing but consciousness working. Life does not mean our physical associations, enjoyments and sufferings, etc., in the conventional sense. It is a secret

working of our consciousness, of which we are wholly unaware. No one knows what one is really, how one is caught. The deep-rooted disease is not known. We have a chronic illness which has to be rubbed out, erased by a gradual elimination of factors, moving from outward facts to inward facts.

When you look at the world, therefore, do not look at Rishikesh. There is no such thing as Rishikesh. Then what is it? It is Uttar Pradesh? No. There is no such thing as that. It is also a name that you have given to a patch of a wider land. Is it India that you are seeing? No, it is not India. India is also a name that you have given to a part of the Earth. You could have given it some other name. You have, fortunately or unfortunately, chanced to give it a particular name. You call a particular part of the Earth America, another part of the Earth India, a third part of the Earth something else. It has no name by itself.

Then when you look, what do you see? You do not see any countries. They do not exist at all. Countries are only a devil in the consciousness of the human being, harassing us. So when you look, you see only a part of the surface of the globe of the Earth. What else do you see? Nothing else. You are a unit, a living organism, crawling, as it were, on the surface of this Earth. Do you know what a liberation of the nervous system it is to think like this? You will sigh with relief. "Oh, I am only on the Earth, not in limited country or a nationality. But even this is a limitation. You are not merely on the surface of

the Earth. There is something else to it. You are wrong in thinking that you are stuck to this Earth.

I will tell you another interesting thing. We are likely to be enamoured of people who land on the moon. “We are in space,” they say. We look up to distant objects and say they are in space, high space. But do you know that you are also in space? Just plant yourself on the moon, and imagine that you are looking at the Earth. This will be a planet hanging in space. This is as much a planet hanging in space as the moon hanging in space. So you can be happy that you are in space. Why are you trying to rush up to some other planet to be in space? You are in space. You are on the surface of a planet. You are in mid-air; you know that. You are not on the surface of the Earth. So I am taking your consciousness above the Earth itself.

You have come from the lower levels, from district consciousness, town consciousness, state consciousness, country consciousness, from Earth consciousness. Now you have come to an astronomical universe consciousness: “I am not even on the Earth. There is no such thing as that. I am simply in space, universal space, belonging to nobody, really speaking.” If you think like this, your consciousness has expanded beyond conceivable limits. If you think like this, you will feel healthy psychologically, and even physically. Illnesses and diseases will vanish by this sort of correct thinking. This is not merely imagination; this is fact, whereas what we are thinking now is imagination – that we are in

India, in Gandhinagar, and so forth. This is all imagination, not fact; it is the disease. The reverse is happening to us.

Thus, from political status of officialdom we have slowly come higher and higher into realities which are vaster and vaster in their magnitude, more and more universal and impersonal in their character, touching the borderland of Truth, as it were. You are a cosmic person, remember. You are not a human being sticking to the planet Earth. You are influenced by the movement of galaxies beyond the ken of sense perception. You belong to the Milky Way. You do not merely belong to the Earth, or even the solar system. The solar system belongs to the Milky Way, as told by astronomers.

Well, these are all wonderful things. The world is very vast, and we are inseparable parts of this vast creation. Your attachments and hatreds will cease by this sort of direction of consciousness in the proper way. We are still in the physical level. I have not taken you further. Even if you think of the cosmos, it is only physical. But spiritual sadhana is not merely expansion of consciousness to the level of physical perception, even cosmically. It is higher still, and subtler, to which we have to go gradually, and not immediately. God-consciousness is not physical consciousness, though it may be universally extended.

By methods akin to these mentioned, the senses which detract our consciousness and make it impinge on objects, cling to objects, can be restrained in their operations. We can thus become more and more

impersonal even in our daily attitude and activity. What you are hearing just now is not merely a lecture. It is a technique of daily living, a methodology of daily conduct. It is the way in which you have to think even when you take a cup of tea, even when you are in the bathroom. It is not only for your puja room. Wherever you are, whatever be your activity, this is the way you have to think. Then you are, I should say, half liberated from samsara. Even by this daily meditation of this character, of this nature, you are fifty percent liberated from bondage. Only another fifty percent remains, which shall also go gradually.

Such is the earnest investigative attitude of a sincere seeker of Truth who contents himself remaining a simple unit in the cosmic creation of God, not arrogating to himself or herself the feeling of possessing things or assuming status in life, or even having a name or belonging to a particular locality and such other associations which have all to be given up by hard effort of daily practice, which is an essential part of sadhana, or spiritual practice.

Discourse 2

SELF-RESTRAINT IS SELF-RECOGNITION

To exercise self-control is to grow progressively in impersonality because the self is associated with the personality to such an extent that the greater is the affirmation of the self, the greater also is the assertion of personality, and vice versa. In this sense, self-control is commensurate and co-extensive with self-expansion. That aspect of the self which is restrained is the personality self, which refuses to recognise the existence and value of other selves. What we called in our analysis last time the logical limitations of the intellect and the spatiotemporal limitations of nature outside is nothing but the way in which consciousness entangles itself in its own perceptions; therefore, self-restraint would involve a far wider operation of consciousness than *sadhakas* are likely to realise.

Self-control is not controlling merely our bodily individuality. Our efforts at the control of the self do not yield much success because our concept of self is erroneous. It is essential that we gather enough knowledge of the methodology of approach before we actually employ this method or technique. It is not essential that we should be too eager to plunge into actual practice without gaining sufficient knowledge as to what this practice is. Thought precedes action. Understanding is presupposed by every kind of effort. It

is not that we should be engaged in activity without understanding throughout the day. Our purpose is not merely to be active, but to bring about the intended result of this activity. If no result follows, if nothing happens, if we are retarded in our progress or are stagnant in our pursuits, we have to conclude there has been an error in our understanding. The restraint of the self is all yoga, in one sentence. But what is this self that we are restraining? Where is it located?

Most people, novices and initiates included, regard the self to be that conscious operation within the walls of our bodily individuality. This is the crude conception of self, the conception of self which a man in the street or a rustic in the field has in his mind: "When I have to control the self, I control my bodily individuality. I mortify my body, harass my mind, torture my intellect, and put myself to such a hardship that I may pass for a yogi or a seeker of Reality, having achieved a lot of success in the practice."

If we take a census of all the yogis in the world and assess the progress they have made in their march towards perfection, we will find very poor results. There are many yogis, but not yogis who have achieved results or successes. Success in yoga is not success in social life. We may be a very big yogi in society, but be a poor yogi in the eye of God, which is of no use, so social approbation is not the criteria of success in yoga. The world may regard us as a genius, but we may be a nothing, a hollow personality inside, so the judgment of

the world is no judgment because all people in the world are like our own selves. What judgment can they pass? Therefore, we should not make the mistake of taking world judgment for the criterion of progress that we make in the practice of yoga. Advertisements, publications and social recognition are not the criteria of progress in yoga. Yoga is something quite different altogether, and one has to steer clear of all these obstacles in the form of psychological cobwebs which may blur the vision of the inner consciousness.

The control or restraint of the self, or *atma-vinigraha*, is yoga. The point is, what is this Atman that we are going to restrain? Sometimes it is said that we have to realise the Self. Sometimes it is also said that we have to restrain the self. We are told both things, and the term 'self' is used in both these definitions or instructions. The goal of life is *atma-sakshatkara*, or the realisation of the Self, but the method to be adopted in the realisation of this Self is control of the self. So there seems to be different meanings given to the concept of self.

We need not concern ourselves at present with the characteristic of the condition which is equated with the realisation of the Self. As seekers, we are now more concerned with the practical side, the methodology and the technique, that part of practice which goes by the name of *atma-vinigraha*. We are involved in world consciousness on account of an entanglement of self, whose meaning has to be very clear to us at the outset. Control of the self would be proportionately realisation

of the Self. The restraint of the self is at the same time a parallel advancement along the line of the realisation of the Self.

These concepts of self are brought into the field of instruction in yoga in such scriptures as the Bhagavadgita. For example, we have a pointed reference to it there in the Sixth Chapter: *uddhared ātmanātmānaṃ nātmanānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.5). In such statements as these, the word 'Atman' is used several times, with different connotations. The Self is the friend of the self. The Self is the enemy of the self. How can the friend be also the enemy? The Self can be the friend; the Self can be the enemy. But whose friend and whose enemy? Of the Self itself. The Self is the friend of the self, and the Self is the enemy of the self under different circumstances.

Here we see different definitions given of the self for the sake of convenient practice of yoga. The Sixth Chapter of the Gita particularly is a treatment of yoga proper. The yoga of meditation, or *dhyana*, is described in great detail; but the method is said to be the restraint of the self by the Self, or the lifting up of the self by the Self: *uddhared atmanatmana*. Now, what is this self which is lifted by the Self, and which is the self to be restrained?

As I said, beginners in yoga are likely to make an error in their concept of self, the error being that they identify this self with the body: "My self is to be restrained. I have to control my self." This is what Gurus,

Masters tell us: “Control yourself, restrain yourself, subjugate yourself.” So what we do is, we put a kind of restriction upon our bodily personality. We do not speak much, we do not eat much, we do not sleep on soft cushions or beds, and all things that may be regarded as a convenience or a facility or a luxury for the bodily personality are diminished to such an extent that the bodily personality is put on a starvation diet.

This is wonderful; a great step taken on the part of the yogi, but this is not the whole of the practice because the Self cannot be limited to the body. The operation of the Self is not an activity that is going on within our bodily individuality, so self-restraint is not merely concerned with our body. It is concerned with certain other things also which are not cognisable on the surface. What we regard ourselves to be is not the mere visible bodily personality. So *atma-vinigraha*, or self-control, is not merely control of the body. It is not also control of the activities taking place within the body. The Self is more than what can be recognised as an activity within the body.

For this, a careful investigation is to be made into our own psychological life. We are psychological entities. We are not merely bodies. Our psychological life is what matters most, and the body is a little part of this wider psychological life that we lead. To give an example of how our self exceeds the bodily limitation, our affections are standing illustrations of the extent to which our self can go beyond the restrictions of the bodily location. Our

lives are very much connected with our affections, loves and hatreds, so much so that we cannot imagine the extent of it. But can we say that affections are limited to our bodily individuality merely? Is our love and hatred contained only inside the body? Does it not operate outside?

Well, we know very well it can extend itself to the whole world. Our consciousness, which is the character of our self, can reach up to a person even in the nether regions. We can love or hate a person in Columbia. Our consciousness can reach up to that spot, and that can mean much to our life. Our individual life, which is falsely taken to be limited to the bodily individuality, is influenced to such an extent by factors beyond the bodily individuality that to regard the self as merely what is contained in the body would be a blunder indeed.

Self-control, therefore, is not merely the control of psychological activities even within the body. These psychological activities of ours have their tentacles protruding towards objects outside. We are far beyond what we think ourselves to be. Even in our daily social life, not merely in a metaphysical sense, we are connected with social entities, and we know very well that our connection with social entities is not physical. We do not necessarily come in physical contact with persons and things, but psychologically we are in contact with many things in the world, organic as well as inorganic. Inorganic objects like wealth, money, property may influence our life to a large extent. Organic entities like

human beings can equally influence our personality. So when we take to the path of yoga seriously, we have to understand where we actually are. It is restraining our self in all its operations.

We are larger than the body can define truth or self. So in the process of self-control, we have to take into consideration the immediate concerns of the self and go inwardly, step by step, to the subtler concerns of self. This would be a part of the meaning of what the Bhagavadgita tells us, *uddhared atmanatmana*. By a higher connotation of self, its lower connotation has to be subdued. It is not one self subduing another self because ultimately we cannot have two selves. If the self is to be defined as a unit or spark of consciousness, and we have no other definition of self, and if consciousness cannot be divided or cut into bits or parts, if we cannot have two consciousnesses, perhaps we cannot have also two selves.

Then what is it that we mean by saying the self has to be subdued by the Self, raised by the Self, and so on? What is meant is, a lower meaning of the self should be raised into a higher meaning of the self. The lower connotation has to be absorbed by sublimation into the higher connotation. The study of self is study of the meaning of life. It is not study of objects or things; it is study of significances and values. We become more and more abstract in our studies as we proceed further and further. In the beginning we are in a kindergarten level. We want object lessons to learn the meaning of life. We

want concrete objects to be visible before our actual senses. But later on, as we progress in our education, we become more and more abstract in our studies, and finally only concepts are enough. We do not want objects of any kind. Even maps, diagrams are not necessary. Mere ideas and notions and concepts are enough in advanced forms of education. And what can be a greater education than instruction in Self, which is the primary reality of life?

Therefore, the connotations of Self are very important in our study of spirituality – the various meaning that we give to the notion of self. We do not rise from self to Self. We rise from a lower understanding of Self to a higher understanding of it. This is the subtlety of the process of practice.

The lowest concept of Self is the situation in which we are today at this present moment – its connections, its operations, its fields of activity, its pleasures and pains, and its objects for the time being. We cannot be fully aware as to how many objects are associated with self-consciousness in toto. But at a given moment of time we can take into consideration those factors of objectivity which are vitally connected with our conscious life. Therefore, the spiritual seeker, the *sadhaka*, has to live in the present. He should not concern himself too much with the past or the future because the past is very lengthy, beyond memory and perception. So is the future. Concern yourself with the present state of your consciousness, and make a study of it. Live from moment

to moment. That would be to live perpetually in the present. There is no harm in doing it. That is perhaps the proper way of living life. Make your life a life of the present, rather than of the past or of the future. By this way, you can make your life happy.

So taking into consideration the present situation of our consciousness, we can take into consideration the factors involved in the operation of this consciousness. The factors are the targets or the objects of consciousness in the external world. Here, in this study of the objects of sense with which our consciousness is connected, we have to be a little bit up to date in the process of what we call perception. I am not going to enter into a discussion of this process. I shall only give a hint as to what it means.

The process of perception is very illusive in its operation. We are hoodwinked by its activities. We live in a fool's paradise, as it were, because of a total ignorance of what happens in the activity of perception. We regard ourselves as beyond censure of every kind, beyond sin and evil and corruption. We take ourselves to be models of ethics and morality and goodness of conduct, and find fault only with other people in the world, on account of a total ignorance of this process of perception and conscious cognition. We are ignoramuses in this field. This is the reason why we detect errors and mistakes outside but we cannot see what is erroneous or wrong in our own selves.

The consciousness, which is the substance of the Self, does not rest within the bodily encasement. This is the primary fact of individual life. Remember, we are now making a study of the process of self-control, so all these aspects have to be understood properly. Before we actually enter into the practice, the technique has to be understood. The theory has to precede the practice.

When consciousness operates within the body, it struggles, writhes to get out of the limitations of the body because consciousness is unlimited, essentially. In its attempt at overcoming the limitations of the body it protrudes itself through the sense organs, five of them being prominent – the eyes, ears and so on, as we know very well. Consciousness, which is the Self essentially, projects itself outside through the senses and operates upon the objects outside.

We, therefore, operate upon the things of the world. How do we operate? By identifying ourselves with the objects of sense outside. These objects are not necessarily inert. They can be anything. They can be human beings. They can even be ideas or notions. We can be attached to or prejudiced about a particular notion or idea, but mostly consciousness operates upon visible things – persons, objects, etc. It goes and casts itself into the mould of objects and begins to recognise, visualise in the objects, those characteristics of limitation which made it project itself outside the body. We begin to see ourselves outside in a mirror, as it were, and in this recognition of

ourselves in other persons and things outside, we, for the time being, forget our bodily personality.

For instance, people who are extremely attached to certain persons and things are more conscious of these loved persons and things than of their own selves. Day in and day out they will be brooding over these things because the Self has transferred itself to that object. Now, the body cannot be transferred, as we know. The body is here as it is. But the essence of what we call our individual life, which is consciousness, has transferred itself to other objects. Why has it done so? What is the purpose? It does this with a pious intention, but all pious people are not necessarily intelligent. There can be foolish piety also, and ours is a foolish piety. The intention is very good, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions, as the poet tells us. Mere good intention is no good. There must be understanding behind it. We should not be foolishly good.

Now, this consciousness, which can be regarded as foolish in its operation, goes outside the limitations of the body with the intention of exceeding its limitations. That is why I said the intention is good. It cannot limit itself to the body because its essential nature is unlimitedness, so it goes out to see itself in the place where it has lost itself. It recognises itself outside the body, but in the manner in which it tries to recognise itself outside, it makes a mistake. That is its error. This is the essence of samsara. This is earthly existence. This is the seed of transmigration. This is our bondage.

Consciousness, when it moves outside the body and casts itself in the mould of persons and things outside, limits itself to those persons and things. So from one limitation, it has gone to another limitation. There are some people who go into debt, and they cannot repay the debt, so they borrow some money from some other person to pay the debt; then the other debt is hanging heavy on their head, so they borrow from a third person and pay that debt to the second man. In this way they are rid of the second man, but the third man is again worrying them so they go to the fourth man. Well, the idea is to repay the debt. It is wonderful, but they have not repaid the debt. They have only made further debt.

Likewise, we are playing a peculiar kind of trick with the objects of the world with a very good intention of exceeding the limitations of the body, but unfortunately we land in some other limitation, perhaps worse than the first one. Why is it worse than the earlier one? Because we have falsely imagined ourselves to be another person, which is impossible. That is why we have so much affection for land, property, wife, children, etc. What has happened? Why so much attachment? The reason is that it is like a devil catching some people – getting possessed by certain aberrations. Likewise, consciousness goes and possesses objects and things, introduces itself into them uninvited, and appropriates those persons and things as if they belong as an integral part of one's own self, which is a total misapprehension. Nobody can belong to us, but we appear to believe that there are many persons and

things really belonging to us. This is a greater bondage and a greater stupidity than to regard this body as the self. So we are entangled not merely in this particular body of ours but in many other bodies outside in the world with which we are connected positively or negatively – positively by love, negatively by hatred. Either way, we are connected with these objects.

So it is essential in the practice of self-control to extricate the consciousness from these unwarranted associations with the objects of sense. It is unwarranted because nobody asked us to do it. We cannot go and tell a person, “You belong to me.” This is most unwarranted. It is culpable. But this is what we are doing: “You belong to me. You are my son, you are my daughter, you are my father.” Well, okay. But how can we say this? Nothing can belong to another thing because there is a logical error in this physical association which is imperceptible to the consciousness itself.

The most difficult part of the practice of yoga is the extrication of consciousness from the objects of sense. It is very painful, like peeling one’s own skin. When we try to do this, we will think that it is better to give up this practice and be content in our home. I purposely say that it is like peeling the skin because we have identified with the object to such an extent that to free us from contact with those things is something like peeling the skin, which is taking a part of our own self.

Everyone knows how hard it is to give up affections. There are people who hang themselves, commit suicide

because of frustrated affections. They feel it is better to die than be free from these affections. Why?

It is because the self has gone and impinged itself on the object so intensely that it becomes the self; then they feel that this bodily self has no meaning at all, so if it is destroyed, there is no harm. That is why they commit suicide. The bodily self has been forgotten. It has lost its importance. The importance has been transferred to some other body, and if that body is not to be possessed or enjoyed, if that is not to come under one's control, life has no significance, so they end their life. What a pitiable state of affairs! Therefore, we should not be under the notion that it is easy to bring the consciousness back from objects. It is not easy. It is the hardest of acts of life, the most difficult of adventures. In the process of perception and cognition, this happens.

We are involved psychologically and physically in processes which Patanjali, in his Sutras, calls *kleshas* – *klishtha kleshas* and *aklishtha kleshas*. From these *kleshas* we have to extricate the consciousness. The *klesha*, or the pain, is nothing but the involvement of consciousness. That itself is the *klesha*. The involvement in an object is the worst of things conceivable. To regard yourself as something other than what you are is the worst of things that you can think of.

Therefore, the severance of attachment is the first step in the practice of self-control. Our attachments are widespread. They are not limited merely to the body or even the family or the community. They are spread far,

even throughout the world. This is why the Bhagavadgita and such scriptures tell us that the first duty of a *sadhaka* would be to live in a congenial atmosphere. You should not live in the midst of tempting objects. You should not deliberately place yourself in a predicament which is hard, and then try to get out of it. The first step would be to live in a congenial atmosphere which will not tempt you to the objects of sense. This is only a negative aspect of the practice, but the positive side of it is that you live in the midst of congenial persons in a suitable atmosphere which is spiritually advantageous and beneficial.

You live in an atmosphere of seeking souls, spiritually inclined persons, saints and sages, in an atmosphere of education, understanding and knowledge, and not in a distracting atmosphere of city life or an atmosphere which could be even much worse.

In a verse of the Bhagavadgita, the next step is mentioned. *Viviktasevi* is also to be *laghvasi* (Gita 18.52). It is not enough if you live merely in a solitary, sequestered atmosphere. You may live in holy Badrinath, but you may be a glutton eating *puris* and *malpula*, *kheer*, and living a life of abandon even in a holy atmosphere. You can be inside the holy of holies in a temple and yet be indulgent to your senses. While the first step in self-control is life in a congenial outward atmosphere, the next step is to diminish the diet of the senses – not merely the diet of the tongue, but of all the senses, because it is through the avenues of the senses that

consciousness tethers itself to objects. If one sense is controlled, the other sense can become doubly active. You know very well by actual practice if one sense is controlled, there is a compensation made by the other senses by becoming more active, more vehement in their operation.

Hence, you should study the activities of the senses by the daily maintenance of a spiritual diary, as it was insisted upon by Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. You must keep a check on your activities, like a CID of your own self. Which particular sense has been active today – eyes, ears, tongue, or any other organ? Why has it become more active this particular day? Have you been very talkative today, or has something else happened that was deleterious to your spiritual practice? These and other methods are to be adopted in restraining the self by means of personal check voluntarily imposed upon oneself. It is not a compulsory check introduced into your life by others by a mandate, but it is a voluntary check that is imposed on yourself for your own progress.

Maintain a private diary of yourself. Make a list of the senses first. How many senses have you got? Do not be under the impression that you have got only one or two senses. There are many senses. First of all, make a list: one, two, three, four, five, ten senses. You have got ten senses. Of them, five are more powerful because they are *jnanindriyas*, and they set to action the *karmendriyas*. Make a list of the sense organs, and every day keep a

watch on every one of the senses. What has happened through the perception of my eyes today, ears, and so on?

And the intake of diet of the senses should be *sattvika: āhāra-śuddhau sattva-śuddhiḥ* (Chand. 7.26.2), says the Chhandogya Upanishad. Now, *ahara suddhi* does not mean only drinking cow's milk. That is not the meaning of *ahara suddhi*. It means diet of every sense organ. You may be a very angry, mischievous person taking only cow's milk daily. You may be the worst anti-social element hated by all people, though you may be taking only almonds and cow's milk. This is not impossible because you have let go the other organs of senses without control.

So let us not be self-deceptive in our practices. It is not so easy to catch the Self or God. You need not be under any misapprehension about it. All the senses have to receive *sattvika ahara*. That which is conducive to the blossoming of the spiritual consciousness within is alone to be taken. You must see only pure things, hear pure things, taste pure things, touch pure things, smell pure things. Never see impure things, never hear impure things, and so on, not merely concerning yourself with the physical diet that goes through the gullet. You have to be all-round in your subjugation of senses, as in the operation of an army or control of the enemy who attacks you. You have to be cautious from all sides, as the enemy can attack from any direction. From any of the ten directions you can be attacked. So is self-control. You can be duped even without your knowing what is actually

happening to you or where you are standing. You may be thoroughly under a misapprehension and self-deception. You may be fools of the first water thinking that you are a master in yoga.

Hence, it is better to go slowly rather than jump to the sky and break your legs. Take each step with great caution, but let it be a fixed step which you may not retrace. Do not take a hundred steps at a time and then run back in fear. Take only one step at a time, but let it be a firm step which you may not have to retrace. Be very cautious at every step as to what is happening to you, and be satisfied, be contented to reach this state of attainment gradually. Do not move blindfolded.

Thus, the control of the senses has to be done by a gradual process of elimination of undesirable factors associated with the senses, in the beginning by living in a holy atmosphere, and then by intake of *sattvika ahara* of the senses, side by side reducing the magnitude or quantity of intake also.

There was a Brahmin who practised the taking in of less diet as days went by. He wanted to reduce his diet every day, but how to do it, because the stomach and the tongue will revolt. If you take today four chapattis, and tomorrow you take only three, there will be no satisfaction. You know very well that you have reduced one chapatti, so there will be a dissatisfaction from within. So this Brahmin had a peculiar technique, which I have observed myself. In the olden days you know the rice measure was made of a wooden shave, as they used

to call it – not metal, but made of wood, or sometimes a bamboo pole would also be used as a shave, or a measure. What he used to do was, he had a small measure, a *pau*, as they called it, a measure of wood. He would say, “I will take only one *pau* of rice. I will not reduce the quantity.” So the mind is satisfied. Every day you take one *pau* of rice. You should not tell it that you are giving less rice. Then it will not be satisfied. It will argue with you. So what he used to do was, he would put the *pau* upside down and rub it on a stone a little bit every day before measuring one full *pau* of rice. Every day he takes one full *pau*, not less, but the *pau* is reduced a little bit by rubbing on a stone. It is psychological satisfaction. Of course, the quantity was reduced very much because he rubbed it very hard, but psychologically the mind was told, “You take one *pau* of rice, my dear friend,” and he went on reducing it, reducing it, until it became a half *pau*. Yet, the mind was told it is one *pau* because it is the same measure though he was rubbing it and reducing its content. Well, this is a humorous analogy.

Various methods have to be adopted in controlling the self. Sometimes we have to talk to it pleasantly, as we talk to our only child. Sometimes we have to threaten it. Sometimes we have to be a hard taskmaster with it, but not unwisely. We may be a hard taskmaster like a teacher or a physician. Doctors are hard taskmasters. Nor is a professor or a school teacher a very lenient person. But this strictness is very essential for self-education, and it is what paves the way for our progress.

So in this way, educatively we may be hard upon ourselves, but not foolishly by way of mere physical mortification. Consciousness cannot be trained by any application of physical methods of hardship, or the observance of mere social etiquette, and so on. Consciousness eludes the grasp at every step and every level of practice. It will not yield to the threats of society, and it will not be amenable to the arguments of our understanding or intellect. It has its own arguments. The heart has a reason which reason does not know.

So we have to know the nature of consciousness and the way in which it works. Its habits and prejudices are all to be understood carefully before we tackle it. Unfortunately, we are not somebody outside the consciousness. It is Self-study, which is the highest meaning of *svadhyaya*. *Sva-adhyaya* is study of one's own self, which begins with study of scriptures, of course, concerning the nature of the Self. So study of the Self is study of consciousness; study of consciousness is study of Self for the sake of control of self, for the sake of restraining of consciousness from its external operation in the field of objects of sense.

Now, in all these stages of practice, we should never miss the ideal before us. We may sometimes, by an error, mistake the means for the end. The means and the end are a little different. We are studying consciousness and controlling it or, to be more precise, it is consciousness trying to restrain itself voluntarily by an imposition of

tapas of its own accord. This is real *tapas*. The restraint of consciousness is *tapas*, austerity. This is self-control.

When we are sufficiently advanced in self-control, we have also sufficiently expanded the purview or the activity of our real Self. ‘Real Self’ is to be underlined, not the false self. The expansion of the real Self is different from the expansion of the false self. The false self is what they usually call in Vedantic scriptures the *gaunatman*, or the secondary self. The self can expand itself in the whole world in the form of social attachments, to which I made reference just now. By affections and hatreds, the self can be falsely expanded into the whole world, but that is not the real Self. The real Self cannot be expanded externally. The Self can never become an object. So whenever you love an object or hate an object, you are in a false world. The real Self is pure subjectivity. *Yenedam sarvaṃ vijānāti, taṃ kena vijānīyāt* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.14): “How can you look at that which is the looker-on?” says Sage Yajnavalkya in the Upanishad.

Therefore, the parallel advancement along the line of the expansion of the true Self, simultaneously with self-restraint, restraint of the lower self, should not be mistaken for the false expansion of consciousness amidst the objects of sense. We have to be very careful here. Satan may come and mislead us. “Here you are, vast as the ocean of Self. You have achieved perfection, O Buddha, O Christ,” said Satan. Nothing of the kind. This is not perfection.

The Self is not an object, and it cannot be recognised through an object, so even if we are world famous, we are not necessarily Self-realised because world fame is nothing but externality of consciousness. The Self is pure subjectivity, universalised. This is very difficult to conceive by the mind. It eludes the grasp of the understanding. So Self-realisation is not world recognition, universal fame, which are far, far removed from true Realisation. The criterion that we have to apply to the Realisation of the Self is indivisibility, perfection and fullness, wherein there is no chance of bereavement, loss of property, etc. We never come to grief of any kind, even in a small measure or a small percentage, after Self-realisation.

Thus, self-restraint is simultaneously Self-recognition. *Atma-nigraha* is, at the same time, *atma-sakshatkara*. While it is *atma-nigraha* in the sense of the lower self, it is *atma-sakshatkara* in the sense of the higher Self. When we are not poor, we are at the same time rich. We need not first become free from poverty and then try for richness. Freedom from poverty is richness. When we know that we are not poor, we know that we are rich. Similarly, self-restraint is Self-recognition, Self-realisation. The lower self is restrained and, at the same time, simultaneously, we achieve mastery over the higher self. The more is the advance made in the control of the self, which has externalised itself, the more also is the simultaneous advance that we make in the realisation of the universal Self.

This is the secret of spiritual practice. Glorious is this practice, most wonderful is the achievement, most hard is the technique, painful is the process. But it is worth attempting. It is good that we pay this price for the sake of that everlasting perfection, *satchitananda*, which is the goal of our life.

Discourse 3

SELF-CONTROL IS THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

As we saw last time, the very structure of life calls for self-control on the part of ourselves. The need for self-control arises on account of a tendency of the personality and of things in general. The usual makeup of the human system is such that it has a tendency to express itself, rather than retain itself in any given condition. The growth of the body is also attributable to this tendency within us. It is not merely the body that grows. Everything within us and everything of which we are constituted changes, grows, and tends to realise a condition beyond itself. The personality of the human being is a very complex structure, and its expressional habit is the reason why we should exercise self-control. If this control over the self is not to be exercised, we would be giving a long rope to this habit which compels us to go beyond ourselves, to cross limits of decency and break the boundaries of etiquette.

Now, to put the question concerning self-restraint precisely, what happens to us when we restrain ourselves, and what happens to us when we do not have any restraint over ourselves? What happens when we lose control over ourselves is that there is a gradual tendency to disintegration of what we call our own selves. The tendency to disintegrate is very disadvantageous to the

stability of our individuality and our personality. All that tends to disintegrate is also a tendency to break the stability of the personality. We get distracted, and feel as if we are not ourselves. We seem to be different things at different moments of time, not having any continuity of thought, emotion or feeling due to the fact that our personality gets distracted.

Self-control is the opposite of self-distraction. The process of distraction is that peculiar activity of the personality on account of which consciousness gets identified with bits of process. Our personality is a process, and cannot be identified with a stable being. What we call the personality is only a description of our individuality. It is a definition of what we bodily are. It is a contour painted over the substantiality of our individual being. When this personality, this individuality of ours – which is different from a stable existence or being, but a complexity of processes – attracts the attention of consciousness, there is a difficulty created for us.

Now, this 'us', the term used, is a difficult thing to understand. What do we mean by staying 'I', 'we' or 'us'? It is, again, a complexity of consciousness, as far as practical life is concerned. We do not mean pure consciousness or pure bodily substance. The body as such has no life. It is inert, like a corpse, when divested of intelligence. Nor do we identify ourselves with mere consciousness when we refer to ourselves in the social life of the world. So this practical 'we', the utilitarian 'I', is a

complex structure, a joint activity, a network or a coming together in a very strange manner of consciousness and matter.

Matter is not a substance in the sense of a solid something. It is a powerful conglomeration of forces, and it never rests in a given condition for more than a single moment. This transitional character of material substance throughout the world is also the character of the material out of which our body is made. As the world is, so the body of the human being is. Everything changes and, therefore, the bodily substance also changes. With this change, consciousness gets identified. So there is a consciousness of change, or a changing consciousness, to put it more correctly. We begin to have a notion that we are changeful beings subject to distinction, difference and growth, etc., really, in the bottom of our personality, and we never for a moment think that what changes is different from consciousness, and what causes the idea or the notion of change is consciousness.

Our conviction that we are subject to change, that we are processes, transitional links in a chain of development, this notion in our mind is due to the character of intelligence or consciousness implanted in us. But for that, there would be no awareness of anything whatsoever. That is one side of the matter. But that there is change, that there is transition or a complexity of structure, is a notion arisen on account of the juxtaposition of material characters with consciousness which is not subject to transition or change of any kind.

This peculiar complex is human nature. It is not pure consciousness; it is not pure matter. Or, to put it in the language of the Kathopanishad, *ātmendriya-mano-yuktam bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ* (Katha 1.3.4): The wise regard the human being as a complex of Atman, the senses and the mind. Three factors brought together into a focus of activity constitute the human personality, or human nature.

Now, these three factors mentioned in the Kathopanishad – the Atman, the mind and the senses – represent the principle of consciousness, the principle of change or transition, and the principle of objectivity and activity. The character of Atman, the character of Purusha, the character of what is really at the basis of our personality is consciousness. The character of what we call thought or mind is shifting itself from one centre to another, never resting in one condition; it is activity of a subtle nature. But when this activity becomes gross and gets tied to objects outside, it goes by the name of the senses. The senses are, really speaking, the mind working. The senses are not completely different from the structure or substance of the mind.

To give an idea as to what the senses are in relation to the mind, we can give a small example, a comparison or an analogy. Just imagine there is a pot. It may be a vessel made of earth or some metal, whatever it is. There is a powerful lamp burning inside the pot. The pot has five holes. These holes have five different lenses: one convex, one concave, one coloured, one not coloured, one of this

nature, one of that nature. Five different structural patterns of lens are placed at the entrance of the five apertures in the vessel, or we may say, five different patterns of prism placed at the five holes of the pot. The powerful lamp that is placed inside the pot sheds its rays, or its lustre, and passes through the five lenses outside, and impinges on whatever is near the objects that are outside. But the light will be distorted when it passes through the five different patterns of lens. You know very well how light rays get deflected into various patterns when they pass through a prism, a peculiar structure of lens or glass. Various patterns of lens can deflect light rays in various manners, but these deflected forms of the light rays are attributable to the structure of the lenses rather than to the nature of the light itself. Nevertheless, it is the light that is seen, and not the lenses. So you know how the lenses play a very important role in colouring or giving an idea of the external object which they illumine through the light rays passing through them, and you also know what role light itself plays in illumining the object.

Such is the internal relationship that seems to be there among the three principles: the Atman, the mind, and the senses. The Atman is transcendent consciousness, with which we are practically not concerned in our day-to-day life because that peculiar 'we', the personality, is the mental structure, and not the Atman that we metaphysically speak of. The mind, projecting itself through the apertures of the senses, gives

a false picture of objects on account of the structure of the senses, which vary from one another.

With all these peculiarities of structure in the mind and the senses, there is one common feature in the total personality, which is the tendency to express and never be stable or rest in itself. This peculiar feature of our nature, which will not allow us to rest in ourselves but makes us restless and compels us to think different thoughts at different moments of time, is what we call the *rajasic* character of personality. The material structure of the cosmos which philosophy calls as *prakriti* is constituted of three strands, as they say, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is the *rajasic* character of *prakriti* that is responsible for the expressional habit of the personality and the restlessness that we experience in our daily life. We sit, and when we are tired of sitting too much, we want to stand. We cannot stand too long because we get tired of standing and then want to sit. We cannot go, we cannot sit, we cannot stand, we cannot think, we cannot do anything continuously on account of the *rajas* of *prakriti* that introduces itself in every little activity of our life.

Do you know that you cannot continuously be doing anything in this world? Neither can you be looking at something forever, nor can you be hearing something forever, nor can any particular sense activity go on continuously, because continuity is a character of *sattva*, discontinuity is a character of *rajas*, and whenever there is discontinuity of any kind of effort, we may take it for

granted that *rajas* is working rather than *sattva*. *Sattva* is stability, and the opposite of it is *rajas*; and when *rajas* takes possession of our personality, we lose control over ourselves. Control is the work of *sattva*. Absence of control is the work of *rajas*.

So the one peculiar, invisible power in us which makes us lose control over ourselves and makes us restless is *rajas*. If we cannot have control over our own self, what control can we exercise over anything else in the world? It is absolutely impossible because the root of any effort is our personality, and the greatest effort that we can exercise is to control, to regulate, to discipline or to restrain ourselves. On the basis of the exercise that we have over our own nature, we can extend that exercise over the external nature. It may be the nature of other persons and things or of the world as a whole in general. But when that exercise is lacking in our own selves, it cannot be exercised over other persons or things in the world.

There is no chance of control of any kind in respect of the external world or persons when self-control is lacking. "Why?" is the question. The reason is that self-control is the essential nature of consciousness. The absence of it is contrary to its nature. Stability is the nature of consciousness. Distraction of any kind is not the nature of consciousness. Consciousness is not distracted. It appears to be distracted on account of its association with distracted *prakriti*, which is preponderating in *rajas* for the time being.

Consciousness has befriended itself with that which cannot rest in itself at any time. *Prakriti* is compared to a moving wheel, a rotating something which never rests in itself, like the wheel of a car. The spokes of the wheel may said to be the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – of *prakriti*. Just imagine that there is a wheel of a car with three spokes, and the car is run with great speed. The spokes also move in such rapidity that we may not be even able to see their motion.

In physics there is something called Newton's disc. It is a round plate of tin or some metal, painted with seven different colours, and rotated with tremendous rapidity by electric power. The seven colours will not appear at all before the eyes, and only one colour is seen. The *vidjor* will vanish, and we will have only a white colour visible before our eyes on account of the rapidity of the motion of the disc.

Something like that happens when the three *gunas* of *prakriti* move rapidly. When a car moves very fast, the spokes of the wheels cannot be seen. It will look that they are not moving at all. They will appear to be static. But they are not static, as we know very well. So quickly they move, the spoke that is above comes down and that which is down goes up. But all this happens with such velocity that our eyes cannot catch the speed of the movement. So there is an illusion of stability or staticness of the wheels.

When the *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – move rapidly, more rapidly than the eyes can catch,

there is an illusion of stability of objects. Things look permanent in the world on account of this rapidity of the motion of *prakriti*, the *gunas*, while they are tremendously moving, vehemently changing their position from moment to moment. Extreme motion looks like no motion. Tremendous activity looks like no activity. You can visualise only feeble activity, lesser motion, and not tremendous speed or velocity in action. The movement of the *gunas* of *prakriti* is so rapid that the structure of the sense organs is not fitted to catch the speed of their motion. So before the senses, an illusion of stability of objects is created; the mind, which only plays second fiddle to the senses, okays whatever is told by the senses, and the mind also believes that the objects of the world are stable, but they are not. They are in motion. Nothing in the world is permanent, and nothing rests in itself; everything moves, and everything is in a state of motion.

Consciousness is tethered on to this motion, or threefold activity of *prakriti*, in the form of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and a peculiar illusion of consciousness is created. Consciousness itself begins to feel that it is in motion on account of its togetherness with the motion of the *gunas* of *prakriti*. Then it is that we become restless. We remark that we are tired, hungry, thirsty, and so on. All these remarks that we make about ourselves are due to this association of the stable consciousness with the unstable processes of *prakriti*. That which moves is not consciousness, and that which moves is not *prakriti*. That

which moves – action and movement and change – is consciousness, but that which moves and changes and acts is *prakriti*. There is a juxtaposition, a movement, a blending, and a mutual reflection of these two principles. Consciousness becomes restless. We are totally unhappy in our lives, miserable in our activities in daily life. Sometimes it looks that it is better that we do not live in this world because of this inability of our consciousness to distinguish its primeval nature of stability, permanency, immortality, from the transient character of the moving *gunas* of *prakriti*.

Now, coming to the point of self-control, it is the character of consciousness, as I said. Consciousness is stable, and if we would be stable in our nature, we would be true to the consciousness which we really are. If we are unstable in our conduct, we would be untrue to our real nature because any kind of distraction is contrary to and foreign to our essential nature. Our essential nature is *purushattva*, pure *chaitanya*, luminosity, self-awareness. More than that cannot be said about this nature. This self-awareness is of that nature which can be explained only by itself, and it cannot be defined by attributes that do not belong to itself. We cannot give a definition of consciousness in the way we define objects of the world. We cannot call it long and short, thin and stout, white and black, this and that, and so on, because all these definitions are due to the attributes that we transfer from the world of objects of sense.

No definition of consciousness is possible. It is what it is. There is only one thing which cannot be defined: that is consciousness. There is one thing which cannot be seen: it is consciousness. And there is only one thing which you really are: it is consciousness. Its principle character is stability, and awareness of itself. Loss of self-awareness is contrary to the nature of consciousness. To be aware of something other than what it is would be in opposition to the centrality of consciousness.

Now, what happens to us? We are always aware of what is not ourselves. Our whole day is spent in consciousness of objects, in the otherness of things. This is the cause of our restlessness. This is also the cause of why we fall asleep when the day ends. How long can we be other than what we are? We cannot be untrue for a long time. For some time we can get on with untruth, but not for our whole life. Truth will triumph, as they say. *Satyameva jayate.*

Truth is Self-consciousness, non-objectivity, and Self-awareness. But the whole of our day is spent in characters, natures, processes and activities which are opposed to this true nature of ours. The whole of the day is spent in the consciousness of other persons, other things, the world outside, activities concerned with space, time and causation, and this causes fatigue to consciousness. We get exhausted by untrue activity, processes which cannot be regarded as essential to consciousness or to our nature.

This is the reason why we fall back upon ourselves in deep sleep. In deep sleep, what happens is that we go back to ourselves by compulsion – not deliberately, of course. No one knows what happens to us. By a compulsion of the character of our nature, we are brought back to ourselves. And inasmuch as we are obstinately persistent in maintaining a consciousness of objects and refuse to go back to ourselves, we become unconscious when we go back to ourselves. So in sleep we are unconscious. It is a compulsory retirement of consciousness brought about by the necessity of nature, to which we are objecting daily; therefore, we are brought back as police handcuff a person and take him to prison, while he refuses to go there. This is what happens to consciousness when it goes to sleep. If we voluntarily go there, that would be liberation of the spirit, but we are brought there by force. We do not want to go there; therefore, what we do is, “You take me there? I will close my eyes. All right, you take me there. I will not see anything.” So we close our eyes when we go back to ourselves, and we see nothing. We go as fools, and we come back as fools, and once again the same daily activity of otherness of consciousness starts – exhausting, tiring, and chilling. The whole day and our whole life is spent in this manner.

This is to give an idea of the psychological background of the restlessness of human nature and the unhappiness that follows in its wake. It is so because our minimum of reality, the bottommost existence, the

ultimate quintessence of reality of what we are, is consciousness, and it is irreconcilable with processes of any kind. It cannot be juxtaposed with transient movements of the *gunas* of *prakriti*; therefore, we have a feeling of tiresomeness and dissatisfaction with the surface view of things. Everyone is dissatisfied with life as a whole, irrespective of caste, colour, age or birth, due to this common malady of human nature which is entanglement of consciousness in processes which are irreconcilable with it. There is a war taking place in our own personality, a perpetual Mahabharata, as it were, due to which we are born with restlessness, live in restlessness, and die in restlessness.

But the freedom that we are seeking in life, the power that we want to exercise, the happiness that we are seeking in our activities and in our professions, etc., is an indication that perhaps we can be really independent of these compulsive processes. We need not be slaves of the *gunas* of *prakriti*. It is not necessary that we should be driven like donkeys. We have freedom in the essentiality of our nature, which we seem to have lost on account of bad company, company with the *gunas* of *prakriti*, which tell us something while the truth is something else.

Self-control is the masterstroke, the panacea, the remedy par excellence for rectifying this illness of our nature, and self-control is the remedy because it is the essential nature of consciousness. It is completely controlled in itself because it cannot be anything other than itself. Lack of self-control is a transference of the

properties of consciousness to objects of sense. When we transfer characters of our consciousness to other objects, then we lose self-control. We become weak. Why do we become weak? Why is an incontinent person, or a person without self-control, weak? The reason is that the strength of consciousness has been divided among the objects of sense. It is like the strength of an undivided family. An undivided family has a strength of its own, but if the family is divided, with each brother having his own house, they are all weak. Anybody can exploit them and defeat them, or even attack them. But an undivided family has a strength which cannot easily be beaten. They are one power, one force.

Consciousness a single, unitary power. Nothing can be equal in power and force. But when it apparently gets divided, by diversification, by division of its content through the objects of sense, then it becomes weak. Incontinence is nothing but the transference of consciousness to objects, and mistaking the objects for consciousness. As I mentioned last time, love and hatred, *raga* and *dvesha*, primarily speaking, are indications of lack of self-control. When there is affection for a particular setup of circumstances, naturally we have to exclude from the purview of consciousness features and characters which are external. This activity weakens the personality. Our strength is nothing but the strength of consciousness. It is not bodily strength that we call strength. *Dig balam kshatriya balam brahma tejo balam balam* (Valmiki Ramayana 1.56.23), said Vishvamitra

when he was defeated by Vasishtha's *brahma-tejas*. The meaning of what Vishvamitra said was the power of consciousness is much more than the power of arms, the power of material resources, the strength of the body or any other power of the world.

Every power that is material can be put down by the power of consciousness. Another example is the Mahabharata. The choosing of a large army by Duryodhana and the choosing of one Krishna by Arjuna is another epic example of the superiority of consciousness over the material content of the world. A large army was nothing before one Krishna because it was consciousness over matter.

So is the philosophical outcome of our analysis of human nature. The more we are true to the nature of consciousness, the stronger we are in our lives; and the farther we are from the centre which is consciousness, the weaker we are in our personality and in our activities. When we are removed further from our centre, which is consciousness, we lack memory power and cannot concentrate on anything. We get irritated very quickly. We frown and pounce on people. All these are effects of weakness of nature consequent upon distraction of consciousness, which again is the outcome of the transference of the properties of consciousness to the objects of sense.

Self-control is again the remedy because self-control is the activity of consciousness, not the activity of the senses or of the limbs of the body. Self-control is not a

physical activity; it is a conscious activity, an activity of consciousness, by which it inwardly frees itself step by step from the clutches of objectivity. The more we succeed in extricating consciousness from its contact with the objects of sense, the nearer we come into the truth of our personality, our being, and daily we grow in strength, in power, in radiance, in happiness, and so forth. This is what is called *brahmavarchas* or *brahma-tejas* in scriptural parlance. A *brahmacharin*, one who is continent, one who practises self-control, glows with a lustre in his face. A peculiar radiance emanates from him; an energy is contained in his personality. What is this? It is nothing but the coming back of consciousness to itself.

When consciousness returns to itself by the practice of self-control, it grows more and more powerful day by day, and when it is completed, when the practice is maximum, when the self-control is exhaustive and all-comprehensive, we become invincible throughout nature. An example is such a sage as Vasishtha. The whole power of the world could not shake his hair though he had no arms, guns, bombs, etc., with him. He had only himself, nothing else. His thought was such that the world could not stand against it. The power came from consciousness which was self-controlled, which Vishvamitra was lacking. He had *raja-dvesha*. He was subject to anger and fits of irritation, which was not a character of self-control, the embodiment of which was Vasishtha.

Sadhana is, primarily speaking, self-control. Where self-control lacks, there is no sadhana. We should not make the mistake of imagining that sadhana is an activity, a kind of ritual that you are performing from morning to night. It is not anything that you do in society that is called sadhana. It is not anything that you do visibly, not anything that you do bodily. It is your attitude, your feeling, and the satisfaction that you seem to be having in an increasing manner day by day that should be the touchstone of self-control.

There have been countless *sadhakas*. Wherever you go you will find seekers of truth, people who search after God, but you will rarely find people who are satisfied with what they have done. The satisfaction does not come. Whatever be the number of years that you have spent in your sadhana, japa, meditation, concentration, meditation, you are not a satisfied being. You are at unrest with yourself, and you sometimes feel so much restless in yourself that you are likely to transfer it upon others and criticise, condemn, and find fault with others. This is a malady, again. This is an illness, a psychopathic condition, where you criticise others while you have to criticise yourself. This is a danger which you have to steer clear from very, very carefully because in the process of sadhana, many psychological changes take place. We get obsessed many times, get prejudiced in many ways, and we become adamant and obstinate in our outlook, mistaking this attitude for truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity of purpose. This is the reason why we remain

dissatisfied beings, notwithstanding our sadhana and the effort that we have been putting forth for years. Self-control is lacking. This is to give a simple answer to the large question of life.

And even where self-control is attempted, it is attempted in a wrong manner. It is made a kind of ostentatious practice. You tie a *jetta* or wear a single strip of cloth, and mortify yourself rather than restrain yourself. Make a distinction between self-restraint and self-mortification. Mortification is torture. Self-torture is not self-restraint. Self-restraint is health; self-torture is ill-health. You are not supposed to punish yourself, but you are supposed to exercise control over yourself.

Government is nothing but a principle of control, but it is not a principle of punishment. It is not meant to inflict pain on people. The very purpose of its existence is to exercise a principle of health over the attitudes of people. That is control. Control is health. It is not against nature or contrary to law. So we should carefully draw a distinction between suffering and self-control. When we are asked to control ourselves, we are afraid. "Oh, what a trouble, what a pain! What an inflicting of suffering on our personalities by this Guru who tells us to control ourselves." To control yourself is not to punish yourself but to become more healthy in yourself and to grow in your strength – not only in strength and power, but also in satisfaction and happiness. The nearer you approach to your own self, the happier you become; and the farther you go from yourself, the more unhappy you are. Thus, a

lack of self-control is unhappiness, and self-control is happiness.

To exercise self-control is to exercise that specific feature of consciousness as the guiding principle in your day-to-day life. This is a very difficult practice. Sadhana is a very difficult practice. “You may swallow fire, you may drink the ocean, but you cannot do sadhana,” says the Yoga Vasishtha, says Gaudapada Acharya and others. Do you know how difficult it is? You may drink the ocean and swallow fire itself, but you cannot control the mind. And what is self-control but that? Why can you not control the mind? Why is it that you cannot be self-restrained? The reason is, you have already lost control over yourself and you have sold yourself to somebody else. You no more exist in yourself. You are a bound slave of objects. A slave has no right over himself. He cannot assert his independence, because he has been sold. We have been sold to the objects. We belong to others. We have nothing in ourselves. We are empty, hollow things. This is why we find it so hard to exercise control over ourselves.

For the slave to realise that he is really independent is difficult. Perhaps he has been born as a slave; from childhood he has been owned by somebody. He has already been hypnotised into the belief that he belongs to somebody else. He can never for a moment think that he has an independence of his own. So is consciousness; it has been a slave of the objects of sense all the while, not

merely in this life, but through ages, through aeons of life that we have passed through.

So it is that we are born weak. When we are born, we are born with certain hereditary weaknesses. We have no strength. We begin to cry from childhood itself, as if we are poor. Well, we may be poor in the social sense of the term, but are we also poor in our mind, in our spirits, in our thoughts, in our feelings, in our attitudes, in our understanding? We are poor even in our will, which is real poverty. Real poverty is poverty of understanding, poverty of will, poverty of the right attitude to things. And when the attitude is changed, rectified, brought to the proper order and made to work in a proper perspective, strength automatically comes. Things get drawn to the personality. You will even become economically rich, what to speak of spiritually. Things will be drawn to you automatically without your wanting them, without your asking for them, because of the magnetic personality that you have built upon yourself due to self-control. Like a magnet attracting things, you will begin to attract things. You will not be poor. Do not be afraid of that. You will be rich; the world will serve you, provided – a great provision indeed – that you are honest in the pursuit of truth, because truth triumphs.

Towards this end, hard effort is to be put forth, and we have to understand the very basis and purpose of self-control. First of all, it is not mortification. It has very little to do with body and human society. It has to do with consciousness only. It is a tuning of consciousness,

and not a twisting of the body or a changing of the attitude of human society. It has nothing to do with externality. It is purely an internal process of consciousness, and therefore, it has always remained a very secret and inscrutable process.

We are likely to miss the point constantly in our life, every day, in this practice of self-control. Every day we will miss the point of concentration. We will not know what we have been doing and where we actually stand. It is, therefore, essential that we dedicate our life for this purpose and do not take it merely as a hobby. Self-control is not to be a mere hobby or a part of the activity of our life – at least, not the life of full-time seekers or *sadhakas*.

Self-deception is the greatest form of deception. It is worse than deceiving others because nothing can be worse than that. It is impossible to conceive anything worse than the situation where you have been duped by your own self. How can you rectify yourself?

So, many methods have to be employed in self-control. One method will not work. The world is very powerful, too powerful for us. To deal with it we have to handle various weapons inwardly, cautiously. These methods are actually the practical techniques of sadhana.

Today I have taken time merely to explain the background of self-control, the necessity for it, the difficulty in practising it, and the wonderful results that follow out of it. Next time I shall try to give an outline of the practices or techniques by which we can exercise

control over ourselves and not be duped by ourselves. We must always be careful to see that our intelligence is not deluded, that our consciousness is not side-tracked, that it is not caught up by forces that are undivine. For this, a series of techniques have to be adopted, stage by stage of course, not suddenly; and of primary importance in all this effort is a self-dedication to this practice wholeheartedly. I am always reminded of the famous saying of Patanjali Maharshi in his sutra: If you want to establish yourself in this supremacy of power of consciousness, which is self-control, you have to wholly dedicate your life for it, and practise self-control for a protracted period without intermission of practice; daily it should be exercised, with great affection and love for it, as if it is the only child that is born to you. Your whole heart has to be in it. You have no other thought except of it. Day in and day out you are brooding over it, how to get at it, how to master it, how to exercise self-control, how to come back to your true nature, how to seek truth as it is.

With this short introductory remark I would like you to contemplate on these thoughts and see where you actually stand.

Discourse 4

THE ESSENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF MORALITY IN SADHANA

Yesterday we had an occasion to have a little insight into the nature of what goes by the name of self-control, and it remains for us to know what methods we could employ in effecting this control over ourselves for the reason mentioned. It gives us a possession of ourselves, with which no other wealth or riches could be compared, and instils in us pristine power, health, and happiness.

To effect self-control, various sadhanas have to be practised, and these are the stages of yoga. It is usually the belief that the practice of yoga is a scientific technique, and people have the habit of adopting a purely scientific attitude to this process of investigation, forgetting the fact that yoga is not merely science, but also morality. In working through a telescope or an observatory or a microscope, morality is not necessary. Not so is the case here. The reason is that we are dealing with human nature, and not with an instrument or something purely external to us or to our nature.

That which foils all our attempts at a vital success in our life is a failure on our part to exercise a control over the ethical nature or the moral behaviour. This is generally taken to mean a kind of social pattern or etiquette. We have been told that to do good or to be good would be to conduct ourselves in certain ways in

respect of human society and the public in general. We have, therefore, unwittingly identified ourselves with social patterns, and also identified morality with a social need.

Suffice it to say that morality is of two kinds. It is external as well as internal. We are familiar only with the external pattern of morality. We do not know that there is another, more interior part of it, which is the vital morality. That we do good on account of fear of social restrictions is one thing, but there is also a command from within. It is called the categorical imperative, a 'must' or an 'ought' which comes from within ourselves as a mandate, not from any outward authority but from the nature of our own being. We do certain things or conduct ourselves in a certain manner not because we are compelled from outside but are impelled from within. This is the inner morality of yoga as different from the outer morality of society.

The principles of conduct that we lay down for our behaviour in society are good enough and very necessary indeed, but this is not yoga morality. We may be a very good person in society but a very bad person inside ourselves, and this will spoil all our attempts in internally conducting ourselves towards Truth-realisation. Our external conduct in respect of human relationship is not going to be an aid in the practice of yoga. What we call etiquette in human society is limited to those needs of our personality in respect of society, but that has nothing to do with our more internal needs concerning the spirit.

The unethical conduct which people often manifest in external life is only a symbol or an insignia of what they are made of inwardly. It is impossible to cover or hide what is hidden in our own personality for a long time. Our nature will manifest itself in spite of ourselves. While social laws and restrictions are framed to regulate human conduct in external life, it goes without saying that this external behaviour of the human being is a necessary expression of the internal structure of the moral nature.

We have what we may call a moral nature within us. It is not moral activity. It is different from the activity that we manifest outside. There is a characteristic within us – rather, as we say, character, as different from conduct. Sometimes we ask for a character certificate. They say the character and conduct of the person is good, which means while we use two terms, ‘character’ and ‘conduct’, we also imply that the two are slightly distinct in their connotation. While conduct is external behaviour, character is internal nature. The internal nature determines external behaviour. So while the conduct may be good and commendable, the character also has to be good because that is internal nature, and if it is contrary to the outward behaviour, it will naturally manifest itself one day and put an end to the present outward behaviour. Therefore, we have to be cautious to investigate into our inner nature because it is this nature that goes to pave the way to higher practice in yoga.

Any kind of unethical behaviour is an indication of an unethical nature inside us. And what is unethical? It is also unspiritual. That which is not moral is also not spiritual because the moral nature is a faint expression again, though inwardly, of the spiritual nature within us. We are after the spirit, we are in search of truth, and the practice of self-control is only a form of the return of the spirit to itself.

Such being the case, spiritual exercise is, at the same time, a moral exercise. We should not be moral only because the world would expect morality of us. That would again be outward morality, and the inner nature need not be in conformity with it. What we would do when we are absolutely alone, even when nobody sees us, would be a sort of indication of our inner nature. It is not that we always behave properly because there is the fear of social censure, social restriction, social excommunication, and many other such things which are very inconvenient to physical existence in the world. On account of such limitations imposed on our very physical being in life by the existence of other persons external to us, we manufacture a kind of ethics and morality for our practical life. But this is manufactured morality and not a genuine or natural morality of ours. What is natural to us would be there even if people are not to expect anything of us. We need not be told with a raised rod in hand that such and such a thing is the principle to be followed or the law to guide our life.

Spiritual morality, or yoga morality, is an inner command of ourselves, and we are concerned only with this morality. We are not concerned with social morality because what the society thinks of us or what we would expect society to think of us is a little different from what we would appear in front of the cosmic forces. The cosmic forces have eyes to see, just as people have eyes to see us. Now, we may hide our nature from the observation of the eyes of people in the world, but we cannot hide ourselves from cosmic forces. There is, as some philosophers put it, a peculiar prehensive contact that we establish between ourselves and the forces of the world.

The world sees us in two ways. It can see with outer eyes, and it can also see us through inner eyes. When we come in contact with an object or a human being, the contact is again twofold. It can be external, and it can be internal. Attraction and repulsion are not necessarily external forms of behaviour, but they are internal events which manifest signs outside. Occasionally we are automatically attracted or repelled by certain persons and things even if we have not come in contact with them earlier. This is prehensive activity of our inner nature moving towards or away from the inner structure of another person or object, due to an invisible relationship that exists between things.

True morality, or moral conduct, spiritually speaking, would be that which would be approved of by the inner nature of things. We are not talking of political morality,

international ethics or social conduct. These are the expressions of that inward law which seems to be reigning supreme throughout the cosmos. There are what are known as *satya* and *rita*, truth and cosmic order, operating everywhere. Cosmic order is the expression of truth, *satya*, which precedes *rita*, the law of the universe. *Rita* is only an external expression of the inner stability of the cosmos, which is truth.

From this analogy we can draw the conclusion that though external morality is very, very necessary indeed for life, it is not necessarily the inner morality because inwardly we may be different personalities from what we appear outwardly, yet we may be defeated in our purposes if we are inwardly counterfeit. What paves for success in life is inner morality, and not outer conduct. If inwardly we are hypocritical or counterfeit, externally we cannot expect success in life. Success is purely an inner event. It is not an external, historical process. It is the inner nature manifesting itself as external experience. This is the subtle anatomy of human life, invisible to external observation but reigning supreme everywhere as the only law operating in the universe.

What we are impelled to do from within ourselves is our moral nature. The yogi is a person who, as mystics sometimes say, tries to fly alone to the Alone. We are in this world as unbefriended units of spirit. No external social associations can be attributed to this spark of the spirit that we are. The spark of the spirit in us, or rather, what we are, is not a social unit. It does not belong to a

conglomeration of bodies or personalities. It is unique in nature, incomparable in character. It is this spark of the spirit that tries to unite itself with the cosmic spirit, and this process is called yoga. Hence, it is a wholly internal life that we live when we live a life of yoga.

We have to disabuse ourselves of the notion that yoga is a social affair. It is absolutely not. It is purely a personal affair because it is an attunement of a personal inner nature of the individual with the cosmic nature of creation as a whole. Society comes with it, because what we call society is nothing but a group of individuals. It is not something absolutely independent of individuality. There is no such thing as society independent of individuals. It is only a name that we give to relationships that we establish among ourselves, and not an entity by itself.

So we should not be under any kind of illusion that our success depends upon what the world will think of us or does think of us. The world is a relationship. It is not an existence by itself. What is existent is the spirit, rather than the letter. The letter has to be distinguished from the spirit. The essentiality or the substantiality is different from the outer coating or the accretion that has grown over it.

Thus, at the very outset, when we are on the first ladder of yoga, we have to be inwardly in conformity with what is known as spiritual goodness, apart from the good social conduct that we may manifest for the sake of practical life. Social goodness is utilitarian. It exists only

as long as other people exist. But inner morality exists even if other people do not exist. Even if you are to be alone in a forest, inner morality persists. As you know very well, if you are to live alone in a cave or a forest with no friends outside you, nobody to look at you, what is the good of social morality? You need not be concerned with it at all because that is a relationship with outward people. But that relationship ceases when there are no people outside you. If you are to be a meditator, an advanced yogi in a distant place, in a cave or a forest in the Himalayas, what sort of morality do you have to form for yourself? It is the inner attitude. It has nothing to do with existence or non-existence of a person. The sun shines even if there is nothing to shine upon. The sun does not say, "There is no object outside for me to shine upon; therefore, I will not shine." It is not shining because there are objects outside to be illumined but because it is its nature to shine.

Similarly, morality is not concerned with people outside. Whether people are there or not, morality does exist. It is an inner attitude or outlook of consciousness, and not necessarily concerned with the existence or non-existence of other persons and things. It is a very subtle process or attitude of our own personal nature, which will persist as long as we exist in this world.

Hence, the first step in yoga is to be a moral unit rather than merely a social unit. We have been accustomed to live in society, and we always think in terms of society. There is no other way of thinking for us.

Whenever we think, we think in terms of other persons. Is there any other way of thinking in the world? There is, and that is the spiritual way, since the spiritual way of thinking is unique in the sense that it does not stand in need of any external object or person. It can work for itself. It can stand on its own legs.

For this purpose, we may have to place ourselves in such circumstances as would be conducive to spiritual progress. Either we physically place ourselves in solitariness, living in isolated places, to see how far we have grown in our spiritual outlook of things, or if we are to live in the midst of persons and things for any reason whatsoever, we have to adopt an inner attitude for our own self irrespective of the visible existence of persons and things outside. This is a more difficult technique. To be in the midst of people and yet to think as if they are not there is a little difficult, and yet this is the procedure that we have to adopt when we have a spiritual outlook of things.

The spiritual outlook is a universal outlook. It is not concerned with individualities or persons or objects. It applies to all things in general, uniformly like law or the principle of justice. It is the preparation of consciousness to adjust itself with the impersonality of character that is inner morality. When we gird up our loins and makes a resolution that we shall live in conformity with the cosmic principles, then it is that we have lived a moral life inwardly. When we are inwardly moral, we also feel satisfied, while if we are merely outwardly moral and not

inwardly so, some dissatisfaction would be gnawing into our vitals. It is inner non-conformity to morality, while there may be an outer conformity to it, that causes unhappiness in the core of our hearts. Outwardly we are fully moral, ethical and in conformity with the principles of justice and law, but inwardly we are in variance from the principles that demand of us a particular behaviour.

As spiritual conduct is super-individual, super-social, and sometimes it looks even super-logical, noting all these problems and difficulties on the spiritual path, we have been time and again advised to place ourselves at the disposal of a Master or a Guru who has trodden the path and known the pitfalls.

Many a time we express ourselves vehemently in practical life. This vehement expression is an insignia that inwardly we are imbalanced. Moral conduct is a golden mean of approach; it is not an extreme of behaviour. All goodness is a force that is struck between two extremes. When we go to extremes, even goodness becomes badness. This is, again, a difficult point to grasp not only in outward conduct but also in the development of inner character. We should not be vehement in the expression of any of our opinions, notions or ideas. Moderate expression is moral expression, moderateness in every level of our life, and an attempt to express the impersonal to the best of our ability in practical life.

What is moderate is also impersonal, and vice versa. The impersonal does not lean towards any particular notion or extreme. It is the personal that leads to

extremes, and where the impersonal manifests itself even in the smallest modicum of percentage, there moderate behaviour is also visible. Moderateness in every form of personal expression is the impersonal peeping through the personality. It would be seen in every one of our activities, physical as well as psychological. You would not be in a haste to do anything when you are moderate in your conduct. You do not run sweating and toiling, as people sometimes run to catch trains. Even when catching a train, why do you run? Go half an hour before the time. What do you lose? This is another kind of peculiarity in human behaviour.

We find it very hard to be moderate in anything. We talk too much or we observe *mauna*. We cannot talk moderately, talk when it is necessary and in proper language, proper expression, proper accent, and with the proper idea conveyed. This is all very difficult for us. We always shriek as if the throat is bursting, or we will observe one month of *mauna* and not talk at all. Both these things are very easy to do, but to be moderate is difficult. Physical activity also has to express the impersonal in it, not going to the extremes. Complete hibernation is one extreme, and fidgeting and running about constantly in a state of restlessness of nerves and body is another extreme. In speech, in action and in thought, we have to express moderate conduct in our life.

Again we have to remember, we do this not because others would approve of it. This morality has nothing to do with others. It is only a training of our personality to

become more and more impersonal so that we may finally attain to that supreme impersonality of Godhood. We have to remember this point again and again that this *tapasya*, this austerity, this self-control, this moderateness of behaviour, this inner morality that we are practising, is not at all a law that we are abiding by from the external point of view, but an inner contact that we are establishing with whatever is cosmic in its nature. In activity, in speech and in thought, morality has to be expressed.

Now, the moderate is the most difficult thing to understand. While extremes can be investigated into and studied, that which is the golden mean cannot be studied because it always escapes notice. The subtle always escapes our observation, like the fine edge of a sword or a razor. You can see a blunt edge, but you cannot see a fine edge because it is very subtle. In one sense we may say this inner morality is as subtle as the sharpened edge of a razor or of a sword, and is difficult to tread, as the Kathopanishad put it. *Kṣurasya dhārā niṣitā duratyayā, durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti* (Katha 1.3.14): Hard indeed is this path of inner morality, of impersonality, of subtlety of perception, of moderateness of character and conduct.

To be moderate is difficult because it is really self-control. Self-control is nothing but moderateness of inner and outward nature. This is the highest form of *tapas* that we can think of, and this is the most difficult form of *tapas* that we could practise. Try it and see. This

would be an impossibility after a few days. The nature will express itself in its extremes once again. To weigh everything in proper proportion while we speak or think or act would be a difficult job. When we speak, when we write, and when we develop relationships with other people, extremes have to be avoided because, again, we have to remember here that truth is not an extreme. It is that quintessence of behaviour, quintessence of spirit which comes out when we squeeze all experience of its external relationships and come down to the minimal experience, the irreducible minimum of reality.

It is, therefore, necessary that we frame a program of our life and a regular routine of our day. This is what we call the spiritual diary or the self-check-up, a ready reckoner for our personal conduct and life. What is the program for our life? If we are to live for another forty or fifty years in this world, what are we supposed to do in this world? This would be our program of life. In accordance with this program that we have before our mental vision of our whole life, we have to prepare a daily routine for ourselves because the daily program is a link in the chain of life's program. Many links make the chain. Many days make the year, and our life. So many daily programs make life's program. Hence, the daily program should naturally be a microcosmic pattern of the life's program that we have before ourselves. We may glibly say that life's program is God-realisation. Well, it is true. But then the daily program also has to be in

conformity with this ideal. It cannot be at variance with it.

The time and the place that we select for our life and our sadhana should be well chosen and regulated. First of all, the choosing of the place and the atmosphere is essential, and also the timings of the program. It is seen that a tenacious adherence to principle in respect of place and time is of great help in the success of sadhana. We have to be persistent in our effort and adhere to the same routine of program, not changing it every day. It is very boring to continue the same program every day, and that is why we have varieties of programs. But variety is not very helpful, just as when we want to drive a nail on the wall, we do not drive it at different places because then it will not go in. We have to hit the hammer on the nail at the very spot where we want to drive it in. Though it may be difficult in the beginning, by a constant hammering we will find the nail goes in. Or it is something like digging a well. We dig at the same spot so that we may find water. If we dig a few feet in a hundred places, we will not get water.

Likewise is sadhana. Our probing should be at one spot, and it should be a persistent probing until the depth is reached, and not look at varieties and beauties of patterns of multitudeousness that may satisfy our curiosity but would not conduce to our inner culture. Sadhana is a *tapas*. We may again remind ourselves of this. It is not an entertainment that we are offered. It is not a pleasure that the senses receive. It is a restraint that

we exercise over the pleasure-seeking habit of our personality, our sensory nature.

We always seek pleasure, even in sadhana. It should be satisfying. It must be beautiful in the sense that the senses should be satisfied. So we change places, change Gurus, change the process of sadhana, change mantras, change methods of meditation, and start reading varieties of books because this gives a kind of satisfaction to the mind. Variety gives pleasure to the mind. The mind cannot tolerate monotony of any kind. But concentration is nothing but a peculiar kind of monotony that we introduce to the mind. It is thinking of one thing only. We cannot give variety to the mind in meditation because then there would be no depth of thought. There would be only width, but no depth. What we need is depth, a probing deeply into the subtlety of our inner nature so that we may reach the spirit within us.

Hence, in our daily program, which we have to chalk out, we have to be very conservative, and not very liberal. The program should be tight so that we may have no time to think of those factors which are exterior to sadhana. As Jadabharata was bound on account of being entangled in a factor which was not conducive to his sadhana, so would be the case with every *sadhaka* if he pokes his nose in matters which are not concerned with his sadhana. Even just at the entrance to heaven there may be a road leading to hell. We should not think that heaven is visible to the eyes. Even at the entrance of

heaven, there is a hole that leads to hell just below, and we can drop into it, if we like.

So is the fate of the *sadhakas*. It may look as though everything is clear before our eyes and we are on the path, but we may forget that even the least lenience given to the mind can lead us completely astray from our objective. Therefore, a very powerful self-discipline program of the day is essential. The items of the program should be reduced to the minimum, to the barest necessity, and should not contain a hundred varieties to distract the attention of the mind.

Bhakti yoga sadhana, raja yoga sadhana, jnana yoga sadhana, and karma yoga sadhana are supposed to be the broad divisions of spiritual practice. But all these yogas have a common feature underlying them, namely, self-discipline. It is this self-discipline that paves the way to success in any of these yogas, and therefore, while we commence sadhana we have to take into consideration those common features which are applicable to any of the yogas. In the initial stages it is difficult for us to judge what our path is, just as in the beginning stage of education we are taught many subjects, though we may specialise in any one or two later on. So it is in sadhana. In the beginning stages we have to be well acquainted with the broad, common factors applicable to all the paths. Then we may specialise in concentrated forms of sadhana. Study of a chosen scripture, *japa* of a given mantra, concentration on a given concept or a chosen method may be regarded as the most common features

in all the yogas. These are the minimal requirements. All these three mentioned – *swadhaya*, *japa* and *dhyana* – have one aim before them, namely, the collectedness of mind, the composure of mind, or the concentration of mind. But with this practice we have also to combine the emotional aspect of our nature, which has much to say in our sadhana. *Swadhaya*, *japa* and *dhyana* are primarily the concern of the will and the understanding; but what about the emotion?

Most *sadhakas* have no occasion to express their emotions. This is the reason why they feel out of sorts when they live for some years in a monastery or in a secluded spot. This is also the reason why people go to cities and go on long tours, etc., because it is difficult to give sufficient food to the emotional nature within us unless proper steps are taken to understand the structure of our emotions and the need of these emotions. This is a very important factor in sadhana. If this is ignored or missed, the whole of our effort will end in utter failure.

As a bird flies with two wings and not merely with one wing, or we walk with two legs, so also we may say that sadhana has two aspects: the discipline of the understanding, and the discipline of the emotion. We should not lay too much emphasis merely on one side. There are people who are very sentimental, always weeping and crying in utter devotion as if they are in front of God. But it is not always that they exercise their understanding. Their will is weak. That is one weakness to which we may be susceptible. There are others who are

very adamant in exercising their will, but they emotionally are bankrupt and can be led astray by uncontrolled emotion at any time in their life.

It is, therefore, necessary to draw two columns in our spiritual diary, concerning the development and discipline of the *buddhi-shakti* and the *iccha-shakti*, or the emotional nature. We should not imagine that we have gone above emotions. No *sadhaka* can get over these emotions ultimately, because that is the pumping station in our personality. It is the powerhouse which supplies energy to our nature. Emotion is the force, the incentive behind thought and action. It is a dynamo. How can we say it is unimportant? But it has to be properly diverted. The energy that is released by this dynamo has to be channelised according to the decision of the understanding. The understanding plays a part, and the emotion also plays a part. While emotion supplies the necessary energy, understanding knows how to utilise this energy. If one is lacking, either we are bereft of energy or we are bereft of the proper perspective, or the right understanding, to apply or utilise this energy within us.

When emotion is misdirected or pent up without proper utilisation, we become inwardly unhappy without our knowing what is actually happening to us. Every one of you should study your own personal nature and find out if you are emotionally happy or emotionally tied up. Emotionally, most of us are not happy. We are restrained from various corners of the world in the

expression of our emotions. While it is true that nobody would allow their emotions to go riot, those emotions have to be restrained, but they have to be restrained in a manner that they are put to activity. The emotion has to be expressed in a healthy manner, in a constructive way, so that they make us happy and also enable us to grow spiritually.

The psychological structure within us is, thus, a very beautifully thought-out complex of structure which contains within it various elements of human nature. It is from the point of view of these various elements in our nature that the various yogas have been prescribed: *karma* yoga, *bhakti* yoga, *raja* yoga and *jnana* yoga.

While it is necessary that we should be emotionally healthy, we should also be healthy in our understanding because when we cannot understand, we also cannot appreciate. Lack of appreciation or wrong appreciation is the outcome of lack of understanding or erroneous understanding, because we have been ignoring one side of our nature and laying overemphasis on the other side of our nature. So draw two columns in your diary, as I said: columns pertaining to the understanding, and to the emotion.

You wake up in the morning fresh and revived if you are emotionally healthy. If you are emotionally unhealthy you get up weak, as if you have done a day's work. Even when you get up in the morning, you feel weak. What has happened to you? Are you tired even after sleep? Because the emotions are tied, they have been very tense even in

sleep. Though the purpose of going to sleep is to release tension, it has not really been released. You have tied up your emotions into a bundle and never allowed them to express themselves in any way, and then gone to bed. Therefore, you got up from bed with a small, shrunken face, with a feeble body, and exhausted even after sleep, as if throughout the night you are very busy. This is due to emotional imbalance, an unhealthy emotion which has not been properly diverted.

This is a very dangerous position in which we may find ourselves, and this may ruin our entire life. We may be thoroughly unhappy and disgusted with things in general, and we may die miserable if this point is not taken into consideration. That is one side, a great point to be remembered and thoroughly investigated like a psychoanalyst or a physician. We must be merciless in the analysis of our personality. No leniency is to be given when we are trying to know our own selves.

Have you any unfulfilled desires? Answer this question openly. If you have unfulfilled desires, you will have pent-up emotions. You cannot fulfil all your desires, because society will not allow it. You know that very well. For fear of social censure, you may thrust your desires inwardly and bury them, but they are not dead. Like snakes, they are inside in a cave. They are cobras, very venomous. Unfulfilled desires, desires which you want to fulfil but you are not allowed to fulfil by human society, cause tense emotions inside. If you daily go to sleep with these emotions, then naturally you will become an

exhausted, worn-out personality, though you really have done nothing in life.

To get out of this situation, your understanding has to be exercised. Here your *buddhi-shakti* comes into play. When you have so many desires which you want to fulfil but social laws will not allow the expression of these desires, what are you supposed to do? Are you to die unhappily, or are you to fulfil your desires, violating all laws of society? Neither of these is possible. Neither are you supposed to violate social laws, nor are you supposed to thrust your unfulfilled desires inside. They have to be given a proper vent, in an artistic manner. Art is the expression of beauty and emotion; and sadhana is a great art, perhaps the greatest of arts. The greatest of beauties is the beauty of sadhana, the system that you introduce, the methodology that you adopt and the balance of approach, which is the characteristic of art, and which you introduce into the system of sadhana.

Understanding and emotion have to go together for this very reason. If emotion alone is to work, you may violate laws and become a criminal. And if understanding alone is to work without emotion, you will be barren. You will be an intellectual scientist without any vitality or substance or pith in your life. You will be a pedant, an academician, without a living spirit in your personality, if emotion is divested in you and you have only understanding or intellect. On the other hand, if it is only emotion, I told you what the danger is. When understanding and emotion come together, you have a

whole personality. That is what is called a balanced human nature. This is what they call goodness of conduct. Goodness is not sentiment. It is not merely sympathy that you show by emotional outburst. It is an intelligent appreciation of values. You love because you understand. You do not love because you are emotional.

Healthy life is, therefore, a blend of understanding and emotion. Intelligence and affection combined together makes for a healthy life. This gives us strength of personality. Where either of the two aspects is lacking, strength also is lacking. Power of personality, the magnetism of our individuality or nature, is nothing but the expression, the radiance of the blending of understanding and emotion. Just as we need a balanced diet to keep our body healthy, we need a balanced nature to keep us living with substance in it. A balanced nature is the balance of understanding and emotion.

In the Bhagavadgita we have a grand, elaborate gospel which speaks of this blending of the human personality, which was disintegrated in the beginning, as we see in the instance of Arjuna, whose nature was completely torn to shreds. All the five sheaths of his body were shivering and trembling, tending to disintegration. They had to be integrated by the beautiful gospel of the Bhagavadgita which is, as we usually say, a synthesis of all the yogas. The intelligent nature, the volitional nature, the emotional nature and the active nature are all put together in proper proportion, not in any excess or overemphasis. It is in the Bhagavadgita that we find a

balanced emphasis on every side of human nature. This is also why we sometimes do not understand the actual spirit of the Gita. It looks as though it lays emphasis on one thing at one time and on another thing at another time, but it is not so. The different types of emphasis it lays are only to give importance to the various sides of the human personality so that we may become integrated whole beings, psychologically healthy, intelligent, powerful in will, healthy in emotion, and active to the extent necessary.

This is how we would psychoanalyse ourselves for our own selves, not for medical purposes but for a healthy understanding of our own nature, and then commence the actual methodology of sadhana, always being conscious of the different sides of our nature, like a driver in a car who knows what part of the machine is working in which manner. If some little nut or bolt is out of order and does not work properly, the driver understands where the shoe pinches. He immediately stops the car and rectifies the error. Likewise, like a good driver we have to conduct ourselves in life and drive this chariot of the body as the Upanishad tells us, while being conscious at every step that we take of all the sides of our nature – which side is getting overemphasised, which side is getting ignored – so that the ignored aspect may be brought up to its proper prominence and the overemphasised part may be scissored off to the extent necessary to grow whole from the beginning to the end. Sadhana is a wholesome approach of human nature. At

every stage we are a whole. We are not a partiality of nature at any stage of our life.

Thus prepared, we may healthily begin to think a healthy form of life to conduct a healthy technique of sadhana for introducing ourselves into a healthy, universal life, which is the goal of existence.