

LIVING A SPIRITUAL LIFE



Swami Krishnananda

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Published by
www.swami-krishnananda.org

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Publisher's Note

This is a series of discourses that Swamiji gave during Sunday night Satsangs in 1994.

Chapter 1

THE PROCESS OF PERCEPTION

This is an ashram where *satsangas* are held, and certain provisions are made for people to come and derive a special kind of benefit whereby they can recharge themselves, or rather charge themselves freshly, with a power and satisfaction which is not easily available in the workaday world. This search for what is not common in the normal life of people is also something which requires to be properly understood and appreciated.

Many a time we feel happy or unhappy, without knowing the reason behind it. An intelligent person should know the causes of these occurrences in oneself; only then will they be really beneficial and lasting. An unconsciously performed virtue cannot be regarded as a real virtue. It becomes meaningful only when it is consciously done. Just as an unconscious error cannot be regarded as a deliberate commission, so also an unconscious virtue is no virtue. In the same way, a happiness whose nature and cause is not known will be of no avail finally. It will be like children jumping here and there in a state of some kind of satisfaction, of which they have no knowledge at all.

That is to say, knowledge is essential. There is nothing in the world equal to, or superior to, knowledge. It is actually the purpose of what we call education—the acquisition of more and more information and insight into everything that constitutes life. An ignorant man cannot be regarded as a happy man. An ignorant wealthy person cannot enjoy his wealth. Knowledge is primary.

It is necessary that we should also have a knowledge of our own existence. Unconsciously existing, like a stone, is not actually a way of living. Existence is one thing, and living is a little different. When we speak of this intriguing phenomenon called living or life, we are face to face with a widespread area of investigation, into which we may have to enter as if in a laboratory. In one way, we may say, this world is a laboratory where we enter into an activity of a search for newer and newer meaning. We have some meaning, but that may not be a complete meaning. The significance that we read in the phenomena of life varies from time to time, from age to age, and from condition to condition. That is what is known as *apara vidya*, or lower knowledge.

We do not want a passing kind of knowledge. It should be with us forever. That which will leave us one day, and has come to us only due to certain prevailing conditions, is not worth the while. We cannot live in this world without knowing where we are living; otherwise, it would be a kind of inert existence, which is totally different from enlightened living.

When we open our eyes, we see something. It is clear, as it were, that there is such a thing as seeing, but rarely do we question as to what we are seeing, and how we are seeing it. "What do we mean by seeing?" is the primary question, and the second question is, "Who is seeing?" The third question is, "What is it that is seen?" The fourth question is, "What is the relationship between the one that sees and the thing that is seen?" Further questions are, "Why is it necessary to see anything? What is the obligation behind this perpetual activity of seeing things day in and day out? Who is compelling us to see anything at all?"

Things appear to be attracting us—compelling us to see them, to look at them, and do something with them. Another question is, "Why do things look attractive; why

do certain things appear beautiful and others repulsive?” Is there some explanation for this phenomenon?

We want to live. “Why do we want to live?” is also an important question that we must put to our own selves. Who is telling us that we should live? Does a book say that, or has some teacher has told that we must live? We do not require to be told by anyone that we should live. We seem to be quite certain that it is necessary.

A further question, away from this and arising from it, is, “What kind of life do we wish to live?” We have a vague notion of the type of life that we would like to live. It is vague indeed, because a complete knowledge of what it is about will not be easily available.

Then, what are we finally aiming at with all this inquisitive and investigative knowledge? Is there a purpose in things, or is life purposeless, just existing without any meaning? If there is a purpose in life, whatever be the nature of that life, it would imply that life, as it is now confronting us, is a process rather than a culmination. Life seems to be advancing in some direction of progress, people generally say—culturally, economically, socially, politically, educationally, in every way—but advancing in what direction, and towards what end?

There are others who speak of what is known as evolution. There is the natural activity seen everywhere, by which old things are cast off and new things are created. The new thing that is created is again cast off after some time, and another, newer thing is created. This seems to be a process going on everywhere throughout Nature. Why should it happen?

With all this series of questions, there is also, side by side, a sense of unknown finitude and insecurity in the mind of every person. There are various means adopted to guard oneself from the feeling of this finitude and insecurity in the world. We build a house and wish to live inside it. The house gives some sort of security, clothing gives security, the food that we eat is a security, and there

are other appurtenances that we have manufactured, discovered or invented, contributing to a sense of greater and greater security.

But insecurity will persist with every protection the world can provide us because our insecurity is not entirely due to the absence of external appurtenances. Even a king is insecure, with everything he can have to guard himself from the sense of finitude and insecurity. A king has a large empire; he has an infinite existence, as it were, in society. But he is a poor individual with the gnawing sorrow of an unknown type of insecurity. If an emperor is not secure, who else can be secure in this world? The reason is that security, or freedom from this agonising sense of finitude, can be achieved by some other means than acquiring the material goods and comforts of the world and having many things with us.

We may have an army of requirements, as in the instance of the Pandava and Kaurava brothers but they are of no utility, finally. Duryodhana had the largest protective army, and the Pandavas had something similar, but both parties were insecure because the multitude of possession will be found finally to be unreliable. The emperor cannot fully trust even his own bodyguards.

So, where is security, without which life has no sense? To exist continuously with a feeling of sorrow that something is dead wrong, and at sixes and sevens, would not be meaningful living. Therefore, to search for this mysterious element in life which is lacking in public performances outside in the world, people come to institutions of this kind to attend and participate in their activities, and they leave with a sense of relief.

What is it that gives relief? I began by saying that the first phenomenon that faces us is the fact of seeing something. Unless we know what 'seeing' actually means—the procedure that is there as an undercurrent behind this activity—it will be like a helpless person being driven in some direction by a force other than oneself. We

have to know, and also know that we know; we have to see, and also be aware that we see. Seeing is not a blank look; it is not just opening the eyes and allowing light to fall on the retina. It is also clubbed with an awareness that seeing is taking place.

There is something very interesting which we generally miss in our observations, and it is this: Seeing is an activity, a process of becoming. Awareness of this fact cannot be identical with the activity of seeing, because awareness cannot be regarded as an activity. Knowledge is not work. It is another element altogether.

The fact that awareness of the act of seeing seems to be different from the act of seeing makes us go further into this phenomenon of a mysterious something before us. Who is seeing? "I am seeing." This is a glib statement of an untutored mind. "I am coming," "I am seeing you," and so on—these statements have no real profound meaning. As this fact of awareness of seeing is not the same as the act of seeing—because awareness is not an activity—what is the relationship between seeing as such, and the awareness of the fact of seeing? Where is this awareness sitting, which makes us feel that we are seeing?

Commonly, an immediate answer to this query would be, "The awareness is me. I am aware that I am seeing." When we say, "I am aware that I am seeing," we are mixing together two things which are really different. You cannot be seeing and also be aware of seeing, unless you are both things at the same time. How is it possible for you to be acting, and also be a judge behind the process of acting, as an element of awareness? This means to say that a dual realm of being is operating in us.

Philosophers say the phenomenal and the noumenal elements are involved in every human being. The phenomenality is symbolised here in this instance by an activity called 'perception of things'. The noumenal aspect in us is symbolised in our being aware that there is such a thing called 'seeing'. The words used are significant. One

aspect is phenomenal because it is passing, and it is moving, and it is not stable. All such things are called phenomenal. There is another thing which is not unstable. It is perpetually there, and it cannot leave us at any time—namely, awareness of our being, and awareness of anything that we do.

We belong to two worlds at the same time, we may say: the mortal and the immortal. The mortal side is the physical side of things, the processional character of Nature, and the activity of people. The immortal side is an irrefutable affirmation taking place in us every moment of time that we are perfectly stable, and we are not changing. Even though we grow from childhood to adulthood, we have not changed; we are the same person. Anything may change, but the continuity of the awareness of this change is a permanent background of it.

Because of the fact that we seem to belong to two realms of being, we are unhappy and happy at the same time. The phenomenal side keeps us perpetually engaged in some labour or work. The noumenal side keeps us asking for more and more, and allows us not to be satisfied with anything. The world says in its phenomenality, “I have everything for you.” But the noumenal side says, “I cannot be satisfied with anything that the world can give. I seem to be something like a large sea into which anything from the world can be thrown and it can be swallowed, but it cannot satisfy the engulfing character of this vast sea.”

The whole world of wealth and so-called security is not adequate to the noumenal demand. When the noumenal is ignored and we engage ourselves excessively in the phenomenal side of things, a threat is discharged from within us, keeping us terribly upset and disturbed. This is the story of the famous German poet’s work, von Goethe’s *Faustus*. There was a doctor called Faust, and he made an alliance with a peculiar genie called Mephistopheles. Dr. Faust represents the noumenal side, and Mephistopheles, the phenomenal side.

“I will give you everything,” said the genie.

“Please give,” said Dr. Faust. “How much will you give?”

“I can give you everything, more than you expect from me,” said the genie.

“Give,” said Faust.

“Very good. I am immensely happy. But,” said Mephistopheles, “There is one condition. You have to pay a price for it.”

“What is the price?” asked Faust.

“Give me what you are,” said the genie.

“What is there in me?” Dr. Faust thought. “I can give myself, provided you give me the whole world because, after all, I am a little puny nothing, an individual like anyone else, but the whole world of glory is going to be given to me. Take me, and give everything that you have.”

Mephistopheles laughed a cruel laughter, and there was a thunderbolt breaking down existence itself. Everything was sundered into pieces, and Dr. Faust was nowhere. He was cast in all directions, like dynamite bursting, and he was nowhere because he sold himself to gain a wealth which was not himself. Or, in a plain language, the self sold itself to the non-self. When this takes place, we break into pieces in one second.

As no one seems to have sold oneself entirely to the world, this thunderbolt has not been discharged upon us yet. But to some extent, we seem to be participating in the activity of a possible transferring of ourselves into the world for the comforts it can give us; to that extent, we are very disturbed inside, and we cannot be really happy. The more we possess the things of the world, the less we are in ourselves. The larger the world is to us, the smaller we are before it, but as we have not become too small—to the point of extinction, as it were—we are still comfortably existing under the impression that things are very well.

But it is not enough if we merely do not possess the world because of the physical impossibility of it. Have you

a wish to possess it? An ardent wish to possess the world is equal to the possession of the world, psychologically. All our existence is psychological, and not so much physical. To commit an evil act in the mind is equal to committing it really, physically, also. Reward is only given to the intention in the mind, and not to the physical performance of it; so is punishment. So, if you wish to have it, you have already got it; and to the extent of the dimension of what you got, to that extent of dimension you have reduced yourself in your personality. You have become a puny individual.

You have become Dr. Faust, and the world is the Mephistopheles. Sometimes they call it a demon, an Asura, always engaged in war with the Devas, or the genuine Pure Being which is permanently there, to which I made a reference as the awareness of perception, awareness of anything.

Now, going further, another question that is raised before us is, “What connection have we got with anything? How is awareness related to the act of seeing, perceiving—in short, in what way are we related to the world? Is the activity of perception wholly outside the awareness of it?” If that is the case, there would be no connecting link between the awareness and the activity. What is the connection?

That which is permanent cannot be connected to anything by something which is impermanent. An impermanent element cannot connect the permanent with anything. There cannot be any kind of relationship between the permanent and the impermanent. If the act of seeing and perceiving the world is an impermanent phenomenon, how would we explain the relation that seems to be there between the awareness of the world of perception, and the world as it is? Many an explanation has been offered in schools of thought and philosophies, and by psychologists of various types.

The usual answer to this query is that pure awareness does not get related to anything. There is something in us which is different from pure awareness and the phenomenon of seeing, perceiving, and doing, etc. That intermediary element is what we call ‘mind’, which is to be distinguished from pure awareness of the phenomenon of the perception of the world.

This is not a final answer, but no other answer is possible—just as we say, “God created the world,” and it is absolutely essential for us to accept that God has created the world, whether He has really created it or not; the circumstances compel us to believe it. In a similar manner, the existence of the mind apart from the awareness of all things has to be accepted.

How do we know that there is a thing called ‘mind’? We have varieties of avenues of knowledge, perception, which we call the sense organs—seeing, hearing, and the like. We have five senses of perception, cognition. Each one performs an independent function, without any connection with the other. The eyes cannot hear, the ears cannot see, and so on. But, there is a synthesising element in us which totally becomes conscious of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc., at one stroke. If this synthesising element were not there, the sensory activities of a discrete nature could not be combined into a total awareness. Such an element has to be accepted.

Now, it was said that Pure Being, which is awareness, cannot be related to any activity; and sensory perception being an activity, it was clear that awareness cannot relate itself to these activities. So, something has to be accepted as being there, which imbibes the character of two elements in itself—the awareness side, and the activity side. This is called the mind.

The mind is a mysterious element we call the psychological organ; in Sanskrit we call it *antahkarana*. Western psychologists analyse the components of this internal organ into understanding, feeling, and willing; but

Indian psychologists go a little further and have classified the internal organ into four functional activities: understanding, thinking, feeling, and willing.

There is something called bare indeterminate thinking, other than understanding. When we see something in dim light, at twilight, at dawn or dusk, we think something is there; this is indeterminate knowledge. After some time, when we go near that thing and have adequate light to see it, we understand what it is: It is not a human being standing there, it is a pole on the road. Then, apart from this twofold activity of indeterminate thinking and determinate decision on the part of oneself in regard to that object, there is affirmation of the fact: I have concluded that this is such and such a thing. *Ahamkara* is the word used in Sanskrit for this sense of affirmation.

We have to affirm that it is so. We cannot just move about without having any permanent, stable knowledge of it. Indeterminate knowledge becomes determinate knowledge, and then we decide that it is such by the affirmative principle, and we remember this fact afterwards. *Buddhi* understands, *chitta* remembers and feels, *ahamkara* asserts, and will decides.

What is the kind of decision? After having gained this knowledge through this awareness of something being there, we decide something, either this way or that way: I have to do something with it, or I have nothing to do with it. This is how the will acts.

With all these operations taking place in the mind, we conclude that there is a thing called mind, generally speaking, which is an omnibus name that we give to the internal organ, so called—the psychological organ, the psyche, we may call it. So, from a twofold observation of things, we have now come to a threefold observation—namely, from the distinction we drew between awareness and activity of seeing, we now distinguish between three elements: awareness of being, perception through the

senses, and mentation, which unifies the activities of the senses.

Yet, we cannot say that they are three different activities. We do not feel that three things are happening within ourselves. If I see a wall in front of me, I do not feel that three things are acting in me to know that there is a wall. I quickly assert, "There is the wall." So, the perception of a thing is a total inclusive operation, notwithstanding the fact that there seem to be three elements in the process of perception.

How could this total conclusiveness be arrived at if three things are actually operating in us? We have to accept that there is a fourth thing which unifies all three factors. The fourth thing is operating in every one of these three elements and even between these elements, and perhaps stands above them totally in order that it may be aware of all three things at the same time. Such an element is immanent, as we say, because it is present in all three elements, even in the relationship between them, and yet transcends them and is above them—because unless it is so, it cannot know that they are there at all.

So, we human beings are not just simple nobodies. We have a great treasure inside us, which has to be dug out and brought to the surface of clear daylight. This is Self-knowledge, as we may say, in some respect. It is no good saying, "I know myself." What do you know about yourself? When so many complicated things are taking place within you, around you, above you, below you, and outside you, how do you say that you know yourself? You are involved in a tremendous operation taking place everywhere, and your mere act of seeing is not a prerogative of your individuality. It is a contribution made by various elements pervading everywhere.

Theologically, religiously, it is said that gods are operating through the sense organs; they are called the *adhidaiva*, the unifying principles above us. There is a divinity behind our performances. "There is a divinity that

shapes our ends, rough-hew them how you will,” is well said by a poet.

So we are not just ourselves. We seem to be something more than ourselves. This element of our being something more than ourselves is what connects us with the world, though it apparently stands outside us—connects us with our relations, connects us with people in the world, connects us even with the sun, moon, and stars. Such a principle of a highly dignified nature is ruling us, reigning as a king inside us and above us. After having gained a modicum of insight into this mystery in us, we should go further as to how we can handle this situation for our true benefit in this world. We shall continue this subject later on.

Chapter 2

TOTAL PERCEPTION

Last Sunday we delved a little into the phenomenon of being aware of an object outside us—the process of perception. It was noticed that in this activity known as perceiving an object, three elements are involved. There must be an object in order that it may be perceived, there must be a method or a medium of perception, and there should be an awareness of the fact of perceiving the object.

It was felt that the introduction of a principle called mind or psyche between awareness as such and the object outside becomes necessary; otherwise, there will be perpetual perception, or non-perception. Conditioned perception is possible only if there is a limiting medium we call the mind or the psychological organ.

We also observed that if these three elements in the process of knowledge stand isolated from one another, there could not be what we call total perception. There would be only little bits of conscious effort, not coordinated into a whole. But we see that our perception is a wholeness of awareness of that object placed before us.

In order that this completeness or wholeness of perception be possible, it is essential to introduce a transcendental awareness, which rises above the threefold procedure of perception—that is, the subjective awareness, the process as such, and the object outside. So, four principles come into the surface of our observation when we analyse the fact of perception of an object.

Usually we glibly, like untutored persons, think that everything is clear to us: “I see something, and it is such

and such a thing.” Such a statement is made, but no one knows how such a perception is made possible. What are the elements involved in this activity known as perception? How many contributory factors are there?

Accepting that there is some intricate involvement of a fourfold factor in the process of perception, as mentioned, it now becomes necessary for us to go deeper into two other aspects of this phenomenon—namely, what do we mean by ‘an object’, and who perceives the object?

There is no use merely saying, “I am seeing such a thing.” This is not a clarified explanation of the phenomenon of knowledge. To us lay minds, an object looks like some solid thing placed somewhere, in some location, and we have nothing more to say about the object.

There are two types of objects: stationary objects and movable objects. Inanimate things, plants and trees, are stationary objects; animals, human beings, etc., are movable objects. Whatever they be, it is necessary to know what these objects are made of. We have anatomical, physiological and biological explanations of what an object is. If we consider the human being as an object of perception, we would naturally say that the human being is made up of bone, marrow, flesh, blood, sinews, heart, lungs, brain, limbs, etc. But this is not a clear answer to the question of what the human being is made of.

Even physically, this explanation is inadequate because this conglomeration of the components of the physical body, as described, is part and parcel of the physical world, which is made up of five elements known as ether, air, fire, water and earth. We do not see anything anywhere, other than the composition of these five elements known as *pancha mahabhutas*—five great foundations of any type of objectivity. If that is the case, the human body, or any located object, has to be composed of these five elements only, there being no other thing in the world except the five elements.

We generally feel that a particular object is in one place only. It cannot be in two places at the same time. One thing is in one place, and it can be in that place at one time. Now, this is a very casual observation of what the object really is. If it is to be accepted that every physical object is composed of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—the object would be there, where these five elements are.

We cannot compartmentalise these elements into bits unconnected with one another. Nature seems to be a whole of action. Even this fivefold description of the elements is not the final truth about them. The five are not five different things, but five degrees of the descent of one and the same stuff called matter. Condensation and particularisation take place when the matter, originally a ubiquitous all-pervading something, centralises itself and becomes a graduated descending process which we now call ether, air, fire, water and earth.

Finally, there is only one element everywhere, and that is matter, counterpoised to consciousness. If we reduce the elements of existence into their fundamentality, we will find there are only two things: consciousness and matter. Matter is not only in one place; the entire world is matter. The whole solar system, all the universe we can conceive of, is materially composed. Matter is omnipresent. In Sanskrit, in certain doctrines of philosophy, we call this *prakriti*, or the matrix, the original stuff and substance of everything.

If a particular object that we see before us is composed of the very same matter that is ubiquitous, incapable of division into parts, we will realise, to our astonishment, that this one object before us looking like some particular thing located in one place is linked to the whole universe.

It is so because the substance of this object is an all-pervading something; therefore, the potentiality of being all-pervading is present even in a little particle of sand. It is not only in one place. Thus, no object is in one place only.

It has the capacity to go deep into its origin and become omnipresent. But we do not see this potentiality of omnipresence in any localised object. We cling to one thing, ignoring other things, while the fact is that the so-called other things, apart from the one object perceived, are also included within the purview of the omnipresent material substance.

Therefore, objects are not manifold in their nature, and the world is not constituted of many things. Objects are manifold appearances, modifications, of one all-pervading substance. It is in the light of this fact that the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita mentions that to cling to any particular object as if it is everything is the worst kind of knowledge that one can have. If that is so, our knowledge is the worst kind of knowledge because we see things only in particular places, and not everywhere. One thing is in one place only and, therefore, under the impression that one particular thing is in one place, we sell ourselves to that object, hug it and want to make it our own, under the impression it is everything. “Oh my child, you are all for me!” says the mother.

This is what everyone does in the transference of consciousness to an observed object. The object is, to mention again precisely, not in one place only. So, when we look at the object, we are looking at the world as a whole, which has all eyes everywhere. *Sarvataḥ pāṇipādāṃ tat sarvatokṣīsiromukham* (BG 13.13): Everywhere it has hands and feet and eyes and heads. Every particular, located object is an eye of matter, through which it sees everything; this is the omnipresence thereof. Inasmuch as we are also one of the localised objects from the physical point of view, we, in our own selves also, cannot realise the potentiality of omnipresence in ourselves.

So, both the subjective perceiver and the object perceived stand parallelly on a single footing. The perceived object appears to be located in one place; the subjective perceiver also seems to be located in one place

only. You are in one place as my object, and I am in one place as the subject. This is erroneous perception. This is what is called the bondage of consciousness, and if all perception is virtually a bondage, the whole world is in bondage.

It looks as if everything is crazy and not in a normal condition of knowledge. The great poet Bhartrihari said, *Pitva mohamayim pramadamadiram unmatta bhutam jagat*: “Having drunk the intoxicant of ignorance, the world has gone mad in its perception of things.” This tragedy, in which everyone seems to be deeply sunk, is called *samsara*, aberration from reality or, philosophically speaking, empirical existence, relative living. So we, as spiritual seekers, not wanting to be bound helplessly by the forces of nature, wishing to be liberated from this kind of bondage, have to see not the object but see through the object to what is behind it.

There are three conditions of an object: status, dynamis and equipoise. These three conditions are known in Sanskrit as *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. *Sattva* is a Sanskrit word which is derived from the word *sat*, or ‘being’. The character of Being is called *sattva*. So we will be in a state of equipoise, equilibrium, harmony only when our experience of anything is interpreted in terms of Being, whose nature also is to be understood properly.

Being means Pure Existence. The nature of that existence is called *sattva*. In scientific fields, the condition of equipoise is not considered; there is only status and dynamics, or kinetics. But there is a third element which harmonises the static and kinetic condition of things, which is the *sattva* spoken of—the nature of Being.

Here again we are coming to the same point which we observed earlier—namely, that a transcendental element is operating in the midst of so-called separated subjectivity and objectivity. As is the case in the process of perception, so is the case of the knowledge of an object by a subject. That is, we confront an object as a colliding taking place

between one individuality and another individuality. In our perception of an object, the object does not enter into our being. It stands outside. This is why I said that we collide with the object but do not make the object part and parcel of ourselves.

Nothing can enter into you. Even the dearest and the nearest of your possessions is outside you; therefore, bereavement is inescapable in life. Whoever possesses anything shall lose it one day because it does not belong to anyone. It cannot belong to anyone, because it is certainly outside the Being of the subjective perceiver.

How would you introduce the principle of permanency, while it is not to be seen in our asking for things? Do we want a thing only in imagination, or is it to be ours, really speaking? Really, it cannot belong to us, because the individuality of the object separates itself from the individuality of the subject. How do we know that the object is there in front of us, therefore, if both stand apart? There is a Being, *sattva*, presiding over the very process of the collision of the subject with the object. This is the transcendental element I mentioned.

So, if we want to have anything permanently, we have to approach that thing through the transcendental principle and not directly confront it without taking into consideration the element of transcendence, which within its purview includes both the subjective perceiver and the object perceived. It is not only transcendent in the sense that it stands above them; it is also involved in this process. This transcendent so-called something is just now between me and you, without which you would not be seeing me and I would not be seeing you.

You may ask me why we do not perceive it, if this transcendent Being is just now here between us, among us. It cannot be seen because it is the transcendental subjectivity and cannot be converted into an object of perception. It is the knower, and not the known something. So, your expecting it to be made an object to be seen is a

futile attempt. This is why the transcendental reality cannot be seen with the eyes.

The eyes can empirically perceive that which is placed in space and time, in the midst of the five elements, but the transcendental Being is consciousness. We have to repeat it again, as we mentioned earlier. Consciousness cannot become an object; it is the pure subject. It is not a subject in the sense of a so-called individual perceiver of something, it is the knower of the whole universe. In that sense, we may say that there is only one observer of the whole world, and not many people seeing things in a different manner. There is only one object called the universe, and there is only one perceiver of it—this transcendent Being. Only that Being has control over this omnipresent object; otherwise, the object will escape our control and run away from us. *Sarvaṁ tam parādād yo'nyatrātmano sarvaṁ veda* (BU 2.4.6), says the great master Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: If you consider anything as outside you, it shall run away from you because it is ashamed to feel that you consider it as outside you and then want it. What kind of friendship is it, where you regard your friend as totally alienated from you and yet want unity, equanimity, with that person or thing? There is a duplicity, a vagueness, involved in all associations of one person with another person, one thing with another thing.

Things do not unite with each other; they repel each other, actually. This repulsion looks like a coming together, unfortunately. When I touch this table with my finger, an electrical repulsion takes place between the particles constituting this table and the very same particles constituting my finger. The repulsion, the kick, as it were, electrically produced, looks like a contact. Actually, we have not contacted anything; repulsion has taken place. The object hates us, and kicks us, and then we feel that we have got it. The whole thing is topsy-turvy, irrelevant, chaotic, if we deeply consider this matter.

What is the point in our discussion of all these things? The point is simple: we are after perfection. We call ourselves spiritual seekers, which means to say, we seek the ultimate spirit of things. The ultimate spirit is this very same thing I called the transcendental Being. We are in search of it; we are seeking it. We are wanting to have communion with it, attain it, merge in it, and become it.

This process which I now expounded in a psychological language, this object, this transcendent Being, is known as the God of religions, the Supreme Father, as it is called. It is above everything; therefore, we call it Father. It is everything; therefore, it is also called the Absolute.

Unless we feel competent to visualise our life with the eyes of this universal presence, we will catch hold of shadows which flee in different directions, and will get nothing in this world. People come to this world weeping, and they have to leave this world weeping; and many live, weeping. The *samsara sagara*, the ocean of turmoil, is misery incarnate. Yet, the fact before us is not realised fully on account of another mischievous activity taking place. I cannot describe it in any other way. It deceives us every minute, due to which we think that everything is fine while everything is dead wrong.

Why it is wrong, we have now understood from this analysis made a few minutes before. But why does it look right, and why do we wish to lick the honey of the objects of sense? It is because of the immanence, the indwelt presence of this very same transcendent Being even in the isolated objects of the world.

The contour of the object, the shape of the object, the particular placement in a given context of the object in respect of a perceiving subject creates the impression that it is worth having. Why do we feel that something is worth having? That content of that particular object is what we lack in our personality. There is some feature in the object which we do not have in our own self. If we are looking

like the very same thing which we love, we will not be able to love that thing. It would be like loving one's own self.

Yajnavalkya, whose name I mentioned just now, says in another context that every person is like a split pea. A pea has two halves, and every person is a half. The other half is the object, like the positive and negative sides of electrical contact. So, no one feels completeness in oneself. We want to take something and make it our own. The half pea wants to unite itself with the other half, but two halves cannot become one. Even if we join the two halves of the pea with gum, they will still remain two. They cannot become one, like broken glass which cannot be united into one by any amount of gluing, unless they are melted down.

Now, this feeling that something is worthwhile, is dear, beautiful, wonderful, "I must have it," arises because whatever quality we find in that object is absent in us. If we have also the same quality, we would not like that thing. This is one point to remember. We are lacking something; that something that we lack is seen in that object which attracts us, as the counterpart of what we lack in ourselves. So, one person can be attracted to only one thing at a time. It is not possible to be wholly attracted to two things because our lacuna is of one type at one given moment of time. But when we grow in the evolutionary process, the feeling of lack will change in its nature. Then we will not like that particular thing which we liked earlier because the lacuna takes a new shape in the process of evolution; and as that new shape requires its own counterpart, we then run after another object.

This process being endless in the life of a person, all the world put together also cannot satisfy us because objects, being relative to one another, flee away from one another as repulsive elements, and one thing localised in one place cannot merge into another thing which is localised in another place. Space divides things; it will not allow things to unite or come together.

The reason for our attraction to things is explained in this manner. The beauty and the taste that we see in an object of attraction is the hidden presence of this transcendent element which suddenly, like a flash of a matchstick, manifests itself in the contact of the subject with the object—at which time, the mind foolishly imagines that it has obtained the object but actually has not. Still, the feeling that it has got the object brings a temporary cessation of that desire for that object. When the desire temporarily ceases, the externality of mental operation ceases for that moment. When the externality of mental activity ceases, it draws itself into itself. Then, immediately *sattva* manifests itself; pure Being flashes forth, and then we feel rejoicing, happy. That feeling of happiness does not arise from the object, which has only acted as an instrument in rousing a feeling in us that we have got what we want. It has deceived us, and it has now run away from us and left us in the lurch. Life is thus a perpetual deception, while we think it is a reception of objects.

Spiritual seekers should not be duped by this kind of phenomenal activity. The will has to be developed strongly. There is no harm in seeing things; you may see a thing, but see it as the transcendent Being sees—as composing within its bosom both the subjective side and the objective side. When you see an object, do not feel that you are seeing another thing outside you, as an object. With great effort of will and determination, lift your consciousness from this bodily encasement and place it literally between you and that object.

Can you imagine that you are sitting between me and you? It is a great herculean feat. Is it possible for me to feel that I am between me and you, and not in me or in you? If that is possible, you will not be attached either to this body or to the body of the object. You will be observing both sides, like the body seeing two hands, not being attached to

either of them. Here is an explanation of what perception of an object is, and what the object is.

Now, I raise the question, “Who is perceiving the object?” You know the old story of the Kenopanishad: The gods thought they won victory, while actually the victory was won by somebody else. The Pandavas were thought to have won victory; actually, Sri Krishna won the victory. The silent witness actually won the victory, the active participants only boasting that they won.

Hence, who is the perceiver of the object, the object which is so intriguing? “I am perceiving”—again the same old answer comes. Who are you? Analyse yourself. Is the body, which is seated here, perceiving the object? Everyone knows the body cannot perceive anything; it is inert, made up of the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. The sense organs also, which are supposed to be the perceivers, are inert substances. They are like glasses, spectacles, which cannot themselves see anything; they are only acting as a medium for knowing things, perceiving things. Neither the body sees, nor the sense organs see.

Can we say the mind sees? The mind does not operate always. In the state of waking, it is actively performing its function; in dream also, it is operating in a similar manner. But when we are asleep, the mind ceases to function; the sense organs also do not operate. You say, “I am seeing the object.” The question is, who are you? Not the body, because it is inert; it cannot see anything. Not the sense organs—they are equally inert. Not the mind, because it is not always there, especially in sleep. What else is there in you other than the body, the sense organs, and the mind?

The well-known study of this phenomenon of sleep has brought to the surface of our observation the fact that we feel that we did exist in sleep, but we do not know in what condition we existed. We did not exist there physically, nor sensorially, nor mentally, but as something which cannot be described. Why is it possible not to know it? The impressions of unfulfilled desires act like a thick layer or

cloud over what we really are, and prevent us from knowing what we are. It is like painting our spectacles with coal tar. It will not allow us to see anything because of the opaqueness of the medium.

Do you know that you did exist in sleep? You may say, “I know that.” Through what medium of perception did you know that you were existing in sleep? If not the body, if not the sense organs and the mind, what is the medium of perception or cognition through which you come to say that you did exist in sleep? There was no medium of perception. That knowledge of the fact of your having been there in the state of deep sleep is not mediated cognition, but immediate cognition. It is self-identical knowledge.

What was that kind of knowledge? What is it made of? You cannot say, because at that time you were not aware of anything. You can only remember that you slept. But what is remembrance? It is a memory of a past experience. Unless you had an experience earlier, there cannot be a memory. You have a memory of having slept, and if memory is a remembrance of what you experienced earlier, you have to explain what ‘experience’ is. Unless there is consciousness, there cannot be experience.

So, from this analysis we again conclude that we did exist in the state of deep sleep as consciousness—not as the mind, not as the intellect, not as the sense organs and the body. That is our real nature. That is why when we enter into it, we feel relaxed. Even a sick man gets up feeling a sense of betterment. Fatigue goes after sleep. Great joy supervenes. The joy of sleep is superior to the joy of any other conceivable thing in the world because it is self-identical experience, consciousness entering into consciousness, being getting identified with Being. The Absolute is reflected there.

Such a wonder is within ourselves—a great treasure. The Chhandogya Upanishad tells us we walk over this treasure every day, but we do not know that it is hidden underneath. We walk over it in the sense of contacting it

unknowingly in the state of deep sleep, but actual awareness of this contact is not there, because of the unfulfilled desires impeding this knowledge.

The whole spiritual aspiration is a process of removing the desires impeding the perception of our own selves as transcendent Being, which rises above the individual subjectivity and the external object, and makes us an all-pervading, perfect, eternal immortal Being. This is what we are, and this is what we are aiming for. How we can actually achieve it is incidentally also implied in what I mentioned to you just now in a few words—the details thereof, perhaps we shall be able to consider further on.

Chapter 3

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ATTAINING THE OBJECT

The spiritual vision of things is markedly different from the ordinary perception of things. During our earlier sessions we discussed certain questions such as: “What do we mean by seeing anything at all? What is involved in the perceptual process?” Having gone deep into this subject, we encountered another question: “Who is it that is seeing?” About this issue also, there was considerable deliberation.

The third question that arose was, “What is it that is seen? What are we seeing in front of us? What is the object of perception made of? Of what is it constituted?” There are further questions of a similar kind which we always take for granted, and never try to properly probe into and understand in depth.

The concept of relations is highly intriguing. In what way are we related to anything in the world? How are things related to one another? What is actually the meaning of the word ‘relation’? We touched upon this subject earlier to some extent when analysing the process of perception itself, because it was noticed that the perception of an object is, at the same time, the establishment of a kind of relationship with the object. So this issue came up earlier, and we understood it in some way.

We have no time to go into these questions in our daily life and imagine that everything is clear to us. We say, “This house belongs to me,” which is the relationship spoken of between the house and its owner. This is a way

of speaking commonly appreciated everywhere in society, but never understood properly. How does the house belong to any person? It has never entered the personality of the owner. Perhaps the house was there even before this owner was born. "This land belongs to me," people say. The land was there ever since the Earth was there. How does it belong to us?

Since we feel some acquaintance with things that we consider as ours, it is necessary to know how this acquaintance gets established. It is because of a mess that we make in the understanding of this issue that we get into trouble every moment of time. There is conflict. Even after carefully knowing that a thing is intimately related to us, there can be a problem with that particular thing. How can an intimately related thing create difficulties?

The nearest and the dearest of things can create problems, which is unthinkable if it is really so near and dear that it is inseparable from oneself. The idea of something being immensely dear and near is the idea of inseparability of oneself with that particular thing. If something is inseparable from us, there is no question of fear regarding that particular thing. It cannot leave us, desert us, and there cannot be any bereavement in respect of that thing. But, the nearest one goes; the dearest one passes away, and everything is lost one day or the other. This is a very difficult thing for a person to swallow. All that we considered as ours does not seem to be really ours; and yet, without the notion of something being ours, life cannot go on.

There is a contradiction in having a dual notion of something being unavoidably related to ourselves, so that life may go on smoothly, and at the same time having a notion that one day we shall lose all those things. This predicament has to be explained and understood properly. On the one hand, we cannot live without some sort of relation with things; on the other hand, things are treacherous in their nature, inasmuch as they can desert us

at any moment. *Sarvaṁ tam parādād* (BU 2.4.6): “Everything shall leave you one day,” says the great master Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Why should a thing that is loved so much leave us? How our perceptual faculty is related to the object of perception is briefly explained in the Bhagavadgita when Bhagavan Sri Krishna makes a statement in this context: *guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta, iti matvā na sajjate* (BG 3.28). Both these contradictory sides are elucidated in this half sentence, *guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta*: “Properties commingle properties,” explains one side of the matter. *Iti matvā na sajjate*: “Knowing this, one does not get attached to anything,” answers the other side of things.

One side is that some relationship is unavoidably there with things; the other side is that every unavoidably related thing also shall leave us one day or the other. These two issues are highlighted in this verse: *guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta, iti matvā na sajjate*. “Having known that in the perceptual process properties of *prakriti* collide with properties of *prakriti*, one is not attached to anything in the world.” Now, how are we to understand this mysterious statement in the Bhagavadgita? What actually is the meaning of saying that qualities, or properties, come in contact with properties?

The whole universe is materially conceived as an all-pervading substance known in Sanskrit as *prakriti*, the mother of all objective phenomena, the matrix of things. It is a presentation of three conditions. Because it is a phenomenon created by three conditions, we cannot regard it as a substance, as a solid something. A condition cannot be an object because it is a moving, procedural activity. Thus, the whole universe of material perception seems to not be a solid object because it is constituted of three conditions, known as *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in Sanskrit. Material conditions are actually a blend of these threefold constituent conditions: *sattva*, or equipoise; *rajas*, or

disturbance of the equipoise; and *tamas*, or inert, unstable, and unconscious existence.

In the state of deep sleep we are, to some extent, in the state of *tamas*; darkness supervenes in the state of *tamas* or inertia, which is pure equilibrium of the negative type, not the equilibrium of the positive aspect known as *sattva*. In that state of deep sleep we seem to be merged in a uniformly spread-out equipoise of unconsciousness, and nothing is seen there, though everything is actually present there.

When the clouds are equally distributed in the sky, sometimes we cannot actually perceive that the cloud is there at all. When it is thickly clouded and there is an equal distribution of the substance of cloud element, sometimes we cannot see any motion of the clouds. It is just all-pervading potential for rain.

In a similar manner is an individual experience of this *tamas*. Corresponding to this individual condition of inert ubiquitousness, there is a cosmic, material, *tamasic* condition also, which is supposed to be the original state prior to the manifestation of the variety of cosmic creation. *Asit idam tamo bhutam*: “Originally, everything was darkness,” says the Manu Smriti at the very commencement of its code of ethics and creation. *Aprajatam alaksanam apradartyam avijyan prabhutam sarvogata*: “Everything was asleep, as it were, in the cosmic condition of dark equipoise.” Without going into the details of the process of creation, something seems to disturb this condition. When winds blow, clouds start scudding from one direction to another, and it is possible for us to see the thickening of the cloud somewhere, and the thinning of it elsewhere—without which, we cannot see the cloud at all. This is a disturbance that is caused by the blowing of strong winds.

In a similar manner, a wind that is cosmic in nature seems to be blowing over this dark condition of the original

material substance, and we can see certain things happening. Movement takes place. This is *rajas*.

Ordinarily, we cannot understand what *sattva* means because it does not usually manifest itself in our life. We are either *rajasic* or *tamasic*, mostly—very active or inactive. There is no third condition known to us. Very rarely does this third condition also reveal itself in our daily life—when we are superbly happy and rejoice at the prospect of something wonderful, whatever the reason behind it be.

These three conditions are called properties, *gunas*. Like the strands of a rope, they are the constituent substances—or more properly, properties, conditions—of universal matter. Inasmuch as this so-called material substance is everywhere, it is in our personality also. We are made up of the same thing. It is not that the world is outside us; it is inside us also. The ‘world within’ comes in contact with the ‘world without’ in perception.

What is this ‘world without’? We have studied what this object is made of last time. We need not revert into that issue again. And, “What is this inner world made of?” was also briefly discussed last time. The physical body is made up of the same three *gunas*, including the sense organs which abide in this physical system, as the properties which constitute the world which appears to be outside us.

There is a peculiar shaking up, or tremor, or a movement taking place in the perceptual process. The very same three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, in our body, mind, intellect and sense organs get agitated and feel disturbed on cognising a similar component outside the sense organs in the form of material objects. As a tiger may pounce on a deer, a snake may jump on a frog, a thief may jump on a nugget of gold, the sense organs pounce on objects. Why do they do this? For what purpose? They see themselves there, or they see their counterpart there, as the case may be. They see themselves there because they themselves are constituted of the same substances as that

out of which the world of objects is made. In this sense, they feel an affinity: the brother sees the brother, and wishes to embrace the brother. There is a love for things because they are made of the same substance as our own selves that wish to love things. As milk mixes with milk, water with water, subjective conditions collide and come in contact with objective conditions when they are placed in an equal context, on a similar degree of reality, and under specific given conditions.

It is not that we see things always. For instance, we cannot see heaven; we cannot see hell. We see only the so-called physical things, because our physical body is not made up of that rarefied substance out of which heavenly conditions are made; nor is it so gross as that situation which we call hell. The human situation is midway between heaven and hell, and so we are partaking of two situations in our process of perception. We are grieved, and at the same time we are also happy that we are in the midst of things.

It is a great joy to be in the midst of many things, and it is also a great fear, for two different reasons altogether. We feel miserable in the midst of many things, and we also feel happy. The reason is the heavenly side and the opposite side of it both act in this middle term of existence called human nature. The upper pull is the heavenly pull, the downward pull is the hellish or the dark pressure.

So even when we cognise a physical object, it is not that we are seeing everything that is created. The object has to be placed in a particular position, at a distance which is commendable, with necessary light, and in a circumstance that is favourable. All these conditions make human perception of things possible. Therefore, our perceptions are finite. We cannot have infinite perception. A finite condition alone can be perceived by the finite cognising media which are our sense organs and mind. The relationship between the perceiving subject and the object arises on account of two finitudes being placed in a

particular context, juxtaposed in a particular manner, and feeling the need to widen their dimension and assume a sort of infinitude in their being by contact with another finite object.

Since the finite objects are too many in the world, we cannot be concerned only with one object throughout our life. The mind moves from one thing to another thing on account of its knowledge that finitude is immense and large enough to cover entire space. Thus, finite perception can never be satisfied by the mere act of perception. No human individual, nothing finite, can be really satisfied by coming in contact with another finite object, because the very finitude of it makes it unfit to produce an infinite satisfaction in oneself.

What we require is unlimited satisfaction. That cannot be provided by anything that is limited in space and time. Thus, we have a limited scratching of our nerves, as it were, in perceptual processes, which gives us a sensation of satisfaction caused by the tickling of nerves and the activity of the sense organs; but that activity ceases because we cannot go on creating titillating conditions permanently. When that situation ceases, the joy also ceases at the same time, and we get fed up with that object under the impression that it has not done what it promised to do. Then we experiment with another object, which also ends in the same failure for a similar reason. Thus, life from birth to death becomes a continuous activity of finite individuality trying to experiment with finite objects endlessly in time, until death takes place.

The world can provide no satisfaction by this process. The necessity to come in contact with any object arises on account of our finitude of existence, and our appreciation only for finite objects. Nothing all-pervading can attract us. Even the universal treasure trove cannot make us happy because it is too much for us. Even wealth is to be given to us in a limited form; unlimited wealth cannot be contained. It will lose its meaning because no one knows where to

keep it. The limited mind cannot conceive an unlimited quantum of any kind of property or wealth. If all the skies and the heavens are ours, we do not know what to think about them. So, even our expectation of joy or happiness in this world is an asking for a limited little titbit of give-and-take process.

We do not want too much of anything; even too much joy can kill us. That is because too much joy, though it is wonderful in itself, cannot be contained by an insufficiently located personal existence, a finite individuality. We can very well imagine our state, the condition in which we are living in this world.

The vision of a spiritual seeker is different from the vision of a materialist, or a sensualist, or the common man on the street who sees things in a prosaic way. We are here seated in this hall as spiritual aspirants, not as purchasers in a market or business people with a give-and-take policy. Inasmuch as this is our inward longing, we have to learn the art of seeing things as they really are in relation to ourselves as we really are.

We find all this too much for us because, as I stated, anything that looks too much cannot be contained by the little mind. Even God is too much for us. It cannot be conceived; and any amount of prayer to God does not seem to satisfy us because it is too much for us. The notion of it is impossible.

In order that our longing for utter spiritual perfection be fulfilled, we have to make ourselves ready to receive that gift of perfection. If all things are given to us, we must also know how to keep them safe in a particular corner of our life. We find that this is not possible because we persist in maintaining our finitude: I am this person, and nothing more, nothing less.

Even in advanced spiritual aspiration and heightened forms of meditations, the personality consciousness does not leave us. It is an inveterate clinging habit of the mind to this particular body only, which it has inherited, right from

its inception. The attachment to this body is so strong because it is manufactured by our mind. It is not made by somebody else. We ourselves have created this body for a specific purpose. What is that purpose?

It is common knowledge that this is not our only life. We have lived many other types of life also in our earlier incarnations. The desire to live is so strong that it overwhelms us every moment of time, and will not allow us to speak on any other issue except this particular intensity of longing to exist in this body only.

When everything goes, we must be physically alive. Life is saved: I have come back safe; I am alive. This satisfaction is greater than the satisfaction of owning the whole world as one's property. One may lose the whole world, but one cannot lose one's body. That is the dearest and nearest thing. Though we imagine that family, gold and silver, husband, wife and children are the dearest and nearest ones, it is not true. When the time for it comes, we will know who is dearest. It is our self only.

This body is clung to by the mind because through the various incarnations one has experienced, one has also developed certain longings connected with the finitude of this body. Desires arise only when there is finitude of consciousness; otherwise, there cannot be any desire. So, every incarnation, every life, is a finitude of living. A desire for overcoming that finitude arises artificially in terms of sensory activity; that procedure adopted by the sense organs is called desire.

Since the asking for conditions favouring breaking up the limitations of finitude is insurmountably large, the desires cannot be fulfilled in one life. One can go on amassing all the conditions needed, the appurtenances necessary for enhancing the situation of oneself to become larger in size. The finite gets still larger, but yet it is finite only. Even if you are as stout as the sky, you are still a finite being only, because there is a limitation even to that.

Because of this finitude of longing which is characteristic of every human individual, desires pour themselves on the corresponding finitude of objects endlessly, like rain water. But, since all desires cannot be fulfilled in one life, the particular body which was created for the purpose of the fulfilment of a set of desires cannot become adequate for that purpose; it is shed and death takes place. Since desires have not been fulfilled entirely, the unfulfilled ones concretise themselves, become hardened, as it were, in space and time, in the form of a new body, which is called the birth of a new individual.

This is the reason for this drama of coming and going being played by everyone in this world. Unless desires cease, there cannot be true satisfaction of a non-finite nature. We shall have only finite happiness, which is not what we actually want.

In order to entertain in our mind even the notion of perfection or the existence of God, we have to raise the status of our mind to a particular level commensurate with the largeness of the object that we are longing for. This preparatory process is called ethical perfection, moral restraint, *tapasya*, and the like, which we hear of in our scriptures and from our Gurus and masters. Intense *tapas* is necessary in order to make this finite individuality capable of even entertaining the idea of the Infinite.

One great philosopher said, "Whether God is or God is not, is not important. What is wonderful is that this little mind of a puny individual with a small brain can conceive such an infinitude as God. That is a greater wonder than even the wonder of God's real existence." How are we able to contain this thought of endlessness while we are ourselves limitedly situated in this little body, in one place only?

That is to say, we are basically, in the root of our roots, not made up of only finite stuff. The iceberg of our personality has a large base, and only its tip is seen on the surface as this particular body. In this ocean of life, we are

like a mass of incalculably wide iceberg, with layers and layers, one over the other, tapering off into a little top, a peak, which is this limited body of ours, connected with the conscious mind, as we call it. But there are layers of this iceberg inside which are the potentials of our personality; they are made manifest partially, occasionally, in our day-to-day conscious operations.

Psychologists tell us that among the various levels of this iceberg of human individuality, at least three can be distinguished as the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious. We can divide this iceberg into many other possible layers also. The conscious level is the retail commodity that the owner of the shop keeps outside for the perception of customers. The entire shop is not visible; it is behind. He brings a little bit from his godown, which stores the entire resource of the shop; a few bags he will bring out, so that out of these few bags he may sell one or two. These one or two that are being sold are the conscious; the few bags which are behind are the subconscious; and the invisible storehouse is the unconscious. Similarly, some portion is let out for meeting the demands of conscious existence, which is the littlest part of our personality coming in contact with the littlest part of the world. It is just like scratching the top of the iceberg.

Our potentials are very deep, and as wide as space and time itself. By a psycho-analytical process we have to bring our buried impulses to the subconscious and conscious levels and make ourselves known perfectly to our own selves also. A spiritual seeker should know what he is made of. There should not be any kind of imaginary feeling about oneself because if one has a complete knowledge of oneself, there may not be moods in our life.

Today we put on a long face, tomorrow we smile, and the third day we don't want to talk to anybody at all; the fourth day we say we won't eat, the fifth day we sleep, and the sixth day we run about. This shows we do not know ourselves fully. When the impulse presents itself, it takes

possession of us; we become the slave of that particular impulse and behave in that manner, under the compulsion of the pressure of that impulse. It is better to know what is there inside us.

We need not find it difficult to be honest to our own selves. "To thine own Self be true" is a wonderful spiritual statement. You have to be honest to yourself; at least you must know who you are. Let anybody say what you are, but are you fully conversant with yourself? Though we may want to know ourselves fully, we will find it difficult because of conscious attachment to this body. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, illnesses of various types, and physical relationships with family, etc., compel us to limit ourselves to this bodily perception only, and we have no time even to think. We wake up from our sleep into a world of immense activity and go to bed after immense activity, so that there is no time to think as to what is happening to us, and why we have been active at all throughout our life.

Why are you so active the whole day, sir? A labourer will say, "I have to earn something every day to maintain my family." Why do you want to maintain your family? "They belong to me; they are mine. If I don't work, I will die; the family will also die." What happens? "I will not exist at all." Your desire is to exist; your desire is not to earn bread, salary, or take care of your family and children. The desire is finally to exist: "I must exist, and that which I consider as mine should also exist." This is the mortal desire of a perishable individual.

To make ourselves ready for the cognition of this great ideal of salvation, immortal being, before us, we have to make ourselves fit for it. Only a dignitary can shake hands with a dignitary; a president meets a president, a prime minister meets a prime minister, etc. The lower and the higher do not come in contact with each other. The highest is God-consciousness, Immortal Being, Universality. This is what we call salvation. But are we fit for it? Our present

state of being has not risen to the level of that dimension which we are aspiring to be.

The necessary preparation for this great achievement is crisply and briefly stated to be a form of *tapas*, or intense heating up of the person by the restraint of the sense organs. A person given to sensory activity, sensuousness, or desires connected with these activities of the body cannot understand what *tapas* means. We feel that we gain by sensory contact, and lose by separation from objects of sense. This is our false notion about things and our life. On the other hand, the case is the reverse. We gain by restraint of the senses. We lose by giving them a long rope.

What do we gain by the control of the senses? Energy quantum which is depleted by the contact of the senses with objects returns to itself and we get energised. It is like the river water rising to a high level of power when a *bandh* is put over it. Sense control is a *bandh* put on sensory activity, and the energy quantum rises to an optimum level. That is why we feel strong by the act of even three days' restraint of the sense organs. It generates heat of the character that is seen in any kind of energy.

In the creational hymns of the Vedas and the Upanishads it is said that the Supreme Being did *tapas*. He contemplated intensely and concentrated the Cosmic Mind for the purpose of the oncoming creation, say the scriptures.

Any successful endeavour can reach its fulfilment only by concentration, and not by distribution of the activity of the sense organs. The mind becomes weak by getting channelised through five different modes of cognition, called sensation. If there are five holes in a pot filled to the brim with water, water will run out through five different holes, with pressure divided fivefold through these apertures; but if there is only one hole, it will rush with greater force because it has only one channel. Thus, in concentration, which is the directing of the mind in one

channel, we rise to a heightened form of activity, which is necessary for us in the practice of meditation.

God, especially in the form of Lord Siva, is regarded as a great renunciate, a *mahavairagta*, a *tyagi*, owning nothing. This is how we picture Lord Siva. The idea is that God owns nothing, the implication behind it being that there is no external object for God that He may long for or want.

In Milton's poem, Adam cries before God, "Great God, You have created trees, plants, and animals who move among themselves in friendship, and You have created me alone without a friend."

God says, "Do you know, my dear child, that I have been alone ever since eternity, even before I created the world? Do you believe that I am unhappy and feeling alone to myself?"

"No Master, You do not feel unhappy. You are all bliss."

"If I can be all bliss, and eternally satisfied by being alone to myself, why should you not be happy by being alone to yourself? Anyway, because you ask for another, I shall provide you with another." And so, the twin becomes created, as the Bhagavata, the Vishnu Purana or the Bible says. This is actually the picture of the creational process and the condition in which we are placed.

The reversal of this process is *tapas*. Coming down from the centre to the circumference of creation is the descent into a worsened form of suffering; the withdrawal of attention from this peripheral activity through the circumference of creation, by the restraint of the sense organs, bringing the energy of the senses back into the mind and concentrating on what you want finally—that is *tapas*, and meditation is the highest *tapas*. Anything that is contributory to this meditational process is also *tapas*. Anything that will put an end to the excessive activity of the sense organs, in any manner whatsoever, is *tapas*.

But, one has to be very cautious in performing *tapas* because the Bhagavadgita criticises, condemns, foolish types of *tapas*. *Tapas*, restraint of the sense organs, does not mean torture of the sense organs, penalising the body, or bringing harm to one's own health. *Tat tāmasam udāhṛtam* (BG 17.22), says Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Such *tapas* is called idiotic, *tamasic*.

Narada prevents the children of Prachetasa from going into utter meditation while the intention of the father was that they should go for meditation for the purpose of procreation. Narada said, "This is not worth the while. Curb the desire for procreation. Do not go for it." And they withheld this intention, got up from the water and retired from the place, which was contrary to the wish of the father. He cursed Narada, "You have spoiled my children!" His reason was that a person who has not tasted the world cannot retire from the world.

We have to conquer the world before reaching God; we should not go defeated by the world. So, I repeat from memory what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say. "Only a king in the previous life can be a *sannyasin* in this birth, because you have seen the whole world of satisfaction as an emperor, and so you are now capable of being a *sannyasin*. You don't want anything, because you had everything. A pauper cannot be a *sannyasin*; a beggar is not a recluse. To have nothing, though one would have all things, is not *tapas*. You should have got everything, and seen everything, obtained everything, and got fed up with everything; then you retire from the whole thing." This is the psychology behind the *ashrama dharma*: *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanprastha* and *sannyasa*. Stage by stage you overcome the world. You do not retire from the world defeated, getting thrown out by the world.

Moderation is called for in our understanding of the relation between body and soul, sense organs and objects, God and the world. Just as we can become materialists by thinking that the world alone is real and there is no God,

and become ethereal idealists by imagining that God alone is there in the heavens and the world is nothing, is to be kicked out, so also we may imagine that this body is an evil because we want the soul only—that the objects are tempters to be condemned. All these are extreme ideas that spiritual seekers may have. Spiritual practice is not an extreme of any kind; it is a golden medium of rapport between the visible and the invisible, body and soul, sense organs and the objects, God and creation.

Thus, to be a spiritual seeker is hard. One has to be tremendously cautious from moment to moment to see that no mistake is committed in our enthusiasm, even if it is in the right direction. Even while moving in the right direction, we may commit a mistake due to extremes of enthusiasm. Moderation is the watchword; understanding, *viveka*, is compulsory in our successful movement towards spiritual perfection.

Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti (Katha 1.3.14): As if walking on the edge of a sword or a razor, so subtle is this path of the spirit—impossible to understand, difficult to grasp, and more difficult to practise. Therefore, to gird up our loins for this supreme purpose, a tremendous will is necessary, and an equally great understanding is called for.

Chapter 4

UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION OF LIFE

The outcome of our earlier discussions centres round the conclusion that the properties constituting the sense organs move towards the very same properties that constitute the world of objects. That is to say, the affinity between the characters of the perceiving or cognising organs and the structure of the objects is the reason behind sense perception. It is as if friends meet friends. This is something easy to understand. Similar things attract each other; dissimilar things repel each other.

While the river moves with a great force towards the ocean, the ocean can receive the river with a greater force than the river can muster. All the rivers jointly cannot face the power of the ocean. Likewise, it may be said that the sense organs, which are like the rivers moving towards the sea of the objects of sense, may find themselves faced with a large tumultuous ocean of objectivity which they cannot easily comprehend, and cannot exhaust with all their might and mane.

This is the reason why there is no end for sense desires. Any amount of water poured into the ocean cannot satisfy the ocean. It is not only that all our desires conceived through the sense organs or their activity cannot be fulfilled by the objects of the world; but much more than that, the world of objects can create more desires. Inasmuch as there is an endless repertoire in this stock of the oceanic expanse of the world of objects, the sense organs can never feel that they have exhausted the resources of the world by their contact with them. This is evidently the reason behind the

great statement of the seer of the Upanishads that the pull of the world is greater than the pull of the sense organs towards the objects.

The world can attract us with a greater might and ferocity than can be conceived by the velocity of the sense organs. The sense organs are strong enough, impetuous enough, but the power of the objects spread throughout the world of Nature is insurmountable. The force of objectivity can see to it that the senses get completely dried up, and the owner of the senses perishes without having achieved fulfilment of this infinite desire.

Finite individuality with finite sensations cannot contain the infinitude of presentation coming from the world of objects. Such is the insurmountable and inexhaustible attraction of the senses for the world of objects that several births have to be taken for even attempting to see whether the gamut of the world of objects can be covered in all the lives or incarnations through which one may pass.

The world is too big for a human individual, or any kind of individuality. Thus, desires can never be extinguished by fulfilment through contact of objects. The result of such a contact is repeated birth and death, and suffering, even at the time of this so-called pleasurable sensation of sense contact. In the beginning, it was an agony caused by the finitude of not being able to obtain the objects of desire; in the end, at the time of passing, it is again the agony that the desired result has not followed from the activity of the senses.

Even in the little span of life midway between the birth and the death of the individual, it is agony for various reasons, such as: How long will the object be with me? It can vanish for various reasons. If it is gold and silver and land and property and house, for well-known reasons, one can lose them. If they are human individuals, there can be bereavement. Many other causes known to human history can suffice to describe the agony of the human being

throughout life, from birth to death. It is because of this turmoil and tragic background of human existence in the midst of the objects of the world that life has been called *samsara*, an aberration from the truth of life.

In one way, the movement of the sense organs towards the objects seems to be a natural activity because of the affinity already existing between the senses and their objects, due to the properties *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* preponderating both in the sense organs and the objects. While this is conceded and appears natural and irresistible, there is an element of unnaturalness also behind it which is the source of sorrow, because if it had been entirely natural and normal, nobody would suffer in search of sense pleasures.

Where is the unnaturalness? It is secret. It is a hidden mystery that Nature keeps under her armpit without disclosing it to anybody. She would see that we dance to her tunes until we die. Her secrets should not be known to us because if we know the secret of the magician, we cannot enjoy the performance.

Why does the world attract us? One of the reasons is what has been already mentioned: the commensurability and the affinity of properties with properties. But something more is there about it, which is the tragedy behind it. That is the secret of the magician which has to be revealed—namely, why do the senses move towards the objects if the objects are made of the same stuff as they are made of? Will gold move towards gold? Is gold not sufficient unto itself? The fact that all the substances that go to constitute or form the world of objects are within us should make us ponder as to why we are dissatisfied with that stuff in us, and want to eat, grab, and possess that same stuff which is elsewhere.

How is it that we are dissatisfied with that thing which we have, and want to have the very same thing which is elsewhere? What is the great mystery behind this? Why

does even a wealthy man want to grab somebody's property as if his wealth is insufficient?

Here is a secret that is behind the operations of Nature, as there are people pulling the wires behind the screen to make puppets dance. The puppets do not dance; they are moved by someone pulling the strings to which these puppets are connected. We are dancing. Active we are. We run about every day here and there doing many a thing because we are made to dance, as puppets, by strings pulled by somebody else behind the operative phenomenon of visible Nature.

Bhūmir āponalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva ca (BG 7.4). There are two kinds of nature, says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. "Earth, water, fire, air, ether—these are my natural manifestations. *Apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām* (BG 7.5). But there is another secret of mine, which is above and beyond and far transcendent to the visible nature which is, of course, my nature."

The magician says, "Beautiful are my performances, but there is a secret behind my performances which should be considered as more beautiful. My wisdom in deceiving you is really more wondrous than the way in which I deceive you." This is what Nature will tell us, finally.

Like fish caught by the fisherman's bait who think that they are catching a tasty dish but never realise that it is to their death, we are grabbed by the objects while imagining that we are grabbing them. As the world is too large, its power overwhelms us and we meekly submit to the pressure exerted upon our sense organs by the vast arena of objectivity.

Now, it is for the spiritual seekers to go deep into this matter. Why is it that sense control is necessary, if the senses come in contact with the objects in a natural manner, on account of affinity of properties? The reason for self-control is the very mistake that we are committing in this working for the affinity between two sides of Nature. It is

indescribable as to how we can persuade ourselves to be dissatisfied with what we have, and try to be satisfied with the very same thing somewhere else. This enigma is the secret behind the so-called pleasures of life, and also the sorrows of life.

The senses do not really derive pleasure from the objects. They are deceived into that feeling. Why are they deceived in this way? Because of some subtle operation taking place behind them—the higher nature, as mentioned—being there behind and beyond the lower nature, which is confronting us in the form of the objects of sense.

It is worth knowing what happens when our sense organ comes in contact with an object. We only know that there is a contact of the sense with the object, but what happens behind the screen is not known to us at that time because we are struck with the wonderment of the beauty and the satisfying character of the object to such an extent that we cannot think what is happening to us. We may, in a way, say that the object brainwashes the senses and prevents them from knowing what is happening.

When the contact of the sense organ with the object has not taken place, there is a distress felt within, due to the reason that the longed-for thing has not been obtained. Therefore, a person who longs for a particular object feels grieved inside and does not want to talk to anybody until he comes in contact with that object. He would fast and lose sleep until that object comes into his possession.

When the object appears to be coming nearer, the prospect of its possible possession lessens the agony caused by the absence of such a contact, and there is a slight pleasure that it is coming near. This satisfaction is called *priya*, a slight titillation of the nervous system under the apprehension that what we require comes, and it is nearby. When it is nearer still, *priya* becomes *moda*, a deeper satisfaction that it is, after all, in the vicinity and it is soon going to be ours. When it is possessed, there is *pramoda*, or

heightened satisfaction, and the mind ceases to think in terms of that object.

The thinking of the object was the source of the sorrow. That it has not been possessed is the sorrow. Now it has been possessed and, therefore, the sorrow ceases. There is deep satisfaction. From where has this satisfaction arisen? From the object? How have we imported pleasure from the object? How has it entered us, when it is really outside us?

Even the closest contact of oneself with the desired object still keeps the object as an external something. It does not enter the person. Even the closest and the nearest contact of a desired object does not mean that it is possessed. Unless it is part of our being, it cannot be regarded as having been possessed, and no object can become our being because it has its own independence. Thus, nobody can possess anything permanently in the world, except in a state of delusion.

Now, coming to the point, when the desire for the object ceases on account of the feeling that it has already been possessed, the distress caused by that desire also ceases. When the distress ceases, what happens at that flash of a second—before another agony starts that it may run away, leave us, we may lose it, somebody may grab it, and something may happen to it—between that subsequent possible feeling of another sorrow and the cessation of the earlier sorrow, there is a modicum of gap of the cessation of desire, in which context the immortal Atman within reflects itself in the mind and flashes forth as immense bliss. This is sense satisfaction.

The poor Atman, unknown to everybody, unrecognised, disliked, never cared for, comes to our rescue to give us this motherly affection even during the idiotic activity that we are entering into by sensory contact. Hence, now we can know why we are both happy and unhappy, simultaneously, when we come in contact with a sense object.

Sadhakas should, therefore, beware of this mischievous activity taking place in the world everywhere for everyone

whose sense organs are active in respect of the objects outside. The lower nature tempts, the higher nature gives satisfaction. Both the natures are working within us at different times, and under different conditions.

As explained, the power of the sense organs is immense. *Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ* (BG 2.60): Very strong is the gale, the tornado, the whirlwind of the movement of the senses. They can pull the mind in their own direction, as a whirlwind can uproot trees and throw them in the direction it moves.

Balavan indriya-gramo vidvamsam api karshati (SB 9.19.17): The cumulative power of the sense organs is such that in an unguarded moment, anyone can fall victim. The guarding of oneself against such mischievous activity of the sense organs is the beginning of spiritual practice, the commencement of real *sadhana*. When such is the power of the senses and the objects, how would we succeed in restraining the activity of the senses and revert into the Atman, from where alone we received the joy, even through the process of sense contact?

A great concentrated effort is called for; preparations galore are necessary. The *sadhana-chatushtaya* mentioned in the scriptures, *viveka*, *vairagya*, *sadshampat* and *mumukshutva*, say at the very beginning that we have to exercise our understanding before we start doing anything. Even in worldly activities, understanding precedes action. We cannot jump into a project without knowing what it is that we are embarking upon. The *viveka* spoken of here under the system of *sadhana-chatushtaya*, or the fourfold necessary qualification preparatory to higher spiritual practice, is the capacity to know the distinction between what is unreal and what is real—or, we may say, the distinction to be drawn between the working of the lower nature and the higher nature.

The lower nature pulls the centre in the direction of the circumference of things. The higher nature draws everything towards the centre. One is centrifugal and the

other is centripetal. Both these activities are taking place in us. Spiritual seekers have a dual feeling, mostly. They cannot say that they are not in the world. Even the best spiritual seeker may find sometimes that the world is too much for him. It is impossible to resist it. The beauties of the world cannot be simply bypassed. Everyone knows what the world can give.

A poverty-stricken, financially poor spiritual seeker who has not seen what wealth is cannot ignore the fact that his ignorance of the values of life cannot be regarded as a spiritual virtue. That we do not have a thing does not mean that we do not want to have it. In the initial enthusiasm, spiritual aspirants are pumped up into a sudden outburst of inner activity making them leave their home and disconnect themselves from all that is near and dear, and resort to places where they think that they can be alone. There is no aloneness in this world. Everywhere we are in the world.

Bringing the analogy of the properties of objects, we can say the very same properties that constitute the father and mother and house and fields, etc., also constitute that place where we are living independently.

A starved individual can eat even a dry stick and it will be tasty. If we do not eat food for fifteen days, we will never complain against any diet. Everything is beautiful, and we gobble it. But if we eat three meals every day, we find that this is not all right, that is not all right; there will be all sorts of complaints against the dish that is served.

A starved individual is not to be regarded as a spiritual aspirant. Either we ought to have seen the world thoroughly, if it is possible, in which case as a king wanting no more of the kingdom, having seen through it thoroughly, we may resort to aloneness; or, if this is not practicable—nobody can be a king and enjoy the world thoroughly—then we have to exercise great philosophic wisdom and penetrating rationality to understand things both outwardly and inwardly so that, right from the beginning, we are

guarded against any kind of onslaught of the objects by our miscalculation.

The *viveka* that is spoken of is described as *nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*. The permanent and the impermanent have to be distinguished. This requires great rational and philosophical investigation. What are impermanent things, fleeting things, unsubstantial things? From this little analysis of sense contact and the pleasure thereof, we would gather that everything is fleeting. There is destruction of close contacts with anything in this world, due to the operations of history and the activities of Nature. Which is permanent in the world? We cannot say that even our breath is a permanent process. We are not masters of our breathing activity. We are breathing unconsciously. In a sense, our life is an unconscious activity. We are not consciously operating our brain, heart, lungs, or the breathing process.

Freedom is not this kind of living. Being subject to pressure and unknown principles operating behind us in every manner cannot be regarded as a life of freedom. Yet, people talk of freedom, saying they are independent individuals, though they are subjects to the core. Thus, like Buddha, who discovered that everything is a fluxation like a moving river or a burning flame which is not a stable object, covet not the objects of the senses under the impression that they are permanent, solid objects. There are no solid objects in this world, even according to discoveries of modern science. There are only forces, electrical charges, space-time complexities, which appear as concrete presentations before us in the form of objects. Objects, solidly speaking, do not exist. Therefore, a craving for solid objects, permanent things in the world, is pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp. It is running after a shadow.

And, from the analogy we cited, we also came to know that the happiness even in sense contact comes not from the object of the senses. It comes from somewhere else, which we have neglected throughout our life.

When the son is in a tragic condition, many a time the mother is the only rescue. Everyone else will desert him. The mother's love is greater than the love of anybody else, and this dear mother, which is the Atman within us, comes to our rescue. Even when we were going astray totally, the Atman was giving us a jot of pleasure. It could have refused to give that; then we would have died in one second. But even in the worst of conditions through which we are passing, it is there at our beck and call.

Suḥṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati (BG 5.29): “Know me as the friend of all. Under the worst condition in which you are passing, I am your friend. I shall come to you. All the friends will leave you, the best of associations will desert you, condemn you, crucify you, hang you, for the least of your faults. But I shall be there at your rescue.” Remember this great verse of the Bhagavadgita. “Know me as your friend,” says the great God of the universe, planted within us as the Atman scintillating all bliss, all joy, an ocean of satisfaction.

Knowing this, *viveka*, rational investigation, understanding, is to be exercised by every spiritual seeker. When this understanding takes fruit, true *vairagya*, or the spirit of dissociation from fleeting phenomena, takes place automatically. Who will jump into a pit, knowing that there is a pit in front? If we do not know that there is a pit, even an elephant can fall inside.

You have to know that this world is made up of fleeting phenomena, not solid substances and, therefore, you cannot love anything with any common sense. Then whom are you going to love? That great friend who has promised you all things. *Yogaḥṣemaṁ vahāmy aham* (BG 9.22): “I shall give you everything that you want, and guard you from every tragedy and suffering.” Somebody says that; find out who it is. The ignored friend comes now to the rescue of this aberrant prodigal son. Thus *vairagya*, or true detachment from fleeting phenomena, automatically takes place on the exercise of pure reason, *viveka*. Then these two effects

follow, namely *viveka* and *vairagya*, in the true sense of the term. We have to emphasise 'true sense of the term'. It is not *abhava vairagya*, or the renunciation caused by absence of things, but having enough of things, we do not want them. When these two effects preponderate, when there is *viveka* and *vairagya*, the other emotional satisfying qualities also follow automatically.

The philosophical investigation has brought out a philosophical detachment, and now there is a need for emotional satisfaction. There should not be any kind of subtle longing that all the glory of the Earth has been lost. *Sama, dama, uparati, titiksha, sraddha, samadhana* are mentioned as the noble qualities to be seen automatically in a person who is detached from sense objects and perpetually exercising clear understanding. Calm and quiet is that individual. He is not irritated; he cannot be disturbed by the events of the world, because the events of the world have now been known in their true nature. They cannot cause any anxiety; they are passing phenomena. The serenity of the mind achieved in this manner brings about also a subdual of the activity of the sense organs, called *dama*. The agitations of the senses cease slowly, gradually, because of understanding.

The greatest power in this world is understanding; everything else comes afterwards. Physical strength is no strength; money strength is no strength. The strength of understanding is real strength. One must know everything in its truth and in its depths. Then one becomes calm and quiet. *Śānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvā* (BU 4.4.23) says the Upanishad. He ceases from unnecessary activity. It is not that he is inactive. The Bhagavadgita is again a great warning to us. The person who has ceased from desiring objects of sense is not necessarily a physically inert individual. There is an activity of a different type altogether.

One who is detached from the things of the world can work greater wonders in the world than those who are

connected to the things of the world. We are, many a time, under the wrong impression that successful activity is a result of intense concern and desire for the result of that activity. It is not the case. Detached activity also brings with it the power of perpetual satisfaction arising from another source altogether than the activity itself. The satisfaction behind activity is not from the activity. It is another thing altogether, which is universally operating. This is why the Bhagavadgita insists on a kind of perpetual activity based on a universal knowledge. Karma Yoga is based on Buddhi Yoga. Karma Yoga is not activity only; it is not work. It is an operation that is unavoidably undertaken by a person involved in the process of Nature—participating in the work of God Himself, as it were, but wanting nothing for oneself because in this understanding, one has realised the fact that there is no such thing as ‘oneself’. The ‘oneself’ has gone completely, like a wisp of wind, in the light of this analysis of the unsubstantiality of things which appear as solid objects.

Then, the power of endurance, *titiksha*, also follows at the same time. We can bear certain difficulties by the power of understanding so that we will not grieve if we lose something that is dear to us. It is to be tested for the good of everyone, what one feels when one loses what one considers as very necessary. Just think over: You have a very valued wristwatch. It is lost. What do you feel at that time? Test your mind. And if you lose a more valuable thing, what happens to the emotions inside at that time? That also is to be seen by every spiritual seeker.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj gave certain humorous suggestions for testing oneself: You are clean and neat, having taken a bath and put on beautiful clothing, and somebody inadvertently throws an ink pot on you. What do you feel at that time? You yourself have to see what your feelings would be. There are many other things mentioned in that little series of advice by Swamiji Maharaj.

Thus, persistence in one's practice in the light of the higher understanding mentioned, cessation of emotional longing for the objects of sense, power of endurance—all these follow spontaneously from a correct analysis of the situation of life and perpetual meditation on it, so that one may not forget even for a moment this truth that is discovered. With these preparations we have to move forward in the direction of our destination.

Chapter 5

THE SUBLIMATION OF DESIRE

Human nature, generally speaking—even when it concerns itself with such things as God, religion, and the like—makes sure that it does not lose its own accepted ground, and unconsciously, as it were, it galvanises its notions of the ultimate meaning of life with its predisposed human characteristics. This happens for the reason that a human being cannot easily be other than a human being.

We have studied earlier, in our previous sessions, that there are levels of human nature. We are not a solid block of individuality. We are a complex structure, with strata of involvements, with different degrees of the levels of development through which we have passed in our various incarnations.

We have varieties of qualities within us, qualities which do not stand outside us. They are part and parcel of our very existence itself. We have the inertness, the lethargy, and the unconscious stability of a stone or inanimate matter, into which level we can descend under certain conditions. We have the appetite of the urge for life, as we see in plants and trees in the vegetable kingdom; and there is no need to mention that we have every quality of an animal which can manifest under given conditions. That they are not revealed in our conscious human way of living does not mean that they are not existent.

The intellect checks the manifestation of these lower instincts. The reason sees to it that, for its own obvious advantage in personal and public life as a human being, these lower strata do not manifest themselves and come to the upper level of consciousness. A forced suppression, as

it were, is exerted upon certain layers of our personality by certain other layers which take an upper hand. This is why we are something sometimes, and something else at other times. This is also the reason why we have moods and predilections, whims and fancies, and sudden desires which cannot be rationally explained.

It is necessary to know all these things about our own selves when we take to the spiritual path. "Nothing is lost," is a statement in the Bhagavadgita. When this pithy statement is made, many things are implied. The context in which this is said is that even a little that we do in the direction of our movement towards perfection will be an asset and a gain to us, and even a modicum of it will not be lost.

We can extend this meaning to many other levels and areas of our life and say that nothing is lost. All that we have brought as our heritage from previous incarnations, also, is not lost. Nothing can be destroyed ultimately, though there are suggestions that things can be transformed, transmuted into certain other levels and conditions; but there is no destruction, as such, of anything that is truly existent.

When we take to spiritual life, mostly the conscious level is active. We are all now seated in this hall, consciously thinking in one level of our psyche. The entire potentiality of the psyche is not manifest now at this moment, because the deeper layers of the psyche are irrelevant to the purpose for which we are seated here. So, there is a choice made by the psychic content very intelligently and cleverly, shrewdly, to see that only the necessary appurtenances of its storage are brought to the surface for presentation in public life, also and personal life, at the conscious level. But this is not to understand human nature entirely.

That we necessarily behave in a particular way at a particular time may be a rational device which we consider as unavoidable for our existence in one level, in one

context of our existence. But we do not belong only to human society. This adjustment that we are making is in terms of our relationship with human society. We know how we have to behave with people, but it is not sufficient if we are intelligent enough to behave with people only, because the structure of the universe is not made of only human beings. The cosmological studies of the structure of the universe will reveal that man is not everything. There are other beings, other textures of constituent individuality which also reign supreme in other levels of existence, other degrees of reality, other planes of being.

We inherit a part of each one of these layers of cosmic existence, and they are microcosmically present in us. In a miniature form, the whole world is inside us and we are actually living a sort of cosmic life even when we imagine that we are living a human life. But the pressure that is put by the conscious level of human nature prevents such considerations as these, and we do not bother to think that we are something different from, or more than, what we are made to appear in our personal human relations.

Spiritual life is not social life. This is something very important to remember. So, any expert adjustment and success that we achieve in society does not mean that we have achieved any success in spiritual life. This illusion must be removed from the mind. Since we have been told again and again, and it is driven into our ears that humanity is something great, society is worthwhile, service is a must, and we have been hearing this from all corners in textbooks, in societies, in public lectures, in rostrums, in churches and temples and everywhere, we have no time to think that there is more truth in this than what is told us. Social relations do not exhaust the spiritual content of life. As a matter of fact, spirituality is not a relation. It is an indivisibility of what we are that is gradually brought into the surface of experience in our spiritual meditations.

When we are ready to take up this task of living a spiritual life in right earnest, the whole structure of our

personality will get shaken up. It is like declaring an emergency in a government; everyone is all eyes and all ears and cannot afford to sleep and woolgather. If we are really honest in our pursuit, the entire personality rises up in all alertness, thinking, "What is going to happen?" But if our attention is only slipshod, we are giving only lip sympathy to our spiritual meditations, they understand that we are bluffing, and so these inner potentialities will sleep. They don't bother. But if we are determined, they will also be determined. The whole thing will be roused into action.

What are the things that will be roused into action? Whatever we have in us, and whatever we are made of. All that we have suppressed and hidden from our own eyes and from the eyes of others will come up into the daylight of experience. This will not normally happen in ordinary cases of initial spiritual practice. No gods, no devils will be seen in meditation. In the beginning everything will look all right. But the world will get stirred up into an unprecedented activity. The quarters will be shaken, as it were, because of the power that we exert in our determined intention to go forward in the right direction.

Even this determination is not easy to have. The lower levels of personality mentioned are a large area of our own being and condition even our conscious thinking. This is highlighted very much, persistently, in Western psychoanalytic circles, to the extent that they have proclaimed that all conscious thought is a camouflage of subconscious and unconscious potentials.

Even our freedom of choice is a chimera, because that also is conditioned by the requirements of the inner layers of our psyche. Thus, it is to be seen that our determination to move along the right path for the achievement of perfection is not sullied by any kind of detracting and sidetracking activity of the inner nature. This is why I said in the beginning itself that even when we are concerned with God, spirituality, religion, etc., we would be very

careful to see that we don't lose our human outlook, and even our human desires.

Many a time, these whispers will come from inside: What are my requirements? Who will answer this question? You will answer the question. And who are you? All this human nature mentioned in all its potentials, what are its requirements? Normally, except under certain influences from outside—such as study of scriptures, company of *mahatmas*, etc.—the idea of God will not arise in the mind. If you ask any person what he wants, he will not be able to answer this question abruptly, because he does not know what he wants in particular, inasmuch as it appears that he wants too many things.

The manifoldness of desire is a characteristic of the manifold potentialities of our submerged level of being. What we call obstacles in meditation are not brought by externally operating angels or gods in upper regions. Actually, these so-called upper regions also are centred in our inner being itself. The roots of the total universe is supposed to be within us; the operations of the gods in heaven, also, are to some extent related to what we are in our own selves. The obstacles, the difficulties, the confusions, and various problems that we face in our meditations are the consequences of the gradual manifestation of unattended potentials within our own selves.

Why is it that we are not paying any attention to these potentials inside? It is because we are too much occupied with conscious relationships in human society. For us, human beings are everything, as if nothing else exists. And if our relationship with people gets on very well, we think that we are a success in life. This is not so. The world can topple us even if we are a socially successful person, because there is another world altogether which we have completely ignored. No man can help us when the world stands against us, so social success is no success. Yet, we

may go for it, due to the weakness of human nature operating mostly on the conscious level.

Spiritual seekers have to find time to go deep into this subject. Why are you in the ashram, if you have no time to think along these lines? Don't say you are busy, and so on. What are you busy for, sir? Your being busy is only an involvement in the human atmosphere, which has to be taken care of in an appropriate manner conducive to your spiritual progress. Your social adjustment should not be contrary to the requirements of spiritual nature. Else, you can be a good businessman, nobody objects to it. Why talk of God and such things?

It is necessary to see what we are inside, basically and honestly, to our own selves. Many a time it may be said that we cannot know our own selves. People say, "I cannot know what is inside me." We can know, to some extent, what we have, by certain occurrences in our own life. These are very important, just as we have methods in psychoanalysis like automatic writing, dream analysis and certain studies of this nature, sudden answers to questions abruptly put to us, and the like.

When we speak, we know what we are speaking. Many times, speech hides our thoughts, though speech is supposed to express thoughts. Our process of speaking often acts like a filter through which only necessary ideas are made to manifest, and the unnecessary background of it is kept back. We do not speak all that is in our mind. Very rarely do we blurt out everything, and do so only when we are in a very peculiar, out-of-control mood.

For three hours, do not speak to anybody, and do not look at anyone; close the doors of your room and sit quiet. It is good if you can sit a little longer; I am mentioning only the minimum period. Don't read any book, and don't touch any object in the room. Sit quietly. Look at yourself. For three hours, continuously go on looking at yourself: What kind of person am I? You will know you are many things to your own self, and that self of yours is the real self. If you

are an honest seeker of truth, you would like to jot down all these feelings that arise in your mind at that time.

But if you go to a distant place, far off from human habitat, and live a long duration of time there without the usual comforts of life, you will know yourself much better than even in your room. If you stay in in an uncomfortable atmosphere in a distant place such as Uttarkashi or beyond for a long time, there will be a stimulation from inside, and voices of certain centres within you will cry for satisfaction and clamour for fulfilment.

Comforts satisfy the conscious nature, and it is then capable of not allowing the unconscious and subconscious nature to come up. When the conscious nature is not satisfied, due to lack of appurtenances for it, it cannot place an adequate check upon the manifestation of the lower levels, and they come up with all sorts of colour and hue. You have dreams which you never thought of, and desires which even in your normal life you would not have revealed. If you can honestly analyse yourself without any kind of prejudice or preconditioning, you can know something about yourself.

One of the ways that you can study yourself is to try to trace back your memories to your early childhood. Many of us can remember our early childhood, even from the age of four. Just remember what you were doing and thinking when you were four, five or six. What did you do at that time? Write it down. And you should not say it is irrelevant or meaningless. It is you in one state that did it, and you have not become another person now. You have grown into a larger dimension of that very thing which you thought and did in the early development of your personality. Trace your mind back: Afterwards, where was I, in my subsequent years of life? Very carefully, little by little, bit by bit, threadbare, remember what you saw, what you felt, what you did, and what you desired.

Make a repertoire of all your experiences until today, right from your childhood. This will be a little biography of

your nature, and you cannot be totally different from that. Though you have outgrown much of it, the little modicum of it is still present inside. That little petty, humble desire that you had when you were a baby, a child of four or five or six, will sometimes haunt you even today.

Early childhood experiences are a very important subject for psychological studies. Our present-day feelings, experiences, etc., our reactions to conditions and circumstances in life today at this moment, are very often determined by all the experiences we had in our childhood when we were with our parents. Our reactions and actions with our parents and neighbourhood, our relations, brother and sister, and so on, are brought into a cumulative force and hidden in our lower nature. It is built up into our present personality; it has not gone.

Even if you had one small desire when you were a little child and it could not be fulfilled, you should not ignore that particular desire: "When I was a boy of sixteen, I had this desire; due to some tremendous obstacle, I could not fulfil it." Even today it will eat you from your vitals. If you have forgotten it, it does not mean that it has gone. Forgetfulness is not abolition of its being. Bring it back to your conscious level. This is psychoanalysis, in some way.

If you have any such desire left unfulfilled—it may be even a petty thing, such as a desire to eat something—eat it, and be done with it. Don't say it is irrelevant. If you had a desire to see a place and could not go due to financial circumstances and many other difficulties, go there and see that place and come back. If you have any other lurking desire, see to it that it is sublimated by appropriate means.

Certain desires can be fulfilled immediately without any difficulty, and with no harm to yourself. You can know which desires are detrimental and which are simple and can easily be fulfilled, such as a cup of coffee or even going to see a picture. If you have a great longing to see a film, go and see it. But then tell the mind, "Enough. I cannot give

you any further permission. I have satisfied your longing, now keep quiet." Use your *viveka*, discrimination.

But there are certain desires which cannot, and should not, be fulfilled with impunity. They are to be handled in a very intelligent manner by methods which have to be studied only under a Guru. If you are intelligent enough to handle them, go ahead; but when you are under an intense pressure of a passionate mood and have a very intense desire, you cannot handle it yourself. At that time it is imperative to go to a superior who is compassionate and capable of understanding your problems. Suitable methods have to be found out.

We may wonder why we are behaving like this. It is there with a good reason. That reason has to be accepted as perfectly justified under the given conditions, and the circumstances have to be overcome, handled very carefully, with the help of a guide. Otherwise, if we go just headlong, without considering these pulls from behind, it will be like trying to cross the borders of our country without discharging our obligations to the country to which we belong. The arms of the law will catch us wherever we go, and these little things which are inside us will come with us even to the heavens. Wherever we go, even to the topmost level, these unattended potentials will pursue us like creditors and say, "We are here with you."

We have debts, say our *sastras*—varieties of debts to the world, to people, and to our own selves. These have to be discharged before we embark upon any further action along these lines. We have borrowed things, we have taken service from certain quarters of the world, and these borrowings and services received have to be repaid in a suitable manner. We cannot expect free service from the world, or from anyone. If we have taken free service without giving any compensation, it will have to be paid in some way or the other—if not in this life, then in the next life. Why should we take another life? It has to be discharged in this life itself. If we have hurt the feelings of

somebody, we cannot die with that feeling. We have to see that it is made good.

If we have injured some great saint by our foolish behaviour, we cannot leave this world with that thought. Especially with great people, masters, saints and sages, our behaviour should be very cautious. Very rightly, or humorously, I may say, the scripture says, "What happens to the *karmas* of a *jivanmukta* when he leaves his body?" The scripture says that all the good deeds that the great sage did in his life will go to all those people who have lovingly served him, taken care of him, and protected him. What will happen to all the deeds of the other kind which are not pleasant, which he might have committed earlier? They will automatically go to all those people who have insulted him, tried to harm him, and given him trouble in one way or another. This is something with great meaning that we have to study.

The point is that nothing is destroyed and nothing is lost. Everything is to be fulfilled, finally, by way of sublimation in an appropriate manner. Once the ground is firm, the march will be quick and rapid. But if the ground itself is shaking, we will not be able to take even one step ahead. Something will pull us back, and we may, many times, have to retrace our steps also. This is called the fall in spiritual or religious life. The fall is only a pull exerted by those impulses which have not been paid sufficient attention. We have not paid the income tax that is due, so we are troubled. We must pay it, and then we are free from the clutches of these difficulties. Many of the things that are inside us have to be taken care of. Discharged duties will not trouble us. And apart from the duties, what about the longings inside us?

It is very, very important to know what our desires are. Even if we are inside the ashram, there may be desires in the mind which do not pertain to the ashram. They may sometimes look irrelevant to ashram life, but they are there. You cannot say that they should not be there because you

are in the ashram. That is no good. They are there, and you have to accept it.

If you can handle it within the campus of the ashram, under the spiritual guidance of teachers within the ashram, blessed you are. But, if you have such desires which cannot be fulfilled in the ashram and you go crazy with them, you should leave this place and go somewhere else. Be comfortable somewhere, for a long time. Cleanse yourself, and then come back. There is no use worrying over the existence of something which you cannot handle. That is a tragedy. This is how you have to be honest to your own self.

We are not practising spiritual life in order to look like spiritual seekers before other people. It has nothing to do with other people at all; it is concerned with ourselves only. What is the good of appearing spiritual to others? What you appear to yourself, in your own closeted room, is what you are. Never judge yourself in terms of how you look in public life, or in the midst of people, because this experience in public is a tremendous adjustment that you are making rationally, which you will not do when you are individually existing, isolated by yourself.

So, when no adjustments are made, you are true to yourself. At that time, what are your feelings? Are you writhing with agony of some kind of thing inside? "I am caught up in this ashram unnecessarily." Do you feel like that? Or, do you feel, "No, this is a good atmosphere for me to clear all my requirements and rise upwards in a positive manner. I have every facility given by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. There is nothing lacking here."

All these varieties of study have to be made through a spiritual diary that we have to prepare for our own selves. Honesty to one's own self is the same as honesty to God. If we are dishonest to our own feelings inside, then we are not honest to anybody else, because the so-called God that we are aspiring for is speaking from inside.

All this is intelligible enough to every one of us, but when we come to brass tacks and actually start doing things practically, we will find hurdles manifesting from our own selves. Therefore, keep such company which will not irritate you or produce more desires, and have the company of some good people. There are good people in the ashram. There are saintly people, learned people, who can give guidance. To have a little discussion with them is a great blessing. Even today, we have such people here. Why should you ignore their existence and go on brooding in a negative manner, suffering inside for no reason whatsoever?

Study of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, or similar scriptures; an honest attempt to know oneself in deep meditative, contemplative practice; maintaining a healthy atmosphere around oneself; speaking what is proper, thinking what is proper, and doing what is not harmful to one's own self are all suggestions that we have to give to our own selves.

While we have guides and teachers outside, finally we will have to be our own guide and our own teacher at some time in the future. When the last moment comes, we stand to ourselves. We have nobody to guide us at that time, and whatever we think at that time will be carried forward to the next life.

The next life is not always and necessarily a bad thing. It may be a higher region. What is the harm if we are born as the son of a great sage like Vasishtha or Vyasa? If rebirth is our fate, all right, but let it be a birth in the family of such great masters. It is not that we are craving for another birth, but if it is impossible to avoid it, we have to see that it is a noble, worthwhile living, from where we can automatically go upwards, with the help received from that condition of living.

But, if we think that it is possible to end this life forever now itself, and no rebirth is required, that will burn our desires. I have mentioned certain little snippets of advice

for fulfilling or sublimating desires, but the greatest masterstroke of the fulfilment of all desires, or the burning of desires, is deep thought of God. It can, like a blazing sun, burn up all the desires. Why does it burn desires? Because all desires are centred in God-Being. God does not negate desires, but fulfils all desires.

Anantha kalyana guna sampurna is one of the qualities attributed to God. Infinite blessing and beneficent qualities are embodied in God-existence. If you want anything, all right, want it; but you will get it through God—through the proper channel, as we may say. Do not go directly, horizontally, and try to get it. Even in fulfilling a desire, it must be with permission, through the proper channel. What is that channel? Through God. Tell God, "This is what is troubling me. Give," and let Him give, if He wants to give. If He says, "No this is not good for you," He may not give it. But you don't purchase it.

Though intense longing for God will burn up all desires, and no other way of sublimation can equal it, intense love for God cannot arise due to several misconceptions regarding the notion of God Himself. One of the notions is that God is far away, He is not very near us, so we can mischievously, secretly, do something without His knowledge. That idea also creeps in, even in the best of people. "After all, some distance is there between me and God. He is very far, very distant, in seventh heaven, in Brahmaloaka." Even after the greatest and the best of learning, this thought of distance of ourselves from God will not leave us. We cannot believe that He is touching our very nose.

The second difficulty is that the world has a wealth of glorious presentations which it can give us at the mere asking. Will God give that, or will He deny it? One of the suspicions in the seeker's mind is that all our desires which are supposed to bring great pleasure, satisfaction, bliss inside, perhaps may be denied by God. It is a fear. This

thinking is the height of foolishness. God does not deny our desire, but gives us in its true reality.

When we pursue an object of desire, we are actually pursuing a shadow of that thing which is in the truth of its nature in the higher realms, in God's kingdom. When God will give you the truth behind your desire, why do you want the falsehood of it, in the form of the shapes, colours, and objectivities thereof? This again requires proper discrimination of the nature of God. There is suspicion in the mind of whether it will come.

What is the final outcome of this great struggle? This question will harass the mind of everyone at some stage, if not just now: After all, what am I going to gain with all this effort? All the world has gone, my relatives are dead. My money, property, everything has gone to ashes. I am going naked, as it were, to an unknown region, knowing not what is going to happen to me. What is all this effort for?

We hear such stories even in the biographies of saints and sages like Buddha. Great doubts come at the last moment, like a huge pit into which we can fall, and we will not know where we will be at that time. That is why in the *sadhana-chatustaya*—*viveka*, *vairagya*, *shadsampat*, and *mumukshutva*—*viveka* and *vairagya* are considered as pre-eminent characteristics to be achieved and imbibed and made one's own at the very outset; subsequent things are *shadsampat*, *mumukshutva*, etc.—longing for God. Longing for God means longing for God *only*, and not with something else. That 'only' is a word that we have to underline. That aloneness of the longing for God can take possession of us only if we are convinced that whatever the world can give us, God can also give, much more than what the world can give.

These are the ways in which we have to spend sufficient time in our daily life. We have to find time for it. There is no use saying we have no time, because if we have no time for doing something good for our own self, then what for is our time for doing all other things that are just

trash before these things? So, we must be honest to our own self—which is honesty before God—and to love God wholly, solely, as the be-all and end-all. That will burn up all longings. Even our *prarabdha* may not sting as it might otherwise, because God's interference in our life will act like the interference of a snake charmer before the cobra that is near us. It cannot do any harm. The *prarabdha* is a cobra, but God is a snake charmer. He will not allow it to come and harm us in any way. Even *prarabdha* cannot sting, and tragedies can be averted, sorrows will vanish, and all life will be blessed, if only we are true to that One who is looking at us from moment to moment. He is not far away in the high skies. He is just here and now. May these thoughts be with us always and we shall be blessed.

Chapter 6

A COMPREHENSIVE VISION OF OUR OWN SELVES

We had in our earlier sessions a thorough study of the internal structure of the human personality in its relationship to the world and objects in general. But, our relations do not get exhausted merely by a study of the psychological constitution of ourselves and the consequent relation of such a constituent personality with the world of objects.

What is ultimately real is not exhausted by either our inner psychological constitution or the externally perceived physical nature. Mostly, in an enthusiasm of empirical observation, people do not see anything beyond themselves and the world before them. All the business of life, the activity of people, and the manifold endeavours in which one engages seem to be covering only the outer shell of the substance of reality. With all the efforts of man to make himself comfortable and secure in this world, he has remained insecure and uncomfortable, which is something which everyone has to appreciate for one's own self.

From the beginning of history, materialistic science, sociological programs and political organisations have been working in a hectic manner to make life secure and happy, and trying to increase the quantum of happiness to the maximum degree. Every type of appurtenance is made available for our satisfaction, but they have not promised us final security. Finally, in the end, something opens up its inner secrets and speaks in a language which is not known to any human being, delivering a message that whatever he

has seen with his eyes, contacted with his sense organs, or felt within himself does not touch even the periphery of the substance of life.

King and beggar have gone and have been reduced to the same level of what we may call an utter negation of all the values of life. It is a great tragedy, one should say, that with all the intelligence and education of mankind, one has not been able to plant in one's program of life an element which is transcendent to the observable phenomenon of life and the available knowledge regarding one's own self through any type of psychological investigation.

One is repelled by the very thought of the word 'transcendent', which has created not only a difficulty in its comprehension, but has even frightened people out of their wits due to the fact of a peculiar suggestiveness behind that word. What is the suggestiveness? It appears to indicate the presence of something which is not of this world, which is above the world, not contactable by the apparatus of knowledge available in this world.

People have used only a single word to brush it aside as irrelevant, by calling it an other-worldly concept. Whether what is called the transcendent is really other-worldly, or it is involved in the world itself to the very core of its existence, the human brain has not always been able to appreciate.

The theories of economic salvation, political freedom, and historical revolutions have considered the very meaning of the word 'transcendent' as not only irrelevant to the practical requirements of human nature in this world, but obnoxious, defying and denying the possible efforts of man for his survival physically, economically, and in a comfortable manner.

The word 'religion', which appears to have a transcendent suggestiveness, has gone out of the world of human thinking because it seems to suggest an aspiration and a longing for something which has no connection with this world. The mind of the human being is framed in such

a manner that the relationship between the transcendent and the perceptible universe cannot easily become a program of one's practical life. There is a basic defect in the very manner in which the human mind operates. The defect is so very organic to its method of operation that it cannot be recognised as being there at all—like some persons who are perpetually sick may not even be aware that they are sick, because sickness has become part of their very life itself. The defect which is organic to human thinking is its incapacity to correlate the transcendent with the visible world of experience.

Philosophers, mystics, saints and sages have ever been proclaiming in different ways that the human mind is necessarily confined to phenomena. Mental operation is a phenomenal operation, not a transcendental one. So, it is easier to flow with the current of the river than to swim against it. The natural flow of the river of life is in the direction of the way in which the mind can think, and feel satisfied with thinking. All of us seem to be happy with the way in which we are made to think in our mind and understand through our intellect. This is a delusive happiness, which can be equated with what is implied by the statement, "Ignorance is bliss."

Any person who earnestly seeks liberation from bondage—which effort on the part of a person is usually known by the words 'yoga' or 'spirituality'—this effort has to dig deep into itself and probe within the presence of something which is not entirely a part of phenomena. It is true, agreeing with the philosophers of both the East and the West, that the mind can think only within the horizon of the phenomenal world. But the very consciousness of the world being a phenomenon is an indicator of there being something in this world, and in our own selves, which cannot be brought within the purview of a phenomenon or the entire phenomena.

The consciousness of limitation is an ambassador from a government which is above the whole realm of

phenomena. Unless there is a simultaneous awareness of there being something outside the limitations experienced in life, there would be no consciousness of limitation. If we are bound, we also know what freedom is. The consciousness of bondage has, within itself, the indication of there being such a thing called freedom. If that element were totally absent in ourselves, we would not even know that we are bound.

The inadequacies of life, the sufferings, the sorrows, and the anxieties consequent upon our way of living should suggest the presence of something which is not available in this world. If that is the case, the mind immediately concludes that it should be not in this world, but above the world. This conclusion is very hasty. The object of religion, the aim of yoga, is not outside the world, though it cannot be considered to be exhausted within the available structural pattern of the physical world.

The mind finds it difficult to conceive all these things; but *viveka*, or the power of discrimination, to which we made reference last time, is such an interesting and enlightening faculty in us. While it is outwardly bound to the perceptible world, it has also, at its root, an element which can rocket it up to a higher level, beyond the conscious perception of the world.

This is a brief introductory remark concerning the problem of the relationship between God and the world. It is not easy for even a sincere student of philosophy, religion or spirituality to give a conclusive definition of the relationship between God and the world. God is above the world. He is in heaven. He created this world. Every religion tells us that God created the world.

The creator cannot be inside that which he himself has manufactured. We do not see a carpenter sitting inside the table he has made, nor do we see the potter inside his pot. The potter is transcendent to the pot; the carpenter is transcendent to the table. The food that is cooked does not contain the cook also, inside. Here is the problem before us

in the manner of thinking connected with the relationship of God and the world. So many schools of thought and so many differences of opinion held by promulgators of the nature of the Ultimate Reality have given us messages of such a variegated nature that we have never been able to reconcile one with the other. With all our capacity to probe deeply into these philosophical truths, we cannot get over the idea that God is above the world. Incalculably far, far away, as far as the stars in the sky or even beyond, is God's kingdom—paradise, Brahmaloaka, Vaikuntha, Kailasa. They are not touching our body; they are above us.

This has created a gulf between religious living, spiritual practice, and our practical life in the world. The Bhagavadgita has tried its best to remove this misconception that what we are seeking as something transcendent beyond the world is not outside the world. A transcendent thing need not be outside that to which it is transcendent. Though the connotation, the dictionary meaning of the word, suggests that it has to be above, our experience shows that something can be transcendent without being physically, measurably distant from that which it transcends.

I have given the analogy of the educational process as one example. The higher level of education is transcendent to the lower level of education. It is above, and the higher we go in the levels of education, the more distant is that level from the kindergarten or primary school level. Now, what is the kind of distance that obtains between the highest level of education and the lowest? Can we measure it with a yardstick, or geometrically, or in any manner whatsoever? It is a very interesting example of how something can be very far, and yet, really, not far. It is far because it is high above the lowest of levels, but it is not spatially transcendent—not measurably above, not geometrically distant—but logically it appears to be transcendent.

In a similar manner, we may say that the distance of God from the world is a logical distance, and not a physically measurable one. It is a distance within consciousness itself. But, as you know very well, consciousness cannot create a distance within itself, because if it splits itself into a distant part distinguishable from another part, it would not be even conscious that such a distance is existing. As I mentioned, the consciousness of limitation implies the consciousness of that which is above limitation, so there cannot be a division of consciousness. So, logical distance is an intriguing operation of consciousness itself, which makes it possible for God to be far, far away from the world and all of us, and yet be within us at the same time. That which is deepest at the core of our being can be also very far from us in a sense quite different from the way we measure things or understand distance in space and time.

These are the roots behind all our doubts, difficulties and problems in spiritual practice, yoga practice, *japa* and meditation, and various other exercises which we engage ourselves in as seekers of the Ultimate Reality. We will face these problems. Sometimes, these problems do not seem to be there at all in the earlier stages, because we are very sure that we are doing *sadhana* when we roll our beads, chant a mantra, study a scripture, perform a worship, go on a pilgrimage, and so on. We are quite comfortable with this. But, doubts also are intelligent creatures. They do not come and harass us unless there is a necessity to come and place themselves before us. When we are bent upon moving forward in our meditations, we will stir up the inner constituents of the mind, and the mind will be frightened as to what will happen to it. The phenomenal components of the mind will get disturbed, as the milk gets disturbed when we churn it to make butter.

Only in an appreciably advanced stage of meditation and spiritual practice will these problems come and face us as unexpected guests, and it will not be easy for us to

decipher what is actually before us. To repeat what I have told you sometime earlier, Patanjali has given us a large catalogue of the difficulties that we may have to face in the practice of yoga. *Vyādhi styāna saṁśaya pramāda ālasya avirati bhrāntidarśana alabdhabhūmatva anavasthitatvāni cittavikṣepaḥ te antarāyāḥ* (YS 1.30). Every little item that is enumerated here is to be studied threadbare. They come in a sequential order, as it were, one after the other. At the present moment, we may feel we do not have any of these difficulties. Let anyone ponder over these catalogued items of problems mentioned to us by the *sutra* of Patanjali. We will find that none of them apply to us. We are free from every one of these. We can concentrate, meditate, pray; everything is getting on well because the apparent ‘getting on well’ with our practice is a result of confining our practice to the conscious level of the mind only.

I have made some reference last time to the levels of our own personality lying subliminal, below the conscious level. We may mistake ourselves to be exactly what we are just now, as we are thinking in our minds in this hall, at the present moment; but, otherwise, we will be taken aback when pressure is exerted upon the conscious mind by an intense practice of meditation—in which process, the buried treasures of the subconscious and other levels will come up to the surface and blind our eyes. The stories of *amrita manthana* that we read in the Srimad Bhagavata, Vishnu Purana, etc., are not concocted stories for our entertainment. They are actually stages of spiritual development and spiritual encounter.

While the search through the *manthana* was for *amrita*, or nectar, what came up in the beginning was the opposite of nectar. It was a poison, which baffled all those who expected something else. The total opposite of what we expect may present itself in an advanced stage of meditation, but that will not be there always. Someone like Lord Siva will come and help us, and drink that poison. It

may be our Guru who bestows his grace and frees us from this poison of the counterblast discharged upon us by the buried impulses of our nature. Sometimes, the good deeds that we performed in our previous life will come and save us. But that is not the end of the matter.

The impulses within can present themselves before us in many other forms, as we have in the story of the *amrita manthana*. Even after the poison was drunk by Siva and it was nowhere to be seen, *amrita*, nectar, did not come. There were some twelve or so items coming up one after the other, all very interesting, attractive and intriguing. They all started coming up, one after the other, some of them having the power of attraction to such an extent as to make one forget the very purpose of this *amrita manthana*. The desire for that delicious taste of nectar can sometimes get sidetracked into the fulfilment of a desire which seems to promise the same satisfaction through another medium, which is one of the presentations through the *amrita manthana* story. Lakshmi herself came from the ocean after churning, and who can stand it? No one can behold that glory and have peace of mind. But before Lakshmi came, many other smaller things came—all wonderful, great presentations, stunning one's mind. Practically speaking, these items of the *amrita manthana* are, to some extent at least, items of our experience in our meditational process.

Another *sutra* of Patanjali makes reference to these stages of the coming up of the glories from the milky ocean when he speaks of *sthanyupanimantrane*. There is a *sutra* of Patanjali which goes like this: *sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgasmayākaraṇaṁ punaraniṣṭa prasaṅgāt* (YS 3.52). “When the levels of being encounter you, do not come in contact with them because there is a possibility of once again falling down to the old, old level from which you wanted to rise.” *Sthani* is someone who is in a *sthana*—a locality, a level of being, a plane of existence; that is *sthana*. The denizens, the occupants, of that particular level are called *sthanis*. They will invite you:

sthanyupanimantrane, come. The commentary of Vyasa on this *sutra* is worth reading. Read it and see what this invitation is about.

What kind of invitation will be there before you? “Come. You have worked hard, and you have achieved your goal. Get up, Buddha! Why are you suffering?” was said to even Buddha in his deep meditation. “Enough of this torture. Wake up. You are already enlightened. Here it is. Take all this.” I also mentioned to you sometime back of the calls of Mephistopheles in Goethe’s *Faust*, where such an invitation is given to Dr. Faust: “Take all the glory. You are going to be blessed. But give me only some little thing in return.” This story is suggestive of the difficulties that we may have to face, and the mistakes that we may have to commit.

The world of glory is before us, and it will come in some form or the other, in an unexpected manner. It will generally not come in the form that we expect; otherwise, we will detect it, and we will shun it as an obstacle. It has to come in a manner which cannot be located, deciphered or understood by us. That is how the inner impulses will present themselves for the purpose of their satisfaction.

I also made reference to this difficulty last time by saying that we cannot bypass the impulses within us. We may call them obstacles, but they are our own children. We have harboured them within ourselves as the necessary results of the acts that we performed earlier and the desires and ambitions we entertained either earlier in this life or in some past life. Every debt has to be paid. We have to pay a debt to our own self, also. We cannot say, “It is not there. Don’t come.” We cannot tell a creditor, “I am not here.” We will be very much there, and he will detect us. How will we tell ourselves, “I am not here. Don’t come”?

The discharging of a debt is one of the prescriptions of the religion of India, especially Hinduism, for which a person is expected to perform five sacrifices called *pancha mahayajnas*. We owe something not only to the world

outside and to people at large, and of course we owe a lot to God Himself, but we owe something to our own inner personality, also.

We have various levels of personality. One level owes its debt to the other levels. The conscious level owes a debt to the subconscious and the impulses buried deeper still. Many a time we get disturbed, without knowing what the cause is behind it. Any little thing agitates our mind. That happens when the conscious mind's engagement in what it regards as the happiness of life is interfered with by the subconscious calls, or the inner components of our nature. We do not want any interference in our conscious operation for the happiness of life. But, if we totally ignore the taxes that we have to pay or the debts that we have to discharge, they will, one day or other, come with double force, with compound interest, and we may have to pay it.

This is the subject with which we were concerned last time. Now, in the attempt to go a little further, beyond that study, I have to recapitulate the processes we underwent during the earlier days, lest we forget what we have studied. When we study a book, when we advance through the pages and gain more knowledge in the chapters that follow, it does not mean that we will forget what we have read earlier. We will carry the cumulative effect of the knowledge we have gathered in the earlier pages to the subsequent pages, so that the later one is not without the earlier one.

The conscious operation, which is the manner in which we live in this world, is not an ignorance of what is not conscious. The Mandukya Upanishad is another illustration before us of a description of the levels of our being. The conscious is, of course, the waking state. Then there is another level which operates in the dreaming state, and there is a third which operates in sleep. But there is a fourth level which dictates its prescriptions to the operation of all these three states, though it is not apparently a part of our day-to-day existence. The most vital factors controlling our

life are often not visible before our eyes, because we get involved so much in the visible phenomena of life that we have no time to even imagine that there are factors which condition the operations of our conscious life.

The deeper levels determine what we may have to pass through in the conscious level. *Jati*, *ayu*, *bhoga* are three terms used in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which are the effects of the buried potentialities of our personality. *Jati* is the circumstances into which we are born—in this family or that family, in this place or that place, in India or in America. We are born somewhere, in some manner. Why should we be born in one place and not in another place? That decision that we have to be born in one particular condition of life is also decided by ourselves, in another level of our personality. It is not somebody else doing something against us.

Ayu is the length of life. The span of our life in this world is also determined by what is inside us. We can neither shorten our life nor lengthen our life beyond a prescribed limit, as this is already decided by the potencies inside.

Bhoga is the experience. All the experiences of our life, whether pleasurable or miserable, are not the gifts of the devil who throws problems before us unnecessarily. They are the necessary, logical consequences following from what is inside our own selves. We are the causes of our joy; we are the causes of our sorrow. No God in heaven is punishing us; no God in heaven seems to be blessing us, also. That transcendent thing to which I made reference just now is also immanent within us and it will speak in our own language from within, as it would speak through a scripture or the Veda as a transcendent element.

This is somewhat an attempt to have a comprehensive vision of our own selves and our involvements, so that, “well done in the beginning is well done afterwards, also.” A good beginning is an indication of good success. Though it is a beginning, it is a good beginning—well understood,

well prepared and firmly grounded, as the foundation of a building has to be. We cannot raise a beautiful palace on a weak foundation.

Thus, everything should be clear, first of all—*nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*. The discrimination called for is, substantially, the processes that we have to pass through under the guidance of a preceptor along these lines, which I have tried to outline briefly for everyone's memory and recollection, contemplation, and deep meditation.

Chapter 7

SANNYASA IS IDENTICAL WITH YOGA MEDITATION

In one place, the Bhagavadgita seems to be identifying yoga with Sannyasa when it says, *yam sannyāsam iti prāhuḥ yogam tam viddhi pāṇḍava, na hi asannyasta saṁkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana* (BG 6.2): Whatever one knows as yoga is also the same as what is known as *sannyasa*. This definition may lead to the obvious conclusion that every Sannyasin is also a yogi, but here the term *sannyasa* has to be taken in a different sense altogether, and not as the well-known fourth order of life. The fourth order of life is a necessary consequence of the social developmental process, from Brahmacharya, Grihastha and Vanaprastha onwards, but yoga is not a social phenomenon. It has nothing to do with society at all.

So, what does the great Lord Bhagavan Sri Krishna mean by saying that yoga is the same as *sannyasa*, and vice versa, *sannyasa* is the same as yoga? In order that we may not be left in a state of confusion, He has given a clue to the understanding of the meaning of the word *sannyasa* in the second half of the verse, *na hi asannyasta saṁkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana*: No one can be a yogi who has not renounced. This the meaning of the second half; but what is one to renounce?

If you ask any Sannyasin to define renunciation in common parlance, the reply will be, “I have renounced my property, my family relations, my social status, and I do not physically own anything, so I am a Sannyasin.” But, this second half of the verse makes it clear that this notion of

Sannyasa is not to be identified with yoga. Though renunciation is implied in the word *sannyasa*, this word does not suggest what is to be renounced. Usually, the idea of renunciation in the context of Sannyasa is associated with physical, material, social belongings, but the renunciation that is required for the purpose of the practice of yoga is nothing connected with material, social, or economic belongings. What is it that is to be renounced for the purpose of becoming a yogi?

Sankalpa-sannyasa is the word used here. That person who has not renounced creative volition cannot become a yogi. *Sankalpa* is willing, or creative volition—asserting some circumstance in life as associated with one's own self. If this will is to continue to operate as it has been doing earlier, one cannot become a yogi.

As yoga is defined elsewhere as a kind of union that is to be established, it follows as a corollary from this definition of *sannyasa* that *sannyasa* also is a kind of union established inwardly by oneself. Though abandoning something is a connotation already associated with the word *sannyasa*, that is not the only thing that Sannyasa means, because yoga is not a process of abandoning, but is identification and union. So, the word *sannyasa* seems to have two connotations: renunciation on one side, and identification on another side. The point made out in this verse is that one cannot practise this identification unless one has effectively practised renunciation also.

Now, as creative volition is supposed to be that which is to be renounced in adopting the life of Sannyasa, physical dissociation from an object of desire need not necessarily mean this achievement of *sannyasa*. For instance, a person might have taken to the social order of Sannyasa in the fourth sense of the term and have maintained no connection with the family, relations or property, but the consciousness that one had that property, and that the property does exist, relations are still there somewhere, is not renounced. That is the significance of

the word *sankalpa-sannyasa*. “I had a lot of property, and I do not have any connection with it now.” This statement is an inadvertent acceptance of there still being a subconscious relationship with that property; else, one would say, “I have no connection with the world,” instead of saying, “I have no connection with those people who are my relatives.”

Who are our relatives? A group of people are chosen out of the large mass of humanity and they are regarded as belonging to us. The consciousness is effectively aware of this fact, and so *sankalpa*, the creative link in respect of the preceding condition of ownership of property and relations, continues, even if physically they are totally dissociated one from the other.

Therefore, the word ‘renunciation’ has to be deeply understood in its spiritual meaning. The consciousness of belonging has to go. The bondage of a person consists not in the existence of things, but in the relation of consciousness to those things. The trees in the forest do not bind us because our consciousness is not related to those trees, which obviously have nothing to do with us. But our consciousness is connected intimately with a tree in our garden. Suppose there is a fruit-yielding tree in our own garden; our consciousness will be related to it. A tree is here, and there are also trees in the forest. In one case the consciousness is dissociated spontaneously; in the other case, it is automatically connected.

Thus, a profound subtlety is involved in the very understanding of the word *sannyasa*, and only then can it be identified with yoga: *na hi asannyasta samkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana*. The renunciation is, therefore, actually the abandonment of the consciousness of a belonging in the form of something standing in front of oneself as an object of some sort. What is an object? It is in the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali that we have a very clear-cut psychological definition of the nature of the object to which

consciousness can be related. There are two types of objects: perceptually related, and emotionally connected.

One's own property, so-called, one's father and mother, husband or wife, one's money and social position are things with which emotion is connected. They are not merely perceived objects, they are also emotionally felt by oneself. These are directly binding cords. Emotions bind more powerfully and effectively than objects which are only perceived, minus the connection with emotions. Objects which are only perceived are such things as a mountain, the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky, the rivers, and the ocean. These are objects that are perceived, but our emotion is not connected. Both these types of objects, whether they are perceptually related or emotionally connected, are a matter of concern in the practice of yoga. One is an immediate concern, like an acute disease, and the other is a remote concern, like a chronic disease, but both are matters of concern, either today or tomorrow. When there are two difficulties, we try to solve the most acute one first, and the general problem afterwards.

Avidyā-asmitā-rāga-dveṣa-abhiniveśaḥ kleśāḥ (Yoga Sutras 2.3) is a *sutra* of Patanjali which delineates emotionally connected situations. A total ignorance of the fact of there being no such thing as real relation with anything is called *avidya*, or ignorance. No one is related to us really, in an emotionally conceived fashion. Everybody stands alone from a scientific point of view, but a peculiar operation in the mind known as ignorance sets aside this general view of the impersonality of perception, and creates an attachment to certain chosen things and persons who are considered as one's belongings. This is *avidya*.

This notion of certain things belonging to oneself, arisen out of ignorance of the true fact, becomes a cause of intense affirmation of one's ownership of these belongings, which is called *asmita*, also known as *ahamkara*, a type of intense self-assertiveness.

The third consequence that follows from this ignorance-oriented self-affirmation is clinging to those chosen persons and things which are considered as one's own, and hatred towards those which are not considered as belonging to oneself. When something is mine, that other things are not mine is well implied. Love for what is related to me suggests also a hatred for that which is not related to me. So, *raga* and *dvesha*, as they are called, manifest themselves simultaneously from this stupid self-affirmation arisen on account of the ignorance of the fact that things do not really belong to anyone.

Then, there is a fear of death, *abhinivesha*: This belonging of mine should last long. Neither should I die, nor should my relatives die; everybody should live for the longest period of time. But people see death taking place everywhere, and so there is an inward uneasiness that this phenomenon of self-abolition may take place in respect of oneself, also. Agony arises on account of anxiety to protect oneself, as well as one's own relations and belongings, from this clutch called death which will descend on anyone at any moment of time.

Hence, the whole thing is a misery, right from the beginning until the end. This is emotionally oriented life, and no one is free from this kind of situation. When this grossest of associations is so hard to overcome, where comes the question of one's freedom from the subtler associations which are only perceptually oriented, such as the sun, the moon and the stars, or the mountains and the rivers?

While emotionally oriented attachment is bad, it does not mean that the non-emotional, perceptually oriented objects are good. Bondage is possible either through iron chains or golden chains; even diamond chains can bind us. Bondage is just confinement, whatever be the means adopted for that confinement. There can be a prison with golden walls. Just because the walls are plated with gold, it does not follow that it is not a prison; nor is merely a brick

structure a prison, because it can be a temple. Thus, the structure or the pattern of the environment is not the cause of bondage or happiness. It is one's conscious association with it, or the interpretation of it from one's own point of view.

After long practice, one succeeds in emotionally relieving oneself from attachments to belongings, so-called. This may take one's whole life, or it may take several lives. Even those who have lived a long life of experience in this world, at the time of passing at a ripe old age, often weep for their relations: what will happen to my daughter, my daughter-in-law, my son, my land? These ideas harass even the mind of a mature, aged person.

Such a hard thing is before us, even before we take the first step in the practice of yoga. Supposing that we have succeeded in overcoming this entanglement and emotionally we are not connected to anybody or anything, even then we cannot imagine that we are yogis. "I neither love anybody, nor do I hate anybody; therefore, I am a yogi." This statement is not true. Merely because there is no love and hatred psychologically, it does not follow that one has been established in yoga, because the definition of true yoga is 'union with reality as such'. Perceived objects are camouflages of true objects that are behind the appearances of what are known to us as objects. There is a real tree behind an apparent tree, or a perceived contour or shape of a tree.

Again we go to the definition of Patanjali Maharishi's yoga, where he tells us what an object is: A tree is something which it is in itself, plus an idea that we have about it and the definition that we impose upon it through our ideas. We associate the name 'tree' to certain things by habit and common usage, and it cannot be applied to certain other things. Apart from that, we have a notion about it, an idea of what a tree is, but a tree is something more than both these things. It is something by itself, as we can illustrate in the case of a person.

A human being may be a father of somebody, a husband of someone else, a brother of a third person, a nephew of a fourth, and a boss of a fifth; yet, that person may be totally different from all these things. When one is dissociated from all these connections mentioned, one stands as something which is the true nature of that person. If a person has no children, he cannot be called a father. If he has not married, he cannot be called a husband. If he does not hold an office, he cannot be called a boss, etc. These definitions are relative, but minus these relations, the person stands independently by himself. That is the *artha jnana* (YS 1.42), or the true substantiality of a person or a thing.

Contact with reality in terms of yoga actually means not contacting perceptually through the eyes or the ears, etc., which is only a process of contacting external phenomenon. The true identity is the substance of the object itself. This is a clarification that comes to the surface of our understanding when we probe deeply into the meaning of yoga practice. On one hand, it is identified with Sannyasa, whose meaning is to be properly understood, as stated already. On the other hand, the meaning of yoga also has to be understood in order that they may stand on a par and be regarded as one and the same thing. Without the abandonment of conscious relationship, one cannot become a Sannyasin, and also one cannot become a yogi.

In our previous sessions we have gone into sufficient detail as to the problems that we may have to face. Briefly, what we tried to understand during the last session is that the practitioner of yoga is not an ordinary human being in the sense of a conscious operation of the mind, and meditation is not to be identified merely with the working of the conscious level of the mind. The whole being of the person is involved in meditation. For that purpose, we must know what that 'whole being' is.

What are we, by ourselves, totally? The psychological structure of the individual will reveal what components

constitute our personality and how they have to be gathered together into a focus of attention in order that meditation may be practised and made possible.

What are these inner components? On the one hand we are told that we are not a solid entity, but a composite structure of different layers known in Sanskrit as *kosas*: *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya*. The physical sheath is the outermost vesture of the personality. Internally, there is the vibratory *prana* which is the force that connects the psychic individual with the physical body. Then, there is the mind that thinks, and the understanding that decides and concludes; and deeper than all these is an unconscious layer, which is the abode of all the impulses of our actions performed positively or negatively in the incarnations we have passed through earlier. It is like a large, thick cloud of unknowing, a mass of ignorance into which we enter in the state of deep sleep every day. Transcendent to all these is the Atman, the light of consciousness, the pure spirit. This is one way of understanding what we are really made of.

All these layers have to be gathered together simultaneously so that we may feel whole; that is to say, we will feel, decide, understand and concentrate simultaneously in all the layers of our being with the depth of ardour which is known as *tivra samvega* in the *sutra* of Patanjali. Intense eagerness has to well up from our total personality, and focus itself in meditation; otherwise, we may wrongly imagine that meditation is just thinking something. Instead of thinking one thing, we think another thing.

Meditation is not thinking anything. It is an attempt on the part of our whole being to identify with the whole being of that on which we are meditating. It is the wholeness of personality trying to contemplate on the wholeness of that which is chosen as the object of meditation. It is not a partial personality rising up to the occasion, nor is it a partial object that is the object of meditation. The whole

thing comes up. Yoga is, therefore, an operation of wholeness in all levels of being, subjectively as well as objectively.

One cannot explain in words what actually this means. We have to eat the pudding to know the taste of it. However much it may be explained, it will pass over our heads because we generally do not feel whole at any time. We are torn individuals, distracted persons, with many things in the mind coming and going at different times, in various forms. And our opinion about things is also variegated; we have no consistent idea of anything in a permanent fashion. As we are living a slipshod, haphazard life throughout our existence in this world, this right-about turn that is required in the process of thinking appears to be something totally new to the initiate. It is next to impossible for the beginner. But, *abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gr̥hyate* (BG 4.35); *abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tan nirodhaḥ* (Yoga Sūtras 1.12): By determined dissociation of the mind from all its distracted avenues of consciousness, and daily sitting and continued practice, one will achieve success.

One has to bear in mind this essential point before anything else is attempted. Have we a total interest in the object of meditation, or have we only a partial interest? Partial interest is that which is a concern for something, together with a concern for something else also at the same time. Today, at this moment, I am concerned with this thing; after some time, my concern will be shifted to another thing. This is not what is going to happen in meditation. It is a concern once and for all, and with no chance of change of consciousness or attention in regard to the chosen object. In all the yogas, whatever be the nomenclature thereof—*karma*, *bhakti*, *jñāna*, etc.—an object is chosen forever and it is not changed. The mind does not move from one thing to another at different times. The reason for choosing the object once, forever, is because, as is the case with digging a well, we must dig

deeply only at one point until the treasure is found. If we go on digging ten feet here, two feet there, and three feet somewhere else, we will not find the treasure of the water. It is like driving a nail into a wall. We must hit it several times in the same place; otherwise, if we hit it once here, once there, it will not go in. So, if we change our object, we will be driving a nail or digging a well in different places.

Meditation is a bombardment of the mind upon the nature of the object so that it splits, as an atom splits, and releases its energy. The energy of the object is released in meditation and it creates such a sustaining reaction upon oneself that one feels at that time that everything is obtained, and nothing else is to be gained afterwards.

Objects are generally not possessed by us because they stand outside us always. They appear to be connected; really, they are dissociated. But in this union of yoga practice, the object ceases to be an object. It reveals its pure subjectivity, a togetherness that it has with one's own self. It is like the *jivatman* embracing the *paramatman*, we may say, in one sense—Krishna and Arjuna sitting in the same chariot, the truth of the object entering into the truth of the subject, the subjectivity in the object entering into the subjectivity of the so-called meditating subject—so that the object ceases to be an object. It is a vast sea of subjectivity that emerges in deep contemplation of anything which originally appeared as an object.

Even that thing which originally looked like an object of meditation will cease to be that, after deeper concentration; it will reveal its friendliness with us, as a true brother and an alter-ego, a real friend, inseparable from us. Things in the world stand apart from us and are isolated from us; therefore it is that we have the great suffering of grabbing them, running after them, and finally losing them and not getting them at all. But, there is a way of actually contacting them in their true spirit, which is the *samyama* spoken of in yoga practice, *samapatti*, as it is also called. The subjectivity in us should be contacted. The soul of the

matter is to be brought to the surface of awareness, and not merely its outer aperture. That is the union of the soul of the meditator with the soul of the so-called object.

When we have dealt with one object effectively in this manner, we have practically dealt with the whole world at the same time. A sip of water in one place on the shore of the ocean is equal to the sip of the same water in any other place also, because the ocean is one mass of water. The universe is one mass of objectivity. It is not made up of different things. The differentiation of parts of nature, as one distinguished from the other, is due to the interference of space and time in the constitution of the objects. Actually, what we have in front of us is a mass of matter, which is what is called the world-stuff.

Similarly, any part of this matter which is the object thereof, whatever we call the object of meditation, is as good as any other part of it. When we touch one object in the world, we have touched the whole creation, just as when we touch one part of the body, we have touched the whole body because it is all vitally connected.

Thus, any object in the world is as good as any other object. There is no difficulty in choosing the object of meditation because all things are made of the same substance, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*—the three properties of Prakriti—and wherever we go, we will find the same ocean of matter. Any part of it can be taken, and it is as good as any other part for the purpose of meditation. When we enter into the soul of this material stuff known as Prakriti in the form of this creation in one place, we have entered into the heart of the whole universe.

That is why the Upanishad says, “What is that, by knowing which, you know everything?” There is one thing that by knowing which, everything is known. One drop of water, when it is properly analysed and known, is equal to the whole mass of water being known by such an analysis.

Therefore, it is necessary to convince the mind that it is obligatory on its part to go ahead with one object only, one

method of meditation and one technology and, if possible, at one place and one particular time of the day, with one objective, one aim, which also should not change. The purpose for which meditation starts in the beginning should be maintained until the end. It should not waiver, and we should not have different notions of aim or purpose at different stages of meditation. Here also, it is a kind of concentration. We concentrate on the purpose itself, apart from the nature of the object. Then the purpose manifests itself, reveals itself.

We bring back to our memories the definition of *sannyasa* which Bhagavan Sri Krishna identifies with yoga which, as I mentioned, involves renunciation of something. It is not easy to practise this renunciation as it is defined in the Bhagavadgita. It is not a spatial distance that one maintains from related objects. Spatial distance does not violate conscious contact. As consciousness can contact anything, even at a distant place, spatial distance does not in any way debar consciousness from contemplating an object of desire. Hence is the special point made out by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in defining *sannyasa*: it is identical with meditation.

From the point of view of the Bhagavadgita verse cited, *sannyasa* is identical with yoga meditation. It has nothing to do with the social order of the fourth category, as people usually imagine that to be. It is a preparation, but it is not itself an aim. To repeat once again, yoga is not a social phenomenon. We do not practise it for the sake of other people. There are no 'other people' for a yogi or the aspirant of yoga. It is, to mention again, a wholesome thing, conceived in one's own self in a conscious relation with a wholesome thing, which is the chosen object.

All these are difficult things to keep in mind. Fifty percent of what I have told may not be retained in the mind, because of the width of the subject and the implications which are hard enough to grasp. But, *abhyasa* and

vairagya, as it is mentioned, will bring to fructification the yielded result, and everything shall be fine.

Chapter 8

HANDLING DESIRES IN A DEXTEROUS MANNER

Continuing from where we left the subject of our discussion last time, we observed that the nature of human desire is very intriguing, and it is hard to understand its operations. *Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ* (BG 2.60). The power of the senses is something like the strength of a tornado, whirlwind or tempest which can hurry the boat of the mind in any direction, and it will compel the mind to think and act in terms of the movement of these agitations of the sense organs.

The handling of the desires of the mind requires a dexterous and very careful process. There are two humorous anecdotes which will give us some indication as to how we have to handle our desires. These are well-known stories that can be applied in the process of the restraint of human desire and proclivity.

There was a person who owned a tiger, a cow and a bundle of grass. He had to ferry these items of his across a river, but the boat was so small that he could take only one item at a time—either the tiger, or the cow, or the bundle of grass. Now, as we know very well, it is not easy to handle this affair. Which one will he take first? If he takes the bundle of grass and leaves the tiger and the cow to themselves, it is dangerous for the cow. And if he takes the tiger first, the cow will eat the grass. So he thought of a plan, like a careful spiritual seeker.

After deep consideration, he adopted a technique. He took the cow first and left the grass and the tiger behind, because the tiger will not eat the grass. He dropped off the cow on the other side and came back. Then, he took the tiger across and left it there, and brought the cow back with him so that the tiger would not jump on the cow. He dropped off the cow, left it here, and took the bundle of grass to the other side and left it with the tiger. Finally he came back and took the cow, and all the three went. See the intelligence of that man. We cannot easily understand this technique. It is very hard to grasp.

There is another beautiful anecdote. An old man was about to die. He had seventeen horses, and told his three children to divide these seventeen horses among themselves in a particular proportion: one will take half, another will take one ninth, and the third will take one third. How will they divide the seventeen horses into half? Half of seventeen is eight and a half. As they cannot cut a horse like a vegetable or a banana, it is not possible to have eight and a half horses; nor is it possible to have one ninth, or one third. The children were struggling, but they were so obedient to the orders of their dying father that they were determined to divide the seventeen horses according to his wish.

While they were worrying about this difficult situation, another person happened to pass that way, riding on a horse. He got down from the horse and asked these children what they were worrying about. They said, "We have a difficulty. Our father, when he was passing away, told us that his seventeen horses have to be divided in this manner: one ninth, one third, and half."

"It is no problem," the man said. "I will arrange it. Where are the seventeen horses? Bring them." The horses were all arrayed in a line. He tied his own horse along with these seventeen, and they became eighteen. "You want half," he said. "Half of eighteen is nine; take nine. Now nine have gone, out of the eighteen. Then, one third is six;

take six. Then, nine and six become fifteen. Then, one ninth is two; take two. Fifteen and two become seventeen, so the proportion of half, one ninth and one third is maintained. It is all right?”

“Yes,” they answered. He took his horse and went away. This is a peculiar mathematical genius, or an operation of intelligence, or a magical performance, or some kind of shrewdness, which we many times have to employ in our day-to-day activities.

We cannot engage ourselves in a frontal attack upon anything in this world, because nothing in the world will tolerate such an attack. Everything has to be handled carefully, in the manner of these persons who had tigers and horses. Every desire has to be taken by itself, and it should not be compared with any other desire. As is the case with this tiger, grass and cow, only one thing at a time was taken into consideration. When we are engaged in one desire, we should not think of another thing.

We should not think that some desires are strong and some are weak. There is no such thing as weak desires and strong desires; it all depends upon the occasion and the circumstances of their operation. Are snakes good or bad? A calmly coiled-up, sleeping serpent cannot be regarded as much safer than a moving serpent. The apparent weakness of a desire is oftentimes not because it is really weak. It has been waiting for an opportunity to manifest its real strength, as people lie in ambush in a battlefield and will not take action unless the time and opportunity for it come. The people lying in ambush are like simple *sattvik sadhakas*, sitting without uttering a single word, but when the time for it comes, they will jump up and attack with full force.

Every desire is equally strong. There is no such thing as an inefficient desire, or a powerful desire. The powerful desire is that which has found its opportunity for manifestation. The weak desire is that which has not found the opportunity suitable. A person who does not speak, and

keeps quiet always, need not necessarily be regarded as a saint, because he may be a diplomat, a political expert, and a careful observer of things. The behaviour of a person, or of anything in this world—much more, the behaviour of desires and passions—have to be taken for what they are, and not for what they appear to be.

In one of the *sutras* of Patanjali, the various methods adopted by desires are briefly stated. *Prasupta*, *tanu*, *vichhinna*, *udara* are the terms used by the great master Patanjali. There can be a desire which looks like no desire at all—as, for instance, when we ask people what their desires are and they say: “I have no desires. I am a fulfilled man. I am completely satisfied. My children are settled; I have computed my pension. I have no desires.” It is not true that there are no desires. They are *prasupta*; they are sleeping, like a sleeping snake. That is one condition of desire.

Therefore, apparent absence of a desire should not necessarily be taken to be a real absence of the desire. Any desire can manifest itself in any person, at any time, if the conditions are favourable. All the desires are present in every being, from the atom to the cosmos, but they cannot always manifest themselves on account of the inefficiency of the physical body, the sense organs, the mental makeup, social conditions, and many other factors in life. This is why most of the desires of people in general are in the sleeping condition.

The other condition is *tanu*, in which the desire is very weak, thin, fine like a silken thread, occasionally raising its head, but mostly not visible at all. It looks as if that desire has no strength, but the silken thread can become a strong rope if the time for it comes.

I shall tell you a third story about this silken thread. There was a person caught in a prison, in a high tower. His wife was grieving very much over the pitiable condition of her husband. She wanted to see that he is somehow relieved of this prison life. What was the method?

An intelligent lady she was. Extraordinary intelligence is necessary to think of all these things. She caught hold of a beetle which had two tentacles on front, and then she smeared both tentacles with honey. Because of the smell of the honey, the beetle was under the impression that moving forward would take it nearer to the honey; but when it moved, the tentacles also moved forward, so it was continuously moving with the feeling that the honey was nearby. Then, she tied a fine silken thread to its tail and allowed it to climb up the tower.

It went up slowly because of the desire for honey. It took some time; it must have taken maybe several hours or even a whole day to reach the top. She told her husband to catch hold of the silken thread. To the silken thread she tied a thread which was slightly thicker. When he pulled the silken thread the other, thicker thread also came up. Then she tied a rope to it. The rope went up, and her husband came down the rope and escaped.

This is dexterous thinking. Will such thoughts generally occur to people? There is nothing that we cannot achieve in this world, if we adopt the proper method. Everything will come to us, if we know how to handle it. The world is neither our friend nor our foe. It is to be handled in a dexterous manner. It is a field of experience.

We have been mentioning again and again in our earlier discourses that the world is an object of perception. It is a field of operation for the purpose of certain given types of experience. The kind of world into which we are born is determined by the collective impressions of the longings, desires or requirements of all the constituents inhabiting that particular pattern of the world. The kind of body, the shape or contour of our physical personality, depends entirely on the total arrangement, intensity, and particular internal constitutional makeup of the cells of the body.

The world is necessary for those who are living in the world, just as this body is necessary for the particular types of cells that make up that body. So, when we make a

complaint against the world, or anything in the world, we take a narrow point of view and judge things erroneously with restricted vision. The world is not merely a field of experience; it is also a society of varieties of individualities.

An individual is not necessarily a human being. A little particle of sand or an atom is also an individual by itself. It has something to say, as we have something to say. It has a right to speak for its welfare, as we have a right to speak for our welfare. Nothing is redundant in this world, just as no part of our body is redundant. Nothing is important, nothing is unimportant. Things have to be judged from their own point of view and in the context in which they are placed. To judge a thing out of context is irregular and unjust.

So is the case with this problem that arises before us when we handle the circumstances of our desires. No one should imagine at any time that one has no desires. In the same way, no country can sleep for a long time, imagining that every other nation is its friend. No ruler, administrator, king, or chief of the country will sleep like that. Although no war is taking place, it can take place. People prepare themselves with the readiness to meet the occasions of that kind, though for another fifty years, no battle may take place. But that it can, is an important point.

Nobody seated in this hall is angry at the present moment. But are we to say that any one of us is not susceptible to anger? All the calm and quiet people seated here can burst into anger under a given condition. Only the condition has to be provided.

Thus, spiritual practice, yoga *sadhana*, meditation, is to be taken as a study in the wholeness of the entire world setup into which we are placed, and in which context our desires manifest themselves in various fashions, according to the conditions under which they are placed. I mentioned one of the conditions of the desires is sleepiness—complete sloth, inactivity, and appearing to be not there at all.

Another condition is thread-like, on account of which I mentioned the story of the silken thread.

The third condition of the desire is *vichhinna*: suddenly a desire arises, and tomorrow it is gone: “Yesterday I thought I would like to have this; well, now I feel I do not want it. I have given up that desire.” One feels like that, but it is a tactic adopted by the desire. When it knows that its method cannot work, it withdraws itself.

Desires are not dead corpses, they are living forces. They have life and vitality in them. If a desire has no vitality, it cannot be so strong. It has vitality because it emanates from our own mind. The mental consciousness charges every desire with necessary strength, and so there is intelligence behind the operation of a desire. Every thief is shrewd, intelligent and very cunning, like a fox in the forest. Hence, a third condition of the desire is that it can occasionally come, and also withdraw itself completely, as if it is not there.

Those who have not eaten for fifteen days develop a ravenous appetite, and every article of diet appears to be tasty. They can digest even hard food, due to the strength of the appetite. Starved desires looking thin like a silken thread, or sometimes sleeping on account of unfavourable circumstances, can rise up into action because desires never die. They can sleep, they can get thinned out, and they can come interruptedly now and then, which is the *vichhinna-avastha* mentioned by Patanjali.

The fourth condition is direct action. We will be simply inflamed with our desire and, like fire, it will rise up from every pore of the personality. Reason will fail at that time. Reason sleeps when desires become fiery in their action. There is no intellect at that time. One temporarily becomes insane when there is such a rampant desire operating through the whole personality. It may be for any particular thing, as the case may be. It is a raging fire of longing.

Each *sadhaka*, each spiritual seeker, has to examine himself or herself carefully: “In what condition am I?” The

fact that under circumstances easily provided we can manifest any desire should make us a little careful about feeling that the desires have completely gone. When favourable circumstances manifest themselves, even a saint would like to have a television in his room. When unfavourable circumstances are there, he will say, “What is there in a television? It is a stupid thing. Have I come here for that?” But provide the facilities, and he will keep even an elephant inside his room.

All potentials of longing are present in every human being; everything in the universe is present in every person also. Inasmuch as the whole world is potentially present in us, there is nothing we are incapable of, rightly or wrongly. We can do the best thing and also the worst thing; we are capable of both. When we go centripetally, as they say, in the direction of the centre, we do better and better things, and are capable of doing the best of things. When we move centrifugally, away from the centre to the periphery or the circumference, far away from ourselves to the objects of sense, we do the opposite. Our actions are worse and worse, and perhaps even the worst possible thing.

Man is supposed to be a centre point where God and devil are crossed. A crossing of God and demon is the human individual. There is the power and the nobility and the magnificence of God in every human being; there is ugliness and the rapacity of the demon also, at the same time. In psychological parlance these two potentials in us are sometimes known as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the higher mind and the lower mind, the higher Self and the lower self. *Apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām, jīvabhūtām mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat* (BG 7.5). *Ashta-prakritis* are there, the Bhagavadgita mentions to us, but they are the lower nature, which comprise all the elements visible to the eyes—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—which make up all the objects of sense. The whole world of visible perceptibility may, therefore, be

considered as lower nature. The higher nature is the charging force of consciousness.

The dexterity with which we have to take care of each desire independently, only one at a time, is illustrated by the story of the tiger, the cow and the grass. Take only one thing at a time and never bring two things into the forefront for understanding, as a judge in a court takes up only one case at a time and will not take up two cases simultaneously.

The story of the seventeen horses tells us how we can make a mistake and yet we can solve it. The mistake is the impossibility in understanding our relationship to things, as these three children faced in their relationship to the seventeen horses. These seventeen horses, which defy understanding, are the objects of the world and the society of people around us. However much we may struggle, we will not be able to understand our connection with other people. What connection have we got with them? We will find it difficult to define this situation. What is our connection with this world? We will not be able to answer this question. Are we connected with it?

We seem to be connected with the world because we are dealing with certain things in the world daily, which makes it clear that we are related. But are we really connected with it, or is it only an imaginary connection? It does not seem to be that we are really connected, because we came to this world alone and we seem to be living alone, to some extent; and when we pass away, we go alone, which may make us feel that there is no real connection with the world. But every day we are dealing with the world as if there is a connection.

So is the case with the relationship with people outside. How are we related to people? Have we anything to do with them, or have we nothing to do with them? We may say, "I have nothing to do with anybody here; I am independently sitting, and I will go to my room when the *satsanga* is over." But it is a hasty statement. We have a

connection not merely with the people here, but with even the walls and the very ground on which we are sitting, the sky, and the air that we breathe. We have a connection with all these, which we will realise when we probe into the situation properly.

We have social relations, personal relations, sensory relations, psychological relations, metaphysical relations, and finally, there is an indescribable spiritual relation. The eighteenth horse that the gentleman brought, which solved the riddle, is the consciousness element in us. Minus consciousness, it is all a bundle of seventeen horses only, and we cannot solve the issue. However much we rack the mind, the seventeen-horse problem cannot be solved, but it can be solved in an instant when the eighteenth horse comes, which is the inner consciousness.

We should not try to interpret things in the world through the sense organs or merely through the logical intellect, which is not going to be a success. People who depend entirely on their sense observations have not succeeded in understanding the world—not even the scientist, who depends mostly upon sensory observations and intellectual, logical decision, because he separates the objects of perception, scientific observations, from the consciousness which is doing this work.

The scientist's consciousness is the observer of all the experiments that he is conducting in his laboratory. He is isolating the consciousness from all the things that are observed, which are all like a bundle of chaos; nothing seems to be clear. Science seems to be advancing every day, refuting the previous deductions and confronting a new thing altogether, arriving at no final conclusion because the eighteenth horse is missing, which is the consciousness of the scientist himself.

The scientist forgets that he is directly involved in the observations that he is conducting. The moment the scientist realises that his presence is as important as the presence of the objects of observation, he will find it

impossible to isolate himself from the study of that in which he is engaged in the laboratory. Then he will realise that the study of the world is the study of his own self. Know thyself first, and you will know everything else.

Thus, these two analogies that I mentioned are illustrative of certain problems that we face daily in our spiritual practice. No *sadhaka* who is really, sincerely engaged in strenuous practice can forget this aspect. Our connections with the atmosphere in which we are living is to be understood carefully. Neither can we reject anything totally, nor can we covet anything entirely. *Tena tyaktena bhuñjitha* (Isa 1) is the word of the Isavasya Upanishad. On the one hand, we can have everything in the world; on the other hand, we can have nothing in this world.

We can experience the whole world, enjoy it, by renouncing it. Have we ever seen anyone renouncing an object and then enjoying it? They are two contrary processes. The true possession of an object is in the act of the renunciation of the form of the object. Objects cannot be possessed because they are outside us. The outsideness of the object is that which is to be renounced—*tyaktena*. When the outsideness of the object, the name and form aspect of it, is renounced, the *tyaga* aspect mentioned in this verse of the Isavasya Upanishad comes into the forefront. Then the object is ours in another sense altogether. A *samapatti*, or an equanimous establishment of relationship, gets established between us and the object: the object enters into us and we enter into the object.

This is another analogy in connection with our relationship with the objects of sense. When the name and form aspect of the object, which creates the externality of it, is renounced, we become the possessor of the object entirely. The whole world becomes ours; otherwise, not a particle of sand or even a broken needle can be called ours. So, on the one hand, nothing belongs to us; on the other hand, everything belongs to us.

Tena tyaktena bhujñitha, ma gr̥dhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam: Do not covet. *Kasyasvid dhanam:* whose is the property? To whom does the property of the world belong? The world is not a property. There are no such things as properties in the world, because one cannot belong to another in the external aspect that it maintains, so there is bereavement in every setup. Where a desire for things is developed, one loses what one possesses. Our dearest of relations dies and there is bereavement, and all property goes one day or the other because no one is a property of another, and nothing is a belonging of any person. Just as no limb of the body is a property of any other limb of the body and all the limbs belong to the total setup of the personality, all things belong to the Central Consciousness of the universe.

Everything belongs to One Person, if you call that Being a person. In religious parlance we call it Mahapurusha, Purusottama. In the Vedic style we call him *sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (Purusha Sukta 1). The Mighty Being, the Central Consciousness, the God Almighty of the universe is the owner of all things, including our own selves. We are not the owner of anything, and no one can own us either.

Here are certain titbits of information as an introduction into the difficulty in understanding human desire. Never should one be complacent in this matter, as a defence mechanism is always ready to keep to its promise; it acts at the requisite moment and it never fails. There are defence mechanisms in the body which keep us alive, and there are defence processes in nations of the world. In every field of life, we will find a protective element operating.

This protective energy has to be developed from within us by not diminishing the potential of our personality, depleting the energies through the sense organs in terms of that which is really not there, under the impression that it is there. What we are craving in our longing for an object of

sense is really not there. What is there is something else, which is hidden behind the perceptive faculty.

The *tattva*, or the true basic substance or substantiality of the object, is commensurate with our own being. There is an *atmatva* present in the object, the *visaya-chaitanya*, as they call it, as there is an *atma-chaitanya* in our own self. All the three processes of perception are called *chaitanya* or consciousness processes. The 'within' is called *atma-chaitanya*, the process of perception is called *pramana-chaitanya*, and the object itself is called *visaya-chaitanya*. Though it is a *visaya*, there is a *chaitanya* inside it. But if we catch the soul, the *atma-tattva* or the *chaitanya* of the object, we are establishing a rapport with it. It is called *samadhi* in yoga parlance. Then the whole world, all objects, dance around us as if a dance of the cosmic nature is taking place under the central sun of Universal Consciousness.

Otherwise, if we consider ourselves as puny individuals, pure physical subjects relating to physical objects, the tragedy of the world cannot end. Desires will rise up like waves in the ocean and dash down everything that goes near them. Spiritual practice is a hard job, therefore. It is not easy. *Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti* (Katha 1.3.14). One cannot know how a *sadhaka* moves. The track of *sadhana* is not visible to the eyes; it is like the track of birds in the sky or of fish in water. The birds follow a track in the sky. There is a road for them, but we cannot see that road in the sky. So is the movement of *sadhana*. It has a method of movement, but it cannot be seen with the eyes. Neither can we properly see it, nor can others properly see it. At one time, one step only can be seen. The entire future cannot be beheld by us.

All the three processes of perception are involved in the consciousness setup: *atma-chaitanya*, *pramana-chaitanya*, and *visaya-chaitanya*. If we can behold a person or a thing, or the world as a whole, as a centre of consciousness, it

becomes ours. Then it is that we experience it and enjoy it. Otherwise, it is something to be renounced completely. *Tyaga*, renunciation, precedes the experience and enjoyment of an object.

Therefore, even to become a great master of yoga, total renunciation is necessary in order that we may be capable of total possession and total enjoyment. That is why a *jivanmukta-purusha* is called a *mahatyagi*, *mahakarta*, and *mahabhokta*: nobody can renounce as he renounces, nobody can work as he works, and nobody can enjoy as he enjoys. These are the secrets of self-perfection, self-restraint, which subject today is a continuation of what we started last time.

Chapter 9

THE VARIOUS HUMAN LONGINGS

All activity, all performance, is an implementation of a longing from within oneself. The prompting of an impulse from within manifests itself as action outside. Thus, the business of life, in the form of a multitudinous variety of activities, can be said to be a concretisation of human longing.

But what is this longing? That will decide the nature of the performance, whether individually or collectively. That our longings arise from our own selves, and that these longings cannot arise from somewhere else is something well known to everyone. But, as every one of us seems to be an admixture of various types of potentiality working through different levels of being, the longing is also not of a uniform nature, as we can see in our daily life.

There can be a longing from the physical body, an entirely material impulse from within the physical structure of our personality. The body requires all physical appurtenances necessary to maintain its physical balance. Necessities of a purely physical nature—such as hunger and thirst, heat and cold—demand corresponding facilities to maintain the stability of the physical personality.

We know very well how we meet this requirement of the physical body every day by food and drink, by clothing and shelter, but we do not always long through the body only. The sense organs have their own peculiar longings. The eyes have a desire to behold, to see an endless variety of colour and motion. There is a dislike to be in an atmosphere of utter stacticity, without movement of any kind.

The ears are fond of different kinds of sounds. When colour, sound and motion join together, we have what we call modern cinema. There are no persons on the screen. A particular formation of colour, together with an addition of the soundtrack, makes us feel that solid objects and concrete substances of great physical value are projected on the screen. The senses do not know that they are getting deluded by such presentations. We know very well that the screen is a flat surface and shadows do not have a three-dimensional substantiality, and yet we run after these performances. The desire to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch are the insatiable longings of the five sense organs. As a matter of fact, on a careful analysis we will observe that we want nothing in this world except these five sensations.

But, inasmuch as these sensations appear to be discreet, one distinguished from the other—the ears cannot see, eyes cannot hear, and so on—there is a necessity for a centralising authoritative affirmation which concludes that all these activities and operations of the five sense organs are the performances of one person only. Otherwise, if the colour and the sound and the motion are separated one from the other, we will not be seeing that which we want to see. An admixture of psychological and sensory operations creates the illusive form of a solid contact of the senses with tangible objects, and there is no need that these objects should really exist.

The example is the dream experience, where we can have all the sorrows and all the joys of life by coming in contact with real valuable substantial objects and personalities in the dream, while none of them really exists in the form in which they appear. There is no solid wall in dream, but the dreaming individual can hit his head against that wall and begin to bleed; we can see the blood flowing. One can fall from a tree and break one's legs; one can have a sumptuous meal and be satisfied. One can rule a kingdom, be an emperor, while there is nothing of the kind

except a vast spread-out network of psychological operations. The mind is creating the subjectivity of the perceiver's position, the position of that which is seen as an object outside, and also creating the magic of there being a large space in this world of dream, including a time process connected with that spatial perception.

A magical performance, indeed, is the dream world. If we can believe that we had joys and sorrows in the dream world—very real indeed they were, when they were being experienced—we can also believe that in this so-called waking world, the senses can create a similar illusion.

The objectivity of a person or of a thing presented before the senses is not any justification for the real solidity of the presentation, because there is objectivity in the dream world, also. The externality that is the characterisation of objects of the dream world is also seen in this spatio-temporal world of waking life. We feel that the waking life is long, and dream life is short; this is the conclusion we draw by comparison. If we take each one by itself, we will find that this feeling is finally not justifiable.

A great master once said that if a person could dream for twelve hours in the night that he is an emperor, and a real king could dream for twelve hours that he is a beggar, what is the difference between these two persons? Who is the king and who is the beggar? We should not say that the waking man is real and the dreaming man is not. We draw this conclusion by a comparison which should not be drawn, because each thing has to be taken by itself in its own position and context. Nothing should be compared. We cannot judge a person by comparing that person with another person. That is an unjustifiable way of judging. Everything is to be judged from its own position, its own contactuality and stature; but we never do that.

We always compare one thing with another thing: dream with waking, waking with dream, one person with another person, one thing with another thing. By itself, individually, in its own position, most dispassionately, we

do not pass judgement on anything. This is the havoc that is worked through the sense organs every day, and since the mind is inseparably connected with the working of the sense organs and we cannot separate the mind from our own being, it looks that we ourselves are engaged in this transitory perception of variegated phenomena, as described.

The mind works like a handmaid of the sense organs and plays second fiddle to their tunes. If the eyes visualise an object, the mind says, "Yes, correct. I accept that something is being visualised." But who told the mind to accept the report of that sense organ? It is due to the identification of the mind with the sense organ.

Hence, unfortunately, our thinking also is sensory. We do not seem to be independently thinking through our minds. We really seem to be thinking through a mind which has been tarnished by the operation of the sense organs. So, we are a sense object—not a great compliment to our wisdom.

One who is involved in sense activity only, who gets into the delusive net of these magical performances of the senses and confirms these performances through the mind which is wedded to the sense organs, is in a dream world of a different type altogether. The whole world is basically unsubstantial, as it were, and nothing in the world can be trusted if the form of perception is to be taken as the criterion of judgement.

This is why we are oftentimes told that the world we see does not really exist, perhaps in the same way as the persons whom we see moving in a cinematic screen do not really exist there. If non-existence can appear as existence in a cinema hall, why should it not happen in the daily life of the individual? How could we be duped in one way at one place, and not be duped in another way at another place? A thief in one place can be a thief in any other place. A fool in one place is a fool elsewhere also. One who is caught in one type of illusion can be caught in another form

of the same illusion without knowing what is actually happening.

Thus, coming to the consideration of the sensorially conceived longings of a human personality, there is a vast network of delusion. It is not true that our eyes present correct perceptions; it is also not true that the other sense organs really, truly, give us a justifiable report. They seem to be experts in creating a chaotic atmosphere of a conglomeration of perceptibility by introducing an externality into the presentations which are otherwise illusory, and making us run after them as one can run after a shadow. This is how a sensory longing differs from a physical bodily longing.

As pointed out, the mental or psychological longing is, unfortunately, not very helpful because it only confirms what the senses are reporting. Can we disbelieve our eyes? When we see something, we say, "Yes, I am seeing." We do not say, "The eyes are reporting the sensation of a perception, but perhaps the thing is not there." The mind will not say that. The mind says, "Seeing is believing," and so is the case with the mind's operation in respect of other sense organs also.

What else have we, except the body and the mind, which both play such mischief before us that we seem to be living in a fool's paradise? It is a paradise indeed, because every magical performance gives us some kind of satisfaction. People flock to see a magician's performance, though everyone knows that there is no substance in what he projects. Thus, everyone flocks in this world of waking life to visualise and enjoy, as it were, the presentations of sense organs. No sensory perception can be trusted finally, inasmuch as it is reporting a kind of sensation which we mistake for a solidity of perceptibility.

Even the tangibility of a so-called solid object such as a desk or a table in front of us does not justify the real presence of that object. It is a sensation created by the repulsions of electrical charges generated by the

components of the fingers that touch and the components of that which appears to be a table or a desk.

Electrical repulsions can create a sensation of solid contact. If we experience an electric shock by touching a high-voltage wire, we feel as if a mountain is hanging on our hand, while there is nothing. It is only a sensation.

The chemical components of the articles of diet, which are forces—energies, actually speaking—come in contact with energies that operate within the linings of the stomach, and combine to create a sensation of stability, satisfaction and energy in the system. It is not the solidity of the food or the reality of the physical aspect of the stomach, but it is the two forces coming together in a harmonious manner that removes the sensation of hunger, thirst, and the like. Such is the way in which the mind also operates.

Now, if the mind is to operate only in this manner—sensorially, and in no other way—we cannot know if there is anything at all above this world of perception. Is this world everything, and there is nothing more? Animals, and even human beings who work only through instincts, may be satisfied with the belief that this world is the only real thing. *Ayam loko nāsti para iti mānī, punaḥ punar vaśam āpadyate me* (Katha 1.2.6), says the Kathopanishad: This world is all and nothing more exists, is the belief of many people. They come under the grip of the widespread destructive power of Yama.

The lower mind, as we may call it, is entirely conditioned by sensory operations. Only in the human being there seems to be a prerogative of the manifestation of another, higher mind that is generally not to be seen in the lower species of creation, which tells that the world of perception is not all. For various reasons of observation and experiment, we immensely resent the finitude that we feel within ourselves. If finitude is a reality by itself, and we must remember that everything in the world is finite, then there would be no necessity to overcome the limitations characteristic of finitude. The desire to overcome

limitations of any kind in oneself is a work of the higher mind. The lower mind is fully satisfied with the limitation itself, and it goes together with the sensory operations.

The transitory nature of things, the evolutionary process of the world, birth and death, and the observation that nothing lasts, everything flees, makes us believe that the world of perception through the sense organs cannot be that which is ultimately real. There must be something different from this world of perception. "Somewhere it should be," says the higher mind, the rationality in us.

We have been discussing about the nature of longing. Material, physical, bodily longing is of one kind; sensory longing is of another kind, and the longing of the lower mind working with the sense organs is of the same kind; but the longing of the higher mind, the reason as we call it, is of a third nature altogether. The higher mind, or the reason, tells us that nothing can satisfy us, for two reasons. One reason is that everything is limited. Everything is in one place, and not in another place; everything is at one time and not at all other times. This resentful nature manifested by our higher reason concludes that there should be a higher reality, where finitude is not. Limitations of every kind are negated, and even the time process is overcome totally.

Spiritual aspiration actually begins with the operation of the higher reason. It cannot arise with bodily longing, or even by the sense-oriented mental operation. This conclusion drawn by the higher reason, that there is a realm beyond this world of sensory perception, is called lower knowledge; yet, it is real knowledge. It can be relied upon, while we cannot rely upon the longings of the physical body, the sense organs or the lower mind. It is called lower knowledge because it gives only information, but does not bring to us the object of our quest.

The rationality or higher reason in us concluding that there should be a higher realm of experience beyond this sense-ridden world of transitory phenomena is still an

informative medium. It only tells us that God must be there. Eternity is, evidently, our heritage, and immortality is our goal. The higher reason brings us this information by means of categorisation and logical judging, and gives us some sort of solace. Though we do not have what we require, if we are assured by a reliable person we are going to get it one day, that statement itself gives us satisfaction.

If a reliable person tells us that we can get what we want, though we have not got it yet, that satisfaction is solacing because it gives an assurance that, after all, the object of our quest beyond this world of perception is going to be ours as a solid experience, one day or the other. Lower knowledge obtained through *gurupadesha*, instructions from a master, from study, rationalisation, investigation, contemplation and deep thinking, is also a protective force that keeps us intact in this world of longing and hoping. If there is no hope of any kind, if there is a futility of all the longings root and branch, then we would perish in three minutes, and there would be no hope of our existing in this world at all.

Wretched as the world is, fleeting as things are, and unreliable as every phenomenon is, how could we be alive in this world but for a hope that is surging forth from within our hearts, telling us that we are going to get what we want? This is the beginning of spiritual longing. Intellectual, rational longing is not spiritual longing; as I mentioned, it is informative and purely secondhand. That is why it is called lower knowledge in scriptural circles. Yet, it is a harbinger, an indicator, a pointer to the existence of something that we are going to get.

If the information comes that we have been declared a success, though we have not got it on paper, in written form, we are happy. “Oh, is it so? I have been declared a success! Come on!” We jump and dance and hold tea parties and call our friends because the information itself is great. The declaration that it is all a success is wonderful.

Thus, we rise from one level of longing to another level by rising above the physical to the sensory-oriented mind's longing, and further on, to the rational reasoning power which gives us the assurance of the presence of an eternal life. But even this is not sufficient. We have to experience it, have it, get it, *be it*.

Meditation, in one stage at least, is a lower knowledge. There are two types of meditation in spiritual longing: lower meditation and higher meditation. The lower meditation is an acute thinking through the mind of that which we signify as the ultimate reality of life. All-pervading existence, omniscience, omnipotence, everywhere, all-timeness, deathlessness, blissfulness, are ideas that engage our attention in meditation; but as long as these ideas remain external operations of the mind, they will not bring us the desired result. The cogitation of the mind in respect of a desired object has to end finally in the entry of the mind into the very being of the object.

We have everything with us, provided we are there in that which we want. But the thing will flee away from us—*sarvam tam parādāt, yo'nyatrātmanaḥ sarvam veda* (BU 4.5.7), Yajnavalkya Maharaj tells us. Everything will run away from us if we are not in that which we are trying to possess, or in regard to which we are showing affection or longing. We can love a thing without wanting it. That is political affection. Political affection will not work in our spiritual meditations, as such a thing is not real meditation.

The heart shall tell us where we really are. Where our heart is, there our longing is; where our longing is, there our object of longing also is. That is to say, the object of our longing is there where our heart is. It can be in England or in America or in the stars, though we may be sitting here physically, on the surface of the Earth.

In the Yoga Sutras, three types of intensity of meditation are referred to: *mridya*, *madhya* and *adhimatra*, as they are called: mild concentration, intense concentration, and supremely intense concentration.

Adhimatra vairagya or *adhimatra abhyasa* is super-abundantly powerful concentration of the mind. It is not concentration in such a way that the object of concentration is somewhere in space in the heavens; it has become inseparable from us.

There are also occasions in our daily life where our objects seem to be non-separate from ourselves. We get bathed in the nature of that object; we are drenched in the love of that thing which we need. What is that kind of drenching and taking bath? One can bathe in gold and silver, dream only that, and feel that one is inundated in a sea of gold sheets and precious metal; this is a rich man's meditation. One can melt in the liquid of one's love for the beloved, which one considers as one's all-in-all. The object that is beloved may be physically far away, but the mind does not consider this distance as of any meaning. Truly, distance does not actually exist in this world—which one has to believe, without any doubt.

There is no such thing as distance. The distance that we see in this world is similar to the distance that we see in the dream world. The huge mountain seen far away in a dream experience is not really spatially far. In a similar manner is anything in this world. Nothing is far away from us. We can touch the stars and the heavens with our finger, as we can touch a mountain in dream, without its being there far away from us. This experience of complete identity with the object of longing is many a time illustrated in our daily life in the greed for wealth in the case of a millionaire, or the longing of a lover for the beloved, or the state of deep sleep. In all these three conditions, we are one with the thing. Distance is completely abolished.

The highlight and the apotheosis of the meditational process is such a distanceless identification of the longing arising from our spirit, which we truly are. The most important qualification that is required of a spiritual seeker is not learning, but a conviction that it has to come and it will come: "I am nearing it. I am feeling its presence. It is

bathing me with its greatness. I am energised every day. I am strong. I want nothing. Everything has come to me.” These feelings will automatically follow from an inundation of the longing of the spirit, which is above the longing of the body, the senses and even the reason. The spirit has to long for what it is asking for. Meditation, finally, is the soul’s asking for the Universal Soul.

Here, the whole personality gets gathered up into a molten mass of onward march and focussed, as it were. The body, the senses, the mind and the reason do not work independently. They get melted down into the crucible of the longing of the spirit for the Spirit. This is the highest point in meditation. There, what happens? *Tasya lokah sa u loka eva* (BU 4.4.13), according to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: the world becomes yours; nay, not merely that, you yourself become the world.

Such are the various types of longing that arise from our own selves. From the dust of the Earth to the perennial beatitude of eternity, all the longings are present in our own selves. They have to be made manifest gradually in a concentrated form by daily effort at spiritual *sadhana*.

Chapter 10

OVERCOMING SPACE AND TIME

Our earlier considerations during the past several days were particularly concerned with the analysis of the very process of spiritual practice. There is a continuity of performance involved in what is known as spiritual *sadhana*, and we have cast our glance on various aspects of this wondrous performance of the personality of the human individual engaged in a task that is veritably super-conceptual, passing one's understanding.

Incidentally, during our observations we noticed that much of the difficulty that we face is due to a vague, inaccurate notion we have about our relationship with things. There are various types of relation observable in this world. Everything seems to be related to everything else in some manner, though appearing to be inscrutable under acute logical analysis.

There are basic fears which we may have to confront in advanced stages of meditational practice which may not show their heads in the earlier stages of *sadhana*. Perhaps the greatest obstacle that we may face, finally, is a kind of unknown fear appearing to be pervading the whole atmosphere of our existence—a fear which was not there earlier on account of a confidence that we had in the capacity of our own investigative power.

The advance that we make in spiritual practice is actually an advance that we make in the diminishing of the intensity of our ego-ridden personality. We appear to be large and very significant in our life, perhaps prominent personalities in some way or the other, but as we move forward in the sincerity of our spiritual practice, we come

to realise that the so-called importance of our personality gets diminished more and more; and the more are we diminished in the notion of our own individual strength and capacity, the greater is the fear that will grip us from all sides.

Generally speaking, we do not seem to have a fear of anything. We are getting on well in this world because of a notion that we have a strength of our own which can ward off any confrontation, bespeaking fear in any manner. The in-depth knowledge of our own personality, which reveals itself gradually in our meditational practice, reveals the hollowness of our previous assumptions, and we begin to feel that we are quite different within ourselves from what we assumed in our earlier days.

In the advanced stages of spiritual contemplation, simple things will assume enormous proportions, frightening us out of our wits. Objects of the world which are practically insignificant will assume a tremendous significance before us. Among the fears that may grip us, three at least are preeminent. The awful distance we feel between ourselves and the Creator is one source of fear. How far is God from us? Frighteningly distant He seems to be, and that fear can totally eat up our personality.

The second fear is the separation that we feel from the world in which we are living. We feel estranged from the world, which is our own habitat. We oftentimes feel that it is not a secure place, and we do not know whether the world really wants us—if it is truly friendly with us.

The third problem is the apparent irreconcilability of one individual with another individual in the world; we cannot compare or contrast one with the other, finally, when we reach the logical end of our investigations. We cannot know how far the Ultimate Reality is from us, though it frightens us by telling us that it is immensely distant, far, far away from even the stars. That the world also is an unreliable friend, which we have to tread upon with great caution, is also a fear we cannot easily get rid of

by any amount of scientific understanding or observation. As to our relationship with people in the world, the less said the better. We do not know how to live in this world of people.

These three foundational concepts—the relationship among God, the world, and the individual—have to be probed into threadbare, lest the fear may take possession of us entirely. The fear can be so awful that we may lose our wits, and perhaps even our life itself. It does not mean that everyone realises God in a single life, though that is the aspiration and the point at which we begin the practice.

Why does it appear to us that the Creator is so far from us? Why do we feel estranged from the world, which is our own house? Why are we so suspicious about our relationship with people in the world? We take all these difficulties for granted and do not go deep into the matter; we ignore it, as we often ignore very serious illnesses of the body—to our own ruin, finally.

There is no use carrying on spiritual *sadhana* or meditation with a secret fear inside. That everything is frightening is not a happy state of affairs. Neither are you my friend, nor is the world my friend, nor does God seem to be very near me. Then, there is nothing left. Everything goes at once, with the going of the conviction that these three apparently separated entities are not organically related or affiliated.

But, is this fear justifiable? The question boils down to the concept of relation of one thing to another thing. “I am related to such and such a person,” is a statement that we often make. What kind of relation is it that we are maintaining with another person? That relation is an imaginary, unintelligible feeling which cannot be substantiated either logically or scientifically. A relation is a notion in the mind. It does not exist physically in front of us, but that non-physical concept rules the whole world in all its levels.

We have been accustomed to the great principles of space and time, which rule the world of perception, about which we have studied in our earlier sessions. The very function of space is to create distance and make everything irreconcilable. Distance explains all the problems of life. If there is a real distance between one thing and another thing, nothing can really be related to any other thing in the world—though we assume that we are related to friends, family, property, finance, and even to this body itself. But truly, the interference of space, which is nothing but the unavoidability of the concept of distance in things, cuts at the ground of any kind of true reliable friendship of anything with anything in the world.

Nobody can belong to anyone. Nothing can belong to us, because the distance that space creates between ourselves and our belonging nullifies the very idea of something really belonging to oneself. Hence, everything is finally cut off from everything else by way of bereavement—the destruction of something, the death of one's own self, or the vanishing of that which one imagined to be one's own.

It is the proper function of a spiritual seeker to see how one can overcome this notion of distance. Is there such a thing called distance, really? Even simple technical instruments of modern times such as radio, television, fax, and other things have very considerably reduced the notion of distance. Things do not seem to be so far from us as they appeared earlier. But, though these technical apparatuses appear to be working very fast, evidently destroying the notion of distance, they have not destroyed distance. They work vigorously, but distance persists. Even if we run with great speed and reach a destination, the speed does not abolish the distance. Thus, modern comforts available to us though our technologies cannot relieve us of our true suffering which is caused by something else altogether, which can neither be properly studied through our mental faculties nor defied by the technical equipment of science.

That is to say, there is a basic difficulty which is prior to even the thinking process itself which has to be solved by handling the mind in a proper manner. Here, no instrument of an external nature can help us. Not the whole world, as a property or a kingdom, can be of any utility to us in this adventure.

God created the world; this is what we hear. The very word 'creation' immediately brings into our mind the idea of a separation of something from the Creator, as if some chip has been shot off from the body of God and it has become this creation before us. Doctrines of the creational process in religious and philosophical parlance have struggled with this idea infinitely through the historical movement of thought, but they have not come to a conclusion, finally. How has God become the world?

We have seen in this world of experience something coming from something, something creating something else, and so on. It is only through these analogies that we can imagine how God must have created the world. One analogy before us is the manufactured goods of the world in their relation to the manufacturer and his instruments. The carpenter and the table, the potter and the pot, the goldsmith and the ornaments are illustrations before us. So, there are some schools of thought which tell us that God created the world out of some material, which is named differently in different schools of philosophy and religion. Some name it 'inert substance'; some call it Prakriti, the matrix of all things. Some say that there was a void, and God created the world from a void—the consequence of which is not known to the promulgator of this doctrine, because if the world had been created out of a void, the whole world would be void in its essence, and we who are involved in the world would also be empty balloons with no substantiality in us.

A thing coming from another thing, being totally different from that out of which it has come, is a doctrine known as Arambha-vada in philosophical parlance. The

Nyaya and Vaishesika philosophies, and others, are fond of adumbrating this doctrine. Their contention is that, though it should be accepted that ultimately there is no material totally different from God, some novelty is certainly introduced into that which is created—like water coming out of hydrogen and oxygen. Everyone knows that the two gasses combining in certain proportions become water, but water has a quality which neither of these gasses has. The novelty present in the water makes the philosophers of these doctrines feel that a new thing can come out of something though, in a very significant way, the newly created thing should be considered as present in the cause thereof.

Is cloth created by its threads? Is the cloth, as a created object, standing outside its threads? The cloth is not standing outside the threads. It is the threads; yet, there is a novelty in the cloth. We can put on the cloth or the clothing, but we cannot put on a bundle of threads. This is also an aspect of Arambha-vada, or the creation of a newly observable phenomenon out of a cause which may, for other reasons, contain the effect inherently in itself.

We see milk manufacturing curds, or yoghurt, by completely transforming itself into something else. Here, the danger of accepting this doctrine is that curd can never become milk once again. It is destroyed totally. Are we to accept that God has destroyed Himself in becoming the world? If that were the case, there would be no such thing as God-realisation, because He has ceased to be. He has become the curd of this universe and He cannot become the milk of Himself again. There is a defect in this doctrine of self-transformation, or what they call Parinama-vada. We cannot, under any circumstance, understand how God has become the world.

Now, a serious question of another type confronts us. Has God really become the world? That is, there must have been a beginning for this creation, because a beginningless creation cannot be conceived. To conceive the beginning of

anything is to introduce the factor of time. It is only in the process of time that we can have a beginning, a middle, and so on. But time, being one of the objects created in the creational process, could not be prior to creation. Therefore, it is impossible to say that there was a time when God created the world because the concept of time contradicts itself by placing time prior to the act of creation itself—because without time, creation is not possible. So, the doubt arises whether God has really created the world.

Another problem in the acceptance of the fact of the creation of the world by God is that if the world has been actually manufactured, we cannot get out of it. We would have to be here in this prison for ever and ever. As long as the world of creation is there, compelled by the will of God at the origin of things, we cannot attain salvation.

Some people wedded to this doctrine hold that there is no possibility of individual salvation as long as the world lasts, because the world will bind us and the will of God will restrain us from going above Himself, or above His law of creation. The very intriguing result that follows from this doctrine is that we have to wait until the dissolution of the universe in order that we may attain salvation. So, where will we be sitting after we attain knowledge of God, until the time of the dissolution? And, when is the dissolution of the world going to take place?

This doctrine tells us that individual salvation is not possible, and nobody has attained salvation up to this time, because the world has not ceased to be; it has not been absorbed into God. *Te brahma-lokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve* (MU 3.2.4). There is some corroboration of this doctrine in the Mundakopanishad also: at the end of creation, they all dissolve in God—not before. This is the concept of what is known as *sarva-mukti*, total salvation of the entire creational apparatus, but it is basically a stifling doctrine. Our heart does not accept it; though we cannot refute it logically, our heart says that it cannot be. It does not appear that we have to wait in the

temporal process of God's creation for the sake of Realisation, because God is eternity and not involved in temporality. People who advocate this doctrine forget that God is not involved in the temporal process or the movement of time. Therefore, the conclusion that we have to wait till the end of time is to imagine something which is impossible, because there cannot be an end of time.

Then, what is the solution? How did the world come from God? Our heart tells us that it is possible to realise God immediately, if our soul is actually asking for it. The soul does not accept from the heart of hearts that there is a necessity to wait till the end of the temporal process for attaining God, because God is above the temporal process. Eternity defies the temporal process, and the very idea of waiting for some time is contradictory to the eternity of God's existence. There is no waiting in eternity, because there is no time. Thus, instantaneous salvation is possible. This is what our heart says, and the question of *sarva-mukti*, etc., does not arise. These are all empirical notions carried to the point of breaking by the futile logic of pedantic metaphysicians, whose hearts do not operate while their intellect is arguing.

The other illustration about God's creation is that it appears that there is a world, but really it is not there. The most difficult doctrine is this. While the other theories are intelligible to some extent, this last one seems to defy our understanding. Why does the world appear to be there if it is really not there? Illustrations of dream perception, etc., are galore before us, and the most common example is how a rope creates a snake.

How has the rope manufactured the snake? An interaction in the perceptual process is the cause of that apparently existing snake in the body of the rope. Hence, the whole problem of creation seems to be a perceptual malady. It is a disease of the mind, a contradiction arisen in consciousness which has to be understood—not by the intellectual process of logical argumentation, but by an

inner probing into one's own self, where our heart is the reason behind all other reasons. It tells us that the feelings are within us. Our basic aspiration, which does not accept any kind of argument in a philosophical style, has its own conclusions, and its conclusion is the certainty of our own aspiration.

The intensity of the longing for God at once defies the concept of the time process involved in the practice of *sadhana*. Something tells us within ourselves that we can have this Realisation instantaneously. While all observation, technology, logic, or philosophising will frighten us away by saying such a thing is not practicable due to the immensity of the task before us, the heart says the entire problem can be solved in a magical instant.

Our nightmarish dreams can frighten us up to the point of death with experiences of living an indefinite number of years of turmoil, suffering and involvements of various types. These tragedies look almost unsolvable but get nullified in one instant by the rising of the waking consciousness. The longest life which we appear to have lived in the dream world does not seem to have been there at all.

This frightening doctrine that we have to wait for our salvation until the whole universe is absorbed into God—the *sarva-mukti* concept that one person cannot attain salvation but that everybody should attain it, and until all are withdrawn into the bosom of God, no individual can have the privilege of salvation—is answered by the dream analogy itself. You have seen many people in your dream world. You must have had a family, and may have been a king in that huge empire of the dream world. The entire creation was there, all people—your friends and relations were hugging you, you were enjoying your life there, and then you woke up. Who woke up?

Put a question to your own self. Who is it that has actually woken up from this dream experience of a long, difficult life in the dream world? The whole thing has

woken up. Do you mean to say that all your friends whom you saw in the dream world are still there and you have alone, independently, wrenched yourself from the trouble of the dream world and come to the waking life? Are they still there? The whole world has been withdrawn into your mind. When the world of perception in dream is withdrawn into the waking consciousness, all that you saw, including your friends and relations and all the property that you had, everything gets absorbed into the causal nucleus, which is the waking consciousness. In a similar manner is evidently what is going to happen when salvation takes place.

The dream analogy is an illustrative example before us. The waking life is considered as a long, drawn-out dream process. As the dream world with all its appurtenances got dissolved into the structural pattern of the waking mind and the entire empire vanished in one instant, the entire creation will vanish in Self-realisation by the fact of the Cosmic Mind absorbing at that time the whole apparatus of creation because in meditation, our individual mind actually becomes *en rapport* with the Cosmic Mind. It is not me nor you that is meditating; it is the element of cosmicality that is masquerading in our own so-called individuality of the mind that truly meditates. Otherwise, if it is the individual mind that is thinking another apparently distantly existing Cosmic Mind, or God, there would be no connection between the two.

I have already mentioned the difficulty in the notion of relation. That the transcendent is also immanent is something we have to remember always. The most distant is also here at this very moment, because of the infinitude that is potentially present in every individual, working its own way in an infinite manner. The meditational process is the Infinite working in an infinite way, and therefore, it is a very joyous process. You feel most happy in your meditation. But, if you struggle and foolishly imagine that meditation is a thinking process—just as you are thinking a wall in front of you, you are thinking another thing—then

you will feel fidgety and irked, and would like to get up from meditation as early as possible. But truly, the meditational process is vitally linking up your own so-called finite mind with the Cosmic Mind, and It has to do the work of meditation.

The 'I' in you has to rise to the dimension of that large comprehensive mind, so that in the act of meditation the total mind of the world starts contemplating, and not the individual mind of Mr. so-and-so, this person or that person. Then, an inexpressible joy rises into the surface of experience. A power that is unknown takes possession of us. Our dimension expands to an indescribable extent. We rise from meditation as a new person altogether, as if we have taken a dip in a reservoir of nectar and are refreshed into a new life of immense vigour, health, vitality, and a feeling of utter perfection in our life.

To live a spiritual life, therefore, is a great glory, and all other kinds of life with which we are acquainted in this world—industrial, political, social, educational, etc.—are all summed up within this total way of living, which is spiritual living. Spiritual living is not one kind of living. It is the all-inclusive total of every type of conceivable living. The whole life is embedded in the spiritual life.

A spiritual seeker is not one kind of person, he is all persons in himself. The All takes possession of him. The spirit is the All. It is not one unit somewhere in the process of creation, so asking for the true spirit within us is asking for the All and, therefore, spiritual life is total life. With these convictions we should commence our meditations and try to be always happy, and never give an occasion for complaint or remorse, depression, dejection, or dissatisfaction of any kind. A spiritual seeker is a blessing to this world, and he is always happy. God bless you.

Chapter 11

MEDITATION IS COMPLETE THINKING

The practice of meditation is like the functioning of an organism. For this purpose, it is necessary for us to know what an organism is and how it operates. Briefly, it may be said that an organism is a living entity. It is a total individuality in itself. It has its own parts, which make up a whole. The relationship between a part and the whole to which it belongs is something worth noticing.

There are two kinds of relation between a part and the whole. One kind of relation is called 'mechanism', and the other kind of relation is called 'organism'. Mechanical relation differs from the organismic relation of the parts of a living body. Heaps of bricks or boulders on the roadside look like a whole, because they constitute a body of several elements which are its components. In this heap, one stone touches another stone, one brick touches another brick, so there is a connection of a part to the whole, which is the heap mentioned.

The speciality of this mechanistic relation is that we can remove one part from that whole without affecting the other parts. If ten boulders are removed from the heap, the other boulders will not even be aware that something has gone. They will still stand perfectly in order. This is a peculiarity of mechanistic relation.

There are machines of various types. Every machine is made up of many parts—nuts and bolts, and so on. If one part is taken away or the machine is dismantled, we cannot say that the machine is dead, because we can reassemble

the parts and make the machine once again a whole, and it will operate perfectly well.

But, take the instance of a human body. It is also a whole made up of several parts; limbs, cells, and various little elements go to form this human body. Now, if we apply this logic of the mechanistic relation of the part to the whole and sever a part of the human body, the other parts of the body will certainly know that something has been lost. Injury will be caused to the whole organism if a limb is severed, but no injury will be caused to the heap of bricks if some of the bricks are removed.

This illustration is to be borne in mind for the purpose of knowing what actually happens while we engage ourselves in meditation. If we imagine that meditation is thinking something among many other things which are also capable of being thought of, we are applying the logic of mechanism, and not organism, in meditation. We may think one thing in meditation, and think another thing tomorrow, according to our wish. One thought does not seem to be organically connected with another thought. This is what we wrongly imagine.

Neither our mental makeup nor our physical constitution is a mechanism in the sense we have defined it. The body is a living whole, and part of it cannot be removed without affecting the whole. I mentioned that meditation is something like the functioning of an organism. How does the organism operate? We can observe the function of our own body. The operation of any single part of the body is also determined, at the same time, by the operation of all other parts of the body. There is no isolated functioning of any limb of the body in a human individual. If anything happens to the body anywhere, it happens to the whole body.

A sneeze from the nose is an illness of the whole organism. It is not a malady of only the nose. If there is a headache, it is not the head that is in agony; the entire body is sick. Any kind of pain in the body will indicate the whole

organism is in a state of imbalance—the parts of the organism are not set in order.

Every part of our body is as important as any other part; this is something well known to us. We cannot have a special affection for some part and a dislike for some other part, because they all collaborate in a fraternity to carry on this total function called the living of the organism—the health, happiness, peace and complete satisfaction that is characteristic of a healthy individual.

Meditation is to be compared to an organismic process. We have to give up the notion that in meditation we are thinking something outside the mind. When a limb of the body operates, it is not that something outside the body is functioning. When the legs move, they are not moving outside the body; the entire body is moving when the legs move. When the hand lifts an object, the whole body lifts the object. When we consider the operation of our mind along these lines, we will realise that every thought is somehow or other connected to every other thought; otherwise, we cannot know that these varieties of thoughts are our thoughts. If each thought is disconnected from every other thought, who would know that they are our thoughts? There is a uniting, cohesive principle behind even a multi-faceted functioning of the mind.

We thought something yesterday, and today we thought something else. Though we have thought a hundred things, we know that we have thought them, and we have brought all of them into a single total of comprehensive psychological operation.

Spiritual success, which is mostly through the practice of right meditation, is determined by the manner in which we organically connect the parts of the mind in its practice of concentration on the ideal. Most of the difficulties of spiritual seekers consist in the wandering of the mind, the movement of the mind away from the chosen ideal to other things in the world towards which the mind moves for certain important reasons. What is the reason? It is a total

ignorance on the part of oneself as to the relationship of the thought process and the object of thought.

Another important aspect that we have to bear in mind in this connection is that the object, so-called, of meditation is not something in front of us, just as a thought is not something in front of the mind. The mind cannot think a thought as standing outside itself. The relationship of the mind to the ideal we sometimes call the object of meditation is vital, living, organic—not mechanical. Therefore, that chosen ideal which is the object of meditation cannot stand outside the operation of the mind. If the linkage of the object of meditation is organically related to the mind in a living process of comprehension, the mind cannot wander in the direction of some other thing without disconnecting itself totally from the ideal of meditation.

This disconnection is unfortunate, because the very purpose of the choice of the ideal called the object of meditation is to decide once and for all, in the beginning itself, that there is a benefit accruing from the meditational process. If the mind feels that such a benefit is not going to accrue, and it has a doubt about the whole process or adventure, it will move in another direction, in the direction of something which it feels will promise real satisfaction.

The contradiction is very obvious. How would we choose an object of meditation as the beloved and the most worthwhile of things for our ultimate satisfaction, and then divorce ourselves from that ideal after a few minutes by engaging the attention on something other than that on which we have bestowed so much faith at the beginning, as the ideal of fulfilment?

There is a psychological contradiction involved in this agonising activity, which is a dual process in which the mind, on one hand, decides to engage itself wholly by attention on what it has chosen as the object of its fulfilment; at the same time, it disconnects itself from the

chosen ideal and goes to something which it has abandoned earlier as not worthwhile.

This happens because the organic connection of thoughts and the relation to objects is not properly known. Most spiritual seekers are very bad psychologists. They don't understand how the mind works at all. The mind works in terms of things and objects, no doubt, but it does not think or operate upon the objects in a mechanical manner so that we can withdraw ourselves from it at any time just as we can take away some stones from the heap.

Everything is connected to everything else; this is something we have noticed in our earlier observations. The world clings to us in some way, positively or negatively, because of the organic relation it has with our own selves, and we cling to every part of the body because of the organic relation that there is between the parts and the bodily individuality.

Whenever there is a clinging to something, or a desire to abandon something, this positive and negative prehensive process takes place. Even when we dislike a thing, we are establishing our connection with that thing in a negative manner. It is not true that the mind is connected to the object only in affection, and not in dislike. It is one and the same thing for the mind whether we like or dislike a thing; there is attraction on one side and repulsion from another side, but both these processes are taking place in the mind itself. So, it is a concussion, a kind of push or blow that is dealt to the mind, whether it is in a state of affection or dislike.

Thus, organic thinking, to which I made reference in the beginning, cannot involve the process of liking and disliking, because likes and dislikes are mechanical activities of the mind. We are not mechanisms, as I mentioned. So, if we are real spiritual seekers, we can neither love nor hate because in that wrong process of liking and disliking, choosing and eliminating, we have become a mechanism like a printing machine, a bulldozer

or a railway train; we have ceased to be a human individual.

Then, no satisfaction can follow by any activity that we engage in. The whole world will look wretched, life will look miserable; we will get nothing out of anything we do, because in every action, this blunder is committed—namely, the isolation of the part from the whole in a mechanical manner, forgetting the fact that our body and mind are an organic completeness, and the total individuality which is psychophysical is also organically related to the whole world outside. So, there is no escaping from anything in the world. This is why Bhagavan Sri Krishna reiterates in the Bhagavadgita, “You cannot keep quiet.”

There is no such thing as keeping quiet. No part of the body keeps quiet. As a physiologist knows, every part of the body is always actively operating, working. Why does it not keep quiet sometimes? It cannot keep quiet like a stone because it is an organism. This organismic relation among the parts of the body as well as the processes of the mind in their connection or their relationship with the world as a whole is the foundational knowledge that should help us in our onward movement in meditation.

Now, in this context of our analysis, you can know on what to meditate. You yourself will know where the object of your meditation is. It is like finding out where your body is. Ask a question to your own self, “Where is my body?” The answer is very clear. But, such an answer does not come if another question of a similar nature is raised: “Where is the world?” You will say the world is there, outside, but you do not say that your body is somewhere outside. Why don't you say that the body is somewhere there?

“It is not ‘somewhere’; it is not ‘sometime’; it is always, and everywhere in me.” If this type of organic affirmation applicable to one's own body can also be applied to one's relationship to the world outside, we will

find that the whole world is aglow with the life that throbs together with our own so-called individuality. The world will rise up into action for our own benefit.

That is an analogy to show that when we are engaged in the practice of meditation, the whole world is active. It is not some secret action that we are engaged in, in a corner of our room. "Nobody knows that I am meditating. I am calmly sitting in a corner, and nobody in the world knows that I am meditating at all." This is a mechanistic view of our thought process; but, if we know the organic connection of ourselves, our mind, and the world as a whole, there is no secrecy anywhere in the world. The walls have ears, and the entire space has all eyes to know what is happening everywhere.

The benefit in meditation, as also the trouble that we may have to face in meditation, arises on account of this organic relation that subsists between ourselves and the world as a whole. As I mentioned, we wake up sleeping dogs. The world is sleeping and is not concerned with what we are doing, because we have severed ourselves from the world in a wrong notion that we are mechanically connected to it and can do anything we like in regard to things in the world. But once we establish a vital connection in our deepest heart of hearts, an organism as the whole world begins to throb in our act of meditation, and every tree, every leaf, every brick, every bird in the air will be aware that something is taking place.

We have read in the Puranas and the scriptures that gods in heaven become aware that so-and-so is engaged in meditation. Where are the gods? They are perhaps in high heaven, but there is no such thing as high heaven in an organic completeness of God's creation. When we touch something, we have touched everything, so when we have thought one thing, we have thought everything. When we touch one part of our body, we have touched every part of our body; the sensation is complete.

Meditation is such a kind of cosmically oriented total thinking—though the word ‘thinking’ is a very inadequate word to describe what actually is taking place at that time. The personality rises in a wholesome manner, in a wholesome relationship with the world of things. Everything begins to vibrate in harmony with us. We have neither friends nor enemies at that time, because the negativity and the positivity of love and hatred have arisen in the psychology of mental operation due to disconnection of the personality from the operations in the world outside.

If we persist in thinking that we are only in some place and the world is somewhere else, and perhaps the object of our meditation is in a third place, we will only be wasting our time in sitting for meditation. Nothing will come out of this activity as a fruit thereof, because the fruit is connected to the total tree. It is the entire tree that biologically yields the fruit of its activity, right from the roots to the trunk, to the leaves and the branches. The growth of a tree is like the growth of the human body. It is also an organism—everything is everywhere within it. The fruit that is hanging on the end of a twig is directly connected to the root that is under the earth.

Thus, what is happening within us, and so-called outside ourselves, is related to all things, but the concept of our relationship to all things is totally alien to human nature. No human being can think in this manner, because every person is different from every other person. Everything is different from every other thing. We cannot see one thing connected to another thing, or one thing really related to another thing. Even a brother is not really related to his own brother; they can separate themselves without harm or disadvantage. The closest relations in a family can sever themselves as if they were never family members at all. All organisations of people can collapse by the separation of the members thereof, because every kind of connection in this world—political, social, industrial, business, whatever it is—is a mechanistic relation and,

therefore, it can end one day, as it began. But the world process is not going to begin sometime and end sometime. It is a movement from eternity to eternity. God operates through all this creation and, therefore, He operates through the meditational process also.

It is certainly a great advantage for us to go on repeating this idea of an organic connection between ourselves and all things, and that all life is vital life. This is perhaps what was in the mind of the great sage who said, *Udāracharitānām tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam, ayam bandhurayam neti gananā laghuchetasām* (Maha Up. 6.72). “This is my relation, this is my enemy, he is my brother, he is somebody else—this kind of calculation of relation with other things is poverty-stricken thinking,” says the Yoga Vasishtha. For a large-hearted individual, there are no individuals at all. They are like drops merged in the ocean.

There should be, first of all, a conviction and a doubtless affirmation that the meditational process is going to succeed—that it is not a dubious adventure on our part. “Let me try and see if it comes; if it doesn't come, let me give it up.” If this attitude is behind our beginning the process, nothing will come. Doubts are our traitors, as the poet said. We have no enemies in the world except our own doubts. They destroy all worthwhile things in life.

If there is a true relation between one thought and another thought in our mind, a true relation between our psychophysical organism and the world of perception, then life assumes the form of a magnificent reality, and it never remains a meaningless pursuit, as it sometimes appears to people who are segregated psychologically and socially.

Really, things are not so separate as they appear to our senses. There is no paralysis of the organism of the world process. They are vitally connected. As we can summon any limb of our body to work in an instant and it works, so should be our conviction inside that we can summon any god for our purpose, if we really want it to be done. The

Yoga Vasishtha tells us that such a devoted, honest, sincere seeker does not require any security guards. He is protected by the gods from all the quarters of heaven. *Sarvā diśo balim asmai haranti* (CU 2.21.4): Every quarter of heaven will come beseeching you, offering you its tributes, says the Upanishad.

The world seems to be rejecting us, and making us look like poor nobodies. This has happened because we have rejected the world. The world is behaving with us in the manner in which we are behaving with it. “The world is totally outside me,” we are saying every day, so the world also says, “My dear boy, you are totally outside me; I will give you nothing.”

Therefore, if we are poor in mind, body, and social connections, we should not complain that somebody else is the cause. We are the cause. The world is rich, enormously filled with divine treasures. The world can never become poor. The poverty is in our relationship to things. Meditation is a rectifying process so that we may, by our sincere endeavour, live a satisfying, comfortable, happy life of no perplexity, no anxiety, no sorrow, and no expectation of something unknown in the future. Everything becomes a certainty.

The world is a certainty, it is not a doubtful existence, and if our relationship to it is also a certainty in the manner described, in an organic fashion, then the tree of creation, as we have it mentioned in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, will yield the fruit of immortal bliss.

There is no benefit, even in the least, by affirming our egoism too much and defying the existence of somebody else. By doing that, we defy the world itself. If the world is defied, mortality seeps into the vitals of the personality, and death takes place. Death is the inability of the bodily organism to cooperate with the functioning of the physical organism of the cosmos. We die because of our egos only. The ego-ridden physicality, the bodily existence, is given a deathblow by the widely spread physical operations of the

five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether. The five elements do not die, and if the bodily individuality is also made up of the five elements only, we have to explain what actually takes place when we die. There is a dismembered situation arising in the physical components of this body by the severance of the ego from its connection with this earlier formation of the five elements as a physical individuality. Death is, therefore, the severance of the ego from the five elements.

When it connects itself to only certain parts of the five elements, it locates itself somewhere and says, "I am here." This is the individual speaking; and who is the individual? It is a little shred isolated from the widespread five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—and centralised in an affirmation which is called ego-consciousness. If this ego, which is only a name that we give to the affirmation of consciousness in one place only, can be melted down by its isolation from this location of the body, and can be connected to all the widespread nature of the elements, we become cosmically aware, and we will not feel the pinch of death at that time. It is the ego that feels the pain, and the ego is only a wrongly affirmed centre of the all-pervading consciousness.

With all this available information, we have to daily recapitulate whatever we have heard from teachers, guides and masters, from scriptures, from sadhus and sanyasins, and try to digest these ideas and attempt to live them, knowing well that we are finally going to be more happy than an emperor if this benefit can accrue.

Meditation is not an activity, it is an operation of our being itself. It is not a work that we are doing, like a labourer, due to which we can get tired, and we would not like to do it all because it is somebody else's business. Meditation is not somebody's business, it is *my* business; and, my business is equal to the whole world's business. Therefore, there cannot be fatigue in meditation. There will be rejoicing inside that every step we take in the direction

of this successful art is also a step taken in the direction of more and more fulfilment of our personality, and not a negative reaction set up by anyone.

Purnam is the word. We have often heard it mentioned in the Upanishads. Completeness is creation. Completeness is our own way of thinking. Completeness is our relationship to things, and meditation is complete thinking.

Chapter 12

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DREAMING INDIVIDUAL AND THE WAKING INDIVIDUAL

The great concentration called yoga meditation is somewhat akin to the individual involved in dream consciousness attempting to concentrate on his own waking consciousness. It is necessary for every seeker on the spiritual path to know something about the anatomy of dream experience. Who is awake, and who is in the state of dream? We just bypass this interesting phenomenon in our daily existence and imagine that everything is clear to our mind. We dreamt yesterday, and today we are awake; there is nothing complicated about it. But, it is intensely complicated. The entire structure or the secret of our existence is involved in this relationship between waking and dreaming.

Incidentally, this is exactly the relationship between God and the human individual. What is the relationship between the mind that is awake, and the mind that is dreaming? What is the connection? It is the connection between God and every one of us. There is a frightening inscrutability about our relationship to God. We can never understand it, because we also cannot understand how we happen to be dreaming a world quite different in its structure from the experience of the very same mind in the waking condition. What makes the difference between dream and waking? The person exists continuously in both the states. That is why there is a statement often made, "I slept, I dreamt, and now I am awake." But, who actually

dreamt? Is the waking mind dreaming? That would be a self-contradiction. The waking mind that is ours at present cannot be regarded as the one that is dreaming, because waking and dreaming cannot go together. When the one state is, the other state goes. So, it is not true that the waking consciousness itself is dreaming. Then, who is dreaming?

Nobody has thought over this problem, because the enigma of the whole creation is so entangling and deluding that it will not permit even the raising of such questions. It is like asking a magician, "How did you suddenly produce a sparrow from your empty hand?" The magician just waves his fist, and opens it; a bird flies out. If we ask him from where the bird came, he can never answer the question. He only knows that something came, but he cannot explain how the bird came out of his empty hand.

We need not go to gurus, teachers or masters to have an answer to this question. Each one of you sit quietly, and be sure that you are awake. Put a question to your own self: "Am I awake? Or, is there a doubt? Do I doubt that I am awake just now, or am I really awake?" When you put a question like this, you will start doubting: "Is there something wrong in the question? Why should I raise a question like this, unless there is a difficulty involved in it?" Put another question: "How do I know that I am awake just now?" Have you any proof to establish that you are now in the waking state? There is no proof, because all proof arises after you have the certainty and indubitably of the fact of your being awake. If that also is doubted, there would be no source of proof. So, certain things you take for granted: "I am awake. The matter is closed. I cannot ask a question to my own self, 'Am I awake?' Am I to go to different people and ask, 'Please tell me, am I really awake?'" You will not have the courage to ask such questions, because people will laugh at you that the waking man is asking a question whether he is awake.

All right, be convinced that you are awake; to your satisfaction, it is so. But, do you also dream? When you go to bed and try to fall asleep, you often enter into a condition called dream. You begin to perceive a large world of space, time and objects. Now, go on putting a series of questions. "Who is perceiving this vast dream world of space, time and objectivity?" Don't give me a glib answer: "I myself am dreaming and I am perceiving space, time and objects." This is not a correct answer, because now you are speaking from the waking-consciousness point of view. So, your statement, "I am the person that dreamt of the world of space-time in dream," is not a logically perfect answer. I already mentioned that there is a difficulty in assuming that the waking mind is dreaming the world of dream perception. There has to be assumed a kind of dreaming mind also—that is to say, a diluted form of mental operation, which assumes an individuality of its own for the purpose of getting converted into the location of the observer of the dream.

The waking world is also perceived by the waking mind. This waking mind has to assume a locality, a kind of individuality, this bodily existence, in order that it may behold the world outside. Unless there is a beholder, a perceiver, there would not be a perceived world outside. That a similar event is taking place in the dream world is something well known to us, but our difficulty is: Who is actually perceiving this dream world of space-time and externality? Not the waking mind, it is certain. A peculiar, unintelligible transformation takes place in the perceptual process when we enter into the dream world. The slipping into dream is so quick that there is no one to know that this event has taken place. When we commit an error, we suddenly do it, though we may repent for it afterwards. We do not go on logically thinking for days and nights how an error should be committed, or in what manner we should get angry. These are sudden occurrences which defy the operation of logic. Yet, it is necessary to know what is

actually happening to us in the dream world. An individuality is artificially, we may say, created in the dream world - artificially because it is distinguishable from the waking individuality, and that newly manufactured individual existence in dream creates a situation of externality. The whole world of dream has necessarily to be contained in the structure of what we consider as the waking consciousness.

Is it not true that the whole world of dream is inside our brain, in our waking mind? Now, where is the location of the waking mind? Where is the mind situated at this present moment? Psychologists have many things to say about even the location of the mind. Some say it is in the heart, some say it is in the throat, another says it is in the midway point between the eyebrows, some say it is in the cerebrum, or cerebellum, in the brain cells. But how does this little force of thought, which we call the mind, manage to modify itself, transmute itself into a spatio-temporal world in the dream world, and begin to perceive it? It has to assume another dramatic actor-like role of a conceived individuality in the dream world, distinguishable from the waking individuality.

It is not the waking individual who is actually dreaming the world of dream, because we cannot have two kinds of experience at the same time—we cannot be waking and dreaming at the same time. This analysis of the relationship between the dreaming individual and the waking individual may give us some clue as to the manner in which we have to carry on Yogic meditation. We say that yoga is principally meditation on God. Nobody has fully succeeded in conceiving the existence of God with a locality of God involved in it. All sorts of phantasms arise in the mind when we begin to conceive God's existence. If this difficulty is to be overcome, for the time being, in the state of a strong imagination, we transform ourselves into the dreaming individual, and imagine that we are seeing a dream world: This whole world is the dream world, and I

am the dream individual, who is to wake up into a consciousness which would include within itself not only myself as the dreamer, but also the whole space-time world of dream perception. That is the waking mind.

Actually, that is called God. There is not much of a difficulty in convincing ourselves about our relationship between God and our own individuality. We need not scratch our brains very much on this matter by reading too many scriptures, and all that. The intriguing relationship between the dreaming individual and the waking individual is also the intriguing relationship between man and God. Striking this relationship in a conscious endeavor, and becoming aware of what is actually happening is yoga meditation.

What does it mean? Can anyone catch the point? I mention once again: Imagine that this world is a dream world—here we are included within the dream world, as a perceiver thereof. In our earlier sessions we have taken time to study the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived world. The world of perception is involved in the perceiver, and vice versa, the perceiver is involved in the world of perception. The world does not stand totally outside us, cut off, without any kind of vital connection. This is so, not only in the waking world, but also in the dreaming world. In the same way as the events of the world are connected to our individual existence in this world—physically, psychologically, socially, in every way—so is the connection between everything in the dream world with the dreaming individual.

Then, how do we start meditating on God, the Creator? God the Creator is just the waking consciousness creating this dreaming world. Where is this God sitting - how far? We have often put the question: How far is God? God is as far from us as the waking mind is from the dreaming mind. Each one of you can assess the length, the distance, between the dreaming individual and the waking individual. There is certainly a distance, but it is not a

measurable distance in space and time. It is like the distance between death and rebirth. It is an unimaginable self-transformation that is taking place, where we cease to be something, and we become another thing at the same time.

As we cannot understand the relationship between death and rebirth, however much we may brood over this phenomenon, so also we cannot know what is happening to us when we are awake and the dream world is abolished completely. Where is the dream world? We have woken up from dream and we do not see the world of dream at all. All these mountains and rivers and people and the entire population of humankind that we saw in the vast creation of the dream world—where are they now, when we are awake? They have not vanished in a sense of negation, ultimately. They have been absorbed into a wider mind which manifested itself as a spatiotemporal external world, together with an individuality necessary for the perceiving of that dream world.

If you want to wake up into the consciousness of what you call the waking world, while you are in dream, what will you do? This is a feat of exercise of your mind. Imagine that you are dreaming and now you want to wake up. Don't take this as a kind of theoretical argument. It is an actual thing that is happening, and it will take place again when you depart from this world. So, place yourself in the context of a dreamer who wants to wake up. What do you mean by 'waking up'? You have to do something with this world of perception. You have to deal with it in some way, in order that you may awake. What do you expect to do with this dreaming world when you want to attain the waking consciousness? Remember that the world of perception is involved in the perceiver. To wake up is actually to awaken the whole world that you are perceiving, because when you have woken up into the waking consciousness, you have not left the dream world somewhere far away and come individually, unconnected

with it. The world of dream that has come up with you, dissolved at once in the waking mind. This is what we are trying to do in yoga meditation. This is exactly the technique of dissolving individuality in universal consciousness—God-consciousness.

What exactly is the technique that we have to adopt in dream in order that we may wake up, and in order that we may not continue dreaming? The operational faculties causing the dream world have to be restrained. Which are these operational faculties? They are the eye that sees the dream world, the ear that hears the dream sound, and so on. The five sensations with which we are quite familiar should not be allowed to engage themselves intensely in that enjoyment they call the form of the perception of the world. The consciousness of the dreamer is together with the consciousness of the seeing eye, and involved also in its relation with the object that is seen, as is the case in waking. The object that we see in dream, the faculty of perception that is the eye, which is the medium of perceiving the world of dream externally, and the consciousness thereof, are all intertwined, and one cannot be separated from the other.

We are eagerly awaiting awakening: "I do not wish to continue dreaming; I want to wake up into the world of reality." The "world of reality"—what does it mean, actually? It is something that contradicts entirely the present perceptual process. Otherwise, the present perception also will be reality only. A dreamer need not wake up. He can be dreaming for a lifetime. What is the harm? The dream world is also a reality when it is dreamt. We can live and eat and drink and sleep and do anything in the dream world. What is the reason that we have a desire to wake up? The inward impulse tells us that this is an unreal phantasm. The dream world is a fantasy; it is a total unreality. The consciousness has to restructure itself, in order that it may become the so-called waking consciousness.

If we imagine that we are conscious even in the dreaming condition, there is a way out from this predicament. It is said that people who dream but do not know that they are dreaming are bound souls. People who dream and are aware at the same time that they are dreaming are philosophers, saints and the sages. They are also dreaming. A philosopher, a saint and a sage also see the world, but they see it as a dream object. The other type of people, who are bound, do not know that they are dreaming. A dreaming individual cannot know that it is a dream. It is the only reality. So are the people in this world not conscious of anything beyond this world. This world is all, and everything is fine, and nothing is wrong with it. This wrong conviction that this world is totally real, and there is nothing beyond it in a higher waking consciousness, has to be tackled properly. For this purpose, yoga meditation is to be practiced.

The meditational process, therefore, is to imagine strongly that one is dreaming this world. Since the dreaming is possible only when the sense organs of dream also are active, they have to be withdrawn. Self-restraint, which is virtually sense control, becomes the precondition for the other type of concentration on the higher level of consciousness in yoga meditation.

There are many methods of meditation. I am describing today one method—the transmutation of dream consciousness into waking consciousness. For this purpose, continuously we have to be aware that this world is a dream world. It should not be taken as a world of reality. It requires great vigilance in the form of non-attachment. If our sense organs get attached to their corresponding objects, they are supposed to be attached to those objects. A vigilant mind withdraws the sensation of connection of the sense organs with the corresponding objects thereof, and ceases from focusing attention on the sense objects. It becomes desireless. This analytic mind will not be attached to anything in the world afterwards, because attachment is

to get involved in the dream world, and then it will prevent you from waking up. Suppose you do not succeed in this art—with all your effort, you are not successful in withdrawing the sense organs completely from the world of dream, which is this world of so-called perception, and you die in this process. What happens?

You may be under the impression that the dream has gone, because you are dead. It is not so. Though death of the physical body has taken place, the impulse in the mind to project a dream world has not died. That reincarnates. That unfulfilled, unrestrained impulse, which has the habit of creating a dream world through the operation of the dream sense organs, concretises itself, centralises itself in some location in an imagined space-time, and takes rebirth, manufacturing a form, a body suitable for experiencing the very same dream experience which was cut off in the earlier incarnation due to its separation from the body.

So, death is not liberation. It is a continuance of bondage. If we do not want to go on continuing the chain of bondage and do not wish to be reborn a thousand times for the sake of being in this very hell of erroneous perception, we have to put forth serious effort, day in and day out, to see, first of all, that the sense organs are not attached to their corresponding objects. We do not go on looking at things; the desire for seeing cinema, video, etc., must be withdrawn because we are seeing the dream world. Similarly, the desire of the ear to hear sounds which appear to be very melodious and enrapturing, the desire to eat delicious things, touch soft things, and various other fantastic desires of the ego-consciousness all have to be subdued and centralised in a will that concentrates on its higher degree of reality, which is God, which is the Creator of the world, which is the Absolute—which is our own higher Self. The waking mind will act like the enemy of the dreaming mind if there is no harmonious relationship between one and the other, because the dreaming mind is a manufactured entity out of the waking mind only. So, the

law of the waking mind operates in the dream world. Thus, the law of the Cosmic Mind operates in this whole process of world perception.

These ideas are not easy to entertain in the mind. In scriptures like the Yoga Vasishtha and certain verses of the Mandukya Karika of Gaudapada, such analyses are carried on to logical perfection to tell us our real fate in this world of sensory perception. We cannot enjoy this world. There is really no such thing as enjoying, as there is no enjoying in the dream world, except in a form of utter stupidity. So, whoever enjoys this world is a stupid person. That is all we have to conclude, from the point of view of the reality which is the higher Atman, which is to pull up the lower one which is dreaming, eating the fruit of *samsara*, as is illustrated in the analogy of the two birds in the Mundaka Upanishad. In this tree of the world, this creation, two birds are perched on one branch. One bird is sitting quiet; he is not interested in the fruit thereof. But the other bird is engaged in eating the sweet fruits—so much engaged in eating the *puri* and *kheer* that he does not even know another bird is sitting there. Sometimes, in a good lunch, we will not be even aware that another person is sitting nearby because we are thinking only of the lunch. In this *bhandara* of world perception, we have completely forgotten that there is another Atman above us, which is watching us like a spy; we are totally unconscious of Its Being, and one day It will take action. Like a policeman arresting, the higher mind may arrest this lower mind involved in the eating of the sweet fruit.

Actually, it is not sweet. It is an action-reaction process which is mistaken for the sweetness of the experience of life, says the Yoga Vasishtha. Neither sugarcane juice is sweet, nor lemon fruit is bitter. They are only reactions set up by the palate in respect of the constitutional pattern of the object outside. Neither is anything beautiful, nor is anything ugly; neither is anything sweet, nor is anything bitter. All these differences are the action-reaction process,

which you will realise when you wake up from this dream world.

You will be wonderstruck that this malady has gone. All the sorrow of dream has gone! You take a deep sigh, and go for your work in the waking world. Likewise, a miraculous transformation will take place if this dream contact is struck off from the connection it has with the dreaming individuality by yoga meditation, one technique of which, I mentioned today, which is the analysis of the relationship between the dreaming individual and the waking individual, who Himself is God Almighty.

Chapter 13

THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The developmental process in the search for the spirit moves along different stages. In the most initial condition of human life, there is a preponderance of sensory activity, and one tends towards an overwhelming interest in material forms.

The physical body, which is pure matter, requires only material counterparts. The desires of the human being in this lowest of levels are sense oriented, and the senses are pre-eminently capable of converting every perceptible object into a material content.

The value of a thing is assessed on the basis of its material components. This is a state of affairs where the mind gets entirely engrossed in the reports of the senses and does not exercise the faculty of independent thinking. Whatever the senses say, the mind agrees. In this condition the mental faculties become almost servants of the demands of the sense organs, and it is difficult to make a distinction between sense perception and mental thinking at this level.

Why does this happen? Due to a peculiar structure and pattern of operation of the sense organs, it appears that sensory contact with an object outside is a source of satisfaction.

A time comes in the history of one's life when, by repeated engagement in this kind of sensory activity, one discovers that the so-called objects of sense do not provide that extent of satisfaction as one expected from them. An unexpected repercussion may sometimes sever one's sensory desire for the objects, and a new avenue of thinking opens itself up inwardly, after a period of suffering and

defeat experienced while spending the whole of one's life in permanent satisfaction from sensory objects. Then, one begins to think, "I have not been able to get what I want." This want cannot be filled from any effort on one's part. There is a susceptibility of separation of oneself from the objects of sense under the least provocation. There is what is known as bereavement, which is loss of one's closest contacts and an unsuspected severance of oneself from the sources of the erstwhile-expected sources of enjoyment.

"This world is no good," one begins to grumble after attaining a measure of maturity. Nobody is finally reliable, nothing is permanently satisfying. The closest, the nearest and the dearest of things cannot be relied upon entirely for various reasons, which one has experienced throughout one's life. "Nothing is good; everything seems to be futile. I have to pursue the good. As nothing has satisfied me finally, I have not been able to discover anything good in this world." But, there must be something which is really good—else, there would not be dissatisfaction with the apparently good things of the world.

Spiritually, this is the first stage of practice: the desire to do what is good and permanent in nature. "It is good to be good; it is bad to be bad. I wish to be good, and wish to see good things in the world. I have not been able to see anything really good anywhere, after my long experience in this world. But, something must be there, which summons me from inside. And, if really a thing called 'good' is not existent at all, the dissatisfaction with the world of things cannot arise in the mind." The desire to do good is the first stage of spiritual life, though one cannot know what that good thing actually is.

In the second stage, one begins to search for the way of knowing what the good is by means of study of scriptures, by personal rational enquiry, by contacting great souls—saints and sages, gurus, masters, mentors—and by attending *satsangas* of saints and knowledgeable persons.

One wishes to pick up the good, as much as possible, from any corner of the world.

Vichara, the investigative process, commences after the desire for the good settles steadily in one's mind. It is absolutely necessary to be finally good. Only the good survives; nothing else can finally subsist in this world. The second stage of investigative enquiry is a wide area of human effort which is carried on through deep study, which includes the study of one's own experience in this world, an analysis of the hardships through which one has passed in this life, the causes thereof, and the real reason for the ultimate undependability of things in this world.

This searching effort on the part of the seeking spirit goes on for years together, because if the search is purely intellectual, that also may not be finally satisfying. One may read the Brahma Sutras, the Upanishads and the Gita with linguistic commentaries and grammatical interpretations; they will not satisfy. One may become a pundit, a teacher, and a professor, but that is the knowledge acquired through reason, understanding and intellectuality, and satisfaction is not an intellectual achievement. It is another source altogether, which has to be delved into carefully.

From where do we actually derive satisfaction? It is not through any kind of intellectual search, through scientific observations or metaphysical investigations. None of these bring peace to the heart, or solace to the individual.

The search goes on along these lines, deeper and deeper, again and again, for many years. The mind engaged in this kind of investigative activity tends to gradually lose the thickened relationship it had established with the objects of sense. A strong rope was previously tying the mind to the physical objects of the world. The thick rope slowly gets thinned into a thread, and the mind, which also works in association with the sense organs, gets attenuated correspondingly. This means to say that the desires which were very strong earlier become loosened, and the grip of

the objects on the senses diminishes in intensity. Though we may sometimes feel that it may be good to have such and such a thing, in this awakened mood of the mind this desire for having something will be a very mild and passing longing which will not harass the mind permanently, as was the case earlier.

Still, the job is a hard one. Though the mind is thinned out by feeding it with a diet of sensory enjoyment it can again become strong and thick like a rope if circumstances are favourable. A person who has fasted for many days becomes thin, emaciated, bony, and only a skeleton is seen; but it does not mean that he cannot recover his original robust and hefty condition if the necessary diet is provided.

Therefore, spiritual seekers cannot go with the complacency that desires have vanished completely just because there is a passing interest in things and no strong liking for anything in this world. A passing interest can become a very seductive source of attachment, because it is a living thing. Even if a living thing is very feeble and thinned out, there is a chance of it regaining its strength in the potentiality which it had earlier because it is vital and alive.

Hence, no one can be so sure that things are perfectly in order and that the mind is perfectly controlled. It may appear to be restrained on account of the fasting of sensory contacts, but as long as contacts are possible—objects persist to exist, and the mind is amenable to such cooperation with this work of the sense organs—then all the doors for the earlier enjoyments are open and the flood of satisfaction expected through the sense organs will insinuate itself, gradually. At any moment of time, the nature of the world in its physical form of presentation can engulf the perceptual activity of the mind. Even in the penultimate stages of spiritual practice, one can have the very same early childhood desires of the normal longings of human nature. It starts with a desire for creature comforts—food, clothing, and shelter.

But when we speak of the mind, which works in terms of the sense organs, we should remember at the same time that the nature of the mind is such that it has hidden potentialities of self-affirmation, which is called egoism. Even as the five sense organs have their own five types of desire, and the mind only acts like a handmaid and plays second fiddle to the organs of sense, there is another type of longing which is stronger and ever persisting, more powerful than even sensory desires—namely, the power of self-affirmation, egoism, and an assertion which defies the value and worth of other things and other people in the world.

“When I speak, I have said everything. No one can open their mouth before me.” This is the sort of attitude the ego will develop, as if the whole world is a fool, and oneself alone is wise. This is the adamant behaviour of a dictator, a totalitarian, a despot or a harsh tyrant who sits in the heart and the ego of every person. One can be converted into that state at any moment. Anyone can easily become a despot if the circumstances are provided.

Therefore, this is a crucial stage of the search for the spirit, where one is on the borderland of ascent and descent. It is a precipitous condition where we may suddenly fall, or we may retrace our steps and guard ourselves effectively. In the earlier two stages of searching for the good—investigation through study, attending *satsanga*, etc.—there is not much danger. It looks like a very common and routine affair, and everyone can participate in these types of spiritual *sadhana*—namely, attending *satsanga*, study of spiritual scriptures, and the like. But, when the *sadhana* process gets internalised much more than it was during the period of study and attending *satsangas*, the warning signal announces itself: “Beware! Here either you live or die!” And, who would like to die? The mind says it is good to be alive; and to be alive in the world is equal to being alive to the demands and the requirements of the bodily and

sensorially conditioned desires. Else, it is a deathblow that the *sadhana* spirit may deal.

Why does it look like a deathblow? Because it is a warning to the ego that it shall not live for a long time. It is not the body that is afraid of what is going to happen, not even the sense organs, but the ego which wants to maintain itself. The ego says, "Thus far and no further."

"Enough of this great vision, O Lord!" sais Arjuna before the Vishvarupa. The ego cannot tolerate the threat discharged by that Vishvarupa to the individual consciousness of Arjuna, which felt that it was going to be annihilated before this blazing fire of cosmic experience. "Come down! Let me see You as I was seeing You earlier. Let the world be there, as it was before my senses. Enough of this light! Enough of this widened vision that is going to swallow me! Enough also of this need to think cosmically."

Set aside the question of the Vishvarupa and Arjuna for the time being. Even the attempt to think in terms of a cosmical operation of things is a threat to the ego. There will be such a pain felt within oneself that one would feel, "It is not for me, and I shall not pursue this way."

Let any one of you try your best to think and interpret every little thing in the world cosmically, in its organic interrelationship with the whole of creation. You cannot think like this even for a few minutes, because that kind of thought is a threat to the egoistic desire to exist individually through this body.

But suppose, by the power of your good works done in the previous life, due to the power of your *sadhana shakti* and sincerity of your longing for spiritual success, you move forward. Then, through this thinned, attenuated form of the mind from which gross longing for objects has been extracted, a light will flash forth.

As sunlight cannot penetrate through brick but can penetrate through glass, the higher forms of reality cannot reflect themselves in a gross form of the mind, which is ridden over with sense desires and egoistic longings. This

flash that will occasionally be experienced in deep meditation is actually the *sattvik* content of the mind working in a preponderating manner, while in the earlier stages *rajas* and *tamas* were clouding the work of the *sattva guna* in the mind. The rarefied form of the mind, which is *sattva*, refracts and reflects the inner light of the Atman, and visions of luminaries manifesting themselves like lightning will be the experience of the seeker.

This experience is actually the fourth stage in spiritual practice. We will see tiny lights emanating from even gross physical objects. Flashes emanate from even grossly hard substantial physicality, and we begin to feel that there is an inner reality hidden behind the visible physical forms of things.

When the meditation continues and one progresses further on, there is a sense of detachment felt within oneself—detachment not of a purely physical nature of being away from objects of sense, but the consciousness itself gets detached from its connection with objectivity of every kind. An object is actually a form of externality. The object to which we are attached need not necessarily be a tangible thing. It can be even a conceptual presentation in the mind arising due to intense longing which has not been fulfilled in other ways.

In this fifth stage, we would like to be alone to ourselves. There is no need for social contact. We feel happier when we are alone than when we are in the midst of people. The more we are alone to ourselves, the more is the joy felt within. An aloneness of a supernatural character begins to take possession of us. This is something different from the aloneness which we feel when we are locked up in our own room and nobody sees us. After the *satsanga* is over, we go to our room, close the door and sit alone. This is one kind of aloneness. But we are not mentally alone, even inside our room. We are conscious of the presence of many things in the world outside.

Hence, physical aloneness is not spiritual aloneness. In this fifth stage, there is an experience of what can be called spiritual aloneness: consciousness feels satisfied with itself only, and it does not require any kind of association with any object of the world. It wants nothing, and it is satisfied with itself. This is a superior kind of *vairagya*, far different from the ordinary detachment that we practise by being at a distance from tempting objects.

Here, we begin to feel a gravitational pull upward, rather than the downward pull towards the Earth and Earthly enjoyments which we were feeling earlier. It looks as if we are moving vertically, rather than horizontally on the surface of the ground. A power pulls us up, but it pulls us from all directions because this power is not only in one point like the apex of a triangle. It is not at one particular pinpointed area of space. It is an all-pervading influence. So, we feel a pull of a different kind altogether, apart from the physical gravitation that we ordinarily feel when we are living in the world. Something shakes us up completely, and it appears that we are not in this world. We are elevated consciously into a realm where our true being seems to be located. “Though I am here, I am really somewhere else, even at this moment,” will be the feeling we experience at that time.

This fact of our real being having a location elsewhere and not in this world on the surface of the Earth is the reason why no one can be satisfied by anything in this world—because we do not really belong to this world. Our shadow moves in this world, but our being is elsewhere. This pull is felt in this stage of spiritual ascent where we are spiritually detached, and not merely out of contact with existent objects. In the further stage, when we ascend higher and higher, the materiality of the world will cast off its masquerading veil, and it will speak to us in a different language altogether.

The world is not made up of physical substance; it is made up of radiation. Everything is aglow with life;

everything can speak. Stones, trees, flowing rivers, mountains, the sun, moon and stars will appear to be eager to speak to us because we have been pulled up into a cosmic level of experience where all things become friendly with us. The Yoga Vasishtha says that all the directions become our friends. It is a great truth. Light flashes from every atom, from every corner of the world, and every human being looks like a super-human person. There is a super-human potentiality even in ordinary people, which can be seen through the eye which is not physical—through that eye alone which Arjuna could behold the Vishvarupa. It is not the physical eye—not the dual eye, but the single eye. There, what happens? Radiance does not merely pervade the world. The world itself gets transmuted into radiance, a mass of light.

Perhaps the quantum mechanics theory of the modern scientific discovery is right when it says that the whole physical world is basically a quantum of light which appears to be solid on account of certain reasons, into which we will not enter here.

There is a suffocating experience at that time, as if somebody catches hold of our throat and our vital individual existence is going to be annihilated and wiped out. It is what is called ‘dying to live’. It is the death of the mortal experience for the sake of eternal existence.

Such are some of the experiences through which a sincere seeker on the spiritual path will pass. But sincerity is a vital factor which has to be emphasised. We should not give lip-sympathy to this search for God: “It is a long way off. Who knows? It may come or it may not come. It may be very far away. It may not be in this birth. It is in the next birth. Who knows?” If this kind of doubt persists, it may not come at all.

What is required is not the length of time of practice, the duration of the hours of our sessions in meditation, but the intensity of the longing—*tīvra samvegā*. As Patanjali Maharishi puts it in one of his sutras, *tīvra samvegānām*

āsannaḥ (YS 1.21): “It is near to those who are intense in their burning longing for it.” The only qualification of the spiritual seeker is wanting it, *mumukshutva*. Seek, and you shall find it.

Chapter 14

THE SAMVARGA VIDYA OF SAGE RAIKVA: THE ALL-ABSORBENT MEDITATION

During our earlier considerations we had occasion to place emphasis on the fact of self-control as a preconditioning requisite in the practice of any type of *sadhana* or spiritual endeavour. It was made out that in the process of the restraint of the senses, what is to be done is to abstract the forces of the sense organs from their contact with their corresponding objects, and revert the energy of the senses to the source thereof, namely, the mind and the Atman inside. But there is another way of self-control which is more glorious, more thrilling, and more satisfying at the same time.

An illustration of this kind of self restraint is given to us in the Chhandogya Upanishad in the context of the story of a great mastermind, Sage Raikva. Apparently, for all outward appearances, he was a poor person, unknown to the public, and no one recognised him. He had no belongings except a cart, which he himself was evidently pulling. But his power was such that he could absorb all things into himself by a peculiar technique of meditation. He practiced a *vidya*, an art known as Samvarga. This *vidya* is known as Samvarga Vidya, the all-absorbent meditation. What does this mean? In this connection, the story goes in this manner.

There was a king called Janasruti. He was a very famous, charitable person. He gave so much in gifts and did so much charity that his glory spread everywhere, not only in his kingdom. The Upanishad says his glory rose like a

flaming fire, even up to the skies. One day, perhaps during the summer season, when he was reclining on the terrace of his palace, two flamingos flew above him. It is said that these flamingos were certain sages who took that form, and they were flying above, over the head of this king who was reclining on the terrace of his palace. One bird was ahead; the other was to the rear.

The bird to the rear said to the one in front, “Oh, foolish one! Oh blind one! Don’t destroy yourself! Don’t you know the glory of this king Janasruti is rising to the skies, like a flame of fire, and it will burn your wings if you cross it? Be careful!”

This bird who heard this glory of a person called Janasruti retorted back, “Oh, King Janasruti of great glory you speak of. Who is this great Janasruti, as if he is equal to Raikva with a cart?”

This remark of one of the birds was heard by the king, to his utter humiliation, because he was respected everywhere as a great man whose glory spread to even the skies, and now he heard that there was someone greater than he, in comparison to whom he was nothing: “Oh, after all, who is this Janasruti, as if he is equal to Raikva with a cart?” This discussion between these two birds upset the mind of the king, and he did not sleep the whole night.

Kings are generally woken up in the morning by music, a band, and songs of the bards. So, early in the morning the bards started singing, “Oh great Maharaja, wake up!” The king immediately said, “Stop! Whom are you praising, as if I am equal to Raikva with a cart? Go and find out who this Raikva is.” They were all surprised at what the king was saying: “Go. There is a person greater than me, a person called Raikva, who has a cart with him. Go and find out!”

The messengers, the attendants of the king, ran to all quarters of his kingdom, to every town and every city, and found nobody of that name. They returned disappointed and told the king, “Your Highness, we cannot find any such person in any town or city in your country.”

“Foolish ones! Do you find great ones in towns and cities? Find them where they are to be searched for,” said the king.

Then they went to some villages, to remote areas. They went everywhere and found one person sitting alone with a cart, careless in his appearance as if he bothered about nothing. These messengers of the king prostrated themselves before him and asked, “Are you Raikva?”

“Oh, yes. They say that,” Raikva replied.

They ran back and told the king they had found Raikva. The king went with large gifts of gold and silver, cattle, and what not, and offered very valuable things. He placed them before this master and requested him, “Please, please, please instruct me in that knowledge by which you are absorbing everything into yourself.”

“Oh, you want to purchase knowledge by these gifts? Go away from here, useless one,” said Raikva. He shooed him off. “You want to buy knowledge from me.”

The story goes on elaborately. The king again came with larger gifts, which somehow seem to have satisfied the sage, and the king was initiated into this great mystery called Samvarga Vidya. What does this mean?

Every one of us knows that we are pulled towards the objects of sense, but we cannot pull anything to our own selves. The objects seem to be stronger than our own selves. It is a shame upon every sensuous person, who seems to be controlled by the character and the contour of the objects. He runs after them as if he is a slave, a servant of the objects of the world.

Where is the freedom that we boast of, when we are utter servants of the demands of the sense organs and we run like servants towards the objects, who seem to be singing a tune to which we have to dance perpetually till our deaths? But, is there a way of not becoming servants of the objects of the world, and converting the objects into our own servants?

You are now the servant of the world, but can the world become your servant? Is it possible? The world absorbs you into itself, which is the sorry state of affairs for every human individual. Now, can anyone absorb the world into himself? If this could be done, self-control has reached its pinnacle. There would be no object left afterwards, if success can be achieved in this art of peculiar meditation known as Samvarga Vidya. Nothing can attract you afterwards, because the attracting things have become part of your being. Because of the force that you have exerted upon them, they have merged into you. They have become your servants. They are at your feet.

In another context, the same Upanishad tells us: *sarvā diśo balim asmai haranti, sarvam asmīty upāsita, tad vratam, tad vratam* (CU 2.21.4). Here is a great tapas for you: meditate that the thing that pulls you has become united with you by the power of your abstracting power, your controlling will, and the reabsorbing power which you are exercising in your meditation. The meditational technique is so cryptic that the Upanishad will not give any detail about it. It merely says that initiation was given into “the absorbing technique of meditation”.

This technique seems to be something like this. The mind, in its usual operations, visualises an object—it may be one thing, two things, many things or the whole world itself—as a large mass of material placed in front of itself out of which it can select anything it needs, fulfil its requirements and reach a state of enjoyment. Actually, the word ‘enjoyment’ is a very intriguing term. What happens to us when we enjoy things, so-called? From where does the joy arise? It does not arise from anything. This is what we will realise on a careful scrutiny of this entire matter.

Consciousness, which is operating through the mind and the sense organs, moves out of itself in the direction of spatio-temporal objects when there is a desire for anything. When there is the feeling that the desired object is spatially near, the agony of not having that object diminishes in its

intensity because of the feeling of proximity of the object. When there is the feeling that it is possessed already, and it is under one's control, the consciousness that has moved out of its own location through the mind and the senses reverts to its own source. Then the self-consciousness, which was artificially and unfortunately diverted to a location out of itself in external space and time, stations itself in itself.

This is called establishment of self in the Self. *Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam* (YS 1.3): The seer establishes himself in himself. The moment this happens—when the consciousness withdraws itself spontaneously and lodges itself in its own root because of the feeling that there is no further need to go outside towards the objects, having obtained them—a splash of *sattva guna* manifests itself within us, while *rajas* and *tamas* were active during the operation of a desire. *Sattva*, which is like a mirror, like a clean glass through which the Atman within manifests itself, flashes forth like a bright light; and as the Atman, which is existence and consciousness, is also bliss, the bliss of the Atman manifests itself immediately like a ray of lightning, and we feel as if we are enjoying the object. Actually, the object has brought nothing. It has only brought the sorrow of a possible bereavement that is to take place in the near future, and many other factors of agony, of which no further explanation is necessary.

Samvarga Vidya, the art of the absorbing activity in meditation, is the centring of consciousness in everything in the world—not regarding it as an object to be cognised or perceived by the sense organs, but as a phase of consciousness itself. This, again, can be illustrated by a small commonsense observation in our daily life. When I look at you, you are an object, and when you look at me, I am an object. But, neither of us is an object. There is a self-consciousness in me, and there is a self-consciousness in every individual. There is a unitary self-affirmative

principle in every object, even in an insect and a particle of sand.

Thus, the assertion that something is an object that can be possessed and enjoyed is an erroneous thought arising in the mind due to thinking that things are located outwardly in space and time, forgetting the fact that everything, whether or not it is in space and time, has its own self-affirmative principle of selfhood. Therefore, every object also is a self for itself. Everything in the world has a self-respect, as much as you have towards yourself. Even an ant has a self-respect of its own. It would not like to be interfered with. Everything has its own cohesive feature of self-maintenance—even an atom, though we wrongly think that it has no awareness of itself.

This meditation is directed in the manner of converting every objectivity in the objects into subjectivity, which is their real nature. When you look at anything, when you even think of something—a person or any object—you begin to visualise the Self in that, and free it from the outer feature of name and form which have been vested upon it because of its apparent location outward in space and time. This affirmation of the selfhood or the self-identical nature of everything in the world by the meditating consciousness creates a peculiar atmosphere around. The self rushes into the Self. While objects and the contemplating sense organs have a false relationship between them, the Self has a true relationship with another self, apparently located in the body of an individual. The world rushes into you, because you contemplate it as a large Self—or, rather, your own higher Self.

This, perhaps, is the hidden import of the great dictum in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita where Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: *uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (BG 6.5). The world is your friend and also your enemy, under different conditions. God Himself is a friend, and also a disposer of all that you want if you do not place

Him in the proper context. All things in the world are possessed of a self, the Universal Self being present in all things, God Himself being immanent in every object.

What are you supposed to do in this particular application of the art in meditation? Here, the will requires a proper intensity of its own. A weak-minded person cannot do this meditation because of the old habit of thinking that everything is outside. That nothing is really outside, but everything is the Self of its own self and therefore outsideness cannot be attributed to it, cannot be easily imagined by your mind, because the trick of the mind is such that even if you assume that there is a Self in the so-called externality of things, you will, by old habit, imagine that the Self is outside you. It will look like something externally placed in space and time. The Self cannot be placed in space, just as you cannot be placed outside yourself.

So, nothing can be placed outside itself, as you cannot place yourself outside yourself. Hard is this to digest, because this is not the way in which we think in the world. If everything has a self of its own, nothing is outside anyone. If nothing is outside anyone, where is it? It also cannot be said to be inside, because the idea of 'inside' arises due to the fact of there being something outside. If the self is not outside, it is also not inside. It is just what it is.

If this contemplation is vigorously exercised in this manner with utter sincerity and with the conviction that it shall succeed, and it is not merely an experimentation that you are engaged in, you will find the world becoming friendly with you. You need not run to things; things will run to you. You become the centre of gravity for all the forces of life. You are the gravitational centre of the so-called things apparently located outside. They will gravitate towards you. You become a world figure in one instant—a world figure not in the sense of a political individual who is known as a great man through the newspapers, but a world

individual in the sense of a being who has absorbed the world into himself and perpetually contemplates only this fact, and no other thought arises in his mind.

The Upanishad says that such was the power of this Raikva that if anybody did any good deed, the credit of it would go to him. It is something like saying that if you do some charity, I will get the merit of it. What is this? How is it possible to explain this phenomenon? The Upanishad says that just as the larger figure includes all the lower figures, the larger Self includes all the lower selves, and if a meritorious deed or charitable act is done by any smaller self, the credit of it will go to the higher, godly Self, which is the meditating consciousness. You yourself are that godly Self. The Upanishad says here that if anyone can sincerely take to this wondrous Samvarga Vidya meditation, one can be sure that the world is his possession; not merely that, he himself is the world: *tasya lokah sa u loka eva* (BU 4.4.13).

Then, where is the question of self-control? Here is, as I mentioned earlier, a glorious method of controlling the sense organs. The senses melt down completely into the Selfhood out of which they have arisen, and bliss of an uncanny nature will arise from oneself. You will always be happy, smiling, and a radiance will be seen emanating from your face. You will be a giver of boons automatically, without uttering a single word, and your presence will be a blessing. Such is the power of this great Samvarga Vidya, beautifully described to us in this illustration in the Chhandogya Upanishad.

So, try to be like this great master who was poverty-stricken, with nothing, outwardly looking like a nonentity, with a poor cart that he had to pull, but was a world figure at whose command the Earth would shake and tremble. Such was the benediction that this *vidya* bestowed upon this great master, which will be the blessing of everyone else, also, who takes to this practice.

Chapter 15

BHRIGU AND VARUNA: THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION COME THROUGH TAPASYA

Throughout our studies we have been laying special emphasis on the practice of meditation, but it remains to be noticed with great care that meditation is a series of intense austerities, several levels of *tapas*, and not merely a rational thinking process. Meditation is not thinking. It is not even merely understanding in the ordinary sense of the term. There is a very severe significance behind what true meditation means or connotes.

A disciple named Bhrigu approached his Guru Varuna, who was the master of wisdom, and requested, “Instruct me in Brahman”: *Adhīhi bhagavo brahmeti, eva varuṇam pitaram upasāra* (TU 3.1).

In ancient times, the Gurus were usually the parents. The father was the Guru, and he was quite adequate for the purpose of instruction in the higher realities of life. Bhrigu’s Guru was his father. What did the Guru say to Bhrigu when he requested him to teach Brahman? “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*: Know Brahman through *tapas*.” He did not go into descriptions, narrations, quotations, or citations of scriptures. He gave just one sentence of instruction: “Know it by yourself through *tapas*.”

Here is the essence of spirituality for any one of us who appreciates it. Spirituality is a way of living; it is not a knowledge that is to be acquired. It is accustoming oneself with the characteristic of the spirit, and to that extent, living one’s life with that particular vision directly in one’s experience.

The intense *tapas* into which Bhrigu entered on the instruction of the Guru ended in a realisation. What kind of realisation did he have? *Annam brahmeti vyajānāt*. He began to feel that all that is materially constituted is Brahman—including this body, including the entire created universe, physical and perceptible in nature. Not being satisfied for some reason, the disciple approached the Guru once again with the same request: “Teach me Brahman.”

These are wonderful examples of Guru and disciple indeed, because the disciple approaches again and again for the same purpose and expresses himself in the same manner and the Guru, in return, mentions the same thing as the instruction. He had nothing more to say.

The second time when the disciple approached the Guru saying, “*Adhīhi bhagavo brahma*,” the reply of the Guru was, “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*.” Why does he go on repeating this again and again? What does he mean by saying, “Know Brahman by *tapas*”? It was already told once; now, a second time he repeats the same instruction, and the good disciple enters into another type of intense *tapasya*, as per the instruction of the Guru.

Intense meditation enveloped the consciousness of the disciple. He realised something quite different from what he experienced earlier. This time he realised *prāṇo brahmeti vyajānāt*: There is a vital principle behind all material structures. A vital energy is pervading all forms of matter; this is what he realised. Our modern schools of scientific thought originally discovered that matter is a hard, tangible substance, but scientists also did *tapasya* by means of intense experiment and observation, and they realised that there is energy content potentially present within all material substances. If the whole universe is materially constituted, the discovery revealed now that the whole universe is made up of energy only. The universe is a force rather than a thing or a substance.

With this realisation, again the disciple went to the Guru. “*Adhīhi bhagavo brahma*.” What kind of disciple is

this? He repeats the same question again and again, after having realised something which was quite good, for all practical purposes. When once again the disciple approached the Guru, the Guru said, “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva.*” A very good Guru and a very good disciple, indeed! “You ask me to teach Brahman. Know it through *tapas.*” Well, he had already practised enough *tapas*, but the obedience to the Guru’s instructions was so important to the disciple that he took it literally and went back for further contemplation in the form of intense *tapas*.

And, he realised something. What did he realise? “*Mano brahmeti vyajānāt.*” He realised that energy is not the ultimate substance of things. There is mind behind all things. The operation of the mind can reconstitute the location of matter; it can transfer material objects from one place to another by processes of telecommunication, telepathy, and the like.

We, in our daily life, notice how powerful the mind is. Even if the physical world is strongly presented before us as perhaps the only reality available, the mind has power over even the physical nature of things. So again Bhṛigu went to the Guru and said, “*Adhīhi bhagavo brahma.*” The Guru said, “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*”: “Know Brahman through austerity, *tapas.*” Again he meditated by means of a tremendous austerity of his personality, and realised that there is something above the thinking process, or pure mentation.

Discriminative understanding is higher than mere mentation. It is called *vijnana*. “*Vijñānam brahmeti vyajānāt.*” Pure understanding, on which most of the philosophers depend for their conclusions, was realised by this disciple as Brahman. With this realisation and experience, he went again to the Guru, and said, “*Adhīhi bhagavo brahma*”

There appeared to be some kind of dissatisfaction in the mind of the disciple, in spite of passing through some apparently satisfying experiences. Otherwise, there would

have been no point in his approaching the Guru again and again with the same question. However, he went to the Guru once again and said, “Teach me Brahman”; and, once again came the same instruction, “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsva*”: “Know Brahman through *tapas*, intense austerity.”

The transmutation of all the earlier experiences now takes place. It is not material substance that constitutes the world of creation; it is also not vital energy, electric force, and so on. It does not seem to be also mere thinking, or mental process. It is also not understanding, because though understanding, intellect, or reason is the highest faculty available to the human individual, it has its own limitations. The greatness of intellect is that it has the capacity to know its own limitations. By knowing its limits, it can infer the presence of something beyond the limits of its own operations.

Normally, no human being can go beyond this level. The greatest philosophers of the world were intellectual specialists, logicians. Pure understanding is their ultimate reach, and nothing more can be known. But, understanding is a process of analytically knowing something, which is other than the understanding process itself. The apparatus of understanding is logic. What does logic do? It separates the subjective side and the objective side of anything.

Even in a sentence, one part is the subject and one part is the predicate. The predicate may be supposed to be the object of this subject part of the sentence. Anything that is externally placed and is objective in character has to be somehow dovetailed to the subjective side in order that we may arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the situation. In forming a sentence, we use a link called ‘is’, or some kind of verb. Without a verb, there is no sentence. This peculiar thing called the verb is what gives meaning to a sentence. If the verb is absent, there is no meaning whatsoever in the sentence. It connects the subjective side and the predicate side.

Logic has this characteristic of knowing things by connecting two differentiated things. It assumes at the very outset that things are separated from one another—for instance, the knower is different from the known object. The known object is not itself the knower; this is something easy to understand. But, some sort of connection has to be established between the known object and the knowing consciousness. The understanding tries to do this artificially, by certain processes which are fundamentally and basically untenable.

The untenability of logical inferences in the knowledge of anything arises on account of a dual role that logical inference plays in the bringing together of the subjective side and the objective side. The two cannot really be brought together, because it is already affirmed that the object is outside the subject. Having affirmed the complete dichotomy of the object from the subject, the question of bringing them together does not really arise.

Here is the defect of logical thinking, though it appears to be very perfect on an outer surface of observation. The object cannot be connected with the subject because it has been already assumed to be outside the subject. This is one side of the matter. The other side is that unless somehow, though artificially, the object is connected or cemented with the subject, knowledge of the object cannot arise. That this cementing is artificial is something very clear, because the object that stands outside the perceiving, knowing consciousness can never become part and parcel of the knowing subject. But, unless it becomes related organically, in a sort of oneness with the knowing subject, knowledge cannot arise.

This drama of the perceptual process, or the knowledge process arrived at through the function of the understanding or reason, tells us finally that all our learning is artificial. Whatever we know is basically a husk; it is a big balloon within which there is no content. That is why even the most learned person in the world can also be very

unhappy. This knowledge does not bring happiness. Professors and pundits are not necessarily happy persons. They have their agonising sorrows. Therefore, *vijñānam brahmeti vyajānāt* is not satisfying.

The disciple went again to the Guru: “*Adhīhi bhagavo brahma.*” The reply was, “*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsva*: Do *tapas* once again and let us see what comes out.” The obedient disciple plunged inside himself and delved into the roots of his own personality—deeper than the material body, deeper than the vital *pranas*, the thinking mind, and the understanding, intellect or reason—and found something very mysterious. What did he realise? *Ānando brahmeti vyajānāt*. He realised that bliss is Brahman.

What is our idea about Brahman? We are also many people seated here thinking Brahman. What do we actually mean by this word? Every person will have their own fantastic idea about it, but all these ideas are intellectually construed with a framework of logic. As it is not possible to actually know the core of the Ultimate Brahman through even the highest faculty available—namely, reason and understanding—a self-identical process of appreciation of one’s own Self is to be called for. In meditation, this is the technique that we have to adopt. Therefore, it follows that meditation is not merely a bodily exercise. It is not merely a vital exercise, like *pranayama*, etc. It is not a psychological analysis through the mind. It is not a rationalistic understanding, like philosophy. It is another thing altogether that is within us.

Our knowledge of our own self is not observable like a body of physical matter. It is also not to be identified with vitality, mind, or intellect. It is something else. We seem to be something quite different from all these vestures. Probing through these vestures by *tapasya* is the art of meditation. We have to penetrate through the physical, vital, mental, intellectual layers—subjectively within our own selves, and objectively through the creation of the universe itself. Both through the subjectivity of our person

and the objectivity of the created universe, we have to recognise one and the same Being pulsating at the root of everything. Happiness is Brahman: *ānando brahmeti vyajānāt*. After that, the disciple did not go back to the Guru.

No disciple will go to the Guru after he is filled with perfect happiness, through any means. Only when there is trouble, one goes to the Guru or the physician. Like a good disciple, therefore, clever in understanding the secret of things, Bhriḡu realised that Brahman is constituted of bliss. But, here again a question arises as to what bliss is.

Human nature is so fragile, and so incapable of understanding even one's own experience of happiness, that "What is bliss?" is a question which cannot be answered. Are we happy? Yes, we may think that we are happy, but what does it mean? We cannot explain it. We can only say we are happy, but we cannot say what the meaning of being happy is. Everything is describable, observable, analysable, but happiness is something which is inscrutable.

Brahman is such. No one can understand it by any means available to human nature, but it can be directly felt inside. Feeling melts into experience. Though we are happy oftentimes, this is not the kind of happiness that is to be equated with Brahman's bliss. The bliss of Brahman is perpetual. Since Brahman is eternal, the bliss of Brahman also is eternal. It is not contaminated by the time process.

Our happiness is fleeting. Today we may be happy and tomorrow we may not be, for some other reason. There are a hundred things in the world which can extinguish the little flame of joy that a person experiences in life. The sorrows in the world oftentimes seem to outweigh the joys. Whether joy is more in this world, or sorrow is more, is a question that each one has to answer for one's own self. Is the world filled with more sorrow than joy, or is it otherwise?

However, if Brahman is the Ultimate Being, and its nature is bliss, it should explain all the questions of life, because the sorrows of the world, to which we often make reference, cannot be connected in any way with the eternity of the bliss of Brahman. Just as night cannot stand before day, sorrow cannot be visualised or experienced in any way when Brahman's bliss is experienced directly in one's own self.

Whatever experience the disciple Bhrigu had, he had it through *tapasya*, not through study of books or listening to lectures. No other means can bring this blessing. No *katha*, *sankirtana*, *bhajana*, nothing that is outwardly motivated can bring this bliss of Brahman, because we can attend to all these *kathas* and *bhajans*, etc., without the least self-control in us. Even a person with no self-control can enjoy a *bhajan*, but he will not derive the benefit of it because the benefit of any kind of spiritual exercise can be had only by self-control. In different stages of self-control, Bhrigu realised that bliss is the nature of Brahman.

The bodily longings which are the cravings of sense have to be subdued first. As long as these cravings persist, physically, through the sense organs, through the desires and passions of any kind, the meditational process cannot go deeper than the physical level. That *tapasya* which was practised by Bhrigu in the form of utter self-restraint enabled him to go deeper—not merely by intellectual analysis, but by actual experience of his own vital existence, mental existence, and intellectual existence.

Therefore, one has to be purely subjective, in one sense, during meditation. There is no external interference at that time. When we reach the deepest level of our being, we will also reach the deepest level of the whole of creation.

This is why it is said, "Thou art That," *tat tvam asi*. 'Thou' here means the deepest essence of spirituality in a person is identical with the deepest core of the cosmos. Identity does not mean one merging with the other, as if they are two different things. It is a cohesive process which

is indescribable through our mind. It is like sinking into deep sleep, where our bodily, vital, mental and intellectual functions melt down, as it were, in a sea of experience where we remain as we are, and we do not require contact with anything else to be happy.

Everyone knows how pleasant sleep is. It is more pleasant, more delighting, than any joy that one can conceive. Let even the emperor, who has all the world to enjoy, not sleep for fifteen days and see what happens to his joy. He will say, “Don’t talk to me. Let me sleep. Let the empire go, but I want to take rest and sleep.” He wants to go into himself, and not into the empire. Though the mind and the sense organs wrongly suggest that we are in the empire and our joy is there, outside, the test is actual experience.

Daily we are taken to Brahman, says the Upanishad. A great wonder is this, that every day we are pulled into Brahman when we are in dreamless sleep. That is why the very presence of that apparent contact we have with the deepest Being in ourselves tells us that we can sleep more and more, and it is not good to get up: “Let me sleep a little more.” The honey-like bliss is poured into one’s experience in the state of deep sleep.

The Upanishad says that we are actually in contact with Brahman, but we do not know what is happening to us. We come back like a fool, as we went like a fool, into the state of deep sleep. This happens because of the absence of self-control, the absence of self-restraint of the different vestures mentioned—the body, the *pranas*, the mind, and the intellect. These vestures, or *kosas*, as they are called, are agitations of the spirit. It is a disease of the mind, concretised in the form of visible personality. To melt it down into the substance of which it has arisen, deep contemplation of an utter subjectivity in nature has to be practised. Finally, it would mean that one has to love one’s own Self, and one cannot love anything else—even the least tinge of love for anything other than one’s own Self.

Looking almost like selfishness, when looked at from another angle of vision, this is the greatest altruism one can think of.

Why does it look like selfishness? Because we conceive of this Self, into which we entered, as a bodily content. It is as if we are going inside our physical individuality. That is why we say wrongly that it is selfish to go inside. But, the deepest inside in us is not ours. It is a property of everybody. It is like a bubble sinking into the ocean. The ocean is the root of all the bubbles. The ocean is not a selfish individual. Each drop may be regarded as selfish in its relation to other drops, but when it melts and bursts into the ocean, it has become the self of all other drops also.

This thing into which we are entering in the state of deep sleep is that into which everything sinks, and therein is our final solace and blessedness. But, however much we may go to sleep every day, Brahman is not realised because the desires of the mind and the passions of the sense organs, which are potentially present even in the state of deep sleep, cloud the intelligence which is flashing forth from the root of Brahman, which gives pleasure on one side and ignorance on the other side. We are happy in sleep but are unconscious that we are happy, so there is a curse upon this happiness. That curse is nothing but the unfulfilled desires of the sense organs, which crave to jump out upon the objects outside at the least opportunity provided.

Therefore, any amount of sleep will not make us know Brahman, unless the senses are controlled and consciousness retreats from the outer level to the inner level—until it reaches the deepest level, where consciousness establishes itself in consciousness. That is the bliss of Brahman, which Bhrigu realised by the blessing of the great master Varuna, who was his father.

Wonderful was the teacher; he would not utter one word of teaching, really. “Know it by yourself; go deep into yourself; work for yourself, and toil for yourself; know it for yourself.” That is the teaching of the Guru, and so

obedient was the disciple that he never questioned this pithy, so-called meaningless instruction. He took it seriously and went inside by self-control, control of the operations of every level of the personality, and reached that bliss which is the very essence of all existence. *Sat*, pure existence, is also *ananda* at the same time. And, it is all consciousness at that time, so we call it *sat-chit-ananda*, existence-consciousness-bliss, towards which end we have to struggle hard, as the disciple Bhrigu endeavoured.

Chapter 16

TOTAL THINKING—THINKING AS NATURE THINKS

A general clash that often takes place between socio-personal values and spiritual values may land a person many a time in a mood of despondency, melancholy, and despair. The clash is between these values which are open to the human individual, in which everyone is sunk up to the neck; one regards these values as absolute, believing in nothing more than what is agreeable to the mind and the reason controlled by the sense organs. What are these personal, social and spiritual values, between which there is a conflict leading to untoward consequences in daily life?

The values that a person holds as final, absolutely necessary, and inseparable from one's own self may be regarded as personal values. These values cause one to exercise authority and affirm oneself in a 'don't care' manner because the personal ego is threatened. As long as the egoistic personality is pampered, worshipped and adored, it looks like a golden temple, most attractive and beautiful, but the characteristic of the ego is intolerance of opposition. There is a peculiarity about this trait in every human individual. "What I say is right, and what anybody else says is wrong." This is the affirmation of egoism.

Apart from egoistic values sometimes getting mixed up with so-called rationalisation of values, emotional values, there are values of purely sensory appreciation, to which a person will cling up to the point of death. For the sake of the honour of the ego, for the purpose of maintaining what is regarded as self-respect, one will be prepared to lose

one's life. Similarly, unfulfilled sense-ridden passions may cause a person to consider his or her life as worthless. Egoistic values and sensory values are the principle values which the personality clings to. We judge everything in terms of these evaluations.

Social values are the well-known do's and don'ts of life—do this, don't do that. Everywhere we hear these things being told. These do's and don'ts vary from country to country, from culture to culture. The do's of one country may not be the do's of another country, and so also are the don'ts. They are galvanised by ethnic, anthropological and geographic influences, so they are not absolute. Yet, a particular culture or society regards them as absolute. When it is said that it should be done or it should not be done, it is a permanent dictum discharged by society for the fulfilment and obedience of every individual in that community or society.

That is why people who are tethered vehemently by certain kinds of restrictions in a particular society often abandon that society and go to another society, enter another country with another sense of values which may— from the point of view of that individual, at least—offer opportunities of greater freedom and facility of expression.

Social values are modern, as well as ancient. They change from time to time—from ancient times to medieval ages, from medieval ages to modern times; and, due to exigencies of certain circumstances in society, yesterday's social values may be turned down for the sake of a newly engendered value today. But personal values do not change. A person cannot change the egoism of oneself, even in centuries. Similar is the value attached to sensory attractions.

Hemmed in from all sides by these operations within as well as without, human nature, when it seeks to confront what are known as spiritual or divine values, faces a dark curtain in front—a thick wall against which it can knock its head and fall down.

The values that are known as spiritual are difficult to understand. They do not consist in study of scriptures, frequenting temples, rolling of beads, fasts and vigils. None of these can ultimately be regarded as spiritual. Only a thing that liberates a person from bondage of mortality can be regarded as a spiritual value. Let anyone cogitate for oneself whether these external manipulations, performances, and rituals which go by the name of religion can lead one to immortal existence. If, in the heart of hearts, one feels that nothing of this kind can lead to immortality, the religion fails as a saviour of humanity. What, then, is spiritual value?

Briefly, as I mentioned, it is that outlook of life, that adoption of behaviour, that consideration of one's circumstance and environment which will fit into the working of nature taken as a whole, and not in parts. Even cultural values differing from one country to another cannot be regarded as spiritual values, because they vary from one circumstance to another. Nature has no country. It has no class or clan. It has no language. It does not speak in a human tongue—though we may say that every leaf in a tree speaks, in its own way, a language known only to itself.

The operations of nature in the universe as a whole are totally different in character and *modus operandi* from the methods we employ in our day-to-day existence in this world. Nature has no respect for individuality. Whether it is a man or a woman, whether one is rich or poor, nature has no such considerations. Its values are totally different from humanly conceived social values. If someone dies, a great tragedy is said to befall that particular family; but if millions die, it is not a loss to nature. If one child is born, it is a rejoicing for the family in this world; if millions are born, it is nothing to nature because the workings of nature are based on what we may call a total visualisation of value. The whole thing is taken into consideration at the same time, while nature opens its eyes and works its ways through the process of evolution.

But no human being can think in a total fashion. Our method of mental operation is mostly personal, artificially family oriented, and if it is extended further into society and the like, it is again a diluted form of personal affirmation. All social values are actually extended forms of personal values. There is no such thing as society except a large body of individuals operating in a given manner. We speak of society; it is impossible to conceive its existence independent of the individual constituents of which it is made. An arrangement or a pattern of the operation of certain classes of individuals is called 'society' for the time being. Societies vary, as cultures vary in different countries, so these modes of working in life by human nature also vary accordingly.

The way in which nature works is also the way in which God works. Nature is the face of God, and if we cannot know how God works, we have only to observe how nature works. But, wedded as we are to the limited vision of personality and personality-oriented society, we cannot even find time to be impartial enough to probe into the mysteries of nature. What is nature? It is a total of phenomena, all things and everything put together—not in a slipshod manner, but in a harmonious way so that the whole universe forms an organism, a living individual.

Nature is a living body, and it is one body only. We cannot have many natures, many universes, and all that. Since nature is one, and it is a living entity as a single organism, its ways are really the ways that finally succeed. No other boasting of man, in any manner whatsoever, will work, and it is no use wagging one's tail before nature's laws. It can topple down stars, suns and moons when it doesn't want them. It can dry up oceans, create droughts and floods, epidemics, wars and destructions. Anything of that kind may be sanctioned by the vision of nature from the point of view of its end, which always escapes the notice of human perception.

The whole of nature has a particular aim before it, and it relentlessly pursues that aim. Everyone has to follow the track followed by nature. It is like the vehicles attached to a railway engine following the track followed by the engine; they cannot have another track. If any individual is harsh and audacious enough to assert his or her own ambitious path of personal glorification and sensory gratification, nature will give a kick to that individual in the form of disease, aberration, bereavement, and finally death itself.

Actually, what we call death is only a nemesis that follows from the reactions nature sets up against violations of its own laws by the individual. There is no such thing as an individual body in nature taken as a whole. There are no personalities; there is no humanity, no creation as we think it to be. If this could be properly understood, even by the stretch of our imagination, we may be stepping on the first footstool of a spiritual view of things. Any kind of external performance and demonstration externally is not going to be regarded as worth a fig by the law of nature. We can deceive anybody, but nobody can deceive nature. It will penalise a person who goes against its principles.

Unfortunately, everyone goes against natural laws. By natural laws, I do not mean merely breathing fresh air, eating good food, drinking cows' milk, and doing daily exercise. I do not mean these as natural laws, though they also form part of it. Natural law is the vision of life, which is the vision entertained by nature itself. It is hard, of course, to conceive what nature is. For that, I gave an illustration of the farthest reach of the human mind, which includes the boundary of nature. We can imagine how far, to what distance, our mind can travel. It can reach the stars. It can go beyond the galaxies. It can touch the boundaries of space and time. All this is within nature. So vast is the concept that we can have, if we are to meditate on the principle of natural workings.

When the attempt at this kind of thinking succeeds even a little bit, a tremendous transformation will take place

inside oneself, as well as in the atmosphere outside oneself—because nature includes oneself, as also what is outside oneself. So, if anyone believes in the law of nature and thinks, behaves and acts to the extent possible according to the law of nature, it will transform the individual as nature would deem it proper, and transform also the circumstances or the environments of the individual because environment goes together with the individual. We are made up of environment also, and not merely our bodily frame.

An effort of a veiled nature, unthinkable ordinarily, is necessary to conduct oneself in this manner in daily life. We have been discussing these subjects from different angles of vision, but how many can retain these thoughts in the mind? The mind is so tricky as to confirm again and again that sensory and egoistic values are final. Whatever we have heard from elders or from scriptures passes over the head of the individual; it does not enter within, as any amount of water poured on a rock will not permeate into the rock.

For this purpose, deep meditation is called for. We must remember that we have no friend in this world. We should not ignore nature and say that we have got many friends: “I can be protected by my family members. I have got even a large army.” The army is of no value before nature. All the powers that we can conceive in this world are like a little bit of husk before natural forces. It can blow a wind which can throw half of the world out; such power nature has got. Therefore, boasting too much about one’s own capacity, and being too complacent about one’s social and personal achievements, is tomfoolery of the first water.

Therefore, every seeker, everyone on the path of the spirit, has to guard oneself from the kicks and blows that one may have to receive one day from natural laws. Every minute we have such kicks by problems that we are facing in life. All the problems of life—social, political, economic, whatever they are—are the conflict arising out of the

difference between the human way of thinking and the natural way of thinking.

It is an ungodly way of living that is the cause of all the sorrows of life, whatever be their nature. So, merely depending on one's own strength, muscular or industrial, is a futile way of living. Especially people who are a little aged, who have grey hair and have learned the art of mature thinking, will not fall into the pit of this erroneous thought that the world can save us from the sorrow of mortality. A comprehensive approach to life, inclusive of oneself and society and the whole of nature, the entire creation, is required. This is what we may call absolute thinking, total thinking, universal thinking, or we may dare to say, God-thinking. This is true meditation. Any other kind of scratching the head cannot be a successful meditation at all. In meditation, we touch the core of reality.

If we are not even able to approach the borderland of reality, and it remains far away from us, the problems remain problems always. The world has remained an abode of sorrows and problems right from its creation, because the world is nothing but an area of action by individuals who contrarily work against nature. Universal thinking is unimaginable to the human level of approach. We are all human beings, no doubt, but how long will we be contented in being only human beings? From the biological point of view we are like animals, and even psychologically we are not far off from the subhuman level. Only our super-arrogant egoism distinguishes us from the category of life which we call, in our own egoistic adumbration, animal and plant life, etc.—which may be perhaps nearer to reality than the human ego.

Thus, seekers, inmates of this ashram, guests and visitors who come here to partake of the blessedness of the vibrations of this place, will do good to carry some treasure which is of permanent value when they go home; and those who are residents here will carry this wisdom with them

permanently for ever and ever as an eternal gift that has come from God Himself.

What can be a greater gift than the ability to think like this? The greatest gift, the greatest treasure, is understanding. Minus that, everything else falls flat. A person without proper understanding always thinks wrongly in an egoistic manner, and sensorially; that person cannot sit for meditation because secretly there is a voice speaking from inside, guided by the senses, the aesthetic sense, and the ego, that life is something different than what others speak of. Every saint and sage, every master who has trodden this path had to face these difficulties of spiritual life where voices were heard from within and also from without, one opposing the other: one phenomenal, another spiritual, absolute, and noumenal.

It is up to us, with the utmost effort that we can exercise, to find time to befriend God. Would you lose anything by being a friend of God? You would rather be friends of people who pamper your ego, cajole you, advertise you in the papers, and do all kinds of things to fatten the ego-ridden personality than really help you on the right path.

Suhrdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati (BG 5.29) is a solacing passage from the Bhagavadgita. “Know me to be the friend of all beings, and the final friend of you all. When everyone deserts you at the crucial moment of your life, I shall come to you as your real friend—a friend whom you have ignored throughout your life, right from your birth. Now at the time of danger and the utter sorrow of your life, I am here as your real friend,” says the great Master, Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita.

You cannot trust anybody in this world, finally; anybody can deceive you. There can be a clash among family members: a brother can separate himself from his brother, a wife can cut herself off from her husband. Anything can happen anywhere in human society. Knowing

this, whom would you regard as your real friend and saviour? Do you want to go, quitting this world, with the feeling that you have lost the only opportunity given to you for preparing yourself for an onward march to the realisation of reality in this arduous task, which is so difficult even to imagine in the mind?

Many of the things I have told you in these few minutes will not remain in your mind when you go out of this hall. Yet, supposing you have entertained them in your mind, the implementation of these ideas in practical life is so hard. Who will help you? There also you have a great consolation from God Himself: "I am with you. Not only am I here as your Friend Ultimate, I am also a help to you at every step in your movement towards God." This is what is called the avatara or the incarnation of God, which takes place at every critical moment of life.

Dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge (BG 4.8) "For the establishment of the righteousness of the law, I incarnate myself at every critical juncture of life." This is the great consolation again, by the most compassionate Almighty, dearer to us than mothers and fathers.

The incarnation comes to our aid as a kind of brilliant illumination, a flash of light on the path of yoga. Darkness gets dispelled, doubts are cleared automatically by our own self, without any external aid, because an incarnation is operating inside. Nobody can help us except God, and He operates within as well as without: without, as the ultimate goal for our salvation of spirit; within, as our perpetual guide and friend.

Sunk as we are in the values that are purely materialistic and mortal, accustomed as we are to value these visible comforts of life alone as final, we cannot seriously take to heart these admonitions of the spirit and the glories of the spiritual path. Repeated practice is necessary. *Abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tan nirodhaḥ* (YS 1.12): repeated practice, daily sessions of meditation, are

necessary; and intensity of aspiration for liberation of spirit is also called for: *tīvra saṁvegānām āsannaḥ* (Yoga Sutras 1.21).

Easy it is to approach it, provided our heart wells up in an ardour and an eagerness which we alone can explain: the ardour, the eagerness, with which a mother would jump into the well to save her drowning child; the ardour, the eagerness, with which a millionaire will hug his wealth; an ardour and longing with which one clings to egoistic values of self-perpetuation by exercising authority and running for name, fame and power. That these values are no values at all, that they are empty of their content, is difficult to know because we are perpetually being deceived by the senses—like a magic show before us which is delighting to see, but the secret behind which we cannot know.

The world is acting like a magician before us, tempting us with all kinds of presentations and gifts, and finally denying each one of them so that we get nothing. Knowing this, a person should be internally detached and rooted in deep contemplation on what today I described as a way of thinking as nature herself thinks—a total way of thinking, an organic way of thinking, an absolute thinking—one thinking only, which includes every other kind of thinking. Then we will see the whole world lifted out of its veil and shining before us as a face of Almighty God Himself. When the veil of space and time is lifted, this external world which has been tantalising us for all time will be seen as shining gold of the beautiful creation of God Almighty. It will not tempt us; it will not repel us, because we are included in this wondrous creation of God.

With these feelings one has to take rigorously, vigorously, with *mumukshutva*, great ardent longing for spiritual success, through meditation—daily to be carried on, individually by oneself—not for a show before society or the public, but for an indescribable, perennial satisfaction that will automatically generate from one's own self. Such is the beauty of the path of yoga, such is the

kindness of God, and such is the blessing that we all have to be in this auspicious place, and to consider and meditate upon these values at this moment.

Chapter 17

THE BIRTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL

The coming of an individual into this world, hailed so much by every family as an asset come from the heavens, is a phenomenon not so simple as meets the eye. Since matter is latent with a cohesive force within itself, and all matter stabilises itself due to this cohesive force that is immanent, present within itself, anything that is concerned with material existence may be said to be concerned, at the same time, with the vast sea of matter pervading all space and constituting every blessed thing in the world.

The event called the birth of an individual on this Earth plane is regarded by a prosaic mind as something suddenly come from nowhere in a mysterious manner inexplicable to the mind, and there the exhilaration of having a child is over. But, there are great secrets behind this tantalising event called the advent of a thing into this world, because all material formation of individualities of any creature whatsoever calls forth the potencies of all material existence—so that, we may say, a single physical formation of an individual is representative of all the powers of the entire material existence, so that the mother of the child is the vast material universe.

It is in the Chhandogya Upanishad wherein we have the description of a science called Panchagni Vidya. We have this wonderful narration of how everything is born. Birth is, first of all, a vibration that is generated in the superior space, beyond the visible physical space. This vibration, which dictates the particular formation of the body of an individual, congeals in the form of the location of the birth, the circumstances of the birth, the atmosphere around

which this birth takes place, and several other incidental issues.

The Upanishadic passage is very cryptic and not easy to understand through linguistic study. The passage goes in this manner: There is, first of all, a movement in the high heavens, demanding the birth of an individual. It is something like an incarnation or an avatara, we may call it. The difference between the coming of an avatara, or an incarnation, and an ordinary individual is that the avatara is conscious of what it is made of, while an ordinary mortal individual is not so conscious. The incarnation deliberately descends of its own free will, whereas the mortal individual is forced to come down, pulled towards the gravitational region of this Earth.

Thus, that which is born into this world is a representation, first of all, of all material existence, because when the dissolution of the body takes place at the end of time, this material composition will be distributed to the original material source in the same proportion in which it was distributed at the beginning of creation. But that an individual is not merely body, or physical matter, is something well known. What are the components of a human individual?

Briefly, the body has to be enlivened, vitalised. There must be consciousness manifest in that formation called the child; and this individualised consciousness, as it were, becomes what we call the mind, thinking through this little body into which the birth has taken place.

This is not the entire story; there is something more about it. The connection of the individual with all material sources of creation and vibrations to which also the mind owes an affiliation brings about a very interesting truth before our eyes—namely, the item that is manifest in this world is an unconscious spot in space and in time, under given circumstances of a great pressure exerted from the centrality of creation.

Therefore, truly speaking, one cannot say who is the parent of a child. There are layers and layers, gradations of manifestation of originality, of an event that takes place. Above matter there is vitality, or energy, which pervades the whole of creation. Transcendent to the vital or energy potential of the cosmos there is the thinking, mental process. Above that is rarefied understanding called *buddhi*. Still further, transcendent above all things, is Cosmic Consciousness.

All these levels of reality get concentrated into a particular form as is required for a specific purpose in the process of the evolution of the universe. Therefore, we are not our own, and we do not seem to belong to any particular family, social group, linguistic or regional limitation. Vibrating within ourselves is the energy of the whole world.

That is the reason why we, as individuals, are unable to contain within our minds the potentials within our own selves. The body, physical though it be, can demand infinite comforts. Anything that is provided for its satisfaction may be inadequate for its purpose. The modern equipments of physical comfort provided to man are indications of the infinitude of physical desire and the longing for physical comfort. Therefore, there is an area or an atmosphere of infinitude even around the physical existence of an individual, carrying the tentacles of human individuality up to the borders of creation, as it were—which is the reason why physical desire is insatiable and can never be satisfied by any finite presentation that can be made from the resources of this world.

But within the body, there is a mind. Even as bodily requirements are infinitude in their nature, mental longings also are of a similar nature. The reaches of the mind touch the corners of creation, we may say. Just as physical requirements are endless and nothing on Earth can fully satisfy the desires of a physically constrained person, the

mind also cannot be satisfied because its longings are weird and heavenly in their nature.

Any person who can find time to think over the needs of the mind of a person will realise a fathomless sea of longing vibrating at the bottom of the little mind that seems to be within our brains. Infinite physical longing and infinite mental operation—these two phenomena are enough to tell us that physically and also mentally we are not located in any particular place. Our mind is not in one place, and even the body, which appears to be in one place, is really not in one place because its parent, which is the body of matter that is universally, ubiquitously distributed, pulls it from all directions and tells it, “You have come from me, and you have to come back to me.” This is the reason why there is infinite longing physically. And because the mental operations also are not limited to a little activity of the brain of the individual—it is also borrowed from cosmic nature—the mental aesthetic longings also are endless.

From childhood onwards till we reach old age and are prepared to depart from this world, we realise that we have not understood what our mind really requires. This is because there is an infinite background of the mental operations of even a single individual. Beyond aesthetic thinking of the mind, there is also an intellectual activity of the superior reason which tells us what a thing is and what it is not. This is a rarefied form of the mind itself, and the desire for knowledge is symbolic of the potentials of the human intellect. Any amount of learning is not going to satisfy a person; he researches over and above the possibilities of himself, goes to various places of research and learning, and finds that still his knowledge is insufficient. The mysteries of nature defy the understanding of man. Scientific observations and logical analysis have not brought an ultimate answer to the mysterious processes of the universe.

All this is a brief statement of a peculiar infinitude of potentiality in our own selves telling us loudly through the language of the mystery of the world that we do not belong to any place, and we are not friends of any individual. We are not children of any particular parent. There is a series of comings and, therefore, our parenthood lies in the centrality of the Creator Himself.

To whom do we belong then, finally? To the whole world. It is the Yoga Vasishtha that tells us, *ayam nijah paro veti ganana laghuchetasam, udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (Yoga Vasishtha 5.18.61): “Poorly constituted minds, ignorant as they are, say that this is my relative, my friend, my family, this is mine, and this is not mine. But to a large-hearted individual whose perceptions have exceeded the limits of ordinary thinking, the whole world is a family.” There is no one unconnected with us, finally.

It is said that if we could by chance remember all the five hundred births through which we have passed before coming to this world, those relationships that we had during those five hundred births will reveal that there is no one to whom we do not belong. All are our relatives only. In one incarnation, in one birth, in one life or the other, someone was our relation. And so, there is no one who is not our relative. There is none who does not belong to us, and yet, none really belong to us.

This is a poignant truth revealed by a careful analysis of our own situation in this world, and it is up to every person to probe into oneself and find out one’s own potencies. To walk on this Earth glibly, like idiots, believing what the eyes present as the realities of life, would be a great travesty and a tragedy.

One cannot believe one’s eyes, because they produce illusions. Today I read that in Delhi there is a flood. I was wondering what kind of flood it is: is it raining heavily? No. It is a flood of a deceptive water-like radiation arising out of the street, due to the heat of the sun. Such is the heat

in Delhi these days, they say, that the road itself starts shining as if it is a flowing river. This is what is called a mirage. If we can believe that water is present on the road in this manner because the eyes are seeing it, then we can believe our sensory perceptions elsewhere also.

The scriptures of the Yoga Sastra awaken us by telling us repeatedly that we have come from an all-inclusive potential creative force, and through degrees of coming down we have reached this present state of sensorially perceived human individuality, like the apex of a triangle whose base is above, wider than the pointing apex. Perhaps it is in this light that the Bhagavadgita tells us that creation is like a tree which is inverted in its position, with its roots above and its trunk, branches, and leaves, etc., spread out downward. That is to say, our origin, the origin of each and every one, human or otherwise, is the root thereof, which is high above in what we call the heavens; and what we see with our eyes are the branches, the twigs, the leaves and the fruits in the form of our experiences.

Why is it that we are born? Who has called us to come down to this Earth? This is the mystery which the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and such scriptures have tried their best to explain. It is a condensation of Cosmic Existence—physically, mentally, intellectually, aesthetically, and in every way—into a localised point in space and time. For what purpose? For playing a joke or enacting a drama. Very good actors in a theatre put on costumes and behave as something which they are not actually in themselves. They can descend into a little role from the high stature that they perhaps occupy in society. But in the case of a human actor in a theatre, the difference is that the actor is conscious of what he really is. Though he has changed his costume and behaves like something quite different from what he is, his consciousness of what he really is made of does not convert him into the ruse of the role which he assumes.

But in this drama, a reverse order takes place. When we put on the costume of a human individual, we do not remember who it is that has put on this costume. The costume assumes that it is itself the individual. It assumes a reality, and struts about on Earth, overruling the reality which has put on this costume, and it looks as if the person who has put on this costume is dead completely. Only the parading costumes look like living realities.

Sometimes, life in the world is compared to a theatrical performance. Poets have gone into great detail in their description of the dramatic character of human performances—finding out thereby that the entire performance in this world is a play, a diversion, an entertainment, as it were, to something which is much greater than what is presented in the theatre. But intense identification with the formation can compel the source of this performance to forget itself, in the same way as concentration on a sense object intensely for a long time makes one forget one's own self, and one runs to the object as if one has poured oneself on the object. Totally, the subjective side has become the object of attraction.

In a similar manner, the creation of the individual seems to have taken place. The littleness of human individuality, the finitude of it, cannot survive merely with the consciousness of finitude, because to be finite is to be an untruth. *Satyam eva jayate nāṅṛtam* (MU 3.1.6) is a well-known saying. Truth triumphs, and anything else will not. What is the truth? The cosmic relationship of human individuals, of all things, is the truth. What is the untruth? The feeling that one is this individual, come from a chosen pair of parents.

Because of the suffering caused by this erroneous outlook of finite nature, it creates a heaven out of hell, as it were, by projecting sense organs, apertures through which it can peep outside through space and time, and contact the world as if it stands totally external to it, to be handled in a particular manner. Do we not think in this manner? The

world is something in front of us, totally unconnected with us, and we have to deal with it in some way or the other, in this way or that way, for our personal satisfaction or group satisfaction. But the truth is not that the world is standing outside us. It is an integral part of our own self. The suffering continues because the senses insist on emphasising that our reality is this physical location only, and we think the pain of this kind of existence is mollified by contact with what we ourselves are not.

To be one's own self as a finite individual is the greatest of sorrows conceivable. That is why no one can sit alone somewhere without coming in contact with things. One would like to talk to somebody, go to the market, do this, do that. It would be a veritable death to be alone to oneself. This is because the truth is not in this localisation of human individuality. To perpetuate this foolish clinging to this body as if it is the only worthwhile thing in the world, the sense organs are projected gradually, even during the child's placement in the womb itself. All the future of a child, of the personality, is hidden in the mother's womb, and it only intensifies itself when it comes out into the world.

To free ourselves from this tragic condition in which we are placed, the Yoga Sastra prescribes techniques of absolvment from the sorrows of life—that is, a retracement of our steps in the fashion in which we came down. How we came, and in what manner have we to go up is the subject of this Panchagni Vidya narration in the Chhandogya Upanishad, which describes only the process of coming down and the sorrows of life. But the way of ascent, going back, is a succeeding chapter in the very same Upanishad, which goes by the name of Vaishvanara Vidya. So, the Panchagni Vidya and the Vaishvanara Vidya act as the obverse and the reverse of the same coin of life—one describing the seamy side of things, and the other the positive glory which life is.

Intense study of these chapters of the Upanishad is necessary, but a casual reading of it will not bring out its truth, because the Upanishads are famous for pithy statements and enigmatic sayings which require to be probed into carefully with the guidance of a competent teacher.

Finally, the outcome of this study and the teaching of the Upanishad is that our salvation consists in the reconditioning of ourselves, the recollection of our forces, mustering in a new energy within ourselves by placing our inner selfhood in the context of what is potential in us, known as the Atman. The rootedness of our self in the recesses of our being is the meditating principle—not the body, the sense organs, the mind or the intellect, but the whole of what we are.

Disciples went to a teacher requesting initiation into Vaishvanara Vidya, or the way of salvation into the mysteries of cosmic living. The great teacher questioned each one of them, asking them what it was that they were already doing: “Let me hear what is the practice that you are undergoing already. After that, I shall tell you what I have to tell you.” Each one had something different to say. From Earth to heaven, every blessed thing was described by those who went for initiation, but each of the methods of meditation was found defective.

The great master, who was a king and a Brahavidya master, told each one of them: “You are sincere students, no doubt. You are highly purified persons. Obeisance to you, prostrations to you all, Brahavidya seekers. But your meditations are defective and, therefore, you have achieved nothing through years of practice. What is the defect? Your meditations have two faults. One of the faults is that you think that what you are concentrating upon is totally outside you. The other fault is that you are wrongly thinking that the thing on which you are meditating is in one place only. The object of your meditation is really

pervading all space, so you cannot project your thought in a spatially directed manner to any particular object.

“Unless you are involved in the process of meditation, the object will not yield to your requirement. It is friendship that finally counts, and works miracles in this world. The friendship that you have to establish with the object of meditation is to commingle oneself with the nature of that object in such a manner that you turn the tables round and practise the same method that you adopt when you are concentrating sensorially on an object of desire. Divert that consciousness to this object that you are contemplating upon, and merge yourself in it.

“The difference between the object of meditation and the object of sensory satisfaction is that the object of sense longing is in one place only; it cannot be everywhere. Totally different is the object of meditation, because it is everywhere. That is why you can rest assured that whatever you are meditating upon as your object of devotion can take you to the highest heavens, because it is pervading everywhere in its basic structure.” This was the answer which the great Brahmavidya teacher imparted to the disciples.

All our discussions during the past several days have been practically a concentration on these issues in different ways, from different angles of vision—namely, that we have to learn the art, not of being some person, but of being all persons. “Look at me, Arjuna. I am the All. All persons are in this one Person.” It is an illustration of what everyone is. That Vishvarupa is potentially present in every one of us, and each one can say, “Look at me; all the persons are in me.”

If all the persons are in you, what do you lack in this world? Why are you weeping and crying and running about here and there, searching for what you cannot get in this world?

This is the message of the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads—hearing which, our heart should melt, and the

mind should become composed. Anger, greed, etc., should subside, making us different individuals, stage by stage every day, making us happier and happier as days pass—not getting up in the morning with a mood of grief and despondency that something is lost, and something is wrong.

With these kinds of meditations we will realise that nothing is lost, and nothing is wrong. The perception has to change completely in a positive direction. This practice is the quintessence of yoga practice. This is meditation proper. It is the art of reaching God, the Creator of the universe, Who is latently present in each one of us as *Antaryatmin*, Who through this little spark of divinity within us speaks to us what He really is. “All things I am, and infinitude is what I am,” He says. That is why we are restless in this world. We are restless because nothing that is finite can actually satisfy us.

Yoga sadhakas, searchers of truth, seekers of God, practitioners of the secret doctrine of inner attunement should realise this mystery of human creation and should not just walk about like foolish people woolgathering, thinking that whatever is visible to the eyes is exactly as it is. You will be surprised to realise one day at the end of time that the world is quite different from what it appears to your eyes.

Before the end comes, it is better to be wise, and be guarded so that you may not fall into the pits of error. Spend every moment of your life in this guarded consciousness of your belonging to a wider order of creation, to God Almighty Himself, Who shall protect you for ever and ever, and provide you with all things so that you rejoice perennially, forever, so that there is nothing that you lack afterwards.

Not only is the world a belonging of yours, it is yourself. The whole world will dance around you, the nucleus of creation, as the *Gopis* are said to have danced around the central nucleus of *Bhagavan Sri Krishna*. Such

is the glorious attainment of spiritual realisation towards which everyone should strive, heart and soul, without a moment's sluggishness of attention. This is a great message for everyone.

Chapter 18

HEAVENLY ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE NO ETERNAL VALUE

Traividyā mām somapāḥ pūtapāpā yajñair iṣṭvā svargatim prārthayante, te puṇyam āsādyā surendralokaṁ aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān (BG 9.20): Those who perform elevated actions, which is the meaning of good actions, raise themselves up to the heavenly region and there, for a long time, enjoy the delight of the gods. But there is a corollary following from this. *Te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokaṁ viśālaṁ kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti, evaṁ trayīdharmam anuprapannā gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante* (BG 9.21): The coming and going in a cycle of births and deaths becomes the fate of even those people who have spent their life in those good deeds which are sanctioned in the ritualistic portions of the Vedas, whereby they appease the gods in heaven.

Reaching heaven has been the longing of humanity throughout history. All religions speak of heaven. Sometimes heaven is considered even as the abode of the Creator Himself, as when we say that God is in heaven. Here, in these cited verses of the Bhagavadgita, heaven is described in a different fashion altogether—not as the location of the Almighty, but as a region of enjoyment.

Since enjoyment has been analysed threadbare in our earlier sessions, and enjoyment is unimaginable except through the sense organs coming in contact with the objects external to them, a person cannot rejoice in one's own self. That is the whole matter. We require something else outside us, some object to titillate the sense organs,

whereby it looks that a principle of satisfaction is generated within oneself.

Now, what is said about gods in heaven and the possibility of reaching these heavenly regions by good deeds is something worth considering. Does one really go to heaven, and are there gods in such a realm? Is there a blissful region above this physical level? Is it inhabited by divinities like Indra, Varuna, and others? How does it come about that a deed that is regarded as good propels a person's soul to the heavenly regions? What is the connection between a good deed and the remote region called heaven, populated by the divinities?

The constitution of the heavenly regions must have some similarity with the constitution of the virtuous or praiseworthy deeds performed in this world. What is a virtuous action? What is a good action? This question is not easily answered because we generally go by the principles of social conduct laid down by the community of people in whose midst we are living. The possibility of reaching a region above this physical level through a good deed implies that the so-called good deed also does not belong to this Earth.

Earthly action cannot take a person to a non-Earthly condition. As is the cause, so is the effect. The perishable cannot take us to the imperishable—taking for granted that the heaven of the gods is imperishable, from one angle of vision at least.

Now, what kind of action should we perform in this world in order that we may be made eligible to ascend to the heaven of the gods? We do many good deeds. We do charity, plant trees, dig wells along the road, construct temples, and feed the poor. Are these actions that take us to the heaven of the gods?

For this purpose we have to analyse the meaning of 'action' itself. What do we mean by 'action'? Is it a movement of the limbs of the body in some direction—digging, planting, giving, etc.? Do these physical gestures

of the limbs of the body constitute action? Evidently, it does not look that they can take us anywhere. A performance which is purely motivated by physical movement does not seem to be adequate to propel us above the physical level. Physical movements will be limited to the physical realm only. A superphysical realm cannot be reached unless there is also some superphysical element in our action. There should be some kind of harmony or similarity of construction between the means adopted and the end that is our aim.

What kind of heavenly character do we find in actions known as ‘good’ that we perform in this world? Can anyone think that any of our actions have a heavenly content? We will shudder to even hear a question of this kind because to us, heaven seems to be so far away, remotely situated above us, that it is difficult to believe that the little acts that we perform, even with a good intention, have anything to do with that blessed region of the gods.

What is the mystery behind this? Why does the scripture say that good deeds will take us to heaven and make us rejoice like Indra, the chief of the gods, and so on? The goodness of an action, therefore, does not seem to be definable in terms of social sanction. It has to be sanctioned by the gods themselves. It should be a good deed in the eye of the gods, not only in the eye of people. If all humanity says, “This is a wonderful thing that you have done,” it need not necessarily be wonderful. It should be wonderful from the point of view of the structural pattern of the region higher than the physical level.

All glory that we earn on this Earth planet conditioned by human thinking, whatever be the imaginary greatness of this achievement, cannot be said to have any kind of heavenly content—which would mean that nothing can take us to heaven if only a heavenly deed can take us to the heavenly region.

Actually, we must understand the meaning of ‘heaven’ in this context. What is heaven? Is it so many kilometres

away, above the Earth plane? If we travel high in a rocket, far, far beyond in the distant sky, will we reach heaven? Even if we touch the border of the expanded space, heaven will not be seen there. The reason is that heaven is a state of consciousness. It is not placed physically above the physical Earth. An elevated sensation arising from our own selves, lifting us above our physical personality; a longing that arises from the depths of our soul lifting us above our physical needs, a condition not easy to understand and appreciate; a longing that cannot be equated with anything that is available in this world, may be regarded as a heavenly longing.

From that point of view, any physical or human achievement in this world cannot be regarded as so good as to be capable of rocketing us up to the heavenly region. A non-physical operation should take place from within our own selves. Are we physical personalities, or is there anything non-physical in us? When we are enthused or in a state of intense artistic rapture, beautiful music, delighting painting, or even an architecture or a sculpture can take us above the consciousness of our physical personality.

There is an element in us which is not limited to this body, which is what it is that longs for achievements beyond the ken of this Earth, or human thought. Even to reach the heaven of the gods is not easy, though in these verses of the Bhagavadgita Bhagavan Sri Krishna does not regard this achievement as anything worthwhile. It is regarded by Him as a poor achievement, ending finally in a coming down from the heaven of Indra to the mortal realm of action once again. *Gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante*: People who desire objects of sense enjoy the cycle of coming and going, even if it be going to heaven and coming back to the Earth.

So, notwithstanding the fact that the Bhagavadgita here does not regard an achievement in heaven as having any permanent value, it is still necessary for us to know where this heaven is. We always look up, above, opening our eyes

to the skies when we pray to a god in heaven because the concept of the above, from our physical point of view, is geometrical, distance-oriented, and spatially conditioned. But, the heaven of the gods is supposed to be not measurable in this manner. It is not in space at all. If we travel the endless space for ages, we will not reach the heaven of the gods because all these experiences, even in the distant space and time process, belong to the Earth level only.

We have to be gods in our own selves, to some extent, in order that we may reach the gods. Even to reach this poor blessedness of the heaven of the gods, which Sri Krishna considers as not of much value, we have to be gods in our own selves because only from a god can a godly deed emanate.

A thorny bush does not produce apples. Likewise, what kind of action can proceed from an individual with a distracted mind tethered to the physical body, bothered much about family relations and connections with this Earth? Purely Earthly. Have you seen a godly person anywhere whose deeds may be regarded as divine and motivated by nothing of this Earth? If such a person is available, that person may be regarded as fit for going to heaven. It is so difficult to reach the heaven of the gods. That is why the sacrificers of the Vedas take intense pain in performing these *yajnas* with meticulous care, because if they commit even a little mistake in the chanting of the mantra or the arrangement of the sacrificial altar, it will not be enough to push them up to the region above the world.

Questions as to the ultimate utility of a sacrificial action in converting the mortal into the immortal are raised in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, where one of the opponents of Yajnavalkya put this question: “As all actions are perishable, how will they take us to the imperishable?”

To that, Yajnavalkya gives an answer: “All worldly actions are perishable indeed, but there is one type of action which is not perishable. Generally, when we perform an

action, we consider certain constituent factors: the performer of the action, the person concerned, the *yajamana* so-called; the method adopted, the means employed in the performance of the *yajna* or the sacrifice; and the intention behind the performance of the sacrifice itself. All these are done with an idea that this type of action will satisfy the divinity whose name is taken in the chanting of the mantra of the Veda. That divinity, being far away, above the Earth plane, cannot make this action immortal, though the divinity itself is immortal.

“All action should be considered as a spiritual meditation. It is not a performance of an externalised movement by a person, but a total concept that arises in the performer of the action, wherein the divinity also is included—in which case, it would look that the action is performed by the divinity itself. The *yajamana*, the performer, gets transformed into the divine power present in the divinity worshipped and adored through the action. The means, the instrument and the intention all get divinised because the meditation that is carried on together with the performance of this *yajna* also brings the divinity into the purview of this action, so that in this process of meditation one cannot know who is actually performing the *yajna* and who is meditating. The divinity itself enters the heart and soul of the performer, or the *yajamana*, and takes upon itself the responsibility of seeing that the *yajna* is perfectly conducted.”

It was difficult for Sage Sakalya, who put this question in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, to understand this answer given by Yajnavalkya. However, here is a secret which has to be studied carefully.

Heaven is a region which is above the physical consciousness of humanity; therefore, actions that are not limited to the physical consciousness of bodily individuality can alone take a person to the heavenly region. Only an intensely holy person can aspire to go to the heavens.

There was a sage called Vajasravasa, as we have it in the Kathopanishad. He wanted to go to the heavens. He performed a *yajna* called Sarvavedas, in which he had to give in charity everything that he had. He gave away all his wealth—all his land and property, everything that he had—so that it appeared that nothing was left with him. He had to give everything, but he did not really give everything, because he did not offer himself also. In this *sarvatra*, or all-inclusiveness of the charitable deed, the performer also goes with it. But here the egoism of the performer of the Sarvavedas sacrifice maintained itself. This Kathopanishad story is very interesting.

Yet, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says all this achievement is nowhere before another great achievement that is ahead of us: *gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante* (BG 9.21), it is true. After that, the great admonition of the Almighty Lord Bhagavan Sri Krishna follows: *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmy aham* (BG 9.22). Here also is a passage which prescribes the method of what we call total action, and total meditation.

We have heard these things said many a time, but the mind is so treacherously selfish and can connive ways and means of not allowing a person to succeed that we do not know what the meaning of this verse actually is. When the Great Lord says, “Everything shall be provided to that one whose mind and consciousness are united with me,” what does He actually mean?

Where is this god whose meditation or union can provide us with everything that we need? Far away is the god—that is what we generally think. Brahma is in Satyaloka; Vishnu is in Vaikuntha; Siva, Rudra, is in Kailasa. How far are they? How much time will they take to come to rescue us and provide us with our requirements?

Our relationship to God should also be clear to us before we try to understand the meaning of this great promise given by the Almighty Himself: “Everything shall

be provided to you. Not only your requirements will be given to you, these requirements granted to you will also be taken care of, so that you need not have fear of losing them afterwards.” The gift is offered, and it is also protected for our sake. This is a wonderful, miraculous statement which will shake us from our roots if we can really understand what it implies. This is not like going to the heaven of the gods for some time, by the performance of a godly deed. This is not a godly deed. It is something more than that. What is it? It is unity with the very purpose of creation, the meaning of existence, the principle of eternity itself.

A shopkeeper may take time to supply our goods, sending them through a vehicle, a cart, but God does not take time. ‘Instantaneous’ is a poor word to describe the way in which God acts, because instantaneousness has a tinge of the time process in it. Timeless action is God’s action. It is done before we say it is done. We cannot even say it is just now, or here itself. It is more than that. Even the words ‘here’ and ‘now’ are poor to describe the manner in which God acts, because we think in terms of space and time, whereas this action comes from eternity, which is not in space and not in time.

To deserve this blessing which is so great and grand even to conceive, we have also to manifest from within ourselves the eternity that is within us and that we ourselves are. Mortal deeds, we said, do not take us to heaven; similarly, time-conditioned devotion, spatially limited actions, will not summon this protection that is promised to us in the Bhagavadgita. *Yogaḥṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*. The practice of yoga is essentially this much: it is a unity of the deepest in us with the deepest in the cosmos.

What is the deepest in us? We are likely to think that this visible, photographed personality is what we are. We know, psychologically at least, that we have a mind which is deeper than the body; there is an intellect and something very deep, but the ‘I’, the ‘we’, the ‘thisness’ which is asserted through this personality basically even at the time

of death, even in deep sleep—that one is the deathless principle in us. That deathless eternal principle in us is what defies the consciousness of death and tells us that we cannot die.

That is the reason why we always feel that death is far away from us. Though we have seen people dying, we never think that it is our fate because the eternity that is within us says, “This is not your fate because you are eternal.” The eternity is not known, but it is inside, flashing forth in this conviction that, “All may die, but I will not.” This feeling arises due to the eternal principle operating within us.

In this meditation which is the requisition for the fulfilment of the promise of Bhagavan Sri Krishna—*yogaṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*—we have to perhaps think as He would like us to think. If a friend can provide us with what we need, we have to think like a friend, and not like somebody else. If we turn our face away from the friend, the friend will not provide us with our requirements. Unity of purpose, identity of feeling, oneness of existence are implied in friendship. That friendship is also to be found between a devotee and the Supreme Almighty. *Suḥṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (BG 5.29): “Peace will be your blessing and your attainment when the time comes for you to realise that I am your true friend. I am the friend of all beings.”

So, there is a heaven above the heavens that we are given in a description: *gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante*. The *ananyāś cintayanto* verse is a declaration of the eternal principle in the universe and in our own selves. While the temporal reality speaks in the earlier verses, the Eternal Being speaks in the subsequent verse: *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām yogaṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*.

Difficult is this to think in the mind; more difficult is it to meditate like this. The mind is accustomed to think only in terms of what it sees or perceives outside; the eternal

principle, the God element, always escapes its notice. It cries and weeps and expects something from somewhere, not believing that whatever one needs will emerge instantaneously from one's own self, provided the eternal comprehensiveness, which is the factor that provides our needs, is also present in our own selves.

This is the meaning of “Thou art That”. We have read this many times in Vedanta scriptures, but the ‘art’ in the middle coming between ‘Thou’ and ‘That’ spoils the whole thing. There is no ‘art’. We should not use that word ‘are’. That connecting link, the verb, spoils the actual relationship between ‘Thou’ and ‘That’, because there is no relationship at all between ‘Thou’ and ‘That’. The ‘Thou’ is the ‘That’, and vice versa.

In this *anantachintana* mentioned in this verse, non-separate contemplation, all blessing is poured upon the person. This is the highest devotion, *bhakti*, we can think of. It is the highest yoga and *jnana*—by attaining which, we do not live like mortals any more, but veritable moving gods on this Earth, which shall be our blessing.