

# TOTAL THINKING



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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## **Chapter 1**

### **THE ARDUOUS TASK OF SELF-ANALYSIS**

We are here for this Sadhana Week especially to reinforce in our minds ideas and values which are supposed to help us in living the life that we are expected to live in this world. The world blows like a wind, as a strong cyclone caring not for what it sweeps away by cutting the very ground from under our feet. That persons and things in the world are like wisps of straw driven by the power of the winds of the world is a truth which will not always occur to our minds, as we get accustomed to be driven in this manner. A perpetual slave will not be aware that he is a slave because he is used to that kind of living. We as human beings actually live the life of puppets, but inasmuch as we are used to this way of living right from our childhood, we may mistake this utter slavery of subjection to the powers of nature for a sort of independence in our own selves. Hence, it becomes necessary that we take stock of our achievements, and of the expectations that we may hope for in our lives, by a sort of self-analysis, and also an analysis of the circumstances and conditions in which we are living. A life that we can call intelligent should be capable of an assessment which is in conformity with the truths of life as they are.

What do we see in this world, and what is the kind of experience that we are passing through every day? We do not see God here anywhere, and we also cannot see religion and spirituality. When we open our eyes, it is not religion that we are seeing. We are seeing something painful, something that takes us aback, that makes us shudder in our hearts and keeps us in a state of anxiety even about the next day itself. It is an obvious truth spoken to the hearts of everyone that our lives are not as secure as they are made to appear on the surface. No one sleeps with a confident heart regarding the conditions of tomorrow in one's life. Man suspects man and intrigues against his own brother and, with a smile on his lips, secretly manoeuvres to cut the throat of his own neighbour. Man has turned out to be a shrewd politician and a ruthless, selfish individual. No matter how often he may frequent the church or the temple, whatever be the scriptures that he may read and the number of times he may roll the beads, he has not ceased to be what he is. He shows his true colours when the time for it comes.

Man has not succeeded in demonstrating his humanity in his outward life because inwardly he has not been a human being. Anthropologically and sociologically he has been a human being, no doubt, but not psychologically. He has been a cut-throat at the root. When a man is cornered from all sides and is not allowed any avenue of self-expression, when all channels of action and thinking are blocked from every side, he demonstrates his essential nature which, at that time, is not humanity but brutality. He chooses the beast that he is while all the while proclaiming to be a humanitarian genius, a religious devotee, a spiritual hero. It all goes to dust in one second when he is tested

with the touchstone of the struggles through which the world passes, and to which he himself is subject.

Let each man touch his own heart and look within himself. Is he a religious man? Is he really a devotee of God? Is he a lover of his own brother in his family, really speaking? Can each brother of the family say that he is really a friend of his own brother ultimately, to the point of doom, under every circumstance? Can any person be a friend of another under all circumstances, unconditionally, without any limitation whatsoever? Can we sincerely, honestly feel that we can be a friend of another unconditionally? We should be careful in giving the answer. We would not be able to find many who have been unconditional friends. We are conditionally sons of fathers, obedient to parents; conditionally we have been disciples of Gurus; conditionally we have been well-wishers of mankind and lovers of our own neighbours; and under conditions we have also been devotees of God. Everything has been conditioned. Very pitiable is our fate.

It is no use floating on the surface of a self-complacency, vanity and egoism that parades as devotion in the few days of Sadhana Week because each one of us knows how we behave in the railway station, in the taxi stand, in the vegetable market, in the court and in the police station, in the parliament and in the meeting of the directors of a company. How we behave with one another is a thing which does not require any commentary. Are we religious and spiritual? Are we devotees? We are everything but that.

So when we undertake this arduous task of self-analysis, we are undertaking an analysis of the whole circumstance of life in which we are involved. If God is omnipresent, according to the proclamations of the scriptures and

according to what we have heard from people, an analysis of spiritual values would be an all-comprehensive analysis of life's circumstances. We are knit warp and woof into the web of life so that everything we touch happens to be a world circumstance. A self-analysis is simultaneously a world analysis. We should not be carried away by the notions of the people around us who observe only the appearances that we put on and the adjustments that we make in our life, but cannot see our heart, feelings, tensions and proclivities.

The whole of man's life happens to be, unfortunately, a series of inward adjustments that he makes for outward collaboration and coordination with people around him. Man is struggling to exist. And, as I mentioned a few minutes before, the winds of the world carry us in the direction they blow, not caring for our private fancies. To the extent we affirm our personalities and individualities and keep our eyes closed to the direction in which the winds of the world blow, we shall live a helpless life of subjection and slavery to circumstances.

Spiritual life, the so-called religious aspiration, is a gradual tending of one's soul to the freedom of the spirit. Religion and spirituality are freedom, but we are not free in any sense of the term. We are not free either physically, physiologically or psychologically. Physiologically, we are utter subjects to the workings of the heart, the brain, the nervous system, the circulatory organs, etc., over which functions we have absolutely no control. We have no power over even our own bodies. We also have no power over the social circumstances of life, though we apparently seem to be exerting some sort of an influence on our atmosphere. The world has a plan of its own, and to the extent we are

unable to understand this plan, or the purpose of the world, to the very same extent we shall also be failures in our lives. Success is not a consequence of self-affirmation, but a result of participation in the purposes of the world, the intentions of nature as a whole.

The more we affirm ourselves individually and pour our opinions on others, compelling others to accept our opinions, the more is the setback and the retaliation that will bounce back upon us on account of a larger power which has its say in every matter of life in the world. And, lastly, we leave this world in utter humiliation, defeated root and branch, seeing that not one of our personal intentions has succeeded in life. Everything has been a frustration. Everyone has to leave this world with a blank look, and with a hopeless sense of utter defeatism.

But the arguments of religions and the requirements of spiritual life have been admonishing us that we are not destined to go from this world with such a sort of defeat inflicted upon us, but with a little bit of satisfaction that we have contributed a modicum of might to the progress of the purpose of the world, the intentions of nature, the law of the universe. An awakening into the status of spirituality, or religion, is a degree of participation that we effect in the purposes of the world because we belong to the world. The world does not belong to us to such an extent. It is a larger whole to which we organically belong as parts, and it is unwise on the part of a fraction to expect the cooperation of the whole to which it belongs, as a limb of our body should not expect a complete transformation of the purposes of the entire body to accede to the requests or demands of a particular limb. The part always obeys the whole in every level of life.

Therefore, when we think that we are religious seekers, spiritual aspirants, disciples of Gurus, we have to be very realistic in our approach and be able to recognise facts as they are, not camouflaging them with the veneer of an idealism which bears no real connection with the experiences through which we pass and to which we are subjected willy-nilly. Today we do not live in a world of spirituality. This is something to be accepted by every one of us. We do not see spirituality anywhere. We see only quarrelsome people, shrewd politicians, selfish businessmen, and we do not see anything else.

Yet we are aspiring for a life in the spirit and hope to live a life of religion, and expect to be devotees of God, if possible—a noble endeavour, a noble intention, and a very praiseworthy ideal indeed. But we are living in a world which looks like a wilderness rather than a temple of God. There are thorns and thistles and viperous elements threatening us from all corners. We do not seem to be living in a world of friends, ultimately. We shall be left to the devil when the time for it comes, and we hope to not see that day when the devil will pursue us and friends will desert us. We shall see through things rather than see things merely on their outer form.

This circumstance which I am placing before you is the field in which you have to conduct self-analysis. This is the battlefield in which you are placed, where you are certainly in a very unenviable position. You should be more cautious than happy. The state when you can be really happy has not yet come. You are in a state where you have to be cautious, vigilant, circumspect, and be aware of every little bit of the situation—social as well as psychological—every moment of time.



The capacity to understand is the greatest of virtues that we can expect in this world. Mostly we are likely to be carried away by sentiments, emotions, and a sudden burst of feeling which may be roused by external conditions tentatively operating but not capable of persisting always. When there is a large *maha sankirtan* we dance and fall in a swoon, but we will not always be in that swoon, as we know very well. We will rise up in our true colours after a few minutes. And we are also likely to be carried away by feelings of that kind when loud bells ring in a temple or a church and a very solemn ritual is performed. We are also likely to be carried away by a sudden gust of feeling when a powerful speech is delivered by a religious master or a spiritual leader. It only tells us that there is, perhaps, also some good element in every one of us.

But we cannot always plant ourselves in these feelings which sometimes rise in us under circumstances which are forced on us due to the events that take place outside, because these events will not always be taking place. Somebody will not be telling us something good every day. There will not be *kirtan* or *bhajan* at all times, and we will not be witnessing a solemn divine worship in a temple or listening to a sermon being delivered at every moment of time. We will be mostly in the midst of hard, staring realities of life where we have to sweat in the hot sun and be agonised inside due to a frustrated feeling injected into us due to some reason or other—a family circumstance, a tension in the office, peculiar difficulties, physical ill-health, and harassments of all kinds. These are our realities, and not religion and spirituality.

In this world we have to live. This is a terrific world indeed. That is why it is often said that we are living in a

world similar to the field of the Mahabharata battle, where everything is tense and a bow may twang or a machine gun may fire at any moment. It is not for nothing that the world is compared to a battlefield. It is veritably that. It is not a temple, it is not a church, it is not a heaven; it is something quite different, a thing that we are able to see every day as the reality of life, quite different from what we hear from scriptures or from masters and others.

In this world we have to live, and we cannot expect to live in a different world. We have somehow been born into this world, and what can we do but make the best of the circumstances of this life? We cannot say we shall go to another world and start practising spirituality. That shall not be, because the world that I refer to is not merely this little planet Earth. It is a vast manifestation called creation. I use the word 'nature' to designate a larger reality than this little Earth on which we are living or the world of which we are citizens. The whole world is a powerful surge of movement towards some destination of which we are not always conscious and into whose mysteries we cannot easily enter. It is a forbidden area. So even if we leave this world and go to another realm, we will find ourselves in similar circumstances because the world, as far as we are concerned, is not the earth, water, fire, air, ether, the mountains and rivers, etc. This is not the world.

The world is an internal relationship that obtains between us and the circumstances outside. The world is more a kind of relationship rather than a physical object, and this relationship will persist wherever we go, even if we go to another region in this scheme of creation. The irreconcilability that is there between ourselves and what we call the world outside is our world. Therefore, it is a

psychological world rather than a physical world. This is the reason why great thinkers have drawn a distinction between what they call *Ishvara-shristi* and *jiva-shristi*—the world created by Ishvara, God, and the world created by us. The world of God is not our problem. The mountains do not trouble us, the rivers are not our problem, and the very Earth is not our sorrow. Our difficulty is something else.

Our grief is a conflict, an irreconcilability, an incapacity of adjustment, and an inability on our part to acquiesce in the conditions prevailing in the world, so it is wholly a psychological world in which we are living and which is tormenting us. This shall go with us wherever we go because our psyche is our property, and if we go to another world, we carry our own psyche with us, not this physical body. When we leave this world and go to another world, the body is not taken with us; our subtle psychological essence goes with us. We are verily that.

Hence, we come to the point of self-analysis, which is world-analysis, wherein we start with what we call religion or spirituality, or whatever it is. We have intense hunger, intense thirst, we feel heat and cold, and we are unable to resist the temptation of sleep. We also have what is called the element of self-respect. We cannot get over that. Even the poorest man and the humblest of creatures has self-respect. He would not like being called names even if he is a beggar on the street. We love ourselves very much, and perhaps we do not love anything else as much. That is why we cannot brook a word that goes contrary to the opinion that we have of our own selves. Our judgment of ourselves is the correct judgment, and nobody else should pass a contrary judgment on us; that becomes an insult, something intolerable. Our judgment of ourselves is the

only judgment possible, and there cannot be any other judgment. Each one holds this judgment about one's own self, so each one is a world by himself and herself. How can there be any coordination? How can we be friends? How can we speak to one another if each one is a world in his own self because he has a respect for his own opinions and does not like the opinions of anybody else?

Thus, we are here in a world of realities which are more than the physical appearance of the phenomena of life, and we are seeking God in this world. We try to live a life of religion and spirituality in a world of this nature. We want to offer worship to God the Almighty in the battlefield of the Mahabharata, where each one is putting on armour and is wielding a lethal weapon. In this world we are trying to perform a worship of God. Is it possible? Can we contemplate and enter into a state of deep meditation on the Creator of the cosmos in this field of ruthless violence, of battle, warfare and an incompatibility of individuals? In this world of these hard facts, can we be religious people? Can we live a life of the spirit? Can we believe that God exists in this terrific atmosphere of irreconcilabilities, conflicts, selfishness, and a wolfish attitude of individuals in respect of others? Is there a God at all? Does He really exist? Can we believe from the bottom of our hearts that a God really exists in a world of this kind? Or are we wool-gathering? Are we being hypnotised into an ideology which is not real? Are we sleeping? Are we somnambulists? Are we utterly mistaken? Are we ultimately fools to believe that there is such a thing called God and that spirituality is possible in a world of this kind where we cannot smile even once from the bottom of our hearts? We are only weeping and agony-stricken.

Here, therefore, in these words I have placed before you a very unpleasant picture which is your so-called pleasant world, and you will see that what I say is right; a day will come for you to see it. Everyone has to pass through this phase. No one can be exempted—not I, not you, not even a hundred Buddhas. You will see this nature of the world one day. Many have seen it, an account of which is recorded in human history. Many are seeing it today, and you will see it tomorrow. Be prepared for it. In such a world you have to summon God, the great succour of mankind. This is your sadhana, and this is the week for gathering your thoughts and ideas for considering the possibility of living a life spiritual, which means to say, a life in the Almighty, in this world of realities. Can you bring down the ideal of the omnipresent Almighty to this real world of tensions, problems, difficulties, sickness and death? If this could be possible, spirituality would be possible in this world. Otherwise, you have to bid goodbye to it forever.

But you have concluded that it is possible and it should be possible; otherwise, you would not be here today in this hall. Something or someone tells you that it is somehow practicable, and if it is not practicable it has to be made practicable, for which purpose you are here to conduct an analysis and a deliberation with the cooperation of other seekers and friends. If it could be possible, what is the way out? This way out is the so-called sadhana which you are expected to practise to the extent possible, not only in this week while you are here, but also when you are at your home, in your business, in your office, and in your own vocations of life.

You should not be under the impression that everything is as fine as velvet. The world is not so soft a thing as it

is made to appear before you. It is not always a flow of milk and honey. Sometimes it looks like that, but it is not always that. So within these few days, let us conduct a further analysis to determine whether some jot of honey can be gathered in this wild desert of what is usually called *samsara*, or this world. Is there an oasis in this desert, or is it only dry, without a drop of water to drink? Is there hope for this hopeless man? And if there is hope, what is it that he can expect in this world? What you can expect and what you can hope to achieve here shall be the themes of our discussion in the days to come.

## Chapter 2

### RISING TO A PHILOSOPHICAL REALM

Philosophy is a study of the implications of experience, and not merely an observation of experience. This is the difference between a philosophical mind and the prosaic outlook of the common man. An outward observation of the phenomenon of life presents not a very happy picture of the circumstances in which we are placed, and we seem to be utterly miserable in every way, apparently with no vision of a positive hope in the future. While this can be the conclusion of a common observing empirical mind, we can go deeper into these experiences and see if we can discover some precious jewel or pearl beneath the tempestuous waves of outward life, which are presenting a picture of conflict and an apparent irreconcilability.

Philosophy becomes a difficult subject because here the understanding is required to go deep within the suggestions of its own observations, and not be contented with merely the observations alone. Evidence is collected by a judge in a court, but a judgment is not merely a collection of evidence. It is not a total or even a sifting of the various arguments of the advocates; it is a new meaning that is read into and behind the information outwardly gathered from the arguments of the advocates and the evidence available. The judgment is not merely a quantity weaned from the

existing evidence from the witnesses, etc., but a new observation altogether of a suggestiveness that is behind the evidence. Therefore, the judgment is qualitatively different from all the evidence and arguments. Such is the nature of philosophy. Philosophy is not a collection of the outward meaning available from observation and experiment.

Thus, science differs from philosophy, and philosophy differs from science. As gathering types of information from various kinds of observation and experiment is the function of science, we cannot say that the judgments of science are qualitatively different from the various factors of observed phenomena. But in a philosophical judgment, we are qualitatively rising above the observed evidence supplied to us through the senses and even the empirical understanding. We are all acquainted with the word 'understanding', but our understanding of the meaning of this word is not competent enough to know the nature of what understanding is.

We have a double personality within ourselves. We are two things at the same time: an aspect or a part of ourselves belonging to this world of visible phenomena, and another, perhaps a more important aspect, belonging to another realm altogether. We are citizens of two worlds at once, though due to our weddedness through the activities of the senses to the functions of empirical understanding, we seem to feel that we belong to only one world. When the understanding dives deep to its own lowermost level, it will discover that its root is fixed in a realm different from this world in which we are physically placed. If we belong only to this world and have no root anywhere else, nobody can be more unfortunate than this.



But I come back to the point of philosophy. It is a light that emanates from our own selves under given conditions which tells us that we seem to be more than what we appear to be. It is this presence of ours in a different realm than the one before our eyes that is the cause of our restlessness and dissatisfaction of various types. Dissatisfaction is itself an indication that we do not belong to this world. If we were citizens of only this world, there would be no resentment or dissatisfaction because all dissatisfaction is suggestive of the possibility of removing the causes of dissatisfaction. We cannot be dissatisfied unless there is a possibility of attaining satisfaction.

Here we are entering into a field of philosophical analysis, which is not the way in which people ordinarily think. We cannot know what is wrong unless we know what is right. It is not possible to see only wrong and nothing else. But a prosaic mind will not know this secret behind the functioning of the human mind. He will say the whole world is evil, wretched, stupid. That is all he can say, and nothing else. This is how we generally define and complain about our experiences in life and our idea about things in the world. This is prosaic, unphilosophical, because one does not know the meaning of what one is saying. The detection of evil in the world is itself an indication of the fact that there should also be something other than what is evil. That we have a capacity within ourselves to detect evil and ugliness in the world should show that we also have a capacity within us to see something beyond evil and ugliness.

Therefore, we do not belong only to this world of sensory phenomena. If that were so, we could not know that it is phenomena at all. One who is involved in the

phenomena cannot know it is such. This is, again, a peculiar feature of philosophical analysis. We cannot know that there is death unless we are superior to the phenomenon of death. We cannot know that something is passing unless we are standing on something which is not passing. Hence, philosophy is a study of suggestions which are secretly embedded beneath the observed experiences and the phenomena of life.

But as pearls are hidden deep in the bowels of the ocean and are not floating on the surface, this endowment in every human being enabling him to analyse his own experiences is not on the surface of life. Outwardly we are shells of individuals, but inwardly we are treasures. If we view ourselves only as what we appear on the surface, we look worthless, like broken pieces of glass. But our hopes and aspirations, our anxieties and expectations for a better day in the future, and a subtle longing to be immortal if possible, is again suggestive of a great possibility before us of a good day to come.

Here we seem to be discovering an element in us which is not a property of this world. We are not wholly citizens of this world; we are only partially inhabitants of this realm of the Earth. In a more important sense we seem to be belonging to something else, some other level of experience, some other order of reality, which is what keeps us restless and hoping for more and more expansiveness in our comprehension and for happier days to come.

What are the implications, the suggestions which we can discover behind and beneath our tumultuous conflicts of outward life? It is that there should be a coordinating principle, a feature that connects phenomena into a well-knit fabric of completeness. Though things appear

totally different from one another, we are able to see that they are different. Things are scattered in all directions with no apparent connection, and one thing seems to have no relation to another. But we are able to know that one thing is not related to another thing. Here is a very important suggestion behind the working of our own minds. That there is chaos and conflict and irreconcilability is one thing, but that we are able to know that there is chaos and conflict and irreconcilability is another thing altogether. How are we capable of discovering the presence of chaos and irreconcilability and difference in things?

An individual, a person, or anyone who is one of the elements scattered into particularities, isolated from every other particular, cannot know that there are differences of this kind. One who is just one single element or a particular among the many others in the world cannot know at all that there are also other particulars. If one particular individual can know that there are also other particular individuals, herein we have a suggestiveness which is deeper than the particularity of the so-called individual imagining that he is one among the many. We are not just one among the many. This is what we will discover when we go deep into our own individuality. We are one among the many, no doubt. We are many persons seated in this hall; each person is different from the other person, with no apparent connection. Each one is a particular by himself or herself.

Here is, again, an interesting light that shoots forth from this isolatedness of observation, a light which comprehends these particularities and knows that there are many individuals. The knowledge of the difference among various particularities cannot be a part of the particular feature. This is to think in a philosophical manner and to go into a

causative realm lying behind the phenomenal isolations of the particular things of the world. As philosophers tell us, there is a noumenal uniting factor behind the differences of phenomenal particularities. Unless its presence is accepted, life would be inexplicable. The knowledge position itself would be unaccountable. We cannot know how we know anything at all. The knowledge of any object by any particular individual is, again, suggestive of the presence of a transcendent element which is neither the object that is perceived nor the one who sees it.

Here again we are entering into the field of philosophy. We do not usually think in this manner when we go to the kitchen for our tea or argue in a meeting, etc., which only shows that we are not always philosophers; we are only sometimes that, and not at all times. But if we can keep our minds fixed to this element of suggestiveness that is behind the appearances of particulars, we would be philosophers and not men of straw, as we appear to be at present.

There is, therefore, a force behind the visible phenomena, which ties them together into some sort of an organisation and unified wholeness, which we are able to discover with our own analytical understanding. I mentioned that our understanding itself has to be understood. This is the fact of philosophical analysis. It is not enough if understanding tries to understand objects. Philosophy begins when understanding starts understanding itself. It becomes an object of its own analysis. When it studies its own self, it begins to discover that it has been entangled in things with which it is not wholly connected, though it is partially related for certain tentative purposes.

The connection of our understanding with the particularities of the world is brought about by a strategic

activity of the sense organs. The understanding is itself not diversified. It is a unifying principle within ourselves, but it appears to play second fiddle, as it were, to the observations of the senses, and accepts that things perceived by the senses are exactly as they appear to the senses, and nothing more, nothing less. By association with undesirable elements even a good person becomes a little contaminated, just as clean clothes have a little touch of blackness after being near smoke. The analytic understanding is conditioned by the very same factors which make things isolated from one another, and our so-called understanding is today nothing but a part of the phenomenal world.

We are not living like sages or philosophers. We are completely divested of our heritage or legacy of our belonging to a noumenal realm. As the story goes, a prince may live among shepherds and imagine that he is also a shepherd. Or, as another analogy goes, a lion cub may imagine that it is a sheep and bleat like a lamb if it has been brought up in the midst of sheep. We like are lion cubs brought up in the midst of sheep, thinking we are also sheep and bleating like small lambs. But merely living in the midst of sheep has not transformed us into sheep. We are lions still, but the consciousness of being a lion is obliterated on account of its association with the atmosphere of sheep, and so on. Likewise, the lion cub of our understanding has been brought up in the midst of the sheep of the senses, and everything that the sheep are fond of, the lion cub also seems to like—not only like, but it begins to bleat like sheep.

We think like idiots because of the idiocy of the senses. They have brought us down to the level of their own activities, and we have ceased to be conscious that we are

citizens of a realm to which we really belong, and from which we cannot be completely distant. Therefore, we are often fed up with this world. We begin to feel an irksome atmosphere in our own hearts. "I have had enough of everything," we say. How is it possible that such a feeling should arise in our minds that everything is over and we have a surfeit of all things? Who says this? Who makes this statement? Whose feeling is this?

This feeling of a sense of enough with things, arising one day or the other in the life of everyone, arises from a realm which is not empirical and does not belong to this world. The true man inside speaks when he sees a surfeit of all things and cannot be satisfied with anything here. Not the wealth of the whole world can satisfy him. A day comes when we shall start thinking like this. There are days when we feel that the world is full of richness and meaning and delicious objects worth coveting, possessing and enjoying. When we feel that there are tremendous meanings in the things of the world, we are living an empirical life of a lower understanding which has sold itself to the senses and their relationship with things. But when a day comes that we begin to feel that there is nothing in this world that can satisfy us, the higher understanding begins to speak. So we have a phenomenal understanding and a noumenal understanding which rises above the nexus of causal relationships. Rarely does this light arise in us, and at that time we speak like sages and feel like masters, and are satisfied like superhuman individuals.

In the previous session I gave you a picture of the phenomena of life. Today I am telling you that there is something behind these phenomena, due to the presence of which alone we can know that the phenomena of the

world are of this nature. From pure empirical observation and a scientific mathematical attitude we are to gradually rise to a philosophical realm where we are in the midst of conditioning factors which reign supreme over the isolated particulars of life and satisfy us that we are more than these mortal bodies and frail minds. There is something superb about us, and the pursuit of this real essence within ourselves is the task of philosophy, the purpose of the spiritual pursuits of mankind.

The world, with all its vagaries and fantasies, seems to be governed by a purpose. There appears to be an organising force in the middle of the apparently chaotic historical movements of mankind and things. If we study human history as schoolchildren study it, we would not be able to discover any meaning behind it. Anything can happen any day. This appears to be the meaning of human history, and we do not know why things happen in the way they do. Today something is, and tomorrow something quite different happens with no connection whatsoever with the prevailing conditions of the previous day.

But a study of history is not merely a reading of chronological events in the time process of mankind. A study of history in the philosophical sense is to go into the purposes behind the movements called history, and then we are in the field of the philosophy of history rather than merely in a chronology of events. History is not merely a story of events that took place in the passage of time. It is a study of the movements of the forces of nature which, with all their ups and downs, seem to be somehow directing themselves to a purpose—as in the movement of a river, for instance. If we merely observe the zigzag course of a river, we will not know where the water is trying to go. It has a

purpose behind its movement. It is an inclination from the higher level to the lower level, in order to reach the lowest of levels, which is its final destination.

A mere observation of a bare, isolated fact of a process will not give us an understanding of the meaning behind the process. Nothing in this world can be known by a study of its location as an isolated particular. Everything is connected with everything else in some way; therefore, a study of history is a study of a purpose behind the movement of history itself. This would bring us to a realm of an understanding which makes us witnesses of the phenomena, rather than individuals involved in the phenomena. We become judges and spectators of the phenomena of life, and not clients dragged into the court merely to furnish isolated evidence of observed phenomena. When we become true philosophers, we become spectators of life, and not elements involved in life. We begin to observe the various processes of life, and we begin to observe even our own lower features as involved among the particulars.

A judge in a court is a man like anybody else. He is as much a human being as any advocate, any witness, or even a defendant. Everything is similar. You cannot photograph a judge and see something new in him which cannot be discovered in a person who has been brought to the court for trial. But a judge is not an individual; it is a principle that operates. It is a kind of understanding that rises above the bodily existence of the judge, and which is wider in its comprehension and perspective than all the particulars of evidence given by advocates, etc.

This also applies to us as spiritual seekers and philosophising individuals. Philosophers are like other



human beings. If we photograph a philosopher, he looks like any other person. But a philosopher is not a person who can be photographed by a camera. He is a principle of awareness and judgment which rises above even his own bodily existence, so that he looks upon himself as a witness of his own self as he becomes the witness of everybody else also. A student of philosophy and a spiritual seeker is not one among other individuals. He looks upon himself as an individual, no doubt, but when he looks upon himself as an individual, he has gone above his individuality. I can see myself in two ways. I can see myself as one who has been thrust into this body and can look upon myself only as a body, as I see other bodies, or I can become a judge of things and see my personality as a body which is also one among the many other things.

Hence, a philosophical understanding is not an intellectual understanding. It is not the psychophysical function of the individual that is called philosophical knowledge. It is a principle of observation which rises above the categorised empirical understanding which sees things outside and judges them but cannot judge its own self. The judgment of a philosophical nature is not an individual function of understanding; it is a universalised operation. This requires a subtle working of the hidden potentialities of our own mind. Difficult enough is this process because here the mind has to learn the art of diving beneath its own self and study itself as one of the objects to be observed and studied as any other thing in the world. Therefore, we as individual subjects become objects of our own study, and we shed this identification of our understanding with the idea which goes with the senses and appears to be our so-called intellect.

Our studies in educational fields these days have become practically useless inasmuch as they are nothing but studies conducted by the empirical understanding, and not by the higher force of light which has to study even this understanding itself. Knowledge has become a kind of descriptive information that we gather about the shape and location of objects outside the understanding itself, and not a purely philosophical wisdom. This is why educated persons today are not really happy persons. Socrates said that knowledge is virtue, but we see today that a man of knowledge is not necessarily a virtuous man. Knowledge is power, but we see today that a man of knowledge is not necessarily a powerful man. We have heard it said that knowledge is happiness, and we find today that a man of knowledge is not necessarily a happy man. This only goes to prove that they have not got the knowledge which we are referring to in these definitions. We have only a shell and a crust and a husk of knowledge, and not the pith and the essence and the kernel of it, which is the treasure which we can gather by the operation of a higher reason within us which tells us that the world is as it appears. That which tells us that the world is a phenomenon full of sorrows, sufferings, conflicts and irreconcilabilities is a subtle ray of the higher knowledge, higher understanding, the deeper noumenal level occasionally peeping through the surface of the empirical understanding and telling us something noble and sublime.

When we take to the practice of religion or what is called spirituality, or we may even call it yoga, we have to be doubly cautious as to what we are doing. We should not be under the impression it is a very easy task. We can be carried away by an outward impression that we are after a

highly praiseworthy purpose known as religious pursuit or spiritual practice, but our religion and spirituality can be one of the appearances in this world. It can be just one item of the phenomena of this world of which our empirical understanding conducts a study and about which it can get satisfied, making us feel that we are religious and spiritual.

Most of our religions today are empirical religions. Much worse, they are only social organisations. They have very little of the real spiritual element behind them. It is so because of the fact that it is very hard for a person to work through the higher reason, which can study the empirical understanding as an object thereof instead of studying the things of the world outside as its objects. For us, an object of the understanding is the physical world of perception, the bodies of individuals. But we have to study our own mind itself as an object, and this is to go deeper than general psychology can teach us. Here it is that we enter the field of philosophy, and philosophy is nothing but a theoretical preparation for the higher pursuit we call religion or spirituality. When philosophy becomes a practical affair of day-to-day existence, it becomes religion. The two go together as the theoretical foundation and its practical implementation.

The study of philosophy, therefore, is an imperative for leading a truly religious life. Religion is not a social activity. It is not a political pursuit. It is an inward transformation of the very process of knowing, and a qualitative enhancement of the very structure of our inner being, so that the more we become religious or spiritual, the more we belong to the higher integrating realm of the noumenon and the less we seem to belong to this world of phenomena. This is another way to approach God stage by stage. We approximate

ourselves to God-being when we become religious or spiritual.

What is God but this very same integrating force I referred to a few minutes before? Wherever there is a power working in the interest of bringing together two conflicting parties, God is working. That is God which unites A with B, subject with object, myself with yourself, one thing with another thing, the seer with the seen, consciousness with the object, anything with anything else; and if we are able to recognise the presence of this force as a necessary element even in the understanding of the fact of there being isolated particulars, we have touched the borderland of God Himself. We have started living a godly life this very moment when we are able to discover and appreciate that it is impossible to even know that there are two things unless there is a third thing which is neither this thing nor that thing. Thus, God is neither you nor me; God is a third thing altogether, to which both of us belong and of which we are necessary integral parts, in which we are subsumed, and through the thought of which we are able to think today, whose existence is our existence, whose understanding is our understanding, and whose value is our value.

A subtle philosophical analysis conducted in this precise manner will immediately take us to a most unexpected state of joy. At once, in one second, like a flash it will burst forth through the cloud of misconceptions. Philosophy is the dearest of dear things in the world. It is not a learning that we acquire from academies; it is a light that we are able to shed around ourselves on account of the burning of this lamp, or the flame of this hidden understanding, which is able to understand the operations of even the outward

understanding connected to the senses and the world. That is why true religious men and spiritual seekers work like researchers in a laboratory, unconcerned with anything, concentrated on one thing, as if the world does not exist for them at all. Many a time a philosopher is said to be a man dreaming of realms which are not of this world. Is not a research scholar in a laboratory a man of the other world? He does not know what is around him because he is seeing a new world altogether through his microscope or telescope. He is concentrated and absorbed to such an extent that he knows that his discoveries through the microscope or telescope will be able to sustain him even in this world of particulars.

The higher conditions the lower, and regulates the movements of everything that is lower. Every spiritual seeker or religious man is, in a sense, not a man of this world, though he is a man of this world because this world is only an expression of the other world; and as it is difficult to draw this subtle distinguishing line between the other world and this world, we are likely to come a cropper in our understanding of religion and spirituality itself, oftentimes relegating religion and spirituality to the other world, as if it has no connection to the world in which we are living now. Yet, we sometimes make the mistake of completely ignoring the other world's values and tethering ourselves to the empirical values of this world only. Either we are there or we are here. We are unable to bring the two together. This is the work of true philosophy and religion proper. Spirituality in its true connotation is a life of godly inclusiveness which makes us utterly good. A philosopher is a good man because he is a godly man.

## Chapter 3

### THE PURSUIT OF A HIDDEN MYSTERY

Previously we discussed that our knowledge of things indicates the presence of something which is beyond this knowledge. Our analysis showed that we cannot know anything unless we know, at the same time, something other than this thing which is the object of our knowledge. Something seems to be pursuing us wherever we go. Though our objective in the pursuits of this world seems to be the visible phenomena of life, there appears to be another factor running behind us and going ahead of us, whatever be the visible aim of our life. There is an invisible mystery which does not leave us, wherever we go. We may soar to the heavens or sink to the nether regions; it makes no difference to this mystery. It is wherever we go, under every circumstance of life, at every time everywhere, because minus this mystery, life seems to be meaningless and cannot be explained. The explanation of every experience in life is the presence of this mystery, so life may be regarded as a mystery in itself.

Life is not a science or a logic, not an arithmetic or an algebra or a geometry, not a calculation or a computation; it is a miracle. It is this miracle that keeps us hoping and living. Our desires, our ambitions and our activities are a miracle. We ourselves are a miracle in this world of miracles.

Actually, religion is nothing but the pursuit of this miracle, the running after the Holy Grail and a knight errant of the spirit. We are participants in the religious pursuit, which is nothing but the pursuit of the Holy Grail of this wondrous mystery that grins at us, stares at us, and mocks us at every event we pass through here. There is apparently something that laughs at everything we do, thinks before we start thinking, and does something before we start doing anything at all. This mystery is the explanation of every phenomenon in life, and this is what conditions the whole of human history.

The process of the history of mankind is the process of the working of this miracle behind human history, but it eludes our grasp, escapes our understanding and defies our every effort to know it. While we can know anything and everything, we cannot know that thing, which is the only thing that is finally to be known. Therefore, we are the fools that we are. But this realm of experience looks like paradise to us on account of the presence of this mystery. At the same time, we are made fools, so we are literally in a fool's paradise. While we look like fools because we cannot know this mystery, we are also in paradise because of the presence of this mystery. Wonder is life, and wonder is religion.

That is why great masters, geniuses, experts, adepts in any walk of life or field of pursuit—literature, poetry, drama, the fine arts, religion and spirituality, mysticism, yoga, whatever it be—have been the miracle-mongers in the world of this mystery which stands supreme above all that we can consider as worthwhile and valuable in life. All the meaning that we can recognise and read in anything in this world is the meaning that descends as a jot or a ray from that supreme mystery of mysteries, the *mysterium*

*tremendum*, as mystics are fond of calling it. Inasmuch as it is the explanation for the whole of phenomena and it is that which accounts for the secrets of every kind of experience through which anyone may pass, it has to be accepted as a universal presence. Inasmuch as it explains everything everywhere, naturally it has to be a presence that is everywhere. That which is everywhere is that which is considered as universality—the universal principle. Because it is the explanation of every particular and is the indivisible presence at the back of every related phenomenon, it can be considered the soul of all things. This is what is called the Atman in the Upanishads, and the Self in mystical circles. It is the soul because it is the explanation of everything. It is the Self because it is behind everything that is known, recognised or experienced. It offers the explanation for everything, but it itself cannot be explained by anybody else because that ‘anybody’ who can explain it does not exist. That which itself is inexplicable but explains everything else is the Self of all things. Because it knows the mystery behind all things, it is a consciousness mystery, a knowledge process, pristine intelligence par excellence.

The pursuit of this mysterious Self is the religion of mankind. This is what is called spirituality. We can have some idea as to what religion can be, what spirituality is, what anything worthwhile can ultimately be if this is the nature of the world, and if this is the circumstance in which we are placed in this mysterious world. The pursuit of religion is the pursuit of this mystery behind phenomena: the Atman or the Self of all things. Therefore, it can also be said to be, at the same time, a pursuit of the mystery of our own selves. The knowledge of things is also the knowledge of our own selves, and our knowledge of our own selves is



the knowledge of all things. To know anything is to know all things.

Here we are at the foot of this great ascent of the religious adventure, the spiritual activity, which cannot be any kind of outward movement, on account of our aim being quite different from anything that can be comprehended within the field of human activity. All activities are presupposed by the presence of this mystery; therefore, the pursuit of this mystery, if it is called religion and spirituality, should be other than what we call normal activity in life. It is an activity, no doubt, but an activity of the spirit. It is our inward self that conducts a process of work in its own manner, which is qualitatively quite different from the works that we undertake in this world of business and social activity.

Religion can be, and ought to be, made compatible with work, but it is not the work that you are thinking of in your mind. It is work, activity, enterprise, adventure; it is everything, but it is nothing that you can comprehend in your mind at present. It is a work that you perform from your soul's essence, and not as a movement of any kind of psychic function. This is why it is said that karma is different from karma yoga. A spiritualised activity, which is karma yoga, is quite different in its nature from the activities known to the world of mankind. You cannot actually have access into the mystery of what you call karma yoga because it is an activity of the soul and not of your hands and feet, not even of your empirical understanding and mind, to which I made reference in the previous session. It is not a world process. It is a noumenal adventure; it is the thing as it is in itself that rises to the surface of phenomena when life becomes religion and spirituality.

Inasmuch as this mystery I referred to is perforce present everywhere because it explains all things at the same time, it is a universal compresence and not a particular existence somewhere. You cannot say it is in some corner of the world. Therefore, when you pursue it, you are pursuing all things at the same time. You become a person belonging to everybody at the same time, and are not a person of one family, one community, one nation—not even of this Earth. When you enter into the field of religious activity, you cease to be a man of a particular country. Perhaps you cease to be a man. Rather, you remain as an inward urge which presses itself forward towards the recognition of the presence of this mystery which explains all things, all phenomena.

Now, inasmuch as this mysterious explanation of the diversified phenomena has to be present everywhere as the Self of all things, it has to be an indivisible something which is incapable of division by space, by time, by even thought and conception. It is a whole of a mysterious nature. Therefore, God is a whole, the Self is a whole, the Atman is a whole, and this is the reason why you consider your little personality as a wholeness in itself. This wondrous, mysterious, universal wholeness explains the wholeness of any particular object in this world. Every little thing is a completeness by itself. A tree is a whole, an atom is a whole, an electron is a whole, a man is a whole, an animal is a whole, even an insect is a whole. The solar system is a whole. Anything you can think of has a wholeness characterising its existence. Even what you call an isolated thing is a wholeness by itself. You are an individual seated here as one among the many, yet you are a wholeness in your own capacity. You are an indivisible individuality. Though you are one among the many persons seated here,

in your own status you attain to an indivisibility which is your personality, the so-called 'I am' you are affirming every moment of time.

In a sense, we may say the whole world is filled with this Self because everyone asserts 'I am'. Even an insect, even a crawling earthworm asserts its independence and wishes to exist in that particular form. The love of life, the struggle for existence, the affirmation of the will to live is present in even the least of things. This affirmation can be explained only by the presence of that supreme affirmation of the mystery which unites the particulars of all phenomena and cries in a loud tone: "I am!" This universal 'I' reflects itself, descends further down into the relative particularities of what we ourselves appear to be, as anything can appear in its own form. Therefore, the world is a world of Selfhood. The pursuit of this indivisibility in any of its manifestations is the pursuit of religion, spirituality, mysticism, yoga.

Hence, a religious aspiration, a love for yoga, is a journey that we are undertaking towards a wholeness which is a little above the wholeness of our own personalities. We are also a whole in our own selves, but we are not satisfied with that wholeness because there are other wholes which contend with our own individual wholeness. The presence of another thing is a limitation of our being, and as we are inwardly a limitless presence of this all-comprehensive mystery, we are not satisfied with our own selves. Nothing anywhere can satisfy us because we are seeking this wholeness which is to explain and to rectify the limitations of our little wholeness in which we are embedded at present.

We are struggling to overcome the limitations caused by the presence of other persons and things by attempting to abolish other things by any means available. This is the

reason why we love things and hate things. All our loves and hatreds can be explained, and have to be explained, only because of our supreme love for the overcoming of our limitations by transcending them by the attainment of a higher wholeness wherein we have the vision of a larger dimension of this indivisibility. Even our little family quarrels can be explained only by our love for the urge of the self for a larger selfhood. Even our small skirmishes, battles and wars are ultimately spiritual. Even the worst of things has a spiritual element behind it, and nothing else can be anywhere, even in the lowest of hells. Even in the worst of infernos an explanation of spirituality is there, and the spirit performs this drama of the ups and downs of life, crowning a person king today and hurling the very same person down to the worst possible experience tomorrow. This is the work of this mystery—to enthrone us in a kingdom today and then cast us down into the dust tomorrow. This is what God is doing, this is what the Self is doing, and this is the explanation of the history of man, which moves as a powerful river to its destination of an oceanic expanse. Thus, we are pulled, whether we consciously will it or not, in the direction of religious pursuits for the practice of spirituality.

There is a large significance behind the talks that we have in the field of religion as a Sadhana Week, as a study, as a *svadhyaya*, as a church-going or a temple worship, etc. There are more things in heaven and on Earth than we can imagine in our minds. Our own little longings are more than what they appear outwardly. They enshrine within their little vehicle a mystery and a treasure which is far superior to the shape of the vehicle in which they are enshrined. Hence, even the first step in religion and spirituality is a step towards the wholeness of experience. This is why it is

often said that particularised loves and hatreds are contrary to the requirements of religious endeavour.

I mentioned just now that our loves and hatreds are explained only by the spiritual urge within us. But we are unable to interpret the experiences of life in terms of the meaning that is hidden behind them as a spiritual motive. We are carried away by the upsurge of the outward waves of experience, but we are unable to discover the inward movement of the ocean that is behind this tumultuous activity of the waves. Our eyes tempt us and deceive us. Our understanding also goes together with the activities of the senses. Therefore, we do not know what we ourselves are aiming at and what we are doing in our daily lives.

The religion of yoga, or the practice of spirituality, is a movement of the finite in the direction of a larger finitude, though that itself may be a finite in the light of a higher experience. Spirituality is an evolutionary process, as anything else can be. The scientific evolution which biologists speak of is also a spiritual evolution. All evolution is spiritual, and the work of the various phenomena in the astral world, in the astronomical universe, in this physical realm, all outwardly appearing to be material in their nature, are also spiritually motivated. Matter does not exist, finally; therefore, in a way we may say that the world also does not exist.

But the so-called world before us, the matter which contends with the spirit, is a false isolation of a part of the spirit itself as an object which it beholds like a counterpart of its own self, a segmentation of the spirit. Just as we can behold ourselves in a mirror, the spirit beholds itself, as it were, in the world, in the universe, in phenomena, in the form of matter. When we behold ourselves, see ourselves or

look at ourselves in a mirror, we have not become another. We see ourselves in a mirror, no doubt, but we have not become that thing which is seen in the mirror. We are still the very same thing that we were before we looked at ourselves in the mirror. Spirit remains spirit, even in matter. Even when spirit appears as matter or the world appears as only matter, and nothing else but matter, spirit remains as spirit. It cannot become anything else.

The so-called material phenomenon, the world of perception, the universe of experience, is an interpretation of the universal spirit through the space-time causal relationship. Therefore, the world is a kind of interpretation rather than an existence. It is a reading of meaning rather than a presence by itself. It does not exist, but it appears to be there as an inexplicable  $x$  in an algebraic explanation or equation. The  $x$  in algebra is a non-entity in itself, but this non-entity is an explanation of everything that is implied in this equation. So is this world. It is a tentative tool for the explanation of that which beyond itself reigns supreme, while it itself does not exist. A non-existent something leads us to something which is really existent. As they say by an analogy, the roar of a non-existent tiger in dream can awaken the individual into a real experience. The dream tiger does not exist, and its roar is also not there, but it can terrify the dreamer to such an extent that we will be woken up into a real world of perception. It is difficult to believe how a thing that is not there can produce an experience which is there. Similarly, the Guru, the idea of God that we have in our minds, and the worships that we offer in the form of religion and spirituality are also the roars of tigers which are not really there, but they can wake us up into a real experience, which is what Is.

Therefore, the practice of yoga, the pursuit of religion, the living of spirituality is the pursuit of a hidden mystery. Religion is a mystery. It is not a social work or a service that we render to our nation or to people outside as a kind of redemptive effort on a purely empirical level. Service becomes spiritual, karma becomes karma yoga when we can see a meaning that is hidden in and through the outward performances of the activity and the intention, which is other than the activity itself. The intention is what counts, not the form of the activity. Hence, karma yoga is not a work that we do but a meaning that is behind the work that we do. If the meaning is absent, the work becomes a skeleton, a corpse which is carried on a stretcher but has no life in it. Action can become a mere corpse when it is divested of the spiritual intention behind it; therefore, our efforts in life may not always succeed. People often complain they have done so much but nothing comes out of it. It is because they have done nothing, really. They have only been moving like a corpse, and the movement of a corpse cannot be regarded as any worthwhile activity because there is no life in it. All the works that we do in life are usually the work of a corpse. There appears to be a movement, but it is like the movement of a car without a driver and so it is a chaotic activity, a lifeless movement in any direction whatsoever, without a purpose.

Karma yoga is a spiritualised activity, no doubt, but we must know what it actually means. It is the discovery of that outlook which is compatible with the presence of this universal Self in the activities of our daily life. It is a difficult thing to understand, and even more difficult to practise. We wool-gather, we sleep, we slip off track, and we are once again the old people that we were in spite of

our effort because, as I told you, the spirit always eludes the grasp of empirical understanding and, much worse, the perceptions of the senses. *Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā* (Katha 1.3.14); *apramattas tadā bhavati* (Katha 2.3.11) are the cautious maxims we have in the scriptures. Subtle, invisible is this path of the spirit. Strait is the gate, narrow is the way, so narrow that it looks like the dimension of a hair's breath. It is subtle like the sharp edge of a razor or a sword, invisible to the eyes. We cannot see the spiritual path. We cannot even know it with our mind wedded to space and time. The understanding is incapable of knowing what it is. Hence, one cannot know what the religious significance of life is by analysing it only through a vivisection by way of scientific analysis, etc.

One has to be very cautious. That is *apramattas tadā bhavati*. Heedlessness is death. We are mostly heedless because we are carried away by a complacency that we are already on the path, but no one can be so sure that they are really on the path. Even if we happen to be on the path, we can be sidetracked, taken in the wrong direction, and we will be made to believe that we are moving in the right direction. Here is the difficulty. But constant practise will save us. Light will shine on the path as a consequence of the good deeds that we performed in our previous lives, the *samskaras* or *punya dharmas* of earlier existences, as also the power that is produced by our own efforts in this life, the blessings of the Guru from whom we have received initiation into yoga and, finally, the grace of God will help us.

Every day one has to wake up in the morning with vigilance in the mind, as if we are walking on a razor's edge or on a very narrow rope bridge, and non-vigilance



may mean falling into the abyss. For this purpose we have to create a daily routine and a program for ourselves. We should never be under the impression that we are wholly religious or spiritual. Not even a great saint can be said to be wholly religious all of the time. That is not possible under the circumstances of life here. A daily routine is to be chalked out, and all the necessary things of life have to be taken into consideration. Our family circumstances, our office routines, our physical health, our financial condition—every blessed thing has to be considered when we prepare a program. Every item that is indispensable in life and cannot be avoided under the circumstances has to be put down in our diary. Oftentimes, the different items of our daily program cannot be exposed to the public. The daily program is not necessarily what people see outside, but rather what is in our minds. The various tensions and anxieties are not capable of being demonstrated outside. Everyone has a worry in their minds, but we cannot tell anyone because to tell it is itself another worry, so we somehow keep it inside us.

But we have to get over this. We have to see that every tension is removed from our minds before we step wholly onto the spiritual path, because a morbid mind is unfit for this purpose. We have to be healthy individuals first. We are rarely wholly healthy. Our minds are distracted by compulsive movements of the social structure in which we are placed. Because we are made in that way, at present we are unable to live a life which is not social. It does not mean that we should always be social individuals from birth to death, but at present, at least, it does not appear that we can live an unsocial existence because we have needs which are connected with social solidarity, social relationship and

social cooperation. Apart from that, we have to breathe air, drink water, and bask in sunlight, which is a natural dependence on the physical world of nature. We have social dependences of other types. We require a doctor when we are sick, and medicine which we cannot manufacture ourselves. We require vegetables which are not grown in our own garden, as well as pulses, rice and wheat. We require every blessed thing. This is a kind of dependence. A day will come, God willing, when we are not dependent like this. A day like that has to come; we cannot go on cringing before others until we die—although, at present, being independent does not appear to be practicable.

Therefore, the difficulties of this type, which we might regard as necessary evils, though they are evils themselves, have to be paid their due. The worst of things has to be taken into consideration even if it may appear as totally unreligious and wholly unspiritual. Anything which we cannot avoid should be regarded as religious and spiritual. We should not say it is unspiritual. A thing that we can wholly avoid may be avoided, but when we have concluded that it cannot be avoided, why do we complain that it is unreligious and unspiritual? It has some connection with our religious or spiritual practices, and with our existence itself. Anything that is contributory to the values which are religious and spiritual even in the remotest sense are also religious and spiritual.

Here, one has to be very charitable, and not dogmatic and fanatic. We have one difficulty in life, and that is social dogma and religious fanaticism, often into which we are born. We cannot forget that we are Hindus, Christians, Muslims, etc. Though this feeling is not necessary and perhaps, I may say, it is wholly undesirable, we are born into

this. We think as Hindus, as Christians, as Muslims, and we also think as men and women, etc. We cannot avoid these ideas. These are great problems. These are the diseases of the psyche, and when they are there, we have to accept that they are there. It is not true that we are Hindus or Christians, it is not true that we belong to a particular nation, and it is not true that we are men or women. But we have been forced into the belief that we are these and, consequently, we are forced to behave as if we are these. This is a malady of human society. But there is no use merely saying it is a malady; it has to be taken into consideration as necessary in our existence. We have to gradually rip ourselves open and shed these limitations by passing through them, and not by imagining that they are not there. We cannot close our eyes to the existence of a problem, though it may appear that it is a fallacy of thinking and a misconception. Even a total misconception in the minds of people can be a necessary part of our religious activity if we cannot get out of the clutches of this misconception.

Hence, when we chalk out a daily routine we have to be a highly impersonal psychoanalyst, a medical doctor or a judge in a court within ourselves, though we may not express it outwardly. Our religion cannot be shown to others. It is impossible to demonstrate to people what kind of religion we are practising, and the religion that is seen outside is not our real religion. We live one kind of religion inside, and show another kind of religion outside because we have to live a social religion acceptable to people; otherwise, they will hang us or burn us at the stake for our religion, as we know very well, and we do not wish this fate. So we have a double religion—a religion inside which is known to us alone in our private lives, which nobody

outside knows, and another religion which makes us bow down before a holy image and speak about religion in conformity with the accepted social norms. Therefore, we have two spiritualities, two religions, two Gods, two aims, two personalities, two of everything. But these two should become one in the days to come.

This is a tension which has crept into us from being forced to live a double life; therefore, we are always sick. We cannot wholly live socially what we are inside us. This is very unfortunate. We do not know whom to blame for this. We are always one thing inside, and another thing in society, because it is not possible for society to accept what we think, and it is also not possible for us to accept what society takes as its norm. Hence, we have to be sick always. We do not know who made us these people that we are, and how society grew into this pattern. Anyhow, it is there, and it has to be explained in the way in which it is there. We have to overcome this difficulty by passing through the difficulty, and not by imagining that it is not there. Therefore, religion is a difficult thing. It is a medical treatment, yes. It has been that, and it can be nothing else.

So I request you all, as members of a fraternity of true religion and spirituality and God-love, to have your own inward program which you need not tell anybody else, except perhaps your own master, teacher, guide, superior, Guru, to whom you can expose yourself wholly. If not, keep it to your own self, and pray to God. He will be your Guru and guide you, and throw light into your hearts. See that every day is a day when one aspect of the tension is shed.

Many of the things which are the causes of our inward difficulties are the desires which we cannot fulfil, and which we cannot help fulfilling at the same time. This is

a psychic problem into which people sink and become neurotics. Many religious people are neurotics. They are not wholly healthy minds. That is why they suddenly flare into anger, shout at the top of their voices, and show their irreconcilability with other people at the least word that is uttered. They have some great tension inside, but they cannot tell outside what it is. So they divert it by a displacement into the personality of other people and pounce upon others like tigers, wolves, making it appear that they are in the right and others are in the wrong. This is a psychoanalytic problem. There are various defence mechanisms which the mind adopts to save its skin and put the entire blame on others, proclaiming in a loud tone that one is wholly unscathed and not at all in the wrong. This situation also has to become an analysis of our own selves, and here we require a good psychoanalyst—not a clinical psychoanalyst, but a spiritual man who has passed through these stages and who knows what people are, and also what religions' requirements are.

Today's analysis has been more psychological, and I hope to lead you further to a field of inward investigation and practice which will be more integrating.

## Chapter 4

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

A crucial issue arising in religious life is the problem of evil. There is always an Ahriman before an Ahura Mazda, a Satan before a God, and a totally irreconcilable material evil before the religious seeker or the spiritual aspirant. We are troubled very much with this existence of evil, and we do not know what to do with it. We have been told, and we are prone to be convinced, that what we call evil is against religion, against what is good, and so we go with the conviction that religion is against evil and evil is against religion. We have already tabulated in our own minds the characteristics of evil. We have a confirmed opinion as to what evil is; and whatever we are convinced is undesirable becomes an object of hatred, a thing to be wholly abandoned.

A religious novice begins to struggle with his own mind in his attempt at rejecting evil right from the beginning. The very idea of taking to religion or spirituality is simultaneously associated with the idea of rejecting something. He starts rejecting all things which he regards as evil and worth condemning, which cannot stand before the light of God's spirituality. But the struggle tells upon one's own mental health because it is not merely a warfare of justice or a battle in the name of righteousness, but a

conflict which arises in one's mind in confronting what is called the evil in the world. The conflict arises due to a peculiar double character of what we conceive as evil. If evil exists, it cannot be destroyed, because that which really is cannot be overcome by any effort. The destruction of a really existent something is unthinkable. And if it does not exist, it is futile to try to overcome it. A thing that is not there cannot frighten us to the extent it does in our daily life, so we do not fully believe what we are thinking in our minds.

Therefore, it is not really a struggle against evil; it is a struggle within our own selves against two aspects of conviction which war with each other. It appears that evil is an incapacity of one aspect of our mind to reconcile itself with another aspect of its own self. Though it looks that we are trying to struggle with an evil outside in the world and in creation, finally it seems that it is not the case. We are trying to wage a war within our own selves between two conflicting parties in the field of our own psyche, because our mind cannot fully accept that what it is forced to reject as an evil is really an evil. We are not fully convinced about the evil nature of the very same thing which we are compelled to accept as evil under the ordinances of the scriptures and religious mandates.

The moment we take to religion, we start as sick people. Perhaps becoming religious makes us even more sick than we were earlier; it makes us moody and crestfallen, and makes us worry right from the beginning to the end. The worry starts the moment we take to the field of religion and spirituality, because the conflict begins. A simple man in the world has no conflicts in his mind. He walks on the beaten track, which is very clear before his eyes. The struggle begins when we start thinking in a different way, almost

opposing our own original convictions, an opposition about which we ourselves cannot be fully convinced finally.

In the previous session I told you there is a lot of irreconcilability between our own inward feelings and the outward structure of our environment. This is a perpetual source of trouble to us as long as we are living in this world, and it may persist wherever we go, even in other realms of being. The irreconcilability is not between ourselves and this particular world called the Earth; it is, rather, an irreconcilability between our individual structure and the vast environment of creation in any plane of its manifestation, even if it be in heaven itself. Actually, the world is confronting us with daggers drawn against us. This is the problem of evil, or rather, the beginning of it. The great evil before us is the perception of the world in front of us, and every other conception of evil starts from that. The segmentation of a world outside our consciousness is the beginning of evil, a warring element standing against God's omnipotence. Lucifer getting converted into Satan is the standard metaphysical evil before us, and everything that is undesirable follows from this original fall, or the commission of the first sin, as we are told.

The beginning of our problem is with our confrontation with the world itself. Previously I pointed out in a few words that in our religious aspirations and spiritual pursuits we are really after the universal omnipresent mystery, the great Self of things, and every effort of ours is a movement towards the achievement of this goal. It is an impulsion from within ourselves towards the attainment of a wholeness which is the characteristic of the universal Self. But this wholeness is cut off and partitioned into a subjective percipient and a world outside. This is the point where we are standing now.



Creation is only this much: a presentation of a world before a Creator who seems to be standing outside it. The Lucifer that is spoken of in biblical language is the world in front of us. He has become Satan because of warring with God, asserting an independence of his own. He was an angel in the beginning; he became Satan afterwards because of an assertion of independence on his part over and above the supremacy of God, the omnipotent Being.

The world was not originally an object of perception. It was an angel inseparable from the bosom of the Almighty. The universe so-called, the creation that we see before our eyes, was not this form which is before us at present. It was one with God's almighty all-comprehensiveness. Similarly, Satan was an angel once upon a time. He was indistinguishable from God's being. But something happened. Nobody knows how it happened and what actually happened. The angel began to feel a sense of importance; and to affirm an importance in the eyes of God, or in the presence of the Almighty, would be to defy the almighty nature of God. Hence, the world stood against God's omnipresence when it asserted its objectivity and independence in that manner.

Thus, the Satan of the Bible is the world that we see in front of us. He is not in hell, in Inferno, in fire and brimstone, as literature tells us. The very thing in front of our eyes is the Satan. And there is no use merely calling names and getting dissatisfied with the circumstances of life. Saying, "You idiot! Get away!" is not a solution. We may say, "You wretched world, I kick you out in the name of God!"—but it is not a spiritual solution. We may go on calling the world names, but the world is not going to listen to our abuses. It shall be what it is.

The great problem of spirituality is a reconciliation of ourselves with the evil which is standing before us and which has taken various forms as the so-called evils of the world. Originally it was a philosophical evil, a metaphysical evil in the form of the whole of creation appearing to be outside consciousness. Then it becomes a cosmological evil, an epistemological evil, a psychological evil, a social evil, a political evil, a business evil, a moral evil, an ethical evil, every blessed evil. These are all the multitudinous children born to the original evil, the mother of all problems; and we are not going to be saved until we strike a balance between ourselves and this great foe in front of us. The foe happens to be a reality, unfortunately for us. We do not struggle against an unreal foe.

The problem of religion, spirituality, philosophy, is the problem of this indescribable relationship between ourselves and the ugly world before us, the evil Ahriman, the immoral principle. The immoral is a dreaded principle before us. People are frightened by the words 'immoral', 'unethical', 'wretched', 'downfallen', but there is no use condemning in this way. The so-called moral has to reconcile itself with the so-called immoral. The Daiva and the Asura Sampat mentioned in the Sixteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita are the moral and the immoral, but there is no use merely saying, "It is immoral. I shall not have anything to do with it." We shall have something to do with it, even if not today. We shall have to confront it and make it our own, as we cannot brook it standing outside us as our enemy forever. It is not for nothing that the great Christ told us that we cannot make friendship with God unless we first make friendship with man. We must first make peace with our brother before we make

peace with our Father in heaven. But we are always trying to make peace with the Father in heaven by condemning our brother, who is an evil before us. "Our neighbour is an evil, and therefore I condemn him in the name of the great Almighty, Who is my friend." This will not work, and it cannot cut ice.

Our religion, as it appears today, has to be shed. I have often thought, and am becoming convinced, that it is high time that we abolish all the religions of the world and be without any religion. This idea arose in my mind because of the sorrow that I felt at the deceptive attitudes of religions and the camouflage which they put on in the name of morality and divinity, which is to their own ruin and to the harm of society. We are grinning at God and mocking our own selves, and suffering a sorrow which has arisen because of our ideas of morality, ethics, religion, spirituality, God-consciousness. This is the fate of religion today.

The great yoga, the union that we speak of, is a union with everything that is confronting us as an 'other than ourselves'. The so-called 'other than ourselves' is our fear. *Dvitiyād vai bhayam bhavati* (B.U. 1.4.2): Whenever there is another near us, we are afraid. We cannot tolerate that 'another' sitting there, and want to abolish it. We would like to be dictators of the whole world, if it would be possible. The dictators are the peculiar distorted affirmations of this unitary being which cannot accept the presence of another outside.

Such peculiar affirmations of a unitary existence manifest as the problem of evil, which is a problem in the scriptures of every religion. The moment we become religious, we close our eyes to the realities of life, condemning them as ungodly, irreligious, immoral, and unworthy of any consideration at all. Here begins our sorrow. That is why

I said our sorrow begins the moment we start becoming religious. A wholly social, materialistic person is also happy in his own way. He does not bother about anything. Everything is reconcilable to him. He is able to reconcile himself with everything, even with the worst of things in the world, and so he is happy in a way. But we are very virtuous persons, and our virtue is our sorrow. This is, again, something very unfortunate.

The evil that we speak of is a seed of irreconcilability that is present in our own minds. In the famous section on creation in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, we are told that there was no 'other' to the supreme God. *Brahma vā idam agra āsīt* (B.U. 1.4.10). In the beginning, the One alone was, and that was the state of utter blissfulness. Then the One appeared as another to its own self. This is the story of every religion. The cosmological hymns of religions are of a common nature everywhere. If we read any scripture of any religion, it will say the same thing about the way in which God created the world. The 'I' became a 'you'. The 'you' is the evil, the 'I' is the principle of the affirmation of the righteousness of God. Fortunately, or for any reason, God was the supreme 'I-ness', and there cannot be a 'you' before God, but we have been told that there was a 'you' in the original state of things and, curiously, the scripture tells us that God Himself felt a kind of uneasiness within Himself, as it were, the moment the 'you' of creation appeared before the 'I' of Himself. A very fantastic description is in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A mystery is creation, and a mystery cannot be explained by any language.

These hymns of cosmology tell us that sorrow began the moment God began to see the world. The 'I' of God descended into the various 'I's of individuals as the 'you'

of original creation is set into the little particulars that we see in this world, up to the least of things—a crawling ant or a sand particle on the beach of the ocean. There is a series of irreconcilabilities and confrontations, right from the beginning Original Will, which was creative, down to the lowest irreconcilability of a shopkeeper and a customer. All these irreconcilabilities and skirmishes have arisen on account of the original conflict between the 'I' and the 'you' cosmically, and now it has become a conflict in little things, in everything that we see with our eyes and in the lowest features of human life and any life conceivable.

To be religious is to search for God, and to be spiritual is to affirm the originality of God's being. Therefore, in this affirmation of religion and spirituality we are not going to condemn anything as an evil, but absorb the so-called evil of the externality of the world into the I-ness which is the reflection of God's originality. Thus, to be religious and spiritually aspiring is not to reject the world but to absorb it into our own selves. The evil, unfriendly Satan has to be befriended, and he has to be enthroned in the original pristine purity of his being, which was his angelic existence in the Kingdom of God in the beginning. Unless Satan is enthroned in the Kingdom of God in the very same status he originally had before creation, the problem of evil cannot be solved. The problem of evil is the problem of the existence of such a thing as Satan. He was not there in the beginning; he became that later on, and the struggle of the world and the urge of evolution is nothing but the struggle of Satan to return to God's being, a status which he has lost and which he has to regain.

To the extent we are 'I's, we have the divine element within us, and to the extent we are 'you's, we have the

satanic element in us. So we are struggling within ourselves, partly as the divine spark and partly as the divine confronting darkness. Light and darkness come together in the field of our own hearts. As the Pandavas and the Kauravas are said to have descended from a single ancestor, light and darkness have both come from God only. They become irreconcilable, and it is difficult to ignore their existence because both have come from the same source. The Pandavas are the Kurus, and the Kauravas are also the Kurus. The confronting darkness as the Satan of the world outside is as much a child of God as we ourselves who are trying to struggle with this Satan. Vice is as much a child of God as virtue, and vice versa. Therefore, religion is not a process of the abandonment of evil as an undesirable principle, but rather the process of the absorption of the evilness of the so-called evil thing into the righteousness of the Kingdom of God wherein evil cannot be, as darkness cannot be when the sun rises.

Hence, religion is a process of a friendliness of attitude, an establishment of conformity with things, and not an abandonment of evil things because, ultimately, they cannot be. Evil does not exist, and because it does not exist, it has become a problem. If it had really existed, it would not have been a confronting principle, and also, if it had been really existing, we would not be trying to overcome it.

But what is evil, again? Place this question before your own mind. Evil is one part of you struggling with another part of your own self. One part of you is the so-called present 'I' or 'you', and the other part is what you are unable to reconcile yourself to. When you are attracted to anything in this world, you are pulled by a part of your own self that you see externally in the world of space and time.

Otherwise, who can attract you in this world? How can a totally contrary being pull you in its own direction unless there is something akin to you in its character? Unless a feature belonging to yourself is present in the world outside, it cannot pull you, attract you, and demand your attention. A part of you is present there outside. So you are seeing yourself in things outside, and calling them evil. You are trying to run away from a part of your own self. The evil of the world is a part of your own self and, therefore, you cannot run away from evil. Just as you cannot say that you do not exist, you cannot say that evil does not exist. But, at the same time, you cannot say that you are other than your own self. You cannot be something more than, or less than, or different from what you are. In the same way, the so-called principle of evil cannot be regarded as a feature totally alien to your own self.

Thus, the fight with evil is a fight with one's own self. It is one part of oneself fighting with another part of oneself—the inward, individualised segment struggling to overcome the barrier that is there between itself and another part of its own self in the form of things outside. The whole world is a part of yourself, and with that you are struggling, calling it evil, condemning it, etc. Therefore, you can never overcome it unless you have become one with it. The overcoming of evil is a becoming one with it, so that afterwards it ceases to be evil. The world confronts us as long as it is looked upon as an object with which we can partly reconcile ourselves, and partly we cannot. In one aspect of it, it is impossible to ignore its existence. In another aspect of it, it is difficult to bring it as a part of our own selves. As an other to our own selves, it cannot be reconciled with ourselves. But as a principle which has somehow or other isolated itself from

our own selves, we have to reconcile ourselves with it. As we have a double personality within us, there is a double feature in everything in the world.

When we take to religious practice or to the practice of yoga, we are in a terrible difficulty indeed. Very few can succeed in yoga, or even in religion or spirituality or anything worthwhile, because moral evil stares at us as an insoluble problem before us, and the ideas of the undesirable, which have been implanted in our minds right from the various incarnations we have passed through, obstruct our newly reoriented form of thinking, so even when we think religiously or in a so-called divine way, we are still using our old stereotyped fashion.

The concept of God and religion that we have today is a prejudiced concept engendered by the *samskaras* or impressions of the past, which are inside us even now; and the nature of the seed shall also be the nature of the fruit yielded by the plant arising from that seed. We cannot have a new concept which is qualitatively different from the idea we are already capable of from the point of view of the impressions in our own psychic personalities. We are big conglomerations in our own psyches. We are a muddle and a chaos, and this chaotic muddle is the quagmire from which arises the plant of the so-called religious aspiration, so naturally it is affected in the same way as any other thought can be affected. Hence, we find ourselves in a situation which is literally called the pull between the devil and the deep sea, or the horns of a dilemma.

The reason why we have been told again and again that a Guru is necessary is that our brains have to be deconditioned, or rather, I would say, we have to be dehypnotised. We are in a hypnotic state today from the



conditions imposed upon us due to the existence of racial factors embedded in our psyche and the impressions formed by experiences of our various past incarnations. We have not started life just a few years back when we came from our mother's womb. We have been living for centuries, for aeons. We have passed through many forms in our struggle to overcome this evil of an 'other' than God's being. As a soldier in a battlefield may declare a temporary truce to regain his strength and take rest in his camp only to resume the battle the next morning, we are shedding this form of the present personality as soldiers in the battle of life and entering into a camp of unconsciousness for the time being, to resume the battle of the very same existence, the confrontation with evil in another form, which we have to assume whether we want it or not.

Thus, the impressions formed in our psyche, which pursue us wherever we go through the various incarnations, stand as obstacles to a totally reoriented form of thinking. The reason why we require a Guru, or a teacher, or a superior in this task is because we cannot qualitatively enlighten ourselves in a new manner as long as we are capable of thinking only in the old fashion conditioned by the psyche which has been impressed with the various forms of experience through which it has passed in the earlier incarnations of life. Hence the need for a Guru, to reiterate.

The reason why we do not seem to be achieving anything worthwhile even in a noble pursuit called religion or yoga is that we are the same old people, whatever be our feeling of advancement in yoga, spirituality, etc. We have not changed a whit, and we cannot change so easily, whatever we imagine about our own selves. We always put on appearances of

religion, very unfortunately. We are religionists and yogis only for other people. In our own selves we are nothing, and we cannot be anything other than what we are. We have been forced to somehow appear as religious men, as otherwise we will be cowed down and spat on by society outside. So we would like to be comfortable religionists and yogis, because who can face this devil of the world even if it be affirming a totally contrary attitude to that which is expected of us as a truly religious attitude?

A sword is necessary for us. When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa came under the influence of the great master Totapuri, he was asked to contemplate, concentrate, meditate.

“Yes, close your eyes and meditate,” said the great master Totapuri. “What do you see?”

“I am seeing my Mother, my Divine Mother,” replied Sri Ramakrishna.

“Cut off her head,” said Totapuri.

“My dear Mother! How can I cut off her head?”

“Sever her head with the sword of discrimination.”

“No, I cannot. She is my dear Mother. How can I sever her head?” said Ramakrishna.

“No, you must,” Totapuri said.

“I cannot.”

“You must!”

They argued like this, and with a tremendous irreconcilable, painful, agonising feeling of sorrow which he alone could experience, Ramakrishna cut off the head of his Mother with the sword of knowledge, and there was no Mother. Who could do this? Then there was a flood of light into which he entered, about which we are told in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. The dear Mother is our world,

who has fed us and taken care of us and raised us as her own child on her lap.

This was the struggle of Arjuna. “My dear grandsire, my dear Guru, my dear cousins, my dear everything!”

Sri Krishna’s argument was the same as the argument of Totapuri to Ramakrishna: “Sever the head of your mother, of your father, of everybody.”

“O God, how is it possible? You are telling me dreadful things,” said Arjuna.

The world has been a dear object. It has been dear, but it has been an object. That is the pitiable part of it. It is very good that it is dear because everything has to be dear, but it is an object. How can an object be dear? “Only the Self can be dear,” says the Upanishad. *Na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (B.U. 2.4.5): Only the Self can be dear, and nothing else can be dear. How can an object be dear? While it is true that to love a thing is a virtue and a noble trait, to love an object is unthinkable. How can one love an object when an object is something different from us? How can we love a thing which is not us? How can we love something which is totally alien to us, which is other than us, which is opposing us, which is an object to the subject—which means to say, totally different from what we are? How can I love that which is totally different from me? How can I be a friend of another person who cannot think at all in a way in which I am able to think? How can I be friendly with an individual who is moving in an opposite direction altogether?

The objectivity of the objects is a contrary movement of consciousness to the way it is accustomed to moving. The non-Self is the object; the Self is the reflection of

God's omnipresence. God is a Self—'I am I'. The 'I am I' in universal form is God-consciousness affirming, and a 'you' or a 'that' or an externality or an object or something different is unthinkable for God. In the Fourth Section of the First Chapter of the Brihandarayaka Upanishad there is a grand, terrifying dictum: Whoever meditates in this manner shall destroy evil, and nobody can stand before him. You will have no enemy in front of you. He will burn like ashes. Before whom? Before that which meditates on this supreme 'I am what I am', before which no object can be. When it is said in the Upanishad that the meditator on this supreme 'I am I' destroys everything that is outside and no foe can stand before that person, what it means is that anything that contends it cannot stand before it.

Unfortunately, the world is contending before us as an independent existence, and we have never felt that it is a part of us or we are a part of it, though in our loves for things we have unconsciously accepted our participation in it and its participation in us, though we have spoken to the world with tongue in cheek, not accepting it fully. We have not fully accepted that the world is a part of us, nor have we completely rejected it. We cannot reject it because we love it, but we cannot make it a part of ourselves because it asserts its independence. Even your family members are independent individuals and would not like to merge in you. The wife and the husband, the son and the daughter all assert their independence. Though you may say they are yours, it is only in some way, under some conditions. Wholly they are not you. When even the dearest of objects has an independence of its own and would not like to get absorbed in you totally and lose its individuality, the world would also not like it. So much love it cannot evince for

you. The world does not want love from you so much as to totally lose its independence and get absorbed into you. That is not possible. "No. I am what I am," it says.

Here is the explanation for what religions call evil. It has become so difficult to understand because it is a mystery which is pulling us in two ways: wanting to get absorbed into us by way of love, and yet wanting to stand independent of us. This is an irreconcilable, unthinkable and indefensible attitude of things. This is why they say the world is *maya*. It is an inscrutable mystery and a jugglery. How can we explain this peculiar situation except by the term 'jugglery'? A jugglery is a peculiar phenomenon which is neither there nor not there. It is not there because we cannot always see it, and sometimes we cannot see it at all. It has vanished. But sometimes we can see it. It is there because we sometimes see it.

Thus, this peculiar relationship of ours with the world, with our friends, with our family members, with society, etc., has to be reconciled and cut through before we really become Godmen. We cannot simply shirk our responsibilities in this arduous task, which was the task before Arjuna's irreconcilable attitude, and a problem before every spiritual seeker. The whole of spiritual life is a series of confrontations and reconciliations with the problems arising out of the notion of evil, the external and the undesirable, the immoral, the unethical, the dark principle, the Satan, the Ahriman, whatever we call it.

Today I have told you something very strange, and yet it will act like a medicine, bitter to the core and impossible to swallow, but which will cure your deep-rooted illness. It has to be swallowed, if not today, at least tomorrow.

## Chapter 5

### THE FIRST THOUGHT OF THE DAY

When you wake up in the morning, observe the first thought that occurs to your mind, which will give you an idea of the predominant thoughts governing your previous day's life, or several earlier days. Make this a daily habit of noting down your first thought every morning for days or even months. Often, when we get up in the morning we have a rush of such anxiety and a feeling of responsibility that we would not be able to note our first thought. We are pushed into activity by the impulse of anxiety regarding the duties of the particular day. But it is good to have a habit of trying to note the first thought that occurs in the morning.

Generally, what we like the most or hate the most will be the first thing that occurs to our mind. Among the many ideas of our mind there are certain intensive propulsions of the psyche which lie as an undercurrent of the other ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., and these predominant ideas are those connected with what we intensely like or dislike. Everyone has an intense like or an intense dislike for something or the other. No one can be free from these psychic habituations. We may have the idea that we have no intense like or dislike for anything, but it is not true. Everyone has something, which may not come to the

surface on account of the powerful surge of the occupations in which we may be engaged for the time being. We may be very busy preparing for a celebration, a function, and may be so preoccupied with these preparations that even our intense ideas are submerged by the rush of thoughts connected with the immediate activity on hand, but this does not mean that a predominantly ruling thought does not exist. It is unfortunate that we occupy ourselves with social and family activities to such an extent that we have no time think of our own longings or pressures which arise on account of these desires, which are positively a like or negatively a dislike. Anyone who likes something has to dislike something else. This is very clear and easy to understand. It is not possible to have an intense liking for anything without a corresponding dislike for those things which are different from or other than that which is the object of our intense like.

What are these ideas that occur to our mind? We may have to strike an average of all these thoughts because it may not be that the same thought will occur every day. There may be variations of shades of emphasis in the occurrence of these thoughts and ideas because we have, as I mentioned sometime back, a variety of impressions in our mind, and it is not that we are carrying only one thought, one impression or one psychic propulsion. That which keeps us restless, for a reason which we may not always be aware, is the predominant thought in our mind.

Now, many a time we cannot say why we are restless. Often we are suddenly unhappy without knowing the cause. Some wave of unhappiness has taken possession of us, which does not immediately become an object of our rational consideration because it is the effect of the working

in the subconscious level which has not yet reached the conscious level. That is why we cannot actually rationalise, understand, analyse or know the reason behind the wave of feeling that has taken possession of us.

If, when we take an average of all the first thoughts that occur in the morning for a month continuously, for instance, we must be able to go further into the analysis of this predominate thought or group of thoughts and know the causative factors behind their occurrence. Why do these thoughts occur to the mind? They have a connection with far-reaching implications. They may be messages from distant realms. The distant regions may be spatially away from us or inwardly deep in our own unconscious layers. However, on a careful investigation into the nature of these thoughts that occur first in the morning, we will know what we are. A knowledge of what we really are will be given to us by a study of an average of these first thoughts that occur over a continuous period. Something has to be done about them because if they are ignored or not bestowed sufficient attention to for a protracted period, it may lead to a kind of nervousness due to pressure of the nerves.

The moods into which we generally fly in our daily life are the results of these pressures from inside, and we usually do not have a continuous mood throughout the day. We are often moody because we are under the pressure of this great asking of our mind for a fulfilment which it has been denied on account of our preoccupation with outward activities. We have been more engaged with the outer world than with our inner substance. We have largely forgotten ourselves in our excessive interest in the direction of outward circumstances. We have forgotten that we also play an important role in the life that we live, and it is not



always entirely true that the world conditions us wholly. There is a reciprocal reaction between ourselves and the external world of society. So when we occupy ourselves with the presentations of the world given to us through the senses, it may look for the time being that we are wholly conditioned by the circumstances of outward life, but our reactions to the outward phenomena are equally important because the world is neither wholly outside nor wholly inside. It is partly outside and partly inside, and the two put together make a whole. We contribute to our experiences to as large an extent as the world contributes to the experiences of our personal lives.

When you wake up in the morning, let your principle occupation be an analysis of this kind, an entry into your own self in your relationship with the environment outside, and may there be sufficient time for you to consider the objects of these propelling incentives taking the shape of either intense likes or intense dislikes. The world has to be considered in its true perspective at the very outset in order to get through the day unscathed, with some sort of satisfaction. Else, you would be carried away by the tumult of the activities which take possession of you and command you, rather than directing them in the way you would like them to be handled. Place everything in the context of the world considered as a whole. Your friends and enemies—people who like you and people who do not like you, or people and things whom you like or do not like—may all be placed in their proper position in the structure of the world, rather than in the position you would give them from your point of view. This requires a little bit of psychic effort wherein you will also place yourself in the context of the world.

To place ourselves in the position of some constituent factor among the many which go to form the world could be a little hard psychological effort from our side. In earlier days, people thought that the Earth is the centre of the solar system and that the Sun moves around the Earth, and that man is the centre of creation and everything has been created for the sake of man. But now we have somehow awakened ourselves to another novel revelation and it is not acceptable to believe that man is the centre of creation, just as it is not possible to say that any particular point on the surface of the Earth is the centre of the Earth. It is true that any point can be regarded as the centre of the Earth, and anyone can be a centre of creation, but it is not true that only one is the centre and not others.

In this way friends and enemies, things we like and things we do not like, including our own selves, may be placed in their proper positions. As we place parts of a machine in the context of their working as essential ingredients of this mechanism, likewise, life as a whole may be considered as a large mechanistic behaviour of which we are necessary parts and of which everyone else is also a contributory factor.

The loves and hatreds, the friends and enemies, are the personal reactions of parts in regard to parts, not taking them in their relation to the large mechanism of life to which they actually belong. This mechanism is what is called the Virat in religious language. The whole universe is one large expanse like a universal machine in which we are all placed as different necessary items contributing to its harmonious working, and our individualistic reactions mutually among ourselves may have to be, for the time being, transformed into another type of relation which we

bear to this impersonal mechanism of the whole creation. I do not belong to you and you do not belong to me, just as one part of a machine cannot be regarded as belonging to another part, but all the parts belong to a large structure called the machine. Therefore, no one owns any property in this world. The idea of owning property is a misnomer. That cannot be. No one can possess another person or thing, and no one belongs to anybody because everyone belongs to a larger transcending ideal—which should be called only by that name, as it is not a thing or a substance—for the fulfilment of which, these parts are there as contributory ingredients. To come to the analogy again, parts of a machine have no independent meaning. A little nut or bolt in a large mechanical structure has no significance by itself. We do not know what to do with it if it is taken out of the machine. No part of the machine has a meaning in itself, but every part assumes a meaning when it is placed in the context of its relationship to the working of the whole machine, and the meaning is only in relation to the mechanical wholeness. Independently it has no meaning.

Likewise, none of us have any sense here. We do not have any importance if we regard ourselves as individuals, isolated units, as we appear to our own selves and to others at present, but we assume every importance and significance and meaning if we consider the way in which we are related to the world in its wholeness. We do not bear any relationship among ourselves. I have nothing to do with you, and you have nothing to do with me. In one sense, this is so. But I have everything to do with you and you have everything to do with me when the same situation is looked upon from another angle of vision. For all practical purposes, the finger of my hand has nothing to do with

my nose. There is absolutely no connection. The nose performs a function with which the finger bears absolutely no relation, so in a way we may say the two are totally unconnected. Likewise, we are all totally different from each other, having no relationship among ourselves. But on a deeper consideration, we can know the relationship between the nose and the finger because both belong to the machine of this body, which operates each of these limbs for a purpose which does not belong to the finger or to the nose. The body exists and functions for a reason and an intention which is outwardly or empirically unconnected with the operation of the finger or the nose. Why does the body exist and function? It is not because it has anything to do with the nose or the finger, or with any other limb. It has a purpose which is beyond all the limbs put together.

The world exists not because of me or because of you. It has no connection with you or me. The world has kicked aside even the most important of persons when the time for it came. The great men of the world, the rulers of human history, have been thrown into limbo by the forces of nature. Great men have gone to dust and were trampled by the ruthless activities of natural powers because no man exists for himself. There is no such ruler or historical personality taken independently by himself or herself. They lose their significance when they are interpreted as individuals—as Caesars, Napoleons, etc. There are no Caesars and Napoleons for nature. They are nothings and nobodies. But they have a principle of relevance to nature's purposes, which she has fulfilled during the span of their existence in this world, and when she can no longer extract any purpose from them, they are thrown out as if they had never been.

We behave in the same manner with the limbs of our own body. If a particular organ of the body does not serve the body's purpose, we may amputate it. The finger does not exist for itself. No limb exists for itself. That is why it can be cast off for a purpose which is different from and transcendent to the operation or existence of a particular limb. We can scissor off a finger, cut off a nose, or even remove an eye if it is cancerous. That shows that we have no great love for the eye or the nose or the finger, or any part of our body. We do not love anything that can be regarded as a part of this body. It is true that I have a love for my nose, but under certain conditions I may wish to cut it off. I do not want it when certain conditions prevail which will defeat the very purpose of the existence of the nose.

I am placing all these philosophical suggestions before you by way of examples, analogies, comparisons, etc., to enable you to think some proper thoughts when you wake up in the morning. I told you to place everything in its proper context; otherwise, it loses its meaning. If the nose is not properly placed for its intended purpose, that nose has no meaning. It is not a nose at all. Everything is beautiful in its own place, and everything is ugly when it is out of place, because the propriety of anything depends upon its placement in the context of its relationship to the whole of which it is a part. Otherwise, no one has any meaning, and nothing has any sense. Nothing is beautiful here, and nothing is necessary. A thing becomes necessary, meaningful, significant and essential because of the role it plays in its relationship to another whole of which it is a necessary part. Otherwise, it has no sense.

Now, when we place things in this context of their relationship to the whole of which they are parts, we

will find that we have no friends and no enemies. There is nothing that we need or do not need. Everything has a meaning which is different from that which is usually associated with an outward part. I have given this very immediate example of the limbs of our own body. It is not true that we love these limbs under all circumstances, yet we love them very much. We take a bath every day, applying soap and seeing that the skin is clean. We would not like that anyone should interfere with any limb of our body in an undesirable manner, but we ourselves will interfere with it and even sever it under conditions that I pointed out. This is only an example to indicate that nothing is important in itself—neither you, nor me, nor anybody. The world can get on without any individual because its purpose is not connected with individuals, persons, things, etc. Its purpose is something which we may better call ideological, rather than physically substantial. The world is an ideal finally, and is not real in the physical sense. That is why we have been told that the world is a mind rather than a thing, that it is a huge thought. The creation, the world, the universe we speak of seems to be a large thought rather than a thing that we see with our eyes.

It is difficult to accommodate ourselves to these ideas because we are not used to thinking in this manner. How can we say that the whole world is a thought and not a thing? It is because no thing has any meaning. For the purpose of the fulfilment of a particular ideal or ideology, we would shun any physical object. We may abandon our husband, our wife, our child, our nation, everything, even this body, for a thought that is in our mind, an ideal we are clinging to, a purpose or an intention that we are regarding as supreme. People have died for ideas, rather than for

things. The martyrs of religion or of the political field were people who died for thoughts, and not for things. It is very strange that a man should die only for a thought, and not for anything else. People are prepared to sacrifice everything they have for a thought that they have in their minds. We will realise one day that we are only a thought, and not a thing. Everything in the world is that.

But somehow we have descended to this body, which is a concretisation of our idea, and we have therefore been placed in this unfortunate circumstance of interpreting everything as a body, rather than as a thought. When everything goes to the dogs, we would rather be contented with living as an idea rather than as a thing. Why are we disturbed when we are insulted? It is because we are a thought and not a body. No one insults a body; it does not even feel that some insult has come. If we are called names, insulted and humiliated, we feel it is better to die than to live a life of humiliation. But what is this humiliation? It is a thought. It is an idea in our head. And for that purpose, we can commit suicide and abolish our physical existence. On a careful analysis we will find that we are only an idea. Everything is mind, thought, and nothing else. This is why great thinkers such as Plato, Christ, Acharya Sankara and all great prophets, and the Upanishads and the Vedas have declared the supremacy of a higher consciousness rather than a higher thing, substance, object, etc.

So when you wake up in the morning, concentrate your mind on the relative positions occupied by things and persons, placing them in this large machinery of the Virat, the world in its totality, wherein you play a tentative role like a person playing a role in a drama. No individual can perform the same role from the beginning to the end,

as no one in a dramatic enactment is important from the beginning to the end. A person comes to the scene only when he is called for. The whole world is a drama. It is an enactment which has a total purpose, or intention, determined by the director of the play. But each individual knows only the role he or she is playing. Often, one actor may not even know what another actor is doing. The director knows, but each individual may not know, and need not know. And after the role has been played, the curtain drops, not because that particular dramatic individual was not important enough, but because the role has ended. When the role is over, the curtain drops. When the role is to be played, the curtain will be lifted.

Each one of us is an individual playing a role in this drama of creation, and we are neither necessary nor unnecessary. We are necessary when we are required to play this particular role of our existence here, and after we have played our role we are no longer necessary, and the curtain will fall on us. We cannot say that we are so important that the curtain cannot be lowered on us. We are not important afterwards. In a sense, nature is ruthless, very inconsiderate, in the same way as the director of a drama is inconsiderate because he lowers the curtain on a person whose function is over.

We are in this condition here. We have an importance. We have no importance. Both statements are correct. Now, in this situation, who is a friend and who is an enemy? What is it that we can like, and what is it that we cannot like? In this way, conduct your meditational activity in the early morning.

I have often humorously mentioned another way of meditation—very simple and jocular to consider. Get



up in the morning, and think about your father. Who is your father? I am the son of so-and-so. Who was the father of my father? Somebody. Who was the father of that person? Another. Go on like this endlessly, thinking where this father started. Who is your real father? When you say you are so-and-so's son, to whom are you actually referring? Very difficult! This hierarchy of fathers must have started somewhere. Your mind will stop thinking, and will not be able to go further because you do not know where this ancestry started. However, there must have been some beginning. Let this original father, the seed of all the fathers, be contemplated upon. You are the son of so many fathers, the descendent of a hierarchy coming from an original source of many individuals who have sired you.

Or you can contemplate in a different manner. Your father in this birth may not have been your father in the previous birth, and he may not be that in your next birth. You have passed through various incarnations, and the people seated here might have been related to you in hundreds and thousands of ways. Today's wife is tomorrow's mother, and in a third birth she is a sister, and in another birth a very dear friend, and in another birth a deadly foe, and so on. If you had a memory of all these relationships of past and future, would you be able to live for one second? You would perish by the very thought of it. We are happy here because we are fools. There cannot be any other reason for our complacency and happiness and smiles. We cannot smile even once if this fact is known. We will automatically be destroyed by the shock of the very thought of this intricate relationship. We do not know what is the relationship of anything with another thing. If you think in this manner, you will be detached from all

things at once by the very shock of it. This is a kind of thought which you can conduct in the early morning.

Remember that death is at the elbow. This is not only a story in the Panchatantra or an Aesop's fable, it is as hard a fact as anything else. Death is at the elbow, and it can creep inside at one stroke. We do not know at whose mercy we are living here, due to which grace we are able to breathe for a few minutes. We have absolutely no say over anything in this world. We are just nobodies, as I mentioned a few minutes before, if we consider ourselves independently, though we have a great meaning and purpose and function to fulfil in the context of the vast creation. If something can happen to somebody, that very thing can happen to another person also. If one plane can crash, another plane can also crash. It does not mean that only that person's plane may crash and not mine. And if one had to undergo some turmoil in life in a particular way, another may also be subjected to that same condition under similar circumstances. Nature, the world, the universe or God Himself have no favourites. It is not true that God likes us very much. And if at all we think that we bear a favourable relationship with this mighty Whole, it is in the same way as the relationship it bears with anything else. Such is this world, and such are our mutual relationships here. These are some ideas you will be benefited to entertain when you wake up in the morning.

Previously I mentioned that you must have a daily routine and make a note of all the essentials of two aspects of your existence: the entire chain of your days, which you may call your lifespan here, and the day's performance, which is something like a little connecting link in the development of the process of your whole life. The thing

that you do today is connected with the purpose you wish to fulfil throughout the span of your life. Whatever you do today cannot be totally unconnected with the intention or the purpose of your existence here. Every little thing of your day-to-day activities has some connection with what you intend.

It comes to this point, finally, that you must have an aim of life. Many of us cannot have an aim of life. We drift from one thought to another. Every day we have a new aim of life. But we should have the inward capacity to relate all these relative, tentative ideals or aims of the different days to a central ideal. This is to think philosophically. To pin ourselves only to the day-to-day aims would be to think empirically, and to read an undercurrent of a final aim behind the little aims of day-to-day life would be to think philosophically; otherwise, we would not be doing what we are doing every day. We are not helplessly being driven to do something without a purpose. That purpose may not be obvious on the surface, but it has to be there; else, we would not move even an inch. Our little movement is part of the intention that we wish to fulfil finally in our life. Therefore, in our day-to-day life we try to fit in our little performances with the aim that is before us. This is not an easy thing to do because the aim of our final structure of the whole of the span of our existence may be such that our little performances today may not look connected; they may appear to be totally irrelevant. But we must have a little mental strength to go deep into these pressures which compel us to do what we are doing, and inasmuch as we are forced to do what we are obliged to do, they must bear a connection with the final aim of our life; else, we would not be forced to do them. An unavoidable thing is a necessary thing.

Now, the unavoidable thing need not necessarily be religious or spiritual in its outer form. This is something I have already mentioned as a problem in our social life because we have to fit in not only to the requirement of the final aim of our life, but also to the requirement of our social setup. This sometimes brings a difficulty of its own nature, with which we also have to reconcile ourselves somehow, so it is a manifold adjustment that we are called upon to adopt in our life. It is like a person dancing with a pot filled with milk or water kept on the head, simultaneously being aware of the many aspects of the performance. The dancer moves through space and whirls like a top, throwing the arms and legs in different directions and casting glances on the audience, and is also conscious of the pot on the head lest it should fall. It is a manifold adjustment of thought which is required during the performance of this dance.

Our life is something like this performance. We have to dance to the tune of the purpose of the whole of the cosmos, whereby we are required to undertake a manifold performance of a subsidiary nature. Even though the dance is the final aim, the performance is the objective, there are little considerations which are connected with this objective, which I referred to just now. This is a strain on the mind to some extent, but is not dancing a strain? It is certainly so. Nothing can be a greater strain than that, because we cannot bestow thought on all the aspects at one stroke. Yet, it is done by an expert danseuse.

Thus, life in this world is, to some extent, an expert dance where we have to be considering every little bit of this performance, such as our relationship to the audience which is looking at us, for whose edification we are on

the stage, and we also have to see that it is expertly done according to the art or the science of the performance. Also, we should see that we are successful in the performance, as otherwise the enactment would be a failure.

These are the ways in which we can bring our thoughts to a concentrated focus of wholeness. I have often mentioned that our life is a movement from one level of wholeness to another level of wholeness. We are not moving from the part to the whole, as it may appear from outside. We are moving from a small wholeness to a larger wholeness.

Meditation is the bringing together of the functions of the mind into a gestalt, as psychologists say. There is a system of psychology called Gestalt, which has discovered that the mind works as a whole and not as a conglomeration of parts. It is not that our mind is made up of bits of process, though it may look like that. The bits of the mind are brought together into a wholeness, or a gestalt, and we think wholly and not partly even when we appear to think of only one part or aspect of a consideration.

In the beginning, this is a painful process. We will be weeping inside. It may appear that we are cutting our relationships with people and that our friends are leaving us, or at least we are leaving our friends. Our desires are likely to feel frustrated when we are conducting our meditation in this manner. But this apparent feeling of frustration of our desires or our loves is like the fasting that is a compulsory precedent to certain medical treatment leading to the health of the whole body, the psychophysical organism. We will enjoy the satisfaction of health and completeness as a result of a tentative fasting and a drying up of our body incidental to the treatment which has become obligatory under the circumstances of our ill health.

Similarly, when we conduct a spiritual life or a religious meditation, in the beginning it looks as if we are severed from everything; we are ascetic, mendicant, monastic, and dried up completely in our feelings, emotions, loves, etc. We are lost souls, very unhappy, most unfortunate, wretched. This is what we may feel in the beginning when we enter into a truly spiritual form of meditation, as we may feel that we are starving and becoming weaker and weaker every day, almost dying due to the fasting inflicted upon us by the medical treatment of a physician. But we know very well that this fasting is a precondition to the great health that we will gain after the treatment is concluded. So is meditation very painful in the beginning, but in the end we will find that we gain spiritual health.

## Chapter 6

### MANTRA JAPA SADHANA

This has reference to the great system of yoga known as *japa*—the chanting of a mantra, which is a principle method of religious practice in the various faiths of the world. While religions vary and differ from one another, in this one particular mode of practice they are almost the same. Every religion recommends and considers as primary the chanting of the Divine Name, the repetition of a formula or the recitation of what we know as a mantra. There is the Patra Nostra in Christian circles, and you must have seen clergymen tying a rosary around their waists even when they are walking about in public. A mala is held by a religious man, and the beads are rolled by any devotee exclusively dedicated to any particular faith.

The repetition of the Divine Name is known as mantra *japa*, and such a great gospel as the Bhagavadgita holds that among all the spiritual or religious sacrifices or sacraments, *japa* should be regarded as the most pre-eminent: *yajñānām japayajño'smi* (B.G. 10.25). In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata there is a story of a devotee having taken to *japa* alone throughout his life, and he attained spiritual mastery. It is, therefore, not for nothing that it is said that *japa* is the foremost of religious practices. It includes within itself the principles of *svadhyaya*, sacred study, and even

meditation. According to one of the sutras of Patanjali, *svadhyaya* also includes the chanting of Om, the recitation of a Divine Name.

It is a direct approach that we make to the divine principle when we take to *japa* yoga. The mantras, so-called, are the spiritual formulae into which one gets initiated by a superior; it is a potent magazine of energy. There are many things which are connected with the practice known as *japa*. The Sanskrit word 'mantra' means a talismanic combination of letters which produce an effect of their own when they are articulated in the requisite manner.

It is believed that mantras are not created; they are only visualised, and the seers of a mantra are known as mantra *drastas*. We do not say they are mantra *kartas*; a mantra is not manufactured or created by the intellectual operation of an individual. It is envisioned and seen as a force that is present, and is not created by any master. There is a seer, known as the rishi of a mantra. It is the tradition that when we take to the repetition of a mantra, the rishi should be remembered at the same time, just as when we read a book we also know the author thereof. The thought of the characteristics of the author has very much to do with the zeal with which we study the book, and the result it produces thereby. The mantra is not supposed to be suddenly chanted without obeisance offered to the great master who envisioned this mantra in his meditations.

The great system of religious practice known as Agama, sometimes also known as Tantra, says that every mantra has a deity. The deity is, properly speaking, a superintending divine principle which works at every juncture of the seer and the seen, the subject and the object, and determines the nature of every kind of perception or knowledge of



objects. We are aware of the things of the world on account of the functioning of a deity. The Vedanta Shastra tells us that every limb of the body, every organ of perception, every sense of knowledge is controlled and directed by a deity. The presiding deity of the eye is Sun, or Surya, and there are other deities for the other senses, which means to say, the organs of cognition or perception in individuals are only external instruments which are pulled by the strings of the intentions of the deity that is above the operations of the senses. The deity is not merely above the senses of the individual, but is also far beyond the comprehension of this triad forming the perceptual process. The triad consists of the seer, the seeing and the seen. In a way, we may say what is called the seeing is the deity, yet it occupies a position which is superior to these processes known as seer, seen and seeing. The three appear to be a single compact process on account of the existence of a deity; so in every act of perception and even in thinking, a deity is operating, and a deity is one degree of the descent of God Himself into the realm of creation.

Thus, in the recitation of a mantra, we are invoking a god. This god, this deity, this principle superintending over the perceptual process is a force, something like a jetting light, with a form compatible with the nature of the perception or awareness at any given moment, degree or level of manifestation.

We have often been told that there are many gods. There is Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Indra, Gopala, Krishna—endless gods. These are not many gods, really speaking. They are the many forms of control exercised by the one superintending, all-pervading principle in its entry into the process of the degrees of perception and experience through the levels

of creation. There is a gradual descent from the Supreme Universality to the lowest of experiences, and in all these levels there is the presence of this principle of Universality, bringing together the two particulars of the seer and the object that is seen. Whatever be the degree of the descent and whatever be its density, even the lowest conceivable one, there is a deity superintending over the process of the seer coming in contact with the seen. Thus, in religion we seem to be worshipping many gods, while there are not many gods.

For instance, a hundred mirrors placed on the walls of this hall may produce a hundred varieties of reflections of a single object placed in the centre of the hall, according to the structure of the mirrors that are fixed on the walls and the variety of the reflections their structures produce, but these reflections cannot be regarded as representing different objects because there is only one object reflected through the various mirrors. And the reflections may not be of uniform character because the mirrors may be constructed in different ways—concave, convex, coloured, not coloured, etc., and there can even be broken mirrors. According to the nature of the particular structural pattern of the mirror, the reflection will be produced of one single object that is in the centre of the hall. Some such thing can be regarded as the explanation of the many gods in religion. They are the variegated reflections of a single entity of the all-pervading Universality made visible to us through the mirrors, which are of variegated types of our personality.

Now, coming to the point, the mantra is a vibration that is produced by this deity, and the vibration is, in a way, inseparable from the existence of the deity, as the light of the Sun can be said to be inseparable from the very being

of the Sun himself. The vibration is an emanation from this deity, and sound is nothing but vibration. If a mantra can be identified with the form of a particular intonation or a sound produced in the sound box within us, it can, by a stretch of its logical limits, be considered as a vibration finally. A mantra, therefore, is not merely a sound, but it is a vibrational process, just as a sound that is projected into the microphone in a broadcasting station gets converted into a vibration through the ether of space and is transmitted to the receiver somewhere else, getting converted once again into a sound, though when it travelled through space it did not travel as sound but only as a vibration which could not, with any stretch of the imagination, be identified with the sound that we could hear with our ears. Electricity is not heat or cold, though it can appear as heat and cold. In a stove electricity is heat, in a refrigerator it is cold, and it can be motion when it is connected to a mechanism that moves. Just as electricity is not heat, cold or motion yet it can produce heat, cold or motion, a vibration is not a sound yet it can appear as a sound. It can even appear as a colour.

Thus, the mantra has a sound form and also a colour form. The colour form is the vision that we often have in deep concentration, and the sound form is what we inaudibly feel inside as the *anahata shabda*. It is not merely sound and colour; it can even be tangible. We can touch it. In fact, the sensation of touch that the fingers feel when they come in contact with a solid object is only an electrical repulsion that is produced, and there is no such thing as real touch. When the fingers come in contact with a hard object such as a cot, a table, a desk, etc., an electrical vibration of the repulsion of particles is produced. That is the sensation of touch that we feel. The object is really not

solid and, therefore, the world is not there. The world does not exist; it is only a huge mass of vibrations. We seem to feel that the world is really there because of the tangibility of the so-called substances of the world, and tangibility is nothing but an electrical vibration that is produced which is comparable to the weight that we suddenly feel when we get an electric shock of some 300 volts of power.

If you like, you can conduct this experiment at your own risk. Touch a high voltage wire, 300 volts or so, not higher, else you may be burnt to ashes; immediately you will feel a sensation of a heavy weight on your hand. I myself had an experience of this kind. By mistake I touched a live wire, and it gave such a shock that I felt as if a heavy stone was hanging on my hand. There was no stone or anything; it was only a feeling of the nerves. The feeling of the nerves can be of a tangible, visible, solid, heavy object, while the object is not there at all. You can hit your head against a hard wall in dream, and bleed. Is there a wall, really? If you can bleed and feel real pain by hitting your head against a wall that is not there, why should you not be under a delusion that the world is there when it is really not there?

I am digressing as a sort of side-answer to a question raised, whether the world is real or not. It is not real, and it is just not there, though it appears to be there because of the vibrations impinging upon our personality which take the form of colour, sound, tangibility, taste, etc. Even taste is an illusion. There is no such thing as taste. It is, again, an electrical vibration produced by the contact of certain taste buds on the tongue when a particular object emanating a particular shape of vibration comes in contact with it. The whole universe is electrical vibration, and solid objects do not exist.

The mantra is similar in its form. It is a bundle of vibrations. It is a condescence, a concretisation, a coming together, a pressurised point of a stress subtler than electricity, a prana shakti manifesting itself as a visible object to the percipient consciousness. This is the deity ramifying its rays as vision, as sound, as olfactory experience, as taste, as touch, etc. In deep meditation we will have all these experiences, such as the fragrance of a jasmine flower, the touch of a soft object, the taste of honey, and many other things. There is neither honey nor a soft object, nothing of the kind. The vibrations become subtler and subtler as we concentrate more and more, deeper and deeper. Then the conditioning factors which separated us from the world outside gradually get thinned out, and we seem to be slowly entering into the nature of things on account of the concentration we are practising.

The mantra is a vibration, and the deity of the mantra is also a type of vibration, but it is superior in its intensity and subtlety to the two bundles of vibration appearing as the seer and the seen. As waves in the ocean dash against one another, the seer and the seen collide in perception. Every perception or experience in this world is a collision of two bundles of force. We are not persons; we are only heaps of energy thrust into a particular point in space due to an intensity of desire arising at a particular point, though nobody can understand why desire arose at all. *Kāmas tad agre sam avartatādhi* says the Nasadiya Sukta of the Vedas: Originally there was a Desire, a Cosmic Will. That is all we can say about the nature of the origin of desire. We are not competent to say anything further about it.

This desire, originally universal and comprehensive in its nature, gets concretised and pinpointed at points of space as

individuals, and the One appearing as the many is nothing but the one mass of energy getting pressurised at different points in what is called the space-time continuum. So we are pressure points in space-time; we are not persons seated here. This is, again, an answer to the question whether the world is real or not. It is not real. Pressure points cannot be regarded as objects, so we are not here as persons. We are bundles of delusion, that is all.

After this little digression, again I come to the point of mantra *japa*. When you recite the mantra, chant a formula, you try to break this pressure point, this condescence of energy, and act almost in a similar manner as a physicist would do when he bombards an atom to release energy. The particular atom that is capable of releasing energy when bombarded is a hidden potentiality, as every one of us also is. It is a sleeping bundle of strength. It sleeps because of a peculiar ego centre that is present in it, sometimes capable of identification with what scientists call a proton or a neutron, etc. A centre of cohesion is present in atoms. That centre of cohesion, which brings all the particles around it into a single unitary structure, is the ego; that is present in the atom, and it is also present in us. We also have a proton inside us, which is the ego in us, and all the other things that appear around us are the huge movement of the electronic particles constituting our so-called body. If the atom is not real, and it is only a bundle of electric energy, we are also not real, we are just that—then the world also does not exist.

So when we chant the mantra, we are trying to release the potential energy of the atom of our personality by bombarding it with concentration. Then the deity releases its blessing, which means to say, the superintending,

transcendent aspect of the deity becomes an immanent force in our own experience. The transcendent God becomes an immanent presence. That is the vision of God that we have in meditation: the transcendence becoming an immanence. The deity that is above us becomes an object of cognition and perception in front of us.

This much I can tell you today about the deity of a mantra, apart from the force generated by the contemplation on the rishi, or the author of the mantra, whose blessing automatically descends upon us by the very thought of him entertained in our mind. When I deeply think of you, your goodwill emanates towards me; likewise, when we think of a great author such as Vyasa, Valmiki, Vasishtha, or a great sage, saint, incarnation, and deeply feel the form of his presence, we draw sustenance from the grace emanating from him by the very thought of him, because a thought of an object is nothing but a contact established with that object. We draw energy from that object. That is the great blessing we have by the invocation of the presence of the rishi of the mantra and the simultaneous contemplation on the deity of the mantra.

Apart from the rishi and the deity, or the *devata*, there is another factor in chanting a mantra, which is the *chhandas*. The *chhandas* is the metre in which the mantra is composed. There is a science in India called Gana Shastra, which is almost dead these days. Some rhetoricians in the Sanskrit language are acquainted with it, but these days no one wants to learn Sanskrit. They think it is a dead, old grandmother's language; very unfortunate is this view of the value of Sanskrit.

There are certain branches of learning called the Vedangas. Many of you might not have even heard what

these are. One of the branches of this learning connected with the Veda is known as Shiksha, or the method of pronunciation, the philological system which is the intonation and the peculiar juxtaposition of the letters of a mantra when it is chanted. Here is a very important point while chanting a mantra. We should not repeat a mantra in a haphazard manner. Though we may be pronouncing the letters in an appreciably satisfactory manner, we may not be able to juxtapose the letters properly. Then they will not produce the proper effect.

When we utter a word, there should not be a long pause between one syllable and another syllable. If the notes in music are not flowing, the sound will not be music. A musical intonation or performance is a continuity maintained by the various sounds produced by the instrument; otherwise, there will be a twang of one string on a particular instrument and another twang after ten minutes, and that would not be music. The word Narayanaya—suppose we say 'Na', and then after a few minutes we say 'ra'; that is not the way of chanting the mantra. I am giving an example of what juxtaposition means. The proper duration must be maintained in the chanting of the letters of a mantra; otherwise, the chemical effect produced by the coming together of the letters will not be there. And the proportion is very important in the chanting of the mantra. It is more so in Veda mantras, where the science is more rigid.

Therefore, the *chhandas* is the metre of the mantra, as there are metres in a poem, for instance. If we want to know in what metre a poem is written, we must recite it as would be required by the system of the metre, else it would look like prose and it would not be a poem. Thus is the special effect produced by the repetition of a mantra



with the proper juxtaposition of the letters of which it is composed, which is the third effect produced by it. Rishi, *devata* and *chhandas*—and the fourth effect is the force of our own zeal, ardour, and affection for it.

Then there is the grace of the Guru, the power of the will of the master who has initiated us into the mantra. All these come together in the production of the required effect of the chanting. Thus, there is a fivefold force present in any particular mantra when it is properly recited. Hence, the potency of the mantra is very obvious. Why should it not contribute to world peace? Certainly it will. But all these conditions are to be fulfilled; otherwise, it will be a mechanised routine.

There are other necessary conditions imposed upon the practisant of *japa* yoga, namely, the system of discipline maintained every day. We can chant the mantra even when we are walking on the road, but that would be something like taking our lunch when we are walking on the road. We can take our breakfast and lunch even while strolling, no doubt, but that is not the way of eating, as we know very well. We should eat by sitting to give respect to the food, and only then will the food be absorbed into our system and its intake be effective. Similarly, while we can repeat the mantra wherever we are and at any time of the day, it has a special effect when it is concentratedly chanted with the discipline characteristic of any yogic practice. There is no objection to our reciting a mantra at all times of the day, even when we are taking a bath, but it is essential to devotedly practise it by being seated, especially at the same hour every day. Everything in the universe moves in a cycle; even hunger is manifest in us with a cyclic effect. At a particular hour of the day we feel hungry, and not at

every moment of time. If we are used to taking our meal at noon, we will find that at noon the gastric juices will slowly ooze out, and after two hours they will stop functioning. We will have no hunger after a couple of hours. There is the conditioned reflex of everything functioning in the bodily system as well as in the psychic realm, and we have to take advantage of it in order to reap the benefit of the practice.

It is not desirable that the seat of the practicant should go on changing every day. It should be the same seat as far as possible, because even the seat produces a vibration due to our sitting there. The time is more important than even the seat. Because of the cyclic way in which nature works, a particular atmosphere is created at that particular hour. That is why we celebrate the birthday of a person, for instance, on the same day every year and not on some other day. There is an astronomical cyclic effect produced by the activity of nature.

The same time is to be maintained, the same seat, and the same posture. All these contribute to the effect of the chanting. There should also be the same method of concentration. The same mantra is to be chanted, and it is not supposed to be changed. Once we are initiated into a particular mantra by our superior, that has to be stuck to under any circumstance. The mantra should not be changed, because a change in the mantra would be like completely changing the diet every day and spoiling the stomach. The same mantra should continue, and then the desired result follows. Even the Guru should not be changed. Once we take to one Guru, he is our Guru forever. Even if he may appear to be lesser than another that we have seen sometime later, the original Guru cannot be left behind; he cannot be abandoned as inferior.

Mantras as vibrations can reach distant areas or regions of space. A vibration is not in space and not in time; electric energy is superior to the space-time complex. Scientists tell us that space-time itself is a mass of energy, so we cannot say that this energy is inside space and time. It is something different and superior to our notions of space-time dimensions. This energy is not a three-dimensional something. At best we may say it is four-dimensional or multi-dimensional. Hence, the vibration produced by the repetition of a mantra is superior to the spatial distance of things, and so we can come in contact with any desired object by focusing attention on the mantra by means of the *japa* of the same. The vibration is the spirit of the mantra, and the spirit of anything is transcendent to the spatial form taken by the particular object enshrining the force.

There is a system, in India especially, known as *purashcharana* of a mantra, which has a greater effect than the usual chanting of it. The belief is that the mantra should be chanted as many times as there are letters, in lakhs of numbers. A lakh is one hundred thousand. The recitation of a mantra, as many lakhs of times as there are letters in the mantra, systematically with the discipline mentioned, is said to be one *purashcharana*; and every *purashcharana* that is completed is said to break one knot of our bondage. Some say there are three knots, some say there are seven knots, and so on. However many there are, the knots which tie us down to earthly experience will be broken open by the performance of *purashcharanas*. There is a great saint and sage in Haridwar who has performed twenty-four Gayatri *purashcharanas*. He is a great saint and sage, and a very unassuming, unostentatious sadhaka. The Gayatri mantra contains twenty-four letters, and he had to perform

twenty-four *lakhs* of recitation of this lengthy mantra to complete one *purasharana*, and he has completed twenty-four *purasharanas*. How many years he has taken, God only knows. He must have spent all his time in doing only this. Then you yourself become the mantra shakti. You do not anymore remain as a sadhaka. You are an embodiment of the deity—a force, a strength, a power, and a fire, as it were. Such is the mystery of mantra *japa*.

When we write the mantra, naturally we are concentrating on these ideals behind the mantra. Why Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and saints of this kind insisted on the writing of the mantra, in addition to the chanting of it as *japa*, is because while in mere chanting the mind can wander here and there, in writing there is less chance of the mind wandering. Because we have to write, the mind has to be concentrating on the formation of the letters. Hence, as there is a compulsion to concentrate in a more intense degree in writing the mantra than while merely chanting it, especially mentally, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has prescribed the writing of a mantra as a very potent method of sadhana.

Thus, under the circumstances of these implications of the recitation of a mantra, we may safely say that a mantra chanted, whether in the mind or by the formation of a sound, and even in writing, will have the desired effect. It shall bring about peace of mind within oneself and create in oneself a spiritual force, and certainly contribute to world peace.