

THE ASCENT TO MOKSHA



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a series of discourses that Swamiji gave in the ashram's Bhajan Hall from April to September 1972. It is the first series that was recorded on tape. Some of these discourses were uploaded as individual talks, but now they have been put together into a single series.

Discourse 1

THE ART OF RECEIVING KNOWLEDGE

In the art of the reception of knowledge, we have to be prepared in the same manner as any good artist would equip himself or herself for the execution of the task. We are at the feet of Masters or Gurus, we are in institutions and in holy places for the reception of higher knowledge, and this process of the receiving of knowledge is an art which demands of the seeker an uncanny preparation and a suitable disposition of the mind.

It is not possible to commence a work of art with either an intellectual or an emotional prejudice. Such an efficient work cannot be commenced when we are intensely tired, fatigued, or exhausted either physically or mentally, or when we are in a very exasperated mood. When we are not prepared to receive anything from outside, when the system is in an intense state of ebullition and activity, the function of art cannot be successful, nor can knowledge be received in such a condition.

The precondition of the reception of knowledge is the capacity to receive. What is important is not the nature of knowledge that comes to us, but the state in which we are and the condition of the entry of knowledge into our personality. Under given conditions, we can either receive knowledge or repel it. Nature is abundant, full of resources, never poverty stricken at any time; still, with all this richness and plenitude of nature we can intensely suffer pangs and agonies of life when we cannot receive this abundance into ourselves. Knowledge is one aspect of the universal nature, and when it tries to gain entry into ourselves we have to be prepared to properly receive it.

Most students of spiritual life who practise yoga are too enthusiastic, beyond the permissible limit. Overenthusiasm is not a virtue because anything that is beyond its limits is likely to come back to its original state, and when the heat subsides there will be no enthusiasm and no energy to move forward. The prejudice of the emotion and the intellect has to be avoided very carefully when we are eager to receive the knowledge that can save us from the pains of life.

There is a vast difference between reception of knowledge in the schools and colleges of arts and science in the world, and the reception of knowledge in the school of life. We are likely to commit the error of entertaining the notion that we can gain the higher knowledge of life in the same way as we can learn the arts and sciences in institutions such as colleges and universities. There is a vast difference, a gulf of difference between the two processes. An inability to understand the difference between the two types of knowledge reduces even an enthusiastic seeker of Truth to a

failure in life. It is not learning or information that we are trying to gather in holy places. It is not knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term. What is the distinction between the knowledge we are familiar with, and the saving knowledge for which we are cursing, for the sake of which we are at the feet of Masters, and in search of which we are hunting institutions in the world? What is the difference? It is all the difference conceivable.

Learning does not save us, though it can help us in a limited purpose. We can be in various kinds of difficulties. There are degrees of problems of life, and it is only the outer crust of the difficulties of life that can be encountered by what we call learning or education in the modern sense of the term. But we have deeper problems that we can think of in times of leisure and satisfaction. We can be in pain from which no one can save us, and such catastrophes can befall us when it will look as if the whole world is of no utility to us. At that time it is that the higher knowledge will come to our aid. When the ground under our feet seems to give way, when the whole of life seems to lose meaning for us, when we do not know whether we are to live or to die – when we are face to face with such conditions, learning does not help us because learning will vanish like a wisp of wind when such excruciating pains of the spirit come and engulf us. We should not, therefore, commit the mistake of thinking that we can gain that wisdom of life which we can use in times of utter desolateness by giving mere lip sympathy to the benefits of life.

Knowledge, in the true sense of the term – the knowledge which we are really after and which brings our mind to a permanent state of composure, giving it the final touch of satisfaction – can be had only if we pay the price for it. The price for this knowledge is high enough. All our time mostly goes in the preparation for the reception of this knowledge. Most of our efforts are in the direction of equipping ourselves for receiving this august guest, the illumination of knowledge, into our personal life. Just as when a distinguished guest comes to our house we are eager to make the place clean, sweep the cobwebs, dust the floor, decorate the seats, and so on, a sort of preparation is demanded of us for the reception of the higher illumination, the knowledge that we are seeking.

It should be clear to us at the very outset that knowledge is not very much interested in us. We are interested in it. It is not too eager to thrust itself into us. It is we that cry for it from birth to death, and in order to receive it, we may have to prepare the ground in a proper manner. The cobwebs within us are the prejudices of personality, which hardly die in any individual. It is easy to imagine that we are well off in culture and the learning of the spirit. As long as we are contented with the achievements that we have made in life, knowledge is far off from us. A self-contented person is contented even with knowledge. That is the meaning of contentment. So if

we are already filled, we cannot be filled again with something else: Empty thyself, and then only I can fill thee, not before that. This emptying of oneself is a very hard job.

There have been honest seekers, *sannyasins* even, monks, *sadhakas*, *brahmacharins*, who have abandoned homestead and chattel and come in search of Truth; they have spent years in lonely places, secluded spots, and after maybe ten years, twenty years, fifty years of apparent effort in what they thought was the proper direction, dissatisfaction came down upon their heads like a dark cloud. If we study the lives of *sadhakas*, even honest seekers who are really enthusiastic about realising Truth, it would be really a psychological history of specific personalities. It is seen that in the end, years of effort appear to go in vain because while the effort was there, it was not properly directed. The enthusiasm was there, but the intelligence was lacking. Our intelligence should go together with our emotional upsurge. It is not enough if we merely weep and cry. We have also to understand. It is true that we have to weep. There are occasions when weeping is essential, but that is not the only thing that we are called upon to do.

Our agony of the spirit, which is an emotional upsurge, has to be simultaneously illumined with the light of understanding. This is what is called the wisdom of life, quite different from what we call learning, education, or holding a degree. Wisdom is different from learning. There is an old saying: Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It will not come so quickly, because the prerequisites for the reception of this wisdom are awfully lacking in the majority of persons.

The greatest defect in all of us is inadequate understanding of the circumstances in which we are placed. We may be good people who are honestly seeking redress from pains of every kind, and we may have spent years leading a holy and pure life. Nevertheless, we may not have the necessary equipment of understanding the situation in which our individual personality is placed, which is why there is a conflict between our feelings and our experience in life. It is also the reason why we are at loggerheads with our neighbours, with our community, with nature as a whole, and with the world in general.

Our understanding is not equal to the task. The reason behind this is that our emotion has taken an upper hand. Emotion is in a greater percentage than understanding, and so while we are very eager to achieve something, we have not got the equipment to do it.

We must be a good person, but also a very intelligent person. Sri Ramakrishna was never tired of saying that a devotee is not a fool. He is a very wise person who can understand everything. Though he may weep for his separation from God throughout the night in agony like the Gopis of Brindavana, he is a very wise person. He knows where he stands. He will not ask for what he is not equipped to receive. Our energies and our powers have to be assessed before we embark upon any task.

The practice of yoga, the living of the spiritual life, is the ultimate task upon which we are now to embark. But before we enter into any field of activity, it is very essential to know what our powers are, what our strength is. Are we up to the task, or is there any shortcoming in ourselves? Any work needs a proper instrument for working, and here the instrument is our own self. It is not an external tool that we can use here. Our instrument in the reception of knowledge is our own body, our own mind, our own intellect, our own feeling, our individuality, our personality. Is it ready to receive the knowledge? Have we the needed powers, the equipment to tune ourselves to those conditions which are amenable to the entry of knowledge into our personality?

We must be very humble. It is very, very important. It is no use assuming airs of importance or achievement in this field of true learning, of real knowledge of the wisdom of life. The might of the cosmos, the majesty of the universe, is such that before it our personality pales into insignificance. There is no use assuming importance before the terror of the cosmos. We are nothing before it. We can be blown away like a dry leaf by the wrath of nature.

There is no real importance in any person or individual. It is just vanity, emptiness, hollowness which makes us think that we are something. We are really nothing, if we are honestly to attest our worth under the circumstances of the vast environment of creation which oftentimes stares at us, perhaps, with suspicion.

The initial precondition would be of humility. Do not assume airs of knowledge, as if you know so many things. You must have read many books, and you may be holding some university degrees, but it is of no avail here in the university of life where knowledge is identical with being. It is the difference between learning and physical enlightenment. The learning of colleges is information about an object – knowledge of the structure of things, knowledge about something. It is not knowledge of being. But knowledge that is en rapport with the object is spiritual knowledge.

Such knowledge is far from us. This is the reason why great masters like Acharya Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and great saints in the past and the present have been untiringly hammering upon our mind that intellectual and emotional preparations are very, very important – equally important, if not more important than the studies that we have to make subsequently.

Humility is most essential, a character which ninety-nine percent of people lack. There is no goodness of behaviour as long as humility is lacking. We cannot be called a good person as long we have not got this virtue of humility, because humility comes by the knowledge of our true nature. When we know what we really are, we automatically become humble. As we do not know what we are, as we have a wrong idea, a wrong notion of what we are, we become vain, audacious and arrogant.

Hence, the search for knowledge is a search for the facts of life, which include facts of our own self. Knowledge is knowledge of facts. The primary object of investigation

is not some distant thing or entity, but that which is nearest. That which is nearest to us is our own self. Nothing can be nearer than that. When we have a thoroughgoing misunderstanding about ourselves, and inasmuch as we are going to use this instrument of our personality in knowing the facts of other objects in the world, our efforts will be a failure if the instrument is not up to the mark.

This is the reason why earnest seekers of yore went to Masters, Gurus, and prostrated and surrendered themselves before the Master. These days, surrender is unknown. We think it is a weakness, a kind of absence of guts or depth. Far from it. A man with depth or guts in the wrong sense is going to achieve nothing. He will be a failure. His life will crack into pieces when it is tested in the touchstone of life.

Though history advances, ages roll on, times pass by, the essential facts of life do not change. We may think that we are advancing, that the twentieth century has come far above the shoulders of the earlier centuries. Unfortunately, we are apt to imagine that we are advancing into higher states of freedom and knowledge under a misapprehension. Whatever be the fact, the essential problems have not changed. The old questions persist even today, and what people were seeking thousands of years ago, we are seeking that very same thing even today, though with a different set of instruments and with a different state of mind.

The problems of ancient times are also the problems of today, of modern times. The ancient man's hunger is not different from the modern man's hunger. It is the same. Our worries and his worries are identical in essence. Though the causes of these worries may be different, the worries are the same. The essentialities of life are identical in all the ages, so the principle approach prescribed for the reception of knowledge cannot change. It flows from the Master, the Guru. That surrender of personality, that goodness of behaviour, that humility of conduct is to be the same even today.

Suffice it to say that an egoistic person can receive no knowledge. Knowledge is the opposite of ego. Knowledge is the condition where the ego completely melts like camphor, without any residuum. So where there is even a trace of ego, there is no knowledge. Where there is a trace of false self-complacency, there is no entry of knowledge. Where one becomes one's own Guru and thinks there is no one equal to oneself, knowledge is far.

There are people equal to us, and more than equal. We should be very simple and very humble. The great master Manu in one place says in his Smriti, *viṣād apy amṛtaṁ grāhyam bālād api subhāṣitam, amitṛād api sadvṛttam amedhyād api kāñcanam*: Knowledge has to be gained wherever it is available. You should not think that you possess all the knowledge. Even a child can speak wisdom to you. Even an enemy can be a source of inspiration to you. Your enemy is not necessarily a bad person. He may be a source of great inspiration, virtue and piety, though he may be

some respects. Nectar has to be extracted even from poison, says Manu. Knowledge and words of wisdom may come even from a child, and good conduct even from an enemy, just as we pick up a nugget of gold even if it is in dung.

The universe is vast, beyond the ken of our perception and understanding. Whatever be the equipment of our knowledge, the gamut of the universe exceeds our knowledge, so we have to be humble. Humility and goodness mean one and the same thing. Whatever be our learning and knowledge, there is something beyond it. It can never be exhausted. The object of knowledge is infinite. It has no limits; therefore, we can never be fully possessed of the entirety of knowledge at any time in the world. There is always something over and above us, beyond us.

There is a story that Indra, the king of the celestials, having learned all the arts and sciences and mastered the sixty-four *vidyas*, went to Brihaspati, the genius, with a pride of having possessed knowledge. He queried the master: "Sir, how much have I learnt?"

Indra thought that a very satisfying answer would come. He expected Brihaspati to reply that Indra knew everything: "You are now complete with knowledge." That was the answer Indra sought, but Brihaspati said nothing. He took Indra to a seashore where there were miles of sand and he could not even see the end of the beach. There Brihaspati took a handful of sand, showed it to Indra, and said, "So much do you know, and so much is still there." Indra returned shamefaced. This is to show us that the smaller we become, the greater are the chances of redemption.

We come to the point, then, that a Guru is necessary. We can achieve nothing without a Master or a Guru, a guide in spiritual life. We may be holding many degrees, but we need a Guru because it is a path of pitfalls with many dangers, unforeseen problems and difficulties which we cannot dream of today. What is ahead of us, we cannot know. We should not be under the impression that the concept of God has entered the mind and now we can suddenly jump into meditation. It is nothing of the kind. "A Guru is one," says the Upanishads, "who is a Brahmasrottriya and a Brahmanishta – one who is well versed in spiritual lore, and one who is also practically and personally established in the experience of spiritual truth."

Two qualifications are mentioned in respect of a Guru. He is not merely learned in spiritual lore, but he is established in the experience of Truth. This qualification is given with a specific intention because there are various types of Gurus. Masters are of various kinds. They are not all of the same category. There are some whom we cannot understand at all. We may be living with them for years, but understand nothing about them. Sometimes we have a wrong knowledge about them. We may even leave them in disgust, thinking that they are good for nothing. They may be geniuses and may be the real persons to save us, but we will not know anything about them because

they will not exhibit their character. There are Gurus who can be known, and there are Gurus who cannot be known.

Now, these characteristics of the Gurus mentioned in the Upanishads are the Brahmasrotriya and the Brahmanishta. It is specifically stated that a preceptor must be one who has a personal contact with Reality, and also be capable of speaking about it. Both these characteristics are to be present. We may be a Master, but we may not be able to speak for various reasons, such as lack of language or lack of interest. There are Gurus who will not be interested in us. And there are others who may not have the linguistic equipment to speak to us, or have various other difficulties. They cannot answer all our questions, nor will they be interested in answering questions. They will have a simple answer to all our questions.

Thus, a teacher who will be able to satisfy a seeking soul is supposed to be vastly equipped with the scriptural lore, as well as having his own personality deeply rooted in the Spirit. He is perfect without, as well as within. These Masters are difficult to find these days. We may be having one or the other type, but not a combination of these characters. There may be Masters who will not be accessible to us at all, and we will not gain anything from them because they are not accessible. But there may be people who are eager to teach us but do not have personal experience within, so they cannot carry conviction.

Difficult it is to find guides and spiritual teachers who have personal experience so that it can carry conviction, and also an interest as well as the capacity to express themselves and teach us in the proper manner. In this age, these Masters are rare. They are becoming fewer and fewer in number. Yet they still exist, and are not completely extinct.

So what I mean to say is, whoever be your Guru or Master, whoever be the guide that you have chosen, your attitude towards the Guru should be of humility, surrender, and a complete emptying of yourself for the receiving of the knowledge.

It is also mentioned that if we have no trust in the Guru, we will receive nothing from the Guru. This is because knowledge is also connected with morality, and it is not merely intellectuality. While learning of the university is only intellectual and has nothing to do with morality, wisdom is quite different. It is inseparable from a moral life. There is no use merely being an intellectual genius bereft of moral stuff. Spiritual wisdom is a blending, a coalescing, a melting together of superior understanding and a high calibre of morality. Distrust in the Guru is a lack in the moral sense of the term. It is a great shortcoming. Students are likely to observe the Guru with their physical eyes, perceiving defects and poking holes in their lives, which implies that the student is superior to the Guru. Otherwise, we cannot see defects. We think we are greater than the Guru, which is why we are able to see defects. If this is your attitude, bid goodbye to spiritual life and search for a job in the world.

Difficult is the search for wisdom. Difficult it is to find a Guru. Most difficult is God-realisation, almost an impossibility for the majority of people. We will end up with a sense of disgust and hopelessness, as if it is all a wild-goose chase.

But one of the qualifications expected of the disciple is tenacity. We must be persistent in our efforts, like the story of Robert Bruce. He observed a spider trying to climb up, and though it fell down many times, finally it somehow gained strength and climbed up. This gave courage to Robert Bruce, and he entered the battlefield again, and won victory.

So should be our life. We are likely to be disappointed in the earlier days of our spiritual pursuits because what we see in the beginning is not light, but darkness. When the ocean was churned for nectar, what came in the beginning, at the outset, was poison, not the nectar that was searched for. We have always to remember that the object of our quest will not come at the very outset. It is mud and dust and dirt and thorn and trouble that we see in the beginning. It is said that when we want to drink the sweet milk of the cow, first we have to dirty our hands with cow dung by cleaning her, washing her, tending her, bringing grass to her, and so on. Then only can we get the sweet milk. We cannot expect merely the milk and have nothing to do with the cow. That would not be possible.

So is knowledge, the milk of knowledge, a difficult thing to acquire. It requires persistent effort, humility of attitude, and the readiness, which is rare to find in people – the readiness to gain knowledge from wherever it is available. The difficulty of the acquisition of knowledge is beautifully stated in a passage of the Chhandogya Upanishad where Narada, the master of all learning, is in a state of despondence. The seventh section of the Chhandogya Upanishad gives us a beautiful narration of the search for knowledge by a true disciple. Narada was a great master. There was nothing which he did not know. He was an expert in all the branches of learning, in all the arts and sciences, but he was grieved at heart. He was sorry at the core. He was unhappy, not knowing what was the cause thereof. In great humility, in utter submission of the spirit, Narada approached the Master, Sanatkumara, and implored the sage, “Master, I have learnt all the arts, all the sciences. There is nothing which I do not know either in the heavens or on earth. Every blessed science I know, and all the arts I have studied, but Master, my heart is unhappy. I am grieved at the bottom of my being. Take me beyond this ocean of sorrow by the illumination of knowledge.”

What was the reply of Sage Sanatkumara to Narada? “It is all words, only names that you have learnt. This is not knowledge. All the art and all the sciences that you are equipped with, all the wonder of the earth and the heavens is mere name. It is not substance. You have gathered the shadow, but not caught the substance. That is why you are unhappy, Narada, in spite of knowing so much.”

“What is the substance, Master? Will you please initiate me into it? You call all my learning only a name, mere words, useless ultimately. Can you take me to that substance of wisdom which shall bestow on me perennial peace?”

Gradually the mind of Narada is taken step by step, stage by stage, through a winding path leading to the vast universe outside, searching for wisdom everywhere, but not finding it in anything. The wise Sanatkumara knew the psychology of teaching. He did not suddenly give the answer. No wise teacher will suddenly, abruptly, answer questions. He would rather follow the Socratic method, as they say, which is the art of taking the mind of the disciple gradually from known realities to unknown ones. We should not speak about unknown facts immediately. That would not be the psychology of teaching. We should take our stand on facts that are accepted, that are taken for granted, which are very clear on the face of it. This is the character of a good teacher. We should not rebut or refute anything suddenly, because then we will also be rebutted. So we always accept first: “Yes, okay.” Probe that accepted fact stage by stage and make the mind of the disciple, the mind of the student, walk of its own accord, with its own strength, through the stages of the path.

Narada’s mind was taken outwardly first, because that is the pleasure of the mind. We travel far distances and are happy. But if we are asked to sit in one place, we are unhappy. We are very happy to travel far in a jet plane, but if we are told to keep quiet and do nothing, we are unhappy. “What is this nonsense?” we think.

So Sage Sanatkumara took the mind of Narada to the vaster cosmos first – to the five elements, to the vast earth, to realms of water, fire, air and ether, and to the other subtler realms of the wider cosmos. “Do you find happiness anywhere? No. There is something beyond, there is something beyond.” At every stage of ascent, Sanatkumara began to say that there was yet something beyond. “What is that, Master? What is that which is beyond even this state?” asked Narada.

Sanatkumara, with a long tour, came from the outer cosmos to the very heart of Narada. Here is the source of all troubles, and here is also the reservoir of happiness. Here is the floundering, blundering seeker. Here is also that which we search for. That completeness, that perfection, that plenitude, that plenum, that happiness which Narada sought was actually told to be deposited at the very bottom of the being of Narada himself. We cannot see our own back. What we are searching for is behind us, and we are moving ahead in search of our back, which we cannot see. If we walk miles and miles forward to see where our back is, we will not see it because it is behind us. How will we see it?

So this futile effort of moving, marching or acting in the wrong direction is not going to bring the knowledge that we are after. That which we are searching for, that which we are asking for, that which is the answer to our questions is behind the question itself, is at the background of our minds. It is the presupposition of our very

existence. This is why the search for knowledge has become so difficult. It is the I of the I, the understanding of the understanding, the mind of the mind, says the Upanishad. The eyes can see things, but who can see the eye behind the eye? The eyes through which these physical eyes behold objects, that eye behind the eye, is the object of our quest.

Ordinary effort is of no avail in spiritual life. Ordinary effort does not bring success in spiritual life because what is needed is a different type of effort altogether. It is a march, if at all we can call it a march or a forward movement, a march towards that which the eyes cannot see, the senses cannot grasp, the objects cannot exhaust in their confinement. This knowledge is limitless expanse, and therefore, it cannot be observed as the observed things of the world. Knowledge is limitless. How can we see limitlessness?

This is the background of spiritual life, which puts us almost in a state of consternation. The lives of more serious students than we people, students who lived in the past, whose lives I would advise you to study very well for your own benefit, will teach us that life spiritual is not a joke. You cannot be a big person in the world and also a big person in the eyes of God. That would not be possible.

Every gain in the realm of the spirit looks like a comparative corresponding loss in the realm of nature and of the world. The more we gain of God, the more also do we seem to lose from nature, which we are not prepared to accept. We do not want to lose anything from the world of nature or the world of our personal lives. Therefore, we have received nothing of the divine life, and God seems to be far away from us yet, almost an impossibility still.

Again I come to the point, that all this is a hard job. None of us can be said to be properly equipped for the task. To reiterate, a Guru is essential. You should not say that you cannot find a Guru. Generally, the person whom you have found most satisfying among all the others that you have seen in the world may be taken as your first Guru. And when you are advanced, you will be brought in contact with the proper Guru. The saying that the Guru comes rather than the disciple goes is true to a large extent. When you are ready to receive the higher knowledge, the Guru will come to you. You will be brought in contact with a suitable Guru by the laws of God Himself, so you need not be too anxious about it. But you have to be ready to receive.

While it is our duty to keep ourselves ready for the reception of knowledge, the entry of it into our personality is God's business. We can plough the field, sow the seeds, allow the water to flow, but we cannot create the harvest. That is in the hands of somebody else. The harvest shall take care of itself, provided we have properly done everything that is within our capacity.

Again, the primary precondition of the reception of knowledge in spiritual life is goodness of conduct and humility of behaviour. In the light of the majesty of the

Almighty, the dignity of the cosmos, the vastness of knowledge, and difficulty of attaining the Immortal, it is very important.

Be a small person. Do not try to be a big person. The smaller you are, the better for you. He that is on the ground fears no fall. If you climb a tree, there is a fear of falling. Do not climb a tree. Be on the ground. Be small, be humble, be good, be little, be the last person in the world, not the first, not the middle. Be the last person. It may look that you are perhaps the most unwanted person in the world. Let it be so.

Thus, be ready for the grace of God. Be the smallest, the most unwanted, the most unknown, unbefriended. Let there not be any misconception that importance in the eyes of people or status in society and the world has anything to do with spiritual life. Absolutely, it has nothing to do with spiritual life. It has to be made clear before your mind's eye so that your search may be an honest asking and not merely a duplicity or self-deceit of the heart.

With prayers to the Almighty, the Supreme Being, may we tread on the path of this supreme attainment which is God-realisation, the realisation of Truth or the Self, which may, we hope, come to us by the grace of God in this very life.

Discourse 2

UNDERSTANDING AND EXCEEDING OUR LIMITATIONS

In a cinematographic projection the pictures move at the rate of perhaps sixteen per second, but we do not see this movement at all. Though we may see a few minutes of a person standing in the film projected on the screen, hundreds of frames must have been rushing forward with great speed to give us this impression.

Now, how does movement of a rapid rush of pictures give the impression of a stable form? It is because of a stationary screen behind it which is not moving together with the pictures. Just imagine the screen also is rushing forward with the same speed as the pictures. What will you see there? You will not see anything, and get up and go away. The eyes are satisfied by having perceived a beautiful show because of a permanent, unmovable screen behind the moving pictures. This is a well-known fact needing no further explanation.

This instance gives us an idea as to what actually happens to us in our daily perceptions of objects. That someone is sitting in front of me for a few minutes or that I see objects – a mountain in front of me or, for the matter of that, any other thing in the world involving a stability of character even for a few minutes – is on account of the fact that there is a screen behind the moving pictures of this panorama of creation, the screen itself not being directly seen. When we see the picture, the screen is not seen. When we see the screen, the pictures cannot be seen. Go to a cinema and try to concentrate on the screen behind the pictures. You will not see the pictures. You will not enjoy the film at all because you are concentrating on the screen. But if you enjoy the moving pictures, the screen appears to be absolutely absent. It is not noticed there at all.

So when we enjoy the drama of this beautiful world, the screen behind it, on which this drama is played, is not seen. But if we can for a moment concentrate our mind on the presence of a screen which ought to exist there in order to give meaning to the show, then we will not see the show. The world will not be visible at all. We will begin to see something else behind the formation of things.

But, fortunately or unfortunately for us, we all see pictures. We are all the audience, as it were, seeing the beautiful show of this vast creation. We are not interested in seeing the screen behind it. We have not bought a ticket for that. Let the screen take care of itself; we see the beautiful show.

All this world is thus a transient moving picture show projected before our senses by a director of a theatre, who is also behind us somewhere, in whom we are not interested for obvious reasons, and we are getting on happily in the world. But if we lift the screen, then what happens to the show? There will be no show.

The reason why objects look permanent in their character – the table appears for a few moments in front of me – is that there is a stable being underlying the impermanent process. As philosophers generally put it, there is being underlying becoming, existence at the bottom of change of character.

If something changes, there is also something which does not change. This is common logic. If something moves, it implies that something simultaneously does not move. If everything moves, movement cannot be seen. We see some person running because we ourselves are not running parallel with that person at the same speed. If two trains are running parallel to each other at the same speed, it does not appear to a passenger in the train that the trains are moving. But if one train is stable and another is moving or we are on the platform observing the movement of a train, we see the train is moving.

We say the river flows, and so on, because the bed of the river does not flow and we are standing as an observer of the flow of the river. If the observer, or the background of the motion, moves at the same speed as the motion, the speed cannot be observed. The fact of the observation of change is enough proof of there being something which does not change. If the fact that everything is transient, everything is momentary, everything is perishable can be known by us, it will be sufficient proof that there is something which does not change, does not move, or is not perishable. If everything is perishable, we cannot even know that everything is perishable because that would contradict the very principle of logical thinking.

The mind which perceives the objects of sense is incapable of discovering this fact of the impermanence of things, and that the transient picture show of the forms of the world is being juxtaposed with a being which is invisible. This is called *adhyasa*, or superimposition, and with this confusion that the mind makes between permanence and impermanence, it is unable to know what actually is happening. The whole of our personality is involved in this erroneous perception of the world. Neither do we see the permanent element behind the impermanent show of forms, nor do we discover the impermanence of forms. There is a mixture of the two elements so that we do not see either this or that completely or thoroughly, as it really is. We cannot understand anything properly on account of this admixture of characters which the mind makes, or creates, in every form of cognition or perception.

Thus, the mind can know neither the truth of the impermanence of things nor the truth of there being something permanent behind this impermanence, as our whole personality is thus involved in this confusion in the form of wrong perception. Just as we cannot know anything outside, we also cannot know ourselves properly. There is a lack of discrimination. This muddle is called *samsara*, once again. When we say we are in *samsara*, we mean that we are in a state of utter confusion, knowing nothing whatsoever within us or outside us. This is one mistake that we commit. The

impermanent world is mistaken for a permanent reality, in which confused perception of our own body and individuality, our personality, is involved.

We are also involved in another blunder of mistaking the objects for a part of our own self, which we unwittingly do every day. You will be wondering as to how an object can be regarded as a self. No one can be so foolish as to imagine an object to be the self. But we do it every day without knowing what we are doing. Unless we establish contact of a personal character with an object, we cannot make a personal observation of it.

In the language of epistemology, or the theory of perception, a process is described by which the mind undergoes a tremendous transformation in the perception of an object. It is not a simple process. We do not just look at a mountain and it appears. An internal change of an invisible character takes place within the mind when there is a perception. There are so many things that are happening within us that we are not aware of. And in this perception of an object by the mind, in which the mind is involved in a process, it is again subject to a double error. The error which the mind commits in all perceptions is twofold. One is of a general character, and the other is of a purely personal nature.

We can perceive objects in two ways. When I look at a person, I can see him as a person, as a human being, pure and simple. That is general perception. But a personal perception is to look upon that very same person as a father, a mother, a friend, an enemy, this or that, in relation to one's own emotional structure. We know what difference it makes in perception. The very same person appears to be something else to us when our emotions are tethered to the objects. That person is not merely a human being; he is also our father. That man is not merely a person; he is our enemy, and so on. Hence, perceptions can be emotional or they can be purely indeterminate, general perceptions. We may see a tree that is growing wild in a forest, in which we are not interested at all, or it may be a beautiful mango tree in our own garden, which we would not like others to touch, and so on.

We have perceptions which are general, and perceptions which are specific. These specific perceptions are more dangerous and more harmful than the general ones, though the general perceptions are also erroneous, as we will see shortly. The specific emotional perceptions are what are called *samsara sagara*. Our emotional connections with the objects of the world are responsible for our pleasures and pains. Our perception of a mountain in front of us is not as much responsible for our pleasure and pain as our emotional perception of what belongs to us and what does not belong to us.

Emotions are not mere activities that take place within us. They are connected with external objects. In this technical language of the theory of perception, to which I made reference just now, when the mind perceives an object, a transformation of the

mind takes place, and in this transformation the mind pervades the object and takes the shape of the object in such a way that the mind and the object become indistinguishable in that perception. We do not know whether we are seeing our mind there or we are seeing the object there.

To give an example to make this matter clear, an object – a piece of stone or a pot or a human being – is visible in sunlight. The light of the sun is cast on the form of the object, and the object shines before us. When we see an object in sunlight, the sunlight is responsible for our perception of the object. What is it that we see? It is the sunlight that is really responsible for the shining character of the object, and not the object as such. The fact that the object as such cannot be seen independently of light is known to us very well. For example, in pitch darkness objects are not seen. What is it that makes us see an object in light? It is the shining character with which the object is temporarily invested on account of the light falling on the object. So what we see as shining is really the light, and not the object, yet we say the object is shining. When we see a person or object in front of us, what we see is only the light that has fallen on the body of the person or the object, and not the body as such or the object as such. The light takes the shape of the object, and so we see a shining form of a body, of a person or a thing, and we mistake one thing for another. Here also there is a sort of *adhyasa* – the form or the shape of the object getting superimposed on the formless light of the sun, and the shining character of the light of the sun being superimposed on the shape or the form of the object. This is known as *anyonya-adhyasa*, or mutual superimposition of character.

This also happens when we look at an object with our mind. You look at your baby, your only child, with great affection. How beautiful, how endearing, how nice is your only child, which you keep on your lap. Now, in this emotional perception of your child, the same *anyonya-adhyasa*, or mutual superimposition of characters, takes place. The mind, which is the perceiver of the child, has taken the shape of the child, pervading the form or the bodily structure of the child, just as light pervades an object. But just as you cannot distinguish the light from the object, and you mistake the one for the other, you cannot distinguish between the mind that has pervaded the child and the child itself. So when your emotion of love has pervaded the child, it looks as if you are loving the child itself, whereas what you love is your own emotion. If emotion is absent, there is no love in the world. But, unfortunately for us, we cannot see this distinction. If we are able to see it, then the world will be different for us.

This also applies to hatred, repulsion. The mind negatively pervades an object in hatred, and the negative characters that are present in the mind pervade the object in such a way that the object repels you, and vice versa. So you hate an object, though you have made a tremendous blunder in thinking that you hate the object as such. An emotion has been poured over the crucible of the form of the object, and the emotion

has taken the shape of the object. It is the emotion that you love or hate, and not the object as such. Now you know what mistake you commit in your perceptions, how wrong you are in your emotional perception of things.

This is to give you an outline of a process of mental transformation that takes place in loves and hatreds, or emotional perceptions in general – which is very wrong, very bad, most undesirable. You are not supposed to judge a person by pouring your mind over him. This is misjudging an object. This is to consider for a few minutes the essential character of mental transformation in emotional perception, or specific perception, determinate perception, as we may call it.

Now, I said there is another form of perception which is not involved so much in emotion but is a general form of perception, as we see a human being with whom we are not very much concerned, or we see an object or a rock on the bank of the Ganges. We are not worried about it, but yet we see it. This is general perception, not emotionally connected. Yet, it is wrong perception from the point of view of truth in its own nature, in which the mind is involved.

What is the error here? The error is that a particular involvement, which is not emotional but something else, is mistaken for the object as such. Just as in emotional perception the love or the hatred involved in the mind, embedded in the mind, is projected to the object and then the object is loved or hated, likewise, some invisible natural structure limits our perception of truth and makes it appear as an object.

To reiterate again, just as an object which has no specific character of its own can be a dear object or an objectionable thing due to the emotion working within, truth, universal in its character, can look specified, localised as an object with name and form, on account of the operation of some other element, just as we have emotion within. As emotions are not seen visibly and, therefore, we mistake one thing for another thing in our perceptions, these invisible structural limitations causing the bifurcation of objects from one another are also not visible to our eyes.

What is this difficulty that is around us, causing a limited perception of objects? Just as emotion is the cause of the specific perception of an object, what is the cause of the general perception of an object? Our mind is not trained to discover what this mystery is. That which causes this mistake in our perception is not visible to us because if it is to be discovered or seen, then we would immediately get rid of the defect. If everyone knew very well, clearly, that emotions are wrongly working and are giving a wrong impression about objects, then we would be very cautious in judging things. But this does not happen because emotions take possession of us. Like a devil possessing a person and making him dance and blurt out things in various ways, emotions take possession of us, catch hold of us, and make us their tools so that we obey the commands or the instructions of the emotions, and judge people and things wrongly, from the wrong perspective.

Likewise, there is an erroneous perception of nature as a whole. That is the cause of the indeterminate perception of objects. This cause is imperceptible because it is a part of the structure of objects. If this element were not there, the objects would not be seen. They call this element *desa-kala-karya-karana-sambandha*, or space-time-cause-relationship, a set of terms which are often used but cannot be understood by any amount of contemplation. One cannot know what this really means. That these forces which constitute a continuum in the whole cosmos should appear as localised objects is a mystery. We see lumps of things as bodies. Though they may be persons or inanimate object, they are nothing but concretisations of force, energies brought together into focus.

Who is responsible for the focussing of these energies in particular locations and making them appear as things, persons or objects? This is the structural pattern of space and time. We cannot, with any stretch of our imagination, understand what space is or what time is. Space is not emptiness, as children would imagine. Time is not merely the movement of a clock or a timepiece. It is something more mysterious than what we are able to think or contemplate in our minds. They are states involved in our very consciousness. That peculiar character in our consciousness which separates one location from another is space, and that very same consciousness which observes the succession of the movement of these locations is time. But we are involved so much in these processes of space and time, they have become so much a part and parcel of our very existence and life in this world, that we cannot see them, and we can make no sense out of them. This again is another, more difficult, aspect of samsara.

Samsara, thus, is of two types, or two degrees. One is the samsara of loves and hatreds, *raga-dvesha-yukta* samsara. The other is a more difficult, more powerful enemy, we may say. It is the samsara which may not be directly involved in individualistic emotions but is involved in a universal structural defect of space-time-cause, over which no human being can have any control. It may be said that we have some sort of control over our emotions, but we can have no control over space, time and causal relationships.

So it looks as though we are in the world, and we have to be in the world, and there is no way of getting out of it. What is the way out of samsara? If samsara is of this nature, so difficult even to understand, over which we seem to have no control in any manner whatsoever, at any time of our life, how are we to achieve freedom in this world?

What is moksha, or the liberation of the spirit? What is God-realisation, or Self-realisation? What is spiritual life in such a setup of affairs where we can do nothing? We are helpless in every way. As I mentioned, when emotions begin to operate within us, we become helpless. For a moment it may look like we can control our emotions,

but when they arise, we are nowhere. Who is free from loves and hatreds in the world? Not one person. That means everyone is completely involved in emotions, helplessly, as it were. Apart from this, we have the further, greater difficulty of the limitation of our consciousness to space-time-cause-relation. With these two things before us, it looks as if we bid goodbye to all spiritual pursuits. Nothing is possible. We can simply keep quiet, expecting the worst.

Now, are things as bad as it appears? Not so, is the answer. This is a fearful picture that appears before our eyes when we analyse the world through the senses and the mind. But is there another way of analysing the truth of things other than through the instrumentality of the senses and the mind? Are we capable of any higher achievement? Are we bound to be mere slaves of space, time and emotion? No. We have an urge from within us that we have to be perfect one day or the other. We are never satisfied with any given object or status in this world. We are never happy even for two consecutive moments of time. Whatever be our possession, we are not satisfied with it. We want to live as long as possible. We pray for a long life, an eternal life. A long life does not mean merely a few hundred years. After a few hundred years, what will happen? Then what is the use of a long life? So when we speak of long life, we inadvertently think of eternal life. We would like to live forever and ever, unendingly through the process of the passage of time. Let time pass on, but we will not end.

We have an urge from within us which is not subject to the logical categories of the mind and intellect because logic cannot explain why this urge should arise at all. Nevertheless, we have this urge for eternal life. Not merely that, we want infinite possessions. We are not satisfied with one or two possessions in this world. We would like to expand our empire, as they say. We want to annexe other states, and become ubiquitous if possible. Is it possible? If it could be possible, we would be very, very happy. We would like to be everywhere, possessed of everything, for all times to come. It is humanly impossible; nevertheless, it is there.

How can humanly impossible things arise in the mind of a man? What is this mystery of the human mind? How do we conceive impossible things? To conceive an impossible thing is illogical because absolutely impossible things cannot even be conceived in the mind. How could impossibility exist at all? Impossibility is the opposite of existence because we already said it is impossible, it cannot be. But we have a desire for the so-called impossibility of eternal life, infinite possessions, continuous happiness. Such an urge arises from the mind, though no one knows how this urge could arise and what it points to. This should be our guide in our spiritual pursuits.

While mathematics and logic are very good, they are not everything. They are good so far as the world of space-time is concerned. Where the spirit is concerned, the logic of the mind is not of much help, though it is helpful in the sense that it can realise its own limitations. Reason and logic are helpful in recognising the limits of reason and

logic. Reason can tell us how far we can go, beyond which we cannot go. The limits of reason give us a hint as to the existence, or the character of the existence, of something beyond this limit of reason. This is what is implied in the logical process of thought. Logic is limited, yes, but the very recognition of the limitation of logical thinking is an acceptance of the existence of something beyond this limitation, logically speaking. Otherwise, how could we explain our urge for infinite possession and eternal life? Why do we cry for perennial satisfaction or unending happiness?

There is something in man which man himself does not know, and cannot know. There is a deep mystery in all human beings which no one has been able to unravel up to this time. Man is a marvel in himself. The greatest miracle of creation is the human being. The solar system and the astronomical cosmos is not a miracle compared with the miracle of the human mind and the human individuality. What the human individuality and structure, the microcosm, can enshrine in its frail structure is indeed the marvel of marvels, the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles. And if this marvel within us could be discovered, we would have seen through the marvel of the whole of creation.

“The proper study of mankind is man,” said the great poet Pope. “Know thyself,” said the oracle of Delphi. “*Atmanam vidhi*,” says the great Indian sage. Towards this end we shall struggle with all ardour and fervour, which is spiritual sadhana.

Discourse 3

OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS

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

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

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

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

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

night, in such a world of samsara, what is of any value? What is of any worth or meaning? Is there anything, or is there nothing?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual life is not an inward life. It is also not an outward life. Spirituality is not withdrawal into a psychological cave; it is not introversion of the mind. It is also not running about outwardly in the physical world. It is neither a sensory approach to the outward nature of things, nor a psychological approach to the purely subjective

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

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

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

Sadhakas who have girt up their loins to achieve success in the path of the spirit should be cautious in discovering this subtlety that hangs imperceptibly between external perception and internal cognition. There is something very, very subtle, almost imperceptible to consciousness, occasionally coming like a flash of lightning between what we see outside and what we regard as ourselves inside. To catch that is to live in that imperceptible eternity. It is eternity because it is not in time. Eternity is a subtle existence introducing itself into our experience every moment of time, but we miss it on account of our engaging ourselves too much in either external perception or internal cognition.

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

What is to be restrained is our consciousness. What has put us in bondage is consciousness. We are suffering due to our consciousness. This is a peculiar subtle

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

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

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

Space and time, are the most difficult of obstacles. The invisible enemy is harder to overcome. The enemy who is visible can be attacked, but the enemy whom we cannot see with our eyes cannot be approached because we do not know where the enemy is. Space and time are *samsara* by itself. What we call mortal existence is nothing but limitation through space and time, but when we look at the world, we do not see space and time separately. They are mixed up with things, like poison that may be mixed up with our dinner. We eat it, not knowing that some undesirable element has crept in.

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

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

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

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

Now, the internal life is not always manifest outwardly, nor is the outward fact of life acceptable to the inner structure of personality. So this is a tension in our existence. We are ever in a state of mental and nervous tension because of a double difficulty that the facts of outward life are not wholly acceptable to us in our personal existence. Also, our personal constitution within cannot be wholly manifest outside in practical life. The two do not agree with each other, so we always live an artificial life. This is a part of samsara, to live an artificial life. Artificiality keeps us ever in a state of

suspense and inward agony. We cannot go to sleep with satisfaction, nor can we get up from our bed with satisfaction, because we are in a state of nervous tension caused by this unavoidable conflict between the outer and the inner. To adjust the consciousness to the outer as well as the inner would be to enter the field of spirituality.

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

There are layers of personality. You have various conceptions about your own self. Now, conceptions about yourself which are not necessary may be shed. You need not daily, for all the twenty-four hours of the day, be conscious that you are an engineer, or a collector, or a judge, or a medical officer, and so on. This is an easy method of shedding part of your false personality. That you are a judge or a collector may be part of your personality consciousness, but it is not a necessary part. It is not also the real part. It is a false association arisen on account of social relationships. It can be dropped any moment, and it will drop of itself.

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

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

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

It is a peculiar *adhyasa* we have created in our own selves apart from that metaphysical *adhyasa* that Sankaracharya is speaking of. That is something different, but we have got some other *adhyasas* created here which are as important as the other one, and perhaps more important, and causing the worst of sufferings in our practical daily life.

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

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

This can be done only in meditation. You cannot get out of this in practical life, but in states of deep meditation and concentration you can forget that you are a sexual personality. You are merely a human individual, that is all, impersonal in its nature,

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

But we are trying to know Truth. We are heading towards the nature of Reality. We should not be satisfied by mere conventions – conventions of political life, conventions of social life, conventions of linguistic life, conventions of family life. Limitations of this kind may be gradually given up.

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

We have created complications in our consciousness by calling things by particular names. This is Mr. Joshi. Who says he is Joshi? I can call him Narayan; I can call him John. What is the harm? Now the personality is associated with name also, and is another limitation. Do you know how deeply your name has entered your consciousness – even when you are asleep? If you call Brahmaji, immediately he will get up. But suppose I call him Karthikeyan, he will not get up. Even if the sound has fallen on his ears, he will not get up because deeply, in an unconscious level, he knows that he is not Karthikeyan. Just imagine how deeply you are attached to even a name. It is not a silly joke. You are all caught up in these small things which have become like a huge ocean, and you are getting drowned in it. Your difficulties are not one or two,

but thousands. It is like being caught by hundreds of creditors from all sides. You cannot show your face to anyone. You are suffering from the root.

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

The analysis of consciousness is the study of life. Life is nothing but consciousness working. Life does not mean our physical associations, enjoyments and sufferings, etc., in the conventional sense. It is a secret working of our consciousness, of which we are wholly unaware. No one knows what one is really, how one is caught. The deep-rooted disease is not known. We have a chronic illness which has to be rubbed out, erased by a gradual elimination of factors, moving from outward facts to inward facts.

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

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

I will tell you another interesting thing. We are likely to be enamoured of people who land on the moon. "We are in space," they say. We look up to distant objects and say they are in space, high space. But do you know that you are also in space? Just

plant yourself on the moon, and imagine that you are looking at the Earth. This will be a planet hanging in space. This is as much a planet hanging in space as the moon hanging in space. So you can be happy that you are in space. Why are you trying to rush up to some other planet to be in space? You are in space. You are on the surface of a planet. You are in mid-air; you know that. You are not on the surface of the Earth. So I am taking your consciousness above the Earth itself.

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

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

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

By methods akin to these mentioned, the senses which detract our consciousness and make it impinge on objects, cling to objects, can be restrained in their operations. We can thus become more and more impersonal even in our daily attitude and activity. What you are hearing just now is not merely a lecture. It is a technique of daily living, a methodology of daily conduct. It is the way in which you have to think even when you take a cup of tea, even when you are in the bathroom. It is not only for your puja room. Wherever you are, whatever be your activity, this is the way you have

to think. Then you are, I should say, half liberated from samsara. Even by this daily meditation of this character, of this nature, you are fifty percent liberated from bondage. Only another fifty percent remains, which shall also go gradually.

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

Discourse 4

SELF-RESTRAINT IS SELF-RECOGNITION

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

Self-control is not controlling merely our bodily individuality. Our efforts at the control of the self do not yield much success because our concept of self is erroneous. It is essential that we gather enough knowledge of the methodology of approach before we actually employ this method or technique. It is not essential that we should be too eager to plunge into actual practice without gaining sufficient knowledge as to what this practice is. Thought precedes action. Understanding is presupposed by every kind of effort. It is not that we should be engaged in activity without understanding throughout the day. Our purpose is not merely to be active, but to bring about the intended result of this activity. If no result follows, if nothing happens, if we are retarded in our progress or are stagnant in our pursuits, we have to conclude there has been an error in our understanding. The restraint of the self is all yoga, in one sentence. But what is this self that we are restraining? Where is it located?

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

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

the world are like our own selves. What judgment can they pass? Therefore, we should not make the mistake of taking world judgment for the criterion of progress that we make in the practice of yoga. Advertisements, publications and social recognition are not the criteria of progress in yoga. Yoga is something quite different altogether, and one has to steer clear of all these obstacles in the form of psychological cobwebs which may blur the vision of the inner consciousness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For this, a careful investigation is to be made into our own psychological life. We are psychological entities. We are not merely bodies. Our psychological life is what matters most, and the body is a little part of this wider psychological life that we lead. To give an example of how our self exceeds the bodily limitation, our affections are standing illustrations of the extent to which our self can go beyond the restrictions of the bodily location. Our lives are very much connected with our affections, loves and hatreds, so much so that we cannot imagine the extent of it. But can we say that affections are limited to our bodily individuality merely? Is our love and hatred contained only inside the body? Does it not operate outside?

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

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

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

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

Then what is it that we mean by saying the self has to be subdued by the Self, raised by the Self, and so on? What is meant is, a lower meaning of the self should be raised into a higher meaning of the self. The lower connotation has to be absorbed by sublimation into the higher connotation. The study of self is study of the meaning of life. It is not study of objects or things; it is study of significances and values. We become more and more abstract in our studies as we proceed further and further. In the beginning we are in a kindergarten level. We want object lessons to learn the meaning of life. We want concrete objects to be visible before our actual senses. But later on, as we progress in our education, we become more and more abstract in our studies, and finally only concepts are enough. We do not want objects of any kind. Even maps, diagrams are not necessary. Mere ideas and notions and concepts are enough in advanced forms of education. And what can be a greater education than instruction in Self, which is the primary reality of life?

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

The lowest concept of Self is the situation in which we are today at this present moment – its connections, its operations, its fields of activity, its pleasures and pains, and its objects for the time being. We cannot be fully aware as to how many objects are associated with self-consciousness in toto. But at a given moment of time we can take into consideration those factors of objectivity which are vitally connected with our conscious life. Therefore, the spiritual seeker, the *sadhaka*, has to live in the present. He should not concern himself too much with the past or the future because the past is very lengthy, beyond memory and perception. So is the future. Concern yourself with the present state of your consciousness, and make a study of it. Live from moment to moment. That would be to live perpetually in the present. There is no harm in doing

it. That is perhaps the proper way of living life. Make your life a life of the present, rather than of the past or of the future. By this way, you can make your life happy.

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

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

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

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

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

For instance, people who are extremely attached to certain persons and things are more conscious of these loved persons and things than of their own selves. Day in and

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

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

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

Likewise, we are playing a peculiar kind of trick with the objects of the world with a very good intention of exceeding the limitations of the body, but unfortunately we land in some other limitation, perhaps worse than the first one. Why is it worse than the earlier one? Because we have falsely imagined ourselves to be another person, which is impossible. That is why we have so much affection for land, property, wife, children, etc. What has happened? Why so much attachment? The reason is that it is like a devil catching some people – getting possessed by certain aberrations. Likewise, consciousness goes and possesses objects and things, introduces itself into them uninvited, and appropriates those persons and things as if they belong as an integral part of one's own self, which is a total misapprehension. Nobody can belong to us, but we appear to believe that there are many persons and things really belonging to us. This is a greater bondage and a greater stupidity than to regard this body as the self. So we are entangled not merely in this particular body of ours but in many other bodies

outside in the world with which we are connected positively or negatively – positively by love, negatively by hatred. Either way, we are connected with these objects.

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

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

Everyone knows how hard it is to give up affections. There are people who hang themselves, commit suicide because of frustrated affections. They feel it is better to die than be free from these affections. Why?

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

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

Therefore, the severance of attachment is the first step in the practice of self-control. Our attachments are widespread. They are not limited merely to the body or even the family or the community. They are spread far, even throughout the world. This is why the Bhagavadgita and such scriptures tell us that the first duty of a *sadhaka* would be to live in a congenial atmosphere. You should not live in the midst of tempting objects. You should not deliberately place yourself in a predicament which is

hard, and then try to get out of it. The first step would be to live in a congenial atmosphere which will not tempt you to the objects of sense. This is only a negative aspect of the practice, but the positive side of it is that you live in the midst of congenial persons in a suitable atmosphere which is spiritually advantageous and beneficial.

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

In a verse of the Bhagavadgita, the next step is mentioned. *Viviktasevi* is also to be *laghvasi* (Gita 18.52). It is not enough if you live merely in a solitary, sequestered atmosphere. You may live in holy Badrinath, but you may be a glutton eating *puris* and *malpula*, *kheer*, and living a life of abandon even in a holy atmosphere. You can be inside the holy of holies in a temple and yet be indulgent to your senses. While the first step in self-control is life in a congenial outward atmosphere, the next step is to diminish the diet of the senses – not merely the diet of the tongue, but of all the senses, because it is through the avenues of the senses that consciousness tethers itself to objects. If one sense is controlled, the other sense can become doubly active. You know very well by actual practice if one sense is controlled, there is a compensation made by the other senses by becoming more active, more vehement in their operation.

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

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

And the intake of diet of the senses should be *sattvika: āhāra-śuddhau sattva-śuddhiḥ* (Chand. 7.26.2), says the Chhandogya Upanishad. Now, *ahara suddhi* does not mean only drinking cow's milk. That is not the meaning of *ahara suddhi*. It means

diet of every sense organ. You may be a very angry, mischievous person taking only cow's milk daily. You may be the worst anti-social element hated by all people, though you may be taking only almonds and cow's milk. This is not impossible because you have let go the other organs of senses without control.

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

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

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

There was a Brahmin who practised the taking in of less diet as days went by. He wanted to reduce his diet every day, but how to do it, because the stomach and the tongue will revolt. If you take today four chapattis, and tomorrow you take only three, there will be no satisfaction. You know very well that you have reduced one chapatti, so there will be a dissatisfaction from within. So this Brahmin had a peculiar technique, which I have observed myself. In the olden days you know the rice measure was made of a wooden shave, as they used to call it – not metal, but made of wood, or sometimes a bamboo pole would also be used as a shave, or a measure. What he used to do was, he had a small measure, a *pau*, as they called it, a measure of wood. He would say, "I will take only one *pau* of rice. I will not reduce the quantity." So the mind is satisfied. Every day you take one *pau* of rice. You should not tell it that you are giving less rice. Then it will not be satisfied. It will argue with you. So what he used to

do was, he would put the *pau* upside down and rub it on a stone a little bit every day before measuring one full *pau* of rice. Every day he takes one full *pau*, not less, but the *pau* is reduced a little bit by rubbing on a stone. It is psychological satisfaction. Of course, the quantity was reduced very much because he rubbed it very hard, but psychologically the mind was told, "You take one *pau* of rice, my dear friend," and he went on reducing it, reducing it, until it became a half *pau*. Yet, the mind was told it is one *pau* because it is the same measure though he was rubbing it and reducing its content. Well, this is a humorous analogy.

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

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

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

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

When we are sufficiently advanced in self-control, we have also sufficiently expanded the purview or the activity of our real Self. 'Real Self' is to be underlined, not the false self. The expansion of the real Self is different from the expansion of the false self. The false self is what they usually call in Vedantic scriptures the *gaunatman*, or

the secondary self. The self can expand itself in the whole world in the form of social attachments, to which I made reference just now. By affections and hatreds, the self can be falsely expanded into the whole world, but that is not the real Self. The real Self cannot be expanded externally. The Self can never become an object. So whenever you love an object or hate an object, you are in a false world. The real Self is pure subjectivity. *Yenedam sarvaṁ vijānāti, taṁ kena vijānīyāt* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.14): “How can you look at that which is the looker-on?” says Sage Yajnavalkya in the Upanishad.

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

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

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

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

Discourse 5

THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

The life that we call spiritual is not an aspect of the life that we are supposed to live in the world. It is not one of the functions that we are obliged to perform in our life here. Many of the erroneous notions concerning spiritual life, even among circles who are honestly after an understanding of truth, are due to the fact that we are accustomed mostly to think section-wise whatever subject may be presented before us, and not take a comprehensive view of anything. Truly speaking, we have never been made fit enough to take a total view of things because our thoughts always run along partial lines of approach and, applying this logic of partial thinking, we have taken the liberty of considering even spiritual life as a partial aspect or side of human life. It is one branch of learning, one field of activity or a particular science, as we have many others in the field of our studies.

This is also the reason why spiritual life is mostly relegated to the later part of one's life, old age particularly, when we have had enough of the enjoyments of the world to surfeit. When we cannot see properly, cannot walk, and nobody wants us, then we search after the spirit. This is usually the attitude of people because of a wrong set of values that have become the guiding lights in our practical life. Our very attitude to life is fundamentally wrong. We are diseased at the core, to put it precisely. We are ill totally, in the entirety of our personality, so we cannot see anything perfectly or correctly.

Spiritual life is a novel attitude which cannot be equated with or compared with any other sets of attitude that we develop towards things of the world. It is not one of the attitudes. Then what is it? As the very term 'spirit' would connote, it is the attitude which is based on the essential values of things. We usually make a distinction between letter and spirit – the letter of the law and the spirit of the law, as we usually say. The spirit of a situation is different from the literal interpretation of it. We generally are accustomed to saying, "You have not got the spirit of what I said, though you understood my words," and so on. When we speak of the spirit of a thing, we usually mean the essential substantiality of it. Whatever is of worth in it, whatever is meaningful or significant, or whatever is true or real, that is the spirit of a thing. Anything outside the spirit of a thing is an accretion grown over it, a tentative relationship established with it or established by it, some sort of an association which is not part of its being. All these are apart from the spirit of a thing. So the spiritual life is that type of living which is in consonance with the spirit of things.

Now, what is the spirit of things as different from the letter or the literal meaning of things? This is again a moot question that we would have to answer. The letter and the spirit are distinguished by their structure, by their fundamental being, by what

may be regarded as the ultimate minimal residual value in anything in this world. When a thing is divested of all its relationships, visible as well as conceivable, what would remain in a thing is its spirit, and to live in consonance with the law of that spirit would be spiritual life. When you free a person, a thing, an object, a situation or an agent from all temporal associations of every type and kind, something would remain there. That something is the spirit of that person, of that object, of that thing, event or situation. That minimal residuum has a determining law guiding and defining its existence. To live in conformity with that law is the life spiritual. This would be a general statement of fact, a sort of academic definition of spiritual values. But all this is difficult for the common mind to grasp. It will simply go over our heads if we are told about all these hard nuts to crack.

Nevertheless, we are told that spiritual life is perhaps the ultimate meaning of things, towards which we are gravitating consciously or unconsciously. Hence, it is impossible for us to give up the quest of the meaning which is spiritual in things, whether or not we are in a position to understand it properly. To look at the spirit of a thing is not to look at the thing. This is a distinction, again. To look at a person, and to look at the spirit behind the person are two different things altogether.

When we look at an object, we are not looking at the spirit of the object because the object is nothing but a colocation of relationships. When we look at a person, for example, it is impossible to differentiate the person as he is or she is from the associations which that person has with the outer circumstances in the world. Suppose we see a magistrate. It is impossible to forget that this person is a magistrate, notwithstanding that the person was not born a magistrate. He or she was something different, completely dissociated from that relationship that has been tentatively foisted upon that person later on, many years after birth.

We have relationships of various kinds. I am only giving a single instance among many, which is the concrete example of a human being. When you look at a human being, several ideas come to your mind. This is a person bearing such and such a name. That name also cannot be forgotten. Immediately the name rushes into your mind, together with the personality that you are seeing. Also, you cannot dissociate that person from the position in society which that person is holding. And there may be other relationships of various kinds, positive and negative. The possessions with which that person is invested, the various types of status which the person is holding in the world and, in short, even the very definition of that person would be in terms of relationships. Who is such and such a person? If I ask you, you would give a definition of that person in terms of the relationship which that person has with other persons, other things, and other conditions of the world. Minus these relationships, what is that person? Such a definition is rarely given. You either say, "I am the son of so-and-so, the daughter of so-and-so. I am holding such and such an office, doing such a

business, staying in such a place.” All these are not your real definitions. They are not the spirit of your existence or your personality, because you may be divested of these relationships. You may possess nothing one day. You may have no relations, no wealth, hold no position, and you may be almost worth nothing in the eyes of people when you are dissociated of all these relationships, and yet you remain a something.

Or, to give another example, there is an object that you see. An object is a bundle of relationships, just as a piece of cloth is nothing but a bundle of threads. This is, again, a very difficult thing for the mind to grasp, though it is easier to understand because you have seen a fabric or a piece of cloth. There is no such thing as a cloth; it is only a name that is given to a pattern of threads. This is how you can get into the spirit of a thing rather than the form or the relationship of a thing. Now, take the instance of a cloth. Is there such a thing as a cloth? Yes, for all practical purposes there is a cloth. When you go to a cloth merchant and want to purchase a sari or a dhoti, you do not ask for a bundle of threads. You say, “I want a cloth,” and so on. He understands what you mean, but yet you know there is no such thing as a cloth. It is only the warp and weft of threads, threads woven lengthwise and crosswise. There is nothing else. This is what you call the cloth. But what are these threads? They are only small fibres of cotton or some sort of a fibre of a tree, and so on. There is no cloth, because that is only a name you give to a system of threads.

Now I am going to tell you, there is also no such thing as threads. That is only a name that you have given to a continuity of minute fibres which are attached to one another by twisting and kneading, etc. So there is no cloth, there are no threads, there are only fibres. But what are these fibres? They are fine units of cotton, and they can be blown into the air. Finally, you will see no cloth there; it is simply blown off. If you take out every little unit of fibre from the cloth and blow on it, it will be flying in the air. You will not know what happened to this huge sari, or the cloth. It has gone. So far, this is intelligible.

But we can carry on the investigation into the constitution of cloth a little further by a careful analysis through finer instruments of observation, as is usually done in laboratories these days. The fibre of cotton is constituted of minuter substances, which are fine molecules. They are distinguished from one another due to their chemical structure or compound. And there are various kinds of molecules, according to the substance out of which they are made, or which they constitute. We have molecules of water, molecules of earth, molecules of air, molecules of fire, or fire atoms, and so on. These molecules are plenty. It is said there are at least a hundred of them.

Now, if you pursue the analysis of the structure of these units called molecules, you will be led along the lines of an astonishing discovery as to the nature of things – that they are distinct, yet not different. There will be a distinction, but there will be no difference. There will be fine particles, one different from the other, but not different

in their structure or constitution, just like sand particles. One sand particle is different from another sand particle, no doubt, and yet structurally, for all practical purposes, in every respect, one sand particle is like another sand particle, and there is no difference in the constitution of the substance of these units.

Now we shall halt here, and not go further. In this manner we may analyse the structure or substantiality of any object, any personality, anything, for the matter of that, divested of names temporally given for a particular structure, pattern or form. It is difficult to divest an object of all its relationships. Some relationship will remain in spite of our ultimate attempts at arriving at the indivisible, final residuum of the object. In this manner if we carry on an analysis or investigation of every blessed thing in the world, we will come to a static independence of values. The word 'independence' has to be underlined, because these units will then not be dependent on other units for their activity or existence. We depend on many other factors for our work and function in the world. You know it very well. For any little thing, you depend on various factors. You cannot simply be, and yet be happy. You come in contact with various people, you develop associations with things, connect yourself with various values in the world, and feel the need for other things than what you yourself are.

If you are an independent unit by yourself, not under the necessity of coming in contact with other things in the world, you would be approximating yourself to your spirit, or what you really are – approximating, of course. You have not yet come to the spirit of it. You would be nearing to what you really are or to what anything, for the matter of that, is in the world, when you take objects and persons as independent values, not related values, independent units, not units connected for the purpose of existence and functions with other units in the world.

So from this angle of vision, spirituality would be that sort of life which is connected with the independent existence of things. Everything is ultimately an independent unit. It is made dependent on account of its descent into fields of perception and sensory activity. When we come to a world of sense perception and feel our limitations too much, we also feel, at the same time, a need to make good that limitation of our personality by associating ourselves with other persons, things and values. When we cease to have any sort of relationship with people and things, when we assert our independence and our value as we were born and as we would die, that sort of value would be a wholly independent something incapable of conception, and to visualise things from this angle of vision would be not only to take a total vision of things, but also to regard things from their own point of view rather than from the point of view of the factors on which they are tentatively made dependent for the purpose of temporal existence and activity.

Or, to put it another way, I must take you for what you are, and not for what you appear to be. This would be to assess your spiritual worth. This should be the way in which you judge everything in the world, including your own self. The world becomes a vast kingdom of independent units, not slaves dependent on factors. Perhaps this was what people meant by the condition of Krita Yuga, Satya Yuga, or sometimes it is known as Ramarajya, the kingdom of dharma or righteousness, the law of truth operating everywhere, and everyone knowing what his or her dharma was.

When you take a spiritual attitude of life, you do not need a mandate from outside to regulate yourself. There is no need for law or government when each one knows what the correct attitude to life ought to be or is. There is no need to be controlled by factors outside your personality. This is Krita Yuga, or Satya Yuga, when people are said to have been living the life of the spirit.

Bhishma speaks to Yudhisthira, as recorded in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, that in Satya Yuga there was no system of administration or government. There were no rulers, no kings. The reason was that there was no such thing as demerit, *apunya*, wrong action, unrighteousness, *adharma*. There was no *adharma* because each one's attitude to life was spiritual. It was wholly based on the internal structure of things, and not on what they are made to appear due to their false relationship with external factors. That would be to see through things, rather than merely see things. You see through and through the object which is before your eyes. You do not merely define it by external factors – from its colour, from its weight, from its dimension, etc. Its value is more than all these can measure or calculate.

When we enter into the ultimate essence of things and realise that harmonious relationship which fundamentally subsists among the various objects of the world, we also realise that spiritual life is the only life possible, practicable and meaningful, because what could be higher than the spirit of a thing, or the meaning of a thing, the life of a thing? What is more valuable in you than the life principle that is in you? Minus your life principle, what are you? Whatever be your worth in this world from the social point of view, that would be reduced to a nihil if the life-giving element in you is taken away. That is the spirit of the person, the vitality of your being, that which makes people take cognisance of you, love you or hate you. When that life principle is present in you, people can love you, people can hate you. But when that life principle is not in you, people will not love you and people will not hate you. They will have no concern with you because what is called the 'you' and which is taken notice of by others, and which is valued so much in life, is an invisible significance. That is all we can say about it – an invisible something, a peculiar significance or meaning that we read in persons and things, but they are quite different from the formations which we call persons and things. These significances are very abstract in their nature, and yet they are more concrete than what we call concrete.

As you advance in your studies, you become more and more abstract in your concepts, notions and ideas. You do not need physical illustrations of things for study. You can merely conceive and judge the values of things. Do you know that the whole world is regulated by certain principles or laws, and these principles or laws are invisible, and do not exist physically? Can you say that there is a physical existence of the astronomical laws of the cosmos or the law of a nation, the law of a society, or the law governing your own physical being? There is a system, a methodology, or a principle operating behind physical values and visible objects. That principle may look abstract and perhaps less real from the point of view of a child's way of looking at things, but you know very well that principles govern things. Things are nothing if the principles behind them are nowhere. The principle is what gives value, meaning and life to the objects and things of the world. That principle itself is invisible to the eyes, and it almost looks less real than the concrete objects. The spirit is invisible, and is regarded as less real than the formations which are animated by the spirit. We are living in a mortal world of physical objects, and we take them for what reality is in its totality. But principles which govern these physical formations, being invisible to the senses, are completely ignored by us. We live an unprincipled and undisciplined life because of the fact that we do not see the principles governing things, but they are more real, more concrete, more tangible than the sensory objects.

The laws of science, the laws governing administration, the laws governing the planetary motions, are prior to the motions themselves, prior to the activities themselves. The constitution is framed first in the minds of people; it does not exist physically outside in the sensible world, and yet that notion which is called the system of working, the constitution, is the regulative principle behind what is called the visible life of things. Such is the spirit and value of all things in the world, and we must learn to go deeper and deeper into these subliminal levels wherein is located the heart of things.

In one version of the Ramayana – not in the Valmiki Ramayana – we are told that the life principle of Ravana was not in his body. It was somewhere else, and so even if his heads were severed he would not die. Rama was told that Ravana could not be killed by merely severing his heads because his pranas were lodged in something else; and when that was dismantled and disintegrated, Ravana would collapse. They say it was in a parrot or some such thing. It is a fable, some story to give us an idea that the meaning of a thing may be somewhere else than in its visible shape or relationship.

A few days back, someone read me a passage from Nammalvar's poem. The first line meant: Do not fix your heart elsewhere than where your home is. Some such meaning was made out by that passage. Do not fix your heart elsewhere than where your real home is. Well, we could pin our faith in things which are appearances. We can love our own reflections in a mirror. This is not impossible. You look at yourself

in a mirror, and start admiring your own self. Loving your own self as seen in a mirror, you garland your mirror self, which would mean you garland the mirror shadow, not your own original personality. You bathe it, you dress it, not knowing that it is nothing but a refraction of light which causes a severance of your personality into an objective something seen through a pane of glass or a mirror, while your original substance cannot be seen. You cannot see your own self. If you want to see yourself, you place a mirror in front of you; otherwise, you cannot see your face.

The substance of things cannot be seen because the substance is not an object. It is a principle. You hold a mirror in front of the substance in order to see it. Well, you may see it as reflected through a mirror; there is no harm in it, but you should not mistake that reflection for what is reflected.

To bring our illustration of spirit and letter, the spirit is what is reflected, the letter is what is seen as the reflection. The spirit never becomes an object – the spirit of anything, for the matter of that – and therefore, to have a spiritual attitude to things is a hard job indeed. To have a spiritual attitude to life is not to look at the objects of the world but to look at that out of which the objects are made, which is their prana, which is their sum and substance, which is coextensive with the substance of your own body and personality.

We move from diversity to harmony, and from harmony to unity. This is the process of evolution of thought. In the beginning, everything looks discrete and isolated from other things. Everything is different from every other thing. There is no apparent relationship of one thing with another. What connection can there be among ourselves here, seated in this hall? Everyone is independent. After a few minutes you will all get up and go in different directions, as if you have nothing to do with one another. This is the sensory evaluation of the world. Everything is disconnected. It may even be chaotic, so bad a situation that anything could be in any condition at any time. This is the *tamasic* attitude to life.

In the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita we are introduced to these three stages of thought, or three degrees of reality, as we may say. It is possible to take a single unit for a completeness by itself, as we generally do, and take a thing for the whole of reality, attaching ourselves completely to it as if that is the sum and substance of all meaning in life; while this is possible, this is the lowest and the crudest form of attitude that we can have towards things. When we develop attachment to certain persons and things, we are *tamasically* attuned to objects, because there cannot be a whole-souled attachment to anything unless that thing is taken for the entire reality. This is the crass, earthly attitude of the senses, the *tamasic* attitude to life, the lowest form of truth, which is totally distorted and taken far away from its centre. This is the lowest category of truth perception.

But a higher form of it is to realise and to recognise an organic relationship among things. It is not true that each thing is absolutely disconnected from each other thing. There is some sort of a connection. It may be a mechanical connection or a vital connection. Parts of a machine are connected with one another, and you are able to appreciate that the whole structure which is called the machine is a completeness by itself, constituted of different limbs which can be disconnected and taken away.

Even in this concept of harmony, therefore, there are two stages. One is a purely mechanical notion of ideas. When we think of a nation as a political unit, we have, perhaps, this mechanised concept of harmony or relationship. Political unity is mechanised, or mechanical, in the sense that it holds good only for the time being. When a particular system of government supervenes or reigns supreme, and when the nation is identified with a particular geographical area of the Earth, this is not an organic relationship because it is subject to change in the passage of time.

But a higher concept of harmony is an inseparable relationship that obtains among the objects and persons in the world. This is to approach the system called dharma, or righteousness, operating in the world. Dharma is not a mechanical relationship of things but a vital, living relationship that obtains among the objects of the world.

So from the crudest form of perception of objects as entirely isolated from one another, having no real relationship between one thing and another thing, we come to a mechanised concept of harmony. This holds good for some time, yet it can crumble to pieces, as it is far from reality. And then we come to the vital, living relationship, which cannot be easily separated. Still, we are far from reality because Truth is not a relationship; it is not even a harmony, because to accept a system of harmony would be to accept distinction of values and a need to connect them, though by a vital relationship.

‘Unity’ is also not the word for the nature of Truth. Unity is a coming together of different parts, but Truth is not made up of parts, so Truth is not a unity. There is no word or phrase which can correctly define or designate what Truth ultimately is. It is not anything that language can describe. That is the ultimate spirit of all things, not a unity of things, not a harmony of things, not a relationship of things – transcending all things, yet present in all things.

The life spiritual, therefore, is the complete life. It is that form of life which gives meaning to any walk of life, any field of activity or anything that is worthwhile in this world. A common measure of values is present in everything as the basic substance or substantiality of things. That is the spiritual attitude of things. There can be a spiritual attitude, therefore, in business; there can be a spiritual attitude in work that you do in a factory, in an educational institution, in family life, and in political administration. There can be a spiritual attitude even in war, as is amply demonstrated in the

Bhagavadgita and the Mahabharata. Even in actual battle and warfare there can be a spiritual attitude.

The correct attitude to things is the spiritual attitude to things. The permanent attitude to things, not subject to change, is the spiritual attitude to things. That attitude which is not subject to transformation at any time is the spiritual attitude to things. That ultimate judgment of all values is the spiritual attitude to things. It is the final Supreme Court judgment. There is no appeal beyond that; that is the spiritual attitude. When you look at a thing spiritually, you see the ultimate meaning of that thing. Nothing can be beyond that. And so we can very well realise what spirituality is. It is not to be relegated to a section of life, to old age, etc. It is the life principle, the vitality, the meaning, the significance, the worth of anything in this world, living or non-living.

Hence, it is impossible to be unspiritual or nonspiritual, to be other than spiritual. Life bereft of spirituality is unthinkable because there is no such thing as that. To look upon things as bereft of spiritual values would be to look upon corpses, not living entities. The vitality of things is spirituality, the totality of things is spirituality, the life principle of things is spirituality, the truth or reality of things is spirituality, at which level they converge into a point which is universal in its gamut.

I purposely used this term 'point which is universal'. How could a point be universal? Yet it is that. I used the term 'point' to avoid the idea of spatial dimension, and I purposely used the word 'universal' to remove the notion that it is located only in one particular spot, as a point is. So it is indivisible like a point, and universal like space itself. That is Truth, and that is the spirit of things. It is the only existence of all creation, of all created things. It is the *satta-samanya*, as the Yoga Vasishtha puts it. The general existence or the general reality of all things, the irreducible minimum of things, is the spirituality of things; or rather, that is the element of God in things. That is spirituality. So minus God, there is no life, as minus spirituality there is no existence at all.

Therefore, to be spiritual is not to put on a robe or to enter into an order of life such as Vanaprastha, Sannyasa, and so on. It is not embracing a particular order. It is not changing your dress or avocation or function in life. It is nothing of the sort. It is to look at the meaning of things. Who could avoid this predicament? Can you avoid looking at the meaning of things, because that is all that is of any meaning and significance in life. Minus meaning, what is life? The meaning behind the meaning of life is spirituality. A great scholar wrote a book called *The Meaning of Meaning*. What do you mean by 'meaning'? There is something behind it. That is the spirit of things. It is very difficult to conceive what spirituality is, and if you understand it correctly, you have won half the game. Fifty percent of your effort is over even in understanding what spirituality is, let alone living it. Living it is the other fifty percent. The first fifty

percent of the trouble of life is the understanding of its meaning and its significance, the relationship of ourselves with creation outside. The very understanding of this takes half of our life, and it is only after this understanding is clear, and we are established in it, that we can take to practice. All practice is posterior to understanding because without a correct grasp of the method of approach to things, there cannot be that approach at all.

Hence it is that we should be doubly guarded in our attitude to all things in the world. We are likely to make mistakes in judging people, judging things, and more than anything else, judging our own selves. To avoid these pitfalls in our judgment of things, we have to be trained in a new line of approach altogether. We have to be administered a new type of education, because this education is completely different from the way in which we generally look at things on a commercial basis of give and take. In the attitude of the spiritual, all external relationships get superseded by a totality of concept. Hence, the idea of give and take vanishes. In the spiritual life, you neither give anything nor take anything. This is, again, very hard to conceive. As Shakespeare put it in another context, "Neither a lender nor a borrower be". Neither you give anything nor you take anything when you enter into the concept that is purely spiritual, because you assert your independence as an ultimate unit of existence.

This is an outline of spirituality, which is very difficult to describe exhaustively. Gradually, by a daily training of our mind along this new line of approach, we can move towards this truth of things, the spiritual values of things; we can rise from the discrete concept of the world to a harmonious concept of the world and, finally, to the indivisible unity of existence, which is the passage of psychological evolution leading up to the direct realisation of a completeness of values, which is called the Absolute of things. This is what is called Brahman in the Upanishads. This is to be implemented in our practical day-to-day life.

The sum and substance of what I intended to say was that the spirit is not outside us, and it is not a future to us. It is a 'now', and it is a 'here'. It is to be put into practice and brought into action in our small, insignificant activities of life. Spirituality can be tested in the smallest things that you do in life, not in the big things that you do, not in the orations that you give or the public administration that you are invested with or the powers that you wield, etc. The spirituality of a person can be seen in the small details of life. In the little words that you utter, in the casual words that you speak, in the passing remarks that you make, you can see your spirituality. You cannot see your spirituality in your *puja* room, in the temples of worship, when you read a Bhagavadgita or a scripture, or when you are on the pulpit. You will know the depths of your spirituality when you are walking on the street or when you are in the bathroom, when you are at your lunch table, when you are talking to your subordinate or your servant. In the bazaar when you go to purchase vegetables, there you can see

your spirituality. When you talk to a *tongawalla* in the street or a *taxiwalla*, when you ask him for two annas less or more, you can see the depths of your spirituality, not in the temple, not in the *puja* room. Do not make mistakes.

Discourse 6

SELF-CONTROL IS THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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

Now, to put the question concerning self-restraint precisely, what happens to us when we restrain ourselves, and what happens to us when we do not have any restraint over ourselves? What happens when we lose control over ourselves is that there is a gradual tendency to disintegration of what we call our own selves. The tendency to disintegrate is very disadvantageous to the stability of our individuality and our personality. All that tends to disintegrate is also a tendency to break the stability of the personality. We get distracted, and feel as if we are not ourselves. We seem to be different things at different moments of time, not having any continuity of thought, emotion or feeling due to the fact that our personality gets distracted.

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

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

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

Our conviction that we are subject to change, that we are processes, transitional links in a chain of development, this notion in our mind is due to the character of intelligence or consciousness implanted in us. But for that, there would be no awareness of anything whatsoever. That is one side of the matter. But that there is change, that there is transition or a complexity of structure, is a notion arisen on account of the juxtaposition of material characters with consciousness which is not subject to transition or change of any kind. This peculiar complex is human nature. It is not pure consciousness; it is not pure matter. Or, to put it in the language of the Kathopanishad, *ātmendriya-mano-yuktam bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ* (Katha 1.3.4): The wise regard the human being as a complex of Atman, the senses and the mind. Three factors brought together into a focus of activity constitute the human personality, or human nature.

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

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

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

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

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

Do you know that you cannot continuously be doing anything in this world? Neither can you be looking at something forever, nor can you be hearing something forever, nor can any particular sense activity go on continuously, because continuity is a character of *sattva*, discontinuity is a character of *rajas*, and whenever there is discontinuity of any kind of effort, we may take it for granted that *rajas* is working rather than *sattva*. *Sattva* is stability, and the opposite of it is *rajas*; and when *rajas* takes possession of our personality, we lose control over ourselves. Control is the work of *sattva*. Absence of control is the work of *rajas*.

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

There is no chance of control of any kind in respect of the external world or persons when self-control is lacking. "Why?" is the question. The reason is that self-control is the essential nature of consciousness. The absence of it is contrary to its nature. Stability is the nature of consciousness. Distraction of any kind is not the nature of consciousness. Consciousness is not distracted. It appears to be distracted on account of its association with distracted *prakriti*, which is preponderating in *rajas* for the time being. Consciousness has befriended itself with that which cannot rest in itself at any time. *Prakriti* is compared to a moving wheel, a rotating something which never rests in itself, like the wheel of a car. The spokes of the wheel may be said to be the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – of *prakriti*. Just imagine that there is a wheel of a car with three spokes, and the car is run with great speed. The spokes also move in such rapidity that we may not be even able to see their motion.

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

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

When the *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – move rapidly, more rapidly than the eyes can catch, there is an illusion of stability of objects. Things look permanent in the world on account of this rapidity of the motion of *prakriti*, the *gunas*, while they are tremendously moving, vehemently changing their position from moment to moment. Extreme motion looks like no motion. Tremendous activity looks like no activity. You can visualise only feeble activity, lesser motion, and not tremendous speed or velocity in action. The movement of the *gunas* of *prakriti* is so

rapid that the structure of the sense organs is not fitted to catch the speed of their motion. So before the senses, an illusion of stability of objects is created; the mind, which only plays second fiddle to the senses, okays whatever is told by the senses, and the mind also believes that the objects of the world are stable, but they are not. They are in motion. Nothing in the world is permanent, and nothing rests in itself; everything moves, and everything is in a state of motion.

Consciousness is tethered on to this motion, or threefold activity of *prakriti*, in the form of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and a peculiar illusion of consciousness is created. Consciousness itself begins to feel that it is in motion on account of its togetherness with the motion of the *gunas* of *prakriti*. Then it is that we become restless. We remark that we are tired, hungry, thirsty, and so on. All these remarks that we make about ourselves are due to this association of the stable consciousness with the unstable processes of *prakriti*. That which moves is not consciousness, and that which moves is not *prakriti*. That which moves – action and movement and change – is consciousness, but that which moves and changes and acts is *prakriti*. There is a juxtaposition, a movement, a blending, and a mutual reflection of these two principles. Consciousness becomes restless. We are totally unhappy in our lives, miserable in our activities in daily life. Sometimes it looks that it is better that we do not live in this world because of this inability of our consciousness to distinguish its primeval nature of stability, permanency, immortality, from the transient character of the moving *gunas* of *prakriti*.

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

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

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

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

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

This is to give an idea of the psychological background of the restlessness of human nature and the unhappiness that follows in its wake. It is so because our minimum of reality, the bottommost existence, the ultimate quintessence of reality of what we are, is consciousness, and it is irreconcilable with processes of any kind. It cannot be juxtaposed with transient movements of the *gunas* of *prakriti*; therefore, we have a feeling of tiresomeness and dissatisfaction with the surface view of things. Everyone is dissatisfied with life as a whole, irrespective of caste, colour, age or birth, due to this common malady of human nature which is entanglement of consciousness in processes which are irreconcilable with it. There is a war taking place in our own

personality, a perpetual Mahabharata, as it were, due to which we are born with restlessness, live in restlessness, and die in restlessness.

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

Self-control is the masterstroke, the panacea, the remedy par excellence for rectifying this illness of our nature, and self-control is the remedy because it is the essential nature of consciousness. It is completely controlled in itself because it cannot be anything other than itself. Lack of self-control is a transference of the properties of consciousness to objects of sense. When we transfer characters of our consciousness to other objects, then we lose self-control. We become weak. Why do we become weak? Why is an incontinent person, or a person without self-control, weak? The reason is that the strength of consciousness has been divided among the objects of sense. It is like the strength of an undivided family. An undivided family has a strength of its own, but if the family is divided, with each brother having his own house, they are all weak. Anybody can exploit them and defeat them, or even attack them. But an undivided family has a strength which cannot easily be beaten. They are one power, one force.

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

Every power that is material can be put down by the power of consciousness. Another example is the Mahabharata. The choosing of a large army by Duryodhana and the choosing of one Krishna by Arjuna is another epic example of the superiority

of consciousness over the material content of the world. A large army was nothing before one Krishna because it was consciousness over matter.

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

Self-control is again the remedy because self-control is the activity of consciousness, not the activity of the senses or of the limbs of the body. Self-control is not a physical activity; it is a conscious activity, an activity of consciousness, by which it inwardly frees itself step by step from the clutches of objectivity. The more we succeed in extricating consciousness from its contact with the objects of sense, the nearer we come into the truth of our personality, our being, and daily we grow in strength, in power, in radiance, in happiness, and so forth. This is what is called *brahmavarchas* or *brahma-tejas* in scriptural parlance. A *brahmacharin*, one who is continent, one who practises self-control, glows with a lustre in his face. A peculiar radiance emanates from him; an energy is contained in his personality. What is this? It is nothing but the coming back of consciousness to itself.

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

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

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

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

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

To exercise self-control is to exercise that specific feature of consciousness as the guiding principle in your day-to-day life. This is a very difficult practice. Sadhana is a very difficult practice. "You may swallow fire, you may drink the ocean, but you cannot do sadhana," says the Yoga Vasishta, says Gaudapada Acharya and others. Do you know how difficult it is? You may drink the ocean and swallow fire itself, but you cannot control the mind. And what is self-control but that? Why can you not control

the mind? Why is it that you cannot be self-restrained? The reason is, you have already lost control over yourself and you have sold yourself to somebody else. You no more exist in yourself. You are a bound slave of objects. A slave has no right over himself. He cannot assert his independence, because he has been sold. We have been sold to the objects. We belong to others. We have nothing in ourselves. We are empty, hollow things. This is why we find it so hard to exercise control over ourselves.

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

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

Towards this end, hard effort is to be put forth, and we have to understand the very basis and purpose of self-control. First of all, it is not mortification. It has very little to do with body and human society. It has to do with consciousness only. It is a tuning of consciousness, and not a twisting of the body or a changing of the attitude of human society. It has nothing to do with externality. It is purely an internal process of consciousness, and therefore, it has always remained a very secret and inscrutable process.

We are likely to miss the point constantly in our life, every day, in this practice of self-control. Every day we will miss the point of concentration. We will not know what we have been doing and where we actually stand. It is, therefore, essential that we dedicate our life for this purpose and do not take it merely as a hobby. Self-control is

not to be a mere hobby or a part of the activity of our life – at least, not the life of full-time seekers or *sadhakas*.

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

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

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

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

Discourse 7

THE ESSENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF MORALITY IN SADHANA

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

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

That which foils all our attempts at a vital success in our life is a failure on our part to exercise a control over the ethical nature or the moral behaviour. This is generally taken to mean a kind of social pattern or etiquette. We have been told that to do good or to be good would be to conduct ourselves in certain ways in respect of human society and the public in general. We have, therefore, unwittingly identified ourselves with social patterns, and also identified morality with a social need.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual morality, or yoga morality, is an inner command of ourselves, and we are concerned only with this morality. We are not concerned with social morality because what the society thinks of us or what we would expect society to think of us is a little

different from what we would appear in front of the cosmic forces. The cosmic forces have eyes to see, just as people have eyes to see us. Now, we may hide our nature from the observation of the eyes of people in the world, but we cannot hide ourselves from cosmic forces. There is, as some philosophers put it, a peculiar prehensive contact that we establish between ourselves and the forces of the world.

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

True morality, or moral conduct, spiritually speaking, would be that which would be approved of by the inner nature of things. We are not talking of political morality, international ethics or social conduct. These are the expressions of that inward law which seems to be reigning supreme throughout the cosmos. There are what are known as *satya* and *rita*, truth and cosmic order, operating everywhere. Cosmic order is the expression of truth, *satya*, which precedes *rita*, the law of the universe. *Rita* is only an external expression of the inner stability of the cosmos, which is truth.

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

What we are impelled to do from within ourselves is our moral nature. The yogi is a person who, as mystics sometimes say, tries to fly alone to the Alone. We are in this world as unbefriended units of spirit. No external social associations can be attributed to this spark of the spirit that we are. The spark of the spirit in us, or rather, what we are, is not a social unit. It does not belong to a conglomeration of bodies or personalities. It is unique in nature, incomparable in character. It is this spark of the spirit that tries to unite itself with the cosmic spirit, and this process is called yoga. Hence, it is a wholly internal life that we live when we live a life of yoga.

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

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

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

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

Hence, the first step in yoga is to be a moral unit rather than merely a social unit. We have been accustomed to live in society, and we always think in terms of society. There is no other way of thinking for us. Whenever we think, we think in terms of other persons. Is there any other way of thinking in the world? There is, and that is the spiritual way, since the spiritual way of thinking is unique in the sense that it does not stand in need of any external object or person. It can work for itself. It can stand on its own legs.

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

The spiritual outlook is a universal outlook. It is not concerned with individualities or persons or objects. It applies to all things in general, uniformly like law or the principle of justice. It is the preparation of consciousness to adjust itself with the impersonality of character that is inner morality. When we gird up our loins and make a resolution that we shall live in conformity with the cosmic principles, then it is that we have lived a moral life inwardly. When we are inwardly moral, we also feel satisfied, while if we are merely outwardly moral and not inwardly so, some dissatisfaction would be gnawing into our vitals. It is inner non-conformity to morality, while there may be an outer conformity to it, that causes unhappiness in the core of our hearts. Outwardly we are fully moral, ethical and in conformity with the principles of justice and law, but inwardly we are in variance from the principles that demand of us a particular behaviour.

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

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

What is moderate is also impersonal, and vice versa. The impersonal does not lean towards any particular notion or extreme. It is the personal that leads to extremes, and where the impersonal manifests itself even in the smallest modicum of percentage, there moderate behaviour is also visible. Moderateness in every form of personal expression is the impersonal peeping through the personality. It would be seen in

every one of our activities, physical as well as psychological. You would not be in a haste to do anything when you are moderate in your conduct. You do not run sweating and toiling, as people sometimes run to catch trains. Even when catching a train, why do you run? Go half an hour before the time. What do you lose? This is another kind of peculiarity in human behaviour.

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

Again we have to remember, we do this not because others would approve of it. This morality has nothing to do with others. It is only a training of our personality to become more and more impersonal so that we may finally attain to that supreme impersonality of Godhood. We have to remember this point again and again that this *tapasya*, this austerity, this self-control, this moderateness of behaviour, this inner morality that we are practising, is not at all a law that we are abiding by from the external point of view, but an inner contact that we are establishing with whatever is cosmic in its nature. In activity, in speech and in thought, morality has to be expressed.

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

To be moderate is difficult because it is really self-control. Self-control is nothing but moderateness of inner and outward nature. This is the highest form of *tapas* that we can think of, and this is the most difficult form of *tapas* that we could practise. Try it and see. This would be an impossibility after a few days. The nature will express itself in its extremes once again. To weigh everything in proper proportion while we speak or think or act would be a difficult job. When we speak, when we write, and

when we develop relationships with other people, extremes have to be avoided because, again, we have to remember here that truth is not an extreme. It is that quintessence of behaviour, quintessence of spirit which comes out when we squeeze all experience of its external relationships and come down to the minimal experience, the irreducible minimum of reality.

It is, therefore, necessary that we frame a program of our life and a regular routine of our day. This is what we call the spiritual diary or the self-check-up, a ready reckoner for our personal conduct and life. What is the program for our life? If we are to live for another forty or fifty years in this world, what are we supposed to do in this world? This would be our program of life. In accordance with this program that we have before our mental vision of our whole life, we have to prepare a daily routine for ourselves because the daily program is a link in the chain of life's program. Many links make the chain. Many days make the year, and our life. So many daily programs make life's program. Hence, the daily program should naturally be a microcosmic pattern of the life's program that we have before ourselves. We may glibly say that life's program is God-realisation. Well, it is true. But then the daily program also has to be in conformity with this ideal. It cannot be at variance with it.

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

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

We always seek pleasure, even in sadhana. It should be satisfying. It must be beautiful in the sense that the senses should be satisfied. So we change places, change

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

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

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

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

Swadhaya, *japa* and *dhyana* are primarily the concern of the will and the understanding; but what about the emotion?

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

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

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

When emotion is misdirected or pent up without proper utilisation, we become – inwardly unhappy without our knowing what is actually happening to us. Every one of you should study your own personal nature and find out if you are emotionally happy or emotionally tied up. Emotionally, most of us are not happy. We are restrained from various corners of the world in the expression of our emotions. While it is true that nobody would allow their emotions to go riot, those emotions have to be restrained, but they have to be restrained in a manner that they are put to activity. The emotion has to be expressed in a healthy manner, in a constructive way, so that they make us happy and also enable us to grow spiritually.

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

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

You wake up in the morning fresh and revived if you are emotionally healthy. If you are emotionally unhealthy you get up weak, as if you have done a day's work. Even when you get up in the morning, you feel weak. What has happened to you? Are you tired even after sleep? Because the emotions are tied, they have been very tense even in sleep. Though the purpose of going to sleep is to release tension, it has not really been released. You have tied up your emotions into a bundle and never allowed them to express themselves in any way, and then gone to bed. Therefore, you got up from bed with a small, shrunken face, with a feeble body, and exhausted even after sleep, as if throughout the night you are very busy. This is due to emotional imbalance, an unhealthy emotion which has not been properly diverted.

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

Have you any unfulfilled desires? Answer this question openly. If you have unfulfilled desires, you will have pent-up emotions. You cannot fulfil all your desires, because society will not allow it. You know that very well. For fear of social censure, you may thrust your desires inwardly and bury them, but they are not dead. Like snakes, they are inside in a cave. They are cobras, very venomous. Unfulfilled desires, desires which you want to fulfil but you are not allowed to fulfil by human society, cause tense emotions inside. If you daily go to sleep with these emotions, then naturally you will become an exhausted, worn-out personality, though you really have done nothing in life.

To get out of this situation, your understanding has to be exercised. Here your *buddhi-shakti* comes into play. When you have so many desires which you want to fulfil but social laws will not allow the expression of these desires, what are you

supposed to do? Are you to die unhappily, or are you to fulfil your desires, violating all laws of society? Neither of these is possible. Neither are you supposed to violate social laws, nor are you supposed to thrust your unfulfilled desires inside. They have to be given a proper vent, in an artistic manner. Art is the expression of beauty and emotion; and sadhana is a great art, perhaps the greatest of arts. The greatest of beauties is the beauty of sadhana, the system that you introduce, the methodology that you adopt and the balance of approach, which is the characteristic of art, and which you introduce into the system of sadhana.

Understanding and emotion have to go together for this very reason. If emotion alone is to work, you may violate laws and become a criminal. And if understanding alone is to work without emotion, you will be barren. You will be an intellectual scientist without any vitality or substance or pith in your life. You will be a pedant, an academician, without a living spirit in your personality, if emotion is divested in you and you have only understanding or intellect. On the other hand, if it is only emotion, I told you what the danger is. When understanding and emotion come together, you have a whole personality. That is what is called a balanced human nature. This is what they call goodness of conduct. Goodness is not sentiment. It is not merely sympathy that you show by emotional outburst. It is an intelligent appreciation of values. You love because you understand. You do not love because you are emotional.

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

In the Bhagavadgita we have a grand, elaborate gospel which speaks of this blending of the human personality, which was disintegrated in the beginning, as we see in the instance of Arjuna, whose nature was completely torn to shreds. All the five sheaths of his body were shivering and trembling, tending to disintegration. They had to be integrated by the beautiful gospel of the Bhagavadgita which is, as we usually say, a synthesis of all the yogas. The intelligent nature, the volitional nature, the emotional nature and the active nature are all put together in proper proportion, not in any excess or overemphasis. It is in the Bhagavadgita that we find a balanced emphasis on every side of human nature. This is also why we sometimes do not understand the actual spirit of the Gita. It looks as though it lays emphasis on one thing at one time and on another thing at another time, but it is not so. The different types of emphasis it lays are only to give importance to the various sides of the human personality so that

we may become integrated whole beings, psychologically healthy, intelligent, powerful in will, healthy in emotion, and active to the extent necessary.

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

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

Discourse 8

BRINGING CONSCIOUSNESS TO REST IN MEDITATION

Before we directly engage ourselves in an attention upon the subject of meditation, it would be profitable to cast a retrospective glance over the field of analysis that we have tried to carry on up to this time from the point of view of morality and ethics, as well as psychology.

The ultimate aim of consciousness is to stabilise itself. The whole process of the activity of life may be regarded as an attempt of consciousness to rest in itself – to bring about a stability in itself through passages of harmonisation, equilibration and integration. There is obviously a lack of stability in consciousness, and the bringing about of this stability is the art of meditation. The question we have been trying to answer was, “Why is it that the consciousness is not stable?” It is unstable because it is obsessed with forms of objects in which it has got fixed psychologically.

This process of fixation may be identified with what we generally know as obsession. The obsession of consciousness is the fixation of consciousness in an object or a notion. The fixation is so intense that there are people who have what is called a one-track mind. Like the railway carriages that move along a single track, minds can move along one track, completely ignoring aspects which are other than the direction which the mind is taking. This is also a kind of obsession or fixation. As horses run around roads with blinkers, looking at things only in front of them and knowing nothing of what is beside them, consciousness can run on the roads of sense with blinkers on the eyes so that there is a restricted awareness of what is in front of oneself and an obliviousness of factors other than what is in front of one’s mental eyes. This is obsession when it is carried to an extreme. This is what we also know as fixation.

When the consciousness gets fixed in this morbid sense, it loses the awareness of what has happened to it. The identification of consciousness with the object of fixation is such that there is a mutual interaction of characters between consciousness and the object. We have studied something about this erroneous interaction which, in common Vedantic parlance, is known as *anyonya-adhyasa*, or mutual superimposition of factors.

This mutual transposition of qualities between consciousness and the object of its fixation is the great trouble we are all in. Self-analysis becomes the hardest of endeavours on our part because the analysis of the Self is the same as an understanding of what has happened to consciousness. The Self and consciousness are generally considered identical as far as we are concerned.

In a verse of his *Viveka Chudamani*, Acharya Sankara mentions some of the forms of obsessions or fixations which can distract the attention of consciousness from itself. Obsession has a threefold character – fixation on the world, fixation on learning, and

fixation on the body. With these three fixations of consciousness one may lose the goal of one's life.

There are many minor forms of fixation studied in the science of psychoanalysis, but Sankara takes only the broad outlines of these and categorises them as *loka vasana*, *sastra vasana*, and *deha vasana*. *Vasana* is a psychic impression which impels consciousness to fix itself on a particular object or activity. This impression is embedded in the lower recesses of the mind, and it pushes consciousness with a tremendous force in a particular given direction to an object or a concept.

The world is taken as one of the objects of fixation by Sankara in this verse from the Viveka Chudamani. The consciousness is obsessed by the world, which is one of the obsessions, so that it can think only of the world and nothing else. The obsession takes a form of an identification of consciousness with the world so that the world is taken for a reality and consciousness is taken, if at all consciousness is accepted as existent, as an offshoot of material concrescence.

These days we have, for example, metaphysical doctrines which try to make out that consciousness is an efflorescence of matter, an exudation of the brain cells, and an effect of concrete spatio-temporal substances. This has arisen on account of an identification of consciousness with matter. The world is matter for us because, as far as we understand the world, it is a multitudinous expanse of forms of matter. So when consciousness is obsessed by the world, it is to say that it is fixed on objects which are material, external, and passing.

The world has three characters: it is material, it is external, and it is transient. Now, these three characters of matter, in any of its forms, are enough to cause a lot of agony to consciousness. We are distressed in our life on account of identification with the world which is external, which is material, and which is transient. On account of the materiality of the objects of sense with which consciousness gets identified, there is love and hatred for objects, and there is a sense of loss when there is bereavement of consciousness from objects. There is a feeling that life itself is lost when the objects of affection are lost. People can die of heartbreak or may even attempt suicide having lost any meaning in life on account of having identified life, identified consciousness, with objects of affection.

The objects of affection are, naturally, material. Whether it is organic or inorganic, it makes no difference. It is a material content of the world. And this object, when it attracts the attention of consciousness, directs the centre of consciousness to the object. Virtually, we may say, the consciousness which is itself, or which is characterised by selfhood, is transferred to the object, and the object becomes the self for the time being. The destruction of the object amounts to the destruction of the self. That is why there is so much pain when the object of affection or love is taken away from oneself. When there is bereavement of oneself from the object of affection, there

is death of people whom we regard as our dear and near. This is what happens to consciousness when it identifies itself with the objects, which are external to consciousness.

The objects are not merely external and material, they are also transient, so that we are always in a state of insecurity in the world. We are never stable or possessed of a sense of security or stability in our life. The consciousness unconsciously, we may say, is possessed of a form of unknown fear. Or, we may say, a fear of the unknown is always before us. We may not be consciously thinking of any calamity that may befall us today, but unconsciously there is a sense of insecurity. We are not fully relieved of this tension caused by the fear of the unknown. We are in a tense state inwardly, in the lower levels of our minds, though for utilitarian purposes of practical workaday life we look all right.

The materiality of the object, therefore, brings about the identification of consciousness with objects to such an extent that the loss of the object is mistaken for loss of the Self, due to which we cry when a person dies. We beat our breasts when a dear person passes away. On account of externality of objects, we can never reach out to any object. We can never possess anything in this world, really speaking, on account of the externality of the content of the world. That which is external, well, it is defined properly. There is no need of expatiating on this meaning of externality. That which is external is external. That which is external can never become internal. If it could become internal, we would not call it external. The externality of the material objects of the world prevents the object from coming into our possession, so that we never possess anything ultimately. Everything is subject to destruction, separation and isolation.

So the externality of objects is a great defect introduced into our conscious life, due to which we are tempted, tantalised, promised, but given nothing ultimately. It is a false promise that the world gives us. It is false because the external cannot become the internal. What is outside consciousness cannot enter consciousness. But, unfortunately, the delusion that is in consciousness makes it feel that the objects can enter into it. Materiality cannot become spirituality. Externality cannot become internality. Transiency cannot become permanent. Yet, we hope for these impossibilities. This is life in the world. Transiency of objects, apart from their externality and their materiality, is another cause of our suffering in the world so that, all told, we may be said to be perpetually in a state of agony, restlessness, fear, insecurity, and unhappiness.

The fixation of consciousness in the world is of this nature. *Loka-vasana* has brought about all these troubles for mankind. This is one of the *vasanas* Sankaracharya mentions in the *Viveka Chudamani*. *Loka vasana*, the love for the world, the attachment of consciousness to externality, which includes love for name,

fame, power, authority, and so forth, are all included in the *loka vasana* – love for the world, not merely this world but all the worlds that we can think of, conceive of, or hear of from the scriptures, such as the other *lokas*. Bhuloka, Bhuvanloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka – all *lokas* are included when we say *loka vasana*. Because of their transcendence of the physical world, all these *lokas*, whatever be their subtlety, are external and transient, so that whatever be the world, whatever be the *loka* or level of being we may be lifted to, we are not going to be in a better state of affairs. Reversal is possible from any *loka*. And this *loka vasana*, the psychic impression impelling consciousness to attach to external things in any *loka*, is an obstacle.

The second *vasana* which Sankara mentions is *sastra vasana*, the love for learning, scriptures, books, etc. Now, learning is very essential; study is good because no one can escape the need of education. But what Sankara mentions here is a state of unnaturalness of consciousness which takes learning as an end in itself. While everything has a meaning and a utility, it has also a limitation. It cannot be carried to its extreme, beyond a logical limit. Everything is good so far as it goes, but not beyond that. The love for learning is all right so long as learning is a means to the discovery of the facts of life, and learning ceases to be useful when its limitation is reached, when we reach its boundaries, or when its purpose is fulfilled. As we say, a ladder is useful to climb over a wall or to the terrace of a building. When the climbing is over, the ladder has no purpose.

What Sankara actually has in his mind when he says that *sastra vasana* is an obstacle is that intellectual comprehension of the truths of life is not a realisation of the truths of life. We should not mistake understanding for experience. The logical analysis of a philosophical situation is not necessarily a coming to a conclusion regarding the truths of life because every philosophical argument and every scientific formula, every conclusion rationally arrived at, has a pro and a contra. It can be argued in its favour, and also against it. We can prove something, and also disprove something by logical arguments. One and the same person can argue both on behalf of something and against it, which is possible by the sifting of the processes of logic and the sifting of the evidences for or against a particular person, object or a condition.

So learning is like a torch which illumines the path, but the walking has to be done by the person who holds the torch. Thus, we should not be too much addicted to literary pursuits such as the study of grammar, rhetoric, lexicon, logic, semantics, and the like; they are processes or intellectual preparations for coming to a philosophical conclusion regarding the facts of life so that later on these concluded facts become the objects of meditation. The purpose or the aim cannot be completely ignored, and the means should not be mistaken for the end. Hence, *vasanas*, or psychic impressions, that attach themselves merely to intellectuality, rationality or sheer literary pursuits or

scientific observations without any practical utility in regard to life become obstacles. Consciousness can get fixed on the world of objects, or it can fix itself on mere intellectual notions such as learning. Scholarship is not the goal of life because learning *about* things is not *knowing* things. They are two different things altogether.

When Sankara speaks of *deha vasana* as a third obstacle, he refers to the fixation of consciousness on the body. Just as there can be obsession in regard to the world of objects, and obsession in regard to scholarship and pedantic learning, there can be bodily obsession, identification of consciousness with one's own bodily individuality, so that the whole reality is limited to the bodily personality. The love of the body is the final love for us. All love is physical love when it is limited to the contours of the body and the frame or structure of the physical personality. So love for the world of objects, love for intellectuality and learning, love for one's own body are three forms of conscious fixation, says Sankara in the Viveka Chudamani. These are obstacles, on account of which what happens? True knowledge does not arise on account of these fixations of consciousness.

It is these fixations that make consciousness unstable, because it is identified with the unstable objects. The world of objects is transient. Intellectual notions are passing, and the body itself, being a part of nature, is transient; therefore, all these fixations of consciousness are fixations on transient forms. On account of the transiency of the forms over which consciousness is obsessed, there is an apparent transiency in the feeling within ourselves. We are perpetually oscillating between alternatives every moment of time, without being conclusive about any item or any fact or truth of life. Every day there are newer and newer discoveries of fresher and fresher truth, the older discoveries getting supplanted by the later so that we do not know where we actually stand and how far truth is from ourselves. If every day the discoveries are to get transcended by later ones, then which is the final discovery? No one knows. We cannot come to a final conclusion at all. Truth is never known; perfection is never reached. All this difficulty is because of the transference of the properties of consciousness to objects, whether they are of the world, whether they are purely notional, or whether they are physical or bodily.

As we know very well, the aim of the spiritual *sadhaka*, or seeker, is the final fixing of consciousness on truth or reality, which is meditation. And inasmuch as the consciousness has to be fixed on truth, it has to be weaned from all fixations on untruth. Everything that is untrue, or false, has to be taken away from association with consciousness so that it may be allowed to rest on truth in its pristine purity. For this, the analysis of appearance is as much necessary as that of reality. That which is untrue, that which is unreal, that which cannot be the object of the meditation of consciousness, is what is known as the appearance, as contradistinguished from reality.

In order to fix consciousness on reality, which is ultimate meditation, it has to be disentangled from association from levels of appearance, various degrees of untruths, the various stages of error which consciousness commits in its perception. Just as Sankara mentions three errors of consciousness as three obsessions or fixations – *loka vasana*, *sastra vasana* and *deha vasana* – Swami Vidyanaraya also mentions in the Panchadasi three types of fixation which are almost similar to the three mentioned by Sankara, only in a different language. It is, in the words of the Panchadasi of Vidyanaraya, what we know as the attachment to *gaunatman* and *mithyatman*, as different from the *mukhyatman*, or the ultimate Self. These words occur in the Brahma Sutra Bhashya of Sankara also, though he has not explained it in detail. *Gaunatman* is the secondary self. What we call the world of objects may also be called the *gaunatman*, or the secondary self. It is called the secondary self because it is not the true self. But why is it called the self at all? How do we say that the world of objects is a self? When we say it is an object, it cannot be called a self at the same time. Why on earth do we call an object a secondary self, or *gaunatman*? How can the term ‘atman’ be applied to an object of sense? It is so because of the character of selfhood being recognised in an object.

We are here, in the analysis of appearance, concerned not with things as they are, but with things as they appear to us. A thing may not be good, but if it appears to be good to me, nobody can prevent me from trying to possess it. Therefore, my concern with it is more important than what the thing is by itself. The object by itself may not be the Self as it really is, perhaps, but to me it is a self. When I look upon an object, I look upon it as a part of myself, in one sense at least. That is, I transfer certain characteristics of my consciousness to that object which I see with my eyes. Then it becomes a part of myself.

How do we detect whether consciousness is fixed on an object or not, whether a particular object is a *gaunatman*, a secondary self, or it is otherwise? If anything that happens to that object will affect the consciousness, it is a *gaunatman*. We will be, to a certain extent, moved when something happens to that object. This is a test that our consciousness is attached to it. It is there already. It is not merely within us, it has also exceeded the limits of our body and gone towards that particular object.

Previously I have given an analogy to describe what actually happens when an object becomes a *gaunatman*, or a secondary self, to a particular person. The object is identified with consciousness in the same way as light is identified with an object which it illumines. An object cannot shine, but it seems to shine on account of light rays falling upon it. When we see a piece of tin shining in sunlight, it is the sunlight that really shines upon it, not the object itself. Yet, we cannot distinguish the light that has enveloped the form of the object from the object in itself. Likewise, we are unable to make a distinction between the subtle activity of consciousness, on account of

which it has gone outside and pervaded the shape of the object, and the object itself independently. What we actually see there is a part of our own self. The skin of a person has been peeled, as it were, and covered over the object. Our own skin is seen there in a subtle form.

The *gaunatman*, or the secondary self which the Panchadasi speaks of, is the pure object of sense which is influenced by the personal consciousness enveloping it intensely, so that the processes of vicissitudes through which the object passes are identified with consciousness. This is the condition in which we find ourselves when the world of sense – the *gaunatman*, the secondary self – is mistaken for the primary self. What is loved or hated is, really speaking, that which is really connected with ourselves. Unconnected things cannot be loved or hated. They are psychologically connected, positively in love and negatively in hatred. Whatever it is, it is connection. Whether you love something or hate something, you think of it. What is important is the thought of it. Whether or not it is a thought of love or hatred, the connection is established. Now, what we are interested in is the disconnection of consciousness from the object, whether this connection is positive or negative.

The second item of fixation mentioned in the Panchadasi is the *mithyatman*, which is what Sankara refers to as *deha vasana*. The false self, or untrue self, the bodily self is the *mithyatman*, as distinguished from the true self, or the *mukhyatman*. These are only scriptural and traditional analyses of the fixations of consciousness. But there are many more forms of fixations we can see in practical life, on account of which neither can we understand what is happening to ourselves, nor can we know our relationship to the world outside.

Just as we have the psychoanalytic science in the West – the Freudian, the Adlerian and the Jungian psychoanalysis – we have the yoga psychoanalysis, which has also made a similar vivisection of the internal structure of the human personality and gone deep into the entanglement of consciousness with the objects in various levels. It has become necessary to know what these entanglements are so that we may consciously, of our own accord, disentangle ourselves from fixations, whatever they be.

But all this analysis will prove to be futile if one does not really wish to be cured of this psychic illness. A psychopathic patient does not really wish to be cured of the illness. A psychic case does not know that it is a psychic case. That is the symptom of a real case, and any attempt at the cure of this illness will be taken ill. We cannot give good advice to a psychic patient because he will immediately regard us as an opposition, an enemy or an obstruction in his life. But these are acute cases of illness.

In the path of the spirit, the way of sadhana that we are discussing, we are not so much concerned with the psychic illnesses studied through Western psychoanalysis, but the higher types of psychoanalysis of the normal human being. We are not concerned with abnormal persons, as they are unfit for yoga. Only the mental

condition of normal persons who are regarded as perfectly sane is to be studied through the psychoanalysis process of yoga.

Though normal persons of the world may be considered to be perfectly sane from the point of view of common society, they are not perfectly normal from the point of view of the psychology of yoga. We are not normal persons, from the point of view of Patanjali's yoga at least, though from the point of view of Freud and Jung we may be very normal. We have various degrees of personality, and it is only from the point of view of one type of personality that we may be regarded as normal. But there are other standards of judgment of normalcy of behaviour, from whose standpoint we may not be in a fit condition to be called normal, because normalcy is conformity to truth. If our conduct, our behaviour, our thought and feeling and appreciation of things, the attitude we have towards life in general, can be in conformity with facts as such, then we may be regarded as normal human beings. Otherwise, from the strictest analysis of the psychology of truth, we are far from being normal because normalcy is perfect stability and rest of consciousness. At least from the point of view of truth, when there is instability and restlessness of consciousness for any reason, we may doubt the compliment we are given that we are normal.

In yoga, we have to attain perfect normalcy in the ultimate sense of the term. It is not social normalcy that we are called upon to seek. This is an attempt of consciousness to go back to the farthest limits of truth so that it need not be subject to further transcendence of experience. The test of reality is non-contradiction. When experience is not contradicted further on, we may be said to be in a state of reality. When our experiences are subject to transcendence, when they can be sublated by other forms of experience, when we have a subtle feeling that there is something beyond us yet, then we cannot be said to have reached the state of reality. An uncontradicted experience is truth experience. On this concept of truth it is that meditation has to be practised.

We have to recall to our minds the various disciplines that a student of yoga has to undergo before he plunges into the highest reaches of yoga, called meditation. The most important of them all, as we saw, was moral discipline, a test of oneself from the moral standard or ethical point of view. The reactions that our psychic personality sets up in respect of events that take place in the outside world are also tests of our ethical perfection and the standard of morality that we have reached.

What is the reaction that we set up in regard to persons, things, objects and events that take place outside? This is to test ourselves morally and ethically. If the reactions are such that they disturb our peace of mind and we become restless for the time being, it means to say that we are morally unstable, not merely psychologically unstable. This is the great study of the kens of *yama* made in the sutras of Patanjali, the essence of which is the practice of *ahimsa*, *satya* and *brahmacharya*. The more we

say about these, the less it is, because all success in yoga depends upon these fundamental moral canons. It is futile and foolish on the part of any student to be overenthusiastic in these matters and overestimate oneself in such fundamentals as the discipline of *ahimsa*, *satya* and *brahmacharya*. It is no use appearing too big before the eyes of people by entering into the field of *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, etc., while there is a shaky foundation of *ahimsa*, *satya* and *brahmacharya*.

It is commonly seen that students of yoga take little notice of these most important essentials of the yoga practice. The foundation will shake from its very roots if a huge edifice of yoga structure is built on the unstable and inadequate preparations made morally and ethically. I need not expatiate on this subject since we have already seen to it in our last lesson.

Subsequent to the moral and ethical discipline that we are called upon to be perfect in, we have to be psychologically stable, and not unstable. After we become morally stable, we have to become psychologically stable until we are certain that we have some sort of control over ourselves. The control that one can exercise over oneself is to be tested now and then. Otherwise, there would again be an overestimation, even here. "Oh, I have seen through all these and I know what things are ahead of me," may be a very unsafe estimation of oneself because the tests that can come upon us are not only sometimes painful, but they can take us unawares. Mostly, our powers are not adequate to the task when we are put to the test. The reason is that we have, again, not sufficiently prepared ourselves morally and ethically. The moral foundation will help us towards the end. It is the reserve force that we conserve within ourselves, and we may consciously, silently, for our own selves, put ourselves to the test of moral perfection and psychological stability.

The energies that are depleted on account of moral falls and psychological instability is to be taken notice of. Its quantity has to be assessed, and then from the quantity of energy thus depleted every day through moral errors and psychological mistakes, this quantity of energy can give us an idea of the extent of progress that we have made in psychological concentration and spiritual meditation.

As all *sadhana* is a conscious endeavour to subdue and stabilise oneself, it becomes necessary to effect this stability, whether moral or psychological, in every stage of practice. Though such teachers as Patanjali have given us only a few stages of ascent, such as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, etc., other teachers such as Vasishtha in the *Yoga Vasishtha* has given us other stages such as *subheccha*, *vichara*, *tanumanasi*, etc. While such numbering of the stages may be regarded as a broad outline of the processes we have to undergo in yoga, when we actually tread the path we will personally see that there are many more stages than these seven mentioned by Patanjali or Vasishtha. We have got many stages to pass through every day. We know it more than anybody else, and in every stage of

psychological experience or opposition we have to gird up our loins to test ourselves and bring about an act of stability in all these levels. In action, in emotion, in understanding, and in spirit, in all these levels stability has to be maintained. This is *abhyasa*, practice. *Abhyasa*, or practice of yoga, is the introduction of stability into consciousness in action, in emotion, in understanding, and in spirit.

The first of these, namely, the introduction of stability in action and emotion, is perhaps the most difficult of tasks because actions and emotions are of many types, many categories. We have to perform various duties in life, on account of which it will be difficult to think of the aspect of stability while we are plunged in a particular work. Especially when we have to change the types of work every day, this introduction of conscious stability into action would be a difficult thing. We may be upset by the changes of activities themselves. Changes of persons, changes of activity, changes in the atmosphere, may bring about changes in our consciousness and in our attitude. This is not to be. If we can maintain a uniformity of attitude even amidst the change of activity, change of atmosphere, and change of personalities around us, that would be a great success. That is, we begin to see a particular meaning and significance in every kind of activity that we may be performing. The meaning is the same. The meaning should not change. This would be the spirit of karma yoga, as we would like to call it in the spirit of the Bhagavadgita. If we can see a single, uniform, unchanging significance or meaning in every activity, that would be stability of consciousness in activity. If a determinate, fixed attitude can be maintained in respect of every person around us – whatever be the nature of that person, our attitude is the same, and we think the same thing in respect of every person – that would be introducing stability of consciousness in respect of people and environment.

When we go to Mussoorie, we think one thing; when we go to Delhi, we think another thing; when we come to Rishikesh, we think a third thing. This is not to be. The atmosphere should not change the attitude of consciousness. The atmosphere may change, but the attitude cannot change. Persons may change, but our assessment of the meaning or the values of persons cannot change. All persons are fundamentally made of the same stuff. That we all know. They do not vary in their ultimate stuff. They are the same. If we study one person thoroughly, we have studied all humanity. There is no need of going to study every person. If we know that one particle of rice is cooked very well, we know all the rice is cooked. The study of one person is the study of all persons.

Stability of consciousness is to be, therefore, in activity. We need not go into higher levels of stability. Consider the nature of stability of consciousness in activity itself, the most difficult thing that we face in everyday life. We have to change our offices, our professions, and the nature of work for various reasons no doubt, but what is the ultimate purpose of these activities? If we can see the purpose behind the activities, we

will be able to be stable while performing the activities. Though the work may change, the purpose of the work does not change. We work for the same purpose, whatever be the work. The purpose is not different. We think that the different purposes which we tentatively see in life are behind the different activities. It is not true. We have to boil down all purposes of activity into a single purpose. This is a very terrible feat of the mind. If this could be done, activities would not disturb us. If this could be done, people would not disturb us. If this could be done, the atmosphere would not disturb us, so that we can sit for meditation in any place. We need not go to any particular spot on this Earth. We have to change places, change human conditions and atmospheres and vocations on account of not seeing a uniform meaning behind activity, not seeing a uniform stuff behind personalities, and not seeing a single meaning and purpose behind atmospheres and circumstances. We can have a household in a forest, or we can have a forest in a household, according to the attitude of our consciousness.

Now, this is a very essential art that we have to learn in meditation because we cannot always find chosen circumstances in this world. We cannot go on asking different things every day. We have to be contented with what comes to us. We have to be satisfied with the conditions in which we are placed. We have to make the best of what is before us. When you go to Rome, be a Roman. This law applies to everyone. It applies to the spiritual seeker also. Wherever you are, adjust yourself to that circumstance. If you are with children, be like children. Do not say, "They are all small children. I will go somewhere else." You can also become a child with children. Adjust yourself immediately: You do not see children, because you are also a child. If you see you are in the midst of old people, also become an old man: talk like an old man, behave like an old man, sympathise like an old man, and be happy with old people. You will not see anything unusual around you.

The most important thing of all: Never disagree with people in your opinions of things. This is a great defect of the mind, at least from the point of view of a spiritual seeker. This is a form of egoism which crops up now and then, and descends on everything that is said, everything that is seen or considered. Sometimes we find ourselves in hot water, and atmospheres seem unsuitable. We become unfriendly in human society on account of this peculiar trait in the mind of disagreeing with people. Why should you disagree with people? What have you gained out of it, especially if it is not going to materially affect you? If someone says God does not exist, you immediately want to contradict him. Let him say He does not exist; what do you lose? I also agree with people who say there is no God. I tell them, "There is no God. Thank you." And they go their way, I go mine. Why do you argue with people? This is very important.

If we are honest seekers, we have to circumscribe the activity of the mind. The periphery of the area around which the mind wanders should be limited more and more every day. The circumference of the circle of the activity of the mind should become smaller and smaller day by day as we proceed further and further in the practice of yoga, so that ultimately there is no circumference at all. There is only the centre. Fix yourself on that. That is meditation. As long as there is a circumference, there is activity. When there is only the centre, there is no activity. There is only attention. This attention of consciousness on the centre by the bringing down of the circumference to the point of attention is meditation.

I would request you all to read Sri Gurudev's book *Concentration and Meditation* in detail, because I cannot go through all these points, and it is also not necessary to repeat them here since he has mentioned them in his book. Also read his beautiful book *Mind, Its Mysteries and Control*, and the book *Conquest of Mind*. At least these three books should be read very well. You will make out some meaning from what I say if these books, and also such books by other authors, may be studied so that you have adequate insight into the structure of the human mind. Good knowledge of the human mind will give you sufficient strength to subdue it and to bring it to the point of concentration and meditation.

Discourse 9

THE CREATION OF PLEASURE AND PAIN

In the beginning, it is sheer trouble not knowing where the difficulty really lies. It is in this condition of uncertainty and an inability to know where one's problems really are that one moves hither and thither in search of solutions. In the earliest of stages it looks that the world is bad, that there are serious defects, and all the causes of problems are transferred to the world of perception.

There is a need for a long series of processes of evolution to discover that the trouble does not really lie with the world. Though at the very outset, on a surface view of things, it looks that all error and ugliness is only outside, a time will come in the process of the evolution of the mind when flashes of insight will make it clear that all the trouble is not wholly on the side of objects.

This stage of psychological struggle to discover the source of pain and suffering is an unavoidable condition to be stepped over by every *sadhaka*, every seeker of truth. In all practices of yoga, whatever be the path, at some time or the other we will find ourselves in an undecided state, not knowing whether the truth lies to the right side or to the left.

But, as analysis deepens and the mind matures in its educative processes, we begin to discover that the root of the difficulties and troubles we pass through in life is not outside but elsewhere, though it is not known where it is. This is a great advance that is made in mental evolution. We may not know where the trouble is, but at least we know that it is not in the world of objects. There is a condition of discrimination which is posterior to the condition of the erroneous opinion we hold that the things of the world are the sources of our sorrow.

We know very well that no object, no person can be a source of sorrow for us wholly, because if the causative factor of pain is to be inherent in any particular object or person, that object or person should be the causative factor of sorrow for everyone in the world. But this is not seen as such. A particular source of anxiety and suffering to us may be a source of great joy and satisfaction to somebody else. The tiger is a source of terror to us, but the tiger's cub runs over the back of its mother without any fear, jumps on her lap and kisses her, while we are afraid even to look at her. So the object as such cannot be regarded as a causative factor in any manner whatsoever.

The object has also to be judged from the point of view of a specific relationship that it has with us. This is a higher stage of discovery. That the objects are entirely the sources of pain is the first crass perception of the untutored mind: All error is outside, all mistakes are of other people, and everything that is ugly is what is not mine. But a higher inquiry lands us in the superior understanding that beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice, good and bad, and all such judgments depend not necessarily on the

structure of the objects themselves but more so on the relation that these objects have with ourselves.

The world is relative, relational, conditioned by the dependence of objects on their experiencers, and vice versa. Any object is beautiful or otherwise in accordance with the specific relationship it has with us; otherwise, it is neither beautiful nor ugly. The ethical and moral judgments of good and bad are also purely objective. They are to be judged from a particular context. We cannot know whether a particular action is right or wrong unless the context also is known, so this context is the relationship of the particular occasion for judging. A superior insight would be the detection of there being a causative factor, known as relationship, higher above the pure structural context of the objects and persons in the world. Where does the source of suffering lie? It is not in the objects, but in our relationship with objects.

Can we say the relationships themselves are the causes of pleasure and pain? This is a question that we have to raise further on. The relationships are only psychological. They are not physical. What causes pleasure and pain to us is naturally a relationship of objects with ourselves. But what sort of relationship is it? It cannot be called a physical or material relationship. It is not a substantial contact of the object with us. A thing may not be physically in contact with us; it may be spatially distant and still cause pleasure and pain by an inwardly directed relationship of the object with its mental relationship. So while it is a very interesting discovery that we have made – we learned that objects are not the sources of pain but the relationships of objects with us are the sources of pain – even this is not an adequate discovery because we cannot say that there is any such thing as relationships outside us. All relationship is internal.

Do the objects jump upon us, or do we jump upon the objects? What do we mean by 'relationship'? What is this contact with the objects that we establish, on account of which we suffer or enjoy life in this world? Whether it is the object that seems to have an impact upon our experience or we have an impact upon the objects, the question is similar, a single common question. What is this relationship? Is it physical or psychological? If it is the object that has the impact upon our experience, it should be physical because objects are physical in their nature. But physical experience is unknown. All experience is mental. We cannot have a purely physical experience. There is no such thing as experience divested of a mental operation. Unless mind also plays a part, experience would be unintelligible. Physical experience divested of mental relationship is no experience at all, at least as far as we are concerned. Hence, all relationship, from the point of view of the causative factor of pleasure and pain, has to be psychological, and not physical.

Thus, we boil down the causative factors and come to a residuum: where do they actually lie? The factors of relationship with objects that are the causes of pleasure and pain, being psychological, seem to have an intimate connection with our own

personality because what is psychological relationship but the operation of our own mind in respect of the objects of the world? Where does the source of pleasure and pain lie? Not in the objects, but in the relationship of objects with us. What is this relationship? It cannot be physical. It has to be psychological. But what is this psychological relationship? Being connected with the mind, it has to be connected with us.

So we are dangerously coming near to the truth that we seem to have a very important part to play in creating our own pleasure and pain. A very inconvenient truth is opening before our eyes, like Pandora's box: It is our mental relationship with persons and things that causes pleasure and pain to us. This is discrimination of the causative factor of pleasure and pain in the world.

What does this discovery mean? "Am I the cause of my pleasure and pain? Can I cause pain to my own self? Will I deliberately jump into a well and break my leg? Should I not be regarded as a sensible person who will want only satisfaction rather than suffering in the world? How is the cause of pain attributed to me?" may be questions that the mind raises. Nobody deliberately causes suffering to oneself. Nobody wishes to go to hell wantonly. Nobody wishes to be hanged, but people are hanged in jail. How does this happen? Nobody wishes to place oneself in such a very miserable state.

It is not that we deliberately create causes of our suffering. Unconsciously we create these factors of our suffering. Though deliberately we will not jump into a well, we may fall into a well not knowing that there is a well in front of us. With open eyes in daylight we may not jump into a well. Yes, perfectly so; it is accepted. But suppose the eyes are not clear in their vision – it is dusk, or perhaps the well is covered over with grass. We are likely to fall into the well unwittingly. We fall into error not because we want to commit error, but because we are led astray by certain factors unintelligible to our understanding.

The causes of our suffering are we ourselves, but we do not create these causes wantonly, with conscious deliberation. We are led along a wrong path by mistaken notions, erroneous judgments of our own selves, and consequently of other persons and things in the world. Now we are awake to a tremendous fact that the cause of suffering in the world is not the object but the relationship of the object with ourselves. It is not merely this physical relationship of objects with us but a psychological relationship, which means to say, a mental relationship, which again amounts to saying that our personality itself is the cause of our suffering, due to certain misapprehensions. We ourselves, our personalities, cause the suffering. This is another discovery that we make.

But what do we mean by 'this personality who causes the suffering'? Is it the eyes, the nose, the ears, the sense organs, the body, the limbs? What sort of thing is it in the

personality that causes our suffering or creates a mistaken notion about the things of the world? “Which is the psychological organ that troubles you?” is a question in the spiritual diary. Some people say, “The eyes trouble me,” some people say, “The ear is my trouble,” some say, “The tongue is my trouble,” and so forth. These are the ways in which they fill up the spiritual diary. Some people say that the street is their trouble. God knows what they mean by that. “The bazaar is my trouble, the street is my trouble.” They mean to say that certain things which they see in the streets and the bazaars distract their mind. That is why they say the street is the trouble. Likewise, we very charitably say the eyes are the trouble, or the tongue is the trouble because it asks for delicious dishes, and so on. This is how we sift the evidences in this process of judging the ultimate cause of our pains and sufferings in the world.

The senses mostly are regarded as our untrustworthy friends who create a lot of misery for us, so in our attempt at self-control we subdue the senses so harshly that their backs may break. But the instigator of the senses is really to be regarded as a more dangerous cause than these instruments, or servants, the senses by themselves.

As we say, students are very bad these days. They are rebellious *gundas*. But we know, and it is well known everywhere, that there are instigating policies and fireworks behind the students, and these young juvenile enthusiastic minds can be bent in any direction, like a young bamboo stalk. When it is very old, it cannot be bent. But when it is very tender, we can bend the bamboo and direct it in any way that we like. These senses are like these rebellious students of modern days. They are not bad by themselves, but they are led along wrong paths by forces which are selfish, personal and injudicious. We have to find out the causes behind these incentives driving the senses along erroneous channels. We should not complete our process of sifting evidence merely by coming to the borderland of sense activity, because we find that we can be unhappy even when the senses are not functioning.

In the waking state we can be highly disturbed even when we are not actually seeing anything, hearing anything, eating anything or touching anything. Have you not had occasions of this kind in your life? You are seeing nothing, almost. You are sitting with a blank look, but are highly disturbed in the mind. It is not that the senses are active at that time; they do nothing almost, but you are highly irritated, agitated, upset, and disturbed by some factor not clearly known. So one can be unhappy even if the senses do not function actively.

What about the dream state? How wretched we become sometimes in dream when all the senses are inactive totally. None of the senses function in dream, but yet we can have all sorts of funny experiences in dream. We can also have experiences in waking condition such as reveries and occasional moods of depression, melancholy and dispiritedness of various types.

So where do we find ourselves now in our discovery? The source of our pain is not the world of objects, not merely the physical relationship, not the sense organs. It is something else, some power that drives the senses to objects and along channels which are untoward. This repository of energy, the reserve force which supplies the incentive for activity of the senses, is the *antahkarana*. Broadly, in English, we can call it the mind, generally speaking. The *antahkarana* is the internal organ. Internal organ is what we call the psychological apparatus. We have broad divisions of these functions such as decision and understanding, which we call the *buddhi* in Sanskrit. We have got the function of self-arrogation and self-affirmation for the ego, or the *ahamkara*. There is the psychological function of retention of past experiences in memory, which is one of the functions of what we know as the *chitta*, and we have indeterminate perception and thinking and doubting in a general manner, which is supposed to be the function of the *manas*. It is mind in a general sense.

Now, these are only functions, but they are not different organs of action. These are various methods adopted by a single intelligent force within us in obtaining the objects of its desire. The mischief-maker is this central operative factory inside us; it is not merely a factory of machines, but an intelligent, self-operating machine. In a very special sense, we can call it an automobile not driven by a person, but automobile in the strict sense of the term, which moves by itself. The mind can move by itself, act for itself, without a driver behind it. It is a self-propelled engine, and it is propelled in such a way that it knows its motives and the centre of its fulfilment of desire and satisfaction. For the sake of self-fulfilment, it employs the service of the senses. The senses are only servants of this self-driven intelligent force called the psychological organ.

The *antahkarana* is this abundant source of energy – not dead energy, but intelligent energy. It goads the senses to activity by connecting itself with them. When the power that is generated in an electrical factory is connected to a machine, the machine starts moving because of the energy that is supplied to it from the powerhouse. These senses are machines of different make. One goes in one direction, one goes in another direction. One may be a motorcar, another may be a tractor, a third may be something else, and so on. But the energy that is the driving force behind these different machines of the senses is the mental structure of our personality, the *antahkarana-chatushtaya*, the peculiar, unintelligible wheel with which the whole of our reality is identified day in and day out.

So what is the process of suffering? This intelligent force within, called the *antahkarana*, supplies the energy for action to the senses. It orders the senses to move in a particular direction, and the senses run, being driven by this force to their respective targets. These targets seem to be the objects of the senses, but they are really the objects of the mind. It is the mind that wants the objects, not the senses, but the

senses appear to be wanting them on account of their being directly connected with the objects. When a policeman comes and arrests someone, it is not the policeman who is interested in the arresting of the person. Some other force is driving the policeman to come in contact with the culprit. The force is not the policeman. He is only an instrument. Some other energy, some other intelligence is operating behind this instrument called the policeman who runs towards the object called the culprit and arrests him.

Thus, the senses cannot be really regarded as desirous of objects. They are unintelligent, structurally. They have no motivation by themselves. They cannot think, they cannot understand. They are blind, active, mechanical structures. They are driven in a particular direction by the intelligence that is supplied by the mind. To give the example of the policeman, he can be driven in any direction. If you ask him to go to the east, he will go to the east. If you ask him to go to the west, he will go to the west. It all depends upon the person who gives the orders. The intelligence for the direction of the senses is supplied by the mind; otherwise, the senses are just unintelligent machines capable of being used in respect of any object in the world.

Our analysis has brought us to this unexpected conclusion that the ultimate cause of all our experiences, internal and external, is invisibly hidden within our own personality and, like a thief sitting in our own house without our knowing he is there, it wreaks havoc within ourselves and transfers the guilt upon the objects of sense. Your own servant in the house can take away all your things and then he may complain to the police that so-and-so has stolen the property. He himself may file the complaint, the man who has taken the things. He will be the first person to come running to you and say, "Sir, the things are missing." And he will run about, asking what is happening. He himself has taken it, and he will help you in filing the complaint.

This is what happens to us. The trouble has started within, but by a peculiar intelligent device, the mind has transferred this error to the objects outside. There is a peculiar defence mechanism of the mind by which it can transfer its properties to persons and things outside. What is within us, we see outside, like a cinematographic projection. We see the picture somewhere on the screen in front of us, while it has come from somewhere behind. The projector is behind. There is nothing there – only a blank screen. The film is behind us, and the shape of the picture, the colour, etc., of the photograph in the film, which is somewhere unseen in the rear, is projected to the screen in front of us, and we begin to see it there, while it is really behind.

Similarly, the structural defect of the mind, which is the photograph in the film inside our own cinematographic factory, gets projected outside on the screen of the world of space and time, and we begin to see ourselves there as other persons and things. So we love things and hate things. The cause of the love or the hatred is here, but it has been thrown on the screen of space and time outside so that, God forbid, it

can be cast on the screen of somebody else, so that tomorrow we like them or do not like them. They are only screens on which the picture is cast, and then only the picture is seen there; the screen is completely forgotten. This is what happens in the cinema. We cannot see the screen. If we begin to see the screen, there is no point in going there. We see only the shape that is cast on the screen that is deliberately made invisible.

The mind is such a wonderful mechanism which has unending resources of material of umpteen shapes and contours, which can keep us active for ages and ages. For years and years we can go on seeing a cinema endlessly, not merely for hours, and the screen is perpetually hanging there outside – an eternal screen in front of us, as space and time. The space-time continuum is the screen upon which is projected this series of the pictures that have been photographed by the mind itself in the process of perception and cognition through ages of reincarnation.

Very interesting it is, and very inconvenient also, to know this truth because there seems to be something seriously awful with our own selves. The morbid source of suffering is in the recesses of our structure, our own makeup, and to study this is to study the world. As far as we are concerned, the world is what means everything to us in our life. The meaning that we see in life is the world for us, and all the meaning that we read outside is the meaning that is projected from the mind. So to study the mind would be to study life, and that would be to study the world. The proper study of mankind is man. We study the human structure in its psychological makeup, in its entirety, and we know what we are, what others are, what the world is, and perhaps what God Himself is.

This is the psychology of yoga. What I have described just now as the process of sifting of evidence from the objects through the relationships, through the senses and the mind, is known in the language of Vijnanabhiksu, a great exponent of yoga, as *samjnas*, stages of consciousness. These are stages of consciousness. The first stage is the consciousness of the world of objects. The second stage is the consciousness of the relationship of the objects with us. The third stage is the consciousness of the senses. The fourth stage is the consciousness of the mind. So all these are consciousness states. These stages are the internal states of the mind gradually getting hardened into perceptible relationships with the objects.

Yoga, therefore, consists in operating the mental factory in such a way that it works harmoniously with the structure of the cosmos. The whole of yoga is only this much. It is an attunement of the mental faculty in such a way that it works smoothly and harmoniously in relationship with the world as it really is. The world as it really is, is different from the world as it is to the perception of the mind. The mind has created a world of its own. This is what they call *jiva-srishti*, the creation of the *jiva*. But *Ishvara-srishti* is quite different. What God has created does not trouble us. What troubles us is

what we have created on the screen of God's creation. So if our creation is in consonance with God's creation, we are on velvet. This is yoga.

We are dissonant in our activities with the structural pattern of God's creation. We move disharmoniously with the pattern of what God has created in the form of this world. The nature of objects is different from what they appear to our mind and the senses. An object as such has no characteristic of its own. A person can be defined from the point of view of the individual mind in different ways. A person by himself or herself is indeterminate, not associated with qualities or characters of any specific nature. If the person is a father, the mind has one relationship with that person. But if the very same person is a son, the relationship of the mind is different. He can be a brother, he can be a friend or enemy, he can be well or ill, wanted or unwanted, an intruder or a necessary person. It may be even sexually distinguished as male and female, or tall and short, Eastern and Western, white and black; such distinctions are introduced to a specific individuality of a human being, which is *Ishvara-srishti*. But the *jiva-srishti* is what I mentioned as the mental reading of meaning on the person, on account of which we have emotional reactions in regard to the person or the object.

If my watch is stolen, my reaction is one thing, but if somebody else's watch is stolen, it makes no difference to me, even if it is the same watch. The same factory has made that watch, and from the point of view of the object as such, there should be no difference in the reaction of the emotion; but we know the connectedness of the emotion with the object makes all the difference. If my child dies, it means something to me. If somebody else's child dies, it is different. After all, what is the difference between your child and somebody else's child in the pure, dispassionate judgment of a living human individual?

Such examples can be cited endlessly to give the distinction that we make in our personal relationship in regard to the persons and objects of God's creation, which are things by themselves. Some philosophers call them 'things in themselves'. The thing in itself is different from the thing as it means to me. I am not so much worried about the thing in itself. What troubles me is the thing that appears before me to my mental vision, and the reading of meaning by me in that particular thing. What is the thing in itself? Nobody knows up to this day. It is difficult to know it. Perhaps as long as we live in this world, we cannot know what a thing really is. As we go deeper and deeper in our analysis, we begin to see newer and newer meanings in the very same object of the world.

We have the famous physical observation of things, which has given us a startling meaning of things, quite different from the one that is seen by the senses. An object which is hard like granite or stone is supposed to be constituted of minute granules of force or waves of energy, continuous in their activity with the other inner structural patterns of other objects in the world. It looks, from modern discoveries, that objects

do not differ structurally among themselves, at least in their fundamental being, because of the outer shape automatically fading away when we begin to observe a deeper vision of things through instruments – the inner structural substantiality of objects.

The difference that we see among the waves of the ocean slowly subsides when we begin to see the bottom, which are the waters of the ocean. Likewise, there seems to be a universal ocean of energy which projects itself into eddies of various shapes, concretising themselves into the shapes of objects when they are perceived by the senses. Energy cognised or perceived by the senses through the activity of the mind on the screen of space-time appears as objects. This is also one of the conclusions drawn by the analysis of yoga psychology. The term *prakriti*, or matter, the world of creation that is used in this psychology, is really a name that is given to the objective pattern of sensory and psychological perception.

It is, therefore, necessary to train the mind in order that it may know its proper relationship with things as they really are. This training is called yoga. We have now discovered that all effort has to be initiated from within. There is no use expecting help from outside. As a matter of fact, nothing seems to be wrong outside. Things are perfectly all right. There is a dislocation in the activity of the mind, due to some error of perception. The mind has mistaken its relationship with the things themselves. If you mistake your friend for an enemy, your relationship would be regarded as mistaken. In darkness you may mistake one thing for another thing and develop an erroneous attitude towards that thing.

You may scream at your own son, thinking that he is a thief. There was an occasion when a person shot his own mother, thinking that she was a burglar. She went out in the night, poor lady, for her ablutions, and this gentleman took his gun and shot her, thinking that she was a burglar before realising it was his own mother. This is gross error in perception and cognition of the mind. It can mistake one thing for another thing.

The whole world is thus mistaken in its totality. The mistake we have committed through the mind in its cognition is not partial, but total. There is a total, complete upsetting of values, so that we are literally standing on our heads instead of standing on our legs. What is above seems to be below. What is to the right seems to be to the left. If you stand on the bank of the river Ganga and look at your own reflection on the water, you will see that the head, which is topmost, is the bottommost there, and the feet, which are the lowermost, appear uppermost. And if you see yourself in a mirror, the right eye is seen as the left, the left is seen as the right. In the Kathopanishad it is told that the world of perception is distorted completely in the same way that objects are seen in a mirror. That which is right is seen to the left, and so on.

It is not merely this distortion that has taken place, but much more. It is a reflection, but also at the same time, it is a limitation. It is a distortion in many ways. This is the reason why the mind is unable to understand what has actually happened to it. The mind has the inveterate habit of believing what it sees. Whatever it sees, it trusts fully, not knowing that the seeing may not be correct. We have the famous instance of eyes with cataracts seeing the moon as double. If we trust our mind on the basis of the perception of the moon through cataract eyes, we are mistaken. We see two moons, while the moon is one. We cannot entirely believe what we see.

But the mind believes what it sees through the senses. The mind perceives the world through the sense organs. Through the eyes it sees, through the ears it hears, and so on. But these five senses are distorted lenses, through which a completely wrong picture of the object outside is presented to the mental cognition. Unfortunately, the mind has no other avenue of knowledge. It has to trust the eyes, trust the ears, trust the palate, and other things. But all these senses are distorted structures. We can compare them to broken lenses completely out of order, which will never give a correct picture of the object outside. But what can we do? These are the only lenses available, and these are the only avenues of perception; there is no other way of knowing truth, and we see things only as these are. So this is the predicament we are in. This is the world for us.

The mind has to be trained to perceive independently of the senses, so far as it is possible. This is the great task before the yoga student. We should not trust things merely because we see them with our eyes, hear them with our ears, etc. Tangibility, visibility, audibility, etc., cannot be regarded as standards of correct perception or judgment. "I hear it; therefore, it must be there," is not an argument, because we have to be charitable enough to concede that the instruments of observation can go wrong. The instruments of our observation are the senses.

Thus, it is necessary that we enter into self-investigation rather than object investigation, world investigation, or an enquiry into the structure of the pattern of the world externally. There is no use observing a minute substance in a laboratory through a defective microscope. Whatever be the carefulness of the observation, inasmuch as the instrument is defective, the observation will bring a wrong conclusion.

So the first thing would be not to strain our nerves in observing through the telescope or the microscope, but to see that the instrument is in perfect good condition; otherwise, all our labour will be a waste. What is the good of philosophy, theology, argument, and scientific observation through defective apparatus? While sensory observation is the basis of scientific discoveries, mental observations are the basis of philosophical conclusion. Both are sailing on the same boat as far as their conclusions are concerned. If the senses are defective in one way, the mind is defective in another way. The senses cannot collaborate among themselves on account of their

distinction in their structural pattern, and they seem to be collaborating on account of the single mind operating behind the senses; otherwise, independently, what the eyes see, the ears cannot hear, and so on. The mind somehow collates these reports of the different senses, and comes to a judgment of its own.

The senses have this defect that one sense can perform only one function and, simultaneously, the other senses cannot come to the knowledge of what the other senses perceive. While this is the case with the senses, the mind has a defect of its own. It can see things only in a limited manner – as a quantity, as a quality, as a relation or as a condition. There is no other way of thinking. Whatever we think of has a quantity or a mass. It has length, breadth, height. It has a three-dimensional structure. Can you think of a four-dimension or a hundred-dimension thing? Impossible. This is a limitation of mental operation or the structure of the mind. We think of only quantities or, if not, we think of certain associated qualities, attributes: it is of this nature or of that nature. Nothing can be thought of unless it has a character, a relation, or unless a thing is in some condition. Everything has to be in some state. So these are the operative limitations of the mind, like the limitations of the senses.

So we have ultimately a wild-goose chase pursued both in rational metaphysics of the mind and the observation of the sciences of modern physics. We are nowhere near the truth, either this way or that way. Hence, mere philosophical augmentation, logical disquisition and metaphysics as we usually understand it in the academic sense are of no use, nor are the observational techniques physics of any use to us.

We come to yoga for a different technique altogether. Instead of observation and rational disquisition, we come for self-discovery. “Know thyself” is the oracle of Delphi. This is what the Upanishads tell us. The science of yoga, therefore, is a science of self-culture, self-study, and self-discovery by the process of self-restraint. Everything is concerned with the self, ultimately. From the objects of the world we have now come down upon the self itself as the source of all our agonies of life in this world.

This is the art of yoga, the scientific technique of self-mastery for the sake of self-unfoldment and self-discovery, which will be so startling to us that it would look as if we are awakened from a dream of world perception.

Discourse 10

SATISFACTION IS A STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

We have been discussing the different stages of the attitudes of consciousness with the intention of subduing its operations, and fixing it in a primary and ultimate objective. We also observed that there are various activities or operations of consciousness which move towards an end beyond themselves and point to the existence of a status transcending the fields of operation that are available to the senses of perception.

Now, in this endeavour on the part of the *sadhaka*, or the student of yoga, in subduing the movements of consciousness, there is a chance of his coming face to face with certain subterfuges which are difficult to detect on the surface and likely to undermine the very effort which was undertaken with such enthusiasm at the commencement.

It is not all a smooth movement from the beginning to the end. The passage of consciousness has, as we know very well, many ups and downs. But it is not merely this. We may have ups and downs of movement on a journey towards Badrinath, for example. There are hills and dales. We have to climb, and we have to come down. To have only ups and downs on the way is easy enough to understand, but suppose there are also pits, such as holes and underground passages covered over with a thin veneer of ground surface. This situation would be most undesirable because one does not expect to fall into pits on the way, while ups and downs may be expected.

The impressions of the mind, which are the active forces behind the operations of consciousness in the field of yoga, have certain mechanisms by which the activities of the mind can be wound up or released, or even given a false colour on the surface, making them appear quite different from what they really are in their essence.

The whole of our personality is the manifestation of the functions of the mind. Our human nature is nothing but mental nature. The mind is what man is. The bodily organs, the limbs and the various systems of physiological operation are external media of the internal activity of what is called the mind of man. The mind is the principle ruler of the whole human system. Whatever we think, feel, speak, and do with our bodily organs are all activities of the mind. But it does not appear that the mind is actually working in these various forms when we observe the human nature only outwardly. We are likely to make a distinction between speaking and thinking, thinking and understanding, understanding and feeling, feeling and action, and so on, as if they are isolated functions quite independent of each other, but they are all operations of a single commander within who gives orders in different ways for different purposes under different conditions and experiences.

When an activity is not to be undertaken, and a step is not to be taken at all, the forces can be withdrawn. The mind can act like a general of an army, and it is really

that. When it is not the opportune moment, the forces are withdrawn and kept in reserve. So at that moment when the forces are withdrawn and kept in abeyance for a future attack or operation, it is impossible to know what is happening inside.

Now, the difficulty is that we are studying our own selves. The student is the subject as well as the object of study in this particular field of science. The mind is the operator, and the mind is also the object of study; hence, when a particular aspect of the mind is withdrawn, the study of it is practically impossible. Then, under this condition of the withdrawal of the forces of the mind and temporary the cessation of its activity, we are likely to mistakenly think that the mind is not there at all. The mind is very much there, but it is not active, like a snake coiled up and sitting in a corner. The coiled-up serpent is as much a serpent as an active, moving serpent. We have to touch it to see whether it is alive or not. The mind can coil itself like a cobra and appear to be dead if necessary, so that the external world of rule, discipline and order may not affect it.

The world is the reality for the mind, and this reality has its own laws. In psychology, generally speaking, the outer world is regarded as the reality, which is mostly in opposition to the mental operations and desires within. The mind of man cannot express all its desires because of social taboos. There are laws operating in society and in the natural phenomena of this vast creation which prevent the operation of the mind as it likes. The manifestation of psychological functions within is obstructed by the operation of the forces of nature outside. So having gained a knowledge of the existence of the laws of society and nature outside, the mind is very intelligent in conducting itself in the world. It has an intention which it wishes to fulfil and manifest in action outside in the world, but these laws obstruct its manifestation. Then it is that we withdraw these forces.

The mind can conduct itself in four ways. It has four ways of action. It can completely overpower us by a frontal attack with all its might and main if the opportunity for it comes. Then it is that we become sensualists, materialists, and indulgent in the objects of sense, and assert ourselves so vehemently, contrary to the feelings and beliefs of other people in the world. This is the height of selfishness which can manifest in the mind of a person when it is given a long rope. We have seen people who are always sticking to their own guns, who will not listen to others' opinions, cannot take others' advice, and will not have any kind of self-discipline. They want a long rope for their indulgent passions and the activities of the senses. This is what is called the fully expanded state of the ego, the mind and the senses. It becomes rampant and rioting, blowing like a tempest because the conditions favour it. The disciplining forces outside are not so active. When this is observed by the mind, it takes full opportunity of this situation and begins to fall upon the objects of sense. This is indulgence, which is usually the predominant condition of the mind.

Indulgence can mean sensory indulgence, egoistic indulgence, or active indulgence. We can be indulgent in our own activities so that we can boss and superintend over everyone in the world as if we are the master of all things. We can be indulgent in our senses, and be highly sensuous in character. Or we can be indulgent in the ego, and be very adamant, obstinate, and not amenable to disciplinary laws from outside. This can ruin the personality of a person because it is contrary to the law of the world, contrary to the law of society, and contrary to the law of the astronomical universe itself. The whole cosmos is opposed to such operations of the mind. When this situation takes place in the mind of man, it is supposed to be the worst of conditions. The condition of indulgence is the lowest phase into which the mind can descend.

Most of the people in the world are indulgent in the sense that they wish to have their own way in every field of work and walk of life. But the mind is not always in this condition, though mostly it would like to be. When circumstances are not favourable, when the laws of the reality of the world are active, it can put a stop to these indulgent activities – not because it is not interested in these indulgences, but because times are not favourable. A seed sown in dry soil finds circumstances unsuitable and so will not grow at all; there will be no action on the part of the seed when we have sown it on dry land. But suppose there is rain that will flood over it and the soil is wet; if the climatic conditions and temperature are all favourable, we will see the dried seed, which looks dead, slowly sprouting into a tendril.

The mind also is like a seed, and when it finds that the soil on which it operates is dry, unfavourable, not suitable at all, then it looks as if it is dead. There is no action at all. But we should not mistake it to be non-active in this condition. An inactive enemy is still an enemy. Enemies are not always active. He can be doing nothing, and not even speaking a word, and he can manifest his nature when the circumstances are favourable.

So the mind is to be taken in this sense, that it is capable of manifesting itself in various hues, various contours, various colours, and it can even behave as if it is the mind of different persons. We can behave as different persons under different circumstances. We suddenly change our opinions. This is because the mind has set up a different kind of activity within for fulfilling its purpose.

Now, the mind has only one purpose, and it wants to fulfil this purpose through various means – by smiling, by cajoling, by giving a slap, by attacking, by withdrawing; by various methods it wishes to fulfil a single purpose. In political language it is called *sama*, *dana*, *bheda*, *danda*. The methods of coercion, of cajoling, of sweet expression, of division, of opposition, of attack, are all known to the mind. As a matter of fact, these methods are of the mind only. There is nothing in the world but the mind ultimately working. Whether it is your mind or my mind, ultimately it is the mind. It

is the mental law that is actually manifesting social law, political law, and even spiritual law.

Thus, one of the methods employed by the mind is direct attack, frontal attack, indulgence. Another method is complete withdrawal, and a third method is intermittent action. This is a very peculiar activity of the mind. Intermittent action means that it is active sometimes and inactive sometimes. For example, you may be very angry with your own child. You can never hate your child, as you know very well. But sometimes you get so angry with it that you give it a blow. You take a cane and whip it. It does not mean that your love for the child has gone. It is an intermittent action of your attitude towards the child. Anger, which is the undercurrent of affection, is possible in family circumstances and in various other social fields also. Love and hate can function simultaneously by an intermittent release of forces of the mind. It may look as if you are angry, but internally you are full of affection, attachment. It may look that you are hating a person on account of your intense attachment to that person. The reason behind it is attachment, but outwardly you put on the air of dislike. This happens in families mostly. Members of the family have a bond of affection among themselves, making them almost inseparable. It is a blood relationship. A psychological unity is present in every family. But members of the family can temporarily fall out and fight among themselves as if there is an army inside the house. Still, their affection is not completely broken; the mother, the father, the son, the daughter, the sister, the brother have a feeling of community, of affection among themselves, although when certain personal interests are involved, they can have a falling out. This is a peculiar activity of the mind where it appears to hate while it really loves.

Now in spiritual sadhana, which is one of the very dangerous conditions in which one can find oneself, we do not know whether we love the objects of sense or hate them. The mind can put us in such condition that we will not be able to know what is actually happening. We may be under the impression that we dislike the objects of sense, while there is an undercurrent of affection for them. The subtle activity of the mind is for affection, but the open activity, the obverse activity, is of hate. We can outwardly hate but inwardly love. This is possible. This is a subtle activity because it is not openly expressible.

In outward society, as in family and other fields of work, it is visible and we can detect what is actually happening, and can even rectify this mistake; but in spiritual sadhana this is most difficult. Here the members of the family who are fighting among themselves are parts of the mind. They are not many individuals here. Different aspects of the mind begin to work in different ways for a subtle purpose which is hidden from us.

Most sadhakas find themselves in this predicament. For days together they will not speak. For days together it will look as though they are very calm, *sattvic* and meditative. But after a few months they may have a sudden burst of anger or passion or ego, or some such undue and unwarranted affection of the mind which is quite opposed to the calm manifestation of it earlier on.

This happens because of an erroneous conduct put on in regard to self-control, or the restraint of the senses. Suppression of the senses, suppression of the activity of the mind without properly understanding the operations of the mind, or a non-intelligent or non-rational approach to the whole circumstance may be regarded as the sole responsible factor behind this kind of activity of the mind. We cannot educate a child by merely giving it corporal punishment, by whipping it or suppressing its activities. Education is not suppression of instinct; it is the flowering of the instinct, the manifestation of perfection – what is already within, as is correctly said. The perfection that is within the mind has to manifest itself stage by stage, and it is a rise from lower categories of fields of perfection to higher fields of perfection. The art of education, or the science of education, or the psychology of education, whatever we may call it, is to be applied in the field of spiritual practice.

Any kind of vigour or emotional putting down of forces is to be regarded as unwholesome because the mind is intelligent. It is not a dead force, an inert energy; it is intelligence operating, and intelligence can be tackled only by intelligence. We cannot tackle it by brute force. If any kind of irrational force is applied upon the mind, it will give an outburst, to the detriment of not only the physical health but also the psychological health of the seeker.

So, as I said, the mind can be wholly indulgent, it can give a frontal attack, it can be intermittently active as in the condition of the expression of love and hate simultaneously, or it can remain in a very thinned-out condition like a thread almost about to break. It will look as if it is snapping, but it will not snap. It is a very fine, fibrous link of mental operation maintained to give the impression that it is dying of starvation.

It is not dead, and it is not going to die so easily. A chronic illness, a disease that is hidden inside the physiological system of our body, can be there in a threadlike condition. It may look that we are very healthy, but that chronic root of the disease is present in a very attenuated form like an atom, like a fine silken fibre which is imperceptible. Even doctors cannot say whether we are ill or not, so imperceptibly present is the root of the disease. Homeopaths will tell us much more than allopaths about this condition of illness. It is very difficult to diagnose a disease when it is deep-rooted but yet attenuated on account of the suppression of its activities. When the suppressive forces are lifted, the thread will become stout, and like a dry hill looking almost barren and white in summer suddenly becoming green with foliage in the rainy

season, we will find the inner forces manifesting themselves, to our own surprise and wonder.

As is the disease, so is every mental factor. Desire for sensory attachment and indulgence will remain in the mind in an attenuated form. It will not die. So what can the mind do? It can remain in a subtle condition like a very fine root hidden within, so that we will not know that something is wrong. Or it can undertake intermittent activity of attack and withdrawal. Or thirdly, it can give a full attack. Fourthly, it can indulge itself. And after the indulgence, it can go to sleep.

In sleep, we look like dead persons. It appears that there is no life, no characterisation, no specification, no identity of personality; nothing of the kind is there. But we know what is there. Everything is fully there. We lose the very identity of personality in sleep. We do not know who we are, whether we are a male or a female, whether we are tall or short, or what our profession is. Nothing is known in sleep. It is as if we are nothing. But when the mind sprouts up, we regain the consciousness of our previous personality, and once again we are equally active as we were earlier. The mind can sleep to give the impression of death, and it can be attenuated to give the impression of the dying condition. It can be fully operative when circumstances are wholly favourable, or it can be intermittently active.

The *sadhaka's* fate is really pitiable, because nothing can be more difficult than the study of one's own self. While there are means and instruments of studying objects and persons outside in the world, there are no means and instruments for studying one's own self. We cannot use any kind of machine or mechanism in the observation of one's own self, one's own nature, one's own mind.

Self-reflection is more difficult than reflection upon objects. Objects are easy of observation because they have a character or an attribute. They have got three dimensions. Every object has a weight, it has got length and breadth, sometimes it has certain colours, and it has relationships with other objects. With these assessments of values, we can study the nature of an object. But what is the characterisation of the mind? It has no dimensions. It has no length, breadth or height. It has no weight, and no colour. It does not even have a particular location.

Hence, the study of the mind cannot be done with the help of any kind of instrument, especially as its locations change. Now, this is a very important point to remember here. Has the mind a location or not? Does it exist in some place? Because if it is not in any place it is difficult to say anything about it, nor is it possible to make a study of it.

While the mind has no dimensions such as length, breadth, etc., while we cannot say that the mind has any weight or any colour, at least we can sometimes observe its location. The only way of studying and detecting the operation of the mind is from its location – not from its colour, not from its weight, length, breadth, etc., because they

do not exist. This is the speciality of the mind factor as different from objective factors of the world.

What is the location of the mind? The location of the mind is the place where it works and acts. This is a very important factor which you have to take advantage of in the study of mental faculties and their operations. What do you do, and what is your present mental state? This can be judged by a knowledge of the particular locality in which your mind is operating. Where is your mind at present? You can know where your mind is located at the present moment by knowing what the mind is thinking. What the mind is thinking, there the mind is present. That is the location of the mind. It may be an object, it may be a person, it may be a situation. Whatever be the object of the mind, that is the location of the mind.

Now, we have to study the nature of this particular location in order that we may know the purpose for which the mind has gone to that location and fixed itself there for the time being. When you think a particular thing, the question is to be asked: Why do you think that particular thing? What is the intention behind it? Instead of thinking 'A', why do you not think 'B'? Why is it that the mind is contemplating 'B' at this time instead of thinking 'A' or umpteen other factors in the world? There is a motive behind the fixation of the mind on this particular object or locality. The question has to be pushed forward. You have to go on interrogating yourself, as advocates do in court. The interrogation should not cease. Questions should come one after another, so that you are caught up at one point by your own self. What does the mind think? 'A'. That is the location of the mind.

You will not think anything unless there is some purpose to be fulfilled through that thing. There is an interest in that thing. 'A' is the object of the interest of the mind. The mind expects a particular kind of satisfaction from 'A', so it is satisfaction that the mind seeks from 'A'. That is why the object 'A' has become the location of the activity of the mind; but what the satisfaction is that the mind seeks from 'A' is a further question.

Now here we will be in a difficult position again. It will not be easy to answer this question. What sort of satisfaction do we really seek? It is difficult to answer this question because we have no definition of satisfaction. We do not know what satisfaction actually is if we are asked to define it. We can feel what satisfaction is, but we cannot explain it in language. If you try to give a logical explanation of what satisfaction is, you can at best say it is a release of all tensions of the system and a resting in perfect peace in yourself, as if everything needed has been obtained and nothing more is to be acquired. Satisfaction is that state of the whole personality, physical and psychological, wherein the release of tension is perfect and complete. It is a state of awareness of consciousness – the word 'awareness' has to be underlined – which can be regarded as satisfaction. It is awareness, because satisfaction is attended

with consciousness. If you are unconscious, you cannot be said to be satisfied. So satisfaction is a state of consciousness; it cannot be denied. Satisfaction is a consciousness, but a consciousness of what? It is a consciousness of having freed yourself from every kind of physical and psychological tension, on account of which you do not feel a need for any other factor to introduce itself into your personality. You are fully relieved of all burden and tension and worrying relationships. You are at rest with your own self. You are at peace with your own self.

This is perhaps the ultimate intention of the mind. It wants to be at peace with itself. Leave me to myself. Do not interfere with me. This is the request of the mind. It wishes to be completely in peace with itself, undisturbed, uninterrupted, released from all associations which cause tension.

The absence of peace in the mind is on account of certain tensions in which the mind is involved. That is why satisfaction is identical with release of tension. Now, what is tension? It is a kind of undesirable relationship which we establish with others. If it is a desirable relationship, we do not call it tension. An undesirable relationship is established where we do not want a thing and yet we are in that thing. That is the tension. We are getting what we do not want, and we do not get what we want. What can be a worse tension than this? We are always placed in circumstances which are unhappy, and happy circumstances are always farther removed from us.

There are various causes of happiness, though this is not the subject of our discussion today. Whatever be the cause of our happiness, these causes are far removed from the possibility of fulfilment, and the causes of unhappiness are brought to our proximity. Then the mind is alert in a very peculiar manner. This very subtle, unusual alertness of the mind under conditions of unhappiness, which cannot be averted for obvious reasons, is a psychological tension which almost every person in the world has sometimes. The world is made in such a way that we cannot always be in favourable circumstances, nor can we accept unfavourable circumstances just because they are there. So there is a tussle within the mind caused by two factors – the factor of the present and the factor of the future. The present is undesirable, and the factor of the future is a hope that perhaps these undesirable circumstances can be overcome. We are trying to avert undesirable circumstances. This attempt of the mind, side by side with the existent condition of unfavourable factors, causes tension by this peculiar admixture of activity, and that keeps it unhappy. So it wants to release itself from these tensions. That is why it is fixing itself on some location of objects. But why does it go to an object to release itself from these tensions? Who told it that thinking of an object is the remedy for release of these tensions?

It has got a peculiar psychology of its own. The mind has a logic of its own. It is a wonderful scientist, we can say. Its feeling is that if it can exceed the limits of its operation at present or increase its powers by accumulation of forces from outside, it

can perhaps combat these unfavourable circumstances at present. Suppose you are very unhappy and grieved, and are crying. What do you do? You go to so many friends. You go on telling your woes to every person, whomever you meet: "I am in this state. This is my wretched condition." And your tension is relieved to some extent. Suppose somebody is dead in the family. You go on telling everybody that so-and-so is dead, so that your sorrow is shared by others. They say sorrow becomes less when it is shared; happiness increases when it is shared. If you are happy, you go on telling your happiness. It increases. And if you are sorry, you go on telling your sorrow to others. It decreases.

So the mind plays this psychology within itself when it is grieved on account of unfavourable circumstances. It wishes to gain the sympathy of outside factors in the world, the sympathy of the objects and the personalities of the world with which it tries to relate itself for the sake of releasing itself from the inward tensions caused by circumstances beyond its control.

These are very tough stages through which a *sadhaka* has to pass. They are tough stages because this is an ordeal, as it were, into which he is led. He may be under the mistaken notion that this is a very advantageous procedure. That is why we apply this means of action when we are grieved or sore at heart. But is this a remedy? Can we expect sympathy from external factors? Can external factors release our tensions? This question can be answered only if we know the ultimate cause of the tension. Why are we in unfavourable circumstances? Who placed us in unfavourable circumstances? While the tension is due to unfavourable conditions, the question is "Who has put you into those conditions? Have you put yourself?" You will not put yourself deliberately. Nobody likes to be in unfavourable circumstances. But how did you happen to come there? Now, this is a further query that you have to put to your own self. How has it happened that you are in unfavourable circumstances? Why are you in pain in human society and in the world of nature? Who has punished you with this infliction? If not you, somebody else must have done it. Now, you cannot say that you have created those circumstances, because nobody wishes to deliberately create painful circumstances for one's own self. So somebody else must have done it. Who are those others?

Now, each one has the same circumstance, and each one will transfer the cause of his unhappiness to others. This is another peculiar defect of the mind that it cannot rest contented without transferring its pain upon others. It seeks to find the cause of its suffering in external factors. This is an erroneous judgment of the mind. The cause of unhappiness is not always outside. Just as we say we are sick on account of hot weather or because the wind is blowing or because it is raining, and so on, we attribute our illness to these factors, but it is not wholly so. We are not sick because the sun is

hot or the wind is blowing or because it is raining. These may become contributory causes, but the real cause is something else.

The real cause is our susceptibility to illness; and when we are susceptible to any particular factor of experience, there can be so many contributory factors adding faggots to the fire. Even a sneeze is not a simple phenomenon. It is a very complicated phenomenon. The whole system creates a sneeze. It is not merely the nose that does it. Every cell of the body is active and gives a caution that something is wrong in the system. The operation of the physiological limbs in the body have gone out of control in the preliminary stage, and the world outside is what it is. It is not going to change itself. The sun will always be hot, it will always rain during the monsoon season, and the wind will be blowing in winter. As we cannot stop it because nature functions like this, it means we must always be ill. Nature cannot change itself. Nature has its own laws, and these laws are not supposed to create illness for people. They are just themselves, what they are, impersonal in their attitude towards things.

The adjustment of the human personality in respect of the forces outside is not properly conducted. There is an error of judgment of the mind when it has a particular attitude towards the forces of nature outside or towards persons in society, etc. The whole question, therefore, boils down to the adjustment of the mind and the personality with outer conditions. As is the case with illness in the example I gave, so is the case with every form of experience in the world. Happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain of every kind are due to a maladjustment of the personality with existent factors.

Now, factors in the world are existent, and they exist for all times. They do not change. The forces of nature are likely to be there as long as nature is there. Its laws have an impact upon our system, especially the psychological system, and to the extent that the mind is in a position to adjust itself with the operating forces outside, it can succeed in its operation. So the whole question of success is one of adjustment of oneself. It may be with a person, it may be with a large society, it may be with a governmental system, it may be with an international system, it may be with the whole nature or creation; it makes no difference. It is a question of adjustment.

What do we mean by adjustment? It is the tuning of our nature with the nature that is outside so that the laws operating outside in nature are in conformity with the laws that are operating in our own personality. We should not have a law of our own if we are to be happy in society. The law of society should also control us, inasmuch as we are a unit of society. Suppose society has one law and we have our own law. Then how can we expect happiness in society? We have become a foreign element in the very society that we are living.

Extending this principle to the whole of the world and nature in its completeness, we are supposed to observe the laws that are operating in nature, and not create laws

for our own selves through the affirmation of the ego. It is the ego that creates laws for its own self, not listening to the laws that are existing already. It wants novelty every moment. It seeks change in accordance with its own prejudices and desires. That is why the harder the ego, the greater is our pain. An egoistic person cannot be happy in this world. Those who assert themselves constantly are always miserable. Why do we assert ourselves so much in the teeth of laws that are operating outside? That is sheer egoism, which has no rationality, no understanding. It works against itself, against its own good, thinking that it is working for its good.

Thus, the mind has to be newly educated along lines of an approach which is quite novel, and in this educational process of the mind to achieve permanent release from tension of every kind and to make the mind rest in peace with itself eternally, a very subtle and ingenious method of teaching has to be introduced to the mind. This is the art of yoga. All this that we have been discussing up to this time is a kind of introduction to the ultimate operations in yoga, which are known as meditations, or *dhyana*. We cannot meditate so easily when the mind is caught up in the network of tensions of various kinds, not even being aware that it is already in tension.

The field of yoga is the field of meditation, the art of concentration on reality. Now, what is reality on which the mind is to concentrate, and how are we to adjust ourselves with the laws that are operating outside? These are subjects which we shall discuss another time.

Discourse 11

THE DEFINITION AND TESTS OF REALITY

The yoga of meditation is a graduated process of absorbing reality into oneself. The concept of reality, therefore, defines to a large extent the methodology of meditation and the various stages through which one has to pass in this inward attempt. It is reality that we seek in all activities of our day-to-day existence. Whether or not reality is conceivable in its philosophical import, it is a necessary part of our life even in the day-to-day activities of our humdrum, crass earthly existence, and this concept of reality that we have in our ordinary day-to-day life is sufficient to give us an impression of the fact that we live in a real world.

Many a time we are baffled by the definition of reality. We have been told that it cannot be defined, but the reality which we seek in life is something that need not be defined because it is seen before our eyes. We take things for real and we engage ourselves in that material of reality which irresistibly presents itself before our consciousness. Generally, reality is defined as that which is never superseded by any other truth or factor, that which is self-sufficient, self-existent, and does not stand in need of definition, relationship, or association of any kind. But this is not the sort of reality that we have in our mind in our ordinary life. It is immaterial to us whether or not the real is self-sufficient or self-existent. Our practical definition of reality is wholly utilitarian in the sense that we regard as real that which is workable in life. If something works and succeeds in achieving the purpose of our activities, our intentions, then we may safely regard it as real.

It is sometimes thought that the practical or the workable is the real. Sometimes it is thought that reality is that which corresponds to existent facts. And often it is held that the real is that which is comprehensive and does not exclude facets of itself, which means to say, it should cohere with other aspects of our experience. A particular experience of ours should not contradict another experience of ours simultaneously or even after a few minutes. That is called coherence of the character of real. It must also correspond to existent facts. It should not contradict facts as they are accepted to be, and it must be workable, useful, and practically significant in our life.

So we have a very simple definition of reality, on which we are unconsciously contemplating. We are brooding upon facts which are taken for granted, and the objects of the senses are real insofar as they correspond to an accepted fact in the empirical world, insofar as they have a workable or utilitarian value, and also insofar as they are not seen to contradict any experience of ours in this world.

Now, this is a tentative definition that we create within ourselves for living a life of convenience and comfort, as far as it is possible. If this is the sort of reality that we are expecting, and if this is the truth on which we are supposed to contemplate, what is the

unusual factor involved in the practice of meditation? Everything seems to be simple. Any object, for the matter of that, can be regarded as the real. The real is that which persists in time. We see a tree in front of us. It seems to persist in time. We saw it yesterday and see it today; we have been seeing it for years together. This is persistence in time. And if the tree persists in the passage of time, and it has been observed to be such for the past so many years, we immediately take it to be a reality. We say the tree in front of us is a reality. It is not a phantom. And objects of a similar character seen in other parts of the world also partake of a similar status of reality. It may be a human being, it may be an animal, it may be a plant or a tree, it may be a mountain, it may be a planet – whatever be the object of our perception, all these objects seem to partake of this special characteristic that we attribute to reality, namely, persistence in time. And do they work? Yes. Whether they work or not we can see by actual sensory contact with them. We can drink a cup of water and it satisfies us. This is workable reality. When we drink it, it must satisfy us. It must quench our thirst. If water that we see or touch or sense can quench our thirst, we say it is real, not unreal. If it is unreal water, it would not quench our thirst. Inasmuch as it quenches our thirst and we can feel its taste in our palate when we actually pour it into our mouth, we say it is real. It corresponds to existent facts. For example, our consciousness of the existence of water in a river in front of us can be regarded as ultimately real if it is also accepted to be such by other percipients like us. I see this river, and another also sees the river; a hundred people see the river, and all give a uniform opinion in respect of this river. Uniformity of perception is a characteristic of reality.

Now, applying all these tests, we come to the conclusion that the world is real because it has got all these features which are supposed to be definitions of reality. But in spite of there being a reality of this kind in front of us, we have not been observing that this reality is uniformly satisfying to us. We have put forth a logical test of reality as the capacity to satisfy, or its workability. Anything that satisfies a logical test of satisfaction, not merely a sensory test, can be regarded as real. Now, does the world satisfy us? If it can satisfy us perpetually without any limitation whatsoever, we can take it as ultimately real and absorb it into our consciousness; we can make it a part of our own life, we can meditate upon it, and we may become it.

We have seen that objects of the world are similar in their method of working and reaction, though they differ in their structure and pattern. We have many objects in the world. We have the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, and ether; and even among the elements of the earth there are varieties, as we daily see. Now these are varieties no doubt, on account of separation in space and time and structural pattern, but they have a uniformity of character insofar as they evoke a uniform reaction from the percipient.

The objects are presented in their character, whatever be the object. The presented character of the object is to locate the object in space and in time. All objects are in space and in time. This is a uniformity of feature in all objects. Every object bears a relationship to every other object, and when we sensorially come in contact with the object it evokes a reaction from us and produces a sensation in us. Whenever a sensation is produced, we regard the agent of that sensation as real. If a sensation is not produced, we do not regard it as real. Take the case of a mirage. Water seen in a mirage has one characteristic of reality, namely, that it is visible to the eyes. It is in space and in time, and it has all the features of water, so far as it is visible to the eyes. But does it correspond to fact?

This is a test which disproves the waterness in the so-called water of the mirage. It is not correspondent to fact as such in the sense that all percipients do not certify it to be water. It is only from a particular angle of vision in a given circumstance of the sun's rays falling on sandy desert or ground that the water in what we call a mirage is made visible. From other angles of perception, the water may not be visible. So when we ask many other people to also look at the same spot, and we query them if they see water, they will say they do not see any water, because the water will be visible only from one angle of perception.

Also, does it cohere? Has it got coherence when it is perceived by other people, and also when it is perceived at the same spot by the same person when the sun sets or changes its position? That mirage water will not be visible to the person who saw it earlier.

These tests, when we apply them, tell us that mirage water is not real water. Hallucinations are not reality. The thoughts that arise in our minds need not correspond to facts because they do not satisfy us physically, sensorially and empirically. These are the usual tests that we apply to discover the nature of reality because what we seek is reality. Who can ask for unreal things? Neither an intelligent or educated person, nor an uneducated or unlettered person would ask for what is unreal. What we seek is real, whatever be our status in society. Whether we are human or even subhuman, it makes no difference. All seek for that which is real. Even a cow or an elephant or any animal will not ask for what is unreal. Objects should be real from their own point of view. So the whole world is to be of reality. We seek reality, we wish to be in a world of reality, and we want real satisfaction, not an apparent or a tentative phantasmagoria in the form of satisfaction.

Now, this is quite good so far as it goes; the world seems to be perfectly okay, and we can be satisfied with the world presented before our senses. But is this reality going to quench our thirst perennially, at all times? We have to apply certain subtle standards of judgment in order to verify the certitude of our experience. The calculations of a bricklayer, a mason, are mathematical, but the calculations of a very

highly qualified engineer, which may be purely theoretical abstractions in his mind, can determine and decide the method of the structure of a building much better than the mason's calculations, though both are using arithmetic or mathematics. The subtlety of perception in mathematics of a very highly qualified engineer is far superior in its effectiveness to the crude calculations made by a mere bricklayer. Likewise, on this analogy we may say that our test of reality and the methods that we employ in assessing the reality of any sensible object cannot be equal to a more subtle method which could be applied as a test of reality by deeper insight and subtler calculative understanding. The very same object which is seen on different occasions as an object of perception can be assessed and scrutinised by various degrees of investigative process.

One and the same object will appear to us as different when different tests are applied. We apply one kind of test and come to a single conclusion about a given object of the world, but different tests may be applied to reveal different types of character in its structure. The test that we apply is inadequate. If the tests that we have been applying up to this time as to the nature of the reality of the world have been adequate, then we ought to be in a world of real satisfaction.

Yesterday we tried to understand the nature of satisfaction as the underlying principle behind psychological processes. That which satisfies is what has meaning for us. The unsatisfying is meaningless, whatever be the nature of that thing. Now we have been applying the test of reality upon the objects of the world as satisfying in character, and found these objects to be wanting, which is why we are restless in our life. If the world were to be really satisfying, we ought to have been perfected human beings: Everything would be perfect, wonderful and magnificent in this world, we would have complete mastery over everything in the world and be endowed with all knowledge and all power.

Unfortunately for us, this does not seem to be the truth. We have neither comprehensive knowledge, nor power over things beyond us. Therefore, we are not satisfied. We have a craving to possess things, to enjoy things to a larger degree of satisfaction, and to gain suzerainty over the objects of the world. If possible, we would like to be suzerains over the whole of the world, if not just to a larger extent. But this has not been possible. No one person ever has been able to have supreme mastery over the entire universe. This is pricking our conscience, telling an undesirable story from within us, and we go on brooding day in and day out as to what is wrong with us, or perhaps what is wrong with the world.

A deep investigation reveals the truth that there is no real satisfaction brought about by the objects of sense, though they seem to be satisfying the logical test of reality as far as we could apply it. But is there any kind of test that we could apply to the objects of the world by which we can discover what is really wanting in the world,

other than the usual test? Why is it that real objects do not bring real satisfaction? This is something very peculiar because the cause and effect are supposed to be equally meaningful and connected with each other on a par of reality. That which is a cause, and that which is an effect produced by that particular cause have to be on par as far as the degree of reality manifested by them is concerned. So if the cause is the real, the effect is also to be real. If the cause is wholly real, the effect also is to be wholly real.

But we find that the object of the world which is certified to be real by our tests does not give us an equal amount of satisfaction. That is why we jump from one object to another object and seek varying types of satisfaction. Anything is as equally real as anything else. There is no difference between one real and another real. That which is real is perfect in itself. We cannot make distinctions among real objects. If we make distinctions of superior, inferior, etc., then no object can be called real in this world. The test of reality is completeness, self-sufficiency. Now, if any object of the world is to be taken as real for the purpose of bringing us satisfaction, then we should not be put to the necessity of shifting our centre of interest from that particular object to some other object of interest.

The unfortunate phenomenon that we see in the world, to the effect that we cannot pin our faith on any particular object wholly and shift our centres of interest day in and day out, shows that no particular object seems to be self-sufficient and able to promise us real satisfaction. There is perhaps an inherent defect in every object. But why is it that they also, at the same time, appear to satisfy the test of reality? We apply wrong tests of reality. That is why they bring wrong results. The method of investigation itself has been erroneous, and hence erroneous conclusions have been arrived at. So the world of objects appeared for the time being to be real, and when we actually brought them into home, into our own conscious field, they revealed their unsatisfactory character.

The test of reality is impossible of quick definition because it has something to do with the nature of our own consciousness. The location of consciousness is the location of the object of consciousness. Now, this will give us an idea as to our concept of reality. The mind, or for the matter of that, the consciousness which is the operating force within us, moves towards a reality and pins its faith upon it, fixes itself upon it, contemplates upon it, wishes to possess it, enjoy it, make it its own. By all these processes, the consciousness seems to imagine that the particular centre on which it has pinned its faith is real. So far as the consciousness is thinking of a particular centre, we can regard it as real to that extent alone, and not beyond. But the consciousness gets disillusioned after a few moments, and immediately it jumps from that particular spot to some other spot with the hope that perhaps it is more real and, therefore, more satisfying.

As I mentioned, though objects differ in their structural pattern, in their capacity to satisfy consciousness, they are uniform and there is no difference in them. They have the same value, and also the same defect. The ultimate intention of consciousness is to bring about a peculiar kind of satisfaction in itself. Though objects differ, the satisfaction does not differ. Whatever be the type of dinner you take, the satisfaction is the same. We do not have different types of satisfaction after a satisfying dinner, though the foods may vary in their preparation or in their colour, etc. The objects of the world are variegated in their structure but the reaction they set up from the consciousness in us is uniform.

Therefore, we have to apply a superior test of reality, as an astronomer or a scientist would use. Is there a star in the sky or not? If we ask any man in the street, he will look up and say there is no star in the sky because he cannot see it. This is also a test of reality. If it is visible, it is real. If it is not visible, it is not real. And what is the test of visibility? When we open our eyes, it should be presented before the eyes. This is the test of visibility. This is one test, no doubt, and it is quite satisfying. Is there a tree in front of me? I open my eyes and look. I do not see any tree; therefore, I say there is no tree. If I do not see any tree, there is no tree. That is my logical test of reality of whether there is a tree in front of me. But suppose an astronomer is put a question: Is there a star? He will look through a huge telescope and say, "Yes there is a star." Though the naked eye could not see the star, the telescope could see it because it is a more powerful apparatus of perception to discover whether or not the star is there. This is an analogy to discover the nature of reality.

We have been applying utilitarian tests of various kinds – the test of correspondence, and the test of coherence – to find out if an object is real or not, and we have been satisfied with the application of these tests. The objects of the world are perfectly real because they correspond to facts. We have seen; we are satisfied. Now, because they do not bring a permanent satisfaction, and also because we are put to the necessity of shifting our interests every moment of time, we have been placed in a situation of doubt as to whether they are really satisfying and whether we are justified in regarding them as real at all. So we apply the telescopic method of observation rather than the crass natural perception of naked eyes. We cannot simply look in front of us and then expect a reality to be present. A subtler test needs to be applied. That test has to come from the nature of satisfaction itself because the judge behind all processes of observation is our consciousness. Our consciousness is the ultimate judge, and it is the consciousness that is seeking satisfaction from the objects of the world. All our activities are directed towards satisfaction. So let us apply the test of consciousness rather than the test of the senses.

Up to this time we have been applying only sensory tests. If the eardrums vibrate, we can conclude that some sound is produced. If the retina of the eyes creates a

picture, we come to the conclusion that an object is in front of us. If we have a sensation of touch, we conclude that there is an object near us, and so on. These are sensory tests. But the question of satisfaction is paramount. The senses are not going to be satisfied if consciousness is withdrawn from them. There is no such thing as unconscious perception, unconscious audibility, unconscious sensation of any kind. Sensation is an act of consciousness. It is an activity of consciousness, so we have to go back to the roots of perception and sensibility. The reality of perception is not sensibility, but consciousness. While sensibility has been taken by us as the test of reality up to this time, it has failed us because we see in dream also we have a kind of sensory perception. We can have water in dream, and a dream thirst can be quenched by dream water. We can be rich in dream. We can be rulers in a dream world, and we can be satisfied as far as the dream world goes. While that is one type of test, it is contradicted in waking. Therefore, we have another test of reality that is non-contradiction. An experience should not be contradicted by another kind of experience. If there is such a contradiction, the experience cannot be regarded as real. So the waking world has been regarded by us as real up to this time on account of its non-contradictory character. Every day we see it. For the last so many years we have been seeing the same object in front of us, so we come to the conclusion that it is real. But we have not been satisfied with this test alone. We have applied the test of satisfaction. A real thing should bring about real satisfaction. The world has not been bringing that satisfaction; therefore, we now go back to another test of conscious existence rather than sensory activity.

What is the nature of consciousness? That should be the nature of reality because we cannot go behind consciousness. We can go on abstracting our activities from the senses up to the point we reach consciousness, but beyond that we cannot reach. So for all conceivable purposes we should regard consciousness as reality. Though the world is reality, the sensory perception of the world is reality, and the mental operations in respect of the objects of perception are also realities, we find that behind all these activities consciousness is immanent. So we should go to the original source of inspiration both to the mind and the senses, which certified up to this time the objects of the world as reality. When consciousness certifies a thing to be real, perhaps it is absolutely real because consciousness seems to be absolutely real. We say it is absolutely real because we have never been able to conceive the existence of anything other than consciousness. Also, there is no presupposition of consciousness by any other reality. That which presupposes consciousness also has to be consciousness. Even if we think we are dead, there is a consciousness behind it. Even if we imagine that nothing exists, there is a consciousness which imagines that nothing exists. So whatever be the denial or the suspicion or the doubt that we entertain in our minds, there is a consciousness behind all these doubts, suspicions, and denials.

On this basis of shifting values by application of various tests, we conclude that there cannot be a reality superior to consciousness, and any test that is applied by consciousness directly should be a satisfactory test. Can we apply the test of consciousness upon the objects of the world and then see whether they are real or not? That which is real should persist together with consciousness. If it is not with consciousness it cannot be called real because the status of consciousness has been accepted to be real. We see that the sensation of objects does not persist together with consciousness. There are moments of cessation of sensibility. It is not that we always sense the same object.

We have at least three states of consciousness – waking, dream and deep sleep. There are other occasions such as swoon, and a very strange phenomenon called death, during which time consciousness does not operate in the usual manner. The senses are completely paralysed under certain conditions. They do not perceive anything at all, and yet consciousness cannot be said to be destroyed because he who says that consciousness is destroyed is there behind consciousness. He is not dead. So no one can say there is a death of consciousness, though there is a death of the activity of the senses. There is a complete cessation of the activity of the senses in sleep, and partially in dream, yet consciousness persists. So the analysis of the three states – waking, dream and deep sleep – which brings out the reality of consciousness, also brings out, at the same time, the non-correlativity of sensory perception with consciousness. That which is real should take reality with it always, and anything that does not persist with reality is not reality. So sensations cannot be called realities as they do not persist with consciousness in all the three periods of experience – waking, dream and deep sleep. That which is persistent is consciousness alone. The last residuum of our being is to be seen only in deep sleep. Even in dream we have some sort of activity, but in sleep there is absolutely no activity, and yet we do exist there.

Now, what is the sort of existence that we enjoy in the state of deep sleep? It is not physical existence. It is not a sensory existence. It is not a mental existence. It is no kind of existence at all, yet we cannot deny that it did exist. We had an indeterminate featureless transparency of consciousness, as it were. Nothing else could be posited in deep sleep. In what form did we exist in deep sleep? What sort of experience did we have? And what makes us believe that we existed in deep sleep? All sorts of questions arise in our mind which, when properly analysed, bring us to the conclusion that we existed as indeterminate, featureless, structureless, indefinable essences of consciousness.

If this is perhaps our deepest reality, that alone should be the basis or standard of judging every other object in the world. The reality of an object, or the reality of anything, for the matter of that, can be accepted only when to it we apply the test of consciousness. What is the test of consciousness? What is the test of reality? The test is

that it is incapable of division into the seer and the seen. This is one of the characteristics of consciousness. Consciousness cannot be divided into the seer and the seen because consciousness cannot become an object of itself. Every object has a defining character, but consciousness has no such defining character. If consciousness is to be the object, then who is to observe this consciousness? Who is to be the subject of this consciousness? Consciousness cannot be the object of consciousness. It is a self-contradiction, a tautological statement. Hence, we have to conclude pure subjectivity seems to be the essential nature of consciousness, and pure subjectivity should not make us conclude at the same time that it is limited to the body because that which is limited is, again, separated into the subject and the object.

By a simple analysis of the structure of consciousness we conclude that it has also to be unlimited. As it is pure subjectivity, it has automatically to be unlimited because if it is limited it is not pure subjectivity because it has an object in front of it. Anything that has an object set as a counterpart of itself cannot be regarded as pure subjectivity, and if the object is there in front of it, it has to establish a relationship with it which is conscious in nature. Unconscious relationships cannot be regarded as relationships at all. So conscious relationship is part of consciousness itself, which would imply that consciousness is present in the object also, while we have already concluded that objects cannot be the nature of consciousness.

By this peculiar, indefinable, subtle test of the nature of consciousness, we come to the conclusion that consciousness is reality, it is subjectivity, it is non-objectivity, and therefore, it has to be unlimited. So the real is unlimited. It is consciousness. It does exist. It is existence, consciousness, and unlimitedness – *satyam jñanam anantam brahma* (Taitt. Up. 2.1.1). This is what the Taittiriya Upanishad gives to us as the definition of reality. This is what we have now concluded by an analytical process of reason and logic applied simultaneously: *satyam jñanam anantam brahma*. The best definition of reality is given in the Brahmanada Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad. It is reality, it is consciousness, it is unlimitedness.

This is the sort of reality that we have to seek in meditation, upon which we have to concentrate our mind in order that we may have real satisfaction. Only the real can bring real satisfaction. The unreal cannot bring that real satisfaction. What we seek is perfect, unlimited, real satisfaction, so we go to the real for it. Where is the reality? *satyam jñanam anantam* – this is the object of our meditation. Who is to meditate on this object? This is partly the difficulty in the yoga of meditation. It is impossible to suddenly bring to our consciousness this infinitude of reality because no one has ever seen it. Though logically we have concluded by the process of inference that it ought to exist and there cannot be any other reality, it has not become an object of our daily experience; therefore, it has always remained apart from the field of activity in day-to-day life.

We have to go to this reality as the ultimate ideal before us by a gradual process of overstepping limits by methods of self-restraint. Limits are set to consciousness, to experience and to satisfaction on account of an involvement of consciousness. We have studied previously what these involvements are, and we must remember it. Various types of involvements are there, on account of which there is an apparent limitation of consciousness; hence, it is unable to concentrate itself on what an unlimited being could be. Meditation is concentration of consciousness, fixing consciousness on that which is real. The ultimately real cannot be the objects of the world; that is what we came to know by an acute analysis of the situation of experience. And yet, in spite of this conclusion, we cannot concentrate on this reality because we have not been accustomed to it; we have not been taught it from our childhood. This is only, again, the unsatisfying objects of the world.

Hence, in the practice of meditation we have to start to move from realities that are lower to realities that are higher, from realities that are localised to realities that are more expanded, from realities that are external to realities that are internal, and so on. You would be benefitted by reading Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's books *Concentration and Meditation*, *Mind Its Mysteries and Control*, and *Conquest of Mind*. They will help you very much.

The process of concentration of mind is preceded by abstraction of the senses, *pratyahara*, self-control. Unless there is self-control, there is no concentration of mind. A glutton, a sensualist, a person who is indulgent, cannot practise the yoga of concentration or meditation. This is very important to remember. A pure heart alone can concentrate. A pure intention is to be there behind these efforts. We must be a good person from the bottom of our heart, and our intention should always be good. Only then can reality reveal itself from within because nothing can be so good as the real. As a matter of fact, some philosophers call reality as the goodness or the supreme good. The supreme good is God, and so goodness is a reflection of godliness. The more we are good in our being, in our action, our thought, sentiment and intention, the nearer we can be to godliness or to reality.

So let us be very cautious in treading the path of meditation that we are well prepared and well equipped, and not in any kind of misapprehension about ourselves. We must be ethically and morally disciplined in order that we may be good meditators or concentrators. Our intention should be the realisation of Truth, and nothing else. Not any kind of ulterior motive should be there behind it.

With this preparatory process of self-restraint, we can take to concentration on reality, meditation on God or Ishvara, to which end we take the least obstructive element as our aid. In processes of initiation into meditation we are given various methods, suited to our temperaments of course, also based upon the stage of evolution in which our mind is, one method being taking the concept of that which we like the

most and is most attractive and satisfying to us. This is what is called the *ishta*. In Sanskrit, *ishta* means dear, loveable, satisfying, that which we like the best. Sometimes Gurus put this question, “What is your *ishta*?” so that they may initiate you into the proper mantra. The *ishta* is that which you like the most. But the *ishta* should be a pious *ishta*. It should be connected with the goal of your realisation. You may think that your *ishta* is a bank account because that is where the mind is, but this cannot be regarded as an *ishta*, though it is that which you like the best. You may like your own baby, and so on. These things cannot be called an *ishta* though your heart is there. The *ishta* is to be pious, holy and unselfish. In spiritual parlance, the *ishta*, or the chosen object of concentration, is not merely that object which you are attached to emotionally, but it also must be an unselfish type of attachment. Thinking of a bank account is a selfish attachment. It is not unselfish, so you cannot regard it as your *ishta*. The object of concentration should be tending you gradually towards more and more unselfish experiences. What is an unselfish experience? It is that which is more and more expansive and pervasive in character.

The highest form of selfishness is limitation of consciousness to the body. When you think that you are the body and all reality is only the body, that there is nothing real beyond this body and the satisfaction of this body is the only thing that you want, you may be said to be in the crudest form of selfishness. But selfishness can be expanded into rarefied forms. Rarefaction means thinning out, yet it is there. When you love your family, you regard reality to be a little more expansive than your own personal body, but yet you are selfish. You love only your family, and not other families. So selfishness is not gone, though it is slightly expanded from limitation to a mere personal body. And when you are a patriot of a nation or a country as a whole, you may be regarded as more unselfish because you have expanded your love from merely your family to the whole country. You love all families, but yet you are selfish because you love only your country and have no regard for other countries.

Likewise, we can rarefy the selfishness, thin out the activity of the ego, yet it can remain there. In spite of its remaining, it is thinned out; it becomes more pervasive. Quantitatively it has become more and more expanded, but qualitatively it has remained the same. This is the defect in mere patriotism, nationalism, internationalism, or some such thing. They are quite good as far as they go but you have only an expanded form of experience and are likely to mistake it for true unselfishness, which it is not. It is a very subtle form of selfishness, but it looks like unselfishness inasmuch as it has taken an expanded form. A large personality is also a personality. Even if you are to expand your body to ten miles long and ten miles wide, you are the same person. You are not going to be different. You may be a giant touching the skies, but you are not going to be a different person in quality though the quantity of the body has increased. Here we are more concerned with the quality of

perception rather than a mere expansion of quantity, but from quantity we have to move to quality in a graduated process of ascent.

The immediate reality presented to the senses and to the mind is quantity of perception. Quality is never seen. We are satisfied with quantities first, and then we go to qualities. So we are asked to choose an *ishta*, or an object of meditation, which is quantitative in nature, yet characterised by the quality of unselfishness as far as it is possible under the circumstances we are placed. Do the best that is possible to introduce the unselfish element into the object of your meditation. It does not mean that you are ultimately successful in it, but to the extent permissible by the present state of your education, understanding and capacity, that would be all right.

Now, one secret of meditation is undivided concentration, concentration on a given object. It may be a quantity, a localised object, but the condition laid down is that the concentration should be undivided. Undividedness of concentration means not thinking of factors other than the object that is chosen for concentration. When you think of a fountain pen, you think only of the fountain pen. You do not think of anything else outside it. This is called concentration. But what is the purpose of this concentration? This is a very interesting psychological question. Why do you concentrate on any particular object? What is the experience that you expect out of it, and why do such experiences follow from the concentration? It is a question of psychology because it is concerned with our conscious relationship with other objects in the world.

When we think of a particular object, the focus of attention is restricted. The whole energy of the mind is fastened upon the chosen object and it is, as it were, that we pull the threads of the fabric of the mind in a given direction and drive it onwards upon that chosen object by force. We suck the energy of the mind from all directions, as it were, and pour it upon that chosen object. The vitality of the whole mental structure is drawn in, conserved, and jetted upon a given object. What is the purpose behind this process? The purpose is very interesting. The mind is connected with various objects in the world, consciously and also unconsciously. We are mostly aware of conscious connections; the unconscious connections are not known to us.

We are seated here in this hall, many human beings, with apparently no connection among ourselves except that we are friends, or perhaps we may have some personal relationships. But apart from that, there is an unconscious connection which the mind establishes with persons and things in the world. This is something very subtle, deep, and not known in ordinary conscious processes. But this is a very important factor, and if we ignore it our whole effort will be topsy-turvy.

When the mind is concentrated consciously on a particular object it can keep an undercurrent of conscious connection with other objects also, simultaneously. That is the reason why most *sadhakas* find it difficult to concentrate the mind even if they sit

for hours together, because they only concentrate consciously while the unconscious mind is not withdrawn. What is the unconscious mind? It is the subtle interests that the mind has with other objects.

The subtle interests are, again, not visible on the surface. They are buried deep in the layers of our unconscious and they have been there, deposited from aeons. We had many births. This is not the only birth that we have taken. We have passed through various stages of evolution. Every stage of evolution is a birth of experience, and in every such occasion of experience we have been accumulating impressions of perception. These impressions have been loaded into the subconscious and unconscious levels, so that today we are heavy with this laden material. This laden material that is in the unconscious level keeps contacting these relative objects, even if they be in other realms, even if they be very far distant in space and in time.

Now, the meditative process is such that its intention is to break this connection of the mind with the objects of the world. It has to break the connections not merely consciously, but also subconsciously and unconsciously. It has to stand absolutely independent, focusing itself entirely on the chosen object.

Just as we move from quantity to quality, from localised objects to more expanded forms of objects, from the external to the internal, we have to gradually move from the conscious level to the subconscious and unconscious levels. This is a simultaneous process that has to take place in which *japa*, or chanting of a formula or a divine name, is a great help. We should not suddenly enter into meditation because the mind is not prepared. It is necessary to take to study of deep scriptures of a philosophical nature in the earlier stages so that the circumference of the field of the activity of the mind becomes smaller and smaller, and later on it can get pinned to a particular point alone.

Svadyaya, or study of sacred scriptures, moksha *shastras*, yoga *shastras*, scriptures on liberation of the soul and deep metaphysical topics of a very inspiring nature should be a part of the meditative process of the *sadhaka*. *Svadyaya*, *japa* and *dhyana* may be taken as three stages of ascent. In the beginning when you take to study, do not study all kinds of books. The subject should be chosen. You must have a good routine of study, a syllabus or curriculum for *svadyaya*.

What is the sort of thing which you want to read? The subject should be chosen first. Then pick out a book connected with the subject, and these books also should be few in number; otherwise, your mind will be distracted. Read only such texts which are concentrated in their nature, and by a study of such texts the mind not only gets purified but also gets concentrated due to the interest that it takes in the subject. And also, at the same time, the limit of the operational field of the mind gets reduced gradually.

Study of sacred texts, or *svadyaya*, may pave a way to a more difficult process which is *japa*, or the silent chanting of a formula or a mantra. Now, a formula and a

mantra are two different things. They are not one and the same. A formula is merely a symbol that you have chosen for yourself to think a particular thought. "God is light." This is a formula. "God is omnipresent," may be another formula. But a mantra is quite different. This is a very potent juxtaposition of sound brought about by a very scientific process known to tantra *shastra* and such other methods, by which the recitation of a particular mantra produces an energy or a potency within ourselves such that we are enabled to concentrate our mind by the addition of the force applied to us by the mantra. Sadhana shakti becomes augmented by the addition of mantra shakti. The power of the mantra adds to the power of your sadhana or concentration. Your own effort is there on one side, but that effort is augmented or accelerated, increased in its potency, by the addition of the mantra shakti. A third factor, the Guru shakti, is also there. The Guru who has initiated you into the mantra supplies a part of the energy from his own will. So there is the shakti of the Guru who initiates you, the shakti of the mantra, and the shakti of your own effort.

More than that, there is the shakti of the *devata* of the mantra. There is a divine principle superintending over every mantra. It is a *divya* shakti, a celestial force hidden behind every mantra. That also comes into operation when the mantra is chanted. So mantra *japa* can be regarded as a complete sadhana by itself. God-realisation can be achieved even by *japa* alone, provided a proper mantra is chosen and the proper technique of concentrating on its meaning is adopted. That is why in the Bhagavadgita we are told *yajñānāṃ japayajñosmi* (Gita 10.25): Of all the sacrifices, *japa* is regarded as the supreme sacrifice.

Thus, *svadhyaya* and *japa* may be regarded as stages to *dhyana*, an abstract contemplation on reality, a subject which has to be taken in greater detail another time.

Discourse 12

DEFINING THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION

We were considering the nature of reality as the central object of meditation because we came to the conclusion that any object of meditation, or concentrated attention, has to be real. No one with any adequate sense of understanding would be interested in concentrating on the unreal; hence, the definition of reality became unavoidable. The concept or the notion of truth has to be firmly fixed in consciousness in order that the object of our attention, concentration or meditation may become stabilised in our experience. We also noticed that reality, or truth, could be defined in many ways, and an assessment of true values could be arrived at by various methods of approach, such as the correspondence of idea to fact. The workability, the utilitarian value of an object, could also be a test of reality, or when the parts of an object cohere harmoniously among themselves, we could take that as a kind of test of reality.

But we found, on an acute analysis of the situation, that all these fall short of the ultimate quest of the essence or the bottom of the being of the human being. The essence in us seems to be asking for something which is not merely an object which corresponds as a fact to an idea. We do not ask for something which is merely workable in this world. There are many workable and useful things in the world, but they do not satisfy us permanently. Also, we found that even the test of coherence, or harmonious agreement of parts of a whole, could not be a satisfactory definition of reality because the true, or the ultimately real, cannot be regarded as a whole constituted of parts.

Even if this is to be taken as a sufficiently satisfactory definition, inasmuch as anything that is true or permanent or adequate should have a harmonious characteristic among its constituents, it has a snag, and the snag is that the parts, notwithstanding the fact that they are harmonious among themselves in their working and fashion, create a division among themselves. Truth is supposed to be indivisible because anything that is divisible becomes also objective. Whatever is perceptible, whatever is visible, whatever is the object of the senses, whatever is localised in space and time, has to be subjected to the laws of space, time, externality, vicissitude and perishability. So the harmonious arrangement of the parts of a whole, a beautiful coherence of values, may be all right so far as it goes, but it cannot be finally a satisfactory answer to the question, "What is truth?"

So our conclusion last time was that the test of reality has ultimately to be consciousness itself, because everything is finally referred back to the standard of consciousness. The judge is consciousness, and the characteristics that we try to apply to the objects of experience also are those applicable to the fundamental constitution

of consciousness. This we came to know through a very graduated process of analysis of experience. If consciousness is ultimately the reality, and that is the standard of the test of truth, well, that alone has to be studied in all its aspects, characteristics and phases.

Satyam jñanam anantam brahma (Taitt. Up. 2.1.1): The Absolute, or the Infinite, is truth, and it is consciousness. These three terms used in the Taittiriya Upanishad do not refer to three phases of reality or three aspects, three stages or three links in a chain. They are a human expression of a compact existence which is at once truth, at once consciousness, and also at once infinitude.

Now, while we have been able to have some sort of a concept of existence, and also of consciousness, which is inseparable from existence, it becomes a little difficult to have an idea of the infinite. It is not easy to entertain this notion in the mind because we are accustomed to think in terms of finite values. Even the consciousness, which judges things as far as our personality and individuality goes, is finite. We cannot think anything that is not in space or in time. This is the finitising or limiting aspect of all human experience. Whatever we think is in space and in time, and is an object. Spatiality, temporality and individuality cannot be isolated from the object of experience. This is to say that we are immersed in finitude. We think in terms of finitude, and inasmuch as our thought or understanding is the highest faculty with which we are endowed, and if that very faculty is to be finite, subjected to the laws of the finite, then it would mean that there is no chance of gaining access into the portals of the infinite.

We cannot have a perception of the infinite. It is impossible because the finite, as long as it is finite, cannot see the infinite, cannot have a consciousness of the Infinite. We can have an inference of it. We can deduce logically by a process of conscious analysis that the infinite has to be there even if it is not an object of practical empirical experience. It has to be there because unless the infinite as a possibility is made the standard of reference, the consciousness of the finite as the finite would be inadmissible.

The consciousness of the finite, the awareness that we are limited, the notion that things are passing, transient, and everything is momentary, that death supervenes everywhere in the world, that the world is samsara, that everything has a beginning and an end – all these experiences point invariably, as a concomitance, to the fact that something other than the finite has to exist. We may call it the infinite or by any other name, but it cannot be the finite because if everything is finite, we cannot call everything as finite. It would be a logical fallacy to be conscious of the finite and yet not admit the existence of the infinite.

Every judgment has a standard of reference. When something is told to be untrue or ugly, something is in our mind as a standard of the true or the beautiful. Such an

analogy can be extended to every other value in the world, and principally the concept of an ultimate value before us today is that of the infinite. The infinite has to exist if we are to offer a satisfactory account of our awareness of the finite. Ultimately, the infinite is the object of meditation because that alone can be the real, and inasmuch as the real is the object of meditation, the unreal cannot become the object of attraction to any sensible person. We have to go a little deeper into this concept of the infinite as the real, and not merely the real, but the real which is inseparable from *jnanam*, or consciousness. We have a most satisfactory definition of reality here in this statement of the Taittiriya Upanishad: *satyam jñanam anantam brahma*.

Now, while we accept that the reality is the infinite, that it has to be consciousness, that it is general existence, how is it possible for us to make it an object of our meditation in the practice of yoga? The word 'infinite' is used even in the Sutras of Patanjali, in one place at least: *prayatna śaithilya ananta samāpattibhyām* (Yoga Sutras 2.47). Here the word '*ananta*' is interpreted in many ways. One interpretation is the concept of the infinite because infinitude is supposed to bring about a stability of the whole system, or the personality of the meditator. We become effortless. *Prayatna śaithilya* takes place. We become spontaneous, and we become natural to ourselves the moment we begin to conceive the infinite in the mind.

The reason is that the infinite has a stabilising character, a harmonising character, because it is equilibrated existence. It is not partial in any of its aspects or functions. Nevertheless, it is difficult to bring it before the mind's eye. Nobody can think the unlimited. The real is beyond the concept of the finite mind. Hence, when we choose an object of meditation, the *ishta-devata* – the deity which is to preside over the mantra in *japa* or to become the object of our meditation in yoga – has to be real in different degrees of concept. We cannot suddenly absorb the ultimate infinitude into our consciousness. Nature's procedure seems to be a gradual evolution. It does not jump. There are no leaps and jumps in nature. There is a very smooth flow in the causal chain of development from the lesser reality to the higher reality. It is not that there are many kinds of realities – lesser, higher, etc. There cannot be degrees of reality. But there can be degrees in the concept of reality – the awareness, the consciousness or the definition, psychologically given, of reality. And as far as we are concerned, whatever is inseparable from our consciousness is real for us. Any existence inseparable from consciousness is real. Existence is consciousness. The definition of reality is existence-consciousness. Whenever existence becomes inseparable from consciousness, it becomes reality for us.

Why do the objects of the world become a reality for us? For example, a sense object is regarded by us as real. We run after it. We want to possess it, we want to enjoy it, we hug it, and we are attached to it in many ways. Now, the reason why the object of sense is regarded by us as real is that its existence somehow or other becomes

inseparable from our consciousness in our experience. The object can never become one with consciousness, it is true. Matter and consciousness are two different things. They are distinct in their character. Yet, by a mutual superimposition of the values between the object and consciousness, that so-called temporary existence of the object gets wrongly, erroneously transferred into our consciousness, and the conscious aspect within us gets transferred to the object. There is a mutual attraction, a mutual lending of values, as it were, and one becomes inseparable from the other so that the statement arises: "I love this object." The statement "I love this object" is a consequence of an underlying feeling, "I am that object." The mother has a feeling, "The child is I. The child is me. The child is inseparable from me." Though the child is really different from the mother in every respect except in her own mind, biologically, vitally, psychologically, socially, in many respects, which the mother alone can understand, the child becomes inseparable from the existence of the mother; and love is nothing but a phenomenal expression of the identity of consciousness with the object.

The object cannot be identified with consciousness, and therefore, it has to take a phenomenal form, a temporal form, an empirical form. While, for obvious reasons, it is impossible to identify the object with consciousness, consciousness asserts itself in the object and vehemently tries to identify itself with the object, so that it begins to love the object if it is not possible to physically identify itself with it. The desire is to physically come in union with it, but physical union is impossible, for physical laws prevent this identification of consciousness with matter. But the vehemence of consciousness, the vehemence of desire is such that it has to be asserted. So identity takes the form of affection.

This affection, again, has a background of a definition of reality. We do not have affection for unreal things. We do not love phantoms. The object has taken the form of reality – external reality, spatial reality. Though it may be distant in space, it does not matter; it is reality for us as long as our consciousness is transferred to it, even if it be thousands of miles away.

Now, this sensible object in the world, which takes the form of reality for practical purposes in the object of hatred and affection for a different reason, is the lowest form of reality. The sense world is reality for the senses, but it is the lowest concept of reality that we can have, inasmuch as there are two defects in this form of reality. One defect is that it is outside. It is external to consciousness. And the other defect is that it is far from our ideal definition of infinitude. It is only in one place. Our objects of affection land us only in one place; it cannot be in many places. Hence, finitude and externality limit the existence of this tentative reality of sense experience.

When we studied the Vaishvanara Vidya in the Chhandogya Upanishad, we also studied what defects were pointed out by Ashvapati Kaikeya in the meditations practised by the six learned men who went to him for initiation into the nature of the

Atman. Different meditations, different *upasanas*, different *vidyas* were the professions of these learned *brahmanishtas*, but the master, Ashvapati, said, "Every one of your meditations is all right so far as it goes. You are getting on well due to that meditation, but there are two serious defects in your concept of reality. One is that it is outside your consciousness, and therefore, you can never possess it. Whatever be your aspiration for it, it shall elude your grasp. You shall lose it one day, and you shall be in misery. That is one defect. The other is that it is localised. You have kept your meditation in one place." One said he was meditating on the sun, another said he was meditating on heaven, space, a third said he was meditating on the earth, and so on. These defects which Ashvapati Kaikeya pointed out in the Vaishvanara Vidya of the Chhandogya Upanishad apply to every form of the attempt of consciousness to fix itself on a purely sensible or sensory reality.

The next higher degree of reality than the sensory is the purely intelligible, intellectual, rational or the conceivable. This is a little wider. The rational infinite is a psychologically projected infinite. It does not objectively exist, but that is a very useful medium for the purpose of concentration in yoga. It is not that the sensory object is absolutely useless. In certain types of concentration, a sensory object is taken as an aid or a prop. We shall come to it later on when we come to the actual practice or process of meditation.

The higher concept of reality, therefore, is the conceivable, the notional or the rational. What is this rational infinite? It is the infinite that we can think of in our mind. Think of a boundless existence. Go on thinking as far as possible into the limits of space. What would be your idea of boundlessness or limitlessness? The stretch of imagination reaches an end. Beyond that, the whole thing is inconceivable. When you were a small child, you used to play some psychological tricks, and put questions. Suppose you go up ten miles, what will you see there? You will see some dust floating in the air. Suppose you go two thousand miles, what will you see? Suppose you go ten thousand miles, a hundred thousand miles, ten million miles, or go still further. Then the mind becomes giddy. You do not know what to say. You used to fall asleep because the mind fails to think. If you are asked what you will see a hundred million miles above, or even above that, how far will you go beyond space? There is no end for it.

The reason behind this prescription of the rational infinite in meditation is to prevent the mind from conceiving any finite object other than the chosen ideal of meditation. It is not absolutely necessary to have a notional infinite for the purpose of meditation. But most of the difficulties in meditation are due to the fact that the mind refuses to accept that the object chosen by us is the only existent being in the world. It knows that there are other things also. Why should not the mind go to other objects? Why should we concentrate only on one? Why do we penalise the mind by giving it a

prescription to concentrate on one particular object – a candle or a dot on the wall or a particular idol or a painted picture? Why should we concentrate on that? The mind puts a question to us: “Why do you torture me like this? Why should I not go to some other object which is more beautiful, which is more appreciable, and which shall give me more satisfaction?”

Now, the mind has here to be educated in order that it may learn that there is a very noble and sublime purpose in concentration on a particular chosen object. The psychological reason behind this prescription of concentration on one object is to disconnect the mind from the relationship with other finite things in the world. The relationship of the mind to other objects is something like the relationship of threads in a cloth. There is interconnectedness of the psychological system. It is like a woven web, and the finite objects hang on the fringe of our mind in such a way, like bunches of grapes in a garden, as it were, that the mind cannot dissociate itself from these finite objects hanging on it. The mind has to concentrate on one particular object. The reason is that when the mind focuses its attention on one particular object, all the energy of the mind – which otherwise flows in different directions into various other finite objects to which it is connected – gets withdrawn. The threads get broken, and only one thread remains.

If various wire connections are given from an electric metre, the energy that flows gets diluted a little bit, and the voltage falls. But if there is only one connection, the voltage is stronger on account of the concentration of the power and there being no other distraction for the flow of power. The mind is a centre, or reservoir of energy. It has tremendous strength within it. It is a source of unthinkable power, but it looks very weak. We feel that we are imbeciles, very weak-willed, unable to remember anything, due to the fact that all our energies are spent, or wasted rather, in an inner psychological contact that we have subconsciously established with the various finite objects in the world, which unwittingly become the objects of our concentration. It is not that we are consciously thinking of finite objects always, but we have established a subconscious relationship with them. We have a bottom deeper than the conscious level, as we know already. It is said that we have an even deeper level than the subconscious, the unconscious; and many other things are said about our internal personality. We seem to be connected with creation as a whole in many ways, in many levels of our personality, and in all these levels we deplete our energy, we become finite individuals, we are *samsarins*, we have become *jivas*, while we are really as mighty as Ishvara himself in our essentiality. We have become weak. We are not really weak, just as the powerhouse is not bereft of energy. But the energy is depleted. It is spent out in various channels of connection.

Hence, the purpose of concentration of the mind on a particular chosen ideal, object or *ishta-devata* is to disconnect the mind on every level of its activities, not

merely on the conscious level, from its relationship with the finite objects of the world, and make the energy flow directly along one channel.

Then what happens? The mind itself will cease to be. The mind, the *chitta*, the *buddhi* or whatever we call it, the *antahkarana*, has a peculiar feature, which is that it cannot exist unless there is a multifarious form of food supplied to it. Just as there is no cloth without threads, and there must be many threads in order to make a fabric, so the fabric of samsara, empirical experience, is constituted of the threads of psychological experience connected with the various finite objects of the world.

We want to break this fabric of samsara, and in order to do that we have to withdraw all the threads of connection. The attempt at concentration on one object is primarily and specifically for the purpose of breaking the very activity of the mind in terms of finitude. The mind bursts like a bubble. When the bubble bursts, we will not see it any more. It has gone back into the bottom of the sea. So when the mind bubble bursts on account of this focus of concentration due to the energy that has been conserved in it by disconnection of its various ramifications from finite objects, what happens is that there is the return of the consciousness to itself. The reflection goes back to the original, as it were. The external goes to the internal. Mind merges in consciousness. The object becomes the subject. Pure awareness becomes the nature of our experience.

Thus, concentration on even a conceivable, visible, external object, as prescribed in certain forms of meditation in the Yoga Shastras, is also helpful in the manner described. The rational infinite, or the conceivable notional infinite that I was referring to, is only another aid for concentration, and is not absolutely essential for every *sadhaka* or seeker. We can expand our consciousness to any limit that is possible. Instead of identifying our consciousness with a single object, we spread it over in a larger area so that we feel happier that we are larger in extent and deeper in the comprehension of values.

But even this notional infinite is only a projection of our thought. That said, it does not really exist. It is a contrivance projected by the mind for the purpose of fixing its attention on a non-dual something. The purpose of *dhyana* is *ananyata*. *Ananyata* is not having *ananya*, or another, as an object of consciousness. For ordinary persons, this concept of *ananyata* is impossible. No one can understand what this *ananyata*, or *ekagrata*, could be because we are never in a state of *ekagrata* at any time. We are always distracted. We think many things in our mind at all times, and even if it looks for awhile that we are thinking of one thing, there is a subconscious distraction tending towards expression in the conscious mind, which disturbs our conscious concentration.

The subconscious distractions latent at the lower level of our mind begin to disturb the conscious activity of concentration, and therefore, even when we sit for *japa* or

meditation, our mind will oscillate because of the unfulfilled desires still left. All the desires of the mind cannot be fulfilled. We have not merely the desires of the present life, but also the impressions or potencies of unfulfilled desires of previous lives. They are all inside, and they all begin to germinate when the rain of suitable circumstances falls over them. Like seeds germinating in a field when rain falls, these impressions, or *samskaras*, slowly begin to show their heads especially when we sit for conscious concentration. Otherwise, everything looks all right. We look wonderful, and it appears for a while that the mind is concentrated.

The mind cannot be easily concentrated unless the desires are checked by various processes of self-control, or *atma-vinigraha*. The *yamas* and *niyamas* in Raja Yoga, the *sadhana chatushtaya* prescribed in the Vedanta Shastra, and such other restrictions on the sensuous activity of the being of man are necessary for purifying our nature first, as a preliminary to the act of actual meditation or concentration. Else, the attempted concentration will be futile. It will bring no result. It would be like hitting a hard rock with a pin or a needle. Only the pin will break, and nothing will happen to the rock. Whatever be our attempt at concentration, it will bring no result because of the various factors of limitation in which we seem to be steeped to the root of our being.

We have already seen the necessity for moral perfection and the need to deal with our desires in a rational manner. We have to intelligently deal with our desires. We should not strike them down with a whip. That will not work. Most of our problems in spiritual life are the problems of desires. The desires of the senses and the desire of the ego – the three *eshanas*, as the Upanishad puts it – are the love of objects of sense and the love for parading one's importance through the expression of the ego. While these are the bane of human nature generally speaking, they are still worse for a spiritual seeker. If there is even the slightest manifestation of the ego, the affirmation of self-importance or an inclination towards the objects of sensory enjoyment, no concentration and no meditation is possible. It is necessary to test ourselves almost every day as to whether we are subject to sensuous likings or we are subjected to egoistic expressions. Unless this test is applied every day, we are likely to be misled. We have to be more prepared for the ultimate reach of meditation than merely be enthusiastic about it.

The concept of reality also should be very clear. Most of us have no clear idea as to what object we are to meditate upon. While in certain occult methods of yoga the objects prescribed are the ones to which I have made reference already, in pure devotion, the love of God, the concept of reality is a little different. It is not merely a philosophical concept of reality that we have in *bhakti marga*, or the path of divine love.

The philosophical concept of reality is likely to sometimes become abstract. Though it is not supposed to be abstract, and it is full of everything that is meaningful and significant, yet when we argue logically and arrive at the concept of reality rationally, we are likely to make it a kind of abstraction. To fill this gap, we are introduced into the concept of God as an all-filling completeness of perfection.

The concept of God is the same as the concept of reality. The word 'reality' is likely to be abstract, as I mentioned, on account of the jargon of the philosophical schools into which we are initiated in our colleges. But God is not merely a jargon. He is not a philosophical concept. The concept of reality is as far from God as He really is as the city of Benares on a map is far from the real Benares. If we take an atlas and see the city of Benares, is it the real Benares? How much difference is there between the real city and the city on the map? That is the difference between our concept of God and the real God. And yet the map helps us, we know very well. A map of the Ganges River cannot quench our thirst, nor can we take a bath in it, but we can see the Ganges there.

Likewise, when we are thinking God, it is like a map. There is nothing in it, so we are not happy. We want to drink the actual Ganga water, not simply see a map of it, but we are only given a map. The Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and the Yoga Shastras are only maps. But maps are very useful, as we know. From the study of a map we can try to find out the way to the thing that really is.

God as He really is, is a fullness of perfection – *ananta kalyana gunapurna*, as they say. All that is wonderful, all that is magnificent, all that is beautiful, all that our soul longs for is in God. The realisation of God is the realisation of all that is regarded as valuable in the world. There are some philosophers who think that God is the creator of the world in such a way that God's perfection cannot be unless the world also is. Their reality is God plus world. It is not so. There is no such thing as 'plus' before God. He is Himself complete. The concept of God is wholeness.

I introduced this idea of God to remove the idea of abstraction in the concept of reality. We should not think that God is a bare, featureless transparency of emptiness or hollowness, a vacuum-like space. God is nothing of the kind. God is wondrous perfection of all aesthetic values, moral values, metaphysical values, and spiritual values. All that is most magnificent and beautiful, which will transport our soul, is God. By merely looking at it, by seeing it, by having a vision of it, the whole consciousness will get transported into an ecstasy. And it is the perfection of all moral values. It is called the ultimate good. It is the highest good, the highest virtue, the greatest repository of what can be called righteousness or dharma, and the highest philosophical perfection, spiritual perfection and metaphysical perfection. What greater things can there be than these values? Such is God.

We have to make this God the object of our meditation. It is difficult to make Him an object of meditation because the mind takes the help of the senses, and the senses

sing the same tune of objects: "Let us go in this direction." The beauty of the objects of the world sometimes seems to excel our idea of the beauty of God, and this is very pitiable indeed. Then the mind again runs to the objects of sense. However much we may superimpose perfection on the concept of God in our mind, it has remained only a concept. But the objects are not concepts. They are visible before the eyes. We are in a sensory world. We are in the *indriya jagat*, and therefore, we regard the objects of the senses as more real than anything that can be conceived in the mind, though it may be the conception of God Himself. So God does not attract us as much as an object of sense.

We have to rise above the mere concept of God and make Him a vital necessity of our practical day-to-day life, and only then can God become a source of attraction. Not merely that. The more we concentrate on the concept of God, the more we feel a sense of release from this harassment of the senses in terms of objects. All *antariyas*, or obstacles, become less in quantity as well as quality when we concentrate our mind on God.

The bhakti schools prescribe a method for this. God is conceived in various ways. We have to pour our emotion on Him because, after all, what worries us very much is the principle of love or affection. That is the worst thing, because when it takes possession of us we lose our senses, and our understanding also fails. So it is very necessary to train the emotions, the affections, the passions in such a way that they are weaned from the objects of sense and poured on the nature of God. These are the *bhavas* of bhakti.

The various attitudes of devotion to God are the various methods of diverting the emotional powers in our mind to God. In the Vaishnava theology especially, God is conceived in five forms. *Para*, or the supreme transcendent form of God, very difficult to conceive, is one form of meditation. The transcendent Narayana in Vaikuntha, or Parama-Siva in Kailasha, or the Virat transcending the visible universe is *para*, the supreme concept of God. And if this transcendent supreme concept is impossible for any reason, we can conceive of God as *vyuha*, or a group of manifestations. The Vaishnava terminology is Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, but philosophically it means the same as what the Vedanta calls Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat. It is difficult to conceive God as He really is, so we think in the process of His manifestation as this cosmos, or the universe. He is the vital, He is the physical, He is the causal, He is the transcendental. This is the *vyuha-rachana*, or the group concept of God in His manifestation. The third concept is *vibhava*, or incarnation of God. Even this is difficult. We cannot conceive of Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat because they are all too big, so we conceive Him as an incarnation, as a visible, physical manifestation but embodying the entire infinitude of force. It is the whole energy of the sunlight, as it were, focused through a lens. Sunlight

does not burn anything, but when it is focussed through a lens it can burn paper, cloth, etc. Likewise, an *avatara* is a focused form of cosmic energy visible in physical form because when we cannot conceive invisible things we have to come down to visible forms. This visible form is not the form of a sensory object, not the object of sense enjoyment, but God Himself incarnated visibly with all His perfections, as in the various incarnations worshipped in religions. This is easier to conceive.

We can go into ecstasy more easily when we read the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata than, for example, when we read the Chhandogya Upanishad or the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad because here the description of God as an *avatara* is tangible. We can see it before our eyes, as it were, and we can emotionally love it as our ideal supreme. The concept of the *avatara* is a lesser concept, easier to entertain in the mind, and yet it is one of the prescribed forms of meditation – *para*, *vyuha*, *vibhava*.

The fourth is *archa avatara*. *Archa* is the object of our daily worship. It may be in a temple or in our own house. The idol of worship is itself our object of affection. It is God Himself because the idol ceases to be an idol to the devotee. It is a symbol of the supreme *satyam jñanam anantam*. How can an idol be God? The answer is, “How can a flag be the government?” The flag we hoist on the 15th of August represents the government of India. How can the government be a piece of cloth? If that could be possible, this also is possible. How can a piece of paper be money or wealth? It is just paper. Likewise, by a systematic agreement of the concepts and an analysis of the phases of emotion and the centralisation of attitude on the symbol, the whole force of the cosmos can be brought down into the level of the idol.

We hear of the lives of saints like Purandaradasa, Tukaram and others who could move the idol of Vittala in Pandharpur by their songs, by their devotion, by their prayer, and by the chant of the divine name in a rapture of ecstasy, by which they lost their personal consciousness. There is no such thing as an idol or an inanimate object. Everything is vibrant with force. Nothing is dead in this cosmos. Everything is living, vital, moving, consciousness ultimately, and therefore, it can manifest itself in any form, even in a particular spot. So *archa*, or the object of worship, an idol, is also taken as a very useful and, perhaps, a necessary object of meditation.

The fifth, the concept of *antaryamin*, is a little difficult. *Antaryamin* is not transcendent or *para*, but immanent or here, under our very nose. God is not in Vaikuntha or Kailasa; He is just within this Bhajan Hall. Not merely that, He is nearer to me than my own neck or my nose. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say God is nearer to us than our jugular vein; so near is God because He is immanent. Immanency implies immediacy of presence. He is not a remote existence. He is not any more *paroksha*, but is *aparoksha*. Immanence means the existence of God in everything that the senses can see, the mind can conceive or we can experience in our

daily life. This is a difficult concept because the immanence of God implies the existence of God in a harmonious and general manner in everything, without ups and downs. Whether it is ice or flowing water, it is all water. Likewise, whether it is a material object like the earth or a flowing substance like water or any of the five elements with various densities of expression, for the immanence of God it makes no difference. He is present equally in all degrees of manifestation, in the five elements. This is the concept of *antaryamin*. Thus, God can be conceived in any of these forms – *para, vyuha, vibhava, archa, antaryamin*.

God loves man more than man loves God. This is another interesting and absorbing feature in the concept of bhakti. God loves us more than we love God. He needs us more than we need Him. One saint said that when we take one step towards God, He takes a hundred steps towards us. He is happy more than we are happy. When we love Him, we feel that He is pleased. His pleasure is much more than our pleasure of conceiving Him, meditating upon Him, because He is not an abstract existence but a fullness of being and consciousness, and not merely abstract universality, knowing everything within us and without us, and capable of fulfilling all our desires at one stroke.

In the commentary on this particular passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad, *satyam jñanam anantam brahma*, Sankaracharya mentions: *saha brahmaṇa vipāścītā sarvān kāmān so'snute*. *Saha*: the word 'saha' is interpreted by Sankara as instantaneous, simultaneous, not in succession. In God, we do not enjoy things in succession, one after the other, like courses in a meal. At one stroke everything is enjoyed, whatever is there anywhere. That is the meaning of instantaneity of enjoyment in God-consciousness. When God begins to supply our needs, it is instantaneous. Everything comes instantaneously, at one stroke, in a non-temporal experience. It is not merely non-temporal, but also non-spatial. It is not somewhere far off. It is here itself.

When all the desires get fulfilled, then the desires themselves cease to be. We can put an end to our earthly desires by educating the mind into the belief that God is the fulfilment of all desires. "My wretched mind, why do you want this tinsel? Why do you want broken glass pieces? Why do you want a dustbin when you have that all-filling, life-giving completion of your very life, which is God?" What we can get here is only in the form of a reflection, but there we get it in reality. Here we lick only reflected *kheer*; there, real *kheer* will come. Suppose *kheer* is inside a mirror. What is the good of it? We are not happy about it. This is what is given to us in the world. It is only reflected, and therefore, we are not happy. The nectar of Brahman's ambrosia of immortality is reflected in the objects of the senses. It is reflected, and therefore, we cannot enjoy it though we see it and run after it. We run after it because we see it, though we cannot get it because it is only reflected in a mirror. The original is somewhere else. So we

should tell our mind, "You will get the original *kheer*, the ambrosia, the *amrita* in the original. Why run after the reflection?"

It is useless to have a desire, but even if we have a desire, it will be fulfilled. In the Chhandogya Upanishad, in the Eighth Chapter, I think, we are told that every desire gets fulfilled by mere thought when this experience comes to us that Brahman is everything, God is everywhere. The only existent is the Supreme Being. The mere thought of an object will bring that object. Any thought that arises in the mind shall be fulfilled because the basis of this thought is reality.

Therefore, God-consciousness is the one thing that we are to strive for, and God is not a remote reality of a tomorrow or of a distant place. He is a question of immediacy, just now, non-temporal and non-spatial. When we think of God, we must lose body-consciousness. That is real devotion. When we think of God, the mind has to run to Him like an arrow running to a target. That is real devotion. When this devotion is there, when this ardour of feeling is there, when this *mumukshutva* or longing is there, why should not meditation come? This meditation should be continuous, for a protracted period. And we must like it, we must love it, we must have an affection for it, and we must think nothing but that. We must long for it, we must weep for it, we must cry for it. That is ardour. When we want nothing but that, it shall come. "Ask, and it shall be given. Knock, and it shall be opened," as the Christ said. "Seek, and you shall find it."

Thus, the object of our meditation in yoga practice is to be an *ishtha* in the literal sense of the term. It should be an object of affection, and so it is necessary that we properly define the object of meditation before we take to the practice of it as students.

Discourse 13

OUR PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

We should keep nothing of a distracting nature in the place where we sit for meditation. The atmosphere should naturally be congenial. The character of the place of meditation differs from person to person according to the social conditions in which one has to live. The social and living conditions of *brahmacharins*, householders, *vanaprasthas* and *sannyasins* are likely to differ due to their various obligations, and consequently, the nature of works that they perform.

But whatever be the social stage in which one may be, the spiritual practice in which one has to engage oneself should be undertaken in congenial conditions wherein no factor of a distracting character is deliberately introduced. To give an instance, if we have a small meditation room and we paste posters on the walls which are absolutely irrelevant to the ideas that we have to entertain in meditation, or keep articles that are repulsive or even tempting, or keep anything that is even capable of bringing into memory repulsive or tempting things, this may be regarded as objectionable. The whole atmosphere should be holy. Nothing that would attract our attention should be placed in the vicinity of the room where we sit for meditation.

This means to say, we have to prepare ourselves to be alone. The preparation for meditation is a psychological undertaking to place oneself at the disposal of reality, and here we should have no kind of reservation within ourselves. All reservations are shed, and we become open to the nature of Truth. It is only when we sit for meditation that we become natural to ourselves. At every other time we may be said to have a little element of unnaturality. We are not natural in a hall like this, for example. We have etiquettes, social manners and customs, and various other factors which restrict the exhibition or manifestation of our true nature. In a marketplace we are not natural. In a court we are not natural. In an examination hall we are tense. In society, whatever be its nature, we put on certain characters conducive to the structure of outward environments rather than be natural to one's own self.

But when we sit for meditation, the character of the atmosphere is quite different. We should select a place and a circumstance where there would be no interference from outside. A time should be such that within the next two or three hours there would be no necessity for us to engage in any other work. The place also should be such that it is free from distracting or jarring noise, and from the intrusion of persons who are likely to disturb the attitude or the mood of meditation.

Now we come to the attitude or the mood of meditation. What should be our attitude? In what mood should we sit? This is a very essential thing to remember even before we try to concentrate our mind. The mood should be congenial. We have various moods. When we speak to a person, first of all we have to find out in what

mood that person is, and only then can we start speaking. Otherwise, there would be no purpose in speaking because it will not be successful. Suppose there is a case of bereavement. A person is crying, so we know the person's mood and what sort of thing we have to speak at that moment. We cannot speak something quite contrary or unsuited to the occasion.

Just as there are moods in our mind which vary according to external conditions, including physical and physiological characteristics, there is also a mood of meditation. When we sit, we become relaxed in every sense of the term. Every sense feeling is reduced to its minimum. We have tensions of various kinds: muscular, nervous, mental and even intellectual. All these tensions have to be relaxed, just as in hatha yoga practice we have what is known as the *shavasana*, where we are asked to relax to such an extent that we do not feel that there is a body at all. When the relaxation is complete, there is forgetfulness of the existence of the body. It is only in a tense state that we feel that there is a body. Also, when we are perfectly healthy, we do not feel that we have a body. When we have an ache or an illness of any kind, we become conscious of the presence of the body. A small baby who is perfectly healthy and skips and dances in delight has no consciousness of its body or its personality. Its spontaneity manifest, and has no tension. We have, to some extent, to become like a child in its spontaneity and naturalness, with a sense of relief from all tension.

Now, tensions are of various types. I have mentioned only a few: muscular, nervous, mental and intellectual, but we have worse tensions than these. Social tensions are the immediate difficulties that we have in life, and with a mood of social tension we cannot sit in meditation. We may feel wrath with a certain event that has taken place or an act that a person has done. We may be completely upset due to an injustice that has been meted out to us. A person may be completely worried over an unlawful act of a promotion being given to a junior when a senior is there. It happens these days. Suppose a junior is taken up due to some nepotistic attitudes of rulers while you are poverty stricken, living from hand to mouth with half a dozen children to maintain and educate, with daughters to marry, and there is nothing at home, no meal for tomorrow. How will you sit for meditation with this situation? So the mood of meditation is very important, and we have to be sure that we are prepared for meditation. If we are not prepared, the meditation will not be successful.

Each person's difficulty is different from the difficulty of another person. It is difficult, it is impossible rather, to give a common solution to the problems of everybody in the world, just as we cannot prescribe a single medicine for all the illness of the world. Each person has a specific difficulty. My problem is entirely different from yours, though outwardly we may look alike in social circumstances and activities.

We have to reduce these tensions to the minimum. I do not say they should become nil. That is impossible. They should be pressed down to the minimum level.

How you can reduce this to the minimum is a matter left to you individually, in consultation with your Guru. This question cannot be answered publicly because each person's difficulty is individualistic. Even the social tensions have various degrees or shades of difference. They vary. Everyone has some sort of social tension, but it is not of a similar or uniform nature. So you have to sit in consultation with your well-wishers and your teacher, or a Master or Guru, if you have one, and then find out a solution for the reduction of the element of tension.

We should not be worried over unnecessary things. We have to learn not to be worried. The world is full of factors causing worries. You cannot get rid of these factors in this world. Whatever be the circumstance in which you are, you have a complaint against it. You may be a king or a beggar; it makes no difference. You have a complaint. This complaint should go by an analytic attitude of the mind.

I will tell you a story from Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnavi* of how a Guru gave a humorous but very practical suggestion to reduce uneasiness of mind.

There was a poor man who was a *chela* of a fakir who was his Guru. The *chela*, the disciple, used to complain to his Guru, "Maharaj, I am in misery, a poor wretched man. One small room I have for half a dozen children. My wife is sick, and there is nothing to eat."

The Guru said, "What is your trouble now?"

"I cannot even sleep at night with so many children screaming in the small room. It is only ten feet by six feet perhaps, and there I have to cook my food, there I have to sleep, there I have to meet people. What a misery! Can you not save me from this misery?"

The Guru said, "I have a solution for this misery. Shall I tell you what the solution is?"

"Yes, please. I shall think that God has blessed me," said the disciple.

"Have you a dog?" asked the Guru.

He said, "Yes, I have a dog."

"You tie it inside the room," said the Guru.

The Master's order, he obeyed. He did not know what was the matter. "Why should I tie a dog inside my room? How can it solve my problem?" Anyhow, the Guru's orders cannot be disobeyed. He tied the dog inside, and the whole night the dog was barking. He could not sleep. It became worse.

The next day he went crying, "Master, I am dying! The whole night I had no sleep."

The Master asked, "What is the matter?"

"The whole night the dog was barking."

"I see. There is a solution for this. Have you a camel? Tie it inside the room," said the Guru.

“What is this? What is happening now? The camel cannot even enter inside the room with such a small door,” said the disciple.

“You tie it,” said the Guru.

The Guru’s orders cannot be disobeyed, whatever the Guru says. If he says, “Hang yourself,” you have to hang yourself. With great difficulty he thrust the camel into the room. Well, there was no place to sit inside after that. Oh, what to do? There was no question of sleeping or eating or sitting because the camel was giving kicks with its long leg. And the dog was barking. You can imagine the condition of the man. He did not know what was happening.

He went to the Guru the next day and said, “Maharaj, I prefer to die rather than live.”

“What is the matter?”

He said, “I cannot explain.”

“Oh I see. There is a solution for this. You have got a donkey? Tie the donkey also inside,” said the Guru.

The sense of obedience of the *chela* was such that he obeyed, with great difficulty. He tied the donkey also inside, and then there was no place to enter. What was to be done now?

The next day the Guru asked, “How are you?”

“It is hell, hell, hell!” he said. “Hell is better than this. I shall go to hell rather than live there.”

“Oh. Tomorrow you tie the dog, the camel and the donkey outside. Take them out. Let them be where they were before. You sleep inside the room,” said the Guru.

That night the disciple had a nice sleep, poor man, a very good sleep.

The Guru asked the next day, “How are you?”

“Heaven, heaven, heaven! It is all heaven,” he replied.

“Previously you were complaining that it is all hell. Now you are saying it is heaven. The same thing has become heaven now, is it?” the Guru said. “You couldn’t sleep in a small room with a few children and with your wife ailing, and now you are saying it is heaven. How it has become heaven now?”

This is a story from Jalaluddin Rumi. Very interesting. I like this story so much.

That is, the mind can create hell or heaven out of circumstances. We can adjust ourselves if we want to. But if we do not, then everything looks as if it is in sixes and sevens. The world is the world. We cannot make the world other than it is. We are also told that we have to bathe in the ocean while the waves are still dashing. If we want the waves to subside and then bathe, we will never take the bath. The world is an ocean with waves dashing upon us in the form of *tapatrayas*. We have all kinds of misery. Whatever be the life we lead, whether we are *brahmacharins* or *grihasthas* or *vanaprasthas* or *sannyasins*, it makes no difference. Each stage has its problems and

difficulties. But these are the waves, these are the *tapatrayas*. And when these waves of the ocean of samsara are dashing upon us, we have to take a bath in it; otherwise, if we wait for the cessation of these waves, they will never cease. We will never do anything in this world.

Hence, the mood of meditation is a psychological adjustment of our entire life with the reality of the world. The world is a reality; it has its own degree of truth, and we should not take it as a kind of thorn or an obstacle in our meditation. If we think it is an obstacle, it will remain that only; it is not going to be different, and we will go on cursing it till our life's end, and achieve nothing.

The wisdom of the spiritual seeker consists in an inward transformation rather than an attempt at an outer reformation of the world of Ishvara's creation. That cannot be done. Buddha came, Christ came, and the world is still the same; it has not become different. Even if a hundred more Buddhas come, the world is going to be the same; it is not going to change, for reasons of its own. But we can begin to see newer and newer meanings in the evolutionary process of the world. The world is perfectly all right. There is nothing wrong with it, but there is something wrong with the perception of the world or the attitude we have in regard to the world.

Therefore, the seeker of Truth has to be a realistic person. There is no use being too idealistic and imagining that milk and honey should be flowing everywhere, and that the earth should be velvet, with no hard corners. We should not imagine impossible things. We have to be realistic in the sense that we have to take things as they are, and not as they ought to be. Well, they ought to be wonderful, but what are they? They are something else. We may expect every person in the world to be a celestial. That is our pious wish, but they will not be. They are just human, and we have to take them for what they are and live with them and yet take advantage of the beauties and the goodnesses that are still present in the world.

So when you enter into your room of meditation, or the temple or a secluded place, prepare yourself to be face to face with reality. What is it that you are confronting in meditation? With whom are you going to converse in meditation? With reality. And you have to be open before it. People are open before the doctor, and before the Guru, but they are not open with others. Here again, you have to be more open than you are with these persons. Every prejudice or preconceived notion has to be shed. No thought or notion of a personalistic type should be entertained. Complete resignation of this personalistic attitude is absolutely essential.

The past has to be completely forgotten, and the future should not worry the mind. The past has gone, and therefore, there is no point in remembering it. The future has not come, and you do not know what it is, so there is no need of worrying about it. A necessity arises, therefore, to live in the absolute present. You have to brush aside memories of the past. You might have had bitter experiences in your earlier days, but

those things should not agonise you now when you sit for meditation. Nor should future hopes or future apprehensions come in between you and the reality that you are facing in meditation.

Therefore, the preparation for meditation should be social, physical, physiological, psychological, and intellectual. You have to be prepared socially in the sense that there should be no social interference, as I told you. No other person should come and intrude, and you should not have any kind of immediate social engagements such as catching a train or going to a court, and so forth. These kinds of things should not harass the mind when you sit for meditation. The time should be properly chosen, with nothing to be done for several hours ahead. You are completely free, and no one is going to intrude; the place chosen is such.

Now you are to prepare your personality for meditation. The muscular tension also should be released by a meditation posture, a *dhyana* asana. The purpose of the asana is to release muscular and nervous tension. Our nerves are tense, not relaxed. Never are we relaxed at any time. We are always in a tense mood, whether we are conscious of it or not. So we have to sit in such a posture whereby the body can place itself in a mood and position without having to strain itself too much. That is the meaning of saying it should be *sukha*. It should be *sthira*, and also *sukha – sthira sukha asana*. It should be fixed. That is the *sthira* of the asana. It should be fixed because you are going to have a continuous flow of thought in that posture. If the posture goes on changing, naturally it will have an impact on the internal structure of the mind, causing the mind to oscillate. So the body should be fixed in a stable posture, and it should not be a difficult posture of which you have to be conscious.

The definition of *sukha*, or satisfaction, is that it is spontaneous. You are not to exert in a state of satisfaction or enjoyment. Enjoyment is always spontaneous. You are absolutely free. It is only when you are free that you are happy. If there is tension, there is no happiness. Hence, let the asana or the posture be comfortable, comfortable in the sense that you can sit in that posture for a protracted period without moving. There is no hard and fast rule about this position except for the fact that it should not be a lying posture, nor a standing posture. If you stand and start meditating, you may fall down. And if you lie down and start meditating, you may go to sleep. The Brahma Sutras say *asinah sambhavat* (B.S. IV.1.7): It is possible to achieve success in a seated posture – not standing, not lying. This is the *via media* course.

But how are you to be seated? That is left to you. Patanjali does not mention the name of the asana at all. It is any comfortable posture. He is very liberal and charitable in his definition. You may be seated in any definite stable posture in which you can sit for at least one hour, not less than that, even as a beginner. When you are seated in that easy, comfortable, fixed posture, you slowly begin to forget the need to exert in any manner to maintain the position of the body. Maintaining your position should be

effortless; only then can you forget the presence of the body. If there is any exertion to maintain that posture, a part of the mind goes to maintain that position. It should be completely spontaneous.

It is said that a straightened back is very conducive to the maintenance of nervous equilibrium. If there is any awkwardness in the position of the body, to that extent the flow of the pranas through the channels of the nerves is obstructed; there is a retardation of the force or the movement of the prana. The prana moves through *nadis*, subtle nerve channels in the astral body, and as the flow of the Ganga is retarded on account of some obstruction, the pranas may be retarded in their free motion on account of a bent or twisted body or an awkward position, which has an impact on the nervous system within because every part of the body is connected with every other layer of the personality – the muscles, the nerves, the pranas, the mind. They are all interconnected.

Hence, *sthira* and *sukha* asana imply the easy seatedness of the body for a time long enough for the mind to be free from direct awareness or consciousness of the body. Do this and see. You will feel so happy merely by sitting. You need not think anything. You need not meditate. You need not chant anything. Merely sit in one posture for at least one hour, and you will begin to feel that the burden of your body is lightened. You are lifted up from tensions of every kind, and slowly you begin to feel that you are not burdened with the body so much.

The muscular tension, therefore, has to be released by a steady posture. Simultaneously with this release of the muscular tension, nervous tension also is released. Most people are nervous and easily sensitised by any person, any thing or any event that confronts them. You have to be free from these nervous tensions; therefore, it is prescribed that the place and time selected for meditation is such that it is far removed from such possibilities of external intervention.

Now, the most difficult aspect is freedom from psychological tension. While social tension, muscular tension and nervous tension can be released to some extent by these methodologies, you will find it is not so easy to get rid of psychological tension because the mind and yourself are almost identical. You can, to some extent, feel that the body is different, the muscles are different, but you cannot feel that the mind is outside. The mind is you, as far as your practical life is concerned, so to reduce the tension of the mind would be to operate upon yourself.

This can be done only with difficulty, at least in the beginning stages. There is revulsion from the mind itself to this very attempt. The mind is not prepared to be chastened for meditation because the achievements of meditation are still a future. No one is satisfied with a future; we always want things in the present, and the mind begins to have an apprehension that the possibility of any kind of success in meditation is a future which may be or may not be. The immediate realities of life are

more valuable and meaningful than the future apprehended facts, and so a subtle revolt is set up from the mind, which is the first obstacle in meditation. However much you may try to concentrate the mind, you will not get at the point of concentration at all; or even if you happen to have a little success in the beginning, the mind will side-track you from one point to another point by a subtle method of its own.

There was a student who started meditation. He meditated on Lord Vishnu, Narayana, in Vaikuntha. The first thought of the student was Narayana in Vaikuntha. The moment he thought of Narayana, he remembered the Satyanarayana puja because Narayana is connected with Satyanarayana. The moment the idea of Satyanarayana came, the *prasad* that is offered to Satyanarayana also came to his mind. The essential part of the Satyanarayana puja is the offering of the *prasad*. If you read the story of the Satyanarayana puja, you will know that the *prasad* is very important. The *prasad* consists of bananas, milk, ghee and many other items. In his meditation his mind has gone there, and, you will be surprised, from *prasad* it went to various articles of fruit such as oranges, etc., and from oranges it went to Nagpur because Nagpur oranges are very famous. Finally, he got up with Nagpur consciousness rather than Vishnu or Narayana consciousness. This is to give an instance of how the mind can lead you from one thing to another thing by association of ideas, and you will be in a fool's paradise when you get up, not having meditated. Nothing has been achieved.

The mind has many techniques of deceit. It is a wonderful deceiver, and can employ many kinds of tactics. It is difficult to tabulate all the tricks that the mind can play. When you sit for meditation, you yourself will see what tricks it can play. So it is essential to have a program of meditation in the beginning. You must refuse to think thoughts that are extraneous to the program that you have fixed for yourself.

The program should consist of various items. The first is: How long are you going to sit? You should not be kept suspended. For example, I have heard of some Zen institutions in Japan where the students are made to sit in a hall for the purpose of meditation, and they do not know how long they will be made to sit by the Guru. It may be for ten minutes, it may be for fifteen minutes, it may be for three hours, so this creates a sense of uneasiness in their minds. Well, it may be a good thing if the Guru is there by their side, but if the Guru is not there, there is no use sitting for an indefinite period of time. Fix a definite period for yourself so that the mind is satisfied: "After all, the devil is only for this time, not beyond that." So it will yield. "Oh, only for fifteen minutes. All right, I'll agree. Beyond that I will not sit," the mind will tell you. So tell it, "I am going to sit only for fifteen minutes, my dear friend, don't bother."

And the method of meditation also should be clear before the mind. You should not go on changing the attitude. Mostly, the method will depend upon the nature of the initiation that you have received from the Guru. This should be clarified from the

Guru himself. You should not go on bringing innovations into meditation because the initiation is inclusive of a definition of the nature of meditation and, to some extent, a description of the possible obstacles that would have to be faced in the process of meditation.

Mostly, the initiation consists not in a direct introduction to methods of abstract meditation, but to concrete contemplation. Most of the Gurus will initiate you into a mantra. Perhaps every Guru does that. They will not, in the beginning itself, initiate a disciple into pure, impersonal concepts of meditation, though the purpose is to lead the mind to that concept. I feel that this is a very suitable method to be adopted for everyone.

The formula or the mantra into which one is initiated becomes a very useful prop in fixing the mind on a prescribed ideal, but if it is a mantra, the advantage is still more. I have mentioned a little about it last time. The mantra is a very beautifully arranged system of verbal junctions employing powers that are not easily visible outside, and by the chant of the mantra, the energy of the mantra is supposed to be released in a mysterious manner.

The Veda mantras have their own method, and the tantric mantras have a different method altogether. Veda mantras are more difficult to chant than tantric mantras. Generally, the mantras into which the student is initiated by the Guru are not Veda mantras, though sometimes they can be. Veda mantras are difficult to chant because of the intonation involved, the *svaras* with which the mantra is associated. It is a fixed conviction of Vedic adepts that the meaning of the mantra as well as the effect produced by its chant depends not merely on the utterance of the words of the mantra, but also on the intonation, the *svara – udatta, anudatta, svarita*, etc. In tantric mantras the *svara* question does not come to such an extent, but the pronunciation should be correct. You should not make a mistake in the utterance of the syllables of the mantra. In the Devi Mahatmya there is one passage, one line: *bhāryāṃ rakṣatu bhairvī*. One person chanted it wrongly, and his wife died. *Bhāryāṃ rakṣatu bhairvī* means “May my wife be protected”, but he did not know how to pronounce it, and what he said was “May Kali eat my wife”. So when you are initiated, be sure that the pronunciation is clear, that you understand the meaning of the mantra, and that you develop a real devotion to it.

The chant of the mantra should, therefore, be the beginning of meditation, and before the chant of any mantra, Om chanting is beautifully prescribed. Whatever be the mantra into which you are initiated, it should be preceded by Omkara. So chant Om for a few minutes. The mantra Om has its own beneficial effects while it is chanted. It produces a very harmonious vibration. All these things cannot be explained. You have to chant it and see what happens. You will feel a rhythm and a

thrill produced in your system. You will feel a titillating sensation in your body when you continuously chant the mantra for at least fifteen minutes.

In the beginning, you will begin to feel as if ants are crawling over your body, and then you will feel a very pleasant sensation, difficult to describe. You will be overjoyed, as it were, without a reason which you can visibly perceive. The more is the harmony achieved in the system, the greater is the joy that you feel with it. The misery of life is caused by disharmony of every kind – disharmony in the mind, disharmony in the nervous system, disharmony in the pranas, disharmony in social relationships. This is the misery of life. Wherever there is harmony, there is pleasure, satisfaction. The chant of Om, therefore, is supposed to bring about a physiological and psychological harmony. But you must also know how to chant Om.

The chant of Om is threefold. It can be short, it can be middling, it can be elongated. This question has been raised in the Prashna Upanishad, and different effects are attributed to the three types of chanting of Om. You should not chant Om as if it is a business, that somehow or other you have to recite ten thousand and then get up. That is not the way of chanting Om. The best way of chanting would be the middling tone. I can chant Om before you, and you can see how I chant it. The short form of Om is Aaauuummm, Aaauuummm, Aaauuummm. The middling form of it is slightly elongated: Aaaaauuuuummmmm, Aaaaauuuuummmmm, Aaaaauuuuummmmm. The elongated form is not suitable for meditation, but I can tell you what it is: Aaaaaaaaaauuuuuuummmmmmmmm, Aaaaaaaaaauuuuuuummmmmmmmm, Aaaaaaaaaauuuuuuummmmmmmmm. The elongated form is wonderful, but generally students are asked to chant Om in a middling tone. For fifteen minutes it can be chanted.

Afterwards, take to the chant of the mantra together with the notion or the idea of the meaning of the mantra. Most of the mantras mean surrender to God, prostration to the Almighty, union with the Absolute, and so on. So when the mantra is chanted you entertain the ideas of protection from all sides, freedom from tension, grace descending from God, and surrender of oneself to God. With these ideas, the mantra is chanted. This is, to some extent, dhyana itself combined with *japa*. They call it *japa-sahita-dhyana*. Dhyana associated with *japa* of the mantra is *japa-sahita-dhyana*, which will lead to *japa-rahita-dhyana* later on. Pure meditation, independent of chants of any kind, will come later on when you get absorbed in the thought of God. So, all these prescriptions are to prepare the mind for the higher absorption of the mind in a loftier consciousness.

There are certain methods which are usually employed by *sadhakas* to always keep themselves prepared for meditation. Do not possess things, the loss of which will cause you mental agony. As a *sadhaka*, be a simple person. Do not have two wristwatches,

four transistors. If they are stolen, you will be wracking your head. Why do you possess these things? Have a minimum of requirements, and live in a simple manner. Let your needs be minimum so that you may have those needs wherever you go, wherever you are. Do not ask for *badam sharbat* wherever you go, or cow's milk. There are some *sadhakas* who say, "We are *sattvic* and take only cow's milk, *badam*." How will you get these things wherever you go? So be a very simple person, not very sophisticated and complicated in your behaviour, and live in such a way that it will be difficult for people to interfere with you or trouble you. People cannot trouble you if you have become so simple. And internally entertain the attitude that you do not possess anything, that everything belongs to God Himself. You have come with nothing, and you shall go also with nothing. You came to the world with a cry, and you shall leave the world also with a sob. You cannot go laughing. We unnecessarily laugh in the middle for a few days without understanding the reality of things. The possessions shall be taken away from us at any moment of time, and we shall remember that we came alone, we shall go alone and, therefore, really speaking, we are now alone. We have no friends in this world. Friends are artificial associations that can be separated at any moment. God is our only real friend.

Thus, keep yourself psychologically pure and aloof, and even if you are to be immersed in objects and social relationships, be psychologically detached. Learn to be happy in this world of God's creation because happiness is health, and happiness is also wealth. Happiness cannot come if you do not want it, and it also cannot come by causes which are transitory. Transient causes cannot bring permanent happiness. As all things in the world are transient, whatever happiness you may get from them also is transient. They may temporarily look delightful, but the delight will be superseded later on by a sorrow that will inundate you. So you should have a permanent attitude of poverty, chastity and obedience, as Franciscans usually say.

I will tell a story as a diversion. There was a shepherd boy in Persia who somehow got into the good books of a king. The king was so pleased with this boy that he educated him, and he rose up to be a prime minister. He was the pet of the king, and the king would not do anything, even the smallest thing, without first consulting this minister. The courtiers were a little bit jealous. "What is this? We are also important people, learned and capable. Why should the king consult only one man? After all, he was a shepherd. What is his qualification?" Anyhow, the king was so fond of the minister that they could not do anything.

Now, there was another aspect to it. Wherever the minister went on a tour on business, he used to carry a box with him. In Persia they used to travel on camels and elephants and he would carry the box behind him. Nobody understood what was in this box. Wherever he went, there was a box behind him, and he would not open it. These jealous courtiers thought, "There is something very secret behind it, maybe

some treasure which was stolen or something misappropriated. He cannot leave it at home because somebody will see it, so whenever he goes, he takes it with him. Oh, now we will catch this fellow.” They went and complained to the king. “After all, Your Highness, you are thoroughly mistaken. This fellow is a thief. He has looted your treasury and kept best articles, and for fear that people may detect it while he is gone, he takes the box wherever he goes. You are mistaken. He is not so nice and good a man as you thought.” They wanted to drive this fellow out.

The king could not understand how the minister could be like that. He was such a good man. For so many years he had been amiable. Anyhow, when so many people said this, the king said, “I must investigate and see for myself.”

“Yes, Your Highness can see that wherever he goes, he carries a box,” they said.

And so the king silently, secretly observed this, and found that the box was going with the minister every time. He also had a little apprehension, thinking, “There is some mystery behind it.” One day he ordered the minister to come with his box. Well, the minister understood there was some intrigue; otherwise, why should the box be called for? The king asked the minister, “I am sorry. I trust you very much, but for reasons of conformity to law and etiquette I have to ask you to open the box before all people in the parliament.”

“It can be opened,” said the minister. He took a key and unlocked it, and took out what was inside. It was a rag, a torn piece of cloth which he had worn when he was a shepherd.

All were shocked and shamefaced. They could not say a word. They thought it was a treasure, looted from the coffer of the king. They asked him, “What is this horror that you are carrying, being a minister?”

“I am carrying what I am really. What I really am, that I carry with me. I do not want to carry what I am not. I was a shepherd, and I am a shepherd. I am a poor man, I was a poor man, and I shall be only this forever. Nobody can make me rich; no riches will follow me, and I cannot trust these riches. And it has been proved already by you, all people who suspected that I carry gold and silver in the box.”

You can imagine the consternation of the public. No word could come from the mouth of any person.

This again is a story narrated by a Sufi mystic to a disciple, indicating how a disciple, a *sadhaka*, should conduct himself. You are a poor person, you are a nobody in this world, really speaking, and it is this sense of *vairagya* that can create in you the fire of dispassion for the world as a whole and a love for God. Love for God and dispassion for the world go together. You cannot have one without the other. The more is the dispassion for the world, the more also is the love for God, and conversely, the greater is your affection for God, your love for Him, the more also is the *vairagya* or the dispassion. God and mammon cannot both be loved at the same time.

The most important factor conducive to success in meditation is *vairagya*. *Vairagya* is a fire which consumes all passions, all longing for earthly things, all desires that are temporal. You want nothing that is external, that is perishable, that is physical, that is associational, that is spatial, temporal or causational. And finally, you are fed up with even individuality itself. You rise above that attachment, or *abhinivesha*, even to this body. You are flooded with an absorbing love for a reality that transcends the body and the structural universe of space and time. *Vairagya* prepares the ground for *abhyasa*, or practice of meditation. And with various techniques, which would be special and peculiar to each individual according to the initiation received, the meditation should be pursued for the sake of the goal that is indestructible, invulnerable and immortal.

I mentioned last time that it is difficult to take oneself entirely to meditation throughout the day. Nobody can meditate for the whole day, so we have to take to methods of practice which shall be equally spiritual, yet slightly more relaxed than meditation in their rigour and stiffness. That is *svadhyaya*, or the study of scriptures such as the Upanishads and the Yoga Shastras; and, whenever possible, *satsanga* of great saints and sages, the company of the wise, and attending discourses which will elevate your mind and spirit would help you in your meditation. They are essential because all throughout the day one cannot sit for meditation. If you attempt the impossible, you will be side-tracked and will fall into a pit afterwards.

Hence, go slowly, go cautiously, and never feel that you are so important as not to need the guidance of a Guru. A teacher is always essential, and at every stage you will find a superior to yourself. At every stage there is a superior, and it would be beneficial and good to be humble and receive advice from ones wiser than you are. It is wisdom to be humble, to be small before the might and the majesty of God, creation and the powers of nature and, above all, the mystery of God Himself. A devotee of God is a nobody. This is the special qualification of a devotee: he is a nobody. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say, "A *sannyasin* is one who can be beaten with a shoe by any person." It was a humorous definition. It means to say that he has reduced himself to a nihil. His personality has gone, and he lives a godly life of aspiration for the positive by withdrawing himself from the negative through dispassion or *vairagya*. More about meditation we shall see later.

Discourse 14

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING CLARITY OF OUR IDEAL

In all our efforts, whatever be the direction in which we move, we keep an objective or an aim before us, and every instrument that we use and every idea that we entertain are seen to contribute to the fulfilment of this objective. But it is not always that we keep a clarity of consciousness in regard to this aim. Much of our difficulty in life is due to a mix-up of matters. The aim gets lost in the midst of the turmoil of effort, and a part of the effort itself may get converted into a temporary aim, by which the original intention of the final aim can easily get missed. This is what generally happens not only in the world of seekers of truth, or *sadhakas*, but also in the people of the workaday world, in family circles and in ordinary life.

We cannot always keep up the consciousness of the ideal in our minds. If it had been so simple as that, we would have rushed towards the aim like an arrow hitting its target. But many are the vicissitudes through which we have to pass in the fulfilment of our aim, whatever be that aim, as I mentioned. Even if it be a secular or a temporal aim – it may be even an economic or social aim, and not necessarily spiritual or cultural – nevertheless, the aim can get missed by a confusion of ideals which present themselves in multitudes when we enter into the field of work.

Now, the field of work is like a field of battle. Very pertinently is this world compared to Dharmakshetra or Kurukshetra. The Mahabharata, the epic of Vyasa, is only a symbolic magnificent presentation of our own day-to-day struggle. We know very well how in this vast oceanic tide of life's problems we sink down as if we are lost in the waves, and occasionally rise up to the surface only to take a breath and realise that we are still alive, to sink again to the bottom by the dash of another wave, and perhaps rise up again. This is called *samsara*.

How can we keep up a consciousness of our aim when this is what we have to experience, when these are the daily unforeseen problems that we have to face? We cannot know today what our problems will be tomorrow, though when we first placed our foot on the field of this battle of life we had a satisfactorily adequate conception of our goal or aim. It may be the goal of education or the goal of ascending in the career of one's office or in the field of earning one's daily bread, yet with all this apparent simplicity of the concept of the ideal before us, life does not present itself as so simple.

Everything that we touch in the world is a network of problems. There is no simple fact in this world. Everything is connected with many unknown factors which are unforeseen and undreamt of by us, and when we touch any point of the world, we seem to be opening Pandora's box. We do not know what is coming out of it. The whole thing is a muddle, and either we retrace our steps because of the fear of the unknown before us, not having the courage to pierce through the veil of the unknown,

or we speciously argue within ourselves as to the error or the mistake that we have committed in having taken the initial step, and turn in another direction altogether which is quite different from the aim that we have chosen in the beginning.

I am particularly making mention of the problems of spiritual seekers because their problems are harder of solution than the problems of others. The difficulties of the ordinary man of the world are large enough, no doubt, but they can be solved by appropriate means because the aims of the ordinary man of the world are temporal. They are within the purview of sensory perception, and the means as well as the end are both confined to the world of perception. The end, or the aim in view, is not beyond perception. We have a very clear idea of what we want to achieve in this world in case our achievement is temporally circumscribed; therefore, the means we adopted are also naturally within the temporal world.

But the question of the spiritual seeker is a little deeper, and so the problems that arise in spiritual adventures may be even hazardous, risky, and it may be absolutely impossible to have a notion of the future that is before the spiritual seeker. The end or the aim of the spiritual seeker is non-temporal. This is the main difficulty. Inasmuch as it is non-temporal, it is also non-perceptual, non-cognitional, non-intellectual, and it is impossible to rationally convince oneself as to the nature of the experience that one may have to confront the next day because the non-temporal does not come within the purview of mental operations. Thus, the preparations that the *sadhaka* has to make are much more than the preparations that the man of the world has to make for his ordinary acquisitions.

What sort of preparations have we to make? The most important factor that we have to bear in mind is that we have to be personally fit in ourselves for the task that we have undertaken. Personal fitness is the most important factor in any work, in any field of life. If we are personally unfit, our effort will not be of much avail, whatever be the assistance that we may be able to command in the field of our enterprise.

Now, personal fitness in the spiritual sense is very peculiar. It is a kind of qualification that the supernatural forces will demand of us, not what the man of the world will regard as competency. The competency in the eye of the man of the world is quite different from the competency which we are called upon to entertain or furnish within ourselves in the eyes of the forces of nature. Suppose we have a degree, a qualification from a university. The forces of nature are not going to regard it. University degrees will do nothing before the powers of the world, though the man of the world lays much store with them because the world's powers are the world's bylaws and rules, which do not necessarily operate in the society of human beings. Therefore, we should not make the mistake of imagining that the guarantee that human society gives us is also a guarantee that the cosmos or the world of nature will

give us. While we may look very secure in the eyes of society, we may be totally insecure in the eyes of the forces of nature.

You have seen how this can happen. While you may be a very important person in society, perhaps a raja, a king or an emperor with all the retinue and the forces that you can command, you can simply be buried in the earth, under the ground, if the forces of nature are to attack you. No one has been spared. Not even the mightiest monarchs that trod on the earth could live, with all their powers, with all their riches, with all their associations and friendships, and with all the learning and the pedigree under their command. This is to tell us that social security is not real security. We have to be secure really, and not only notionally or conceptually. The powers that an official commands are notional; they are not real, because they are invested upon a person by associations which are purely in the minds of other people.

The powers of a political chief, to give one instance, are in the minds of those people who obey the orders of that particular chief. If tomorrow the minds of other people change and the whole group of persons under him disobey his orders, his powers cease to exist in a second. They are notional, psychological, and not real. All our powers in the world are of that nature; they are only mental. They are only within our heads. They are not really there. As long as society collaborates with us in thinking as we think and follows the system of thinking as it has been mutually agreed upon, so long we are in a fool's paradise, thinking that this life is wonderful, and beauty is the world.

But notional reality is not absolute reality. It is not reality at all because that would be to trust the mind of a monkey. The real forces that govern the world are not subject to the psychological whims of the human being. They are governed by principles which are impersonal. They are not notional, not psychological, and therefore, not personal. They are impersonal. So the physical fitness or fitness of learning or academic recognition is not what the world of nature will expect of us. Personal fitness of a spiritual seeker is of a different kind altogether. It is a qualification that he acquires in the eyes of the forces of the world, and not in the eyes of people who see him physically. So personal fitness, which is so essential in spiritual sadhana, is to be acquired by a knowledge of the constitution of the world, the powers of nature and the forces that govern the world.

The world is impersonal; therefore, the first, and perhaps the last, qualification of a spiritual seeker is the acquisition of impersonality in his character. This is also what is known as control of the senses, *indriya-nigraha*, or in short, what is known as self-control. We insist on self-control because self-control is the effort at the planting of impersonality in our character. We become more and more personal the more we become physical and also social; inasmuch as society is nothing but a group of objects which are sensorily perceived, in this world of society we also lose energy through

sensory perception and sensory contact. All indulgences of sense are depletions of energy. All of us are weaklings physically and mentally and volitionally because of the fact that we have been losing our energy through perceptions and cognitions based on sense perception. Voluntarily we lose energy, and mostly also we lose energy unconsciously without our knowing it. Our contact with objects is a kind of loosening of the bond that we have put as a barrier for the flow of energy.

Energy is again difficult to define, and energy strength is what gives us power. When we lack energy we become poor in strength. There is a very beautiful passage in the Upanishads which says *nāyam ātmā bala-hīnena labhyaḥ* (Munduka 3.2.4): A weakling cannot attain to the Atman. Now, a weakling is one who has fallen in the moral sense, and on account of that, fallen in every sense because we become weak, we become *bala-hīnena*, the moment we disconnect ourselves from the forces that sustain us.

We should not make the mistake of imagining that we are sustained by other people. When I say “the forces that sustain us”, it cannot mean other persons, other people, or the things of the world as they appear to the senses. People do not sustain us, because the people who appear to sustain us today can desert us tomorrow. Today’s friend is tomorrow’s enemy. So this is not the force that sustains us. There is some other unknown and invisible power which keeps us intact in this physical complex called the body, and keeps us also possessed of some sort of strength mentally and physically. The more we conform to the laws of this unknown and invisible force, the more also is the physical, psychological and moral strength that we gain within ourselves. But the more we depart from the centre of this source of energy, the more also do we become weak physically, psychologically and morally.

Unless we assess our strengths in all these levels of our personality, it would be a hazardous attempt on our part to sit for meditation or to attempt at concentration on higher realities. How many of us are able to sit for meditation and how many among us feel so confident that the mind is capable of being absorbed into the object of meditation the moment we sit for it?

What we generally experience is a rebuff from the object. There is, first of all, a feeling that meditation is a kind of imposition, a kind of trouble that has come upon us on account of a very unthought enterprise which we have undertaken and we are not sure whether we are going to succeed or fail, whether we are going to achieve anything at all. All these suspicions are at the background of our very attempt at sitting for meditation, and the weakness of our will, the imbecility of our character, contributes to the failure of our attempts.

We are not to forget that spiritual meditation is the apex of our spiritual efforts. It is not the beginning of our spiritual practice. It is the last step taken in the adventure of the spirit, and we should not, therefore, be under the impression that it is a task

which can be taken up by any Tom, Dick and Harry. It will not be a success because the concept of reality is the determining factor of the success in meditation. Whatever be our notion of reality, that is the determining factor of the achievement in our meditation.

Most of our concepts of reality are limited to the world of the objects of the senses, and to us the world of reality is the world of objects. Now, the world of objects has two peculiar characters. One is that the objects are always far away from us in space and also occasionally in time. The objects of the world which are regarded by us as realities are not in our possession. Perhaps we have very little contact with many of the objects of the world. Secondly, no object of the world can be in all places. It can only occupy one place at a given moment of time. Every object, therefore, is limited in space and in time. So our concept of reality is limited to space and to time. It cannot comprehend the entirety of reality. But also we have a very untutored feeling in our mind that the purpose of our spiritual meditation is a little far removed from the world of reality in which we are today, namely, the world of objects.

There is a conflict in our mind in the very concept of reality. This concept is that while on the one hand we cannot give up the notion that reality is confined to the objects of sense, on the other hand we are pulled by another longing of an ideal which seems to be removed from the world of physical perception.

What we seek to achieve through meditation spiritually is not an object of sense, as we know very well, and yet we cannot give up the notion that reality is confined to the objects of sense. If the world of objects were not a reality, we would not be pulled by them. Unrealities cannot attract us. We are attracted to reality, and the fact that the world engages our attention to such an extent as to immerse us there completely shows that we have taken the world of objects for reality. Yet, we meditate on reality in our spiritual pursuits, which is quite different from the reality in which we are. So there is a double reality, a conflict of character in our psychological makeup, which has contributed much to our failure in our attempt at meditation for so many years. We have not been able to reconcile between the pull of the ideal and the attraction of the real.

The ideal is somewhere which beckons us with its magnificence, with its notional infinitude and the imagined immortality or the Godhood with which we invest it on the one side, but on the other side, the world is not prepared to leave us. When we open our eyes the world is there as real as it was, and we do not come down to the world of perception with any different idea about it. Just watch your own mind. Be seated for meditation for an hour, or two or three, and deeply concentrate on your spiritual ideal in your meditation. When you come down from your meditation even after three hours, the world of perception, the world of objects, will be as real as it was. It will make no difference. That means to say, our psychological life is far weaker than

our physical life. While our meditations are psychological activities, our life is confined to physical levels. We live in a physical world of physical realities, which have a greater say in the matter of our living than the psychological attempts that we are putting forth in the way of meditation.

Now, we have to first of all disillusion ourselves by a clarity of thought, namely, that the psychological world is not to be a handmaid of the physical world. Modern psychologists, the western behaviourists and materialists, are of the opinion that the mind is an offshoot of matter. As wax comes out of a tree or a flash of flame comes out of a matchstick, mind exudes from the brain cells. Well, it is another way of saying the mental operation is only another activity of matter. But this opinion held by psychologists and even the common man in the street has a serious consequence.

We are always under the control of physical objects, and the mind has to dance to the tune of the objects of sense. We have already accepted the fact that the mind is weaker than the physical objects and the physical level in which we are living. The mind is only an instrument to fulfil the needs of the physical body and the physical attractions of sense. This is a very subtle analysis that we have to make to understand where we are actually placed in this world. Why is it that people think that the mind is only an offshoot of matter? It is because the mind is subsidiary in function to the objects of sense, and our mental activities are unable to change any event in the physical world. Whatever be the depths of our thought and the intensity of our ideas, it cannot bring about any physical change in the world.

Now, this has led people to the conclusion that the mind is only a toy in the hands of the physical forces of nature, and we would only be contributing much more to this false notion if after such a deep meditation of several hours we come back to the same physical world of objects of sense and get attracted to them and get engaged in the work of the world in the same intensity in which we left it.

Unconsciously and subconsciously we are wedded to the objects of sense. Subtly we are accepting the fact that even today, at this very moment, we are slaves of the objects of sense, notwithstanding the fact that we have undertaken another religious activity called meditation, which is of no utility in our practical life. Inasmuch as our spiritual activities do not seem to have any practical utility, we have become lost and bewildered in the world of ideals and achievements.

Spiritual seekers are likely to get lost both ways on account of this conflict in their minds – the conflict between the ideal and the real. It is very difficult to find a successful spiritual seeker. While there are many spiritual seekers, most of them are failures in their attempts. There are frustrations, setbacks and various kinds of defeatist attitude which somehow are not allowed to enter into the sanity of their concepts because of a tentative physical satisfaction that they give to their senses. This is a very important factor which we have to remember. We have to be very cautious in

knowing what our actual situation is in our present spiritual life. We are not very secure and safe. There is an unknown fear ahead of us caused by this conflict or rift in our personalities – the physical and the psychological.

The first step that a spiritual seeker has to take in his endeavours is to bring about a harmony between the psychological personality and the physical personality. Now the physical personality is dominating the psychological personality. The mind is to work according to the demands and orders of the senses. The five senses command the mind to act in a particular manner. Any one of us can dispassionately judge our own selves and see if we are doing this or not. Whatever we do is in accordance with the call from one of the senses of our personality. It may be the call of the eyes or the ears or the taste, or whatever it is. A particular sense demands a particular attitude from us, and we immediately manifest that attitude. This means to say, the mind is a slave of the senses, which is another way of saying that the mind is a slave of physical matter and we are only agreeing with the behaviourist psychologists that mind has come from matter.

The lowest condition of the human being is the dominance of the physical personality over the psychological personality, which is the present state of affairs. All of us are in that condition. Let us not think that we are superior to it. We, all of us without exception, are dominated by the physical personality, and the psychological personality is completely under the thumb of the physical forces of the world, and of our personal body also.

So the first ascent in spiritual life would be a harmonisation of the mental and the physical forces, and the next step is the dominance of mind over the material world. Instead of the body controlling the mind, the mind controls the body. Instead of the physical forces controlling us, we shall control the physical forces. That is a much higher state, a large, unforeseen and magnificent spiritual attainment which is very far from us from our present point of view. But that is not an impossibility if we take proper steps to see that our personality is not in a chaotic condition caused by this rift between mind and body.

As I said, the fitness of personality is a very important factor contributing to success in spiritual life. Self-control is impossible as long as there is a conflict between the mind and the body. We should not imagine that we are masters of the body, masters of the senses or masters of the world. We are not. Our daily life demonstrates how the body has a say over the senses and the mind, and the extent to which bodily changes affect our mind. We know it very well. But when there is a harmony brought about between the mind and the body, the mind at least is equal to the body in its status; it is one step in achievement, and this is also the first step in self-control. Self-control, or *atma-nigraha*, or *indriya-nigraha*, is the process by which we gradually gain control over the lower levels of being through the instrumentality of the higher

levels. Instead of the cause being determined by the effect, the effect has to be determined by the cause. Now the cart is before the horse. The effect seems to be controlling the cause; and the spirit, which is our ideal, our goal, which is the object of our meditation, is almost non-existent for all practical purposes of our life. The spirit is dead almost. We cannot see it, we cannot even think it. On such a thing we have to meditate. While the spirit is completely non-existent for practical purposes of our life, the mind is a subservient element and the body is ruling us. So we can know now where we stand.

From the physical level of the body we have to rise to the mental level, from the mental we have to rise to the spiritual level, and meditation is a spiritual activity. It is not even an ordinary thinking process of the mind, much less to do with the physical body.

In the beginning the meditational process is mental and psychological, though in the end it becomes spiritual. But even this psychological act of meditation is quite different from the ordinary thoughts that are in the mind. Meditation may also be regarded as a kind of thought that we entertain in our mind but this thought, which we call meditation, is different from the thought of an ordinary sense object which attracts us or repels us.

The difference lies here. While in the thought of a sense object the mind is dissipated, in the thought of the object of meditation it is gathered into a focus. There is a difference between a dissipated condition and a gathered-up condition. The thoughts of the mind run pell-mell in ordinary perception and conception of objects. The mind is not concentrating on any object when it is sensorily attracted or repelled by an object. Concentration is the total activity of the mind on a given object, total in the sense that every force which constitutes the mind is gathered up for the sake of the thought of that given object. But in ordinary sense perception what happens is a part of the mind is given to the thought of the object, and another part is given to another object, or perhaps many objects.

To give an instance, you are engrossed in your work in an office, but you cannot be said to be meditating on the office work though it is deep thought that is bestowed upon the work. Why it is not called meditation? Because while you are wholly engrossed, so to say, on the duty or the work which you are performing in your office, a part of the mind is subconsciously working in relation to your duties at home. You have got a family, you have got children, you have got some responsibilities, and somebody is sick at home. You may have many problems privately in your life which are not completely brushed aside even while you are concentrating on the office work. So the mind is not wholly thinking of the work though for all practical purposes, for outside perception, it looks engrossing. Likewise, you may be divided among many concepts in the ordinary thought of things. The mind can subtly relate itself to many

other sense objects though consciously, at a given time, it may look that it is concentrating on one thing. As I mentioned, when you are doing the work in the office you seem to be wholly engrossed in it, but you are not really wholly engrossed. You have got many other responsibilities which are hovering around your mind, and perhaps worrying your mind, which you have suppressed for the sake of fulfilling a particular duty with which you are engaged at that given moment. But meditation is not like that. Meditation is not office work. It is not a work at all. It is not a duty that you are performing. Meditation is not an activity. It is not any kind of social or personal enterprise in the sense of contact sensorily or physically.

Mental operations in spiritual meditation are quite different from mental operations in social work, office work, or any other work in the world. So while meditation may be regarded as a kind of thought of the mind, it is qualitatively a different kind of thought. You are wholly gathered up by what you know as *pratyahara*, and the subconscious activities of the mind do not distract your attention in respect of other objects. Just as while you are doing office work you may be subtly thinking of your home, you are not supposed to think of something else when you are engaged in meditation. Then it is not meditation. But most of us do that. For us, spiritual meditation is something like office work. We allot one hour for that, as we allot one hour for office work or some other duty in life. This is not like that. We cannot allot a little time for meditation as if it is one of the activities of our life. It is a point at which we arrive when we forget all other engagements, and collect our energies for the sake of an achievement which is not one of the many achievements of the world but the only achievement that is before our mind. That is why we call it the goal of life. Office work is not the goal of life. Home work is not the goal of life. No work in the world can be called the goal of life, but that thing before us in meditation is our goal of life. So there is a great difference between temporal objectives of the workaday world in which we may get engaged and the non-temporal objective which is the ideal of our meditation. They are two different things. So when we are seated for meditation, we are not seated for doing some work or business. We are a different personality altogether when we are in a mood to meditate.

It is impossible to describe in language what that mood is. It is impossible to describe it in words because there is nothing comparable with it. We cannot compare this mood with any other mood of our day-to-day activities. We get roused into a sense or a consciousness with which we cannot compare any other sense or consciousness in our life. If we have had moments of such enthusiasm in moods of meditation, we know how incomparable it is.

Very rarely in our lives do we get roused to such moods. Very rarely are we in moods of meditation. Daily we cannot be in a mood of meditation, though we may sit for it, because the mood for meditation sometimes looks like the grace of God. It is a

tremendous blessing that comes upon us, and if really we are in a mood of meditation even for a few minutes, we will come out as a different person altogether. We will not think as we thought before, and we will not speak as we spoke before. Our attitude to things will be different. We will come as if we have drunk some nectar. Though it is only a drop that has gone into our gullet when we swallow a drop of nectar, we can never forget its taste, if we are really in the mood of meditation. I am talking only of the mood, and not the absorption of consciousness in the object.

The mood to meditate is a preparation of the whole soul for rising into the Absolute. It is like an entire army ready to take action. We can imagine the totality, the collective force of the army. When the general gives a command to begin the attack, all the thousands are gathered up into a single attitude, a single mood, and prepared for a single action. It is not that every soldier thinks differently at different times when that order is given. Similarly, when the soul gives an order to meditate, every cell begins to meditate. All the pranas get collected, and the mind immediately obeys its order. Remember this small analogy I gave of the command of an army general, with thousands of soldiers thinking a single thought. The soldiers are thousands in number, but they think a single thought at that time. They are in a single mood, and they are for a single action. It is as if one thought is given by all the soldiers put together with tremendous force because of the obedience of that one order of the general.

Likewise, the order of the soul is the call of God, and when this order comes from within, the whole personality gets gathered up. We are withdrawn. This is what is called *pratyahara*. The whole energy of the body is collected. The cells of the body, the muscles, the nerves, the pranas and the mind stand in unison, in one mood, for one thought, in one action. That is meditation. And if we can be in that mood for even a few minutes, as I mentioned, we will come out as a different person. You can test yourself to see whether you are the same person or are different. If you sit for meditation for two or three hours and that meditation has no effect, there is some serious defect at the very outset. That is something like forgetting to put on the switch when the electrical installation is complete. There will be no effect because we have forgotten to put on the switch, whatever be our effort at the installation. Likewise, if we are prepared in every way but forget the essential point, there will be no meditation. It will be a lifeless activity. It will be a corpse sitting, not a human being meditating.

Suffice it to say that even a few minutes of meditation will change our attitude to life. It is a touchstone of success in meditation. We can know whether or not we are really meditating by the effect that follows from the nature of the mood with which we get up from meditation, and the release of tension as well as the delight and satisfaction that we feel when we rise from meditation. The more we sit, the more we would like to sit; such is the delight of the gathering up of the mind. While activities,

work, business and professions tire us, meditation does not tire us. While we can be fed up with activity, we cannot be fed up with meditation.

The reason is simple. All activity is an external emanation from our personality into space and time, but meditation is the reverse process of the entry of forces into us rather than the movement of forces away from us as during other worldly activities. This is the difference. Forces enter into us in meditation, while forces leave us in activity. Therefore, we are tired of work but feel joyful and delighted in meditation. We gain strength in meditation but become weak after toilsome work, so work and meditation are two different things. Meditation is not an activity, it is not a business, it is not an imposition, it is not a fatiguing work; it is the soul of our soul. It is what gives life to us.

So the concept of reality, to come to the point again, is the determining factor of success in our meditation, and to the extent the concept of reality is clear, to that extent meditation is successful. If we have a very crass, materialistic, gross conception of reality, there will be no success in meditation. We will come out as if we have achieved nothing. The concept of reality is the motive force that supplies energy in meditation because meditation is nothing but the fixing of consciousness on reality. As reality is unseen, meditation is the dwelling of consciousness on a concept of reality in the earlier stages, and later on the concept slowly merges into being through a gradual ascent of consciousness.

In the beginning, thought and reality are different. Consciousness and objects seem to be sundered apart, but in the gradual ascent of the soul to reality, this gulf between consciousness and matter, thought and being, becomes lesser and lesser, gets narrowed down until the gulf vanishes. There is no difference at all between thought and reality when we reach reality. That union of thought and reality is called *sat-chit*, a state in which being and consciousness become one. Now they are quite different – being is somewhere, consciousness is somewhere else – so consciousness has to attempt, put forth effort, at bringing reality into its being. In the beginning, consciousness assumes reality in itself. Then it realises it in itself. The process of this gathering up of energy for the sake of the entry of reality into consciousness is self-control, *atma-nigraha*.

Thus, the fitness of our personality is moral and spiritual. Social or political recognition are not what we are required to entertain or present before the judge of the cosmos. The universal forces have a law of their own. They are impersonal, spiritual, and therefore, spiritual life is obedience to the laws of the cosmos. The more we abide by these laws, the more we are protected by them. A spiritual seeker is fearless because the world protects him. The world protects him because he obeys the laws of the world. The laws of the world do not mean the laws of the government or

the laws of society, but the laws of the reality of the world, the laws of the forces of nature, the laws by which the whole cosmos is determined.

This is something glorious. Spiritual life is magnificent, and nothing can be equal to it. And to sit for meditation is to dwell on reality, to set our foot on the path to the eternal, which we regard as the goal of life. When we say it is the goal of life, nothing can be equal to it, nothing else can detract our attention from it, and concentration on it or meditation upon it is equal to acquisition of every other benefit in the world. We cannot be detached in meditation because what we achieve in meditation is equal to and much more than what we achieve through any other effort in other fields of life.

Thus, it is essential to have a clarity of concept, a beautiful notion of what our ideal is, and with this unshaken strong foundation of a clarified concept of our ideal we should engage ourselves in spiritual pursuits and not allow ourselves to get dissipated or be in a mood of melancholy, dispiritedness and defeatism as if there is nobody to support us, nobody to help us and as if we are going to achieve nothing. This attitude should be completely vanquished from the mind, and a positive attitude of our total dependence on the laws of the world, on the laws of reality, has to be entertained. The world will take care of us. The forces of nature will protect us, and God shall be with us always.

Discourse 15

EVOLVING OF PERSONALITY THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

Yesterday I was trying to give a concise analysis of the way in which our personality gets involved in a rift within itself without our actually knowing it in conscious experience. While we manage to get on with this psychophysical gulf which we have created within ourselves in our practical life, it becomes a serious problem when we enter into spiritual meditation. There are many problems in our life with which we can get on to some extent, but when they get concentrated, they become formidable. We do not wrack our brains over small difficulties in life, though they are there as hard as life itself. But when they get focused into a point of attention, they become serious encounters, and without resolving the conflict which they pose before us, we would not be able to move forward.

Inasmuch as we have various interests in our lives, we are able to forget some of our difficulties. God has somehow blessed us, perhaps, with diverse interests. It is not that we have only one interest in one object of a particular type continuously throughout our existence here. We can shift our interest from one centre to another, and it is the nature of the mind to seek satisfaction in such shifting of centres of its enjoyment.

Now, on account of there being a chance of continuous adjustment of the mind with various centres of satisfaction, there is also a possibility of forgetting many of our worries. Just as a child stops crying for a moment when it is given a toy to play with or when it is provided with some other diversion, we have various diversions in life. We can go to a film, we can go to a club, we can have a drink, we can have a good lunch, we can go on a picnic, we can go on a long tour, or we can go to bed and have a long sleep if we are too much fatigued or agonised in our hearts. Thus, we are trying to get on in life somehow or other, pull through it, though there are hard-pinching facts at the bottom of our existence itself.

Now, this fundamental problem of an insoluble difficulty in life is created by an invisible factor working within our own selves, to which we have closed our eyes forever, as it were, and we want to close our eyes to it inasmuch as it is insoluble. When a problem is too hard to solve, it is better to forget it. This is the attitude which we have been entertaining with regard to many of our difficulties in life when they go beyond our control. We close our eyes or try ways and means of brushing it aside completely from our memory, and think of it only when it actually comes in front of us and attacks us or threatens us. But forgetting a problem is not a healthy attitude because problems will never leave us just because we forget them. That would be the analogy of the cat which closes its eyes and drinks milk, thinking that nobody will observe it. The difficulties are illnesses or diseases of our personality, and a disease

cannot be cured merely by forgetting it or ignoring its existence. Rather, it gets accentuated and becomes more risky when it is ignored.

Our psychological context is a great problem in our life which comes into high relief when we sit for meditation on the spiritual way of life. As we observed yesterday, the attitude that is spiritual is a wholesome, comprehensive and all-inclusive attitude. Thus, it takes into consideration whatever is without and whatever is within. There is no chance of ignoring or forgetting any factor there. That which is comprehensive includes every existent factor, whether it is desirable or otherwise. While in the ordinary life of the world we can afford to forget or ignore certain factors though they are existent, in the spiritual field we cannot ignore any factor because we should not be tired of bringing back to our memory again and again the truth that spirituality is not one of the ways of life that we are adopting but it is the comprehensive attitude to life. This is a very important essentiality of the spiritual attitude to things which is likely to be missed in our enthusiasm of life.

The attitude that is spiritual, inasmuch as it is comprehensive, is inclusive of every existent factor, psychological as well as physical. Hence, questions that are especially psychological cannot be ignored. Now, the rift or the chasm to which I made reference yesterday in our personality is a psychophysical chasm. It is the impossibility on our part to bring about a harmony between our mind and our body, or the principle of thought with the principle of objectivity. The object ever remains as a target of thought, an objective which the mind wishes to assimilate into its existence, which factor is demonstrated daily by the attraction of objects over the mind and the impossibility of the mind to rest contented within itself without coming in contact with objects. The mind, somehow or other, unwittingly convinces itself into the belief that objects are realities and, therefore, it has to pursue objects.

The hectic activity of the mind to run after the things of sense is explicable on the ground of the inner belief within us that objects are real and, therefore, we have to be after them because nothing can satisfy us more than the possession of reality. If reality is the highest of possessions and the greatest benefit we can acquire, and if reality is to be identified with the objects of sense, naturally our satisfactions are identical with sensory indulgences. The mind has somehow or other duped itself into the belief that objects are realities and to pursue reality is the highest objective in life, and therefore, sensory indulgence is the greatest conceivable satisfaction.

Now, the body is used as a kind of instrument, a handmaid, in the satisfaction of the senses. The body has been a very useful instrument in the pursuit of the mind through the senses in terms of objects. Though we are educated in human psychology and know that the mind is more important than matter, it has always remained as a kind of theoretical or academic acceptance. The mind has always remained subservient to the operation of material forces. We are controlled by economic and

material forces today on account of the subservience of psychological factors to material forces. We always think in terms of politics, economics and sociology. We have no other way of thinking, forgetting the fact that there are realities within us subtler than what we can think in terms of society, money or governmental administration.

The aspirations of the human mind are superphysical. We are not to be satisfied with material economy or objective indulgence of any kind. Even if a person is possessed of all material wealth, he is not going to be satisfied. A verse in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata says that all the wealth, all the gold, all the cattle, all the grain that is available in the world cannot satisfy one person in the world; such is the desire of man. If we are possessed of the kingdom of the whole world, we will not be satisfied. Why? Because matter cannot satisfy spirit. Spirit is superior to matter, and the mind is a replica of the spiritual aspirations within us. It is a representation of the infinitude that is within us. The mind operates within the bodily limitation, no doubt, and yet it reflects within itself an infinitude of aspiration. That is why the mind of man can never be satisfied, whatever be the possession, whatever be the wealth and whatever be the status that one occupies in human society.

We are, therefore, under a misplacement of values, and this is what generally goes by the name of suffering through samsara, an inexplicable difficulty in which we have entangled ourselves, a difficulty from which we want to extricate ourselves, a difficulty which sits upon our heads until the end of our life. This is samsara. But this suffering of samsara has come upon us merely because of the preponderance of the material attitude over the psychological and the spiritual attitude. This is a fact and a point and a theme which I tried to dilate upon yesterday.

Today I shall try to go a little further into the question of the meditational problem of the spiritual seeker that arises on account of this psychological, or rather, psychophysical rift in one's personality, which has to be harmonised and made whole. We have to be complete personalities rather than personalities with a schism or a rift, though it lies within unconsciously. Unconscious problems are problems nevertheless.

We have, as I mentioned, various levels of our personality, and we are not exhausted by physical experiences. The conscious experiences of physical life are not the entirety of our personality. We have deeper essences within us which begin to speak at different times of our life. When we are frustrated, when we are deprived of all we possess and we are thrown into the winds, the deeper personality within us begins to speak in a deeper language altogether, while when we are well-off and on velvet and we think the world is all milk and honey, we speak in a different language only on the conscious level. The bottom of our personality wells up into the surface when we are frustrated deeply and shaken from the very roots of our being. It can happen when the forces of the world become unfriendly towards us.

The social security and satisfaction that we are enjoying in the physical level of our being is on account of a tentative or a temporary thrust that people lay upon us and the apparent uniformity of conscious experience among human beings. But subconsciously human beings are not uniform. That is why really one cannot be a friend of another person in the world. Though consciously we seem to be friends, subconsciously we cannot be. So there is a possibility of breaking of friendship, though the conscious level promises all types of uniformity and stability among people. We have a subconscious difference, though a conscious uniformity. While on conscious levels we appear to be very friendly, amiable and very satisfying among ourselves, subconsciously we keep within ourselves a knife, as it were, which can cut the thread of friendship any moment of our life. History is a lesson to us, and it tells us how humanity has been duped by this false satisfaction that it seeks from human uniformity that it observes only on the conscious level.

Now, in spiritual meditations, the subconscious mind is brought to the surface. What we really are within ourselves comes up. The devil, the tiger, the snake, the scorpion, everything that is within us comes up to the surface. We have characteristics of all these animals. We are sometimes like tigers, sometimes like snakes, sometimes like jackals, because these traits that we have overstepped through the process of evolution somehow manage to retain a little tinge of themselves, and become materialised into experience when proper circumstances are provided.

The spiritual act of meditation is the bringing out of the entire personality of a person. We are not to be satisfied merely with our conscious experiences. For example, we are likely to think that we have no desires of an undesirable type at the present moment. At this particular hour of the day, people are seated within this hall listening to a discourse in a particular mood or attention of mind, and you are likely to think that you are quite normal in your behaviour and everything is well with you. There are no objectionable desires or antisocial traits in your mind. Perhaps it is true when you consciously judge yourself at this present moment. But antisocial traits can be worked up into your conscious life if the circumstances around you change.

When the conditions that determine your mental operation change, they can bring out of your personality traits which are hidden in the lower levels, being suppressed, for obvious reasons, in conscious social life. We have antisocial characters within us. Every one of us has these characteristics, and we suppress these characteristics because of laws that operate in life. If the laws are not to be, there will be only the law of the jungle prevailing in the world. There is a mutual agreement of people which restricts our experiences and operations in external life, and therefore, the undesirable traits which are of an antisocial or unsocial nature are pressed down into the subconscious levels, not for sublimation or destruction, but merely for the reason that they cannot

germinate under the given circumstances at the present moment. In meditation they are consciously brought out.

In psychoanalytic therapy, a process which medical people employ, there is a set of operations done upon the patient to bring out the unconscious traits and hidden impulses which have caused a rift in the social and personal life of the individual. There are mental diseases of various kinds, for which people are taken to psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, etc. This rift in their personality has been the cause of their illness. The rift is nothing but the conflict between the suppressed traits and the conscious behaviour of the personality. When the conscious behaviour is more powerful than the suppressed traits, we look sane and perfectly normal. We are not mental cases because the conscious activity of our mind is more powerful than the hidden or the suppressed traits – not that they are not there, but they are weaker. But when the suppressed traits are stronger than the conscious activity of the mind, one becomes insane, a maniac. That is what is called a mental case. The conscious activities are weaker than the suppressed instincts. If the conscious activity is stronger than the suppressed one, then of course we get on in life somehow or other.

Now, the psychoanalyst therapy is a very interesting technique which is also employed by spiritual seekers in another manner altogether, which amounts to a very tactful bringing out of the hidden impulses into conscious life by processes such as free association, dream analysis, and concentration of mind on a given subject. There are many other methods also. You are asked to go on repeating certain items that come to your mind suddenly, without thinking. Continuously let me hear what you go on uttering – mountain, tree, river, stars, sun, moon, food, the diet, roti, chapatti, whatever it is. You go on saying whatever comes to your mind. If you continuously go on uttering whatever comes to your mind for half an hour, some sort of a reading of your mind can be made because these words that you utter are the utterances of your mind. They are impulses expressing themselves in the form of ideas. If you were given time to think, you would not utter objectionable terms or express ideas which will not be tolerated by people, so you are not given time to think. You have to utter words quickly, rapidly, so that you lose control over your rational powers, and the emotions push the impulses that are within into conscious levels.

Dream analysis is another method of studying personality. The objects that we see and the experiences we undergo in dream give a sort of indication of what impulses we have hidden within us, and dream projects our desires in symbolic terms. The mind has got defence mechanisms and methods of manifesting its desires in a very subtle, unobjectionable manner. Objectionable desires can be expressed in an unobjectionable manner. For example, in court people argue false cases in a legal manner, giving them a tinge of rationality. This is called rationalisation, a logical

presentation of forbidden traits within the mind in an acceptable manner. This method is employed both in waking life and in dream.

We employ symbols of sensory satisfaction both in waking and in dream. We see a snake in dream, which is a desire expressing itself in concrete form, indicating that we have a hidden impulse. Or we fly in the air, or drown in the ocean. These are symbolic of hidden impulses which can come up when they are pressed too hard. When they are given a free scope of expression within a limited circle, we do not see their activity or the way in which they work. But when we control them vehemently or drive them hard into corners, then they take revenge and come up into the conscious level either as a revolting activity, a revolutionary attitude socially or personally; or if this attitude cannot be manifest for some reason or the other, it becomes a craze or a mania.

While we are trying to avoid these psychological illnesses in our day-to-day life by diversions and satisfactions of an innocuous nature, in spiritual life we cannot do it because a spiritual attitude is an attitude of self-control. We cannot have diversions; we cannot go to pictures, we cannot have a drink or a peg, we cannot smoke. We cannot have any kind of permissible social enjoyments when we take to a monastery particularly, or to a meditational attitude as a whole-time aspirant. We impose upon ourselves a deliberate control and a check upon impulses of our personality, giving no chance of diversion or satisfaction; and there lies the danger.

Now, this is precisely what meditation tries to solve as a panacea for mental conflicts. While conflicts can lead to mental illnesses, in meditation these conflicts are sublimated and made to evaporate. We become a whole personality by a healthy introduction of psychological medicine rather than a suppressive attitude, which we have been adopting up to this time for want of a proper method. Meditation may be regarded as a panacea for all the ills of life. It is a medicine not only for personal ills but also for social ills, because social ills are personal ills. They are identical. What is society but humanity put together? Many people put together, many individuals joined, is called society. Therefore, social conflict is individual conflict, social battle is individual battle. Whatever we see outside is inside. So if the within is cured, the outside also is cured. The cure of the human personality is the ultimate aim of spiritual meditation.

But it is not merely a psychological cure that meditation adopts. It is a spiritual cure of the whole personality, a cure of samsara itself. The greatest of illness is samsara; it is not merely psychological conflict, which is only a very meagre form of suffering that we are undergoing compared to the invisible fundamental problem which we call earthly existence, the process of birth and death. The greatest of diseases is the transmigratory process of birth and death. We are subjected to a chain of metempsychosis without having any say in the matter. It is being driven to jail for an

indefinite period, and we will never be given the chance of a hearing. Such seems to be the predicament in which we are. And what greater disease can we be infested with?

So while the psychoanalytic attitude of therapy is very interesting and useful, and it is used also in the spiritual processes of meditation, the purpose of meditation is deeper than psychoanalysis. It is deeper because it tries to cure the illness of life itself. And what is the illness of life? It is the subjection of the human soul to birth and death. We are subjected to birth and death because of the identification of consciousness with the process of material forces. The world of matter is subject to change and transformation. Everything in the world is a vicissitude. Everything comes and everything goes. Momentary is the existence of physical objects, and inasmuch as impermanence is the character of everything that is physical, material or earth-earthly, when consciousness is falsely identified with this procession of material forces it is subjected to this procession. The birth and death of the body is falsely transferred to the experience of consciousness, and it looks as if consciousness itself is passing through birth and death. We are not really subject to birth and death essentially in our being. The soul is immortal, eternal, infinite; such is our consciousness.

But we seem to be undergoing the suffering of life in spite of our being immortal and infinite. The reason is that in the vicissitudes of time and the differentiations of space, the processional activity of material forces get mixed up with the existence of consciousness, and vice versa, which is called *anyonya-adhyasa*, the mutual superimposition of characters within consciousness and material forces of objects. So when objects come into being and go out of being, when there is birth and death of material configurations of bodies, of objects, the identified consciousness also begins to feel that it is subject to a similar vicissitude of transmigration. The purpose of meditation is to sever this relationship of consciousness from these forces, or rather, to realise the infinitude of consciousness.

When the *chaitanya-shakti*, or the consciousness within us, gets identified with the changing character of material forces, it undergoes the process of birth and death, as it were, and when this identification is snapped, when consciousness asserts its independence – *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam* (Yoga Sutras 1.3): when the *drashta*, or the seer principle within us, the consciousness proper, gets established within itself independent of association with objects outside – it realises its infinitude and eternity. This is the purpose of spiritual meditation: to cure the illness of consciousness in which it has been involved, the illness of birth, death and suffering, which have all been caused by an initial mistake of identification of the subject with the object, which is called *avidya* or *aviveka*. *Avidya* is the absence of the knowledge of infinity and eternity of consciousness; *aviveka* is the non-discrimination between subject and object. *Avidya* and *aviveka*, like twins, get born into experience in a mysterious manner and create in us *ahamkara*, or personality-consciousness. *Avidya*

and *aviveka* produce *ahamkara* in us, which is the assertion of individuality, which is contrary to the nature of our consciousness. Consciousness is eternal and infinite, it has no personality, and so the assertion of a particular bodily personality as an individuality is contrary to the nature of our consciousness. That is the beginning of *samsara*.

Hence, *avidya* and *aviveka* lead to the false affirmation of personality, *ahamkara*, which leads to *raga* and *dvesha*, likes and dislikes. Because we are one thing and others are another thing, we develop likes and dislikes towards other people and other things in the world. *Raga* and *dvesha*, or likes and dislikes, cannot be avoided as long as there is personality affirmation. They are the children born to *ahamkara*. From *ahamkara* come *raga* and *dvesha*. Due to *raga* and *dvesha*, or likes and dislikes, we get involved in selfish activity for the fulfilment of *raga* and the avoidance of the objects of *dvesha*. We are busy in our life, in our selfish attitude, for amassing wealth and for many other reasons. We sink ourselves in selfish work for the sake of fulfilling our desires to pamper the psychological attitudes of *raga* and *dvesha*. Karma, which is binding, becomes our engagement when *raga* and *dvesha* are the strings that control our activities.

This binding karma produces birth and death. *Janma, jara, dukha* – all these are the outcomes of selfish activity. Karma produces a momentum of power which pushes us further in the chain of transmigration. Karma produces an effect which gets lodged in our psychological nature like a cloud covering the sun, and the luminosity of our Atman is completely overshadowed by this mist or cloud of the impressions produced by selfish activities, which are the outcome of *raga* and *dvesha*, which assertion have come from *ahamkara*, which has come from *aviveka*, which is the product of *avidya*. So everything ultimately is rooted in absence of understanding, absence of knowledge, a misconception and a total erroneous attitude to things in general. Meditation sets right all these errors by putting the things in the proper places while they are now pell-mell, scattered everywhere, anything existing anywhere.

The meditation that is spiritual particularly is the setting in proper order of the forces of the world and the forces within our personality, which ultimately mean one and the same thing. The control of the mind is the control of the world. *Mano-jaya* is *jagat-jaya*. If you are a master of yourself, you are a master of everything else also because everything else is constituted of the very same substance as you are. So the technique of meditation sets right the personality of the individual primarily and, as a consequence, becomes a remedy for the chaos that one experiences in the cosmos and in the universe as a whole.

The chaos that is the personality has to be set right first, and then it becomes an avenue for entry into the wider forces operating in the world. The chaos in the personality, as I mentioned, is the dichotomy between mind and body, spirit and

matter, which is called *aviveka* or *avidya*. This has to be removed by meditation. How this can be done is the question of who will bell the cat. This is the crucial point in spiritual practice. All this is the background and the introductory preparation for taking action finally at a given point. Now, what is this point on which we have to concentrate? This is the object of meditation.

Here we have to be very cautious because the choice of the object of meditation is also simultaneously the choice of the method of meditation, just as the choice of the destination which we have to reach is also the choice of the road that we have to pursue in that direction. If we want to go to Delhi, we know which is the way to Delhi. So the road is already fixed because the destination is fixed. Likewise, a choice of the object of meditation is to be taken, is to be done very carefully, suited to the temperament of the particular spiritual seeker. The goal is one, but we move from different directions.

To give the same example, if you want to go to Delhi from Rishikesh, you have to pursue one path. But if you want to go to Delhi from Amritsar, you have to pursue another road altogether. If it is from Bombay, the goal is same, but the roads to Delhi are different because they all come from different directions.

So the goal is same; the Absolute is the goal, but the paths are variegated on account of the various temperaments of the individual. The temperaments of individuals vary on account of the various psychological structures of the mind. Every mind is psychologically, structurally, different from the other. Everyone has a house to live in, to give one instance, but the pattern of the house of one person is not the same as the pattern of the house of another person. The pattern is different, though everyone has a house to live in. Likewise, the pattern or the methodology of the working of the mind is different in different individuals on account of various factors that have come through various aims, through different lives.

The temperaments which vary from individual to individual are nothing but the structural or patternal differences of individuals. These are the determining factors of the object of meditation, and also the method of meditation. So here comes the question of initiation again. Why do you go to a Guru or a Master? Because you cannot know what is your temperament. Sometimes you are likely to mistake your temperament for one thing while you are really another thing. You may say, "I have no emotion," while you may be full of emotions. You do not know whether you are a rational type, a volitional type, an emotional type, an active type, or a type which is filled with conflict. All these can be observed by a dispassionate mind.

Our minds are not dispassionate. They are full of prejudices, and therefore, we cannot make a very dispassionate or impersonal judgement of our own self. That is why we go to Masters or Gurus. The Guru, or spiritual teacher, is an impersonal being who has no desires of any kind, who has an equal attitude towards people and,

therefore, judges people properly. We cannot judge our own friends or enemies because we have a hatred for enemies and a love for friends. So love and hatred prejudice our judgment of persons, whereas a Guru has no love and hatred; he has no friends or enemies, so his judgment will be a correct judgment of the mind of a person. Hence it is that we are asked to approach a spiritual adept, and generally, if the adept that we have chosen, by God's grace, is well established in spiritual practice, he will be able to select a proper target for our meditation, and also program for us a daily routine of spiritual practice in accordance with our predilections, prepossessions and intellectual capacities.

Many factors come into play when we try to decide the object of meditation and the method of concentrating the mind. It all depends upon various factors such as the family in which we are born, the social circumstances in which we have been brought up, the kind of education which we have undergone and, above all, the *samskaras* with which we are born into this world. All these contribute to the decision of the factor of meditation in respect of the object as well as the technique.

So we come again to the point that a Guru is essential and initiation is imperative. While the initiation is given, the disciple or the student is supposed to be instructed in everything concerned with meditation. It is not just a five-minute affair. It is a detailed study of the student's personality, a continuous observance of his behaviour, and a personal care which the Guru takes of the disciple for a long time until the disciple is able to stand on his own legs and take care of himself on the spiritual path.

The impulses that are within our minds are mostly responsible for our difficulties in meditation. Every person has some difficulty or the other when he sits for meditation, and these difficulties vary from person to person. They vary because of the variegated types of impulses hidden within. Some may be obsessed with *vasanas* of *kama*, others may have *vasanas* of *krodha*, a third may have *vasana* of *lobha*, and so on. Or there may be a feeling of self-importance, which does not leave the individual even in deep moments of concentration of mind.

We cannot know what obstacles we will have to face in meditation because we do not know what impulses are hidden within us. The objective experiences in meditation are the outward manifestations of the subjective impulses. So whatever the impulse within is, that is the sort of experience that we have in meditation. Many people mistake experiences which are caused by impulses for spiritual experiences or God vision. They say they see lights, colour, hear sounds; they say that is God speaking or God is coming near. God will not come so quickly. Though He will definitely come, He does not come so early and so easily. So visions and sounds should not be mistaken for God vision or philosophical or spiritual experiences. They are mostly outward manifestations symbolically presented in space and time of impulses that are within us because one of the tests of experience is the consequence that it produces, the

reactions that are set up by these experiences, and the feelings generated within us after we have these experiences.

When you have a vision of sound, colour, etc., what is the feeling generated within you? If it is one of fright, doubt, suspicion, confusion, etc., you cannot mistake it for a spiritual experience because spiritual experience is like waking into reality, getting up from sleep or rising from dream. When you wake up, you do not have doubts in your mind. You do not ask questions, "Am I awake, am I asleep, or am I in a state of dream? Am I a human being or am I a cat, am I an animal?" You never ask these questions because everything is clear when you wake up. So in spiritual experience everything is clarified. If you have doubts, you can take for granted it is not a spiritual experience. You do not go and compare your experience with somebody else. "Yesterday I heard the sound of a bell. Is God ringing the bell or is it something else?" They are the workings of the pranas. Sounds and colours especially are the pressure exerted on the prana by the concentration of mind. If you press your eyes hard, you will begin to see some colours. You can see it now itself. Press your eyes hard. Varieties of picturesque scenes can be seen in front of you. The same thing happens in meditation. While here you are pressing the eyes with the palm of your hand, in meditation you are pressing with the force of will but the effect is the same. Because of the power of will exerting a pressure on the prana, you begin to see colours, and you may even hear sounds due to the movement of prana. They are not the spirit manifesting itself. That is very far off. These are unavoidable experiences, but not to be mistaken for spiritual realisation.

We have to live the life of saints so that we may gain some idea of what we may have to expect in our spiritual life, especially the lives of those saints whose records are available to us, like the life of Buddha or the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the life of the great saint of Maharashtra which we read in Bhakta Vijaya, and the lives of those mystic saints of the south called Alwars and Nayanmars, and many other such mystic adepts who passed through inhuman sufferings for the sake of God. All this suffering is for the sake of God because when we ask for the transcendent reality, all that is phenomenal has to be shed. The sufferings that we undergo in our spiritual life are the processes by which we shed phenomenal contact with the objects of sense. It is like scraping our skin, as it were, and we start feeling pain because we are scraped.

Every detachment is a pain to the soul. We have been accustomed to think that attachment is pleasure and, therefore, non-attachment appears to be pain. The march of the soul to Godhead is the march from one stage of non-attachment to a higher stage of non-attachment. We rise from the lower detachment to the higher detachment. The higher we go, the more we are detached from contact with things, and so we begin to feel a sort of restlessness, as if things are being lost. All the desires of the mind are curbed; they are denied their satisfaction. The desires are of umpteen kinds. There are desires of the eyes to see beauty, there are desires of the ears to hear

melodious sounds, there are desires of the tongue to taste delicious dishes, desires of the nose to smell fragrance, the desires of the skin to touch soft things, and above all, the desire of the ego to gain self-recognition. These will come like devils with cudgels in their hands. Buddha had experiences of this kind. Read the life of Buddha, a most picturesque life. Mara came and attacked him from various sides. Christ was tempted by Satan: "All this universe is yours. Why are you undergoing these austerities?" Many such temptations will come; and many people will yield to the temptations, mistaking these temptations for holy utterances of the spirit and harmless experiences that come on the way. Here God helps, Guru helps.

Thus, experiences in meditation are of various kinds, and mostly they are phenomenal appearances of the subjective impulses. When the impulses completely come out to the surface and get exhausted totally, that will be like a sick man attaining health. The appetite will grow, the mind will think more clearly, and the whole world will look beautiful. This is what a healthy man sees. A sick man curses the world, he has no taste for anything, he cannot sleep, and he cannot utter a sweet word because he is agitated, annoyed and agonised within. But a healthy person sees beauty, perfection, amiableness, and health spread around himself.

Likewise, when the spirit begins to manifest itself, when the psychological disease-producing toxins of impulses are thrown out by sublimating them through the process of meditation, we gain a spiritual health which is impossible to explain verbally. That is the stage of ecstasy. You might have heard of spiritual ecstasy and transportation of the spirit people experience in meditation. These transportations and raptures and ecstasies are the rise of the sun of the spirit in the firmament of our personality. When the sun rises, the whole darkness is dispelled; the mist melts and everything is seen clearly, and we wake up into a new kind of activity. That is beauty. That is the kind of thing we will begin to see when the spirit manifests itself and the disease-producing toxins of impulses are removed.

We are now sick. We are not healthy, spiritually speaking. We are all spiritual bankrupts and spiritual patients full of illnesses of the mind. Many kinds of maladies are within us, in all the layers of the personality. The illness is not only in the physical body, it is in the *pranas*, in the senses, in the mind, in the intellect, everywhere. In all the five *koshas* we are sick. And these five *koshas* have to be straightened. They are to be made healthy, and when these five sheaths encasing the soul get polished of the dross of *tamas* and *rajas* and become *sattvic*, even this very personality will reflect the radiance of God. That is the saint. Like a glass pane reflecting light, the personality of the individual will begin to reflect the radiance of the spirit. That is what is called a *siddha*, *mahapurusha*, *avatara*, saint or sage. Even while living in this world, the personality will radiate the light of God because of the *sattvic* character which is manifest through the five *koshas* rather than the *rajasic* and *tamasic* character that is

now at present. This is what you will experience when you advance in meditation. You will begin to see a veiled light and an uncanny satisfaction and delight, which will be its own explanation, its own proof. It needs no explanation, and it does not call for any proof or demonstration of it.

Such is the grand technique of meditation, and towards this grand end we move.

Discourse 16

ENTERING THE REALM OF IMPERSONAL FORCES

Thoughts and things are interrelated. Though things appear like objects of thought, without any intrinsic relation within themselves, they are essentially children of the same parents. The source of thought is also the source of objects. They are a kind of parallel movement from an invisible context of creation which is beyond the perception of the mind, as well as the reach of the objects of sense. Inasmuch as the common source of thoughts and things is not conceivable to the mind – not at all sensible or perceivable – the thoughts, which impinge upon objects, take the objects for externals and treat them as strangers. Thoughts have to deal with the objects, inasmuch as the source of the thoughts and the object is not known.

There is a bifurcation in the process of creation at a particular point, and this bifurcation it is that is responsible for what we know as subjects or knowers or thoughts or minds or selves on one side, and things or objects or visible forms on the other side. We are told that the original equipoise of all things in the cosmos is known as *prakriti*, *mula-prakriti*, which is constituted of metaphysical principles known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and it is this *prakriti* that gives rise to the first evolute in the process of creation, known as *mahat*, also *mahat-tattva*. We sometimes know it as cosmic intellect. This *mahat-tattva* is inseparable from universal Self-awareness, sometimes identified with God, the Creator, the first Universal Individual, impossible for us to conceive but posited in the scriptures and affirmed in the Darshanas such as the Sankhya and the Vedanta.

It is from the point of this universal *ahamkara* that a parallel creation starts. Up to this point it is all one. In biological science also it is said that in the fundamentals of life there is no sex. We do not have male and female in the lowest amoebic level or in the elementary forms of biological life. When life progresses to a particular point of manifestation, sexes differentiate themselves. Originally it was one, and at a particular stage it became two, so that an externally conceived relationship had to be developed between the sexes due to a conflict brought about by the twofold factor of their having an original source fundamentally and yet their being separate objectively.

Some such thing has happened in cosmic creation. At the point of *mahat-tattva* and *ahamkara*, which is the last point in cosmic evolution, we have a separation of the fundamental reality into the subject of perception on one side and the object of perception on the other side. It is, to give a crude example, the projection of two arms from the same body. The body is one, and yet we have the right arm and the left arm externally related to each other, though intrinsically they are connected to the same physical organism.

The subjective side of creation consists of the physical bodies of individuals, the vital forces, the sense organs, and the various psychological functions, known in Sanskrit as *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, *chitta*, etc. The objective side, which is something like the left hand projecting itself forth from the same source, manifests itself as what are known as the *tanmatras*, or object potentials. *Tanmatra* is a Sanskrit term, which simply means the quintessence of objects. We have in modern physical science the discovery that physical objects are not the realities; they have inner realities constituting them, such as electrical charges within the physical bodies of objects, and so on, rising still further into mathematical point events and the relativity of the cosmos, etc. In the same way, we have related in our scriptures and Darshana *shastras* the existence of potentials of objects, or manifestation of forms, known as the *tanmatras*, which materialise themselves into objects of physical perception. Just as internally, subjectively, from one side of creation we have the intellect, the mind, the *chitta*, the senses, the *pranas* and the physical body as an outer manifestation of the internal potential, outwardly we have the physical cosmos of earth, water, fire, air and ether – *prithvi*, *apas*, *teja*, *vayu*, *akasha* – manifesting out of the *tanmatras*, or these potentials.

Now, inasmuch as there has been a bifurcation of the fundamental root into the two branches of subjects and objects, subjects having to deal with objects in an externalised manner, there arises the context of what we call cognition and perception. We perceive objects; we do not regard them as part of ourselves. Perception is a demonstration of the fact that the objects are outside us.

The theory of creation, as outlined just now, will tell us that inasmuch as the source of objects and thoughts is the same, the fact of the externality of objects should be a kind of misconception. It cannot be true. If, by a freak of consciousness, we begin to feel that our own hand is outside us, we would be regarded as mental patients. A kind of twist or kink in our consciousness, or mind, can produce this false perception of a part of our body being outside us. That is a kind of psychopathic condition. This perception of a part of the body being outside one's own body cannot be called normal perception; it is an illness of the mind, yet it looks normal to the perceiver. There are people who have the mental illness of seeing human beings moving in front of them, while no one is there. They get frightened because to them it is real. If we tell them, "My dear friend, there is nobody in the house. Why are you running about? Why are you frightened?" he will say, "Look! Here he is, gazing at me, coming near me." For that person under the spell of that false perception, it is all a reality, and our arguments will have no meaning. But we know very well that this perception of a non-existent object is an erroneous mental condition.

Similarly, the practice of yoga is the great art of the putting an end to this mental illness forever and making the mind realise its original source. If the mind is to realise

in its practical life that the objects of the world have come from the same source as its own self, we would be dealing with persons and things in a different manner altogether. There would be no fights and quarrels, no attachments and emotional obsessions; there would be a different world altogether in front of us if there were to be a perpetual awareness that we and the objects outside have come from a single root.

Now, this bifurcation into the objects and the subjects is of a very peculiar character, and because of this peculiarity, we are unable to know what has actually happened. It is not like the branches of a tree running in different directions at a particular point of the trunk. This bifurcation is a psychological, rather, a conscious activity based on an incapacity to perceive rather than a perception of what is really there because rectification of facts is not possible. We can rectify only errors. If the bifurcation is a fact, it will be always there, and there would be no such thing as setting matters right. Why should we set right what is correct? But there is something wrong, which is imperceptible to the mind, and this error is a psychological one; it is not an error of physical relationship but an error of psychological perception.

This position of objects and thoughts having arisen from a common source is very pithily pointed out in a half-verse of the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, *guṇā guṇeṣu vartante iti mātva na sajjate* (Gita 3.28): In perception of objects, the properties of *prakṛiti* move among the properties of *prakṛiti* – *guṇā guṇeṣu vartante*. You move among yourself, as it were. It is not mind impinging upon objects that we call perception of objects, but the same character of *prakṛiti* moving among another set of characters of its own self. A character of *prakṛiti* as subject, or thought, or mind moves in the line of the character of *prakṛiti* itself as objects on another side. So the mind perceiving objects is something like the right hand touching the left hand. It is not two persons coming together. It is one and the same person existing in a different situation, and not two isolated realities coming into contact with each other. This is the meaning of *guṇā guṇeṣu vartante*. If we know this truth, we will not be attached to anything because attachment is only to objects which are outside us. We will not be attached to a part of our own body. But this is a very hard nut to crack. It is not easy to conceive because this fact is based on a reality transcending the normal mental operations of the human being.

The practice of yoga, as I said, is the masterstroke which deals the final blow at this tree of samsara by extricating the mind from the entanglement in which it is caught, entanglements which are of a psychological character. The mind is entangled in a perception, and it is not entangled in objects. The mind is not caught up with objects; it is caught up with the wrong perception of objects. So the practice of yoga is not a detachment of the mind from objects, or a practice having anything to do with the objects of the world. It is a practice having something to do with the mind itself. It is a setting right of errors in the mind rather than a setting right of errors outside in the

world because there is nothing wrong with the outside world. The wrong is inside. When we see a thing wrongly, we begin to perceive wrong outside in the objects. We have various illusions of perception of optical illusion by which we can mistake our own errors inwardly for actual defects outside.

Thus, the practice of yoga seems to be a very simple affair when we come to the essential fact of it. It is a small sand particle sticking to our own eyes, preventing us from seeing anything. The whole world will be closed to our perception if a minute insect or a gnat enters our eye. The vast world cannot be seen, and the mistake is a very small event that has taken place within our eye. The mind has got caught up in a circumstance that it has created on account of wrong association of factors which are originally harmoniously connected.

What is the method that we have to adopt in the practice of yoga, then? One word in yoga is 'concentration' or 'meditation'. While the mind ordinarily thinks of umpteen things because of the misapprehension that things are many in the world, in concentration the number of thoughts is brought down to the minimum. When we sit and gaze at an object outside us, many thoughts enter our mind: one thought, two thoughts, three thoughts, a hundred thoughts. Countless thoughts enter the mind even when we are looking at a single object on account of impressions that have already been formed in the mind due to previous perceptions.

Now, yogic concentration is a different way of thinking altogether. While hundreds of thoughts can enter our mind in ordinary perception, there are only four fundamental thoughts in concentration. We have reduced all the thoughts to only four thoughts. This is what we call concentration. It is said that concentration is one thought, but it is not really one thought in the beginning stages; it becomes one later on. Though it looks like one, it is a fourfold focussing of the mind on a single chosen concept or objective form.

There are four ideas in our mind when we concentrate on a given object or concept in the practice of yoga, and these four thoughts are not jumbled or thrown pell-mell. They are harmoniously related to one another, like the limbs of our body. We have got many parts of our own body, but they are very harmoniously related so that when we jump, run or walk fast, the limbs work harmoniously. So the manifoldness of the limbs is not any kind of deterrent to our activities, provided this manifoldness is harmoniously related within itself. It is chaos that creates confusion, not harmony. We are not afraid of manifoldness, but we are afraid of chaos.

These four thoughts are the points of engagement of the mind in concentration, or what is called *dharana*. Now, what are these four ideas? One idea is that we exist. We cannot give up this notion. The meditator, the practitioner of yoga, the student, the *sadhaka*, does exist. "I exist," is one idea in our mind which can never leave us. The other idea is that there is an object on which we have to concentrate. There is

something which we have chosen for concentration purposes. It may be a psychological object or a physical object. So this is the second idea in the mind. The third idea is that we perceive, we cognise the object. That is the cognition or the perception aspect of mental activity. We are there, the object is there, and there is the process of perceiving the object. This is the third idea in the mind. The fourth idea is that there are certain thoughts which should not be allowed to enter the mind. This is the fourth part. We want to set aside certain thoughts, and allow certain thoughts for the purpose of concentration – *vijatiya vritti nirodha* and *sajatiya vritti pravah*, which means the setting aside of non-conforming thoughts and the allowing in of the flow of thoughts which are in conformity with the character or the nature of the object chosen for concentration.

These four thoughts do not come one after another like people coming into a room. They are simultaneous, just as in the analogy of the human body the limbs are simultaneously present. It is not that we are conscious of one limb first and another limb afterwards. We are simultaneously conscious that we have a nose, we have ears, we have hands, and so on. So these four ideas are four aspects of a single idea perhaps, and it is this singleness that is behind the fourfold idea that has given rise to the notion that concentration is one thought.

Now, what are these ideas which should not enter the mind, and what are the ideas that have to be entertained in the mind for the purpose of concentration? Let us not think first, for the time being, the notion of one's own self and the notion of the object. This is to be considered later on because they are difficult things to think. The notion of the object and of one's own self is more difficult to tackle than the notion of that which has to be excluded or included in the process of thinking.

The first thing to be tackled is the nature of those thoughts which should not be allowed to enter the mind because if everything is allowed we are just ordinary people, thinking a hodgepodge, without any purpose or motive. But we are students of yoga, and therefore, we want a harmony of thoughts and an adjustment of ideas in a very beautiful manner, like an art.

Thoughts which should not enter the mind are those which do not pertain to the characteristic of the object that has been chosen for concentration. In order to know what are those ideas which should not enter the mind, we first of all have to know what is the object that we have taken for concentration. There are some people who say, "I meditate on Rama, but Krishna comes before the mind. How does it happen?" It is some mystery of thought; due to the varieties of impressions that are in the mind being disorganised, they all come up to the surface and create multiplicity of mental cognition.

I mentioned last time that in sadhana, in spiritual practice, in yoga, initiation is essential. Initiation is the sacred method of deciding the factor of the object of

concentration with the aid of a Guru and, together with it, taking a mantra also which is a formula or a name pertaining to the nature of the object chosen for concentration. In this process of initiation the disciple, or the student, is told by the Guru as to how this *vijatiya vritti nirodha* and *sajatiya vritti pravah* can be practised at the same time.

Therefore, to know what *vijatiya vritti nirodha* is, we have to know the nature of the object that we have chosen for meditation. What is the object? It varies from one person to another according to the temperament of the person. We can take one example for the purpose of explanation. Suppose the object that has been chosen for concentration is a deity; say it is Hanuman. Today is Saturday, so the idea of Hanuman came to me. We want to concentrate on Hanuman as our deity. What are the characteristics of Hanuman? Invincible power and complete control over the senses, obedience to one's master, and a decision to establish the law of dharma as against *adharma*. The principle factor that will come to our mind when we think of Hanuman is purity and power. Hanuman is power due to purity. Because of intense psychological purity born of continence, *brahmacharya*, by the blessings of the gods, etc., he was a mastermind and an indomitable power. So this is what we are thinking in our mind now in concentration.

Any thought which has no relevance to this thought should not enter the mind. "Now it is six o'clock. I have to go to Rishikesh for shopping." This thought should not enter the mind because it has no connection with the characteristics of Hanuman. "After the *satsanga*, how will I go out? I have not brought my umbrella." These are extraneous thoughts, unconnected with the object that has been chosen.

These unconnected thoughts can be of two kinds. They may be positive or negative. Positive unconnected thoughts are such as I have mentioned just now. "It is raining. The umbrella is not there. It is time for me to go to Rishikesh," and so on. These are positive unconnected thoughts because they appear to be harmless, at least on the surface. But negative unconnected thoughts are harmful thoughts such as, "I will get up from the *satsanga* and see what I can do to that man." That is a harmful thought, a thought of wreaking vengeance. Anger, prejudice, and such emotions, when they manifest themselves as contrary thoughts during *satsanga* or *japa* or *puja* or concentration, are to be regarded as harmful extraneous thoughts which have to be put down first. They may be thoughts of *raga* or *dvesha*.

So primarily, ideas pertaining to love and hatred may be regarded as those which have to be dealt with initially; later on, at the next step, we have to find out methods of dealing with thoughts which are not so harmful as these but just simple interferences, such as the thought of rain, clouds, umbrella, etc. So there can be two kinds of unnecessary thoughts in the mind: harmful ones, and apparently harmless ones. But for yoga, both these are harmful. For a student of yoga, any thought unconnected with the character of the object of meditation is a deterrent thought.

To deal with extraneous thoughts, whether they are harmful or harmless, Patanjali tells us that we can adopt a method called *pratipaksa bhavana*. *Pratipaksa bhavana* is the entertainment of those attitudes in the mind which are just the opposite of these contrary thoughts. If you feel you are a weakling, if you have an inferiority complex in society and are suffering from this false psychological attitude, you could entertain the opposite thought of Hanuman being your deity. “How powerful is my god, how pure is he, and I shall draw enough energy from him.” The thought of Hanuman is also a thought that is contrary to incontinence and impurity of every kind.

Pratipaksa bhavana is thinking just the opposite of that which arises in the mind as a deterrent to meditation. You think the opposite of it. If you are angry, you think of compassion. You show pity to people. If somebody is angry with you, do not get angry with that person in return. On the other hand, analyse in your mind: “This is a pitiable case. This person is angry with me because of a misconception, a wrong understanding, a lack of knowledge; therefore, I have to help that person in understanding and becoming calm to attain psychological health rather than reacting through anger from my side.” If you have thoughts of incontinence, think of the power of continence, the glory of health, longevity, and the energy that will benefit you by the practice of sense-control, and so on. You can multiply methods of *pratipaksa bhavana* in accordance with the nature of the thought that arises which is contrary to the character of the object of meditation.

These are characters of the mind which have to be set aside, brushed aside as *vijatiya vrittis*; they should not enter the mind. But we have also to do something positive to allow in the health-giving forces. This is *sajatiya vritti pravah*. While we take medicine to get rid of a disease, we also take a positive tonic to put on health. We take proper diet, and so on. We do not merely eat medicine and keep quiet. There is a negative activity plus a positive activity simultaneously done for a single purpose. So *vijatiya vritti nirodha* and *sajatiya vritti pravah* go on together. We do a good thing, and do not do a bad thing. These are simultaneous actions.

Now, when the mind is engaged in *sajatiya vritti pravah*, or the inflow of thoughts conducive to the concentration of mind, it is not completely oblivious of factors that are contrary to the thought of meditation. Though we have driven the enemy away, we have not forgotten the enemy. In the beginning, we are to battle with the enemy directly. The enemy is shunted away by the power of our thought, but we have not forgotten the enemy. It may come back again and pounce upon us, so we are watchful even when there is *sajatiya vritti pravah*.

Thus, there are various processes going on inside in the concentration of mind. They are all subconsciously done, and are not always conscious in their entirety. We are vigilant of the entry of contrary thoughts even when we are positively engaged in the inflow of positive thoughts. While we are blessed with good health, we are also

cautious that we should not fall ill by any kind of indiscretion. We do not want to get wet in the rain or put on wet clothes, etc., because we may fall ill. We are aware of these factors even when we are healthy, though we are not sick. Likewise, there is a vigilant attitude maintained even when there is internal security. Internal security is there, but still vigilance is working. This is a very essential part in the process of *dharana*, or concentration of mind.

But in *dhyana*, one thought is dropped. The notion that something is to be excluded is completely shed. You have only three thoughts left in *dhyana*: the thought that you are, the thought that the object is, and there is a perception or cognition of the object. The enemy is completely uprooted, and you need not think of the enemy any more. So there is no question of practising vigilance in *dhyana*. You are completely safe. You have only to think of positive culture rather than increase your defence forces. This is *dhyana*.

We have been discussing the nature of meditation and the many psychological factors that are involved in this process, the difficulties and the problems that one has to encounter, and so on. It is almost an impossibility for most people to meditate, though many may think they are meditating, because to circumscribe the area of thinking to a minimum of psychological activity is a hard thing to practise. Most people think many things at a time, and so they are restless. Most people's minds are restless, and restlessness is nothing but many forms of thought entering the mind simultaneously without any kind of coherence. This is what is called restlessness. Rarely will we see people who are free from this *rajas*, or distraction of thought. Students of yoga are those who are free from *rajas*.

There are said to be five types, or five stages, or five kinds of *vrittis* of mind, known as *kshipta*, *vikshipta*, *mudha*, *ekagra*, and *niruddha*: distracted condition, dull condition, slightly distracted condition, concentrated condition and completely inhibited condition. These are the five states of mind. The distracted condition and the dull condition are absolutely useless for the practice of meditation. The slightly distracted condition is that in which there is partly an entry of extraneous thoughts and partly an inflow of conducive thoughts. But pure yoga starts only from the state of *ekagrata*, or one-pointedness per se, absolutely, without any kind of oscillation, doubt or suspicion in the mind.

We have to be socially and personally disentangled from complexities of every kind before we enter the field of yoga. We can have two kinds of complexity: social and personal. Both these are obstacles in yoga. If you are entangled socially in any manner – politically, communally, or in any social state of life – it will interfere with your concentration of mind and you cannot practise yoga. Personally also you may be in a state of conflict. “To be or not to be,” may be your mood personally. So these conflicts

socially in the outside world and personally within oneself have to be properly dealt with in a healthy manner before one takes to the practice of yoga.

It is a dedicated life that we call yoga. It is not a hobby. It is not a humorous activity into which we enter for the sake of diversions. We dedicate ourselves completely when we take to yoga, and dedication means surrender of the total personality. A part of our personality does not remain outside in dedication. The whole thing has been given up, surrendered, for the supreme ideal that is the practice of yoga.

Now, as we noted, in *dhyana*, or meditation, we are concerned only with the object of meditation. We have surrendered ourselves completely to it, as it were. We have no concern in our life other than thoughts of the character or the nature of the object of meditation. There is a mutual concourse of consciousness between us and the object. It is like water from two tanks on the same level moving from one side to the other side. We do not know that there is motion at all because the tanks are on the same level, and yet the water of one tank moves to the other tank, and vice versa, on account of a connecting link being there between the two tanks. When the status of the object and that of the subject become equal there is *dhyana*, or meditation, and there is inflow and outflow of thought.

This is difficult to achieve. We cannot easily come to the awareness that we have both come from a single source. That thoughts and things have emanated from a single fundamental essence is a difficult state of affairs for us to entertain in our minds. Therefore, we always regard objects as something extraneous to us and struggle hard with the objects, grapple with them, and spend years in actually discovering the true nature of the relation between thought and things.

When *dhyana*, or meditation, supervenes, we get possessed by the object. We are overwhelmed by the nature of the object, inundated by the quality of the object, flooded by the object itself. From all sides the object encircles us, as it were, and if we see anything, it is only that object, nothing else. While we see many objects now, in meditation we will see one object even if we cast our eyes in all ten directions because of the power that the object has exerted upon our mind.

Here, in this condition of consciousness, the object does not remain in one place. It assumes a universal character, though in the beginning it was a single point of concentration. The object is internally connected with the objects of the world, as minds are connected with the objects. As threads make cloth, objects make the world. As threads are interwoven into a fabric which we call the cloth, and the threads do not stand apart from one another, the objects of the world do not stand apart from one another, though they look so when we sensorily perceive them. They are intertwined among themselves in a cosmic network.

We are in a cosmos, and not in a chaotic world of objects. The cosmos is an interwoven fabric of harmonious forces and elements. Such is the world and cosmos,

or universe, in which we are living, of which we are also harmonious parts internally related. So when we meditate on a particular object, we are taken by the object to the fundamental essence of the object. We dive into the object, we plumb into it, go deep into its bottom, and realise the interconnectedness of things.

In meditation we feel happiness on account of this truth that is coming to the surface. Otherwise, how do we feel happy merely by looking at an object or concentrating upon it? In deep meditation we are carried to the bottom of the object. We plumb its depths and visualise the interwoven character of the objects of the world. This is intuition, or the direct perception of the nature of things that comes about in *dhyana*, or meditation.

Here, in this state of awareness, we have taken one step forward, though we have not realised the ultimate truth yet. The one step forward that we have taken is that we have given up the idea that the objects of the world are disconnected entities, due to which notion the mind began to jump from one object to another.

When we sit for meditation, the mind jumps from one point to another on account of the notion that there are many objects in the world. "Why have I been given only this object to concentrate on? Why should I not think of another object which is perhaps equally good?" is perhaps the argument of the mind. But this is only in the state of concentration, where it still has not dived into the nature of the object. When it goes deep into the nature of the object, the separableness of things is realised as a false notion, and the interconnectedness of things becomes the real object of our meditation.

As a matter of fact, here, in deep meditation, the object ceases to be as a unit or a point in space. It becomes a symbol or a point of reference of forces which are wider than the object that we originally chose for meditation. Just as a person may represent an organisation or an institution or a government, the object of our meditation begins to represent a wider mass of forces rather than stand by itself isolatedly. Here we are taken by surprise and possessed by a force which is not merely external. It becomes a possession by a universal implication.

In the beginning, it was necessary to put forth effort to concentrate the mind on the object because the object stood outside the mind. There was apparently no relationship between the mind and the object. We had to struggle with the mind to entertain in it characters of the object that we have chosen. But now in meditation, what has happened? Instead of our trying to contact the object and possess it in our meditation, the object seems to possess us. We are lifted into an empyrean of effortlessness and freedom of thought rather than being entangled in the effort and pain of concentration of mind.

In the beginning, concentration is painful because we have to give up all the sensory pleasures of the world and all the satisfactions that the objects of the world can

give as *vijatiya vritti nirodha*, which is very painful indeed. We cannot think of our parents, of our husband, of our wife, of our money. All wonderful things there are in the world, and we set them aside as *vijatiya vritti nirodha*. It is very painful indeed. Meditation is insipid and bitter in the beginning stages. We will be repulsed by the object of meditation in the beginning because of the difficulty of harmonising the mind with the nature of the object chosen. In the beginning, therefore, meditation is difficult merely because of this reason that the mind subconsciously begins to feel that it has given up pleasures of the world for the sake of an unforeseen, unknown, nebulous object of meditation, whose nature is not clear. But in meditation, this misconception goes. We are flooded by positive thoughts, and we have intimations of having entered into a new world of perception altogether.

So where are we now? We have moved from extraneous thoughts to positive thoughts, from *vijatiya vritti nirodha* to *sajatiya vritti pravah*. From positive thoughts of the object chosen, we have now entered into a wider field of forces rather than remain in a world of objects. They are objects to the mind in the initial stages of concentration and meditation, but later on they diffuse themselves into forces. There is a difference between an object and a force. While an object is personal, a force is impersonal. So from the world of personal objects, we enter into the realm of impersonal forces. This is why we feel delight and satisfaction in meditation. Wherever there is impersonality, there is joy. The more we become personal, the more are we cramped and limited in our enjoyment. The process of meditation is a march of the mind from intense personality consciousness to a gradual realisation of the impersonality of Truth.

From the personal presentation of a concrete object before the senses and the mind, we enter into a deeper sea of impersonal forces. Wonderful is this experience. This is a very advanced stage in meditation that I am describing, not a beginning stage, and we will not enter this stage easily.

Yet, the personality consciousness of the meditator remains even here, although we have given up the notion of there being extraneous ideas, and have not even to maintain a vigilance over extraneous thoughts. We have come now to the positive task of allowing in only harmonious thoughts – *sajatiya vritti pravah* – and have been wholly absorbed in the object of meditation. Not only this, we have come to realise a cosmical relationship of things.

Here, what has happened is that the externality of the object slowly gets diminished into an internal relationship of it with the mind, which means to say the mind is slowly travelling upward to the consciousness of there being a source common to both the object and itself. When the mind travels upward to cosmic *ahamkara* and *mahat-tattva*, it becomes happier and happier, more and more free in its operations, and begins to feel a sense of power which it could not feel when it was limited to its body

consciousness. Yet it maintains a personality consciousness as a perceiver, a cogniser, or an experiencer of this state of affairs that there is a world of universal forces.

Here we are in a condition where the mind is lifted from the world of objects of sense to a world of interpenetrating forces which rush into each other and determine each other so that the formation of each object may be said to be determined by the formation and operation of every other object in this world. No object is independent here. Everything is connected to everything else, and everything is determined by everything else, just as every cell of our physical body may be said to be determined by the health or the illness of every other cell in the body. This is to realise universality in meditation, though there are higher stages which lead to spiritual perfection.

Discourse 17

THE TRUE RELATION OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT

The object of meditation can be an idol, for instance. The physical form of the image chosen for meditation is the initial target on which the mind is fixed. To gain concentration of mind even on an image or an idol takes a very long time. It may take months or years to have some sort of a control over the process of thinking in respect of that object. Normally, we cannot think solely of a single chosen object. We have the story from the Mahabharata how Acharya Drona wanted to test the concentration of his disciples, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. A small bird was tied to a lofty branch of a tree and the princes were asked to target the eye of the bird, and not miss.

But before the actual test of archery commenced, Acharya Drona questioned each of them, taking them by hand one by one. "Now come here and look at your target. I tell you to hit that black spot on the eye of the bird, and not anything else. You should not hit its beak or its head or the wings, and so on."

He called one of them and said, "Look at the bird. Do you see it?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Do you see the bird, or do you see anything else also?" Drona asked.

One of them said, "I see the bird sitting on the branch of this big tree."

"Oh, you are unfit," he said. "You go. You cannot be a good archer."

Then he called another and said, "What do you see? Do you see the bird, do you see the tree or do you see anything else? I asked you to hit that black spot on the eye of the bird."

The student said, "I see the bird sitting on the branch of the tree."

"You go," Drona said. "You are not fit for archery."

Then a third student said, "I see not the tree, not the branch. I see only the bird."

Drona said, "You are not fit. You go."

It was Arjuna who said, "I do not see the bird. I do not see the tree. I do not see the branch. I see only the black spot."

"You are the real archer," Drona said. "Now you can commence the tournament."

This example is to show what concentration of mind is. This is not yogic concentration that we are speaking of in archery, but it is nevertheless a tremendous force of mind exerted on a chosen spot. Even shooting a gun is not easy. There is training for the army and the police where they are asked to shoot a particular spot from a furlong distance. It is not a large body that is hit but a particular point on the body, for which a tremendous concentration of the mind and the eyes is essential; otherwise, they would not be a good gunner or archer.

Now, in meditation it is much more difficult, or at least as much difficult. The image or the idol on which the mind is to be concentrated is the symbol of God for the

student of yoga. First of all, the idol is invested with divinity, with characteristics of the Supreme Being, God the All-pervading, focussed through a particular image; He is speaking to us, gazing at us, and bestowing grace upon us through that idol, through that symbol, through that image. The mind does not think of any other aspect of the object of meditation except that it is fully charged with power divine. Like a lens upon which the rays of the light of the sun converge, and through which they are directed upon our eyes, the meditator conceives the image to be a lens, as it were, through which divine energy is focussed and charged upon the meditator's mind. It is not an image isolatedly kept outside, but a focussing point of concentration where the mind of the meditator and the power of the divine come together at one point. This may be regarded as a first step in meditation, the gross object taken for fixing the attention of one's mind. It is a gross object because it is isolated from other objects. The characteristic of a gross thing is that it is not physically connected with other things or other objects. Now, inasmuch as the image or idol chosen for concentration is physically detached from other things of the world and, at least in the beginning stages, it is supposed to be located at a particular point in space, it is to be regarded as a gross object of meditation.

Now, as we learnt yesterday, the physical object is really not so isolated as it appears to the gazing eye. The meditation goes deeper into the structure of the image or the idol, so that the location of the idol, which is the initial point of concentration, gradually gives rise to a wider background upon which the idol is set. In the beginning, the background is not taken into consideration. Only the image or the idol is taken as the single point of concentration. But this point gradually enlarges itself, as we saw yesterday, so that the object of meditation, though it is gross, becomes wider in compass, and the mind need not have to exert effort to isolate this object from other objects which also do exist apart from the chosen object. In the beginning there is an effort on the part of the mind to isolate the object of concentration from other objects on which the mind is not concentrating. But when the compass of the object of concentration gradually enlarges itself, the effort of the mind to eliminate other objects gets diminished so that when there is nothing to eliminate, the meditation becomes effortless, continuous and spontaneous.

We have to exert in the beginning on account of the presence of other things, those things to be eliminated, but the objects that are initially thought of as elements to be eliminated get somehow or other harmonised with the object of concentration later on, and then it is that effort ceases and spontaneity commences. In the stage of effort, there is not much satisfaction, but in the stage of spontaneity naturally there is a delight and a new type of satisfaction born of the release of tension. Effort is a kind of tension, whether it is physical or mental, and when effort is released, tension is released, and the release of tension is coming to normalcy of thought and one's

condition. All normal conditions are states of delight and happiness. Meditation goes with happiness when effort is withdrawn and the process of concentration becomes natural.

Now, whatever be the experience in meditation, and however much the object may enlarge itself through the effort of the analysis of the mind, nevertheless it remains an object outside the mind. You can never forget that the idol is outside, that your concept is externalised. The idol may be physical or purely conceptual. You can open your eyes and gaze at the idol or close your eyes and conceive it. Though the closed eyes free the mind from its necessity to look upon the physical object outside, the mental activity is the same. To think an object and to see an object may be different from the point of view of the distinction between mental activity and sensory activity, but taking the situation purely from the point of view of the activity of the mind, they are similar.

When an object is gazed at or looked at, what happens is that the mind alone sees the object. The mental rays pierce the aperture of the eyes and conceive the object, and then perceive it as physically existent outside in the world. Though there is a difference between perception and conception in the sense that organs external to the mind are made use of in perception while in conception they are not necessary, the activity of the mind is similar whether it is purely a concept or a percept. The mind ramifies itself into various rays when it conceives an object. It does the same thing when it perceives an object. When the mind perceives, it does it through the instrumentality of the sense organs while in conception, it does it independently, yet the ramification process of the mental rays is similar in either case.

Now, distraction is nothing but the ramification of the rays of the mind, and concentration is nothing but the withdrawal of these rays into a single ray or focus of attention. It is the mind that meditates, and not the sense organs, so even when you open your eyes and look at the idol, it is the mind that is looking, truly speaking. The mind projects itself through the eyes and looks at the object. But it does not merely project itself through the eyes. It projects itself through the other sense organs also. When you are concentrating or meditating, you can hear a sound. If somebody touches you, you can feel it, and if a fragrant object is brought near you, you can smell it, and so on, which means to say the mind is not merely looking at the object through the eyes but it also hears, it can touch through an experience of the tactile sense, it can smell, and so on. It has manifested itself in various forms through all the sense organs, though for the time being it appears that it has focussed its attention on the object.

Thus, concentration does not mean being simultaneously aware of sounds, touches, etc., but being conscious of only one object of a particular sense organ at a given moment of time. If you are to concentrate on a sound that comes from a distance, you should not be thinking of an object that is in front of your eyes, for

instance. That would be lack of concentration. When you see an object, you should not be hearing sounds simultaneously because that means the ears also are functioning. And if somebody touches you, you should not have the sensation of touch. If the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, the seeing, the touching are all there, then it is distraction and not concentration.

So even in the concentration of the mind on a physical object, there is great difficulty. The difficulty is this, that we cannot completely withdraw the senses even when we are supposed to be, for the time being, concerned merely with looking at an object. But if we can look at an object so forcefully as not to be able to hear sounds, feel touches, etc., that would be effective physical concentration.

Now, this physical concentration itself is transformed into conceptual concentration in a more advanced stage. In this conceptual concentration, the eyes need not be kept open. It is not necessary to open the eyes and look at the idol or the image. The eyes can be closed, but the mind will be thinking of the same form, it will regard the object as physical, and it will be an external object. These are the essential points in external physical concentration of a chosen object such as an idol.

In the next stage of concentration and meditation, as I said, the comprehensiveness of the object gets enlarged when the mind realises the subtle interconnectedness of the object, at the root, with other objects in the world. This is what is called *sthula dharana* in yogic parlance. According to the system of Patanjali, this would be the *savitarka* form of meditation. It is *savitarka* inasmuch as there is an intense activity of the mind in respect of the physical object chosen for the purpose of meditation. It is gross and it is external, it is in space and in time, and it is causally connected with other objects. These characteristics of an object make it the grossest conceivable form in concentration.

When the grosser form of the object is gradually eliminated on account of a deeper realisation that this object has a background of a vaster relationship with other things in the world, when this stage is reached, the mind goes to a higher form of *sthulatva*, or grossness. The grossness also is of two kinds: isolated and interconnected. The isolated grossness is the crudest form of the object, but the interconnected form of the physical relationship – the organic relationship, rather – is a higher form of grossness, just as we have individual life and social life. Social life is supposed to be a slightly more enlarged form of living than purely selfish individual living because the compass of mental activity gets enlarged in social activity and social conception. Likewise in meditation, the object, when it is taken as entirely isolated, is the first form of grossness. When it is regarded as internally connected with other objects, even in their physical relationship, it would be a higher form of gross meditation.

Now, this higher form of gross meditation which brings about the relationship between things is a little different from the crude form of grossness in the sense that

we regard the crude form of the object as being in one place and in one time, whereas in a higher form it is regarded as spatially and temporally released from its limitation of location.

Space, time and cause are the limiting factors of all objects, and they have a tremendous hold over things when we regard any particular thing as isolated completely from other objects. But the hold of this principle of space-time-cause is lessened when we realise the interrelated harmony of objects among themselves because though the space-time factor does not entirely get eliminated here, the causal factor gets very much eliminated because when there is interconnectedness of things, we cannot say which is the cause and which is the effect. Everything is the cause and everything is the effect. If there is a circular chain with many links, we cannot say which is the first link and which is the last link. If there is a push given by one link – just for a minute imagine this – and the push is felt by every other link and there is a circular movement of the pushes, we do not know which is what, which is the cause and which is the effect. So in an interrelated harmony of relations, causal limitations get lessened, and there is a realisation of a community of existent objects rather than causally limited existence.

Yet, the space-time factor is still there because we cannot ever imagine that we are outside space and outside time. Whatever be the effort of the mind to think of an enlarged form of the object as interconnected, harmonised, it is still in space and in time. With all the farthest stretch of imagination, we cannot imagine anything outside space and outside time. These are the greatest difficulties that we have in operation of thought.

It is a great achievement if we can conceive objects as free from causal bondage, though they are in space and in time for all practical purposes. Yet we are still in the *vitarka* state because we are in the gross stage only. We still regard the object as outside us. Though it is universalised, though it is harmonised and interrelated, it is still outside us. We can never forget that the world is outside us, though the world is so large as to make us feel giddy by its vastness. We can go on stretching our imagination towards the borderland of the cosmos and may be unable to think the end of the universe, yet the universe is outside us. So this outsideness of the universe is the special feature of externality, objectivity, physicality, etc.

All this is a difficult technique in meditation, though yoga teachers tell us that these are lower forms of meditation. The lower forms are lower only for adepts, but for people like us they are most hard things and we can never conceive objects in this manner as universally interrelated, causally free, and yet located in space and time. We generally never think in this manner because it is not the normal habit of the mind, but the mind has to be habituated to this way of thinking if we are to be accustomed to yogic way of thinking. The yogic way of thinking is quite different from the ordinary,

crass, human way of perception, and we have already discussed where the difference lies.

The *sadhaka* should cultivate a habit of looking at things in this manner throughout the day if possible, and not limit this activity of the mind only to a few minutes during the period of sitting in a meditation room. What is the harm of thinking like this? No harm. It requires years of practice to expand the gamut of the object, but once a sort of control of the mind is gained over this object, meditation becomes spontaneous.

Now, the object remains outside us, though it is very vast, interconnected, causally free. It is outside us still because it is in space and in time. Can you think anything that is not in space and not in time? It is not possible, so it is not possible to give a logical explanation of what happens to us in higher stages beyond this, because to speak of anything beyond this is to speak of that which is beyond space and beyond time. Since all language is limited to things in space and in time, explanations beyond this would be meaningless.

But we can give an idea as to what is likely to happen to us by inferring and concluding from the testimony of masters of yoga. There is no point in discussing these objects beyond the spatio-temporal circumscription, but as a simple point of interest for the yoga student and an impulse of higher emotion and enthusiasm giving a sort of idealistic satisfaction, we may consider these higher stages of meditation in an outline.

These stages are supernormal. They cannot be regarded as ordinary experiences. We cannot think in this manner, and therefore, this cannot be called a normal way of thinking and perceiving. Hardly a few in this world will be thinking like this throughout the day, and even during the few minutes of our meditation we find it hard to think like this.

When, by the effort of thought, consciousness gets fixed on this vast panorama of interrelated objects, they cease to be objects. There is only one object. In the beginning stages there was an object of concentration and there were other objects of concentration whose thought was actively eliminated from the mind. And then there was effort of the mind to concentrate on one object which was chosen for concentration. But now we have no such difficulty of eliminating other objects and choosing one object. There is only one object. The whole panorama of perception is a single object. As the single object which was originally chosen for concentration has now diffused itself into the other objects through its interrelatedness, we can say that the whole world is the object of our meditation. This is what Patanjali means by *vitarka dhyana* or *vitarka samadhi*. The whole *sthula jagat* becomes the object of meditation.

The whole world is one object, not many objects. The many objects are only many forms of the one object. When we look at a person, we see his nose, his ears, his eyes, his fingers, but they are not seen as many objects or many persons. It is one person. Though we see ten fingers, two eyes, two ears, one nose and many parts of the body of that person, we know that it is one person, one object. Likewise, though we thought there are many objects in the world in the beginning, now we know it is only one object before us. It is the vast physical world. The trees and the mountains and the rivers and the stars and the stellar system are only the nose and ears and eyes and fingers of this vast object. So we need not be bothered about the multiplicity of objects. They do not exist. There is one object in front of us – the *sthula jagat*, the vast physical cosmos. Now we are a little bit free. We are a little happier that, after all, we have not to struggle with objects. There is only one object, this vast physical universe, but it is in space and time. It is outside us.

This physical cosmos is constituted of *tanmatras*. The physical potentials out of which the world has come are potentials, latent forces, which are not perceptible to the senses but which are there as causative factors, as energies behind these physical objects. Earth, water, fire, air and ether are the higher objects of meditation. Yet they are still objects. Even the *tanmatras* remain outside us. The concentration of the mind on the *tanmatras*, or the subtle potentials behind the physical objects, is called *sukshma dhyana*, as different from *sthula dhyana*, subtle concentration on the potentials behind the physical objects which, again, are like a sea of forces flooding all places. They differ from the physical objects in that while the physical objects are capable of being sensed by the physical organs, the subtle objects are not capable of being so sensed. They are objects of pure inner perception, and not of external sensory contact. Yet the limitation of these *tanmatras* to space and time persists because as long as we regard anything as external to us, space and time will be there because space, time and externality mean one and the same thing. To be outside is to be in space and time, and to be in space and time is to be outside. They are not two distinct things. It means one and the same thing. So as long as we think and feel and are convinced that the world is outside, we cannot also free ourselves from the concept of space and time. The spatiotemporal conception of the vast subtle *jagat*, *suksham jagat*, is *savichara dhyana*, according to Patanjali.

We have already gone beyond the *savitarka* and come to *savichara*. Even in the *vitarka* stage, some people make the distinction of *savitarka* and *nirvitarka*, that is, the physical object as an admixture of concept, name and form, and the physical object taken by itself, independent of concept and name. It is a difficult thing to understand. The example of a cow is given, for instance. The cow is inseparable from three factors. It is a cow which has a name, 'cow'. The cow itself does not call itself a cow. We call it a cow, so it is our idea that it is a cow. It does not have a name, really speaking, but for

us, this name is inseparable from the object. The moment the word 'cow' is uttered, that particular object, that particular shape and form comes before our mental vision. And when we see that object, the name gets associated with it, so the name and the object are associated. Also, the thought is associated. The idea and the object are different. The idea of the cow is not the same as the cow, but the two are inseparable. The mind takes the shape of the cow when it perceives the cow, and a mould, as it were, is formed in the mind, and an impression is formed in the mind by the perception of the cow. The object as such and the mould tally, and they also get mixed up with the name. This admixture is what is called the perception of a cow. This is called *savitarka* thought.

But it is said that in *nirvitarka*, we have to conceive only the object independent of the idea about it and the name associated with it. It is very difficult. We cannot think of the cow independent of the idea about it and the name associated with it. It is a very hard job, but when we get mastery over things in this manner, we will have control over the object.

Yogis are supposed to have mastery over things. This mastery comes by the freedom that they achieve over this admixture of things. They conceive objects as they are in themselves rather than as they appear to the mind. We need not go very deep into this complicated subject. I am only giving an idea as to what adepts in yoga tell us.

This is *savitarka dhyana*, *nirvitarka dhyana*, *savichara dhyana* and *nirvichara dhyana*, which means the perception of the subtle *jagat* independently, by itself, apart from its association with name and idea. All this put together is called *grahya dhyana* or, in the technical jargon of Patanjali, *grahya samapatti*. *Samapatti* is a kind of mental acquisition or concentration – meditation, we may say. It is *grahya* because it is external. *Grahya* is that which can be grasped by the sense organs and by the mind. When the mind and the senses grasp something as external, we call it *grahya*. When it is subtly grasped purely by the mind, it is *tanmatra*, an object of *savichara* and *nirvichara dhyana*. While it is an object of the senses, it is an object of *savitarka* and *nirvitarka dhyana*.

We are still in the world of objects. We are still regarding the objects as outside us. We are in the *grahya jagat*, *sthula sukshma jagat*. We are in a *jagat*, but we are still in a state of bondage in spite of this knowledge. Notwithstanding that we seem to have attained a very high state of concentration and knowledge, we are in a state of bondage. Samsara has not left us yet because we feel that the world is outside us; it is thought by the mind and perceived by the senses.

Now, how does the mind think the world? This is a very interesting subject. What do we mean by 'thinking the world, thinking the object'? Does the object enter the mind, or does the mind go and support the object? What do we actually mean by thinking an object? This is a subject in psychology and philosophy. When we think an

object, what happens to the mind? We cannot say that the object enters the mind. The object may be very far off. Can we say the mind travels and hits upon the object? If we do not accept even this much, then we will not be able to know the relationship between the mind and the object. Suppose the object does not enter the mind and the mind does not go to the object. Then what is thinking? How do we conceive the object at all?

There are two kinds of thought of objects. One kind is where the rays of the mind travel through the sense organs and actually touch it. This is *pratyakshata*, or actual perception. If we see a tree in front of us in broad daylight, we are allowing the mind to travel through the sense organ called the eye, and envelop the form which is there, which we call the tree, and transmit that particular mould or shape of the tree back to the mind with the help of the sunlight or any other light; then, in this condition, when consciousness throws a flood of illumination upon it, there is the perception of a tree. Perception is a double activity of consciousness and mind. The mind travels because it is spatiotemporal. The mind is also limited, as it is regarded as a product of *prakriti* and is made up of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. But consciousness transcends these qualities. Though the mind is made up of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and it is a subtle ethereal quality, it is unconscious; it is *jada*. Inasmuch as it is *jada*, it cannot think. So what is it that thinks, then? It is the dual or joint activity of consciousness and mind.

To give an instance, put a mirror in broad daylight in such a way that the sunlight falling upon the mirror also reflects on the wall inside a house. The sunlight does not directly come to the wall inside the house, but because the mirror kept outside acts as a medium for the refraction of sunlight, there is illumination on the wall inside. The sun does not directly illumine the wall, but does so indirectly through the medium of the mirror. We say that the mirror shines, the mirror dazzles. The mirror does not dazzle; it is the sunlight that dazzles. What shines is the light of the sun, and what is shed on the wall inside is also the light of the sun. "The mirror shines," is only a way of speaking. It is a concession given to practical experience rather than a truth or fact as such.

So also is thinking of the mind. The mind is like a mirror. It cannot think by itself, just as a mirror cannot shine by itself. In darkness, at midnight, the mirror does not shine, and we cannot see our face in it. But in light, we can see our face in it, so the light is also responsible for the seeing, not only the mirror. Similarly, the mind is not directly responsible for conception or perception, though the mind is essential. Just as neither the light of the sun nor the mirror alone are sufficient for the wall inside the house to be illumined, so also, consciousness that is universal alone will not be sufficient for external perception, and the mind alone is not capable of doing it because of its being *jada*.

Thus, the first form of perception – the lower form of perception, we say – is the process of the mind travelling to an existent object outside, casting itself into the mould of the object, into the shape or the form of the object, and then that particular mould being illumined by consciousness inside. It is a joint activity called *vriddhi vyapti* and *phala vyapti* in Vedanta philosophy. *Vriddhi vyapti* is the pervasion of the mind over the object. *Phala vyapti* is the illumination by consciousness of the object through the medium of the mind. This is what is involved in thinking when we actually perceive an object.

But when there is only internal perception, what happens? Internal perceptions are called cognitions. We can close our eyes and think a tree. Now, what happens to the mind here? The mind has taken the form of the tree, though it is not actually perceiving the tree through the sense organs. The mind does not travel in conception, while it travels in perception. If we close our eyes and think the tree, inwardly it manages to mould itself into the form of the tree purely by idea, by ideation. There is no attendant consciousness in internal perception as there is in external perception because the mind does not travel. There is sudden illumination. There is *vriddhi vyapti* but no *phala vyapti* in internal cognition, whereas there are both *vriddhi vyapti* and *phala vyapti* in external perception. The internal cognition is *vriddhi vyapti* because the mind takes the shape of the tree. But there is no travelling, and therefore, there is no need of consciousness attending the process of travelling. So it is said that in internal cognition *phala vyapti* is absent but *vriddhi vyapti* is present, while both are present in external perception. This is a distinction between thinking an object externally and thinking it internally.

What do we mean by thinking an object? The mind taking the form of an object is called thinking. What is the position of the object in relation to the mind? In the stages of *savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *savichara*, *nirvichara*, we thought that the object is outside the mind, which means to say there was *vriddhi vyapti* and *phala vyapti* going on simultaneously in the four stages of meditation. Now we have to go a little deeper and find out what the status of the object is in relation to the mind that thinks the object.

According to both the Sankhya and the technical aspect of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the object is independent of consciousness. *Prakriti* is different from *purusha*. *Prakriti* is the object, the universal object to which we have arrived now, and *purusha* is consciousness. So consciousness operating through the manifestations of *prakriti*, *buddhi*, *manas*, *ahamkara*, *tanmatras*, *sthula*, *jagat*, etc., is what is called the relation of *purusha* to *prakriti*, consciousness to matter, or rather, the essence of thinking. In thinking, the object does not get identified with the mind, and the mind does not get identified with the object. The doctrine of the Sankhya and the technical Yoga Sutras is that there is only a mutual concourse of characters, and not an identification of substance. What is meant by a mutual concourse of characters and

not an identification of substance? An example is given of a crystal assuming the colour of a flower that is brought near it. If a red flower is brought near a colourless crystal, the crystal assumes the reddish colour of the flower, and we cannot distinguish the crystal from the colour. They become one. The crystal is tinged, as we say, with the colour of the flower. This is the concourse of characters. But the flower does not get identified with the crystal. This is Sankhya's philosophical meaning.

Well, whatever be the status of the object in relation to consciousness, it becomes clear that there is an interrelation of the object and the mind in thinking. Bondage is defined by the Sankhya as the assumption by the consciousness of having really been possessed of the character of *prakriti*. We have the analogy of the crystal. If the crystal begins to think it is really red, that would be the *samsara* of the crystal. The bondage of the crystal consists in its really thinking, feeling and believing that it is red while it is really not red. It is pure, untinged luminosity by itself. If the crystal were to be credited with consciousness, or the power of thinking, and if it were to assume that it is really red, that would be the bondage of the crystal. But the crystal realises: "I am not red; it is only the flower that is getting reflected in me. I am a white crystal, pure, luminous, dazzling. The red colour does not belong to me. It belongs to the flower." The moment this realisation comes to the crystal, it is the liberation, *kaivalya*, moksha, of the crystal.

So the Sankhya and the Yoga want us to realise that we are pure crystals, and not reddish crystals, because the reddish colour has come from an outside object. All the characters that we associate ourselves with in practical life belong to *prakriti*. They do not belong to *purusha*. They are material associations, and they do not belong to consciousness. "I am hungry, I am thirsty, I am short, I am tall, I am born, I am dying." These ideas in our consciousness are the ideas born of the belief that consciousness is really possessed of the characters of *prakriti* because consciousness does not die, and consciousness is not born. It is not short, it is not long. It is not Mr., it is not Mrs. It is not here, it is not there. It is everywhere. When we say, "I am only here and not there," we have identified ourselves with *prakriti*. When we say, "I am hungry, I am thirsty," and so on, and give many other appellations to ourselves, we suffer. The transitional character of *prakriti* is falsely identified with the eternal character of consciousness, and then it is said that we are in *samsara*. Moksha is the freedom of consciousness from the transitional character of *prakriti*. When consciousness withdraws itself from association with *avidya* and *aviveka*, with *prakriti*, there is *kaivalya*, moksha.

Thus, what Patanjali tells us is that through these *dhyanas*, or meditations, and through samadhi, we have to realise our independent status as universal consciousness, or *purusha*. *Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe'vasthānam* (Yoga Sutra 1.3): The consciousness rests in itself and does not move towards an object. Why should the

mind move toward an object? Why should there be *vritti vyapti*? Why should there be an envelopment of the mind over the object? It is due to an attachment and a false conception. When the consciousness rests in itself, there will be no *vritti vyapti*, no *phala vyapti*. There will be no perception of an object. There will be no cognition, no perception. There will be only Self consciousness of a universal nature, of *purusha*. That is *kaivalya* moksha. To this we are moving through the *dhyanas* and the processes of *samadhi*.

We have now come to the stage of realising where we stand in relation to an object. I have given you an idea as to what the Sankhya and the Yoga think about the relation of the object to the mind, and vice versa. The object is not the cause of the bondage of the *jiva* or the bondage of consciousness. It is the association of consciousness with the object that is the source of bondage; and this is to be realised. We are not so much concerned with the existence or the non-existence of the objects. Let them be, let them not be. We are not bothered about them. But what does the object mean to me? That is my bondage, and that is also my freedom. The meaning that I read in an object is my bondage or my freedom. If I do not read any meaning in the object, the object does not exist for me. That would be *kaivalya*.

The travel of the mind to the object is due to *raja* and *dvesha*, and *raja* and *dvesha* are due to *aviveka* and *ajnana*, due to a misconceived state of affairs. The consciousness somehow or other gets identified with the object. Nobody knows how it happens; this is a transcendent mystery. All the schools of thought accept this mystery, and it remains a mystery. It has ever remained a mystery. We cannot know how this mystery took place, but we are here to try to find out how to solve this mystery and get out of its clutches.

Now, from *grahya* we go to *grahana* and *grahita*. I am giving an idea of the meditations of Patanjali. From the object we go to the process of perception of an object and then to the perceiver. When consciousness withdraws itself from the object and concerns itself purely with the process of perception, it is a more advanced state of meditation, and when it is concerned only with itself, the perceiver alone, that is freedom of the soul. So from *grahya* we go to *grahana*, and from *grahana* we go to *grahita*. *Grahya* is the object, *grahana* is the process of the perception or cognition of the object, and *grahita* is the perceiver or the cogniser. So gradually we go from the external to the internal, and when we reach the internal, pure consciousness, we also realise that we are universal. We shall see to it next time.

Discourse 18

THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL YOGA OR MEDITATION

The grasping of the universality of things in their gross form in relation to space, time and cause, and the grasping of the very same object by consciousness in its subtle form, together constitute what is known as *grahya samapatti*, or the recognition by consciousness of the universal objectivity of things.

Here, as we saw earlier, the object of meditation ceases to be an ordinary, sensible object. For want of adequate words and terms to express this subtlety of perception, we use the term 'object' uniformly whenever there is a content of consciousness. But the object in the highest reaches of consciousness in meditation is different from the object that we usually sense physically in our day-to-day experience.

This *grahya samapatti*, or the conscious recognition of the universal objectivity of things, is a meditation so deep that it is almost identical with the goal of the practice of yoga. It is, therefore, sometimes called samadhi, especially in the Sutras of Patanjali – *vitarka vicāra ānanda asmitārūpa anugamāt samprajñātaḥ* (Yoga Sutras 1.17). The term *samprajnatah* is used in the Sutras of Patanjali for the process of the grasping by consciousness of this universal objectivity as well as a tendency of this consciousness to get merged into this object, which is called samadhi.

Now, there is a very interesting supernormal process which supervenes when meditation enters this state of the interconnectedness of things and the subtlety known as the *tanmatras*, or the object potentials, operating behind the physical forms of things. These experiences and these expressions pertaining to supernormal types of meditation are naturally unintelligible to the beginner in the practice of yoga. They remain merely as words for those who have not had access into this kind of experience.

We are trying to understand by this process of yoga analysis the passage of consciousness to its ultimate attainment – how, from the incipient condition of the meditating consciousness apparently existing as an isolated unit, it gets lodged in the physical body which is limited to the weaknesses and the various foibles of nature, and how this consciousness gradually expands its operation and enters deeper and deeper into the object of its experience so that the more it advances in this process, the greater is its grasp over the object, the nearer does the object become to consciousness, and the more is the realisation of the interspersed background of the objects of the world. From mortality we rise to the state of the immortal by a very, very slow, gradual and subtle process. This is the art of meditation, or *dhyana*.

So in the condition known as *grahya samapatti* – the collectedness of consciousness wherein it enters into the fibre of things like water seeping into every fibre of a submerged cloth, to give only one instance or example – consciousness does

not exist outside as an observer or a percipient. It is not like cloth hung in a room, far away from the waters of the Ganga. That is different in its location. It is a permeation of consciousness into the structure of things. This is *vitarka* and *vichara dhyana*, to use the terms of Patanjali. These are states of consciousness in which it does not exist as an individual observer as we exist, for example, as observers of trees, mountains, etc., apparently unconnected with the objects, having nothing to do with them, so that when the object undergoes a particular transformation, nothing happens to the subject of the experience. For example, if a tree in the jungle is cut, we are not affected by it because it remains as an external object, but here the object does not any more remain unconnected with the observing or perceiving consciousness.

We know how cloth is connected with water when it is soaked through its very fibre. We will find water permeating every particular of the structure or the constituents of the cloth. Likewise, here consciousness pervades the very content of the object, yet there is an object, even as the water and the cloth are different though the cloth is soaked to the core by the water. For all practical purposes we can say that water permeates every part of the cloth, yet it is clear that the cloth has not become water and water has not become cloth. By this analogy we can gain an insight into the type of experience that one enters into when *grahya samapatti*, or the consciousness of the universal objectivity of things, arises. This state of experience is so lofty that it is identical with samadhi itself in one of its forms.

What happens further? Things undergo a further transformation. Changes take place continuously right from the beginning till the attainment supreme, and in every stage of experience of this transformation, consciousness seems to rise higher and higher in its graspability of the object. In Sanskrit the grasping of the object by consciousness is called *graha*, grasping, and *samapatti* is attainment. So *grahya samapatti* is the attainment which is identical with the grasping of the object by consciousness in a particular fashion.

As I stated, this grasping is quite different from the perceptual grasping of the object by sensory operations. The senses may be said to be grasping an object such as a tree when they cognise or perceive a tree, but, as mentioned, this is a different state of the connection of consciousness with the object, where it does not remain outside at all. This object is equanimous with the subject, just as two brothers, though born of the same parents, yet exist separately. The brothers are not identical with each other; they are two different persons, but constitutionally, temperamentally and even psychologically, they are uniform in most respects.

Similarly does the object enter into consciousness and consciousness enter into the object. We are told that in their highest reaches they enter into each other like the water of one tank entering into the water of another tank which are both on the same level. We cannot know that one thing is moving into another at all. There is a flow,

and yet the flow is imperceptible, like water flowing on equal levels. This is the acme of perception in *vitarka* and *vichara* forms of *dhyana*, which give way to another kind of experience of pure satisfaction, pure delight or *ananda* in one's consciousness, born of a situation or a circumstance unfamiliar to the senses, and unknown even to the mind in its earlier forms of sensory perception.

We are happy for various reasons. We have *ananda* in one sense in our daily life. We laugh and feel happy even with small things and circumstances which are of little consequence. But why do we feel happy? The happiness is a transformation of consciousness which is brought about by an event that is taking place in the external world. The event or the circumstance or the situation acts as a kind of agent in stimulating the consciousness within. The vital juices in the physiological system get stimulated when certain drugs are administered, and then we have good digestion, good appetite, and so on. The medicine acts as an agent in the stimulation of certain vital energies in our system. The medicine itself does not cure any disease. It acts as an instrument in stirring certain potencies in our system which have been lying dormant on account of the entry of certain toxins, which is set right by the agency or the instrumentality of the medicine.

Likewise, we may say the happiness that we experience on any account in this world is not the outcome of any object, as the cure is not caused by medicine. The cure is not in the drug, it is somewhere else. Likewise, the happiness that we experience is not in the event or the circumstance or the situation or the object. It acts like a drug, a kind of medicine that is administered into our consciousness for stimulating it into a particular type of activity.

This particular type of activity, which is stirred in consciousness due to the entry of a particular set of circumstances as objects of consciousness, or content of consciousness, creates a feeling in consciousness. This feeling can be of three kinds. It can be a feeling of equanimity, harmony, stability, and a uniform distribution of forces in our system. Such a stimulation can be caused in consciousness by the entry of a particular set of forces into the system, or the forces that enter our system can stimulate the consciousness into an activity of distraction, agitation and annoyance, or there can be a third type of force which can enter into consciousness and make it stupefied and torpid, stopping all its activities. These three forces are known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Sattva is that state of consciousness wherein there is an equilibrium of forces in the system, a harmony of activity and a uniform movement of energy in the body and the mind. Then it is that the consciousness feels happy. We have a feeling of satisfaction when consciousness is equally distributed in the mental setup. The happiness that we experience in the world is a mental function. The mind experiences pleasure when

consciousness is equally distributed in the structure of the mind, just as we feel health when vitality is equally distributed in the physiological system of the body.

But if there is a retardation of the flow of blood or a stopping of the movement of the prana in a particular limb of our system, we feel there is a sense of paralysis. We feel numbness and awkwardness. Likewise, a sort of awkwardness enters into the mind when consciousness is not equally distributed in it. This unequal distribution of consciousness in the mind is restlessness. That is *rajas*. We run here and there, talk all kinds of things, and cannot have peace of mind when consciousness is unequally distributed in the structure of the mind. We may say that there is a kind of traumatising of psychological functions.

Many a time we are also in a torpid condition. We feel sleepy, fatigued to death, and do not want to talk to people. We simply cover ourselves with a blanket and go to bed. That is *tamas*.

We are not happy in *tamas* or in *rajas*. We are happy consciously only in *sattva*. So the reason for this happiness in the world is not the possession or the non-possession of an object. The object as such was only an instrument in creating a circumstance in consciousness. The experience by consciousness itself is the cause of the happiness. This is the psychology of pleasure.

This psychology can be also applied to the delight that we experience in yoga meditation, only it is expanded much more than it happens in ordinary sensory pleasure. The *ananda anugat dhyana* mentioned by Patanjali is the meditation bringing that type of satisfaction or delight which is not born of the attachment of the mind to objects, but on account of a reverse process taking place, the detachment of the mind from objects. We may wonder how we can be happy when we are detached from things when in our normal experience we feel happy when we are attached to pleasurable objects. In yoga what happens is *duḥkhasamyogaviyogam yogasamjñitam* (BG 6.23), as the Bhagavadgita tells us. There is a detachment of the connection with things. That is *duhkha-samyoga-viyoga*.

The detachment of consciousness here, in the state of meditation called *ananda anugat dhyana*, is not a separation of consciousness from objects of endearment or love, but the detachment of consciousness from factors that cause distraction to consciousness. It is true that all contact is a source of pain, whatever be that contact, and it is also certain that any kind of contact with any object is a source of trouble only; it can never be a satisfaction. In this state of ignorance and untutored stupidity, we think that we derive satisfaction by contact, while what comes is only pain. Pain is mistaken for pleasure in ordinary sensory experiences of the world. It is not that we experience any pleasure in this world. Nothing of the kind. We are duped by a mistaken notion in our mind, due to which we feel that pain is pleasure. A stirring that

has been caused by consciousness in consciousness by the attachment of it to objects is regarded by us as pleasure, but in *dhyana* the cause of pain is directly detected.

In meditation we know a thief as a thief, though up to this time we thought he was our friend. The recognition of the true nature of things is the cause of delight in yoga, while ignorance is bliss in our present condition. We are happy on account of ignorance of the true nature of things, while in yoga we are happy on account of the knowledge of the true nature of things. There is a tremendous difference between happiness born of knowledge and the happiness of ignorance. A baby's happiness born of ignorance is different from the happiness of a wise person who knows everything. So let us not make the mistake of thinking that this *ananda* which comes to us in *dhyana* is something like happiness that we experience from objects by sensory contact. It is far from this temporal experience of sensory enjoyment. It cannot be called enjoyment. It is not pleasure; it is the bliss which is the outcome of the entry of the being of things into consciousness. The being of things is different from the forms of things. While in ordinary sensory perception the forms of things enter into the mind and create a sensation in it of pleasure, the being of objects always remains outside the grasp of consciousness. Hence it is that we can never have any real say over any matter in the world, and cannot control anything in the world. All things in the world are out of control, and they are beyond the operation of our mind. But in yoga, the consciousness grasps the object in such an intrinsic capacity that there is control over the object, and the object reveals its essential nature of *sata*, or existence.

The existence of an object is different from the processional activity or the form of the object. We never grasp the being of the object by our mind or mental perception. The philosophy of the Buddha Gautama says that everything in the world is a procession of forces. He said that everything is momentary because everything is made up of bits of process; everything is made up of parts, as scientists say that everything is atoms or energy particles. They move from one centre to another centre, flooding each other like waves in the ocean. Everything is dynamic. Nothing is static in the world.

Then what is it that we grasp by mental perception as objects? How do we mistake a procession of activities for a stable object? It is an illusion. We may call it a psychological illusion or an optical illusion. The stability of an object is an illusion, according to modern physics and also according to Buddha. This inability of the mind to grasp the essentiality of things and the identification of the movement of forms with a so-called stability results in the illusion.

But in yoga, the real background of this process is grasped. There cannot be movement unless there is a motionless background. If everything is momentary, something has to be stable. That very activity shows that activity is tending towards an actionless state. Thus, in ordinary mental perception the essential being of the object is never grasped because the mind is unstable, even as the forms of objects are unstable.

The unstable mind comes in contact with the unstable forms of objects, resulting in a mistaken identity of perception.

But in yoga, it is not mind coming in contact with the form of objects but the soul behind the mind realising and recognising the soul behind the objects. It is the Atman within that begins to see the Atman without. When you realise that the stranger who has come to your house is your own brother, you are overjoyed. "Oh, I thought some visitor has come. You have come." You feel rapturous to meet your lost friend, as it were, who has been away for years together. Consciousness which has been outside the essentiality of objects recognises that these objects are its own self. You recognise your real nature, as it were, and the joy of this recognition knows no bounds. You have lost a dear object and have regained it. You know the joy. How happy you feel when you find a lost purse! You have lost it in a taxi, suppose. You weep. You do not know what has happened to it, whether you will get it back or not, and the taxi driver comes back as a gentleman and gives you the purse containing so many thousands of currency notes. Oh, how happy you are! The lost friend has come back.

So is the delight of consciousness when it recognises the lost friend of the cosmos. The whole cosmos is lost by us. We are strangers to it, and it is a stranger to us. We look at each other through the Berlin wall, as it were. There is no actual contact, but we can see each other from a distance and talk, with no mutual intercourse. Such is our experience in the world outside.

This is the reason why we cannot have control over the objects of the world in ordinary perception, and is also the reason why our happiness comes and goes. No one is always happy throughout the day. It is not possible, because this happiness is an artificial generation of an activity in consciousness by the entry of particular forces from objects. When this entry ceases, we are unhappy again. But in this *ananda anugat dhyana*, there is a perpetual inflow of the substantiality of things into the consciousness so that there is a perpetual feeling of satisfaction. So the distinction between this happiness and ordinary sensory happiness lies in the fact that while we are duped by the forms of objects and we mistake this deception for a gain and feel happy, in yoga *dhyana* we are really possessed of the truth of things; therefore, we are perpetually happy. This is *ananda anugat dhyana*, the perpetual or permanent revelation of *sattva guna* in the expanded form of the mind. The mind is in a very subtle form, almost about to thin and vaporise itself away.

The mind exists here like a clean glass reflecting the light of the sun. We cannot know whether the glass exists or not because of its cleanliness and transparency, and yet it is there. Such is the ecstatic mood into which the mind enters, where we cannot know which is mind and which is consciousness. Consciousness and mind become almost identical here. We can call it mind or we can call it consciousness because of the reflection of consciousness through a clean, transparent medium.

Here, the *vritti* or the psychosis, the modification of the mind, is sometimes called the *brahmakar vritti* in terms of the Vedanta. The *vritti* is a modification of the mind, about which we have studied enough earlier. Whenever, in perception, the mind comes in contact with an object, it casts itself into the mould of this form of the object. This mould that is created in the mind is called a *vritti*. If we dip a bucket into water, we find a hole the size of the bucket created in the water. Whatever be the form or the shape of the vessel that we dip into the river, the shape of the vacuum that is created inside is of the shape of the object or the vessel that is dipped. Likewise, the shape of the mind at any particular given instant is the shape of the particular object that it sees or cognises. This kind of transformation of the mind into the form of a given object is called a *vritti*.

But when it has grasped the being of things, it has no particular *vritti*. There is no *vishayakara vritti*. It is not of a particular object. The mind can take the shape of a tree, a river, a person, and so on. This is *vishayakara vritti*, or the psychosis which is of the nature of the form of any given object. But when the generality of things is grasped, the mind also assumes the generality of psychosis. It is not a particular mould of this or that objective form that is created in the structure of the mind, but a general impression of the structure of the entire existence. It is *brahmakara vritti*, the psychosis which is absolute in its grasp, not tentative or particularised. This *ananda anugat dhyana* is called *brahmakara vritti* in Vedantic parlance.

We have gone very high, far above the temporal realm, and we are face to face with a tremendous transmutation that is yet to take place – a transformation forever, the final transubstantiation, we may call it, of consciousness. The river is entering the sea, as it were, and there is a total cessation of the *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – yet they mix with each other into a condition of equilibrium and transparency. *Asid asitidam tamobhutamaprajnatam alakshanam apratargyam avijneyam prasuptamiva sarvatah*. This is how Manu begins his Smriti, wherein he gives us a description of the ultimate condition of things into which our mind enters in this state of meditation. It is stability supreme, *amaprajnata alakshanam*: unconscious from the point of view of ordinary consciousness. It is unconscious, as it were, because it is not conscious of any object. When we know everything, it is something like knowing nothing; such is that state. Indefinable: *aladshanam*; *apartargyam*: not capable of being deduced by logical terms; *avijneyam*: therefore, unknowable through mental perception; *prasuptamiva*: as if we are asleep. It is not sleep, but it looks as if it is in a state of sleep. It is dynamism which looks static, as is sometimes seen in the movement of an electric fan. When the fan moves very fast, we cannot know whether it is moving at all. We will know it only if we put our finger into it. It appears to not move at all, as if it is completely static, such is the speed. The speed of *sattva* is also such that it looks like a cessation of all activity, though it is the highest

dynamism conceivable. It is not the torpidity of *tamas* or the idleness of inactivity, but the supreme dynamism which is incapable of description. That is the condition where the mind is almost about to break, like a bubble, in the sea of existence.

There is a simple awareness of being – *asmita matra*. This *ananda* also gets merged into this pure sense of being. *Ananda* is an experience of having possessed everything at one stroke, but this experience ceases when the feeling of having possessed also ceases because there is nothing to be possessed here. We have become what is to be possessed. There is a sense of pure Self-existence, *asmita matra*, so we are also above *ananda* now, and this is the indeterminable, indescribable, supreme individuality, sometimes identified with Ishvara, or God. The sense of being in that condition is *asmita matra*: I am. It is not an assertion of “I am” verbally; it is a way in which we can describe that condition. It is an “I am” in which everything else which is “I am not” is also included. God is supposed to have declared to Moses, “I am that I am.” In the beginning of the Old Testament we will find this statement: “I am that I am.” This is the name of God. This “I am that I am” is *asmita matra, aham asmi*.

Now, in our temporal experience, what do we feel? We feel that we are, and that others also are. When we wake up from sleep we have an experience of the stages of objective consciousness. We know nothing in sleep, but when we wake up we have a hazy notion of something being there. Sometimes we do not know whether we are there or somebody else is there. You might have felt this sometimes. You cannot be fully conscious of your own self when you have just gotten up from sleep; nor are you aware of anybody outside. Afterwards, the next state of consciousness is that we exist. We begin to feel ourselves, but we are not distinctly conscious of others. Then later we begin to feel that there are others also, and still further on we actually realise the particularity of persons and things.

Here, in this supreme I am, or *asmita*, there is no exclusion of the object from consciousness because it is the universe that is saying, “I am,” not you or I. When you or I begin to say, “I am,” naturally others have to be. But the whole cosmos is saying, “I am,” so naturally there cannot be anything outside it. Now, the cosmos asserts I-amness in a transcendent sense, not as we would conceive it in our mind. It is not the assertion of the forms of things, of the bodies of objects, but the essentiality of things. It is the substantiality of objects in their universality that begins to feel or realise “I am”, *asmita*. This *dhyana* is *asmita anugat dhyana*. *Vitarka, vichara, ananda, asmita* are the four stages of meditation mentioned by Patanjali, and the highest form is this supreme Self-consciousness inclusive of all objects. Here one is possessed of all the powers of God. *Ishatva* means divine power, and it is the highest of the eight siddhis.

Here *prakriti*, which stood as an outside object to consciousness, ceases to operate as an object of consciousness. One cannot know what actually happens. Some mystery takes place. The Sankhya and the Yoga tell us that there is a complete isolation of

consciousness from objects which stood as *prakriti* earlier. It is like fever dropping down completely to normal, and immediately we feel a sense of elation and health. Our temperature is normal; the disease has gone. *Prakriti* is the disease. It is the illness in our system, the foreign body that has entered into consciousness. It gets eliminated little by little, little by little, by process of *dhyana*, meditation. Then it is completely cast out like a devil. It is exorcised, and when consciousness regains its health, it becomes normal in the true sense of the term. *Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānaṃ* (Yoga Sutras 1.3). This is the *drasta*, or the Supreme Being-Consciousness, resting in itself. It is called *sata*, resting in one's own self.

This self is quite different from the bodily self, the selfish self, the mortal self, or any kind of temporal extension of self, as we know very well. It is the universal Self asserting itself in *asmita anugat dhyana*, where there is a severance of contact with objectivity of every kind, and consciousness stands supreme. This is Absolute. This is *kaivalyatva*. This is *kaivalya moksha* of consciousness, *moksha* or *mukti*, nirvana, whatever we call it. This is the state.

What happens here, finally? We have come to know what happens through the various degrees of perception. There was a grasping of the entirety of objects by consciousness in the beginning. The totality of objectivity was grasped at one stroke, instantaneously, by consciousness. Then what happens later on? This object, in its universality, in its substantiality, entering into consciousness, created a sense of delight. There was universal satisfaction on account of the Universal Being entering into consciousness. Then the sense of satisfaction ceased because the sense of possession ceases when one realises the identity of oneself with the object. *Asmita matra* alone remains. Then there is the supreme silence of the Absolute. These are, in outline, the stages of spiritual or yoga meditation described in the yoga scriptures, and to come to this stage we have to work very hard. We have seen in our earlier analysis for several days how hard it is, and what disciplines we have to voluntarily impose upon ourselves – social, moral, cultural, intellectual and spiritual.

We are now to grasp the fruit, the delicious product of the maturity of the growth of the tree of knowledge. The growth has been very slow. We have to sow the seed, and tend it, and manure it, and protect it, and see that it grows properly, and it has taken many years to yield this delicious fruit of nirvana.

To sum up, yoga is a collection of various aspects of self-discipline internally related, not externally connected, so they all harmoniously form one body, a single unit of operation. These various aspects of yoga are a single body operating systematically, with all of the many aspects working at the same time. When the body begins to work physiologically, every part of the body begins to work. It is not that some part is sleeping or keeping quiet. If we take a grain of food and put it into our mouth, the whole system starts working. It is not only a part of the body that works.

The whole system of self-discipline is one of intense vigilance practised through stages, while bearing in mind the internal relationship of these aspects at every step so that we may not make the mistake of emphasising any particular aspect too much. We have no particular affinity with or liking for any limb of our body. Every limb is equally dear to us. Nose or fingers, eyes or ears, it makes no difference. Likewise, every aspect of yoga is as important as any other. The active aspect, the emotional aspect, the psychic aspect, the knowledge aspect, the will aspect – all aspects are equally important aspects, the ingredients of a single unit of action.

We have thus seen the glory and magnificence of yoga, and how it is indispensable, how it is a must for every individual because it is the goal towards which humanity is unwittingly moving, the supreme attainment towards which the whole cosmos is tending in every atom of its existence. So there is no question of whether yoga is necessary or not; it is a question of whether we have to live or not. It is impossible to avoid because it is the art of living. Life is essential, and yoga also is essential because life is yoga. Such is its vast gamut and expanded comprehensiveness. Such is its connection with the practical life of every person, and in one stage or the other yoga can be applicable to every person in the world. There is no one who is totally unfit for it, just as there is no one totally unfit for being educated at some stage or level. Even the first step in yoga is yoga. *Vijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate* (B.G. 13.18): Even an aspiration to know it is transcendence of scriptural verbosity and knowledge, says the Bhagavadgita. Even to have a longing to attain the higher is yoga. We might not have achieved anything, and have only a longing, but that longing itself is the initial step in yoga. *Viveka*, or the yearning of the soul for the higher, is the first step of knowledge, the first step of yoga.

We have to bring back to our memory the various stages we have traversed to come to this culmination of experience. We had to disentangle ourselves from social complexes, from personality complexes, from vital, sensory, psychological and intellectual complexes, and we had to be a psychoanalyst of our own selves in a very dispassionate manner so that from stage to stage we rose from being to being in different degrees, and from stage to stage we also entered from a lower kind of satisfaction to a higher state of satisfaction, from a lower sense of power to a higher state of power, from a lower condition of health to a higher condition of health, and in every stage we realised and recognised that we are rising integrally from the lower reality to the higher.

Thus, we realised the supreme status of things, known as *Brahma-sakshatkara*, the Absolute Being directly experienced in one's own consciousness. This is God-experience, God-consciousness. This is God thinking of Himself, Being identical with thought. All these terms are Greek and Latin for those who have had not had enough moral purification and intellectual equipment to understand their implications. But

once they are grasped, they will fill us with such power and sense of satisfaction that we will not know how to express it. That is the silence of conscious satisfaction. We will shut our mouth because of the sense of having possessed things and knowing all things. This is the state of the sense having done whatever is to be done, the sense of knowing whatever is to be known, and the sense of attaining whatever is to be attained. Whatever is to be obtained, we obtained, whatever is to be known, we have known, and whatever is to be done, we have done. The supreme duty of life has been fulfilled, the highest dharma has been practised, and the consciousness now rests in its highest experience.