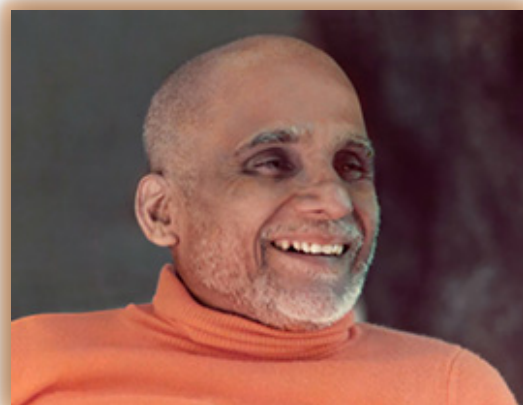


THE VISION OF LIFE



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



ABOUT THIS EDITION

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

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

“Under the blessed auspices of the Centenary of Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, several programmes have been contemplated by the Central Committee of the Celebrations, one among which is supposed to be a series of considerations that may go under the title, as announced, ‘The Vision of Life’.”

These are the words spoken by Revered Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj at the beginning of a series of discourses given from the 2nd to 8th of August, 1987. Swamiji’s masterly exposition of the various aspects of the vision of life and in-depth analysis of the psychology of the spiritual aspirant, combined with Swamiji’s scintillatingly brilliant style of expression make this book a rare treat for seekers of the highest vision, namely God-realisation.

Most of Chapter I was edited by Revered Sri Swamiji Maharaj himself shortly after this series was transcribed, and the balance was lightly edited recently when it was decided that this publication would be brought out on the Punyatithi of Swami’s Mahasamadhi which took place on 23rd November, 2001.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY
November 9th, 2005

Chapter I

THE VISION AND ITS UNFOLDMENT

We have in our daily life rarely an occasion to be alone to our own selves and bestow adequate thought on the manner in which we conduct ourselves in the world, or the way in which we live at all. A spontaneous impulsion carries us through the day and the night, and all this goes under the designation of a reasoned-out procedure of a purposeful existence. But it is evident that there is not much of a rationality in this propulsion to living, whose pressure we feel every day, if only we can withdraw our minds into our own selves for a few minutes and investigate into the extent to which our daily conduct and activity are rational or reasoned procedures.

A habit that has been driven into us by the pressure of circumstances can adumbrate a light of reason in its own way, though a conscious direction is difficult to discover in its ways. Nevertheless, there is some sort of a principle that we seem to be adopting in our life, which is basically an emanation of the constitution of our own selves.

We do not apparently feel comfortable when we live a life which is contrary to what we actually are in ourselves, whether or not we have an adequate knowledge of what we ourselves are. What we are remains, however, as an irrefutable fact and persists in the affirmation of itself, though we do not in our conscious processes have an awareness of this automatic affirmation that is taking place within. The affirmation which is associated with the very existence of oneself is so basic to our nature that it does not

call for any conscious consideration of it, a logical investigation into it; it does not demand a proof for its being there.

We live with a sort of prevision of what we want to achieve in the world. This vision need not necessarily be a highly sophisticated structure of intellectual deliberation. It is, again, a spontaneity that is characteristic of our nature, which is basically simple. We are a simple, indivisible element in our own selves. In our roots, we are not complicated. In common terms, we may say that we are more a kind of compound than a complex of structure involving different ingredients of composition. Our body may be composed of elements which are anatomical, physiological, but we ourselves in our essentiality are pure simplicity, which cannot be further reduced to a greater simplicity.

Inasmuch as this basic, indivisible, simple element seems to be what we really are, it spontaneously acts and reacts in respect of circumstances outside. This spontaneous reaction of our pure simplicity at the root of our being is actually the vision that we have about things, though it should not be identified with the laboured edifices of a logical structure as we have, for instance, in an engineering feat or an architectural mould.

The fact that we are basically simple and not a bundle of complicated elements will come to relief when conditions in life, circumstances prevailing, drive us into our own selves by a pressure which life can exert upon us, rarely though such a situation is encountered by us. Very few of us might have felt the pressure of life to such an extent as to

compel us to retreat into our own selves entirely, and be totally what we are. Extreme types of tragedy, or anything that drives us to the corner, one way or the other, may be an illustration of the condition in which we may go into our own selves and feel that we need nothing except what we ourselves are.

But we cannot easily accept this position in our practical life, especially in modern life, inasmuch as we never go into our own selves. Mostly we are other than what we are. We have a business to perform, as we usually say, a lot of work that is to be done from morning to evening, which is just an engagement in conditions which are outer and extraneous to our own selves, and we get involved in this peculiar network of what we call the business of life, which is nothing but our peculiar entry into the interrelated atmosphere of a world that is many things to us—physical, social, political, and so on.

Every one of us, practically, has to be other than what we are and go out of our own self in order that we may be busy in the accepted sense of the term. Otherwise, what are we busy about? The business so-called is the involvement of ourself in that which is not ourself. This is shocking indeed to hear, that the glorious adventures of life we call our business are involvements of ourself in what we are not in our own self. We may not be happy to hear this; but, whether we be happy or nor, here is a fact, and this peculiar situation which casts us into the mould of an interrelated structure of the outer world, day in and day out, this predicament is the true life of the world which keeps us all anxious every moment.

Anxiety arises from the fact of our being in a condition which is estranged from the condition that is characteristic of our true nature. We are fear-stricken every day and we are immensely cautious about the conditions prevailing in the world. Why would we be so very anxious? The anxiety arises because our true being, which is simple knowing spontaneously through an instrument of knowledge which is other than the sense organs, is caught up in a mire of activity, compulsion and work, all which cannot be really associated with itself. If we are left alone to our own selves wholly, unconditionally, if we are free to our own selves, if this could be possible at any time, we would not be so eager to be busy in the world as we appear to be today and daub this scenery of involvements with the brush of a satisfaction that we seem to be deriving from our activities.

What satisfaction can we have, what peace of mind can we derive, what permanent acquisition can we expect by means of an involvement in a medley of conditions which force themselves upon us, willy-nilly, and in which state we have to lose ourself in a large percentage and become another thing altogether, artificially transferring our being to the being of another thing which we cannot identify with our own self? An estrangement is life, if by life we mean our extrovert involvement in the activities of nature, of society, or whatever it is that we call the world.

But, having said all this, we have to concede a little bit of credit to the simple root that we ourselves are, since, though outwardly we seem to be losing ourselves in the adventure of outward life, we cannot really lose ourselves. Losing oneself wholly and really is unthinkable. One cannot

be other than what one is, though it appears as if we are doing nothing but that in our daily life. Every moment of time we get transferred to a condition that is not we. Yet, with all that, there is an irrefutable root which we are, that cannot condescend to get so transformed into something else that it ceases to be entirely.

We cannot wholly cease to be. Outwardly, we may appear to cease because of our emotional, volitional and social involvement, but it is superficial and does not touch our core. If the involvement, that is to say, if our entry into the world in the manner of a participation in things which are totally other than ourselves were wholly real, there would be no freedom for us. If our becoming other than what we are in the activities of life is a wholesale losing of ourselves, becoming servants of outer nature, if that were so, we would not be reasonable in expecting any kind of freedom in our life, and salvation would be far, far away, and unimaginable.

But the struggle of the individual to be free, the aspiration in man to achieve perfection and his resistless longing to break the boundaries of life in every way is an illustration of the strength of what man is basically. There is a tremendous power, an illimitable strength that is simmering like a jetting flame within us, wanting to burst forth into a conflagration of its real dimensions, which, of course, we are daily preventing from taking place due to the pressure of this bodily encasement and its physical associations.

This something that we are, whatever we may be, is the 'I' that beholds the world. The activity of the 'I' that has an

awareness of the atmosphere in which it is placed is its Vision. There is a knowledge of what things there are around oneself. We see things, and then act. We think before we embark on any adventure, though many a time we are hasty in doing things; yet, even when we are overenthusiastic, suddenly, we would realise that there has been a previous consideration in some part of our own selves of the manner of engaging ourselves in this otherwise sudden action.

We are at the back of every action even if it be instantaneous, abrupt and unexpected, because even the most urgent of engagements is a process in time. We know time, we are aware of the process of time, and, therefore, we ourselves cannot be in time. Actions which are temporal, though they may be quick, instantaneous and sudden, are posterior to the being of our own selves, which is prior to every engagement, consideration, thought and vision, and which, therefore, is timeless.

Usually, our vision of things is physical and social. We have a little land and money, we have a house, we have a family—that is our main concern—property which is material, association which is social. The minimum of expectation of a person is only this much, and even when the expectation enlarges itself and becomes wider, it is a multiplication quantitatively of this little concept of one's basic needs—land, house, family, material wealth to maintain oneself. Even if we were to conceive of our being lords of the whole earth, rulers of the world, it is just a larger expansion of this basic need we feel in ourselves. This is the unlettered vision of the crass, unburnished

constitution of our outer personality which is physical, and associated socially in terms of what the body is made of and what its requirements are. The plunging of ourselves in this accepted tradition of wanting only these things, the force with which we enter into this water of life, the vehemence of this outward-oriented engagement is such that we cannot imagine that there can be a more modified vision of life, since mostly we go with the conviction that what we are is this body and what we need is just what the body demands. We can have no other need, though, occasionally, by the impact of natural conditions, we are driven to accept that our needs are perhaps more than merely the physical.

The history of human thought has recorded a long series of deliberations and considerations on the part of experts in this line, who took time to delve into the mystery of the manner in which we live, the way in which we conduct ourselves in respect of the world outside. These records that are available to us go by the name of the 'Philosophies of Life', which simply means conclusions arrived at in regard to the ultimate conditioning factors of whatever we are as we consider ourselves to be, and whatever be the manner in which we behave in an environment we call the world.

We live in a world. The meaning of the word 'world' appears to be so clear to us that we do not feel like thinking over its implications. This earth, this sky, the sun and the moon and the stars, these people—this is our world. This is one concept, one notion about the area that we occupy we call life, the world that is in our minds. But, actually, there is something more about what we call the world than this

definition would provide us. The world may be not just a solid mass of matter we call the earth, or the stellar atmosphere; there is likely to be something more about life. Our understanding of life is our vision of life, and it varies in its intensity, its quality, its quantity, and its relation to the varieties of conditions circumscribed by such factors as, for instance, the anthropological, ethnic, geographical, historical, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, social, and the like. We cannot uniformly set before ourselves a single perception of things valid for everyone under every condition, or every circumstance, since what we call a vision of things is a reaction of the thinking faculty, the consciousness in us, the life principle, from the state in which it is in the process of evolution. As we know that every living being cannot be expected to be in a uniform level of the evolutionary process, it will be futile to expect everyone to have a similar response to life, much less a common understanding of things.

Why go into the larger issue of all living beings, we may limit ourselves to human beings only for the time being, and even limiting our considerations to the life of humans, do we not see that there are varieties of humans? People are not the same, the quality of a person being the manner in which the person thinks and reacts psychologically to outer conditions and aspires for a higher condition.

In some rudimentary types of human life the aspiration of anything higher is so deeply buried that it may not be visible at all. It may be like a stone existing with no consciousness of a beyond, because even in plant life, in the vegetable kingdom, we see some sort of an asking, a

reaching out beyond itself, though not as perspicaciously as in the human level. Plants try to reach beyond themselves and struggle to survive in the best possible manner even by exploitation of other kindred existences. The desire to survive in a manner surpassing the present condition is to be seen even in such incipient life forms as vegetable existence, plant life.

We find in the different levels of human nature a kind of vision which appears to be valid from its own point of view. The kind of vision that a person entertains or a set of people manifest in themselves would seem to be adequate to itself, and this adequacy prevents it from communicating with others in a harmonious or cooperative manner, because each one is adequate to one's own self. The necessity to cooperate arises due to a sense of inadequacy felt in one's own self. If we are wholly adequate, where comes the need for any consideration outside? If a particular concept of life is self-sufficient, and is so crude as to regard itself as a whole by itself, needing no connection with anything else, it becomes fanatic in its vision. The conflicts that we see in life and which we abhor so much appear to be practically unavoidable in some way, if we accept that there are levels in the evolutionary process and so a uniform vision of things would not be possible. This is because one level of evolution which is far removed from another level can, with difficulty, be able to coordinate itself with the others. The nearer we are to a different view, the greater is the possibility of our assimilating that view into our own lives and our being able to coordinate ourselves with that view so that we shall have a peaceful social life.

But if we stick to our guns and if 'my vision is far, far away from yours' due to the lodgment of my view or your view in different sets of locations altogether, we would be like the north pole and the south pole that cannot meet each other. Social conflicts, or frictions of any kind in life, arise on account of a clash in the visions of life and the inability on the part of a particular concept or notion of things to get accommodated with another, merely because it feels that it is self-sufficient. Such a view is encased within its own cocoon and it can, with hardship, break that shell in which it is contained.

The lower we are in the level of evolution, the grosser is the vision of things, the more does it appear self-sufficient and enclose within itself a narrow philosophy of life. Human nature, by way of a gradual evolution of its own inner potentialities, reveals capabilities, within itself, of entertaining larger visions of life that include not only all the ingredients of an earlier stage of evolution but also manifest openly possibilities of a higher view with which it can easily accommodate itself by means of a faculty we call higher reason.

Reason is a peculiar instrument in us which not only feels competent to transmute all the lower elements of nature which it has transcended in evolution but also by the fact of logical inference is enabled to accommodate into its purview, or vision of things, even that area of life which it has not reached, which is presently outside itself but which it can know as a necessary part of its own area of action by inference, deduction, by drawing conclusions from given premises.

This conducting of a logical process, that is, inferring consequences from existing premises, is a prerogative of only a particular stage in evolution and is not available in all levels. We are told that such a systematic capacity to deduce consequences by way of inference from existing conditions is not available in subhuman species. There is some sort of logic we should accept even in plants and animals. They have a way of understanding things around them which generally goes by the name of an instinctive action; nevertheless, it is also a kind of logic. But the word 'logic' is a term that we use to designate a particular type of awareness, understanding and capacity to infer which we associate only with evolved human beings.

A true human being is not merely a biped; we cannot say that a person is entirely human merely because one has all the biological features of a specimen we call human personality. To be human is not to be merely anatomically human but to be capable of manifesting in oneself those qualities which we generally consider as human qualities. We have some idea of what a human quality is, apart from it being necessary for a true human being to regard other human beings also as human beings and to treat other human beings as one would treat one's own self, because others are also human beings like one's own self. In other words, apart from the fact of being able to give equal consideration to others as one gives to one's own self, which is the least that one can expect from a true human being, there is something more in human beings in itself, apart from the social cooperation and consideration; that is, the logicity of approach. This is the higher human nature,

which is the great blessing that human nature has received from providence in the process of gradual evolution.

We have in us a peculiar potentiality to accommodate ourselves to anything and everything, if only we would be able to exercise that blessing of faculty which we call higher reason in ourselves. Mostly we bury this higher reason in the mire of the clamour of instinctive demands which are prenatal, subhuman, animalistic, even vegetable in their nature. If we concede that life has evolved from lower levels to the higher state of human life, that there has been a rise of this tree of life from the seed of something that has been very incipient and crude, we should also accept that qualities of the seed can be seen in some measure in this grown-up pattern of the tree that is arisen from it, though we cannot see, of course, the seed in the tree. We see only the tree, the branches and the widespread manifestation of this tremendous thing that we call the grown-up tree, but the seed, which cannot be seen in the tree, makes itself felt in every fibre of the tree, which we have to accept by pure analysis.

In a similar manner our present state of life, which is human, cannot be said to be entirely free from the conditions that prevailed in the earlier stages from which it has evolved, and so our vision of things which is today of course human, expected to be human, can also be coloured many a time by the visions that are earlier, which appear to be self-sufficient, fanatic, crude and rudely animalistic. The presence of these incipient remnants of earlier levels from which we have risen into the human state today makes us sometimes behave in a manner which cannot be regarded

as human. If remnants of the earlier states still persist in human life, that particular person in whom those remnants seem to be persisting cannot be regarded as wholly human—there is still something remaining of the earlier level. It is like a subtle illness persisting even in an apparent healthy condition of the body. “I am perfectly well,” someone says, but one may not be really well, as in a recess of the person there may be a little potentiality for the manifestation of an illness that was there earlier.

A true human being, therefore, is not that particular personality which carries within itself certain remnants of the previous levels which it has passed or transcended, because we cannot be always human, though sometimes we can be human. If the non-human elements which were in the subhuman stages persist in our present human condition, who is a true human being, then, who has a correct vision of things? A human being who is truly humane cannot have those characteristics which we usually associate with the earlier stages.

Fanaticism of any kind is totally alien to human nature, whether it is philosophical fanaticism, religious fanaticism, social fanaticism, family fanaticism, or communal fanaticism. Whatever be the nature of this instinct of adhering to one’s own position irrespective of the position that others may occupy—whatever be the nature of this assertion—it is still unwarranted in a human being.

As I mentioned, this peculiar instrument we call higher reason is a liaison, as it were, between our present human vision of things and the possibility of a different vision that it can envisage by an act of inference from the present

prevailing condition. We cannot aspire for anything that is higher if this logical deduction is impossible for us, because aspiration is nothing but an asking for that which we do not have just now but we can have in the future. The possibility of achieving something in the future which we do not have at present can be accounted for only by the justifiability of the deductions that we make by way of inference from conditions prevailing now. This is the work of the higher reason, but the lower reason—there is something called a lower reason also, as you must have heard of—this peculiar thing we call the lower reason is just a faculty which rationalises the instinctive process. In psychoanalytical language we have a word called ‘rationalisation’, which is just the process by which we argue out in a so-called logical manner the conditions which are impressed upon us by instincts that are characteristic of a lower nature, that are subhuman.

But the higher reason is of a different type altogether. It aspires—it does not merely justify. It reaches out beyond itself into the possibilities of the achievement of things which are above, but which are only vaguely visualised by way of inference, logically but not practically. If any one of us is sure that any one of us is really human, then we would also know to what extent we have the capacity to argue out the possibilities of a future higher achievement from the premises prevailing today, just now, in our practical, human way of living.

The philosophical vision, the spiritual vision or the darshana view of life as we may put it, is the act of a higher reason. It is up to any one of us to look into our own self

and ascertain the extent to which we are entirely human in our life. This is a purely private matter, which I know and you know and everyone knows. Because, as it was pointed out, it is not possible to be entirely human throughout the day if there is a possibility of the manifestation of that which we have already crossed and got over as an undesirable remnant of an irrational nature. The higher reason stands midway between the lower world and the higher world, we may say, between the world of sensory experience and the world of pure intuition. Higher reason, the pure reason, which is the faculty of correct judgment in human beings, is at the centre between the world which is visualised by the sense organs and the world which is directly contacted by non-sensory apprehension, which we call intuition.

We are supposed to be spiritual seekers, devotees of God, disciples of Gurus, followers of the great master Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and saints and sages of that kind. Which means to say, we accept that we are truly human beings, because to consider oneself as a spiritual seeker is, at the same time, to accept that one is wholly human, since a person who is partially human cannot expect to be divine. There is no double promotion in the process of human evolution; there is always a graduated rise from the earlier stage to the next higher, but not a leap to three or four steps above.

As spiritual seekers that we consider ourselves to be, we should feel confident that the higher reason is operating in us. We are aware of the presence of something that is above this world. We have a vision which is not of this world. If

this vision were not to be there, we would not be here in this ashram, coming from long distances, from different corners of the earth. Each one would have been totally satisfied with one's little family, little house, shop, office, etc. None of us was wholly satisfied, that means to say the higher reason in every one of us has started working, and is telling us that we are more than what we appear to be.

The world is not exactly as it is presented to our sense organs; our vision is capable of and subject to a transcendence of itself. Our organ of knowledge, which is reason, visualises simultaneously, in its body of visioning, the lower which it has crossed and the higher that it has to achieve further. The reason mentioned is something like a body with two legs—it has one leg in the level that it has overcome, crossed, transcended, and it has another leg in a realm which it has not reached but it previsions, and which it envisages as a possibility of experience.

So human life is supposed to be a midway affair between the lower and the higher. Sometimes, sarcastically or poetically, whatever it be, we are told that we are both God and devil crossed at the same point. The devil in us is due to the presence of elements that are low, and the God in us is due to the prevision of that which is above us. But we are not devils, each one of us may be sure, because, as I felt and put before you just now, if we had a little of the element of devil in us, we would not have come to an ashram like this, and we would not have been aspiring for that which is above us. There is an element of divinity and godliness in every one of us, and we have taken the first step in the act of reaching out beyond ourselves through the

pointing of the higher reason. We are heading along the lines of the journey towards the intuitional grasp of a vision that is totally integral, a world which is beyond the world.

Chapter II

MATERIALISTIC AND HUMANISTIC VISION

A living organism is supposed to be fit for survival in accordance with its capacity for adaptation to its environment. But this adjustment that everyone seems to be making in respect of one's own environment is conditioned, in its nature, by the organism's vision of life—its understanding of the nature of the environment. The visualisation of the atmosphere of life is the philosophy of life. The history of philosophy has recorded endless varieties of such considerations—visions of life—and this enormous multitude of viewpoints can be attributed only to the manner in which one is able to probe into the structure's environment, the world in which one lives.

We have a common view about things, prevalent almost everywhere, which is that our life has to be comfortable. We should have no physical pain, no social harassment and no political insecurity, all which is summed up in the attitude of a physical envisioning of life. A person who is wholly confined to this attitude of a life of continuous comfort and physical satisfaction, who thinks only in terms of property, land and money, or even in terms of social position, who thinks nothing else, whose vision of life is restricted only to this extent and cannot go above, such a person we generally call a materialistic person, identifying the materialistic view with a concept of a comfortable existence, physically and socially. But materialism is not a philosophy of comfortable living; it is a specialised vision of life in itself, and if it brings physical comfort, that is a secondary matter.

The basic issue is the vision, the concept, the notion, and the extent of the characteristic of reality that is seen to be present in that particular envisioning. We are acquainted with the word 'materialism'. As I mentioned, it should not be identified merely with money, property and land, because materialism is a philosophy. It is a vision of life which holds that what cannot be tangible or sensible, cannot be regarded as knowable. A thing that is entirely unknowable need not be affirmed to really exist, because the existence of a particular object is connected with the extent of the knowledge one may have about that object.

The world exists, an object exists, this exists or that exists. This statement can have a value only to the extent that there is a knowledge connecting it with a perceiving unit, as a totally unknown element cannot become an issue for any kind of consideration. That which is knowable certainly does exist to the extent knowledge permits the evaluation thereof, in that manner. But how do we feel competent to affirm that something can exist if it is not at all known in any way, and cannot be known? The only thing that we can be sure of knowing is what we can see with our eyes, what we can touch, and so on, with the available apparatus of the sense organs.

The senses mentioned come in contact with something which is tangible in a special sense, and in this special sense it is that we consider a tangible or visible thing, a material object. Whatever we see is a concrete substance, whatever we hear is audible in a concrete manner, and so is the case with what we smell, or taste, or touch. A substantiality, a concreteness, or rather a materiality has to be present in

anything that our senses can cognise, with which our senses can come in contact. Inasmuch as we have only these faculties of cognition and perception, and there is no possibility of even inferring the presence of any other faculty in us, limited as we are in sense perception only, we are forced to conclude that the sense world is the only world, and to posit the existence of any other material world would be an unwarranted assumption, wholly theoretical and incapable of tenability of any kind.

Now, this vision which considers substantiality as the only reality, materiality as the essence of true existence, has subtle layers of argument and methods of proof in its philosophical repertoire, and with this apparatus the materialistic doctrine attempts to make itself a complete view of life so that nothing else can be said about life in this world. The argument of a section of people that the existence of a material world has to be confirmed by a knowing subject, and matter can be said to be there only as that which is comprehended through a knowing process, thus giving some sort of an independent existence and value to the knowledge of matter, is set aside by the doctrine of materialism with a single stroke by the argument that the knowing process is within the campus of matter itself. The whole astronomical universe is material in its nature, and the process of its being known in some manner is a part and parcel of the operation of the inner constituents of matter itself. As the activity of a large sea in the form of movements through waves, etc. cannot be isolated from the body of the sea itself, any activity, even the activity of knowing, cannot be segregated and

considered to be existing outside the purview of this body of the material, physical universe—there ends the matter.

This is an interesting position indeed, most satisfying to common sense, and the materialistic doctrine has reached such heights today that it has changed its designation from being known merely as materialism, and has assumed a new nomenclature—scientific materialism. The word ‘scientific’, the term ‘science’ is so enchanting because of the precision and the indubitably of its procedures that few in the world can escape its clutches. The scientific attitude of materialism is an outcome of developments through history in the direction of the probing into the inner constituents of matter, though originally it was enough for a materialist to accept that any tangible, hard substance like earth, water, fire or air would be just what matter could be.

A large section of thinkers along the lines of materialism were intelligent enough to observe the operations of the inner constituents of matter, because it does not require much time to know that every material body can be reduced to minute inner constituents like particles, and particles can be reduced to finer elements so that they may not be visible at all to the naked eye. They cannot be called sense objects in the ordinary sense of the term, but they do exist as material stuff. Here the scientific character of the material doctrine is hidden in the concept of matter. Originally, we thought that matter is anything that we can touch, taste, smell, etc., but an advance in the concept of the true nature of matter led to finer conclusions, and made materialism an advanced philosophy which was to the satisfaction of almost

everybody in the world. Matter need not necessarily be a tangible, hard, concrete thing like stone; the scientific, or rather the philosophical aspect of the concept of matter, lands itself in the position that matter can be anything that is known by a knowing subject. Any known content is matter. Even conceptually known things should be regarded as matter that is not necessarily known only by means of the sense organs. Thus the present day reduction of matter to its finer elements, they say, does not in any way refute the doctrine of materialism.

Recently I had occasion to go through a little pamphlet published by a highly advanced scientific society in which the author says that there is a wrong notion among people that materialism has been exploded by the modern discoveries of higher physics and mathematics, which somehow proclaimed to the world that matter as it is presented to the sense organs does not really exist, which means to say, dangerously, that the world itself perhaps does not exist. This does not follow from even the most advanced form of physical findings, says the author, because even the finest, irreducible form of the material world, even if it be so fine as to be co-extensive and co-eternal with everything else in the world, still it remains something which can be known by a knowing principle. Therefore it stands opposed to knowing it is still an object, and therefore it is matter, nevertheless—so materialism holds up. We cannot overcome materialism, because however fine the world may be to the eye of a modern scientist or physicist, it is nevertheless matter. Even atoms are material, electrons are material, energy is material,

electric force is material; there is nothing non-material in any one of these.

But reverting to the question posed earlier as to how matter is known at all to exist in any way, and the ancillary argument of the materialist that even the knowing process is part of the inner activity of the constituents of matter, we feel that this situation requires a further, deeper consideration. The materialistic principle abruptly and unhesitatingly declares that rarified matter, in its finest form, assumes the form of what we call knowing, consciousness, going even to the extent of holding that it is some sort of an exudation of matter. This is the philosophical aspect of materialism, apart from its purely scientific or technological aspect. No doctrine can stand unless it has a philosophy of its own, whatever be its utility from the point of view of its application in daily life. So the materialist has a very strong philosophy which appears to be wholly unshakable—that we, even as observers, knowers, do not stand outside the material world.

This vision is very satisfying to the world of sense satisfaction and physical security. We seem to be happy to know all these things. But, a great 'but' seems to be there behind this complacency that materialism seems to be offering us, namely, the status of the knower himself in the world of material perceptions. What is knowledge? And what do we mean by knowing anything at all? It is not enough if we merely make a statement that there is a knowing or a perceiving entity coming in contact with something which we call a material object. That is all right,

but what is actually the process that seems to be taking place when something is known by someone?

An intricate action seems to be involved in the act of knowing. Knowledge is a state of awareness, a centre, a person. A subject who can be regarded as an observing location of an awareness of something is an intriguing element indeed, because this awareness of an object, or a material, or an external content, requires the activity of a peculiar thing called consciousness, which is usually, by the materialist, identified with a form of rarified matter. If a capacity to know, an ability to be self-conscious, can be attributed to some form of matter; if matter which is the stuff of the universe can, in its finest forms, assume the state of the light of awareness or consciousness, thus making it possible for someone to know that matter exists; if this could be possible, matter can be self-conscious, because the nature of consciousness is basically self-consciousness. Though consciousness is always a consciousness of something outside, it is prior to this act of the consciousness of something outside—a self-identical awareness of itself. The knowing entity, the subject of knowledge, knows itself to be there. This subject, being consciousness itself, has to be aware of itself. The awareness that consciousness has of itself is different from the consciousness that it has of an object outside. Granting that consciousness has the capacity to know matter as something that has emanated from matter itself, do we not feel compelled to conclude that if this is the fact, the entire world of matter, the universe of material contents hiddenly enshrining in its bosom this potentiality for knowing,

would become a total centre of self-awareness? Dangerous conclusion indeed, because this would root out the very basic concept of the materialist that there is anything called matter at all. The abolition of the concept of matter being the ultimate reality arises as a consequence of it being impossible to know the existence of matter without there being consciousness and also without consciousness being self-aware.

What do you call matter if it is self-aware? The characteristic of self-awareness is non-objectivity—one does not know oneself as something other than oneself. The nature of consciousness is so very subtle, so very difficult to grasp, that it eludes the introduction of any element of objectivity into itself. Consciousness cannot be known by anybody else, because to know consciousness there should be another consciousness, and that would land us in a funny situation of there being a series of consciousness, one being behind the other for the sake of knowing the precedent consciousness. That which knows is self-identical in the sense that it knows itself as nothing other than itself.

The material aspect of the concept of life cannot stand if this position is to be accepted. It is not possible for a confirmed materialist, who holds that the whole universe is matter, to agree that there is any possibility of matter being self-aware. If self-awareness is not to be attributed to matter, matter cannot be known to exist. But to attribute self-awareness to matter is to defeat the very purpose and the aim of the materialist doctrine. It kills itself—it would be a self-defeating doctrine.

Here we have before us the outcome, finally, not only of crass materialism which holds the world to be just a bundle of solid objects, but also of the rarified form of the materialist doctrine, scientific in its nature. The scientific aspect of materialism also cannot stand as long as the nature of matter is not properly defined. There is no use jumping from one concept to another concept of matter, only to escape the difficulties of an earlier conclusion. The bogey of matter being something outside consciousness cannot leave us; it pursues us wherever we go. The outsideness of anything that is material is the special feature of whatever we can call material, and anything that is wholly outside cannot be absorbed or accommodated into a conscious, knowing subject. Therefore there is no chance of the final success of the materialist doctrine, on the one hand due to its inability to explain how matter is known unless there is a knowing subject, and on the other hand its being dangerously near the most unexpected conclusion that matter is potentially consciousness. Neither of these aspects can be accepted by a materialist, but there is no third alternative. Either way we find that there is something more about things than what they seem to be presenting to us on superficial perception.

The difficulties envisaged in the acceptance of a wholly materialist doctrine has pressed itself into the minds of people through human history to such an extent that it has become difficult to cling to it entirely, and man has slowly risen to the acceptance of values which are non-material—such as goodness, affection, a spirit of cooperation, servicefulness, the presence of duty, and a sense of

purposefulness in existence, which we cannot deny, but none of which can we attribute to matter. We cannot say that there can be some matter which is good, some matter which is bad, that there can be beautiful matter or ugly matter, cooperative matter or non-cooperative matter, serviceful matter or non-serviceful matter. Anything that we consider as humanly meaningful in our existence does not seem to be a characteristic of matter. Material existence does not seem to be the whole of life, because we see values in life, and today we have risen to the level of the acceptance of there being such things as human values. The adamant affirmation of the crass materialist is slowly giving way to a humanistic consideration of values. We speak of humanity very often these days. We work for the peace of the world, in the sense of the peace of mankind. There is a series of forums we set up for international well-being, all which mean well-being of human beings. Human values are considered as final values. The survival of humanity is the aim of all our pursuits—man is final, the last word in creation. If only something could contribute to the survival of man, that would be taken as the final assessment of the situation, and everything else can be ignored. Anything can be sacrificed for the survival of man, whatever it is. We have no hesitation in accepting this view. If something endangers the life of a human being, even if that also be a kind of living being, like an animal, that would not be our consideration. A human vision of life has taken possession of us to such an extent that we cannot any more accept that there can be anything in this world more than man.

But this so-called humanistic view is as shaky in its foundation as the reasons we saw for the untenability of a finale in the materialistic doctrine. The flaw in materialism is obvious. We can describe and decipher such an obvious flaw in this commonly accepted universally deified vision of man being everything. Man is the centre of all values. Now what do we say to this? Can we say that man is the centre of all values? It is certainly necessary for us to survive, and we have to move earth and heaven to see that we somehow exist in this world—this is to be accepted for obvious reasons. It is not good to invite death and annihilation or the abolition of life. So there is an instinctiveness to see that we survive somehow or other, by hook or by crook, by any means that can be adopted, even by the destruction of others which are not human. But, as we had an occasion to observe previously, even human nature has degrees; perhaps there are categories of human nature. And when we are pressed into a corner, if we hold on to this concept of humanity as the final value, we may not even hesitate to sacrifice lesser humanity for what we consider as a more valuable category of humanity. This possibility is very shocking, surprising and difficult to swallow, but it is something we see before our eyes—human beings being sacrificed legally, officially and necessarily for national welfare or human welfare, you may say, the welfare of all people. The welfare of people may require the sacrifice of people, especially in contingencies like wars where human beings are sacrificed, and no soldier goes to the field of battle with a conviction that all soldiers will be alive and they will return hale and hearty. A spirit of sacrifice of one's

own life is involved in any kind of adventure of this type, but this adventure is embarked upon for the welfare of people. So some people should die for the sake of some other people to be alive.

This takes us to a serious consideration of what human life itself is. Does it mean that fifty percent of people have to die for another fifty percent to be alive? Certainly we say no, that this is not our intention. We want humanity to be alive. The life of humanity is our intention, and not merely the lives of fifty percent of humanity, though mathematically fifty percent of the people may die in a big, tragic war. God forbid that may take place, nevertheless we say it is a worthwhile adventure for the survival of humanity—mankind. Mankind has survived; it has won a victory in war, but it has won the victory through the destruction of fifty percent of its human brethren.

The concept of humanism is full of difficulties to entertain because we do not know what we actually mean by humanity, mankind, for which we are struggling. In everyday life we are guarding ourselves and are ready to fight tooth and nail against people for whose welfare we are girding up our loins day in and day out. Everyone is stirred with the spirit of social service. "I have dedicated myself for the welfare of people." This spirit is considered as most noble, worthwhile, and nothing can be higher than this spirit of the wish to offer oneself entirely for the welfare of people. Who are the people? The human beings living in the world. And who are we afraid of? Human beings living in the world. Why are we manufacturing ammunition, setting up armies and police and courts of law? Because we

are afraid of people. Whom are we serving? People. Who are we afraid of? People. What sort of people are we afraid of? Are we intent upon sacrificing our life for the service of people whom we hate, whom we dread? Or are we serving or intending to serve and sacrifice ourselves for the welfare of those who are not likely to cause us fear? We will not be able to suddenly give an answer to this question, because even those people whom we dread are human beings equally as those others to whom we are affectionate.

Now, when we conceive humanity as an object of deification, finally—humanism as a final philosophy—we will realise that the very definition of mankind or humanity would require a new definition altogether, as we found that the concept of matter requires a new definition. It is not that we are living in a purely material world, and it is also not true that we are living in a purely human world. It is so because our values—ethical, legal, moral, social—do not seem to be confined to individualities which are what we call human beings. A principle of justice, a position that can be taken entirely from a legal point of view, may not consider the value of an individual. If the individual, whatever be that individual, whoever that be, is as sacred, as important, as meaningful as anybody else, there would not be any chance of imprisoning an individual or meting out punishment to an individual for the welfare of people. The welfare of people requires punishment to be meted out to some people. That means to say, the people to whom punishment is meted out are not people. Why? They are certainly people. But the legal procedure, or the social norm, or the moral tradition which requires certain

attitudes to a section of people, which cannot be regarded as a universally applicable principle to all beings, takes us beyond the concept of individuality. Perhaps we are thinking of the welfare of people in a sense that is not limited to individual human beings at all, because if humanity, mankind, human nature is to be limited to human individuals, then we cannot have any system of adjudication in a judicial nature, a legal form, much less any kind of meting out of punishment.

There is a value which we entertain in our minds that is superhuman. There is a conceptual entertainment of the meaning of life, rather than a physical or even a humanitarian concept of it, if humanity is to be limited to only a vision of individuals existing isolated from one another. The world of nature has not cared for individuals. History has not paid any special attention to individuals, but it has stood for principles which are more than individual. It has stood for nations and it has stood for the world welfare in a sense totally different from the welfare of individuals. The justice of a cause may require the sacrifice of an individual, notwithstanding the fact that the individual is as much a human being as any other human being for whose welfare this attitude is adopted towards a particular individual.

All this takes us into deeper philosophical concepts of justice, legal operation, ethical conduct and moral values. We do not live in a material world. We also do not live in a human world. Because values are not to be identified with matter, they cannot also be identified with any individual human being. They surpass the units of matter, and they

seem to be superceding even human beings as individuals. We cannot always find time to think along these lines—in the manner of a generalisation of principles—and we seem to be mixing up the individual with a principle in our daily life, the sin with the sinner as they say, and feel not always competent to distinguish between the embodiment of the principle and the principle itself. A human being enshrines a principle, no doubt, but the human being, as a physical embodiment or a social unit, is not always identified with the principle as such. Sometimes we dislike a person, though that person is a human being. As people devoted to the welfare of human beings, we cannot dislike any human being, nor can we excessively like any human being. But the likes and dislikes arising out of considerations which are either judicial, legal, social, moral, or whatever they be, seem to be justifying our attitude, and this justification can be there only if it is rooted in some vision of life which is not limited to any particular individual, much less to material objects.

The goodness of a person or the badness of a person does not make a person less than human. Our idea of a human being should be clear in our minds first. A bad human being is also a human being; a good human being is also a human being. We make a distinction among human beings, simultaneously with our avowed spirit of surrender to the welfare of people in general. There is a mix-up of values—love and hate come together like two waves dashing one over the other in a sea. Difficulties arise on account of our not being able to extract the principle of life,

the spirit of living in general, from the individualities which are human beings.

The philosophy of humanism therefore is full of flaws. It cannot stand finally, as materialism cannot stand. So an overemphasis on what we consider today as the welfare of humanity and the service of people may not be more than a kind of slogan or a shibboleth which assumes a divine character because of a total misconstruction of its true meaning. It cannot stand on its own legs if we probe into the secret of our very thoughts which are associated with the concept of humanity. Humanism is great, life in the physical world is great; but there is something more than life involved in physical matter and life involved in a purely human concept of living, limiting human nature to individual human beings. The idea of humanity is a very intriguing concept and we take everything for granted, as if everything is clear to us and fine, so we can go headlong along the line of the action that we are trying to take for fulfilling our ambition, humanitarian in its nature.

No one can love humanity truly, unless he is superhuman. A person who is only human cannot have a real understanding of what humanity is, because a person who is only human, nothing more, is limited to whatever constitutes human nature; and inasmuch as every human individual is limited to a physical encasement, there is a possibility of a human being becoming selfish and on occasions trying to ignore the existence of other people and limiting oneself to oneself only. The possibility of reverting to one's own self entirely in a selfish manner, even in the consideration of bodily existence, cannot be completely

discarded because every human being is, after all, an isolated entity, one cut off from the other. To take a total view of humanity as a whole, and even to be correctly conscious of the nature of humanity without getting into the muddle of the dichotomy between principles and individuals, one has to be something a little more than human.

A superhuman element seems to be embedded, unconsciously though, in all human considerations, even as there was an unwitting acceptance, forced against one's own will, of the presence of a peculiar element called self-consciousness, even in the body of matter when we considered materialism. We find that humanity involves something that is more than humanity. The philosophy of materialism and the philosophy of humanism finally fall if they are to consider themselves as self-complete in themselves. If matter is all and nothing more than matter is, if man is all and nothing more than man is, neither humanism can stand, nor materialism can stand.

Considering these problems, being fully aware that there is some basic difficulty in the acceptance of either crass materialism or socialistic humanism, psychologists took a new turn altogether and adumbrated a vision of life which took into consideration the mind of man rather than the individuality of man or his physical environment. This standpoint, which is other than the standpoint of materialism or the viewpoint of pure humanism, is psychological, or perhaps we may say psychoanalytical. These considerations, which have been engaging our attention during these few minutes, land us finally in the

presence of something that is called 'mind', a thinking process which is other than a body of matter or even a physically conceived human individual.

All values seem to be psychological, mental and inward. Hence all values, though they appear to be physical on the one side and human on the other side, seem to be psychological, essential; and the vision of life presented by psychology and psychoanalysis takes us deeper into the inner contents of human nature, the very perceiving individual, the subject thereof—a point of view we shall try to discuss next.

Chapter III

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOANALYTICAL VISION

The necessity to think before we act arises on account of certain consequences that are expected to follow from the act. This is the logic of the mind which, by a process of internal argument known only to itself, visualises what follows and what ought to follow from a given set of circumstances. The capacity of the mind to reach out beyond itself is something worth considering. Every conclusion that is drawn from known premises is actually a reaching in respect of a realm that is not the venue that one is occupying at present. One cannot reach out to the future, as everyone is living in the present. But the presence of such a thing as a future, and even the nature of that future possibility, becomes a content of the present consideration due to the present being hiddenly present even in a future possibility, perhaps pointing out at the same time that there is no past, present and future. There is a continuity, because in order that we may be aware that there is such a thing called the past, it has to become a content of the present consciousness. Even so is the case with the future. That which is not yet, and is yet to be, can be known as such only when it has somehow got accommodated into the present consciousness.

The idea of a particular prevalent condition and the nature of the steps that we have to take in the direction of a future possibility—all these things take us into the depths of our own minds. There is a thing called mind, which is

understood in many a way. Philosophy or whatever it be—a vision of life or anything that we can think of, deduction or induction—anything in any manner whatsoever appears to be an activity of the mind which is, which has been and which perhaps will ever be a very intriguing concept, a notion, a visualisation. Unless we have some idea of the way in which our minds operate, it would be difficult for us to come to any sensible and reliable conclusion in regard to what the mind perceives or concludes as a verifiable fact. The justification of conclusions drawn by mental cognitions can be there only on a verification of the process of mental activity, the activity going on within our own selves.

Often people have felt that all our experiences are limited to the operations of our minds, and even the whole world as an object of experience should be regarded as entirely coloured by the spectacles that we put on in the form of mental operations. This consideration has led people to such an extent that many have not hesitated to conclude that the world is merely a subjective form of appreciation. If all things in the world, whatever they be, are known to be there by a mind that acts, and they are known to be there in the manner of the activity of the mind, there is some point in the conclusion that all experience is subjective. The objectivity of the fact of an experience, though it has to be granted for certain other reasons, has also to get accommodated to the vision of the mind cast into the mould of its own inner constitutions. Our experiences are of the same shape and character as is the shape and character of our minds.

We have different kinds of minds, each one of us, as is well known, and therefore we all have different kinds of experiences of the world. Not only different kinds of experiences, philosophically speaking, but even in our daily life we have different kinds of appreciation of values. Each one lives in a totally independent world, as it were, to such an extent that the pleasures and pains of others do not materially affect the existence of a particular person. Even someone may die; that event of death does not materially affect or modify the life of an individual in any manner whatsoever. Such is the connection of the mind with the body.

The historical controversies over the nature of things, call it the point of view of the doctrine of materialism or socialism, or any other point of view, has to be first of all described in the pattern of the operation of the mind itself. The vision of life is a mental vision, and we find a parallel consideration of this nature in one of the chapters of the great work known as the Panchadasi, written by the venerated sage Vidyaranya, in which he distinguishes between facts as they are, or as they might be, and facts as they appear to the minds of people.

For certain reasons we have to accept that there is something like a world outside—but the world that is really there outside is not the content of our daily experience. Our daily duties, anxieties and activities are a sort of abstraction from the world that perhaps really is there outside, abstraction enough to be accommodated into the working of the mind in its own patterns. Loves and hates, which dominate all experience, cannot be regarded as being

present in the objects outside in themselves. The land, the house, the material wealth which are supposed to evoke reactions in the mind in the form of likes and dislikes, do not and cannot be expected to have these qualities in themselves. We do not know if the land loves anybody, the house has affection for any person, or material possessions have any sense of value as we seem to be attributing to them. A lovable object, or an object that is despicable from any point of view, is an adumbration of that particular issue or object from a unilateral appreciation by the mind of the individual or groups of individuals, else it would be difficult for us to believe that gold or silver, grains or land or wealth or house have in themselves any such quality that can be regarded as happy or unhappy.

These qualities which contribute to the happiness or unhappiness of people, these being life itself in its entirety, these characteristics which are conditioning all human experience, are not to be found in the world. In the language of the sage Vidyaranya there is a distinction between Ishvarasrishti and jivasrishti. Ishvarasrishti is the name that he gives to the world of actual objective perception, and jivasrishti is the reaction set up by the perceiving individuals in respect of the truly existent objective world. A human being is just the same as any other human being anatomically, physiologically and biologically, but a person is different to different persons by way of psychological relation. It is my relation, it is my friend, my enemy, someone related to me or someone unconnected with me, and so on and so forth; this is also the case with material possessions.

The experiences of life have been considered to be psychological in their nature, and it is futile to wrangle over the true nature of things, going on arguing whether the world is material in its nature, social in its nature, economic in its nature, or whatever it be. These arguments seem to be out of point inasmuch as they hinge entirely, in the end, on the manner in which human minds operate. There is no such thing as an economic condition for animals in the forest, and many of the things that human nature considers as ultimately meaningful do not seem to have meaning for subhuman species, though they also are living beings and perhaps they have the same hunger and thirst and instinct of survival. The mind can create a heaven or an earth or a hell in one moment, at a single stroke of its internal action. Suddenly we will find ourselves in heaven if the mind works in one manner, or we will find ourselves in hell, though it would appear that the physical world we call Ishvarasrithi has not changed whatsoever. A shock of joy or a shock of sorrow, which is purely a mental appreciation of values, can change the entire world of experience in an individual to such an extent that even hunger, thirst and sleep are affected. Even life can end by excessive mental activity either in the form of inconceivable joy or inconceivable grief. Such is the power of the mind.

But where is this mind? The history of psychology has attempted to locate the mind somewhere, and we people who have studied so many spiritual texts, scriptures, philosophies and psychological tomes have our own idea of what the mind is. But mostly we are primitive in our concepts, whatever be our education or study—primitive in

the sense that we cannot help the feeling that the mind is some sort of thing inside our body. It is inside the body, though we cannot argue out this opinion in a satisfactory manner. Instinctively we are made to feel that there is something moving inside the body, like a ball of mercury or some sort of flexible and fluid element, quickly adjusting its position from one part of the body to another part of the body. This is how we feel—childlike in respect of the mind's operations.

If the mind is all life, all our experiences are mental, our life and death seem to be entirely conditioned by how the mind works, and if at the same time we begin to feel that the mind is inside the body, it would appear that we ourselves are inside our own bodies. But this is not the fact. We have never been able to come to a satisfactory conclusion, even today, as to where the mind is located and what is its relation to the body, because neither can we say that it is the same as the body nor can we say that it is quite different from the body. The entire distinction that is sometimes drawn between the mind and the body would lead to a peculiar situation where the mind cannot act on the body at all, while we feel that the mind certainly acts on the body, changing even physiological and chemical operations inside and vice versa—physiological conditions affect the mind also.

So, it is not entirely true that the mind is so very markedly set aside in some part of the body. It is vitally associated with the body as if it is permeating every cell. Inasmuch as a parallel existence of the mind and the body cannot be conceded due to the action and reaction

appearing to take place daily between the mind and the body as if they are one and the same, as if they are two phases of one single element acting, many have held that there is no such gap between the mind and the body—it is one single act taking place which, for want of better words, we may say psycho-physical, sometimes psychosomatic. 'Psycho' and 'somatic' are not two different concepts; they are only two words used to convey a single operation which is not just partly physical and partly mental, but at the same time is psychological and physical.

We are both mind and body at the same time. We are the mind-body complex. This is what we mean by saying 'psycho-physical'—the human mind is also the human body and vice-versa. The human body is the human mind to such an extent that it appears that the body is nothing but a concrescence of the mind. An ethereal, rarified form of the body seems to be the mind, and a more dense form of the mind is the body.

The concept of the five koshas or sheaths, well known to us in Vedantic parlance, seems to justify this feeling. We have heard that there are sheaths, koshas—annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya, anandamaya koshas—described to us in such a way that we are made to feel that they are like five shirts that the soul is putting on, like peels of an onion, one being there over the other. But the sheaths are not so placed; they are not coats or shirts or peels. They are densities of a particular activity which is called individuality, jivatva, and we cannot demarcate the presence of one sheath from the presence and activity of another sheath. There is a gradual density, or condensation

of activity, we may say, appearing to take place from inward to outward performance, and a rarification from outward to inner conditions. It is one single modification in a gradated system of concretisation of experience from the centre of our personality inwardly to the outer periphery of our experience, ending with the physical body.

In a similar manner seems to be the relationship of the mind to the body. Psychology in its history, right from early times until the present day, has been a very interesting study, and its studies are not complete even today. Researches are being conducted to astonishing conclusions in respect of our own internal make-up. We are great mysteries and wonders in our own selves. We are not so simple individuals—going for a walk, having our meal and going to sleep—nothing of the kind is what we are. Very interesting, complicated and inaccessible is our essential nature.

We are mostly in what they call the conscious level of activity. We are just now conscious, and this state of a conscious mental activity is mostly considered as the whole of activity. Whatever I am thinking just now is the whole of what I am thinking. This is, again, a crude understanding of how the mind can act and react. There are immense possibilities in our minds which can shoot forth such forms of experience that in a moment we can become different individuals, to our own surprise, and we would not be a moment afterwards what we were a moment before. There are capacities in us to behave as all the forms of species that appear to be there in creation. Every species is imbedded here in potential form in human nature, the lower as well as

the higher. The divinised potentialities and the lower potencies are both present in human nature. The conscious activity of the mind is not actually the whole of activity.

Our life in the world is conditioned by pressures from outside to such an extent that we cannot be wholly free in our conscious life. This limitation to our mental freedom arises on account of the existence of other people who also have similar minds and would expect a similar kind of freedom to act in society. The conceding of freedom to others as one would like to have freedom to one's own self is, at the same time, a limitation that one puts on the freedom of one's own self. We cannot be entirely free if other people also are to be equally free, because the very existence of another is a limitation on the existence of our own self. We cannot be free inasmuch as there are other things which are also clamouring to be equally free. Inasmuch as everyone cannot be absolutely free, because absolute freedom granted to everyone would be the abolition of freedom to anyone, freedom seems to be a very peculiar thing as it implies the presence of a limitation together with what we consider to be the act of freedom.

Thus we do not seem to be entirely free in our conscious life. We are bound souls, even if we may seem to be free souls as we may appear to our own selves. I may walk on the street—who is to question me? But we cannot walk on the street as we would like. There are limitations set even to our walking on the street, we know very well. We cannot behave in the way we would like under the pressures of our own inner calls, because every individual is a social unit, fortunately or unfortunately. The social aspect

of the existence of an individual is the limitation set on the experience or freedom of the individual. This limitation is not a happy thing, though we know very well that it is not possible for us to live in the world with an exercise of ultimate and final freedom because of the presence of other people and other things in the world—it would create a feeling of rancour in our own selves. We feel unhappy that other people are, we would wish that they are not there, because if nobody else is there one can be wholly free. But this is only what they call building castles in the air; it cannot be that others are not there—others have to be there, as anyone else has to be there. So freedom has to be limited.

This consequence following from the limitation of the freedom that one exercises produces such an effect and impact upon the mind that it very sorrowfully receives these consequences and buries them inside. Every action produces a reaction, so while thought can be regarded as reaction, the consequences, results following from a mental action would have such impact upon itself that it would receive them back and keep them in a chamber created by itself, unknown to itself on the conscious level, deceiving itself as it were, as if these consequences have not followed at all. We behave as if we are wholly free, though we know that we are not wholly free. This is a self-deceptive psychological attitude which creates inward agony, but this agony is not consciously felt since such conscious agony would be a death blow to the very existence of the individual. So the inner sorrows arising from the fact of the limitations set on human freedom are kept inside in a dark

chamber, inaccessible to the operations of the conscious mind, as if there is another mind altogether which is different from the conscious mind. Actually it is a background of the very same mind, part of which acts as the conscious level, part of which acts as the subconscious or the unconscious, whatever we may call it, which is at the back. These fields, which are kept as a stock of our griefs, lie there as ungerminated seeds waiting for the rainfall of conducive circumstances, at which time they can slowly germinate into action and surprise us, because we would not know that they have been there at all. The surprise arises because they have been kept in an unconscious form, while we have been limiting our life to the conscious level only, never knowing that we have other chambers of mental activity which are at the back of the conscious level.

The layers mentioned, koshas—pranamaya, etc. are just the layers or the chambers of the human mind. It is the mind itself that appears as these various layers called the koshas. So these internal layers, not always being brought to the surface of conscious activity, lie inside, dissatisfied, sleeping with a sorrow of their own that they have not been brought to the surface of active consciousness, which means to say, we have been unfriendly with them, because an unconscious friend is no real friend. These inner chambers of our minds have not yet become our consciously known friends. They clamour for this recognition. If one of us is not recognised, we would clamour for recognition by thrusting ourself in the crowd and making ourself felt somehow or other, so that recognition becomes a conscious operation and we are not

there as a very unimportant person, unknown to people. So this desire to project oneself into conscious recognition is the element present in every fibre of the mental make-up. But inasmuch as this is not possible due to the pressure of society from outside, we remain always, in some percentage, grief-stricken individuals, though outwardly smile as if everything is fine and milk and honey are flowing in the world. No person can be really happy in this world inasmuch as there is a restriction prevailing from outer circumstances on every individual.

This continuous repression of factors that are not pleasant to the mind later on becomes a thick cloud, as it were, covering the light of understanding. Here is the forte of all psychoanalytical observation—that no thought of ours on the conscious level can be regarded as a wholly free activity of the mind, and we are determined by the inner potentialities of the seeds of possible experience that have not yet come to the surface of conscious experience. Though psychology generally classifies human activity into the conscious, subconscious and unconscious layers, there are many more layers than these, and the mentioned ones are only the operative distinctions drawn, but not actually all the potentialities included there. Immense are the possibilities of the mind, infinite are the capacities, and we cannot count how many things are there in our own minds.

Though it is true that this is the state of affairs in which the human individual lives, the story does not end here. Psychology and psychoanalysis tell us that we are self-deceiving persons. There is no honesty in our efforts. This is so, and this has to be so, because we are always forced to

behave as double personalities—consciously something and subconsciously or unconsciously another thing. Our conscious behaviour is well known. We know very well how we conduct ourselves in daily life, in family affairs, in political circumstances, in our office, etc. But there is something which is private, which is known by each person individually, though even privately it is not often known due to the flood of conscious engagements in our daily life which occupy our attention to such an extent, especially when we are very busy people, that we cannot believe that there are inner calls at all. A very busy person who has no time at all for himself or herself, being a very big gun in the office, in administration, in business, whatever it is, such a person does not know that he or she has another personality altogether inside, which will come up to high relief of potential action when business ceases, office ends, or there is deviation or separation from family circumstances, when everything is lost and one stands alone to oneself. At that time the true personality comes up. Spiritual seekers do not expect such a kickback of a psychological nature, though they know that such a kickback can be the fate of anyone, one day or the other, if proper attention is not paid to the potentialities in one's own self.

So spiritual seekers generally create an artificial atmosphere of aloneness in themselves, which is not actually the aloneness that is thrust upon oneself by the loss of property or getting kicked out from the office, etc. They go to a sequestered place like Uttarkashi, Gangotri, etc. and live alone to themselves, not even having correspondence

with people, not reading anything, not seeing people, just being to one's own self. If we live like this in our own self for months and years, we will create an atmosphere within us which is almost similar to the atmosphere that comes upon oneself when everything is lost. It is at this time, when conscious activity ceases from its intensive operations, that the inner calls come out, the ungerminated seeds come up to the surface of action, and we begin to feel what we really are. We suddenly become unhappy. After a few years of staying alone in Gangotri, we will feel that we are a unhappy person. Do not be under the impression we will find ourself to be an angel after we do deep meditation. Nothing of the kind is possible; we will find that some trouble has suddenly emerged from within our own self, from sources that are unknown to us. People who live in such isolated places for a protracted period come down to the cities in order that they may not go crazy, because the pressure of the unfulfilled, frustrated feelings oftentimes becomes so into intolerable that they have to palliate them by feeding them with their requirements, which they cannot do in a sequestered place like Gangotri or on top of Mount Everest.

But all the same, it is worthwhile knowing what kind of persons we are. The necessity to know all our inner potentialities arises because we are all these potentialities. Unknown things are not non-existent things. Therefore the unknown potentialities in us are not something other than what we are—they are just us. So it is necessary for us to be good psychologists of our own self. We should not just be teachers of psychology to students in a college—we should

also know how our own mind is working. If we are happy right now, why are we happy—what has happened to us? If suddenly a mood of depression takes possession of us, what is the matter? Something is not all right. Something is wrong with us. Many a time the extent of conscious life in which we get involved is so intense that when we are in a state of moody depression or in a state of melancholy, we cannot go deep into our own self and discover what has happened to us. “I am not well. I do not eat. Let me be alone. Let me go to sleep or go for a long walk, go for an excursion. Let me have a tour.” These ideas arise in the mind because of a sudden inner spurt of sorrow in being alone to one’s own self, for reasons which one cannot understand.

But it is necessary to understand what is happening to us. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. If we are unhappy, we must know why we are unhappy. We cannot say, “I don’t know.” This “I don’t know” business will not work in the world. Everyone has to know the law operating in nature, in society, and also in one’s own individuality. So psychoanalysis, particularly, has taken the trouble of going into the depths of these mental operations and disillusioning us from the complacent view that all things are well with us. We are not such angels as we appear to be or we pretend to be in human society; we are crude matter inside our own self, which comes to the surface only when it is rubbed hard. This rubbing hard of the inner potentialities takes place when either the conscious activity ceases because of the exhaustion of its own momentum, or because conscious activity becomes impossible due to

conditioning factors operating from outside in human society. So psychology, especially in the field of psychoanalysis, has found that we are a big cloud of unknowing rather than an illuminated radiance of all knowledge. To such an extent are we cloud that even our intellection, ratiocination and education, we may say, even the culture that we seem to be putting on, are just adumbrations of the cloud that we essentially are—ignorance conditions even our knowledge.

All our knowledge, all our education, all our culture also seems to be a sort of projection of a basic ignorance of the values of life, and this is the reason why, educated or not, cultured or not, we are capable of being unhappy one day. Neither have we the power that we expect to have, nor are we happy in the manner we would to like be, nor are we wealthy—nothing of the kind is our prerogative. This is one side of the picture of the human personality, which psychology brings to the surface of our understanding. We are not just that which we appear to be in social life—we are also something which we are in our individual life.

The Indian counterpart of Western psychology has a theory of its own which explains, perhaps in greater detail, the inner contents of the deeper potentialities, in Western language called the unconscious, but in Eastern philosophical parlance called the anandmaya kosha, the deepest recesses of our own self. This anandmaya kosha, or the unconscious level of our personality, is not just something created only in this life. It is not that we are suddenly born into this world from nowhere and all our experiences, pleasurable or otherwise, are created by actions

and reactions of only this life. Western psychology does not have the leisure to accept that a previous life of the individual also could be possible, but for which present experiences can not be entirely accounted for. The anandamaya kosha, or the deepest unconscious, is the reservoir of potentialities stored up within our own self of all frustrated feelings come from various incarnations through which we have passed in earlier types of creation and ages.

The stored-up potentialities in the anandamaya kosha, or the unconscious, do not all germinate suddenly, but gradually, little by little, as it may happen if rain falls only in some part of the world and in some other parts of the world it does not rain at all. So while seeds can be thrown on the soil throughout the earth, all the seeds may not germinate at the same time due to scarcity of rainfall. They will germinate only where conditions are good, atmospherically. Likewise, all the potentialities in us do not manifest into action in our life, and only certain portions of the existing stock act in conscious life. These percentages, or certain aspects or certain packages of the existing stock coming into action in conscious life are called prarabhda karma. The prarabhda is only a retail commodity that is kept by the shopkeeper outside for daily use, but he has more commodities inside, in the storeroom that is the reservoir of his resources. What we experience is said to be prarabhda karma, which simply means we are not the whole of what we are even throughout our life. We cannot be that due to the fact that the whole storage of the unconscious, or the anandamaya, cannot come into action

because conditions in the world do not permit the manifestation of all these potentialities.

We have to be cosmic individuals, suddenly enlarging our dimension to the entire cosmos in order that all the potentialities stored up within can come into action — which we are not, and therefore which we cannot do. Individuals that we are, we have a limited capacity to manifest all the potentialities, and so we are just some little things in our individualities, and not all things. In the future births that we are likely to take, certain other unused packages of potentialities will be brought to the surface of action and we will be different things altogether. Next birth may not be the same thing as now, nor will our experiences of this birth be the same in the next birth—we may even change our sex. A man today need not be a man in the next birth. A woman today need not be a woman in the next birth. One can be anything and everything, pleasant or unpleasant, higher or lower, as there are so many things in a particular individual.

So to restrict our view of life only to what is available to us today on the conscious surface is not wisdom, says Indian psychology; and in a similar way Western psychology also tells us, of course not going to such depths, that the vision of things manifested by the human mind on the conscious level is an artificially conditioned projection and it is not even the whole possibility. There is therefore a chance of the individual reverting to the baser instincts when the occasion arises, though a human being does not always behave like an instinctive animal.

The child that is born does not seem to have all these complications in its mind, because all the instincts lie sleeping in the child and it has practically no conscious desires. It has mostly a biological existence and very little of what we call a psychological existence. It lives, it breathes, but it cannot think as a developed conscious mind can think. It gradually grows into the capacity to manifest what was lying latent in itself. It was a biological content earlier, in the womb of the mother, and the question of a psyche operating in it does not arise at all in those rudimentary stages. It gradually manifests its potentialities as it grows into the awareness of society and also the awareness of what was lying dormant in its own self.

Basically, hunger and thirst are the primary instincts in the human individual. Everything else comes afterwards. When all things go, only these remain. We would like to eat, we would like to drink and keep breathing—that is all that we want, and nothing else would be asked. Conditions which are atrocious in life may drive us to that acceptance of our minimum requirements—only food and drink and breathing. This vegetable existence, biological existence, is seen manifest in a newborn child, but it becomes more and more artificially construed and constructed when externalising impulses manifest themselves by way of intensive activity for self-protection and self-preservation. It moves earth and heaven to see that it survives, and in any manner it has to survive. The psychological aspect of this situation is that, at least from the point of view of Western psychoanalysis, the mind that the human individual uses in a developed state of individuality is just a kind of

instrument that biological instincts use, so that from this point of view at least, even today, at the height of our mental and rational understanding, we are basically biological, animalistic, full of instincts that are subhuman, and the so-called cultures of mankind and the education of humanity are outer circumstances created by biological conditions for their own survival. All social life is selfish life. This would be the final conclusion of psychoanalysis — basically everybody is selfish to such an extent that we are indistinguishable from animals.

This vision of life, which is briefly stated for the further consideration of its implications, is to highlight what we can be, other than what we are socially, culturally and educationally from our present-day understanding of what education is, culture is, or social life is. That there is some truth in these findings of psychology and psychoanalysis can be appreciated by every one of us who lives a private life, if at all anyone has a private life in this modern world. We are never private at any time. We are busy people. We are always with somebody, in a family, in an office, in a marketplace, in a railway train, in a bus —wherever we are, we are with somebody. We are never alone. We cannot be our own self, and therefore we cannot know even our own self.

The problems that are besetting humanity today are considered by these systems of findings as the outcomes of the hidden potentialities of unhappiness which cannot be brought to the surface of consciousness due to their being conditioned by social life and it not always being possible for the individual to be wholly free to act as one would like

to act. Though it is true that we have inner potentialities in the anandamaya kosha, in the unconscious levels, and sometimes some of these are experienced by us translucently though not very transparently in the dreaming condition, yet Indian psychology goes deeper than Western psychoanalysis and says that there is something eternally operating in us, and not merely psychologically as we are often told.

Hence the vision of psychology is entirely true of course, from the angle from which it is operating and acting and telling us; it is true and yet it is individualistic in its approach and does not take into consideration the non-individualistic associations of the human individual. Earlier we had occasion to consider certain aspects of human nature which are not just individualistic. For psychology and psychoanalysis we are only individuals; we are like animals, and our entire life is mentally constructed from the point of view of those unseen forces buried in us, so that our conscious life seems to be an arena of utter sorrow appearing to be a life of happiness.

But this is not the whole truth of the matter. We have an eternity inside our temporal occupations and experiences. All the problems and sorrows of life are misconceived adjustments, or rather maladjustments, we may say, of the human individual. Basically, at the essence, we are not constituted only of sorrow. Human nature is not a bundle of grief. It is basically a preparation for eternal happiness, which cannot be had under conditions of pressure exerted by any kind of wrong maneuvering of the mind by a maladjustment of itself with the circumstances in

which it is placed. So the considerations of these doctrines—materialistic, humanistic, psychological, whatever they be—do not seem to exhaust all the possibilities of human nature. There is still an asking beyond us. Granting all freedom from problems in human existence, making one happy in social life, giving all the wealth that the earth can bequeath, with all these things, there would be an asking further. A ‘more’ is there beyond the ‘more’ that is given to us. Life is a more and more and more, an endless more, and an asking for further and further possibilities, the end of which one cannot reach. Infinity seems to be the potentiality of the individual, and not merely a limited possibility of socially restricted individualistic operations.

Thus our considerations of the different visions of life, appearing to be interesting, very incisive in their probes, very valid also in certain fields of life, are not exhaustive. Whatever description one may give about oneself, though apparently complete in itself, is not really complete. No one can describe what a human being is. Though we can give some sort of a description from the point of view of the physical body, social relations, office that one holds, wealth that one possess, and so on and so forth, all these definitions, the bio-data of the human individual, would not be an exhaustive consideration of the individual. There is something more about us than we can think of in our own selves. There is an infinity masquerading in the form of individuality, an eternity crying for recognition even in the midst of temporal vicissitudes.

Chapter IV

UNIVERSAL VISION

A more in-depth perception of life is the blending synthesis that has been achieved in ancient times in a concept known as the fourfold aim of human existence. The aspiration of the human soul cannot be equated with any kind of philosophy or objective evaluation—material, social or otherwise. The soul of man refuses to be equated with anything in this world though it has a connection, apparently, with all things in the world. Permeating all conceivable values of life, it also stands above all available values. The aims of human life have been summed up in a very well thought-out pattern of aspiration designated as dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

All values in life which are materially construed are known as artha. Anything that can be contacted through the sense organs is artha. Anything that can be possessed as a property is artha. Anything that is contributory to the satisfaction of physical needs is considered as a material value—this is artha. Artha is a Sanskrit word meaning an object of perception, a content of consciousness. That which is the end result of any kind of sensory activity is artha. Kama is the psychological value of human life. Dharma is the human value, which at the same time surpasses itself, reaching beyond itself in a superhuman grasp of a cosmic principle. An intelligent investigation into the structure of this pattern, namely the coming together of dharma, artha and kama, will reveal to us the profundity of this research and its final finding.

The spiritual value of life, we may say, is what generally people consider as moksha, a difficult term to properly understand in its linguistic form or even in its philosophical content. The evaluation of human life is actually, from this point of view, an evaluation of all life. When the human individual rises to the level of spiritual aspiration, the human ceases to be a limited individual social unit and becomes an embodiment of a call which is above all individual values or social relationships.

There is a many-sided envisagement of the requirements in life when it is understood from the point of view of the soul of the human individual. Our soul, or the soul that we are, is such a comprehensive experience—we can only call it experience for want of a better word—that it leaves nothing as an external possibility, nothing outside itself. The soul is all things and everything, though human understanding limited to a physical evaluation of things may wrongly imagine that the soul is within an individual, that it is something inside people.

What we call the soul is also known as the spirit that enlivens the personality and gives meaning to all life in general. Spirituality is the character of the spirit. It is the nature of the innermost essence of all living beings. It is that which gives meaning to any kind of aspiration, desire or engagement in any field of life. Though it is true that, at a particular level of experience, life is involved in physical matter, embodied in a physical personality, we as souls are also embodied in this visible form, this tabernacle. Giving concession to this extent of involvement of the soul in the physical body, we have also to give an equal concession to

its physical requirements. It is the soul that needs, and nobody else has any need whatsoever. Any need, any call, any requirement, any desire, any aspiration, is the activity of the soul.

It is difficult to understand what we actually mean by the word 'soul', inasmuch as the meaning attached to it usually has been limited to its embodied relationships and it has never been considered from its own point of view. The soul cannot be known by anyone except the soul itself. No faculty other than that which can be identified by the soul itself can be said to be competent of knowing what the soul is. Any psychological operation or intellectual activity, even in its highest reaches, should be considered inadequate for the purpose. The comprehensiveness of the activity of the soul is inclusive in such a wide-stretched manner that there is nothing worthwhile in all life that can be excluded from its purview or the jurisdiction of its activity.

Actually, there are no distinctive features in life called material, psychological, human, etc. They are phases of the operation of a single vision of things, appearing to be distinct from one another on account of emphasis specially laid on one particular aspect or other. When we limit ourselves to the perception of only what is externally envisioned by the sense organs, we appear to be aware only of what can be called the material values of life because of the fact that the senses can contact only that which they regard as material. But granting that the materiality of whatever the senses contact is valid from its own level of manifestation, the demand of the sense organs in their

contact with things they consider as material is not exhausted merely by a material evaluation of values. Even the sense organs cannot entirely be satisfied by material objects. If food that is material, whatever it be, is fed into the sense organs, even up to the point of surfeit and utter satiation, that still would not end the desire of the sense organs.

Thus the perception of the senses, which is basically material and objective, is not satisfying even to the senses themselves. That is to say, whatever is available to the sense organs is not going to satisfy them. But the satisfying character of objects available to the sense organs also points to a state which is beyond that particular level of satisfaction. Our craving for objects of sense is, of course, a call for a kind of happiness that we imagine to be derived from external material objects, but the dissatisfaction that follows from that satisfaction of the contact of the senses with objects is a pointer to a higher involvement.

Why are we dissatisfied even after we are satisfied with sensory contact? All the material in the world for which the senses crave as their diet has not left them satisfied. The artha which has been longed for, through an inward operation called kama, has brought to a standstill, to some extent, this operation of the psyche in the form of kama or desire, but it has left a lacuna at the same time—a lacuna of the nature of a total vacuum, in the end. After all satisfaction, after the fulfillment of every desire, the satiation of our kama by the acquirement of everything that is called artha; after this so-called fulfillment, the state in which we feel we are entirely filled to the brim with joy,

after having attained this state of an overwhelming sense of completeness through sense contact of objects appearing to give satisfaction, we are left with an emptiness in ourselves.

The objects of the senses, the things that we long for through our kama or longing, sap our energy, suck our blood as it were, and leave us lifeless. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad an interesting name has been given to the objects of sense, while another name has been given to the manner in which the sense organs operate in respect of their objects. The senses grab—their only intention is to catch, clutch objects of sense—and because of their habit of catching hold of anything that is available around them, the Upanishad calls this sense activity as ‘graha’. It is a kind of crocodile, as it were, which grabs with a tight grip anything that is presented before it. There is no end to the asking of the senses.

But the objects which the senses grab have also a strength of their own. Very interestingly, the Upanishad calls these objects ‘atigraha’, a greater catcher. If the senses tightly grasp the objects, the objects grasp the sense organs with a greater grasp. It is difficult to imagine why such a situation should arise at all, how it is that while we grab things, the objects, the things also seem to be willing to grab us in such a manner that they leave us almost dead. This is an undercurrent of activity that is taking place beneath the surface of the operation of the mind in its activity called desire for objects of sense—kama for artha.

The kama is the calling for the object. The artha is the object itself. While it is necessary that the call should be strong enough to evoke the movement of the object in its

presence, the object also should have the capacity to fit into the nature of this call. The magnet should have the strength to pull iron filings into itself—the pull cannot be exerted on dry bamboo or straw. The magnetic attraction is felt only by certain elements such as iron. So, the object should be of a character that is commensurate with the nature of the operation of the sense organs. There should be a give and take policy between the senses and the objects. The two have to be en rapport with each other.

There seems to be a kind of internal relationship between ourselves as individual centres of satisfaction, kama or desire, and the objects outside. There is a reciprocal relationship between ourselves as desiring centres and the objects which constitute the world outside. This internal relationship of a reciprocal nature between the subjective side and the objective side is what makes it difficult for any particular individual to be entirely a possessor of any group of objects. This also makes it difficult for the capacity of the objects to entirely satisfy the sense organs. Neither can the objects entirely satisfy anyone, nor can anyone have complete control of all the objects in the world. This is so because of the fact that there is a non-individual background behind the individual percipient, and a non-objective character in the objects of the world. The objects are not merely objects, and the individual seeker, the desirer, is also not entirely individual. There is an unseen background behind both the desiring individual and the desired object. This makes the contact between the senses and the objects an inadequate operation, not up to the mark, and actually not promising

the satisfaction that they hold up before the senses. The activity of the mind and senses in respect of objects, known as the artha, through the operation known as kama, will be a futile attempt in the end if something else is not there acting as a principle to bring them together into a framework of coherence.

The cementing principle does not leave the subjective side, on one side, and the objective side, on the other side, as unrelated elements. This principle that brings them together into a vital relationship is called dharma. It is another peculiar terminology whose meanings have been construed in a multitudinous variety of ways. The law of a thing is called dharma. The principle that is at the root of anything is dharma. The essence of a thing is called dharma. That which keeps the stability, maintains the stability of any particular localised thing is dharma. If we feel that we are a single self-identical individuality, it is due to the dharma that is operating within us. Any kind of law can be regarded as dharma. A law is that which maintains order and system. A disarray or chaos of any kind is prevented by the operation of dharma.

Automatic is the action of dharma—it is not some instrument that is wielded by someone. The world seems to be made up in such a way that it has a spontaneous character of maintaining its stability as completeness by itself. Dharma is the self-assertive character of the world, the whole universe, we may say, by which it maintains itself as a self-complete individuality. That which does not permit the universe to become chaotic, or things to be scattered in a disorderly manner, is called dharma. It is that

principle that works in such a way that things are what they are, and anything is what it is, and a thing cannot be other than what it is. That stability of things to anything whatsoever is given by an unseen law which is called dharma.

Conflicts are avoided by dharma whenever it operates in any of its levels. There are degrees and varieties of the intensity in the action of the principle we call dharma. It acts mildly in certain stages, and very strongly and powerfully in some other stages. The intensity with which we feel that we are this body, the vehemence we manifest in the feeling or assertion that we are just this little person and nothing more than that—this vehemence is an instance of the intensity with which dharma can act in maintaining a sort of indivisibility in a given location, such as my individuality or yours.

But the power of cohesive action of dharma is not so intense in social relationships. The manner in which an individual asserts himself as being only that individual and nothing other than that is more intense in its self-affirmation than the manner in which he affirms himself as a unit in human society. We feel that we belong to a formation of bodies called human society, it is true, but we do not feel it as intensely as we feel the intensity in our own selves. The action of dharma, this force of cohesion in the maintenance of the individuality of a thing, is pre-eminently operative in comparison with the more modified and diluted forms of it in social relationships, affections and hatreds.

There is a bond established between things that act and react upon each other, either by way of like or of dislike. This power of action and reaction is also dharma acting. It brings about a relationship between two things, either by way of attraction or by way of repulsion. But this is an artificial way in which it acts, suggesting that any kind of social relationship—all relations that are externalised in nature, are not basic to the nature of things. Our aim in life is not any kind of makeshift arrangement with things we consider as existent outside, even in such forms of relationship as family, society, etc. There is a pull of transcendence imminently present even in social relationships, so that social relation is not all and everything.

Dharma is not merely a power that works in the material world by way of gravitation, etc.—it is something more than that. It acts as a biological cohesion in a living being, a psychological cohesion where there is reason and intellect operating, and, finally, a universal cohesion where the spirit acts directly. Dharma, therefore, is seen to be present in all levels of life. It is in the physical world, as mentioned by way of gravitation—the pull of bodies, whether it is in the level of life on earth or in the planetary realms or the galaxies. Even loves and hatreds, psychologically felt, are also a sort of gravitation, propelling or repelling as the case may be.

Any sensible coming together of particularities for the formation of an intelligent whole, whether it is on the material level, the biological level, the psychological level or the rational level, is dharma acting. Dharma is that which

sustains; anything that protects, sustains, maintains and stabilises is dharma. It is a very intriguing operation taking place everywhere, and not available to the grasp of the sense organs. The interaction between the sense organs and objects, by way of this catching and greater catching mentioned, is indicative of there being something that is above both the individual that grasps and the object that is grasped. In fact, we tend to move towards objects and ask for things in the world not because the things have any individually ingrained inherent value in themselves, but because there is a call that we feel emanating from these visible forms outside, a call actually arising not from the things themselves but from something which is inherent in them, inherent in the objects, present in them and present also in the very perception of the objects.

This call for the cohesion of coming together, which is the love of life and the fear of death, is operating in a threefold manner—in the desire for things inwardly, in the pull of objects outwardly, and in the perception of things in a third fashion altogether. The knower, the known and the knowing process are the three phases in which this pull operates. What is this pull? It does not come either from only inside, or only outside, or just midway between inside and outside. It is a total pull coming from every corner. Actually, the love of life is not the love of life in this particular body only, though it appears to be that from an erroneous point of view. It also does not mean a love for objects outside—it is not a love for the possession of things. It is another love altogether which emanates from all corners, in all directions, transcending time and space, such

that we may say love alone exists anywhere. People sometimes call God the centre of love, identifying love with God and God with love. There is some point in this assessment because it is a call of the Self for itself.

All this is to give a brief notion as to what dharma could be as a cementing factor between the objects which are the artha and the kama that calls for them. Dharma points to a freedom of the calling nature from the clutches of the objects, and also the impulsion of the call itself. We are bound in this world in a twofold way—by the pressure of the call for things arising from our own individualities, and also by the magnetic pull that is exerted by the objects themselves. To put it in the language of the Upanishads, they are atigrahas—greater catchers or grabbers.

We cannot actually know what is happening to us merely by thinking through the mind or rationally arguing in an empirical fashion through known logics of the world. What is happening to us? Why are things what they are? Why should the world be exactly as it is, visible or seen? Why is this creation made to appear before us in the manner it is? Why are we happy and why are we unhappy? Why do we want this and why do we not want that? Why there is a desire to live long and why do we fear death? What is the matter with us? Why this confused medley of adjustments and maladjustments in life, keeping us in a state of anxiety from moment to moment, no one knowing what is actually happening and no one knowing what one really needs in this world?

This great difficulty, this intense question that is raised about ourselves, namely, what life itself is—this question

cannot be answered by anyone who raises this question, because the answer comes from a state of existence which is behind and beyond the state of affairs which evokes such questions. It is the wish that is inherent in every living being, basically uniform in its nature and arising from the deepest recesses of the being of anything; not capable of satisfaction through possession of things, artha; not being exhausted by the calls of the psyche called kama; not being able to be wholly satisfied even by subjection to the law called dharma—a call that is inexplicable, cannot be identified with either the action of law in the world or with the presence of things that are desirable, much less a desire for things. This inscrutable, unknowable, unimaginable, inexplicable, unanswerable position that life seems to be occupying is the great answer of life to the question of life—briefly, in an enigmatic manner, called moksha or freedom.

It is freedom that is at the back of the desire for the possession of artha or objects. We are subjected to a pressure which arises from our desiring nature in respect of things that the desire actually expects from the outside world. We are subjected to the pressure of these inward calls. This is not freedom. To be subject to an inward pressure in the form of a desire is more a slavery than an act of freedom. It is not that we are freely asking for things. We are not exercising freedom when we desire an object. We are exercising the opposite of it—subjection to the pressure of desire.

Even when the objects which the desires expect for their fulfillment are presented to us, we are subjected to another kind of pressure, namely, the endlessness of the

objects that the desire is actually pointing itself to. The endlessness of the variety of things in the world is also a difficulty that is posed in having to find satisfaction even when the desired object is presented to the desiring individual. The whole ocean of objects is there in front of this desiring individual. There is, therefore, limitation on one side in the form of a pressure felt in the form of desire, kama, and on other side there is a greater difficulty in the form of a sea, as it were—a sea of objects appearing before the sense organs. On either side there is no question of voluntary action or freedom in the true sense of the term.

The real freedom that one is expecting from the satisfaction of sense objects is not coming forth because of the difficulties mentioned—the impulsion that is unending from inside and the unending expanse of the objects of the senses from outside. What is the solution? The solution is in the acceptance of the fact that freedom is the nature of life, and it is quite different from any kind of externalised achievement or psychological operation—it is freedom from the desire to contact anything at all. The freedom that we seem to be enjoying by coming in contact with things outside is not freedom. Freedom is the end of the desire itself. When we feel free because we have what we actually wanted, we are not actually free. We are free only when we feel that we need nothing. So the freedom of the soul is not in the acquisition of objects; rather freedom is in the state which needs no contact with objects.

How can freedom be identified with a state of affairs where there is no necessity to come in contact with anything at all? This is so because of the fact that the world

is not constituted of objects. The nature of the world in which we are living is not actually externalised, but universalised. The world is the creation of God. We hear it said in the scriptures that the Lord Almighty has revealed Himself as this creation. God, who is all-in-all, all complete, inexhaustible infinity has manifested Himself as this cosmos.

Infinity has moved into the form of another alienated infinity, as it were, through a process which also is infinity itself. This great bundling up of infinities, one over the other, piling completion over completion in an inscrutable manner, is what is indicated by the great mantra of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which proclaims: Purnam adah purnam idam purnat purnam udacyate; purnasya purnam adaya puram evavasisyate. The Full that is the Almighty, in an act that is Fullness in itself, produced a Fullness that is called the universe, so that the Creative Will, which is Full, does not in any way get diminished in its Fullness of content by the projection of another Fullness which is the universe or even its act of creation, the process of the manifestation of the universe—even that does not become in any way less than the Full.

The measure or the step that God seems to be taking in the creation of the universe is also completeness in itself. It is an inward self-fulfillment of the great completion and the grand fulfillment which is the aim of all existence; that is the meaning of this 'Purnam adah purnam idam' mantra. Such being the case, nothing that is partial, fragmented, or localised can satisfy any localised individual. Dharma, which is all inclusive in its action and tries to bring all

things together for the purpose of a fulfillment of all things, is actually God working. Dharma is God Himself acting in the world. In the Vedas, a special term is used for the manner in which this law operates. 'Rita' is the term used—the cosmic law. In the Bhagavadgita this is designated by another term called 'visarga'. The projection in a wholesale fashion of a Whole that is the universe, from a Whole that is the Creative Will, is the final meaning of the dharma of the universe—an eternity manifesting itself as inclusive temporality. Even time, which is segmented as the past, present and future, appearing to be limited because of the historical process through which it passes, is actually a completion in itself.

All creation is self-filled. This self-fulfillment, the necessity to assert a completion even in the littlest core of creation that is felt in direct experience, is the consequence of a universal present in all particulars. Even in the smallest creature we find a wholeness that is operating, a tendency to feel that it is all-in-all. A little crawling ant is not a fragment of life—it is a complete being, self sufficient, all-in-all, very happy, needing nothing outside itself. So is the minutest of creation, even an atom which tries to maintain its stability by an action around itself through the nucleus which is its core. This fulfillment is God reverberating through minute, more diluted forms of fulfillment, through the gradations of creation, until it reaches the lowest level called atomic existence, which also is fulfillment by itself.

The whole thing is completion, fulfillment—purnam, purnam. All is complete. Fragments are unknown. Even so-called isolated, neglected fragments of material values are

also fulfillment in themselves. It is complete. This assertion of a sense of self-sufficiency and self-completeness in all things, though appearing to be minute in their quantum, is a reflection of the wholeness that is directly acting, eternally, in all things. The action of God is eternal action, even while it appears to be a temporally manouvered operation.

So, moksha is the soul, and dharma is the action of this universal soul. Satya, which is the eternal state of utter liberation or moksha, acts in this world as rita or the law of the cosmos. Embodied moksha is dharma. The soul of dharma is moksha, which, when it appears as something segmented in the subjective or objective side, appears as individual desire on one side and objects of senses on the other side. The total universality, which is God Almighty, Supreme Absolute—Brahman, we may call it—looks like an object, adhibhuta, externally conceived as the material universe, and adhyatma or the individual from the subjective side. The segmentation of this whole into the knowing side and the known side is the reason behind the desires of life. The action of dharma adumbrates that the desires so manifest from individual centres in the direction of objects outside is a misconstruing of things. Any kind of law in this world is a pointer to the inadequacy of the manner in which individuals act in relation to other individuals from their own point of view. Social law, political law, economic law, psychological law or any kind of institution of order or system is indicative of the fact of there being something inherent in the so-called fragments

of individual isolated existence, of something which is more than the individual.

Life, in any of its formations, is just the assertion of the universal in the individual—a transcendence working through that which is acting, for all practical purposes, from one place only. Location in space and limitation in time is not all. This location is inexplicable unless it is defined in terms of other forms of location. You will see that no individual existence can be permitted finally. No one can survive unless there is a cooperation with other individuals, which means to say even the so-called asserted individual existence is really something beyond individual existence. This is why social formations are required — individuals love something more than themselves. It is impossible to be limited only to one's own self. Such a thing is impossible. There will be a withering away of the individuality if an extreme affirmation of that individuality is maintained irrespective of its relationship with other individuals. The cooperative coming together of individuals, socially, is the affirmation of a larger-than-the-individual acting in the individual, namely a universal principle. Therefore social law is supposed to be more respectable than merely an individual law. The larger is the operation of this law, the more respectable it becomes, the more endurable it is and the more valid it is, until these operative laws, rising from the individual to larger dimensions, reach a climax where these laws comprehend every law altogether. The law stands as the only operative law, and nothing outside it can be there. It is a law that need

not be amended at any time, because it is eternity masquerading in time.

The concept of the values of life—which is dharma, artha, kama and moksha—is a masterstroke of genius of the Indian soil particularly, which did not exclude from its consideration even the lowest calls of human nature, but was not satisfied with any of the calls of human nature. While all our desires are permissible in one way, none of the desires is finally permissible. While all that we need and call for, and every thought, every feeling, every vision of life is a permissible and valid evaluation of things from its own point of view, none of them is final. All phases of the vision of life are valid from their own points of view. Every religion is a right religion, a correct vision of things, and every faith is valid in its own way. Every vision is complete, every viewpoint has a validity of its own and anything that one thinks is a valid thinking—but it is an inadequate thinking.

Here is the necessity for charitableness, which we have to manifest in ourselves while affirming our own point of view. My point of view and your point of view and everyone's point of view is a correct point of view, but none's point of view is a whole point of view. There is something beyond any vision of things, though every vision of things is self-centred and appears to be complete from its own stage, level and operative angle. There is thus a necessity to live a cooperative life. The life that the world expects from us is not so much competitive as cooperative. Things in the world do not argue, one against the other. They do not compete in a business fashion, but agree to

accept their own limitations, and also agree to expect the correlative aspects of their inadequacies from other things in the world, other people—from everything. Everyone is sacrosanct, everyone is holy, everyone is complete, and every human being is as valuable as any other human being. Everyone is equally valuable—there is no inferiority or superiority among people. Human life is a ubiquitous, equally distributed valuation of aspiration to exist, but no individual human life is complete in itself.

This is to sum up the viewpoint that is placed before us by the pattern called the fourfold purusharthas—dharma, artha, kama and moksha. They are not four aims of existence; they are the fourfold vision of a single aim of existence. We are materially located in this body, we are psychologically operating through the mind, we are socially existing in the midst of people, and we are also vehicles of an eternity that is permanently acting for the fulfillment of itself in self-realisation.

So the artha that is the objective world, the kama that is the psychological asking, the dharma that wants to keep everything alive in a cohesive manner—all these are fingers operating in space and time of a non-temporal Eternity whose names are the objects of adoration in the religions of the world. Religions therefore are various roads that lead to this centre, the peak of eternal life—we call it moksha in our own language. But what moksha is, is something that still remains eluding to our mental grasp. Even after having said so much about it, it remains an inscrutable something. Whatever idea of liberation, freedom or moksha we may entertain in our minds, finally we will find it to be a wrong

concept. It is impossible in our own psychological limitations to entertain a correct idea of what true freedom is, what eternal life is, or moksha is, or for the matter of that, what we are actually aspiring for at all, in the end, in our life. This requires great discipline, a peculiar training which is called sadhana marga, the path of spiritual practice, which makes us fit recipients of this eternal blessing that is flooding us from all sides—a call from a central parent, a father and mother to whose calls we are sensorily deaf and psychologically blunt, not sharp enough to receive its call. Spiritual life is not a philosophical theory, it is not a view of things, it is not even a religious ritual or performance—it is an actual living of the very soul of what we are in utter practise. It is living and not merely thinking.

The presentation of the fourfold facet of existence as dharma, artha, kama and moksha does not stand as four legs of an aspiration, but actually means the variety of fulfillment through the various degrees of our ascent in life to finally get fulfilled in a thing that we cannot think at the present moment through our feeble minds.

Chapter V

VEDIC VISION

The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita constitute a trio whose revelations may be regarded as the highest possible reaches ever achieved by mankind. The plumbing of the depths of the very nature of all life, which seems to have been the occupation of the ancient Vedic seers, is really an unparalleled adventure in the history of humankind. The Vedas are principally known as Samhitas, a body of invocations, prayers, supplications, attunements of spirit with spirit and a vision of things which beholds a uniform, unifying principle in the highest as well as the lowest, in what may be visible or what is not visible, what is related or what is not related to the human individual—physical, natural or religious, or even the occupations of daily workaday life—all these became the object of attention of the great seers of the Vedas. That which cannot be known through ordinary means is supposed to be capable of being known through the Vedas. Hence the Veda is called aloukika or super-physical in its power of perception, while all our normal perceptions are physical and personal as well as social.

The association of the very content of the Veda mantras with the ultimate facts of life has been deified to such an extent that one of the aphorisms of the Brahma Sutra makes out that the truths of life can be known only from the Veda shastra. It is also mentioned in an Upanishad that the Veda, the shastra, the scripture, is not merely a source of the knowledge with which one can come

in contact with the ultimate realities of life, but this knowledge itself is a sort of divine breath, an exhalation emanating from the great reality itself. The Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva—the Veda is the nishvasita, the expiration of the great reality of the universe, which means to say that the essence of knowledge, which is the constituent of Ultimate Reality, is in the Veda as a visible embodiment, an accessible means of final and infallible knowing.

The mantras of the Vedas do not merely act as a kind of textbook which convey through their words a dictionary meaning of their contents or a stylish interpretation of the intention of the author. On the other hand, there is a specific characteristic of the Veda mantras. This is so because the mantras are not supposed to have been written by any person. They are not compositions by a human author. Apaurusheya is the Veda, which means to say the the source of the Veda mantras is non-human, superhuman and spiritual. From where does the Veda emanate? How did it come into being? The great advance that has been made in a doctrine of the word, called spotavada, on which subject intricate textbooks have been written, makes out that the sound principle, which is the vehicle through which the knowledge of the Veda is conveyed, is basically an eternal vibration. When it is said that the Veda is eternal in its nature and does not constitute a temporal textbook, what is intended is not that the printed book, the bound volume, is an eternal body, but that the knowledge is of a non-temporal nature. The non-temporality of this knowledge arises because this wisdom of the Veda is capable of being communicated through various degrees of

the manifestation of a vibration, which ultimately is supposed to be the substance of the whole cosmos.

The universe is vibration; it is not a solid substance. In the beginning was a great vibration—this is the doctrine of the spotavada. We say, in modern language, that there was originally not a manifest universe of galaxies and solar systems, but there was something like a potentiality to manifest nebular dust, a kind of bang, sometimes called the big bang, at least from one angle of the vision of modern science. There are many other doctrines of this split—the coming forth, the concretisation of this great vibration. It is not easy to define what a vibration is because we always have the habit of thinking that the vibration should be ‘of something. Something has to vibrate in order that there may be vibration. But here, in the case of this peculiar cosmic vibration, it is not something that vibrates but vibration itself that is the ultimate stuff of things. This position is inconceivable to our present mentality due to our concept of the energy pattern of the cosmic make-up, energy being a potentiality but not a capacity manifest by something else as a substance. The energy of the universe is itself a substance. Electricity is itself what it is. It is not a manifestation from something—it itself is all things in itself. It is a manifestation as well as a substantiality.

The theory of sound, in its most in-depth character, has been studied in India. When we speak, we make a sound. There is an articulation in the expression of language. This outward mode of the manifestation of our inner intention through expression, vocally, is the grossest form of the manifestation of sound. This, in the Sanskrit

language, is called the vaikhari form of the sound. The audible sound is the grossest, densest, most concrete form that the vibration can take. But this vaikhari form of sound, the audible, expressible nature of the sound form, has an inner content that is capable of classification in a fourfold manner. This fourfold classification of the essence of sound, which is not to be identified merely with the sound that we hear through our ears, this fourfold character of sound is designated in mystical circles, in the Sanskrit language, as para, pasyanti, madhyama and vaikhari. In the Mandukya Upanishad, which is incidentally an exposition of pranava or Om, a suggestion is made of the possibility of identifying the stages of sound with the degrees of reality. That means to say, the highest form of sound-potential, which is not a physical content but a highly rarified form of universality, is just the same as the Reality as it is in itself. The four stages of sound, which constitute pranava or omkara, are set in tune with the four manifestations of the Ultimate in this Upanishad, known as Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara and Brahman. The identification of the degrees of the manifestation of sound with the degrees of the manifestation of Reality will give us some hint as to why it is said that the Veda, which is the embodiment of the highest knowledge in the form of potential sound, is the emanation of the Supreme Being Himself.

Knowledge is not an uttered word. It is a potentiality; it is a possibility; it is a capacity for expression in a particular form. The vaikhari form of the sound, while it is the grossest form of articulation, is motivated by a vibration which is subtler than itself. This subtle background of the

vaikhari form of the sound is inaudible. The inaudible potentiality of the audible sound, vaikhari, is madhyama. The inaudible form of the sound is also an expression of a pressure felt from another thing that is behind it called the pasyanti, a still more rarified form. But the most rarified form of the sound is para. The word is very significant indeed—it is Absolute.

‘Amatra’ is the word used in the Mandukya Upanishad to designate this soundless rarification of the sound, whereby the visible becomes the comic content, and it is no more a sound but the very background of the manifestation of sound. We have five sense organs. There is a particular sense which receives vibrations in the form of colour—the eyes. Another organ receives the vibration in the form of audible sound. A third organ receives vibration in form of taste, a fourth one by means of tangibility, and a fifth one by smell. We seem to feel that there are five things in this world—that which can be seen, or heard, or touched, or tasted, or smelt. They are not five things, but five types of impact that a single energy has upon five types of receptive potentialities or capacities in ourselves. We receive a common content of the cosmos in five different ways, as we can conduct the action of electric energy in different ways—as heat, or cold, or motion, or water.

The chanting of Om, the recitation of the pranava, is supposed to create in us a sympathetic vibration in the personality, commensurate with the deepest potentialities of the universal vibration. When we recite Om, chant Om systematically, we will feel, if we have done it properly, that there is a slow rarification, a passing from the gross to the

subtle of the sound that we make in the chanting of Om, until a state is reached that it is one with thought itself. It is one with thought and one with the whole being.

The higher is the potency of a homeopathic medicine, the greater is the action that it has upon the body, because the higher potency alone can touch the higher levels of our being, whereas the lower potencies can act only on the lower levels, such as the physical body. Our personality is equally a systematised arrangement of degrees of reality, as we conceive the same degrees in the cosmos. As we have Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara and Brahman, the visualisation of the Supreme Being in a fourfold manifestation, we have also a corresponding fourfold manifestation in our own selves by way of the manifestation of our consciousness in waking, in dreaming, in sleep, and in a transcendent something which we are—the Atman, pure and simple.

The Atman in us, the Self that we are, the true being of ours corresponds in our microcosmic personality to the macrocosmic Brahman. The one is en rapport with the other. The condition we call deep sleep is the potentiality for outer manifestation in the form of dream and waking. This potential causal state of our personality is sympathetic with the universal causal condition, known as Ishvara. The dream condition where we have a translucent manifestation of the mind, which is neither causal nor actually expressed, is comparable with a faintly manifest condition of the universe in a state called Hiranyagarbha. The actual waking state is where we are conscious of externality in its true colour—in this state we are one with Virat. The Virat is one

with us in our waking state, through our visualisations, by means of the sense organs. We are actually touching the cosmic reality, daily, from moment to moment in the form of this Viratsvarupa. The many heads and eyes and ears, which the Virat appears to have, as told to us by the Vedas, the Bhagavadgita, etc. are our own heads and eyes and ears. They are not somewhere else. A transportation of our individual perceptual manner to a cosmic position would suddenly transport us from an individual to the Virat in a single moment. It requires only a moment for us to transport ourselves to the Virat condition—not years of effort.

The Veda therefore, in its form as an embodiment of eternal knowledge, does not remain as a textbook for teaching in a pedagogical manner in a college or university—it is a spiritual content for daily meditation. Today researchers have gone to the extent of seeing, in the inner meaning of the Veda mantras, many things that are more than mere prayers to deities or gods of the cosmos, but are even instructions on the daily fulfilment of our requirements, including political, social, economic and technological. The Veda is difficult to understand because of its fourfold implications. Disciples, great sages appear to have gone to Veda Vyasa one day and requested the great master, “Teach us the Veda.” We are told that a cryptic reply of Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa to the disciples was “Ananta vai vedaha”—infinite is the Veda. Endless is the meaning of the Veda mantras. The endlessness of the content of the Veda is in its fourfold or fivefold inclusiveness of approach, which is not always available to

us, humans that we are. The objective world is presented to our consciousness in one manner. This is also one method of the perception of reality—the world as an externally presented content to the sense organs, mind and intellect. But reality is not exhausted only by the externality that the world is; it is also the internality that the subjective individual is. The adhyatma or the individual is one viewpoint from which the knowledge of the Veda can be interpreted; the adhibhuta or external form of it is another altogether. But there is a third way which is predominantly known as the adhidaiva interpretation, the mantras being used as invocations of a transcendent content, present and operating between the adhyatma and the adhibhuta, myself and yourself, connecting us both.

This invisible content permeating through all that is objective as well as subjective is the god, the divinity that is adored through the Veda mantras under the names Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, etc. The bahu, or the manifoldness of the designations or names of these gods, signifies the varieties of approach possible in respect of the manifestation of this reality through various angles. The objective side is one, which is called adhibhuta, the subjective side is another, which is adhyatma, and the transcendent side is a third one altogether, which is adhidaiva. There is a fourth one which is adhidharma, a principle of cohesive activity to which I made some reference previously. Reality also operates in this universe as rule, law, order, system, symmetry and rhythm—this is dharma. Adhidharma is one aspect of the manifestation of reality. There is a fifth form which is adhiyajna, the

activities of the cosmos, the manifestations right from creation onwards down to the lowest dust of the earth, including our own daily activities, individually. The ritualistic, activist and relative performances of individuals in respect of the environment is the yajna that we perform. This is a sacrifice, as it were, the attempt that we make to commune ourselves with reality outside and above by social relationship, communication, work, sacrifice, cooperation, service, charity, sympathy, love, affection, etc. So at least among the manifold forms in which the knowledge of the Veda can be conceived, five basic factors can be stated—namely, the aspects of adhibhuta, adhyatma, adhidaiva, adhidharma and adhiyajna.

This being the inner potentiality of the meaning of the Veda mantras, ordinary linguistic interpretation or translation in an ordinary fashion will not bring about their true meaning. Ages passed in this manner when the visualisation of the Ultimate Being through the mantras was available only to great sages like Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Guatama, Atri, Bharadvaja and many others who are mentioned as the Seers of the mantras in the caption of the suktas of the Vedas themselves.

The traditional concept of the Veda is that it is not a historical document, as sometimes modern readers of the Veda opine, but it is an indivisible presentation in the degrees in which it can be conceived but not temporally manifest, one coming after the other. That is to say, the vision of life through the Veda is a complete whole—not conceived merely chronologically in a historical fashion,

one succeeding the other as an effect produced from a cause, but a sudden possibility of the manifestation of the vision of life in a manifold manner, simultaneously. It is not that we do one thing now and another thing tomorrow. We pray today, work tomorrow and achieve our goal the day after tomorrow—it is not like that.

Simultaneity is our being, simultaneity is our perception, simultaneity is our relationship with things. The world acts in a simultaneous manner. There is no chronology in natural history. Therefore we cannot even say that God created the world at some time in the past, which would be a child's conception of the creation of the world, as if there has been a slow coming down of things in a historical fashion. It is rather a logical development—a deduction, as it were, from a premise, rather than a chronological coming like the marching of people in a queue, one following the other. There is a deduction; one follows the other in the process of creation, no doubt, but this one following the other is a logical following and not a chronological following.

All this makes the attempt to understand the Veda mantras a difficult thing. This is the reason why the Veda is not taught in the form of a lecture or a teaching in the manner in which we are accustomed today, but it is considered as a holy yajna performed by a dedicated, devoted, holy disciple, seated before a holy master. The Veda mantras are not studied in the manner we study textbooks of mathematics, physics, history, geography, etc. At the very initial stage itself there is a dedication—spirit pervades even this devoted seatedness in the vicinity of a

master. There are techniques of teaching the Vedas, and there are techniques of receiving the chanting and imbibing not only the manner of recitation, but also the manner of contemplation. The Veda mantras are not merely prayers, verbally offered to gods, though that also may be one of the meanings—they are certain indications of the highest meditations possible.

The Upanishads are the extract of this visualisation of the possibility of meditation on the inner significance of the Veda mantras, and we have been saved the trouble of personally going into this big forest of the implications of the meaning of these mantras. The sages of the Upanishads have been very kind—they have done the work for us. This implication of a great variety in nature, in respect of the inner meaning of the Veda mantras, is the Upanishad. It is the tattva, the quintessence, the final word or the import of the Veda mantras. So the Veda Samhitas and the Upanishads stand, not as two different approaches, but one complementing the other, one explaining the other, one actually, vitally related to the other.

The Upanishad is the tattva, the inner intention of the Veda mantras. Because there are varieties of approaches presented by the Vedas, the Upanishad also becomes a very difficult thing to understand. It is not just philosophy, it is not theorising or argumentation, it is not logical thought—it is a direct grasp, intuitively made available in deep meditation. Both the Veda mantras and Upanishads constitute meditations proper. They are spirituality embodied in the form of these holy texts available to us today. The trio that I mentioned—the Vedas, Upanishads

and Bhagavadgita—form a body of friendly approaches, one corresponding to the other from a different angle of vision. Each approach supplements the other and makes the other more explicit for the purpose of understanding and practise.

In a way, we may say that the Veda mantras are the highest of visions and realisations. That is why the Veda mantras are considered the most sacred texts of the religion of the country. Nothing can equal it. No philosophy can exceed the reaches of the Veda mantras in their contents. Yet, because of their manifold possibilities, human minds found it hard to extract the inner meaning in daily practise. The visualisation of the inner depth of the Veda mantras is the Upanishad proper. It is the secret meaning of Vedas—that is the meaning of word ‘upanishad’. While the word ‘upanishad’ has many other meanings, this is one of the meanings—a secret doctrine is the Upanishad. A grand visual form spiritually of the ultimate reality, in practical daily life, are the Veda mantras in their action.

The more we are taught a particular doctrine, the more we find it difficult to understand as time passes. This is due to the inability of the human mind to properly place itself in the context of the teaching, which is so comprehensive that a fractional approach of the mind, to which it is accustomed, finds it difficult to accommodate itself to this larger approach. The Bhagavadgita is the last word in the interpretation of the spiritual content of a complete vision of life, where everything is laid before us in a most intelligible manner. The perfect knowledge of the Veda and the Upanishad is perfectly presented in a most perfect

manner by the great perfect master Himself. There is a verse which states that the Bhagavadgita is the milk, as it were, of the Upanishads. If the Upanishads are the milk of the Veda mantras, the Bhagavadgita is the milk of the Upanishads, the quintessential essence of spiritual teaching. The various approaches—adhibhuta, adhyatma, adhidaiva, etc.—are implied but not explicitly available in the Veda mantras or the Samhitas; but the meaning, considered only from a meditational point of view in the Upanishads, is practically presented before us as a daily instruction for our life, from morning to evening, in the greatest possible detail.

We find today that even the Bhagavadgita is difficult to understand. The numbers of commentaries that have been written on it, hundreds and hundreds in number, indicate that even this most explicit teaching of the Bhagavadgita, which is supposed to be clearer than even the intentions of the Upanishads and Veda mantras, is so hard that what the final word of the Gita is, is not known to most of us. The difficulty that we feel in our daily life is the adjustment of ourselves to the various calls of the sides of the personality, which are connected to the sides of the reality, objectively. We cannot think all aspects of our life at one stroke. Spiritual life is a total vision of life. It is the totality of its approach that makes it a very difficult thing for us to think in the mind and put into practise. We may do something in a particular way, we may think also from one angle of vision, but all aspects of the matter cannot be taken into consideration at the same time. Spirituality is the approach of the soul. It is not an activity of the mind or an

argumentation of the intellect or the reason, and it is not a work that is done by our body or the limbs or organs. It is the soul rising into the level of its aspiration being fulfilled, the inner soul calling the Universal Soul.

When the soul within us summons the Soul that is above, we are in a state of spirituality. All life that is spiritual is the soul in action. If our spiritual life gets limited only to certain activities which are the work of our limbs or organs or even only mental processes, they would to that extent cease to be entirely spiritual. The spirituality of an approach is to be seen from the satisfaction that we feel by the implementation of that approach. The japa that we perform, the meditation that we conduct, or the communion that we try to establish in our depths in our spiritual practice will have to result in an experience of a greater potentiality and understanding in ourselves, a greater strength, a greater feeling of security, a feeling of betterment, both physically in the form of health and also mentally in the form of a satisfaction that was not present earlier. To rise from meditation in a dissatisfied way would not be an indication that the meditation has been conducted properly. For spiritual practice, the ancient system of preparedness, or adhikaritva, has to be emphasised even today. It is not that anyone and everyone can suddenly step into the paths of the spirit at one stroke, though everyone is eligible for it one day or the other, provided the necessary discipline is undergone. Everyone is eligible for everything, but under conditions of the required discipline that is made available in oneself.

The life that is spiritual—spiritual life, as we call it, is the highest achievement that we can expect in this birth. It is the highest point that can be reached in the evolution of the human species, beyond which there can be nothing, because the concept that is spiritual is basically non-temporal. The soul in us is not a temporal unit; it is not something that is moving in time. We ourselves, in our roots, are not temporal motions or the flux of creation. Our aspiration for eternity and an unending life is the argument of something within our own selves that is unending in itself. God speaks to us through the voice of our own spiritual aspirations. Our conscience is the voice of God. Thus these approaches, these proclamations, these revelations made available to us through the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita are the touchstones of Reality, the treasures of mankind, our bosom friend, our vade mecum. They are not merely books—they are the visible God Himself. That is why that we feel such a holy and exalted mood in the presence of the visible form of this knowledge as the Veda, or the Upanishads, or the Bhagavadgita. They are verbally embodied forms of the highest revelations of Vedic sages, the masters of the Upanishads, and in the case of the Bhagavadgita, the great vision of Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself.

Even a study of the Veda mantras, even a mere recitation of them, is supposed to be capable of purifying us. A mantra is that which protects, supports and gives security to anyone who even thinks of it and recites it. By a contemplation of it, it is protecting us every moment. The Veda mantras are a talisman that we are carrying with us

always, particularly the Gayatri, which is considered as the essence of Vedic teaching for various reasons which we need not consider here.

The spiritual vision of life, therefore, is the highest vision of life. It is highest not merely in the sense of the pinnacle of a pedestal that we ascend from the lower to the higher—it is a comprehensive outlook from all angles of vision possible. It is all content, all substance, all soul, all fulfillment; this is why we call it the very soul of all things. To be spiritual is not to be in a state of occupation. It is not just to appear in a religious manner, it is not a mood which is other-worldly, but it is a purification of the personality in such a way that it becomes a friend and collaborator—a friend, philosopher and guide—that which is one with all things in the deepest spirit. A spiritual seeker is no more an ordinary human being. If the seeking is truly spiritual and it is an emanation from the soul, it at once transforms the human into that which is superhuman. Great glory is spiritual seeking. Great achievement is spiritual seeking. Great possession is spiritual seeking, and nothing can be greater than this achievement. Health and wealth follow from a truly spiritual vision of life. Every kind of protection from all corners of the earth follows, says the Upanishad. The great soul, who is tuned up to the soul of cosmos in a spiritual vision of things, receives tribute, as it were, from every quarter of the world. As everyone wishes protection to one's own self, everyone will wish protection to us. All creation will wish our welfare, because in our spiritual aspirations, we have ceased to be ourselves—we have become everyone. Because in our spiritual aspirations we are no

more ourself but we are all people, everyone wishes our welfare. We are not merely the friend of all—everyone also is our friend. Just as children cry for food, seated around their mother, so do all living beings cry, as it were, seated around this great personality who is the highest spiritual potential possible, and they wish their welfare.

The vishva who is the individual becomes the Vaishvanara who is the cosmic through the gradations of ascents—vishva, taijasa, prajna and the Atman or turiya individually, and cosmically through Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishvara. This great spiritual vision gets materialised in direct experience. Thus the spiritual vision of life is also the modus operandi of our daily activity in life. The spiritual vision is the actual constitution of the cosmos, and the administration of the universe is conducted from the point of view of this great vision, which is spiritual, whose inner intention and the variety of approach is available to us in these great texts mentioned—the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter VI

RELIGIOUS VISION

When the spiritual outlook of life assumes a practical shape, it becomes religion in one's day-to-day life. The conducting of one's personality in its entirety in the light of this vision, which is spirituality, is religious practice. We have to bear in mind that religion is the life that we live, and it is just that. All conduct in life is a manifestation of a vision that we have in our entire arrangement with the total atmosphere.

Knowledge of what we are actually seeking is at the back of what we have to do in life. Inasmuch as all activity in life is an endeavour towards the fulfilment of the basic aspirations of our total personality, and also because of the fact that all aspiration is, in the end, spiritual, life in its varied performances also becomes spiritual. All work, everything that we do, our professions and our undertakings, are various ramifications of the central aspiration to achieve the direct experience of the spiritual constitution of existence.

We are likely to miss the point that the life that we live in this world is a complete encounter with the world as a whole and never, in any of our undertakings or works, are we fractionally connected with anything in the world. The world is a whole in itself and we too are a whole in our own selves. Thus the way in which we come in contact with the world is also a whole in its operation. But the way in which we usually think, due to personal desires, prevents this

placement of the entirety of our personality in its real encounter with the whole world.

We belong to the whole world in this sense. It is not that we belong to any little segment of existence. There are no fractions anywhere in creation. Even the minute organisms are not fractions, and the smallest atom is a whole in itself. Our expectations in life are not fragmented. We do not ask for a little of something—we expect the whole of anything. That we are unable to achieve this purpose, that nothing in a wholesome manner comes to us, that we seem to be getting little, small things, is the outcome of our distracted approach in respect of the constituents of the world.

To be a religious person is not an easy job because if religion is the way of living, it is a process of the transmutation of oneself as required in the light of one's placement in the structure of the world. If this is religion, any activity that would not touch the core of ourselves would be a kind of movement taking place on the surface of our being, touching not our own selves, and any work, any activity that proceeds not from our own selves but from the surface of our being will not bring satisfaction to our being. We will get nothing out of this world, inasmuch as our work does not manifest from our own selves. A deed is supposed to be a manifestation of one's intentions. The intention is not merely makeshift. It is not a political adjustment or maneuver—it is a rising to the occasion of the whole that we are.

All spirituality is wholesome in its nature, to repeat once again what we have been considering earlier.

Spirituality is the nature of the spirit, and the spirit is the essence of anything and everything. Inasmuch as there is an essence, a core in all things, there is also a spiritual longing in everything. Basically all asking is a spiritual asking. But because this call of the spirit, this expectation of the soul, passes through the medium of the sense organs, mind, intellect and even the physical relations, it gets diversified and diluted into the form of external contacts, and it loses the vitality with which it rose. It also gets divested of its very intention—the purpose for which we undertake to do anything in the world gets lost in the diversified forms through which this intention of ours reveals itself outwardly.

Our longings are not an outward movement. Our desires are not actually a physical activity. It is not merely the skin of the body that is asking for final freedom and satisfaction. We have a deeper core that remains in a state of dissatisfaction, due to which it asks for that alone which can free it from this eternal longing, the cause of its dissatisfaction. Many a time we find it difficult to extricate the inner content of our basic longing or aspiration from the external forms it takes when it passes through the shells of the personality, the forms of our individuality, or the sheaths of the body, as we say—the koshas, etc. As the light of the sun may appear to assume different colours and project itself through various rays in convex and concave forms or in distorted shapes, so this real asking of ourselves inwardly, which is wholly spiritual, appears to be a physical asking, a social requirement, an outward comfort that we actually seem to be wanting.

The outwardness in which our basic longing gets involved is the difficulty that we are facing in our life. Nothing in us is really outward. We are ourselves. We do not become something external to our own selves at any time. Therefore anything that emanates from us also cannot be an external action. No action can be really called external. The great teaching of the Bhagavadgita is just this much, that work is not an externalised performance. It is only when we are able to envisage the non-externality of the performance we call work that it becomes a divine worship. The divinity in our daily performances arises on account of the divinity that is at the back of our aspirations. Basically, we are divine in our essence. The soul is the symbol of divinity in us. Its longing is the true longing. What it asks for is only what anyone wants. This aspiration is called spiritual longing, a search for truth, and therefore it cannot be an outward time-conditioned performance. But it appears as if we are conditioned by the time process. The body is in the midst of the movement of time, divided into past, present and future. The body is a space which is three-dimensional. Because this is so and because we mistake our body for what we really are, we condition our spiritual longing by the pressures of the dimensions of space and the segmentations of time. Not only that—our longings appear to be physical rather than spiritual.

Do we not ask for physical comforts, though it is sure, as everyone knows very well, that physical comforts are not the only things that we need in the world. Yet we crave for physical satisfaction only. All our longings in the activities of our daily life are just a call for physical comfort. Even

what we expect from human society and the administrative set-up of the government is physical. It is very unfortunate that we seem to want only physical satisfaction, security which is physical in its nature, protection against the annihilation of our physical existence, freedom from the fear of death of the physical body. We seem to be asking only this much, while this is not actually the intention of the soul. Our soul is not placed in space, it is not in time, it is not inside the body—it is a very widespread operation taking place everywhere at all times, in every nook and corner of creation. Spirituality is a universal operation. A spiritual seeking is not one man's work. It is not something that someone does, somewhere independently, unrelated to other factors that conditions life in the world.

Spiritual asking, spiritual seeking, spiritual living, the religious conduct of existence is not a personal affair. It is not personal because spirituality is not limited to the physical personality of anyone. As I mentioned, we appear to be personally conditioned even in our religious practices. It looks as if someone is independently doing some spiritual practice somewhere because of a travesty of affairs that has taken place, because our inner spiritual longing passes through the lens of the covering of the soul, the bodily encasement. Inasmuch as it is so, it is assuming a form which is psychological sometimes, physical at other times. Very unfortunate that the unending joy that we expect from an eternal quest that is emanating from ourselves, has taken the form of a psychological security by means of name, fame, power, authority and a physical security by way of all available comforts and outward protection. The

universal longing, which emanates from the universal centre which is our source, apparently assumes the form of the human desires and the social requirements of the personality. We should free ourselves from this predicament with a great effort of our will, intense reasoning along these lines, and a devoting of sufficient time in our daily life for this kind of meditation.

It is, first of all, essential for us to be convinced that we are more than what we appear to be. We always go with a satisfied feeling and take for granted that we are sons and daughters of people, socially connected with other persons, we are human to the core—we are nothing more, nothing less. If we are only individual units in human society and we are no more than that, our desires should be capable of fulfilment instantaneously by a human adjustment of values and a social adaptation of our life. But any kind of adjustment and adaptation does not give us freedom; we know that finally there is the icy hand of death that strikes on the head of everyone one day or the other in spite of any kind of adjustment that we make and all the protection that we expect, psychologically or physically.

There is a rule and a law, evidently, that defies the arguments of the physical body and human society. That law tells us that we shall be wrenched from this involvement which is physical and social by the operation of factors which are neither physical nor social. The asking for God is supposed to be the occupation of a religious person. Religion is spirituality in practise. Inasmuch as the spiritual vision of things, as we have noticed already, is a universal vision of all things—it cannot be anything else—

the religious undertaking in our daily life also is a practise that is super-individualistic. It is not ever a social performance. It is not a creed to which we belong. It follows from this analysis that religion is not a character of a community; it is not conditioned by anything that we can associate with factors geographical, ethnic, linguistic, etc. It is a common requirement of anything that is alive, anything that is really human; all mankind basically has one longing only—to survive, and to survive at the highest possible reach of achievement.

But it appears that the forms of religion are multifold—there is no universal religion available in the world. This again is due to the fact that the otherwise universal upsurge of the human soul, which is the basic religious asking, gets conditioned by geographical factors, historical conditions and ethnic relations. All this merely highlights that we cannot easily get over the limitations of the physical body and our sense of belonging to a particular group of people called society, the idea of a nation or a country, sometimes going even lower into smaller circles of limitation, thus converting our so-called religion into a fanatic creed of a particular community, or perhaps even a little family.

This difficulty in first of all envisaging the true meaning of a spiritual vision and the difficulty of living a religious life is the reason why we have been told, again and again, that a special disciplinary process under a competent master has to be undergone by every seeking soul. A religious university is called for, evidently, for the training of religious seekers, which has to be carefully guarded from its spontaneous and automatic involvements in conditions

which are other than spiritual and religious. A godly aspiration can get involved in ungodly conditions, which mostly happens, as we see through the passing of the history of religions of the world.

A disciplined approach to the fulfilment of our spiritual longing is usually known as the practice of yoga. Nowadays the word 'yoga' has become so very familiar in the countries of the world that it does not require much of an introduction. Everyone is a yoga student, of a yoga teacher, from one's own vision of what yoga is. But in order that yoga may yield its desired fruit, it has to become the true implementation of the real religion which we are expected to live as a manifestation of a totally spiritual vision of life. We are told that yoga is a kind of union, a unitedness of ourselves with something in all the levels of our being and in all our relationships with people.

We have different kinds of yoga with which we are all familiar. These definitions of yoga relate to the many-sided approach that is possible in the practise of this discipline, in the light of the temperaments of people, varying one from the other, and conditions of life differing in different ways. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences that we concede on account of varying temperaments, basically yoga is an onward march of the deepest roots of whatever we are. This march is a systematic process of expansion on one side and ascent on the other side—it has a width as well as a height.

In our daily routines of yoga we become wider personalities, more than what we physically and individually are. That means to say, we become more considerate in our relationships with people—we become

loving in our conduct, we become appreciative of the circumstances in which other people are placed, we are cooperative and sympathetic with others, we harm not any living being, we deceive not anyone in society, we grab not anyone's property, we hoard not wealth more than what we require for our basic existence, and we live a life of utter truthfulness. This is how we can expand our personality into a cooperative existence so that society, not merely of human beings but even of all beings, gets transformed into a framework of association and cooperation with us. The world is at our back in a relationship of friendliness and sympathy and affection—the world shall love us. We become sarvabhutahite rataha, in the language of the Bhagavadgita. This is how we expand the dimension of our personality—socially, horizontally, as it were. The yamas and niyamas mentioned in the yoga system are this much—a consideration on our part in relation to the world in which we live, so that we do not live as strangers in our own world but become citizens of this universe.

But there is also, at the same time, an ascending factor in the practice of yoga, other than the expansion of a horizontal dimension by way of social cooperation and external consideration of values. This, as the ascending aspect of the practice of yoga, is the higher side of it. It is also said that yoga involves a twofold practice known as vairagya and abhyasa. Maybe from one point of view, at least, we may say that this horizontal dimension of ours, expanding beyond the limitations of the physical body, is a kind of practice involving detachment and freedom from attachment but for which our affection for the things of the

world, our cooperation with things would be impossible—vairagya is this much.

Abhyasa is the direct inward practice of our soul's location in the direction of its movement upwards. Yoga is an upward ascent from involvement in physical matter and conditions which are outward, in the direction of whatever is above it from whatever is beneath it. We look upon ourselves as the physical body only—we have little time to think that we are anything other than this body. Conceding that the involvement of our mind in the body is a fact of life, to that extent we have to be sympathetic enough to also take the body into confidence and convert the body itself into an instrument of higher ascent. It is not true that the body is to be always rejected as something redundant. Nothing can be called unnecessary when we, mentally or intellectually or in our conscious life, get involved in it. Even an utter illusion can become a reality, insofar as we are involved in it. It is no more an illusion to the extent we are involved in that illusion, our mind is in it, our consciousness has enveloped it—to that extent, even utter unrealities are realities only. Do not illusions satisfy us in life? They do so because of our involvement wholly by the entry of our consciousness into the structure of that illusion. So do not say that the body is an illusion, that it is an ass that is to be struck down. It is no more that. As the body has somehow managed to insinuate itself into our own feeling that it is us, it has to be utilised and not rejected in the practise of yoga. This healthy, cooperative, sympathetic, intelligent transmutation of our physical association with this body into a practise of yoga actually is

what is known as hatha yoga. The asanas, the postures and the various disciplines of the muscles and the nerves are physical no doubt, but they are disciplines of such a nature that they stabilise the muscles and nerves and the biological functions in such a way that the chaotic involvement of our psyche in the physical body through the pranas, causing distress to us every day, are properly aligned along required lines, and we assume a health which is not only of the muscles and the nerves but also of the vitality in us.

We are sick people, though we may not be always lying in bed, in a hospital. Our ailment is not always a medical sickness, but it is some kind of discomfort that we always feel in our own selves, caused by a peculiar wrong adjustment between our thought and the body, and our not being aware that we have some inner mechanism operating inside the body. We are just the body, and sometimes we do not even know that we have a mind, as we are wholly occupied with physical relations and physical activities.

The ascent in yoga is also an inwardness that we establish in our own selves. Really the ascent is an inwardised ascent. The ascent is not actually to be construed in spatial terms as a kind of rising from one rung of ladder to another rung of a ladder, the type of ladder which masons or workers use in the construction of a house. That is not the kind of a ladder which we are using in our ascent through yoga. It is an ascent of ourselves through our own selves. The ladder is not outside us—we ourselves become the ladders.

At present we are in the lowest rung of the ladder. We say the mind is lodged in the muladhara chakra, which is to

say that we are wholly involved in the physical world. We are entirely sunk in physical relations, and our desires are entirely material and physical. Our frustrations are caused by the inability of the mind to secure enough physical satisfaction and material comfort. Our instincts are basically animalistic. If we are in the lowest rung of the ladder, which is the entire satisfaction that the senses feel in their contact with physical objects, we are at the lowest level of life. We are unable to find any joy in a life which is not sensory, which is not physically construed, which is not material in nature. To the extent that we require material objects for our comfort, to that extent we are far, far removed from the spiritual requirement.

The physical exercises, known as asanas, constitute therefore a necessary discipline to stabilise the operations of the body in order to facilitate the permeating of the vital energy in us through the pores or cells of the body, making us healthy, first physically and then poised in our minds as a consequence. The practise of yoga is a movement towards the health of the personality and also in the direction of the establishment of a healthy relationship with people.

The mentioned achievement, by way of an expansion of our dimension through social coordination, also is not an easy affair. We generally take to yoga asanas, pranayama, concentration and such practices under the impression that we are wholly prepared for such exercises. It is not always true, because our relations outwardly, our visioning of things, our opinions in respect of the things of the world, are not always as they ought to be. The loves and hates that mostly condition our social life and personal relations will

tell us how far we are from even the initial requirement for the practise of yoga. We have to emphasise again what yoga calls the yamas—they are not so many unimportant and merely ethical instructions, as we consider them to be. The yamas are not a requirement of ethics and morality. They are a direct requirement in our daily life, in our day-to-day relationships.

The yamas—we know very well what these are in the language of yoga—are not instructions given to us to be good. It is not a teaching that we should be moral and ethical in our behaviour, in spite of the fact that it is told to us again and again that it is good to be good, it is proper to be ethical and it is necessary to be moral. It is not an injunction that we are following—it is a necessary recipe that we have to adopt for the freedom that we have to achieve from every kind of illness that is social and relational. We are good, we are moral and ethical not because it is good to be so in the light of social requirement, but because it is essential for the maintenance of our health. Any kind of anti-ethical movement emanating from our internal nature would not merely be an anti-social attitude, it also would be anti-healthy. Anything that is anti in the outer sense is also anti in the inner sense, merely because the relationship that we have with the world is neither inward entirely nor outward entirely—it is a wholesome action taking place vitally within ourselves and the world.

Hence, one need not be too very enthusiastic in devoting all one's time only for hatha yoga, or even pranayama, not knowing where one stands in one's outward relations, in one's opinions, in one's philosophies,

and in one's likes and dislikes. The touchstone of our personality is the attitude that we put on when we are opposed in life. The strength of a person, as well as the essential character of a person, gets revealed during periods of intense opposition from outside. Otherwise these natures are buried and we cannot know exactly what we are. Though we do not expect actual opposition from nature or society, we can intelligently, rationally, spontaneously place ourselves in an atmosphere of this cooperation that we establish with all things, which is an opposition that we instill into our own selves deliberately—opposition to our own instinctive nature, because if this test is not injected into our own personality, we will be put to this test one day or the other by the compulsions of nature and the demands of the higher reaches of yoga.

Very cautious one has to be in treading these levels of yoga. Haste always makes waste, as they say. There is no need to be quick and anxious in the steps that we take in the direction of yoga practice, because as we rise higher and higher in the ascending series, we will find the practice is more and more difficult. The intensity of the difficulty that we may feel in the higher ascents arises because of shaky foundations that we have laid earlier. The structure cannot rise on a foundation that has not been well laid. We cannot lay this foundation by ourselves, inasmuch as we do not know what is ahead of us. The secrets of nature are always hidden from our eyes, and therefore a Guru is essential. We have to be humble students under a competent master. The study under a teacher is a vital communication that we establish with a higher response that comes from nature

that is above us. The Guru or teacher or master is not just an individual like us, another person, but a super-person who is the object of our adoration. A master, or a Guru, or a teacher is not a person like us, because if we consider the Guru as another person like us, naturally there will be an inclination sometimes to change the person and become a student of some other Guru, which is not possible if we understand what a Guru actually means.

A Guru is a spiritual entity, a manifestation of a higher dimension of realisation that includes the dimension which we are occupying—super-social, super-individual and therefore more capable of inclusiveness than we are. In these days, of course, we know very well that it is difficult to find a competent teacher, yet we may say the world is not so bad as to make it impossible for us to find a good teacher. There is some virtue still prevailing—the world is not all devil yet. There is some sort of goodness, dharma—God is still alive, and there is hope for everyone.

It is therefore necessary for each one of us to gradually move upwards, cautiously taking our steps, one over the other, and find enough time to be alone to our own selves for this purpose, and not become too engrossed in the unnecessary activities of life. In our daily program a distinction should be made between the most essentials which we cannot avoid, and the non-essentials which we may avoid. It is not that everything that we do from morning to evening is all very, very essential. Sometimes we like to be a little light-hearted, free in a sense of abandon in our physical and social nature, on which we can put a sort of restriction gradually, which is not very difficult. It is

necessary to feel a kind of greater satisfaction in oneself when alone than when in the midst of people.

We feel miserable when we are alone, mostly. We feel wretched. We would like to go to a shop, go somewhere and shake hands with someone, go to a tea shop and chat with someone, because it is difficult to be alone to oneself. The social nature has entered us in such a morbid way, we may say, that we have ceased to be what we are in ourselves. But to be a spiritual seeker, to be a healthy person is to also realise that it is not always necessary for us to be dependent on external factors. There is a potentiality in us. We are healthy. We can be healthy in our own selves without borrowing things from outside. It is essential, one day or the other, to be alone in our own selves. Alone we have come and alone we will go—we must remember this. Therefore it is necessary for us to realise that even today in social life, in this family life and community life, we are really alone; our friends are not real friends. It is good to be a little wise in our life in this world. We should not wait for a kick from nature forcing us to be alone to our own selves.

We should find a little time to be alone to ourselves, and be free to place ourselves before this great majesty of God's creation. In the early morning, when we wake up from sleep, we are face-to-face not with people, but with creation. What we see in front of us is God's creation. It is not our house that we see in the early morning—it is not our kitchen, it is not our family members, it is not our study, it is not our office—it is creation that we are envisaging. It is possible to widen our vision a little bit, it is so easy, if only we can be little investigative and capable of

going deep into the implications of our daily perceptions. Again, to repeat, all this is difficult for an individual seeker without the help and guidance of a competent master.

We had, in our own life, the blessing of being under the umbrella and protection of a great sage, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Physically he is not visible, but invisibly he is operating even now, and even if one cannot find a teacher due to the difficulties of one's personal life, one can be sure that this great master, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, will act as one's guide even now, though he is not visible to the eyes. If our soul is actually aspiring, if our heart is sincere and if we truly wish to be spiritual and be on the path of the quest of reality, sages and masters of the higher realms will descend for our protection. Nobody is dead in this world. Neither Swami Sivanandaji is dead, nor is anybody dead. They are placed in some realm, a higher potentiality of existence, from where they can operate in a greater and more powerful way than they could through their physical bodies. When God himself can come to help us, why not others who are Godmen? The world is not remote—it is not entirely outside. It is involved in everything that we are, and our sincerity will summon and is capable of evoking the blessings of all the saints and sages, visible or invisible. Great adepts who live in higher realms will descend and bless us, whether we are aware of the way in which this blessing comes or not, because divine grace descends in its own way and it need not work always in the manner we expect it to work.

God's incarnations are supposed to be perpetual, and they take place from moment to moment whether or not

we are able to recognise them. The entire wonder of God's creation, the way of nature, of the process of the history of humanity is a perpetual incarnation that is taking place and a perennial demonstration of the fact that protection comes perpetually from every side. It is available to everyone, at every moment—even just now if only we really ask for that protection and grace from the bottom of our hearts.

Chapter VII

YOGIC VISION

The spiritual seeker, the soul that aspires, is protected from all sides. This seeking centre becomes the cynosure of all the eyes of the guardian angels. The world opens its eyes and gazes attentively at a sincere spiritually aspiring soul. Spiritual aspiration is a miracle, a wonder in its own way. It is not a kind of occupation, a work that is of this world. It is an awakening, a rising from sleep into the perception of a new dimension and a different kind of world altogether. The seeker himself would be surprised when the world takes possession of this sincerity that emanates from spiritual seeking.

In the earlier stages it often appears that the spiritual seeker is abandoned socially and is often helpless, appearing to be isolated in a kind of individual religious practice. There is an unavoidable state of affairs through which one has to pass in the earlier stages of spiritual seeking, namely, the feeling of a kind of social aloneness.

We are born into a family. We are not born suddenly, individually, isolatedly in a desert. We have a father and a mother; we have an atmosphere of members who constitute a family. From our very birth we are in human society—we are never alone. The security, the satisfaction, the joy and the traditional clinging to an environment of this kind is so ingrained in the human person that no one can even dream of living a single isolated life, freed from social connections. So when a surge of spiritual awakening begins to activate itself in the soul, mostly people feel like being away from

human society. Why such feeling arises is something interesting in its own self. What is wrong with our being in human society and yet being a spiritual seeker? No spiritual aspirant in the history of mystical quest has freed himself or herself from this pressure to be alone to oneself whenever this spiritual longing is felt to be very strong in one's own self.

There is a peculiar juxtaposition of factors which creates this impulse to be alone into oneself, and there is a feeling of irksome unhappiness when one is forced to live in the midst of people, though it is not that people around are always bad and are against the welfare of the seeking aspirant. The activity of the soul is an answer to this great question of the intricate and intriguing aspiration to be alone to oneself. On the one hand there is a feeling of insecurity and fear in being socially alone to one's own self. We feel protected in the midst of people. But here we have an apprehension which is not a happy thing—when we are totally alone to our own selves we do not know what will happen to us tomorrow, though we feel that nothing of an unbecoming nature will happen as we are guarded by the society of which we are members. Yet spiritual seeking goes together with the necessity to be alone to one's own self.

This admixture of factors—on the one hand a desire to be alone and on the other hand the feeling of uneasiness in being alone—this mix-up of feeling arises because of an admixture of the stuff of our personality itself. We are neither soul entirely, nor a physical body entirely. If we are wholly soul, the necessity that the physical body feels in its daily life would be out of point entirely, and if we are

wholly physical bodies, there would be no impulsion inside along spiritual lines. We are partly physical bodies and partly not physical bodies. The physical aspect of our existence compels us to be in the midst of physically related society. The fear of annihilation and pain takes possession of the physical body, physical existence and all physical values; but the other aspect of us which is not physical, therefore not social, wishes to be alone to itself, because the spirit is always alone.

The spirit cannot be a social unit. It has no society. It is not a member of a family. The nature of the spirit inside us is super-social, eternity being its essential nature, and therefore it craves to assert its aloneness and non-externalised independence, which is the reason why there is a pressure from inside to be alone to oneself when there is an urgent call of the higher life. But the other aspect of the matter also has to be taken into consideration as long as the spirit feels that it is with difficulty that it can free itself from involvement in the physical body and the physical relations of human society. Thus there is a combination of inwardness and outwardness; a kind of contradiction takes possession of a spiritual seeker— neither can one be alone nor can one be in the midst of people.

The earlier stages of spiritual practice are in a way the most difficult stages, because of it being not so easy to lay proper proportionate emphasis on these two aspects, these two sides of our personality—the spiritual on the one hand, and the physical and the social on the other. Hence the advice of adepts in this line is for a graduated extrication of involvement in human relations and physical needs by a

systematised diminishing of the percentage of involvement and an increase of the percentage of association with the call of the spirit in itself.

In the Yoga Vashishtha, the teacher mentions that in the earliest of stages of spiritual practice only one-sixteenth of the mind can be devoted to God. Fifteen-sixteenths has to go to the world, because the involvement of everyone in the world is so deep that any attempt at an isolation of oneself from the world entirely, at the very beginning itself, would be something like trying to peel the skin of one's own body—a total impossibility. The mind is involved in the body to such an extent that it will not permit any kind of attention that is compelled upon it in the direction of anything that is entirely cut off from its desires, which are manifest through the body and social relations. One-sixteenth of the mind, one-sixteenth of our time alone can be permitted to be given to the pursuit of God. Inasmuch as a large percentage of our life goes to social satisfaction, physical fulfilment of desires and all sorts of empirical longings, the mind will not mind much our occupation in the so-called other-worldly, godly occupation. The control of the mind is often compared to the control of a wild beast. No one can go near the beast, because it is violent in its nature. It asserts its own point of view to such point of vehemence that no one can afford to go near it. The mind has its say in everything, and everything has to be done according to its inclinations, predilections and instincts. Any requisition from the mental nature cannot be opposed by logic, social restrictions or religious forms. Therefore great caution is exercised in the restraining of the mind

from outer involvements, as a ringmaster in a circus who tries to control wild animals takes care to see that he protects himself from any kind of onslaught from the beasts and at the same time tries to succeed in his endeavour to restrain them, control them and gain mastery over them.

We cannot dub the world as entirely bad while we desire it from our deepest recesses. It would be a hypocrisy of attitude to feel one thing and proclaim something else. The taste that the senses feel in respect of things in the world and the delicate nature of our performances through social relations are so very inviting, attractive and comforting that to make a theoretical proclamation of the illusoriness of the world, or the non-utilitarian character of involvement in the world, would be an entirely futile attempt on our part. It is impossible to escape the notice of the world to the extent that we are involved in the world and the world is entirely present in our own selves in a miniature form as a microcosm in the shape of this body. We are carrying the world with us wherever we go, though we feel that we have renounced the world. The world cannot be renounced by anyone who carries the body with him, because the world is not outside. This body is called the world; it is hanging so heavy on our minds and our consciousness, and it has become so intensely part and parcel of what we ourselves are, that we are ourselves the world.

Who can renounce the world, as the world is ourself? The freedom that one can establish in relation to the involvement of oneself in the body, which is regarded as one's own self, is also the extent to which one can be free

from the world outside. Wherever we go we are in the world. We are not away from the world merely because we are seated on the peak of a mountain or geographically we are distant from some particular location. No one can escape involvement in the world, because all spiritual seeking arises from an individual nature originally, which is nothing but an involvement in the physical body. The needs of the body are something like the calls of a devil. It is true that we are not going to appease the devil, because neither can it be appeased nor it would be wise to pamper the clamours of a demon. But there is a way of freeing oneself from the demon, inasmuch as we can place ourselves in some intelligent context with the devil, not by denying what it asks, and not by entirely acceding to its requirements. We give it what it wants, though it is not our intention to go on giving it what it wants always, forever.

From moment to moment the mind finds itself in a necessity to fulfil its potential desires. It asks for its diet every day, and this diet has to be placed before it. Give it what it wants, though we know very well that we have no such idea of continuously giving it what it wants for eternity. As a statesman works wisely in the administration of a country with a consciousness of the past and also an anticipation of the future while he acts in the present, there is a kind of spiritual statesmanship, an adroitness in behaviour on the part of a spiritual seeker. The seeker does not rush headlong, like a fool, into a region where angels fear to tread. He carefully places his steps not to destroy himself in this movement, but to be firm in the steps that are taken, and yet protected even while moving forward.

A very wise suggestion that has come from Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj that we should keep a spiritual diary, together with a daily routine. This is a system of personal check-up that we maintain for assessing the progress that we are making and the amount of control that we have been able to exercise over the calls of the inner nature. Though all the calls of the inner nature have to be attended to properly—the eyes have to see, the ears have to hear, the tongue has to taste and all the senses have to be given what they need—this has to be done only in that percentage and quantum which is essential at the given moment. Excessive pampering is to be avoided. For instance, we are hungry and we are thirsty; we need food every day. We also want drink for the quenching of our thirst, but it does not mean that we should go on eating throughout the day, occupying ourselves only with this work as if there is nothing else for us to do.

The satisfaction of hunger by the giving of a diet to this impulse we call hunger is very necessary indeed, but only in that percentage in which it is required. That is to say, for instance, we have to eat only when we are hungry and we need not eat when we are not hungry. But most of us eat even when we are not hungry. For instance, just at this moment we are not hungry; we have had our breakfast. But if some very delicious prasad is distributed just now, everyone will take it and put it in the mouth. There is no necessity to take it, but the inclination to eat in excess of an otherwise reasonable requirement precipitates into a habit of total involvement in a kind of appeasement of the senses.

The senses take possession of us rather than our taking possession of the sense organs.

Social relations are very necessary. We cannot be brooding individually somewhere in a corner and crying that we have lost everything, the world is not helping us, the world does not want us, we have abandoned our homes, we have no friends, we have no wealth, we have no house, and God is not coming—the One whom we have been aspiring for, for whose sake we have left everything. This is not the way of living a spiritual life. Hasty steps should never be taken even when we are engaged in doing something virtuous and most desirable, even spiritually. Though God protects everyone and He is at the beck and call, as it were, of every devotee, there is a way in which God acts.

Our concept, our idea or notion of God will not always be adequate to the purpose. We may affirm that God is here just now and ready to protect us, give us what we need; but we have a peculiar sentiment, a traditional pressure of the feeling that creates a distance between ourselves and God. Even if there is only one inch distance between ourselves and that source from whom we expect protection, there will be no connection. We know very well that even if there is only a millimeter distance between the lightbulb and the electric socket there will be no light, though it is very near indeed to the point of contact. In a similar way, the psychological distance that we inadvertently create in our own selves between ourselves and God, whom we expect to protect us and save us every day, perhaps prevents God from rightly acting and taking steps in the direction of the fulfilment of our aspirations.

Why do we create this distance? It is the pressure that the world exercises upon us, the world that is involved in the space and time process. Because of the pressure of space, which is the very essence of the manifestation of the world, we cannot help feeling that there is some gap between us and the world. We cannot feel that God is sitting on our lap or is clutching our nose—He is not so near, there is a little bit of distance. This is caused by the element of space that is working as this world. Because of the pressure of time, we feel that God will come a little afterwards—a few minutes, a few hours, a few days, a few months or years afterwards. God will come. He has not come but He is going to come. This futurity of attainment and expectation of God's grace is the subtle activity of the time process which keeps us in anxiety in respect of what has not taken place in the form of a future, and the space that creates the difference. There is therefore an intellectual honesty which affirms that we shall receive all abundance and grace from God Almighty, but a subtle dishonesty from the other side which is the instinct acting from our lower nature, telling us that this is not going to be a simple affair.

Again, to repeat what I mentioned previously, we initially require guidance for the spiritual seeker. To tread the path by oneself independently, to attempt this impossible task, would be to walk on the razor's edge, which will cut either way and will not even be visible to the eyes as to the manner of its working. The weaknesses of the flesh, the involvements of the body and the desires of the mind are to be taken as they are. Call a spade a spade, as they say—we should not imagine ourselves to be more than

what we really are. Mostly, in enthusiasm, we may consider ourselves to be superior to what we actually are. This self-approbation, an over estimation of ourselves, is the work of the ego which does not wish to be cowed down by any kind of advice or instruction from outside; it feels it knows everything for itself and it is not inferior to anybody else. The ego will not take everything that even the spiritual guide gives. It will sift the arguments and the instructions of the Guru and apply reason, so that its own point of view conditions even the more mature advice or instruction coming from a spiritually experienced state which is the Guru or the master. We have umpteen cases of fall in spiritual practice, leading not only to the breakdown of physical health but also to mental aberrations later on.

Most sincere spiritual seekers become nervous in their personality, quick in irascible behaviour, sudden in counteracting whatever is placed before them, and manifest an incapacity to accommodate themselves or even to be charitable in their feelings, in their words and in their outer behaviour with people. A self-assertive nature of a vehement type takes possession of spiritual seekers; they often become more egoistic and self-adumbrating in comparison with others who are not so spiritual. This is the reaction that is set up by the inner operations of the psyche, especially the ego, which objects to any step that we take in the direction of its own control. The nearer we go to the wild beast, the more violent it appears to be in respect of us. If we are away from it, it appears to be calm and quiet, lying still, and it does not appear to be what it really is. The approach that we make to it rouses it into a fit of its

essential nature. So is the ego, so is the instinct, so are the sense organs, so are the desires which are subhuman, animalistic and purely biological.

The presence of these instincts cannot be condemned outright as something totally undesirable, inasmuch as we have been born into a biological instinct and we are biological bodies only. Therefore the needs of this atmosphere, which are physical, social and biological, have to be taken care of in a proper percentage, but with a wise intention, namely, the need to gradually free oneself from these pressures. How? By proportionate feeling, and not going to excess in the act of indulgence. Neither indulgence nor austerity has to be of an extreme type—we should be balanced. Here is a caution exercised, namely, that yoga does not come to a person who is extreme in behaviour, excessive in performance either on the positive side or on the negative side. Yoga will not come to that person who does not eat at all. But yoga does not come to a person who indulges in eating too much, day in and day out, and goes on gorging himself with delicacies. Yoga also does not come to a person who sits idly and does nothing, or to a person terribly active and distractedly moving about here and there, with one business or the other, so busy that there is no time to sit.

Our relationship with God is a state of balance that we establish between the consciousness within and the consciousness that is operating everywhere. It is a system of harmony that is introduced in the relationship between the inner soul and the cosmic soul. Because the universal soul is present in the various degrees of manifestation in the

creative forces of this world, this balance, which is also yoga, has to be struck by degrees, from the point of the lowest type of involvement gradually to the higher kinds of involvement, which are internal and natural. A great scientific attitude is sometimes called for in our spiritual quest. We have to be mathematically precise in keeping a watch over every thought that arises in the mind every day. We have to observe every impulse that arises from us from morning to evening, and even study our dreams, what they could be indicating. We have to be a watchdog of our own selves.

This spiritual diary or the daily routine as advised by Sri Gurudev, to which I made reference, is a kind of a diary, a ready-reckoner, as it were, by means of which we can keep watch on our own selves. We are distracted, disturbed and irritated. We feel a sense of resentment many a time, caused by factors over which we do not generally bestow much thought. The intense resentment and the repulsion that we feel in respect of outer conditions originates from a psychological circumstance that arises from within our own selves, which we have to study. The cause of our behaviour has to be the subject of our self-investigation. If we have behaved in a particular way today, what was the reason for the manifestation of that behaviour. It is not anyone's fault, of course. Neither can we say we were entirely at fault, because outer conditions evoked that behaviour, nor can we say that the outer atmosphere is entirely responsible for it, because there has been a susceptibility on our own side to manifest that behaviour. The vulnerability of a person and the pressure of outer circumstances clash with each

other and create this behaviour. Therefore a study of one's behaviour is also not going to be an easy affair. We do not know who is to be found fault with, whether with oneself or with somebody else. It is neither oneself nor somebody, but a peculiar situation which insinuates itself into our life. That peculiar thing, which is neither us nor somebody, is very difficult indeed to study; a very impersonal approach is required in the study of these circumstances.

We stand above ourselves and even the outer conditions—we become umpires of two parties. The two parties consist of ourselves and of others, the world and the individual, and an observation of what is taking place in the manifestation of a particular behaviour, desire or impulse. This observation is not possible either from one's own subjective point of view or entirely from the point of view of others in the world. We have to take a stand which is neither oneself nor others; we have to be a judge of the very case that we present before the observing entity, which is neither me as an individual nor the world as an outside element. It is the sakshi-chaitanya that is working as the witness-consciousness, which is at the back of our individual consciousness. Sometimes we call it the conscience that is operating in one way. Individually we are jivas, but there is a super-individual witnessing power in our own selves called sakshi that will help us in knowing what is actually the reason behind a particular occurrence in which we are involved, and also the counter co-relate of ours, namely the world, is also involved.

This kind of self-investigation is to be carried on every day by one's own self in the presence and under the

guidance of a spiritual expert. We may also have mutual discussions among ourselves if we are in a fraternity of common aspiration. We are in the midst of several people in an organisation, in an ashram, in a family, in a house, in an office—wherever. There may be one or two persons who think like us, from whom we can find guidance from the concourse that we establish with them in an atmosphere of friendly dialogue, in addition to the help that we can get from intense study.

The scriptures tell us that one-fourth of our knowledge comes from the study that we make, one-fourth of knowledge come from the teacher, one-fourth comes by the passage of time, and one-fourth comes by one's own effort. All these factors go together, and we need not over emphasise any particular aspect here. But to repeat, it is necessary for us to keep a watch on our own selves by maintaining a diary and observing our thoughts from morning to evening, especially thoughts that occur early in the morning when we wake up and thoughts which occupy our minds when we go to bed—the first thought and the last thought, apart from the various thoughts which come to us by our contact with outer society.

Spiritual seeking is an entire dedication. It is a whole-souled surrender to a pursuit, and when this pursuit is taken seriously it engulfs within itself every other pursuit, whether it is economic, official, personal, or whatever be its nature. That which we expect from spiritual seeking is inclusive of all our expectations through other channels of activity. It is a sea, as it were, before us in our contemplations of the objective of spiritual life, a sea into

which every river of desire and extraneous expectation gets involved. But the sensory perception of a multitude of objects in the world often prevents us from taking to this recourse of convincing ourselves that the objective of our spiritual meditations is going to be so large in its inclusiveness that we can find everything there. We may even doubt if our attainment of God is not going to be in some way a loss of certain values in this world. We are going to be bereaved of friendly relations, the joys of life and the many accumulations that we considered very endearing to ourselves—such is the intensity of the weight of the world that we feel is sitting on our head perpetually. Such doubts can persistently enter us and shake our faith in the very object with which we have taken recourse to spirituality.

We have to be in an atmosphere of friendly, cooperative spirits for sometime in the early stages; and we are all in the early stages. No one can be considered as advanced in spiritual sadhana. Such a high-handed feeling should not enter our minds. In the earlier stages we should be in the presence of some friendly, guiding spirits. We require some sort of social security, otherwise the mind will immediately revolt. We may become totally out of gear and lose control of our feelings. The limitation on our social relations may be confined to only a set of people with whom we are concerned, as we are not concerned with all and sundry in the world. Our activities should also be limited to our immediate requirements and urgent necessities, not beyond that. Those conditions which have to be fulfilled for the bare existence of oneself in the world

in a healthy manner have to be accommodated into one's daily life. Those things which are called luxuries—the non-essentials—may be carefully avoided.

A mutual cooperative decision of a spiritual nature taken among friends of the spirit will also be an assistance here in this practice. Though it is true that we have ultimately to be alone to ourselves in our daily meditations and place our aloneness face to face with an aloneness that God Almighty is, we may move slowly in this direction by taking cautious steps through a little fraternal society in which we may live, though we need not be attached to the society. We may eat, yet we need not be attached to food. We may put on clothing as a necessity, but need not be attached to our dress. We may live in a little room, but need not think that the room is ours. The facilities and amenities provided for healthy living in the world need not necessarily mean that we should simultaneously have a sense of possession for those amenities. This is a detached attitude that we can maintain even when all the comforts are available to us.

In this ashram, for instance, the spiritual seeker has every comfort. Comforts beyond expectation have been provided by the great tapasya of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. There is nothing that this ashram lacks. There is every kind of security, every kind of protection, and needs of every kind are attended to. There are avenues for the fulfilment of our longings in a healthy manner, whatever they may be. But it does not mean that we possess anything in this ashram—we have no ownership here. We are blessed by these amenities provided to us—a

temple for worship, a library for study, a kitchen for our food, a room for our stay and social security which we cannot easily find elsewhere. Everything is here, and we should be happy and grateful to God Almighty and Sri Gurudev that we are in an atmosphere of this kind, which is so very ideal in every way—and yet nothing here belongs to us.

Having everything and yet not feeling that one has anything at all is also a spiritual requirement. To be alone to oneself and yet feel that one has everything within oneself is a symbol of spirituality. We have nothing with us and yet we know that we can have everything, if we want. The aloneness of the spirit is also, at once, a universality of protection from all corners of creation. The aloneness of God Almighty is not an isolated social aloneness. In that direction it is that we are moving from the lower degrees of aloneness to the higher ones, which include all the other things that originally appeared to be outside the spirit of being alone to oneself.

The practical technique that we may adopt in our daily life when we practise yoga should be a scientific discipline, precisely conceived, namely, that all eventualities that we may have to face in our spiritual life are clearly before our minds. We are aware of all the future potentialities, the future expectations, the troubles through which we may have to pass, the pitfalls that we may have to encounter, and the difficulties of spiritual seeking in general. The practise of yoga is, for all outer observation, an individual affair. We know that somebody else cannot do it for us. It is not a social congregation that is called yoga practice. It is entirely

our business, yet it is not wholly our business. While we appear to be alone to ourselves, we are not somebody else; we are seekers by our own right. Yet we are related to others in many a way, firstly by social relation, secondly by the involvement of the entire nature in our physical body, and thirdly by the entry of the whole cosmos itself in a miniature form in our own individual personality. So the individual is engaged in spiritual practice no doubt, from one angle of vision, from a particular point of view; but this practice is also universal in its gamut and catch, finally.

It begins with an individual session of meditation, but it gradually expands itself into a region which rises beyond and above the location of the individual personality. We are more than ourselves every moment, though we are only ourselves always. This is a peculiar self-contradictory position that we occupy in this world. We are no one other than what we are, and yet we are connected to everyone, in some way or other, in every respect. We are all humanity even in our individual nature, all nature in our personality, and all creation in our individual make-up. From one point of view there is a social association in yoga practice or in any kind of work altogether. It is also an individual affair, from one point of view, and it is also a cosmic occupation of the mind. The realisation of the highest spiritual reality, which we are aspiring for, is a universal attainment. It is not one person's occupation on an individual track that is isolated from the beaten track of others. We begin from different points, but reach the same level after some point.

In the stages of yoga practice, up to the level or the point of concentration of dharna and dhyana, we appear to

be different, but when we touch the point of real absorption bordering upon the finale of dhyana that is called samadhi, we will find that all pilgrims have landed in a particular point, the peak of attainment—all types of yoga converge at this point. The individualities of the various pilgrims melt into a flow of inclusiveness where all those who have been journeying on this spiritual pilgrimage become a single individual.

So there is a natural aspect, a physical aspect, a social aspect and an individual aspect in our daily life and in our spiritual practice, but there is also a super-social, super-individual and cosmic aspect simultaneously in us. From our individual personality we rise gradually to the universal that is operating through us even now. This spiritual occupation, which is the sadhana that we practise, should be a daily affair in the same way as our breakfast and dinner is a daily affair for us. We would not like to miss it even for a single day, and we feel unhappy if it is not there on some day. Continuity is maintained by way of a vibration that is set up by our practise. When it is done every day, a cyclic operation takes place in the daily sessions of meditation; the cycle gets broken if one day we do not do it. Sometimes in the administration of a medicine for curing an illness, a specific dose is prescribed to be taken at particular intervals, and if the intervals are broken, the chain of action of the medicine breaks and it will not produce the desired result. In a similar manner is this cyclic action that takes place in the continuity of practise in which we have to be engaged every day—it has to become our daily bread.

These are certain considerations that serve to adequately clear before our minds the principles of spiritual life, a vision that lifts itself above itself every moment in a longing that is never satisfied at any moment, in an asking that is more and more, every day, a never-satisfied asking. This unending, timeless desire that we seem to be confronting in our daily life is to be our inner guide, by which we shall guard ourselves from being wholly satisfied with anything that is given to us in this world, even in abundant measures. All the joys of life, even if they come together as a flood from all directions, should not extinguish this endless asking in our own selves. Even after having acquired all the power, authority and joy of an emperor in this world, still there is an asking for more.

We may daily contemplate the very interesting and thrilling calculation of the possible joys given to us in the Taittiriya Upanishad, namely that the highest possible joy that a human being can expect in this world is not even a drop of spiritual bliss. We all know well how this computation is aesthetically presented before us in this very thrilling narration. Can we conceive of a ruler of the whole earth, an emperor of this world, very healthy, very learned, a great scholar, very wise, very discrete, very considerate and very amiable? Can such an emperor of the whole world be imagined as having control, being a master of the treasures of life, living long with all things that we consider good, virtuous, righteous and magnificent? Can we imagine such a person, though such a person never was born, and we do not expect such a king to be on earth at any time in the future also? But if such a king, an emperor of the earth,

can be imagined at least in the mind, what would be the joy of that king? Unthinkable, immeasurable, surpassing understanding would be the bliss of that great emperor. We cannot even dream what that bliss could be. A hundred times more than the conceived happiness of an imagined emperor of this whole world is supposed to be the joy of the astral beings—pitris and gandharvas. A hundred times the happiness of gandharvas is the happiness of the gods in heaven, the angels in swarga-loka. A hundred times more than the happiness of these angels and gods in heaven is the happiness of the ruler of the gods, Indra. A hundred times more is the happiness of the preceptor of the gods, Prajapati, because of his wisdom which surpasses even the power and knowledge of Indra. Infinitely greater is the joy of Virat. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times multiplied over and above the joy of this great master of wisdom and power, Prajapati, is that incalculable bliss of Virat. A hundred times more is Hiranaygarbha, Ishvara—and what could be that Supreme Absolute!

What are the little joys of this world? We are also happy. Are we not tickled by the little satisfactions of life? If we can be pleased even with a little modicum of the worst of things in the world, what about this great emperor that we have been thinking of in our minds, and the great ones that are above; and where is this God Almighty, Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara, Brahman? Knowing that such majesty exists above us, we should be detached from attachments. Vairegya should be the watch and ward of our daily life. The high watermark of our expectations should be a total detachment, not because we have a hatred for

anything, but because our expectations, our desires, our longings, our aspirations transcend and must transcend all these lowers which are included in the higher.

Strangely enough all these levels, all these stages of bliss mentioned are in our own selves even now. They are not far away physically, millions of light years above us. They are ingrained, potentially, latently, in our own little personality, here, just now, this microcosm, this pindanda which contains the entire brahmanda within itself. All the lokas, the fourteen worlds mentioned, are capable of perception in the little cells of this body. The gods in heaven—Prajapati, the preceptor of the gods, Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara—are actively working here in this very fibre of our personality just now, so that we can manifest this potentiality. We hear that Hanuman could manifest immense strength—right from a little minute creature, he could become mountain-like. This means to say that there are possibilities in us which can be struck into the action, unleashed into force by ignition, detonation of whatever we are in ourselves. These great things spoken of in yoga—these majestic things, these wondrous divinities, God Almighty Himself—are inside us, not inside as content in a vessel, but as part and parcel of our very muscles, nerves, cells and our very bones itself. Such is the glory of whatever we ourselves are.

With this joyous beginning, we continue a joyous day of spiritual practise with the hope that we end with that limitless joy. Spiritual sadhana is supposed to be a movement from one state of joy to another state of joy. From bliss the world has come, in bliss it is located, by bliss

it is sustained, and to bliss it shall return one day. Joy is the beginning of this creation, joy is what sustains this world, and joy is also the culmination and the final longing of this world. So live a life of inner quest of the highest spirit with a beginning which is joy, a procedure which is also joy, a progress that is joy, which shall consummate in a joy which is the aim of yoga, of spiritual vision, of religious practice—of our very life itself, this existence in toto.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj took birth on the 25th of April, 1922, and was named Subbaraya. He was the eldest of five children in a highly religious and orthodox Brahmin family well versed in the Sanskrit language, the influence of which was very profound on the young boy. He attended high school in Puttur (South Kanara District, Karnataka State) and stood first in the class in all subjects. Not being satisfied with what was taught in the class room, young Subbaraya took to earnest self-study of Sanskrit with the aid of Amarakosa and other scriptural texts. While still a boy he studied and memorised the entire Bhagavadgita, and his simple way of doing it was not having breakfast or even lunch until a prescribed number of verses were memorised. Thus, within months Subbaraya memorised the whole of the Gita and recited it in full every day; such was his eagerness to study scripture. Reading from the Srimad Bhagavata that Lord Narayana lives in sacred Badrinath Dham, the young boy believed it literally and entertained a secret pious wish to go to the Himalayas, where Badrinath is located, and see the Lord there.

By the study of Sanskrit works such as the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, etc., Subbaraya was rooted more and more in the Advaita philosophy of Acharya Sankara, though he belonged to the traditional Madhva sect which follows the philosophy of dualism. His inner longing for Advaitic experience and renunciation grew stronger every day.

In 1943 Subbaraya took up government service at Hospet in Bellary District, which however did not last long. Before the end of the same year he left for Varanasi, where he remained for some time. But the longing for seclusion and the unknown call from the Master pulled him to Rishikesh, and he arrived there in the summer of 1944. When he met Swami Sivananda and fell prostrate before him, the saint said: "Stay here till death. I will make kings and ministers fall at your feet." The prophecy of the saint's statement came true for this young man who wondered within himself how this could ever happen. Swami Sivananda initiated young Subbaraya into the holy order of Sannyasa on the sacred day of Makar Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1946, and he was named Swami Krishnananda.

Sri Gurudev Swami Sivananda found that Swami Krishnananda was suitable for the work of correspondence, letter writing, writing messages, and even assisting in compiling books and editing them, etc. Later on Swamiji was given the work of typing the handwritten manuscripts of Sri Gurudev, which he used to bring to him every day. For instance, the entire volume of the *Brahma Sutras* of Sri Gurudev, which he wrote by hand, was typewritten by Swami Krishnananda. Swamiji confined himself mostly to the literary side and never had any kind of relationship with visitors, so that people who came from outside never knew that he existed in the Ashram. It was in the year 1948 that Gurudev asked Swamiji to do more work along the lines of writing books on philosophy and religion, which he took up earnestly. From that year onwards, Swamiji was more absorbed in writing and conducting classes, holding

lectures, etc., as per the instructions of Sri Gurudev. The first book Swamiji wrote was *The Realisation of the Absolute*, which was written in merely fourteen days, and is still considered by many as his best book terse, direct, and stimulating.

When it became necessary for the Ashram to co-opt assistance from other members in the work of management, Swami Krishnananda was asked to collaborate with the Working Committee, which was formed in the year 1957. At that time Swamiji became the Secretary especially concerned with the management of finance. This continued until 1961 when, due to the absence of the General Secretary for a protracted period, Gurudev nominated Swamiji as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, which position Swamiji held until 2001.

Swami Krishnananda was a genius and master of the scriptures, and expounded practically all the major scriptures of Vedanta. These discourses were given in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of the Society during the early morning sessions, afternoon classes, and the regular three-month courses. Many of them have been brought out in book form and are authentic commentaries covering the philosophy, psychology and practice of the various disciplines of yoga. Swami Krishnananda is thus the author of forty-one books which were printed during his lifetime, fifteen books which were printed after Swamiji's Mahasamadhi, and twenty-four unprinted books which are published on Swamiji's website, each one a masterpiece in itself. Only a genius of Swamiji's calibre could do this in the midst of the enormous day-to-day volume of work as the

General Secretary of a large institution. Swamiji is a rare blend of karma and jnana yoga, a living example of the Bhagavadgita's teachings.

Such was Swami Krishnananda's literary skill and understanding of the entire gamut of the works of Swami Sivananda, numbering about three hundred, that when the Sivananda Literature Research Institute was formed on the 8th of September, 1958, Sri Gurudev himself made Swamiji the President. Again it was Swami Krishnananda who was appointed as the President of the Sivananda Literature Dissemination Committee, which was formed to bring out translations of Sri Gurudev's works in the major Indian languages. From September 1961, Swamiji was made Editor of the Society's official monthly organ, *The Divine Life*, which he did efficiently for nearly two decades.

Swami Krishnananda was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev in a cryptic statement, which he himself has amplified in his article, [He is a Wonder to Me!](#) Swami Krishnananda, as the embodiment of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, lived in the state of God-consciousness and guided countless seekers along the path of Self-realisation. Swamiji attained Mahasamadhi on the 23rd of November, 2001.

All of Swami Krishnananda's books, plus many discourses, audios, videos and photos can be found on Swamiji's website at www.swami-krishnananda.org. According to Swamiji's wish and with his blessings, these are available freely to all. May the blessings of His Holiness Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be with us always.