

The Pilgrim and the Path: Living Theosophy



A Theosophical Study Course

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PREFACE

THE PILGRIM AND THE PATH: LIVING THEOSOPHY

Theosophy tells us that we are pilgrims, implying that we are on a journey to a particular place. If we decide that we are indeed pilgrims and start to look for the path that will take us to the goal of our pilgrimage, we should also have some idea of why we are traveling and where we are headed. To begin a process of self-unfoldment, we had also better know what is being unfolded.

These matters are considered in the following lesson and some subsequent ones, based on chapters from a book by I. K. Taimni called *Self-Culture* or, in later American editions, *A Way to Self-Discovery*. Two other books will also be referred to (*The Pilgrim Self* by Robert Ellwood and *The Pilgrim and the Pilgrimage* by Emily Sellon), and some supplementary material will be included.

—J.A.

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Chapter 1

EVOLUTION IN THE LIGHT OF THE WISDOM TRADITION

Evolution is one of the most influential ideas of modern science. But the materialistic bias of scientific thought has led to this idea's remaining a half-truth and deprived it of its real meaning and importance in human life. The Wisdom Tradition provides the other half of the truth and thus makes the idea of evolution dynamic and helpful in understanding our own lives.

The basic idea of evolution as science presents it is easy to grasp. The theory of evolution was formulated by Charles Darwin (1809–1882) to account for the large variety of species in the animal kingdom, though it was soon applied and extended in other directions and found to throw light on phenomena of the most diverse kinds. A main idea in this theory is that the changes which have brought about such a large variety of species in the animal kingdom do not take place in a haphazard manner but result from the success of forms in adapting to their environments. Forms go on changing continually; and the forms that survive to reproduce themselves are those that are best adapted to the conditions of their changing environment. The continuity of changes in living creatures is thus accounted for by their interdependence with a gradually changing environment. So the theory of evolution introduced order into the apparent confusion of biological phenomena by showing that the large variety of living forms were not unrelated to one another, but rather that a principle of derivation was working behind the changes that produced them, which made them increasingly well-adapted to their environments.

In the scientific idea of evolution, changes in forms were attributed solely to the success with which they adapted themselves to the environment by a process of random mutations. This idea was, the natural result of regarding the whole process as a purely physical phenomenon and considering the life side of the process as a by-product of the physical changes. As long as life was regarded as the result of an interaction between matter and force, it was inevitably left out of account, and changes in form were attributed solely to the influence of environment. The limitation in the scientific conception of evolution is thus inherent in the metaphysical position of modern science—materialism.

The important contribution made by the Wisdom Tradition to the idea of evolution was to point to the other side of the coin and thus to give a complete picture of the process. The view of the Wisdom Tradition is not an innovation, but is grounded in an ancient teaching which holds that life is not a by-product of matter and force but an independent principle that uses matter and force for its expression on the physical

plane. Forms exist to enable the ensouling life to express itself, and they change to meet the growing and varying demands of life for fuller expression. Life takes upon itself form after form, and by the stimuli received through them, all of its inner possibilities are gradually unfolded, and made manifest. Forms die and disappear, but the life that functions through them grows more and more.

So behind the changes of form, which make the whole process of evolution appear in the scientific theory to be a meaningless panorama of endless change, we can see a continuously evolving life using these various forms at succeeding stages of its evolution. In the infinite variety of forms and their constant destruction, Nature has an intelligible purpose denied by science. Modern science is thus like a deaf person studying musical instruments of great variety and increasing delicacy, who knows those instruments in great detail but refuses to believe in the reality of music.

No wonder then that evolution as studied by science is often thought of as an uninviting subject—a matter of dry facts, of fossils unearthed from the bowels of the earth and skeletons pieced together from them—giving us a partial if not distorted view of the process. On the other hand, evolution in the view of the Wisdom Tradition is a dynamic idea with fascinating and practical implications for our own lives. It gives us, as if it were in a flash, an insight into all the natural processes taking place before our eyes and harmonizes into one integrated whole all the phenomena of life. It not only illumines the past and the present but also gives us a glimpse into the future, not only of humanity as a species, but also of ourselves as individuals. It looks toward the perfection we will all attain one day, and it reveals the steps of the ladder by which we rise to that perfection. Perhaps the most important feature of this Theosophical view of evolution is not the intellectual insight we get from it about the working of nature but the certainty it gives of our final triumph over all our difficulties, imperfections, and limitations. It thus enables us to become active participants in evolution by unfolding our inner powers and faculties with confidence.

The object of this work is to deal in a comprehensive manner with the process of self-unfoldment, which is possible only in the wider view of evolution given by the Wisdom Tradition. We have to part company here with the scientific theory of evolution and look instead at what evolution means in the Theosophical Wisdom Tradition and at the various stages on the long road leading to perfection. But to begin with, let us first consider what “perfection” means.

The potential unfoldment of life in diverse forms has no limit. At no point can it be said that ultimate perfection has been reached. But for us human beings there is a limit that marks the boundary of the human kingdom, and that limit is the goal to which we are moving. Those who reach that boundary-goal are called by various names. In Christianity they are “saints.” In Confucianism they are said to have the quality of *ren*

(or full humanity). In Hinduism they are *jivanmuktas* (persons freed from the limitations of this world while still living in it). In Buddhism they are *arhats* (persons enlightened by the instruction of others). In Theosophy, they are said to have taken the “fifth initiation” and thus to have become Masters of the Wisdom. When Adepts reach that stage, their need to reincarnate in this world is over. They have passed out of the human into the superhuman stage of evolution and thereafter continue their self-unfoldment in other ways. The “perfection” referred to above is this relative perfection reached by a Master of Wisdom.

We cannot know exactly what this perfection is until we reach that stage ourselves. The realities of the higher life can be known only by direct experience; no verbal description of them or even the highest effort of imagination can enable us to know them as they truly are. So when we try to understand these things with our intellect, all we can do is to catch broken lights or faint reflections, here and there, of a hidden splendor utterly beyond human conception, which can be realized to some extent only in our heart when our inner development makes such realization possible.

We will now take a broad, panoramic view of the vast process of evolution. According to the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition, all life has come from one divine essence or Principle and, after unfolding its potentialities, will again merge with that divine source. All the qualities and powers we associate with divine perfection are present when life emerges from its divine origin in a latent or germinal state, just as a tree is hidden in a seed. They are very slowly unfolded, being made functional by a twofold impulse: (1) the impacts from without provided by the evolutionary forces and (2) the constant pressure of divine will or intention, exerted from within each evolving entity. When life, after attaining perfection, again merges consciously in divinity, it does so with all the qualities and powers it has evolved during its long evolutionary pilgrimage.

Another fundamental teaching of the Wisdom Tradition is that our solar system, which is our theater of evolution, is sevenfold in its constitution. Interpenetrating the physical world, which we can cognize with our senses, are six other worlds of progressively subtler matter. These worlds are called “planes” in Theosophical literature and are given various names. The world closest to the physical, into which we pass in sleep and immediately after death, is called the “astral” plane and is related to our feelings, desires, and emotions. The next “higher” world, in which we spend the major portion of our time between two incarnations, is called the mental plane and is related to our thoughts. Then in order come the buddhic, atmic, anupadaka, and adi planes. They are related to our spiritual and eternal being and are the source of our highest spiritual knowledge and powers.

All life in its many forms is connected with all seven planes of the solar system; but confining ourselves to humanity for the present, we may say that we have a body or vehicle of consciousness on each of the planes. Our life is rooted in the life of the divine mind or “Logos” on the highest plane and flows out from that all-inclusive center through all the vehicles that connect us with the various planes. A ray of divine consciousness, called the *monad* (Greek for “unity”) or *jivatma* (Sanskrit for “life-self”) passes through and energizes a complete set of vehicles on the various planes, bringing about their gradual growth, until the divine fragment stands fully developed, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient on all the planes.

These are represented by the diagram in figure 1. Of course it is only a two-dimensional figure, a symbol to help us picture these concepts, not a representation of the transcendent realities of the higher planes. There is always a danger in using figures, symbols, and analogies, that we may try to stretch them too far and to draw unjustified inferences from them. The concepts represented in figure 1 could also be shown in reverse order, with the physical at the center and the unlimited space beyond the circumference representing the unmanifest of the cosmos. The possibility of such a reversal suggests the old aphorism “God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.” The two figures are just different ways of looking at the same reality.

In figure 1, the seven planes of the solar system are represented by seven concentric circles. The center represents the solar Logos (called *Ishvara* in Sanskrit), presiding over the manifested solar system during the period of manifestation. Although the planes are represented in this diagram by circles, they are actually spheres that interpenetrate one another, each subtler sphere surrounding and interpenetrating all the denser ones. The circles are thus meant to indicate, not the size of the various planes, but their spatial relationships. Our consciousness, used to the three dimensions of space, cannot imagine the conditions on the higher planes where it has to work in more than three dimensions. So only with difficulty can we get the barest idea of the relationship of the planes to one another. The physical world, to which our consciousness is generally confined at present, is the densest, the farthest from the center of consciousness, and subject to the greatest limitations and illusions. As we penetrate inward, plane by plane, these limitations become less and less pressing, the veils of illusion become thinner until they disappear completely when we reach the consciousness of the solar Logos, which permeates and supports them all.

An individual soul (or *jivatma*) is represented in this figure by a radius of the concentric circles. Such a radius cuts all the circles, indicating that a ray of divine consciousness (the soul) passes through all the planes and energizes a complete set of vehicles connecting it with those planes. All the vehicles of a particular soul may be

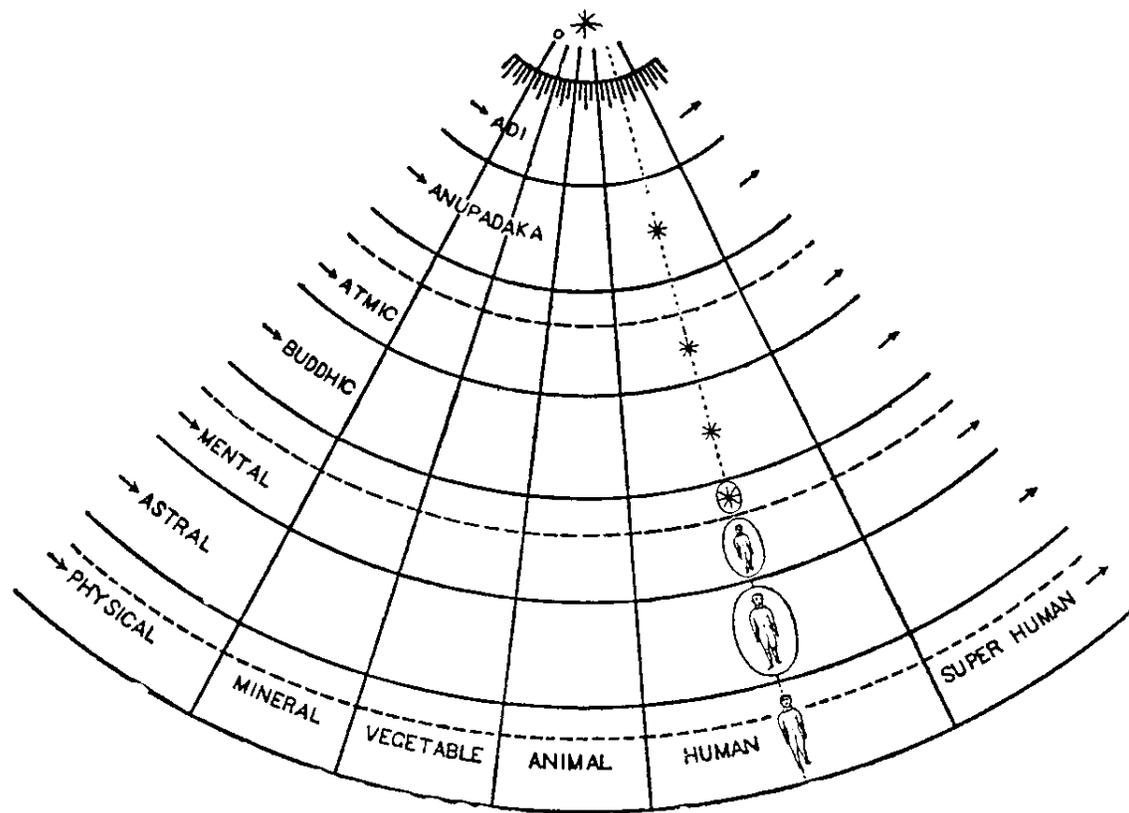


FIGURE 1

imagined as threaded on this ray of consciousness, which thus unifies them in spite of the tremendous differences in the way they work. As evolution proceeds, vehicle after vehicle, starting from the physical, becomes developed, quickened, and fit to serve the soul on the successive planes.

The evolution of life, which comes from the Logos and after unfolding its divine potentialities again merges with that Logos, is represented in the figure by the arrows in the segments between the circles. The stages of development through which life passes before it reaches the mineral stage, are represented by a blank because conditions relating to these stages lie more or less beyond our mental horizon. It is, however, well to remember that before life reaches the mineral stage, which is considered by most people as the lowest, it has already passed through at least three distinct stages. In these stages, which are really stages of involution (rolling up) and not evolution (unrolling), life sinks deeper and deeper into matter before it begins to ascend again. The mineral stage is thus the lowest point in the cycle of involution and evolution of consciousness.

We become aware of life first at the mineral stage, the line O in the figure marking the boundary between the unknown and the known. Life in the mineral stage is, of course, very different from that of higher forms. However, at least as far as its

manifestation on the physical plane is concerned, it has been studied very thoroughly by scientists, and the laws of its working established by chemistry, physics, geology, and astronomy. But there is more to the mineral stage than science has been able to study.

The next stage in evolution is the vegetable kingdom, where the response to external stimuli is more active than in the mineral kingdom and the capacity to feel sensation is developed to a greater extent. The sensations are still indefinite because the astral body, which is the vehicle for feeling sensations, instead of being an organized vehicle, is merely a loose aggregation of astral matter. We cannot therefore say that plants and trees feel pleasure or pain as animals do, but their response to external stimuli resembles pleasure and pain of a sort. The vegetable kingdom itself includes great differences in degree of evolution, the highest members of this kingdom having perhaps a greater capacity for feeling sensations than do the lowest members of the animal kingdom. These kingdoms of nature are not sharply separated from one another; they overlap to a considerable degree, so it is sometimes difficult to decide which kingdom a member on the borderland belongs to. The life of the vegetable kingdom, as it manifests on the physical plane through physical organisms, is the subject of the science of botany.

Life in the vegetable kingdom is certainly much more evolved than in the mineral kingdom, but the fact that most vegetable organisms are rooted to one spot greatly limits the variety of stimuli that they can get from their environment. This limitation for the most part disappears in the next stage—the animal kingdom—and animals' capacity for movement opens the door to a larger number and greater variety of experiences. This increased freedom no doubt accelerates the evolution of life, and so we find in the higher animals, not only a well developed capacity for feeling sensations, but also the beginnings of mental activity. The astral bodies of animals and their nervous systems are quite well organized, and therefore the capacity to feel pleasure or pain is highly developed. For this reason an animal feels acutely any injury to its physical body even though it may not be able to express its feelings. Those who inflict pain on animals or cause it to be inflicted, by using them either as food or as objects of sport, should be aware of this. Suffering inflicted on other beings recoils sooner or later on those who inflict it, and the all-embracing law of karma does not cease to function in the case of those who are ignorant or try to find excuses for their actions. If people only knew what terrible suffering they are piling up for themselves by the callousness and cruelty they inflict on animals, they would be less inclined to dismiss these unpleasant subjects with a shrug of their shoulders and continue in their unthinking ways.

A contribution of Theosophy to the concept of the evolution of consciousness in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms is to explain the mechanism of that evolution.

Evolution in these lower stages differs in one fundamental respect from that of human beings, in that each physical organism in the lower kingdoms does not have a separate soul, as every human being does. Instead several (ranging from a few to very many) physical organisms of the same species are vehicles for one “group soul,” which is thus both the repository of every experience undergone by all those organisms and also the informing and energizing life of all those forms. This fact of collective evolution throws light on many problems connected with the life of animals and plants and also shows the ingenious methods adopted by nature.

Although to all outer appearances the human stage is merely a continuation of the stages going before—and in some respects it is such a continuation—a fundamental change takes place when life enters the human stage, a change that sharply divides human life from that in the animal kingdom. This change is called “individualization,” and consists in the formation of a “causal body,” the outermost vehicle of the individual evolving entity (the “pilgrim”), into which the life of the Logos descends directly and through which it begins henceforth to work in a more dynamic manner. This introduction of the new divine element in the human being, not present in minerals, vegetables, or animals, is the origin of our self-consciousness. In the human being, the life force has become an individual unit of consciousness, and this consciousness can go on expanding in the human and superhuman stages without any limit.

The earlier phases of the human stage are passed in conditions of personal and environmental limitations. These earlier phases are not necessarily what people have called “primitive” or “savage.” Those are terms for less technologically complex societies than ours. It is our ethnocentrism that leads us to think of the lack of our sort of technology as “primitive.” People in “primitive” societies are not much different from those in our “advanced” civilizations—at least, in the things that really matter, such as sensitivity, appreciation, feelings, intellect, and spirituality. On average, a cross section of the population in San Francisco or Paris is probably not essentially much different from one in the Amazon jungle or the Australian outback.

The “earlier phases” we are talking about are those in the far distant past of humanity in our world, when a quite different sort of environment existed, and many human faculties we take for granted were still developing. Human beings have gained experiences of all kinds under all manner of circumstances, and our astral and mental bodies have slowly develop as we have reincarnated in widely differing conditions and under circumstances we have created by our thoughts, desires, and actions. Our feelings and emotions develop our astral body, our thinking and ideas develop the mind, while both feelings and thoughts of a higher kind develop the causal body, the vehicle of our individual evolution. The vast majority of people have reached a stage in their evolution where the astral body is fairly well developed and the mind is also

developed to a certain extent. But only in the case of sages and saints is the causal body functioning freely. In the rest of us, it is still only semi-developed, at best.

After we have passed through all kinds of experiences, life after life, and have gradually begun to give our thoughts to higher things and to live a noble and unselfish life, the next vehicle, that on the buddhic or intuitional plane, also begins to develop slowly and the illumination coming from this region into the mind shows itself as the faculty of discrimination (*viveka* in Sanskrit). When we exercise that faculty, we begin to appreciate spiritual truths and intuitively to recognize their existence even though we have no empirical proofs for them. This buddhi or intuition is the faculty with whose help all spiritual truths are recognized, and without its development we can make no spiritual progress. Mere intellect is of no use in a region that is outside its scope.

When the buddhic vehicle is sufficiently developed and begins to influence the mind, an urge is born that heralds the awakening of our ultimate nature. Then we begin to question life, to ask about the ultimate problems of existence, of which those who are spiritually asleep are not even aware. We begin to seek a way out of our illusions and suffering. We aspire to lead the higher life of the Spirit and feel an inner kinship with our fellow beings which earlier we could hardly have understood.

If this urge is heeded and rightly guided, sooner or later we will set our feet on the path that leads to perfection, ultimately reach the goal, and pass out of the human kingdom. If the urge is not heeded, but instead is smothered by the lower mind or thwarted by worldly desires, then we may have to wander through many lives drawn between rival attractions—attractions of the lower life which pull us downward and aspirations for a higher life that draw us upward. But sooner or later, as a result of the repeated lessons taught by suffering, frustrations, and disappointments, the divine call becomes too strong to resist. Then turning our backs on the lower life and setting our faces in the direction of the divine, we begin to mount step by step toward the mountaintop.

We have so far been traversing rapidly in thought the long road of evolution that we have been traveling ever since we came out of the divine source, until we reach the stage where the urge is born within us to think of our true home and the means of returning to it. Let us now glance mentally over the path, which still remains to be trodden, and the stages that remain to be covered.

What should we do when we feel these yearnings for a higher or wider life? The first thing, of course, is to think deeply about the fundamental problems of life until these problems stand out clearly before our mental vision and we realize that the only way we can solve them satisfactorily and permanently is by treading the Path which leads to perfection and enlightenment. It is necessary to go through this preliminary process of deep reflection and searching of one's heart very thoroughly and to take time

in coming to decisions with regard to these vital matters, because the occasional urges which come from within are of an evanescent nature—the result of reactions arising from the disappointments and frustrations of life. They disappear gradually as the attractions of the world again cast their veils of glamour over the mind, so that we sink back into our usual condition of forgetfulness of our higher destiny. The divine urge that will carry us through many lives to our goal has to be steady and strong; it must be the result of that maturity which results from our having learned the lessons that our many experiences were meant to teach.

Supposing that the urge we feel is of the right type, our next step is to consider carefully the means to be adopted for realizing our aim. The world offers many paths and many teachers. We have to find the right path for us and the teacher who can guide us with safety right up to the end. Some of the paths we see stretching before us are blind alleys, and some of the teachers who offer to guide us are the blind leading the blind. A right choice of path and teacher will therefore save us much time and trouble. Those who have thought deeply about the problems of life and understood the plan of evolution should have no difficulty in choosing. The only path they can choose is the path that has been trodden by all the great teachers and rishis of the past, which leads to the perfection of human life, whether that perfection is called “nirvana,” “enlightenment,” “jivanmukti,” “liberation,” “salvation,” or any other name. The only teacher they can have is the Higher Self seated within their heart, which has brought them to their present stage and is capable of guiding them unerringly right up to the end, the goal of enlightenment.

Is it possible to have any idea of this exalted condition reached by those who have crossed the boundary separating the human stage from that beyond? No—except in the haziest manner. But the tremendous advance made by the adepts who have reached this stage can to some extent be judged from the fact that for them all the five lower vehicles of consciousness—physical, astral, mental, buddhic, and atmic—are fully developed and vivified, so they can function in any of those vehicles just as the ordinary person can function through the physical body, in full consciousness. Adepts only have to focus their consciousness in any vehicle from the atmic downward to come at once into touch with the corresponding plane of matter and know whatever they want to know on that plane, although the word “knowing” is a very clumsy one to express the functioning of consciousness on the higher spiritual planes. Moreover, their consciousness is normally centered on the atmic plane, and when they have to work on any of the lower planes, they focus partially on those planes for the time being. Thus all five lower planes of the solar system with which humanity has anything to do are within their consciousness and form the field in which they work for the fulfillment of the plan of evolution.

The development and organization of the three lower vehicles—physical, astral, and mental—has taken us millions of years. When we approach the end of our human evolution, however, and are on the threshold of awakening the divine consciousness within us, our evolution in the spiritual realms is accelerated to a tremendous degree. Then it becomes possible for us to cover in a few lives the stupendous distance separating an ordinary human from an adept.

What further stages of evolution and unfoldment lie beyond in the superhuman realms we do not know. The human intellect sinks back baffled when it tries to penetrate these deeper mysteries. It is enough for us to know that they exist and that from those stages of unimaginable heights some, who in the past have been where we are now, are working for the welfare of those of us who still live in the valleys of illusion, suffering, and death.

SUMMARY

This chapter makes a number of major points, such as the following:

1. Life is not a by-product of matter, but an independent principle expressing itself through material forms.
2. Both forms and their ensouling life evolve. Physical species diversify as forms change to adapt to their environments, but that is in response to the needs of life for ever more adequate forms of expression for its own evolution.
3. Evolution is purposeful, leading to more responsive forms, increased consciousness, and more unified awareness.
4. The evolution of the individual, or self-development (the “Path”), is part of the general evolution of life.
5. Although there are specific goals for various stages of evolution, such as the human “perfection” or “enlightenment” of the Masters of the Wisdom, there is no ultimate perfection to be reached, no end to the process of growth.
6. The evolving world and everything in it come forth from a ground of being or ultimate Principle and in the process of evolution unfold the potentials inherent in them.
7. Our world has seven “planes” (or states of consciousness or fields of energy), ranging from the most rarefied in nature to the most physical.
8. The essence of consciousness in each of us (the “monad” or “Pilgrim”) functions through “bodies” (or interfaces) on those planes.

9. The development of life on those planes passes through various “kingdoms” or forms of expression, including the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human.
10. Pre-human evolution is collective; only in the human kingdom does the evolving life become fully individualized.
11. The Path of self-unfoldment has been followed by all the great teachers of the past, who serve as models for us; but our only personal teacher is the intuitive Higher Self within each of us.

QUESTIONS

1. What points in this chapter, in addition to those listed above, seem to you to be important?
2. Which of these points do you think is most central to the chapter? To your own life? (They may be different.)
3. Pick one or more of the points made in this chapter and consider the implications it or they have for daily life.
4. What does this chapter imply about an answer to the question, “Who are you?”
5. How does the Path referred to in this chapter seem to differ from other forms of “spiritual discipline” or “ways of life” or “commandments” for living that you may be familiar with?

Chapter 2

THE TOTAL HUMAN CONSTITUTION

After having surveyed the concept of evolution in the Wisdom Tradition, we can now look briefly at what the Tradition has to say about the inner constitution of the human being. This analysis of our inner constitution is the result of discoveries made by a large number of investigators who have been able to develop their subtler faculties and to examine the phenomena of the inner planes in a scientific manner. In fact, to a number of advanced Adepts these observations of the subtler planes are matters of direct experience in the same way as the phenomena of physical life are to an ordinary person living in the physical body.

It has already been pointed out in the previous chapter that we human beings have a very complex constitution and function in several vehicles of consciousness. Our consciousness is rooted in, and is a part of, the consciousness of the Logos of our solar system on the highest plane, and descends, step by step, down to the physical plane, which lies on the periphery, as it were, of the divine consciousness. On each plane of the solar system, the individualized unit of consciousness appropriates matter of that plane and gradually prepares a vehicle through which it can function with ever increasing efficiency.

As we go from the "periphery" to the "center," the vehicles become less and less material and consciousness becomes increasingly predominant. According to Theosophical teachings, the whole solar system is derived from and is based upon the consciousness of the solar Logos. The manifestation of the life of the Logos on the successive planes means a progressively greater materialization of that life and the enclosure of its consciousness in progressively thicker veils. As it descends, plane after plane, consciousness loses its powers and attributes, step by step, until on the outermost physical plane these limitations reach their utmost limit.

Thus when consciousness recedes inwards, as for example in yogic practices, thereby reversing the descent of consciousness, these limitations fall away one after another and consciousness is able to function with an ever-increasing freedom. In this progressive reversal, human consciousness approaches, although it never reaches, the unrestricted and unconditioned splendor of the divine consciousness. This dropping away of limitations and obscurations is experienced by all yogis as they transfer the center of their consciousness from one plane to another and approach the source of all consciousness.

As we are living on the physical plane, engrossed in its passing and comparatively dull phenomena, they appear to us to be vivid and vital, while the realities of the higher

planes appear nebulous and unreal, and therefore without any attraction. We are afraid to lose touch with the physical plane, afraid of being deprived of its passing joys, not realizing that the physical is the dullest of all the planes, and life on this plane is a distorted and gloomy reflection of the unimaginable splendors that are associated with the higher realms of the spirit.

In spite of the multiplicity of vehicles and the great differences in the nature of manifestations through them, the consciousness functioning through them is one and the same—a ray of the divine consciousness. In studying the complex human constitution, we may divide it, for the sake of convenience, into various components, but we should not get the impression that there are different entities working within us, one inside the other. Consciousness working through a complete set of vehicles is indivisible; only its different aspects are brought out in a lesser or greater degree according to the nature and development of the vehicle through which it is working at a particular moment. And this manifestation on a particular plane depends upon the nature of the plane and the coloration derived from the other planes through which consciousness has passed.

For example, when the monad or jivatma is functioning through the physical vehicle, the consciousness is conditioned by the nature of the physical plane, but all the other vehicles of the monad are also present in the background and influence life on the physical plane. At death, when the physical body is dropped, the astral body becomes the focus of consciousness, but all the other vehicles are still present in the background and modify the way consciousness can function astrally. It is similar when the astral body “dies,” or is abandoned, and the consciousness is transferred to the lower mental world (or “devachan”).

In the integrated state of consciousness known as “samadhi,” however, the center of consciousness can be deliberately shifted from one plane to another. As it is, one vehicle becomes the focus of consciousness for the time being, while others remain in the foreground or background as shown in figure 2 (see next page). If we seek to integrate ourselves, we must do so in a comprehensive manner, taking into consideration our total constitution. All our vehicles are connected with one another and are interdependent; we cannot modify one without, in some measure, modifying the others also. If we want emotional health, we cannot isolate our emotional life from the rest of our existence and treat only that. We have to look to our mental and physical life as well, and if we wish to be really thorough, we will have to attend to our spiritual nature also.

Although our vehicles are on different planes and the way our consciousness works through them differs from plane to plane, they seem to function in sets of three. Consciousness working in each set as a whole is a unity, though this unity is

subordinate to, and is contained within, the larger unity of the next higher manifestation. This fact is illustrated in figure 3.

	PHYSICAL	ASTRAL	LOWER MENTAL	HICHER MENTAL	BUDDHIC	ATMIC
NORMAL PHYSICAL LIFE					*	*
IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH					*	*
HEAVEN LIFE					*	*
IN SAMADHI ON HICHER MENTAL PLANE					*	*
IN SAMADHI ON BUDDHIC PLANE						*
IN SAMADHI ON ATMIC PLANE AND NORMAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF A JIWAN MUKTA					*	

Figure 2

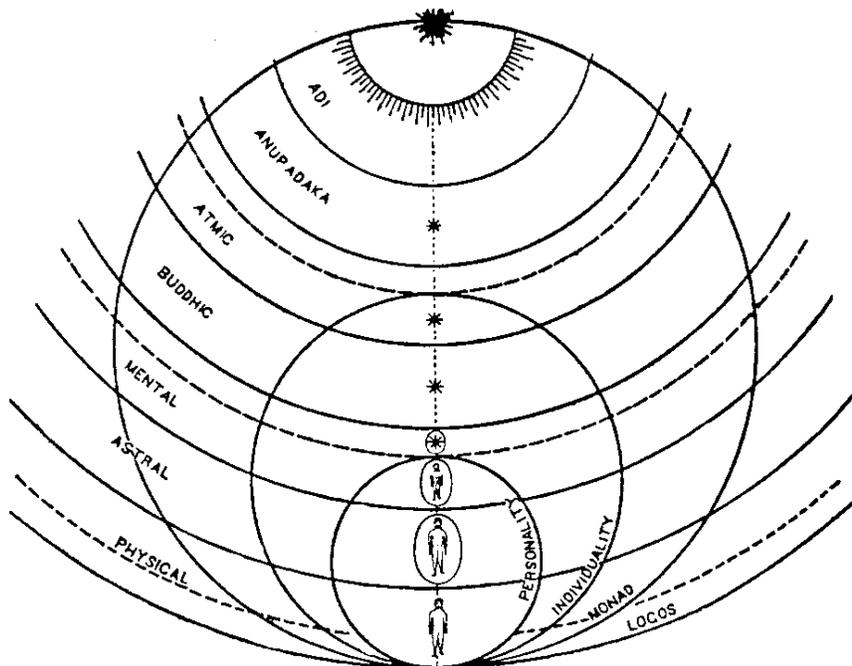


Figure 3

The smallest circle represents the limited working of consciousness on the lowest three planes—through the physical, astral and lower mental bodies—the sphere of the personality. The next larger circle represents the sphere of the individuality, which works through the atmic, buddhic, and causal bodies; it includes the personality within it. The individuality is in its turn contained within the far wider consciousness of the monad, which is rooted in the adi plane, functions on the anupadaka plane, and exercises its influence on the atmic plane in a manner which we cannot comprehend on the lower planes. And again, the monad, in some incomprehensible manner, is contained within the all-inclusive consciousness of the Logos. So we see that the personality, the individuality, and the monad are partial and differently limited manifestations of the consciousness of the Logos, each higher manifestation being fuller than the lower and containing the lower. The personality, the individuality, the monad and the Logos are called respectively *jiva*, *jivatma*, *atma*, and *paramatma* in Hindu terminology.

The personality is that ordinary, limited human consciousness that works through the physical, astral, and lower mental bodies. Because those three vehicles are temporary and are formed anew with every incarnation, the personality is obviously a temporary manifestation, dissolving and disappearing as these three bodies are destroyed, one after another, during the progressive recession of consciousness after death. Although the consciousness working through the personality is a ray of the Sun of divine consciousness, still, owing to the limitations and illusions of the lower planes, it loses its awareness of its divine origin, and a temporary entity that considers itself independent and separate from all others comes into being. This entity moves about upon the world stage for a number of years, then withdraws into the subtler planes after the death of the physical body, and having spent a longer or shorter time on those planes, ultimately dissolves and disappears forever.

If we identify ourselves with this illusory entity, we remain engrossed in its petty interests, oblivious of our greater destiny and of the far more splendid life that is hidden behind the mask of the personality. A few who see through this illusion take to the path that ultimately leads them to the realization of their divine nature and enables them to use the personality as an instrument of their higher Self. The vast majority of persons, however, are born, live, and die in this illusion, passing from life to life, living again and again, as unconscious of their true nature as the flowers in the field or the birds and beasts in the forest.

The next higher component of our inner constitution is the individuality, also called the higher Self, the Ego, or the *jivatma*. It works through the causal, buddhic, and atmic vehicles. It is the spiritual element in us, the immortal Self that endures from life to life and gradually unfolds all the divine attributes and powers from within itself during the long period of its evolution.

Just as there is a kind of unity and cohesion in the physical, astral, and lower mental bodies, which imparts to the consciousness working through them a sense of personality, in the same way the three higher bodies working on the atmic, buddhic, and higher mental planes are knit together and give a kind of unity to the consciousness working through them, this unified consciousness being called the individuality. The individuality, though it works under the limitations of its own planes, is still above many of the grosser illusions that cloud the vision of the personality and make it think of itself as a separate entity fighting for its independent existence against all the other manifestations of the divine life.

The higher Self is conscious of its divine, immortal nature, is aware of the unity of life and of its oneness with that life, and knows the divine purpose in evolution. It remembers all the separate lives through which it has passed in its successive personalities; it can identify itself in consciousness with all living beings through the buddhic vehicle; and it can, through the atmic vehicle, touch the divine consciousness. Gradually, as evolution proceeds, knowledge, wisdom, and power, which are the attributes of the divine life, appear in the individuality in an ever increasing measure, for its “future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor has no limit.”

But even this higher immortal Self, which is the spiritual element in us, is not the highest aspect of our nature. Within it abides eternally the monad (called *purusha* in Samkhya philosophy and *atma* in Vedanta). About that mysterious being, we cannot form any idea although it is the very core of our complex being. The individuality is immortal and though it has an immeasurably long life compared with the personality, still because it came into existence at a particular time—with the formation of the causal body—it must also eventually cease to be. But the monad is beyond time and lives in eternity.

The monad is one in essence with the solar Logos, a ray of the divine Sun, rooted in the adi plane, having its center of consciousness on the anupadaka plane, and overshadowing and influencing the individuality on the atmic plane. What appears as evolution and unfoldment of the individuality on the lower planes is in some mysterious way eternally present within the monad. That is why we do not evolve in a haphazard manner but become something that we already are in our eternal nature. This idea has been paradoxically expressed in the well-known esoteric maxim: “Become what you are.”

Each individuality is unique because it is the result of the expression of an archetype that, in some way incomprehensible to the human intellect, exists within the monad and is gradually expressed in time and space during the evolutionary process. All this, of course, appears absurd to the mere intellect, which is a very much lower expression of Reality and, therefore, cannot be expected to understand the higher

aspects of Truth without the light of intuition. But in the vision of the higher planes, what appears as nonsense to the intellect becomes as clear as daylight, and the paradoxes of the lower life turn into the indivisible and living realities of the higher life.

We thus see that although every individual unit of consciousness, called a monad, is merely a center through which the consciousness and life of the Logos finds expression on the various planes, still in considering the total constitution of such a unit we have to deal with three clearly marked and distinct components. Each lower component is a partial and more limited expression of the next higher component, and its purpose in the evolutionary scheme is to subserve the unfoldment of that higher component.

The function of the personality in bringing about the unfoldment of the individuality can be illustrated by an analogy with the growth of a tree. A tree puts forth new leaves every year in spring and through the foliage absorbs carbon dioxide, which after going through many changes is assimilated into the body of the tree and serves its growth. The tree sheds its leaves in autumn, but before this is done, the enriched sap is withdrawn into the body to be sent back again into the new leaves next spring. Year after year this process is repeated and the tree grows bigger and stronger in consequence. In a similar fashion the individuality takes a new set of bodies on the lowest planes and puts forth a portion of itself into the new personality thus formed. This personality lives its allotted span of years on earth, gathering a number of experiences, but before it dissolves and disappears after it has enjoyed the heaven life, it hands over the essence of its experiences to the individuality, in this way enriching its life and serving its growth. Thus every successive incarnation brings to greater perfection the faculties and powers latent in the individuality and provides a more efficient instrument for the expression of the divine life.

In a similar manner, but one we can hardly comprehend, the individuality is a partial expression of the monad and serves its unfoldment, although the word "unfoldment" can hardly give any idea of that process on the highest planes. We have no word for the process that takes place on the planes of the monad and corresponds to the gradual evolutionary unfoldment of all the qualities and powers in the individuality on the planes of atma, buddhi, and higher manas. Still, something of the sort and of a far more tremendous nature must be taking place because everything on the lower planes is a reflection of something far grander on the higher planes: "As above, so below."

Not only does the lower reflect the higher, but also everything that happens on the lower planes has its impact and influence on the higher planes. The inner and the outer, the higher and the lower, appear to be acting and reacting on each other all the time and, between them, bring about the process which we see as evolution or unfoldment.

An understanding of the relation between the personality and the individuality also throws light on some of the fundamental problems of the spiritual life. As long as consciousness is confined within the sphere of the personality and we identify ourselves with the illusory entity of the personality, which comes into existence in every incarnation, for all practical purposes we are that entity and must share its fate. If we live merely in our thoughts and emotions and remain completely engrossed in the temporary interests of the lower self, then with the dissolution of that self—which is inevitable—we also die.

But suppose our center of consciousness shifts from the personality to the individuality and we realize—not merely think or feel but actually realize—that we are that spiritual entity which is conscious of its divine nature. Then the personality becomes merely an appendage of ourselves, just as our coat is, and what happens to the personality does not really affect us. If our coat becomes worn-out or torn, we do not feel unhappy because we know that we can discard it and get another, but if our physical body gets old, we feel unhappy as if everything is over for us. Why? Because we identify ourselves with the physical body, even though we may intellectually know that it is only an instrument.

So the real challenge of the spiritual life is somehow to shift our focus of consciousness, which is now situated in the personality into the individuality and to live from that center, using the personality as a mere instrument on the lower planes. When we succeed in doing that, we still work through our physical body, our mind, and emotions, but we are always conscious of the distinction between our real Self and the bodies we use on the lower planes. We are always conscious of our higher nature, and when we use the lower bodies, we are aware of descending into them, as it were, in order to use them on their respective planes.

This establishment of our consciousness in the higher spiritual realms gives us freedom, immortality, and bliss because it makes us independent of the personality, which is subject to the limitations of change, illusion, and death. Immortality and peace can never be found in the sphere of the personality. It is futile to seek them there. We may be able to prolong our physical existence for some length of time, we may live in the heaven world for thousands of years, but a time must come when the causes we have generated in the past incarnation are exhausted and that personality dissolves never to come into existence again.

Wise people who realize this fact and know they are sailing on a ship that is bound to founder one day take the earliest opportunity to find terra firma from where they can view with equanimity the surging ocean of existence. And this terra firma is that spiritual consciousness that abides within us always and is our true home. In the later stages of evolution, the focus of consciousness shifts still further inward and gets

stabilized in the plane of the monad. During the long ages of our evolutionary progress, the focus of our consciousness moves ever inward toward the center which is the consciousness of the Logos, though it can never reach that center: “You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame.”

Spiritual evolution means shifting the center of our consciousness towards the divine center of our being and realizing our divinity more and more. It does not mean perfecting the personality, which by its very nature must remain imperfect and limited to a great extent. The spiritual unfoldment of the individuality is certainly reflected in the personality but only to a limited extent, because the limitations inherent in the lower planes prevent the full expression of the individuality.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Consciousness is one. The way consciousness is expressed is manifold, depending on the level at which it expresses itself.
2. At each level of its expression, consciousness functions through a “vehicle” or a body composed of matter at that level. These bodies are not completely separate, but each influences the way consciousness can function through any of the others.
3. All consciousness is ultimately the consciousness of the Logos—the divine consciousness of a particular world.
4. The Logoic consciousness is reflected in us in three identities, each functioning on three levels:
 - a) Monad on the adi, anupadaka, and higher atmic (three levels of cosmic consciousness)—an eternal spark or ray from the divine sun of the Logos
 - b) Individuality on the lower atmic (self-consciousness), buddhic (intuitive intellect), and higher manasic (the inward directed mind)—the immortal reincarnating entity
 - c) Personality on the lower manasic (outward directed mind), astral (emotions), and physical (body)—the mortal expression, lasting one lifetime only
5. We can be conscious of ourselves as any of those three identities. If we identify with the personality, we have identified with something fleeting, impermanent, transitory. The immediate challenge of the spiritual life is to identify instead with the individuality.

6. Identifying with the individuality rather than the personality is the aim of self-discovery or self-realization or yoga.
7. That aim is achieved, not by perfecting the personality, but by transcending it, and thus transforming our awareness of who we are.

QUESTIONS

1. What other points made in this chapter would you add to those listed above?
2. What is the practical importance of knowing about the levels on which consciousness functions, and the grouping of those levels into the three identities?
3. Why does the author caution us that consciousness is one, not three or seven?
4. What levels of consciousness are you aware of functioning on at different times during the day or night? (Don't limit your consideration to those mentioned in this chapter—they can be subdivided in various ways to make others.)
5. List some ways in which one level of consciousness affects other levels. (Use either the levels mentioned in this chapter or those from question 4.)
6. What is the practical importance of the author's remark that spiritual evolution means "shifting the center of our consciousness towards the divine center of our being" rather than "perfecting the personality"?

Chapter 3

SELF-DISCOVERY – A SCIENCE (Part 1)

One of the striking features of the present age is its lack of any real comprehension regarding human nature. We are trying to know everything in the universe. We can say with certainty what stars, millions of miles away, are made of. We know thoroughly the constitution of atoms and molecules. But about ourselves, we know practically nothing. And what is more striking is the fact that many of us are content to live our lives without caring to know where we came from, what our real nature is, why we are here in this world, and where we go after death. It is really amazing how the vast majority of people in the world can live through their lives without asking such questions.

One consequence of the lack of knowledge regarding human nature and our inner constitution is the indefiniteness of our ideas about human character. The word “character” is used generally in a very vague manner for the mental and moral qualities as well as the idiosyncrasies that “characterize” a particular individual. The real “Self” with its several vehicles of consciousness standing behind the physical vehicle is unknown and unrecognized. Only as much of its complex nature as is able to find expression through the comparatively dense and inelastic medium of the physical vehicle is taken to be the individual’s real nature.

The word “character” is commonly used to sum up a number of quite different things: physical habits, emotional and mental responses, and spiritual impulses. It includes all the tendencies we have to behave in a peculiar way under various circumstances. Yet we know very little about why human beings behave in those particular ways and how these various elements of human “character” are related to one another.

With such confusion of ideas on the subject it is hardly possible to evolve a system of character-building or of Self-discovery. Without clearer ideas of what we are doing, we may be able to bring about certain changes in our characters, but our efforts are bound to be haphazard and of limited success. For a real system of character-building and Self-discovery, we should have, first of all, a clear concept of human nature, our total constitution and the powers and faculties latent in us. We should also know the laws that govern the workings of consciousness through its several vehicles.

Mere knowledge of such matters is not enough. We must also develop a technique that enables us to apply natural laws to the various problems connected with the unfoldment of consciousness in its vehicles. And lastly, we ought to have a clear idea of what we are aiming at, the goal we want to reach, and the various stages on the path leading to that goal. It is only in the Wisdom Tradition that all these elements needed

for evolving a satisfactory system of character-building and Self-discovery are to be found.

What is character according to the Wisdom Tradition? The whole manifested universe, according to that Tradition, is the expression of the divine life, which is building up form after form and trying to express itself through these forms with ever increasing perfection. The expression of that divine life has reached a critical stage, a turning point, in those individualized units of consciousness which are human beings.

In every human being, there is a constant interplay between consciousness and the vehicles through which it works. Some patterns of that interplay are common to all human beings. They are the general characteristics of our kind, with which we are all familiar. Other patterns are peculiar to a particular individual, and they are what we call that individual's character.

Because of the many patterns that the interplay between consciousness and its vehicles assumes in actual life, we may wonder whether there is any relationship among the various human characteristics, and if so, what it is. Despite the difficulty of classifying the various elements of human character, we can do so, provided we get the proper clue to the basis for this classification. That clue is found in the triple nature of the divine life, a teaching found in one form or another in practically all the great religions of the world.

The divine triple nature gives rise to three fundamental aspects of consciousness, which in Sanskrit are called *sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda* (being, awareness, and bliss or joy). It also gives rise to three fundamental qualities of matter, in Sanskrit called *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* (inertia, energy, and harmony). The divine nature has this double threefold reflection because consciousness and matter are the results of the primary differentiation of the Absolute in the manifested world.

The triplicities that are observable everywhere in nature are reflections on the lower planes of the fundamental triplicities of consciousness and matter. The great variety of phenomena in the world (the "ten thousand things") result from the varying conditions on the successive planes and the innumerable permutations and combinations of the basic aspects and qualities in manifestation.

It is obviously impossible for us to go into that complexity here, but we can simply note that all the qualities and traits that make up the characters of individuals are merely modes of expression of the fundamental aspects of the divine nature on the lower planes of manifestation. An analogy is that all the colors of nature or art are combinations of three primary pigments—blue, red, and yellow. A few illustrations of character differences may help to make this clear.

When the *sat* (being) aspect of consciousness is reflected in the sphere of the personality it can give rise to a number of qualities which, though outwardly different from one another, are found on closer examination to have a common basis. Take, for instance, the following well-known traits of character: courage, strength, decision. If we analyze these qualities we find that they represent merely different modes of manifestation of the principle of stability implied in the *sat* aspect.

When a person pursues a predetermined line of action in spite of threatening dangers, that person is said to have courage. Courage is stability amid difficulties. When a person pursues a predetermined course of action in spite of temptations, that person is said to have strength. Strength is stability amid temptations. When a person sticks to a chosen line of action in spite of alternative courses of action, that person is said to show decision of character. Decision is stability amid mental distractions. So we see that these traits of character like courage, strength, and decision, which outwardly seem unlike are really the principle of stability manifesting under different conditions of life. Stability is a fundamental attribute of Will, which is a reflection of the *sat* aspect of consciousness.

The other two aspects of consciousness are similar. When the *ānanda* (bliss) aspect is reflected in the sphere of the personality, it gives rise to Wisdom. One of the fundamental attributes of wisdom is the perception of the unity of life manifesting through all forms. On the higher planes of the spirit this perception is direct and clear, but in the region of the personality unity is merely sensed and appears as love in various forms. Qualities such as affection, compassion, and devotion are based on an indirect perception of unity, their differences being the result of the different circumstances under which the sense of unity is expressed.

Thus when we feel an inner kinship with another individual, whether that individual is related to us in this life or not, we are said to have affection. Affection is love called forth by association in past lives in various kinds of relationships. When we see another human being in a degraded condition—the divine life being overpowered by the weaknesses that beset the bodies—and our love goes out to our fellow creature, we are said to have compassion. Compassion is love going out to those who are weak and need our sympathy and help. When we see another individual embodying the ideal that we adore and our love goes out to that individual with a desire to link our life to that individual's larger life, we are said to show devotion. Devotion is love given to one whom we recognize as our superior in wisdom, power, or knowledge. We thus see again that a number of elements of human character are merely reflections in the various conditions of human life of the aspect of consciousness called *ānanda*.

When the third aspect of consciousness is reflected in the sphere of the personality it gives rise to knowledge of concrete objects. Observation, memory, reasoning, and

other functions of the lower mind are reflections of the *chit* (awareness) aspect of consciousness under different conditions. Thus for example, when we put ourselves in touch mentally with any unfamiliar object through our physical senses we are said to observe it. Observation is an aspect of the mind gathering its material. When the mind takes an impression of any object to be used later on in its operations, memory comes into play. Memory is mind retaining its material for future use. When the various objects that have been observed are compared and contrasted and conclusions are drawn, the mind is said to reason. Reasoning is mind establishing relations between the objects it has observed and retained in the storehouse of memory. All these mental faculties are connected with knowledge in one way or another and are derived from the *chit* aspect of consciousness.

SAT	CHIT	ANANDA
Being	Awareness	Bliss
Will	Activity	Wisdom
Stability	Knowledge	Love
• Courage	• Observation	• Affection
• Strength	• Memory	• Compassion
• Decision	• Reasoning	• Devotion
Tamas	Rajas	Sattva
Inertia	Energy	Harmony

What has been said above shows that all the human characteristics and faculties we call by various names are merely manifestations of the three aspects of consciousness, in their many permutations and combinations. Some of these characteristics are simple derivatives of one particular aspect while others are complex derivatives combining more than one aspect. In either case, the expressions are further modified and complicated by the distinctive character of the several vehicles as the *sāttvic*, *rājasic*, or *tāmasic* element predominates in them.

This view of the nature of human characteristics and faculties will perhaps enable us to understand to some extent what human character is and thus to lay the foundations of a real system of character-building and Self-discovery. The character of a particular individual is the sum total of all the different modes in which his consciousness manifests through his various vehicles—physical, astral, mental, and spiritual. This sum total can only be a small fraction of the totality of modes of manifestation that are possible to the divine consciousness working through each of us. As the individual evolves, all the possibilities locked up in that fragment of divinity pass, one by one,

from latency into potency, and the character becomes a richer and more efficient instrument of the divine life.

Science provides an analogy for the gradual appearance of qualities from a latent state. If a solid like a piece of metal is heated progressively, it begins to give out vibrations of different frequencies. When the solid becomes incandescent, these vibrations can be analyzed by a spectroscope and are found to give a spectrum showing which vibrations are active in the incandescent body. As the temperature of the body is raised, step by step, more and more lines appear and the spectrum of the incandescent body gradually approximates to the spectrum of the sun, in which all possible vibrations are represented. Dark lines or bands in such a spectrum represent the absence of vibrations of the corresponding frequencies and the number of such dark lines or bands becomes smaller as the temperature of the body rises and the gamut of vibrations become more and more complete.

The analogy of this phenomenon to human evolution and the progressive appearance of our faculties and powers is apparent. All the attributes of the divine life are present in a latent form in every individual fragment of divinity. As the individual (or *jīvātmā*) evolves, these attributes are brought into manifestation one after another, and gradually the individual approaches that condition of relative perfection in which all the attributes are in full manifestation. So the character of any individual is really the incomplete spectrum of divine qualities that individual shows at a particular stage of development. The light of consciousness manifesting through the imperfect vehicles produces the partial spectrum.

The character of a perfect being shows the complete spectrum of divine qualities and so is like the spectrum of the sun. That of an ordinary imperfect individual can be only like the spectrum given by an incandescent solid body, showing some bright lines of developed qualities separated by dark lines of undeveloped qualities. The Wisdom Tradition does not recognize the existence of positive evil qualities. They are the dark lines or bands of the character spectrum, which are bound to disappear in course of time as the individual evolves and develops the corresponding positive qualities.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Despite all the new knowledge available to us today, we still lack knowledge of what is most important—knowledge of ourselves.
2. The particular patterns by which consciousness and its material vehicles interact within an individual is that individual's character.

3. To change those patterns effectively, we need to know (a) what they are, (b) what we want them to be, and (c) how universal laws can be applied to the process of changing them.
4. Consciousness has three aspects (being, awareness, and bliss) which interact with three aspects of matter (inertia, energy, and harmony), thereby producing the characteristic qualities of all things.
5. Stable qualities like courage, strength, and decision are expressions of inertial being; knowledgeable qualities like observation, memory, and reason are expressions of energetic awareness; loving qualities like affection, compassion, and devotion are expressions of harmonious bliss.
6. We all have within ourselves the potential of a complete and perfect expression of all possible divine qualities; but they become actualized only as we are able to develop those qualities within ourselves.

QUESTIONS

1. What is it about human nature that the present age (including our science, philosophy, and religion) is ignorant of?
2. Using your own words, express what the author means by "character."
3. In what sense is the human being a critical stage or turning point in the evolutionary expression of the divine life?
4. In what ways do the qualities of matter (inertia, energy, and harmony) seem to parallel the aspects of consciousness (being, awareness, and bliss)?
5. What are some other ways that the qualities of stability, knowledge, and love appear in human behavior, either positively or negatively?
6. What, according to the Wisdom Tradition, is "evil"?

Chapter 4

SELF-DISCOVERY – A SCIENCE (Part 2)

From what has been said in the first part of this chapter, it should be clear that the building of our character, in the widest sense of the term, is nothing but bringing out from the hidden recesses of our divine nature all those qualities that are already there in a latent form. In the process, we approximate our imperfect nature more and more to that divine perfection that contains all the qualities in harmonious and balanced completeness.

If character-building is a system, it should be possible to do this in an orderly and confident way. It can be done confidently because we know what we have to do and how we have to do it, as a result of the knowledge which has been placed at our disposal by the Adepts of the Wisdom Tradition. It can be done in an orderly way because the unfoldment of our inner qualities is a natural process governed by laws that are as immutable and reliable as the laws governing the physical world.

The use of the expression “character-building” for this process of inner unfoldment may give a wrong impression in two ways. First, it may give the impression that something has to be constructed like a building or a machine, whereas the actual process is that of releasing an inner reality already existing in its fullness somewhere within us. The process is really the gradual and increasing release of a life of infinite possibilities, the progressive expansion of consciousness that will ultimately embrace everything in the universe. What need to be constructed and evolved are the lower vehicles through which the divine life within us finds expression, and not the life itself or its expression. For that reason, we can also call the process “Self-discovery.”

The second wrong impression we might get from the phrase “character-building” is that the character we are developing limits and restricts the freedom of life’s expression. If the mind is made to function in certain healthy patterns of behavior, they no more restrict its freedom and activity than certain desirable and necessary physical habits restrict our physical life.

It is not habits, physical or mental, which restrict the freedom of our expression but the lack of buddhi or *viveka* (discrimination) which makes us unaware of our limitations and thus dominated by them. The more our higher nature develops and takes control of the lower vehicles, the less hampering and innocuous habits become. Habits merely enable the soul to relegate to the mechanism of the unconscious mind various physical and mental activities that would otherwise claim its attention, wasting time and energy unnecessarily.

The problem of evolving a perfect character is mainly one of studying all our vehicles and their functions and then taking the necessary steps to perfect the functions of those vehicles. It is not possible to do this on the basis of conventional scientific, philosophical, or religious knowledge. In none of those forms of knowledge do we find the needed elements for a system of character-building.

The necessary knowledge for such a system is found only in the Wisdom Tradition, the Adepts of which have for ages been experimenting along these lines and so have been able to evolve an effective technique for this purpose. An attempt is made in subsequent chapters to take up, one by one, the various human vehicles, to deal with their respective functions, as far as they can be understood by us on the lower planes, and then to show the preliminary steps by which these functions can be improved. Only in this manner is it possible to deal systematically with the problem of Self-discovery.

The work of building our character has to be approached in both a systematic manner and a scientific spirit. This means two things. First, that we should adopt a scientific attitude toward the whole problem. A "scientific attitude" means that we must realize clearly that in dealing with all these vehicles we are working in spheres with natural laws as dependable as those in the physical world, upon which the whole structure of modern science has been built.

It is necessary to emphasize the scientific nature of character-building because there is a prevalent misconception about all aspects of life outside the domain of the physical. Ordinary people and even many scientists have very odd notions about things of a mental or moral nature. They take it for granted that everything in the physical world happens according to fixed natural laws but that, in the sphere of our mental or moral life, nothing is definite and certain. We talk about mental and moral laws, but very few people take them seriously. This misconception really amounts to supposing that one portion of the universe is a cosmos while the rest is a chaos, but the absurdity of such an attitude is not generally realized by people who are too much engrossed in the physical to see anything beyond.

There is one criterion by which we can judge whether we are firmly grounded in the laws of the inner life. Does failure to get the expected results in any experiments that we may be making with our inner life depress us and make us doubt the validity of those laws? Or do we consider such failure merely as a consequence of our not providing all the necessary conditions for success? Many people who take to Self-discovery and start working on their thoughts and emotions feel discouraged because they do not get the expected results as quickly as they would like, and some even give up all efforts, thinking there is nothing certain in this activity. That attitude is quite unscientific and shows that they have not understood the very basis of Self-discovery.

The scientific attitude toward such problems also means that we should not regard the phenomena of the higher life as mysterious. It is true that we have to approach these higher realms of the invisible in a spirit of reverence, but that should not make us forget that these realms are subject to natural laws and that the secrets of those realms can be obtained only by experimentation and the proper utilization of the laws operating in them. All the facts and laws, which in their entirety constitute the Wisdom Tradition, have been discovered, not by any mysterious process, but by experimentation with the help of superphysical faculties and powers. They have been verified again and again by the students and Adepts of the Tradition, who have trodden this path of inner development and found its laws to be utterly dependable under all conditions.

When students enter this vast and fascinating field of discovering their inner nature and undertake to dig out of it various extraordinary faculties and capacities, they should understand that they can get anything they want, provided they have the key of knowledge and the will to persevere in spite of all the difficulties that are bound to come their way. Mere theoretical knowledge is not enough. They must experiment. They must themselves verify and gain direct knowledge of the laws of the inner life and evolve a technique for the effective application of those laws. Only in this way can they advance steadily in knowledge of their own unfathomable nature and the external universe in which they live.

We should be on our guard against one thing. The fact that the phenomena of mind are subject to natural laws does not mean that we can get the results as quickly and in the same manner as in the case of physical or mechanical phenomena. The results of experiments in the realm of mechanics, chemistry, or physics appear immediately because no life processes are involved. With life processes, not only is the phenomenon far more complicated, but also the results are obtained only after a comparatively much longer time.

In the case of biological phenomena, the results take much longer to appear and are not obtained with as much certainty as in the case of mechanical phenomena. On account of the complexity of the process we are far more liable to miss or ignore some factors, and they account for the failure. As soon as the omission is remedied the results appear as expected. We do not say that biology is not a science because of this time lag or uncertainty. It is a science despite these factors because its results depend ultimately on natural laws, however long or complex the process of their working out may be.

Similarly in the case of mental and spiritual phenomena, a time lag or a failure to get an expected result under certain conditions does not mean that there are no immutable laws operating in these spheres. It only means that the conditions are different and more complicated and so require a far more intelligent adjustment. So let us not imagine that, because the field of Self-discovery is governed by natural laws, our

task is like that of assembling an automobile on a production line and then driving off to our destination. The problem is full of difficulties and complications of all kinds, which require careful handling and patient and prolonged effort. But the results are based on natural laws, and therefore our ultimate success is sure. It is only in this sense that Self-discovery or yoga is a science.

The goal of Self-discovery is broadly indicated in a previous chapter. Essentially, it is living a life of perfect freedom in conscious at-one-ment with the divine Spirit and wielding with perfect mastery the powers and faculties belonging to all the planes in carrying out the divine Will. But this is a goal that an aspirant can reach only after several lives of intensive effort.

So has Self-discovery nothing to offer us here and now? Do we have to take this long and arduous journey merely in the hope of becoming perfect and enlightened in some future life? Certainly not. Those who go through this book will see immediately that even a little progress made in this line will be of great advantage in freeing us from most of the anxieties and miseries of life.

Imagine your life as it would be if you were able to acquire control over your physical body, emotions, and thoughts and were able to regulate their activities in accordance with the dictates of your reason and higher judgment. Imagine yourself without physical attachments, without emotional disturbances, without the worries and anxieties of a disturbed and harassed mind, living a perfectly serene life amid the circumstances in which your lot is cast, depending on your inner resources for that strength and happiness which others seek, in vain, in the outer world. And amid this calm and Self-controlled life, imagine yourself progressing constantly and zealously toward your ultimate goal, which is enlightenment. This is a state worth striving for by any person, and it can be achieved in this life, provided that the task of changing the inner life is tackled with earnestness and determination.

The time we take in reaching our final goal will naturally depend on the efforts we have made in this direction in our past lives, on our stage of evolution, and on our karma. But nothing can prevent us from acquiring a state of mental poise, calmness, and peace in this life—now, if we are sufficiently earnest.

So Self-discovery has a message of hope and encouragement and offers a happy life for everyone. No one who makes an earnest beginning can fail to reap benefits from the very start. Even when death comes, we will know that we have laid the foundations of an enlightened and free life, have set our feet on the path that leads to our goal, and will take up in our next life this fascinating work at the point where we have dropped it in this one.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. What we “build” in character-building are more effective channels for the expression of consciousness. What we “discover” in Self-discovery are ways to actualize the latent qualities within ourselves.
2. There is a system of character-building or Self-discovery that we can go about in an orderly and confident way because the inner worlds of consciousness are governed by natural laws just as the physical world is.
3. That system requires us to know the nature of the vehicles through which consciousness expresses itself because we can effectively change only what we know or discover and only if we know how to search.
4. Failure to achieve results we expect does not mean that results cannot be achieved, but rather is a sign that our methods or expectations are faulty or that our perseverance is lacking. The more inward the realms in which we work, the more complex is the working.
5. Following the system may not produce instantaneous enlightenment, but it will make small improvements in our lives here and now and will prepare the way for eventual greater improvements.

QUESTIONS

1. The terms “character-building” and “Self-discovery” are both metaphors. What does each imply, and what are the advantages of each metaphor? Can you think of other metaphorical terms that might be used for the same process?
2. Some people have said that enlightenment comes suddenly and unexpectedly, like flipping on a light switch; others have said it comes gradually and after preparation, like turning up a dimmer switch. Can those two views be reconciled?
3. What are the implications of saying that there is a “system” for building character or discovering Self?
4. Are habits an impediment to our progress—why? What does interfere with progress?
5. What stumbling blocks may we encounter, and what can we do about them?

Instructor's Note:

The first three chapters of Taimni's book give an overview of its subject: character-building or Self-discovery or, as we might call it, walking the Path or living Theosophy. With the fourth chapter, we enter the second part of the book, in which each of the vehicles of consciousness is examined in more detail. The purpose of this examination is generally to give information about the topic, but more specifically to suggest practical ways that information can be used in living.

The next group of chapters come in pairs, the first chapter in each pair giving information about one or another of the vehicles of consciousness, and the second proposing ways that information can be put to use. This and the following chapter deal with the physical body. Succeeding chapters will treat the subtler bodies of desire, mind, and so on.

Chapter 5

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

Previous chapters give a bird's-eye view of the whole problem of Self-discovery and show that the process consists partly in bringing to perfection the various vehicles of consciousness that the individual uses on several planes. The outermost and densest of these vehicles is the physical body, which is also the vehicle we are most familiar with. We will therefore consider this body first. From the known to the unknown is always the best way to approach any subject.

The physical body is the subject of two different confusions of attitude. Some people pay an undue amount of attention to the problems connected with it and fuss a great deal about nonessentials, so that they become obsessed with their physical natures. Others, especially in India, totally neglect it, under the mistaken notion that the lower life on the physical plane is *māyā* or illusion, so it does not matter how we live and how we treat the physical body.

The proper attitude to adopt toward the physical body is to consider it as an instrument of consciousness for its work on the physical plane. Any sort of instrument should be kept in perfect order, so that it can perform its functions efficiently. A musician who neglects his violin and lets it get out of tune is as foolish as the one who fusses unnecessarily about its superficial embellishments.

Before we consider methods of improving and sensitizing the physical body to make it a better instrument for the work of the individuality, we need to understand the nature and functions of this instrument. If we want to use anything for a particular purpose, we first have to understand the thing as thoroughly as possible. Horse-trainers know very well the nature of a horse, and that knowledge lets them bring even a wild horse under control and train it for specific work. Teachers must know the nature of children if they are to guide a child in the right way. Similarly, we must understand our physical body well if we want it to be an efficient and controlled instrument for our use.

The first thing necessary is to have a general idea of the body's constitution and its internal anatomy. Any elementary textbook on physiology will give an idea about these matters. Many otherwise educated and sensible people do not know even the most elementary facts about their bodies—the position and functions of the organs, for example. They may know more about the constitution of the sun or the functioning of an automobile than about what is inside themselves. Such ignorance is a sad commentary on our educational system.

An important result of knowledge about the internal structure of the physical body is that it enables us more easily to objectify the body, that is, to see it as something

different from ourselves, an instrument and not ourselves. If we know only the outer appearance of the body, we are more apt to identify ourselves with it than we are if we see it as it is actually—a complicated living system, more elaborate in its working than an industrial plant.

Next we need to be aware of how the body functions. We see that it is an instrument, but what is its use? It is an instrument by which the individual comes in contact with the physical plane. Slowly, through a long process of development, this instrument has been evolved according to a model or blueprint given by the divine agencies working in the Solar System. It enables the individual both to be affected by and to affect objects on the physical plane. With the help of the five sense-organs (called *jñāendriyas* in Sanskrit), consciousness gains knowledge of the physical plane. Through the organs of action (*karmendriyas* in Sanskrit), it brings about changes in the outer world. These organs have been gradually developed during the evolution of the physical body.

The importance of sense-organs for our knowledge of the physical world can be demonstrated by a simple experiment. Close your sense avenues one after another, as far as possible, and you will find your contact with the physical world becoming more and more limited until, if all five avenues are closed, you will find yourself completely cut off from the physical world. All that remains will be mental images conjured up by the imagination or the memory from former contact with the physical world.

Looked at this way, the physical body is nothing but a portable instrument combining in itself the functions of a radio transmitter and receiver. From the physical world it catches vibrations, such as those of light and sound, through its sense organs and carries these vibrations inward to consciousness. From the consciousness within, it receives motor impulses and thoughts, and through the organs of action it transmits those to the outer world.

We are the inner consciousness that carries this portable instrument about on our two feet to put ourselves in touch with various parts of the physical world. Yet, so ingrained has become our habit of identifying ourselves with the physical body that if, instead of saying, “I am doing this” or “I am going there,” we used language more in harmony with the facts and said, “I am causing my physical body to do this” or “I am taking my physical body there,” it would sound strange.

Modern scientists, who have given several centuries of continuous research to the investigation of the physical body, have been able to gain very detailed information with regard to its mechanism. Every muscle, bone, nerve, and artery has been thoroughly investigated and cataloged. How the various metabolic processes take place has been determined. But despite this tremendous amount of work, they have missed entirely more than one half of the physical body.

This omission is due to the materialistic approach of ordinary science. That approach, valuable as it is, can deal only with the dense parts of the physical world, including the physical body. We now come to a very important contribution made by the Wisdom Tradition to an understanding of our physical constitution. It tells us that, in addition to the dense level of the physical, there are other, subtler levels.

The dense physical body (called *annamaya-kosha* or “sheath made of food” in Vedantic terminology and *sthula sharira* or “gross envelope” in other Indic systems) is that part of our physical form which the scientists have investigated and which we can see with our eyes. It is composed of matter belonging to the three lower subplanes or states of matter of the physical plane—solid, liquid and gaseous matter. Besides these three physical subplanes or states, there are four others, subtler than and interpenetrating solid, liquid, and gaseous matter.

The techniques of science are not adapted to the study of these subtler states of matter. But the matter belonging to these four finer grades enters into the composition of a subtler counterpart of the physical body often called the etheric double in modern Theosophical literature or *linga sharira* (“model envelope”) in older Theosophical writings and *prānamaya-kosha* (“sheath made of vital breath”) in Vedantic terminology.

The term “etheric” was used because the four finer states of matter beyond the solid, liquid, and gaseous were referred to as “ethers,” a scientific term of the nineteenth century, now no longer used by scientists. This subtler physical form was called a “double” because it is the counterpart of the dense physical body, though it projects out from the dense body about three inches on all sides. The etheric double is not a separate vehicle of consciousness, but rather a complement of the dense body, the two together constituting the whole physical body.

The function of the etheric double is to serve as the vehicle of *prāna*, an energy which in its various modifications preserves and regulates the activities of the physical body. This energy is obtained from the sun, analyzed into its constituents by an energy center (or *chakra*) located near the spleen, and then the currents of these different kinds of *prāna* are carried to all parts of the body along well marked channels to do their specialized work in those parts. This vitality is needed to maintain the physical body. Food and drink are needed by the physical body for repair of the tissues, for producing heat, and for many other purposes, but the body’s vitality comes also from this vital energy called “prana” in India and “chi” in China.

Just as conventional anatomy is unaware of the existence of prana or the channels it follows throughout the body, it is also unaware of some of the functions of certain physical organs. Two examples are the pineal gland and the pituitary body, which are situated within the brain. Biologists suppose both these organs to be rudimentary,

having played their part in earlier evolution, but now having only a minor role in supplying certain secretions for the growth and maintenance of the physical body.

The real function of these organs lies not in the past, but in the future of our evolution. The pituitary body is the organ which serves as a valve for the transmission of vibrations belonging to the planes of buddhi and higher mind into the physical brain. Its vivification forms part of the training which every advanced student preparing for practical work goes through. The pineal gland is the organ for thought transference, and its vivification enables one person to send thoughts to another.

One of the chakras is mentioned above. They have been dealt with extensively in Theosophical and yogic literature. When the etheric double is examined by clairvoyant sight, it contains at various points vortices in which matter is churning round and round with great rapidity. These vortices have a shining appearance and seem to be divided into varied numbers of colored segments called petals from their appearance. The vortices are the chakras (Sanskrit for "wheel"), which serve as points of contact between the physical and subtler vehicles.

At these chakra points, various kinds of forces enter from the emotional world into the physical body, and their peculiar churning motion is due to this rapid influx of forces from a higher dimension. The chakras have several functions, one of the most important being as a bridge for consciousness, their vivification enabling us to establish direct conscious communication between the physical and emotional planes. When the chakras are vivified, it becomes possible to bring down into the physical brain clear and correct memories of all the experiences we go through on the emotional plane. Then for all practical purposes the two planes become as one, part of the waking consciousness.

The chakras are vivified with the help of kundalini, a mysterious force with its seat at the base of the spine, which plays an important part in yogic practice. Certain yogic practices, which should never be attempted except under the direct guidance of a competent teacher, arouse this force and make it pass upward along the inner passage in the spinal column (called the *sushumna*). As kundalini passes through the chakras, it vivifies them, activating various latent abilities. But all such practices are undertaken in the last stages of the path of discipleship leading to enlightenment, and no novice can dabble in these things except at great peril to the physical body.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. We should not identify with the physical body, because it is not us, but rather an instrument we use. On the other hand, we should not neglect it, for an instrument is useful only when adequately understood and well cared for.
2. The physical body is our interface with the world, through which we learn about our physical environment and by which we influence that environment. It is our point of contact with the physical world.
3. The physical body has two levels, a dense body, which we are aware of through our ordinary senses, and a subtle counterpart, one of whose functions is to distribute vital energy or prana all through the body.
4. Some organs in the dense physical body have subtle functions unknown to conventional physiology, and the subtle body has its own organs or chakras, which are connecting points between the physical and subtler realms of being.
5. Manipulation of the subtler energies, such as that called kundalini, should not be undertaken without the guidance and supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced teacher.

QUESTIONS

1. Give some examples of ways in which we both overvalue and undervalue the physical body.
2. Get a good basic book on human anatomy and find in it something you did not know before about your own body.
3. Sit opposite another person, with each of you extending your arms toward the other, so that the palms of your hand are facing the other person's. Begin with your palms about a foot apart; then slowly move them toward the other person's. Is there a point at which, without touching the other person, you sense something? What is the sensation? (If another person is not handy, you can do this alone by bringing the palms of your two hands toward each other in front of you.)
4. One of the most popular books on the chakras is *The Chakras* by C. W. Leadbeater. Read it to see what he says on the subject.

Chapter 6

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION, AND SENSITIZATION OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

The preceding chapter dealt with the constitution and functions of the physical body as an instrument of the soul on the physical plane. If we are treading the path, which leads ultimately to perfection, we must train and develop this body so it can function as perfectly as possible. Certain limitations inherent in the nature of the physical plane cannot be overcome, but even within these limitations, it is possible to bring the body to a very much higher stage of efficiency and perfection as an instrument of the soul.

We are told that in the far distant future, when the matter of the physical plane is far more highly evolved than it is now, physical bodies will be more fitted to respond to the vibrations from the higher planes, and the people of that time will be able to bring down far more of their divinity into physical consciousness than they now can. But our present limitations should not discourage us. We still have vast possibilities of progress and advancement, and all that can be expected of us is that we make the best use of the available material.

The first problem we have to tackle in dealing with the physical body is to bring it under our control. Without gaining some measure of control, we cannot either purify it or make it sufficiently sensitive to the delicate vibrations coming from within. The physical body is a living instrument, not an inanimate instrument like an automobile or a violin, which obeys the laws of physics and chemistry only. The body is semi-conscious, and it has fixed habits and idiosyncrasies, as well as a will of its own, so that it can, and does, resist our attempts to change its ways.

All of us have experienced resistance from the physical body if we have ever tried to change our physical habits and mode of living. Most of the trouble we encounter when we try to change the way we live is due, not to the physical body, but to the desire and mental bodies because the physical body is the instrument through which our desire and mental bodies try to gain what they want. But still, apart from our desires and mental nature, there is something left over, something with its origin in the physical part of our being. The physical body has to be reckoned with in our attempt to acquire mastery over our lower nature.

The first step in bringing the physical body under our control is to separate ourselves in consciousness from it and to realize as fully as possible that we are different from and are master of this body. One reason to learn about the physical body is to give us the ability to separate ourselves mentally from it to objectify it, so that we do not

regard it as ourselves, but as an object apart from us. This power of objectification and dissociation of the body from ourselves must be developed by a course of training until we do not identify ourselves with it any more than we do with a car we drive.

We don't expect a car to run without proper gas, oil, antifreeze, water, and so on. If we take care of the car, see that it is lubricated and has regular service, it will run better and last longer than if we do not maintain it. But we do not expect the car to determine what we do with it. The car is not us, but a vehicle we use. We drive it; it does not drive us. We decide where we with our bodies.

The body differs from the car in that it is a living vehicle with whims and idiosyncrasies, with a natural desire to feel comfort and avoid whatever it is not used to. Yet it too must be controlled and directed. The way to gain control and direction is not merely by thinking. It requires a persistent and consistent discipline. Without such discipline, we cannot develop the capacity to dissociate ourselves from the body, and so, unaware, we continue to let it drive us.

"Discipline" does not mean, however, going to the other extreme and torturing the body or subjecting it to unnecessary strain as is done by some misguided ascetics. Extreme methods are wholly wrong, and all great Teachers have warned us against them. The physical body is brought under control simply by applying a steady pressure of will to change undesirable habits and using patience and common sense in managing it. The purpose of intelligently practiced austerities (called *tapas* in Sanskrit) is to acquire control over the physical body and make it an obedient servant of the soul, so that it carries out efficiently and without resistance whatever it is required to do. Every person (a *sādhaka* in Sanskrit) who follows such a regimen can devise his or her own methods for acquiring this kind of control, for the needs of each person are different. What suits one may be unnecessary for another.

Suppose we have acquired control over the physical body and can do with it what we want, what comes next? We have to purify it. What does purity mean? Purity, not only in connection with the physical but also in connection with our emotional and mental vehicles, means the preponderance in our bodies of those constituents, of those combinations of matter, that respond easily to higher vibrations and do not respond to lower ones. On all the planes, combinations of matter are related to certain vibratory powers, so that a particular grade of matter can respond only within certain limits of vibrations and not otherwise.

The vibratory capacity of our body as a whole is determined by the quality and the proportion of the various grades of matter present in it. A body composed preponderantly of finer combinations will be able to respond easily to the higher vibrations and be more or less impervious to lower ones, whereas a body composed predominantly of coarser combinations will respond easily and instantly to lower thoughts and emotions

and will be unable to catch finer ones. Purification means increasing the proportion in the body of the finer kinds of matter with the gradual elimination of coarser kinds.

The physical body is built up from what we eat and drink, so naturally the quality of its constituents will depend, to a very great extent, upon the quality of this food. Knowledge of the nature of different kinds of food and practical experience have enabled esotericists to classify foods under different categories according to the way they affect the vibratory capacity of the body as a whole. A widely used Indic classification divides food into three groups: *tamasic*, *rajasic*, and *sattvic*. To characterize them briefly: *tamasic* foods are those that promote inertia, *rajasic* those that produce activity, and *sattvic* those that produce harmony and rhythm. As far as possible, the aspirant for spiritual knowledge should select from the last group.

This principle of selecting food may be overworked and applied in an unintelligent and routine manner. Some Hindus make a fetish of this principle, and it is sad to see people whose religion and efforts to spiritualize their life are confined chiefly to the sphere of the kitchen. Purity of body is only a means to an end, and purity of the body alone can no more lead to spirituality than a good violin by itself can produce good music. Unless purity is combined with other conditions for leading the spiritual life, it is almost useless.

After purification, health is the next important requirement. Real health means the harmonious functioning of all the vital organs in the physical body. This produces not only a feeling of well-being but also the capacity to engage in prolonged physical and mental activity without becoming tired. A person in really good health is hardly conscious of the physical body at all, whereas a person suffering from chronic ill-health is always aware of some part of the body.

Because disease causes constant distraction of the mind, it is an obstacle on the path of Yoga and has to be overcome by those who are preparing to tread this path. Disease is often the result of inner disharmony and lack of self-control and so disappears when those causes are removed. But there are a few cases in which karmic causes are involved, and so ill-health continues in spite of the most vigorous self-discipline and abstemious life. In such cases, aspirants should go through this phase of life resolutely maintaining a good attitude and strictly regulating their physical life. The phase of ill-health must come to an end sooner or later, and by the time it does, they will have laid the correct foundation for a healthy physical life in the future.

Another quality is needed to enable the body to respond to higher vibrations and energies, and this quality can be best expressed by the word "sensitiveness." Purity relates to the nature of the material; sensitiveness has more to do with vibratory capacity. The difference can be explained by an analogy with music. The musical note we can get from a wire depends on both the material of which the wire is made and the

tension with which the wire is stretched. Different kinds of materials—iron, copper, platinum, and so on—give different kinds of sounds or “timbres.” But the notes that the wires will produce also depend on their tension: the greater the tension, the more rapid the vibrations and the higher the musical note.

So purity, good quality in the material of our body, by itself will not enable us to contact the higher life. The body also has to be sensitized, so to speak, to enable it to respond to the subtler vibrations. If purity alone were enough, any child born of parents with pure and sensitive bodies and fed on pure food from birth should be able easily to contact the higher life, but that is not the case. The body must also be subjected to a special process that makes it sensitive and responsive to subtler vibrations.

The body is sensitized by meditation, an intense concentration of the mind, combined with an ardent aspiration of the soul, polarizing all the energies of the lower vehicles in the direction of the Higher Self and thus making possible an influx of the subtler forces into the physical brain. These preliminary practices, involved in ordinary concentration and meditation, gradually lead to that more intensive discipline and control of the mind known as Yoga, and ultimately culminate in the merging of the lower with the higher consciousness.

What actual changes take place in the constitution of the physical body as a result of prolonged meditation has not been described in detail, nor is it necessary to have such information in order to make the physical body sensitive to subtler vibrations. But part of the process consists in bringing into activity those organs and centers referred to in the previous chapter, and another part is in changing to some extent the forces flowing in the atoms of the nervous system. It is not necessary to go into these things in detail because they are very complex and because we do not have to know their *modus operandi* before we can sensitize the body.

Making the physical body a sensitive instrument through which the soul can work unimpeded on the physical plane is not an easy matter. It involves very deep-seated changes in the constitution of matter composing the body. That is why such prolonged and rigorous training is necessary for making a real esotericist and why only those who have exceptional patience and perseverance can successfully accomplish this difficult task. It seems easy for some people to bring about these changes, but that is only because they have worked for that goal in previous lives, and what now appears easy of unfoldment is really the recapitulation of progress made in the past. We all get what we deserve and have worked for. Nature has no favorites.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The body has its own preferences, habits, and conditionings. We need to control its ability to impose its preferences on us. We do that by developing the awareness that it is a thing apart from us.
2. Disciplining the body does not mean punishing it. Extreme practices are never desirable, and the particular discipline we follow must be appropriate for us.
3. We must also purify the body by giving it good food and drink, such that promotes neither inertia nor hyperactivity, but harmony and rhythm.
4. We should not, however, be obsessive about our diet, or anything else. That is to mistake the means for the end.
5. We must also make the body as healthy as possible and, to that end, regulate our lives. If, however, ill health is a karmic condition, we should accept it with the knowledge that doing so prepares us for better days ahead.
6. The body needs to become more sensitive to higher vibrations. We can effect that by meditating regularly.
7. Improvement does not come without effort. We have to work for it. But if we do, it will happen.

APPLICATIONS

1. Instead of thinking "I'm tired, I need to rest" or "I'm hungry" or "I really like that nice soft chair," practice thinking instead "My body's tired, it needs to rest" or "My body's hungry" or "My body really likes that soft chair."
2. Experiment with practicing a little self-discipline. Deliberately go without something your body likes but does not really need. Or deliberately do something physical that your body would rather not, though doing it won't hurt.
3. Experiment with your diet. What suits our taste is to a large extent what we are used to. Try becoming used to food that is healthful for your body and promotes its purity and sensitivity.
4. Follow a regimen that promotes bodily health.
5. Meditate regularly everyday. It need not be for long, and don't strain. Just sit quietly in body and mind and observe.
6. Don't worry about whether or not you are progressing. Just pay attention to what one of the Masters wrote: Try

Chapter 7

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DESIRE BODY

In this chapter we deal with the functions of the desire body, the next component of our total constitution. Also called the “astral body” or “kama rupa” (Sanskrit for “desire form”), this body comes next to the physical as we penetrate inward from the periphery to the center of our being. It is composed of matter of seven subtypes, subtler than physical stuff, which can be perceived clairvoyantly by those in whom such faculties have been developed but also in a general way by everyone through an awareness of our own inner nature.

A number of books on Theosophy describe in some detail the appearance and composition of the desire body as seen by clairvoyants. Here we will deal only with what we need to help us understand our desire and emotional nature and thus assist us in purifying and controlling it. The control of desires is one of the most difficult but necessary tasks that the candidate for enlightenment has to undertake, and it is completed only when we are standing almost on the threshold of Nirvana.

To understand the part played by desire in our life, let us first examine some elementary functions of the desire body. Its simplest function, which is not generally recognized, is the conversion into sensations of physical vibrations perceived by the five senses. Science tells us that vibrations caught by the sense organs are carried along the nerves to centers in the brain, where mysterious changes occur that transform them into sensations in consciousness.

Theosophical teachings agree, but hold that the physical vibrations are first reflected from the dense brain into the etheric brain and from the etheric centers again on to corresponding desire centers, where they appear as sensations. All consciousness of sensation is situated in the desire body, and the conversion of physical vibrations into sensations is, therefore, one of the primary functions of this body.

The centers in the desire body that bring about this conversion of physical vibrations into sensations should not be confused with the sense organs of the desire body through which impressions are received from the desire plane by the exercise of clairvoyant and clairaudient powers. The latter are only partially developed in some people. The former are universal and came into existence much earlier in the course of evolution along with the sympathetic nervous system.

The next stage in the series of changes by which physical vibrations reach the indwelling consciousness is that sensations are reflected inward again into the mental body, where they appear as perceptions in the mind. Most of those sensations are just neutral perceptions, but some are perceived by the mind as pleasant or unpleasant.

Such sensations are called feelings. Thus a second function of the desire body is to add the qualities of pleasantness or unpleasantness to some sensations, converting them into pleasurable or painful feelings.

At this stage, a fundamental change may occur in consciousness. In response to the feeling of pleasure or pain there may arise a want for experiencing the pleasure again or for avoiding the pain. This is desire in its simplest, most elementary form. This attraction or repulsion is connected with both the desire and mental bodies. The mental element is due to the presence of memory or anticipation, without which desire could not arise. As more and more mental factors enter into this interaction between feelings and thoughts during the course of our evolution, desires become more and more complex and play an increasingly predominant role in our life.

For example, I sit down for my meal. A particular food comes in contact with my palate, affects the taste buds and starts physical vibrations that ultimately appear as a sensation in the desire body. If the dish is palatable, the sensation will be a pleasant one. When I finish eating, the sensation disappears, but at some point in the future, the memory of it is triggered by the sight of the same dish or through an association of ideas and arouses a desire to re-experience that sensation. Thus I want that dish again.

Understanding the nature of desire can help us to know when and how to control it. We cannot live without sensing the world around us. And the perception of sensations as pleasant or unpleasant arises automatically and inevitably, with consequent attraction or repulsion. The change in consciousness that we can control is the emergence of a desire to experience the sensation if it is pleasant or to avoid it if it is unpleasant.

Those who do not understand the nature of desire or who are not determined to control it get caught by the attractions and repulsions, which bind them to the lower worlds and to the wheel of birth and death. Those who are wise move through the world, among all its attractions and repulsions without allowing their minds to establish any connections with the objects of desire, thus remaining free. No harm is done if we feel pleasure in going through certain experiences; pleasure is the natural result of contacts between the body and the objects that cause the pleasure. The trouble arises when we allow ourselves to be bound to an object by attraction or repulsion.

The aim is to be strong enough to remain unaffected by pleasure or pain while living in the midst of objects that give pleasure or pain. Beginners may find it easier, however, to take themselves out of an environment that is full of temptation, until they have gained sufficient strength to resist it. An alcoholic who keeps company with those who drink will find it more difficult to give up liquor. But we have not really conquered our desires until we can move unaffected amidst all the attractions or repulsions of the objects that generate them.

The key we need is the relation of desire and will. The nature of desire is that it draws us to objects that give us pleasure and repel us from those that give pain. This drawing or repelling is a power that is essentially the same as willpower. Desire is only the reflection of will on a lower plane. In desire, however, the power of the self is drawn out by external objects and is dependent upon attractions and repulsions, whereas in will it is independent of any external stimulus, being self-determined.

The essential identity of desire and will is shown by two important facts we can each observe for ourselves. First, both desire and will carry within them the power of accomplishment. Whatever we desire we can get, though not always immediately. The moment we place any object before us and begin to desire it, it begins to draw towards us, the attraction being proportionate to intensity of our desire. If the desire is sufficiently strong and the circumstances are favorable, we are able to grasp the object immediately. On the other hand, if the circumstances are unfavorable or if the object is of such a nature that it can be gained only by continued efforts, it takes longer. But even then, the pull begins the moment we begin to desire.

For example, suppose I desire to hear some good music. I only need to tune in the radio or play a CD to satisfy the desire. But suppose I desire to become rich. Then I will have to work, to sacrifice my comforts and enjoyments, to carefully manage my resources, and if I have a certain amount of capacity in this direction I will be able slowly to amass wealth and realize my ambition in this life. If I die, or am otherwise unable to realize my ambition in this life, and my desire continues, I will be born in my next life with greater capacities to realize my aim.

But suppose instead of desiring transitory objects, I desire to gain enlightenment. Obviously, this is not a desire that can be satisfied immediately. I have to labor for many lives, gradually to build up a pure and strong character, to subdue my lower nature, slowly to unfold all my divine possibilities life after life. Then, if I have the necessary intensity of desire and perseverance, one day I will find myself standing on the mountain top—enlightened and free. So we see in desire the same irresistible power of accomplishment that we associate with the human will.

The second fact that shows the essential identity of desire and will is the way they merge into each other. As a matter of fact, the word *will* originally meant “desire” in older forms of English, and even as we use the words today, there is no firm distinction between them. We tend to use the word *desire* when we are talking about things outside ourselves, especially more material objects, and the word *will* when we are thinking of an inner intention, especially directed toward something less material. Will and desire are like one force operating at two different frequencies.

To illustrate this relationship, certain desires with which we are all familiar are arranged below in a serial order. The gradual sublimation of desire makes it

approximate more and more to spiritual will or intention, until the two become indistinguishable. It is only a question of using different words whether the energy is called "desire" or "will":

1. Desire for sensual gratification
2. Desire to help one's family to live comfortably and decently
3. Desire to serve one's community and country
4. Desire to serve humanity
5. Desire to make one's will one with the Will of the Supreme

An important inference that can be drawn from this essential identity of desire and will is that the possession of a strong desire nature is not necessarily a disadvantage or something to worry about. A strong current of desire hides beneath its covering of selfishness the pure waters of spiritual will, and one has only to remove this covering to have at one's command the tremendous power of spiritual will. People with strong desires are, therefore, from the higher point of view more promising than those whose desires are weak, who are too lazy to strive energetically after anything and whose general reaction to their environment or their ideals is without any vigor. It is this truth which lies at the basis of the well-known saying "the greater the sinner, the greater the saint."

From the relation between desire and will, we also see how the gradual elimination of the personal elements from the life of an individual tends to make actions purer and purer. In the earlier stages of evolution, while desire rules life, the motive power of action is desire. When the desire for any object is aroused, it at once makes the mind think of the ways and means of satisfying it. If the desire is sufficiently strong and persistent, action follows sooner or later. In this pursuit of desired objects of all kinds, the individual is kept constantly busy, gains experience, and evolves the various powers of the mind.

In later stages of evolution, with the dawning of discrimination or *viveka* and the progressive elimination of personal desires, the will gradually gains ascendancy and becomes the motive power of action. As action is thus purified, it becomes more and more impersonal and a reflection of the Divine Will. In this condition it does not bind the individual because it is not performed for personal benefit but as an offering to the Supreme. In fact, in the highest stages of purification, action can be said to be done through rather than by the actor.

We now come to a related group of phenomena derived from desire: the emotions, which are the result of the activity partly of the desire body and partly of the mental body. We have seen that desire in its elementary aspect is characterized by the attraction and repulsion of objects and by the mind's grasping or avoiding these objects.

The constant and intimate association of desire and thought results in various emotions. Emotion is thus a complex state of consciousness constituted by desire springing from feelings of attraction or repulsion, coupled with thought.

The large variety of emotions we experience seem to form a chaotic jungle. But this confusion is only apparent because emotions are related to one another. In his book *The Science of the Emotions*, Bhagavan Das has tried to show that most emotions spring from two primary ones, love and hate, based on attraction and repulsion. As the two emotions of love and hate are directed towards a superior, an inferior, or an equal, they assume different aspects; and the permutations and combinations of these six secondary emotions—three derived from love and three from hate—combine with various mental factors to account for the large majority of emotions.

How can we use these ideas systematically in the building of character? Since all life, manifesting in various forms on all the planes, is one in essence and an expression of the Divine Life, we are all bound together by ties of spiritual unity that we may not be able to see in the lower worlds of illusion and separateness. Whatever is in harmony with this fundamental truth of existence, this law of unity, must bring happiness; and whatever is in conflict with it must cause unhappiness. That is why love, which fulfills this law of the One Life, invariably brings happiness and hatred, which sets it at naught, is the source of endless misery.

This law of life is not a hypothetical religious doctrine we have to take on faith, but a law we can easily verify for ourselves by experimenting for a few months. Observe carefully and note systematically in a notebook the condition of your mind—with respect to happiness or misery—when you are experiencing various kinds of emotions based on love or hatred. You will find that love and happiness go together, and so do hatred and misery. What religious teachers have taught about the necessity of cultivating love is really true and based on actual experience.

It may appear strange that all human beings are bound together by invisible bonds of spiritual unity and yet they fight and try to destroy each other, thus creating so much conflict in the world. But this is due to the fact that the lower mind covers and obscures our consciousness of unity and makes each center of consciousness feel itself as an isolated and independent unit. When this obscuration is removed, the spiritual unity is revealed, and it is then impossible for that individual to hate or harm anybody.

It follows from what has been said that, if we want to be happy always, we must completely eliminate from our emotional life all emotions based on hatred and cultivate, as fully as possible, those that are rooted in love. But we are governed in the emotional world, as in the physical and mental, by the law of habit. We are apt to be carried away by emotions we are in the habit of indulging and to find it difficult to arouse emotions we do not frequently express. So the problem resolves itself into

cultivating the right emotional habits—implanting and nourishing those based on love and weeding out those derived from hate.

When we start rebuilding our emotional nature in this manner, we find that what we are really doing is cultivating virtues and getting rid of vices, for virtues and vices are in most cases nothing but emotional habits based on love and hatred respectively. Leading a virtuous life is a matter not merely of wishing or aspiring but also of forming correct emotional habits. It is a work we can take up in a systematic manner and carry out with the help of the laws in this realm.

The relation of emotions to virtues and vices also shows the place of a virtuous life in the bigger problem of Self-realization. The cultivation of virtues merely ensures a healthy and correct emotional life and therefore plays a subordinate though essential role in Self-realization. Leading a virtuous life is necessary as a foundation for the higher life of the Spirit, but it cannot be a substitute for that life. The goal of human endeavor is something much higher than merely living a virtuous life: Self-realization or, as it is called in Sanskrit, *jnāna* or knowledge. It is only when we have found this Truth of existence and live in the light of its realization that we can have permanent peace and be above the turmoils, illusions, and the sufferings of the lower life.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The control of our desires is not something we can achieve easily or once for all time—it is an ongoing process.
2. Physical stimuli received by the sensory organs of the physical body are interpreted by the desire body as sensations perceived as neutral or as pleasurable or painful feelings. The mental perception of those feelings, reinforced by memory and anticipation, leads to a desire to repeat the pleasurable and to avoid the painful.
3. We cannot avoid stimuli or feelings; but we can control our response to their memory or anticipation—and therefore our desires for them and the attachment desire creates.
4. Desire and will are essentially the same thing, except that desire derives from objects outside us and will derives from inside us. Desire can thus be transmuted into will. If we have a strong desire nature, we can transform it; if we are indifferent and passive, it is difficult to achieve any intentions.
5. Emotions, which are desire mingled with thought, are of two basic kinds: love and hate.

6. To be happy, we must practice love, for engaging in hate leads to misery. The practice of love must be grounded in a realized knowledge of the underlying unity of all life.

APPLICATIONS

1. Observe your own reactions to things. Try to see in your particular reactions the sequence of stimuli, sensations, feelings of pleasure or pain, and memory or anticipation leading to desire. Being aware of this chain of events is necessary for controlling the reaction of desire.
2. As suggested in this chapter, keep a notebook in which you record your emotions based on love or desire and your associated states of happiness or misery.
3. Expand your conscious and subliminal knowledge of the oneness of all life. Do a little study of ecology. Do a sympathetic study of other cultures. Volunteer as a helper at a shelter for the homeless or for animals. Begin every day by saying the universal invocation: "O hidden life, vibrant in every atom; o hidden light, shining in every creature; o hidden love, embracing all in oneness; may all who feel themselves as one with thee, know they are therefore one with every other."
4. Remember that it won't happen all at once—the whole process spans lifetimes. Be patient. Be tolerant with others and with yourself.

Chapter 8

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMOTIONS

After dealing with the functions of the emotional body, we now consider the control, purification, and development of this vehicle of consciousness. It is necessary first to acquire some control over the emotional body because otherwise we cannot undertake the more difficult task of its purification and development.

As with the physical body, we cannot properly control any vehicle of consciousness if we identify ourselves with its activities. As long as we feel that we are our desires, that we are all the sensations that give us pleasure or pain, or the emotions that surge within us, we cannot bring these movements of the emotional body under our control. So the first step in acquiring control is to disengage ourselves in consciousness from these sensations and emotions.

We must learn to “objectify” these emotional manifestations, as they say in psychology. We should, as it were, place them on the table, observe them, and analyze them until we recognize them as merely phenomena taking place within us, not really part of ourselves. When a desire springs up in our hearts, we need to realize that it is merely a vibration in our emotional bodies that we can change if we want to. When we experience any pleasure, we should be able to trace the changes of consciousness that produce it, as discussed in the previous chapter. We have to learn to dissociate ourselves from our desires, emotions, and sensations, and to rise above them before we can hope to acquire real control over them. The more thoroughly this preliminary preparation is made, the more permanent and swift will be our mastery over these activities of the emotional body.

The development of dissociation requires constant recollectedness through observation and reflection. We are all used to letting our desires and emotions have free play in our lives; it is only rarely, when we become agitated to an extraordinary degree, that we become conscious of their dominance over us and of our inability to control them. “Recollectedness” means that we put our emotional bodies with their ever-changing desires and emotions under observation. We constantly watch their workings. Whenever we are, for example, angry or elated or under the influence of any other emotion, we should be aware of the movements in this body, whether strong or feeble. At first, we will find that we are agitated without even being aware of the fact, but with constant alertness and practice, gradually a consciousness develops in the background of our mind that is aware of all the movements taking place in our emotional natures and, like a silent spectator, notes each movement, even if it cannot yet control it.

The effort to be constantly alert in observation should be accompanied by reflection. We should always be trying to watch the development and working of all the desires and emotions that appear in our minds, examining them impersonally, tracing them to their respective sources, and judging their value in a dispassionate manner. Such observation and reflection is less effective when done in retrospect than when we are actually under the sway of the emotions, so we must learn to watch the emotions in action and to dissociate ourselves from them while they are dominant. Doing that does not necessarily interfere with our work or normal routine of life because only a part of our minds will be occupied with it, just as a person can knit and carry on a conversation at the same time.

When we have attained a certain degree of success in objectifying our emotions and desires, we may begin to exercise more direct control over them. Observation and reflection should already have developed the capacity for discriminating between different kinds of desires and emotions. What we have to do next is to prevent the expression of those that are not in harmony with our ideals and to allow only those that help us on the path that we are treading. The mere effort to watch the movements in the emotional body will help to eliminate some of the cruder desires and emotions and to tone down others, but this discrimination and control has to be practiced intensively and persistently until we become master of our emotional life, and only those desires and emotions that we allow are able to find expression through our emotional body.

Gaining control over our emotions is a long and difficult discipline. The degree of our success depends upon our stage of evolution and the intensity of our effort and earnestness in trying. Completing the job requires patience and strength from an unfoldment of the higher principles of buddhi and atma. Without that help, we will get tired of the tedious task and give it up as an unattainable ideal. But we must remember that the only way we can gain control over our emotions is the long and tedious method of constant effort and practice. There is no magic formula that can give us a mastery over our lower nature overnight. But there is this encouragement, that once mastery has been attained, the need for putting forth constant effort in this direction practically ceases, for then our emotions and desires automatically align themselves with the ideals and requirements of spiritual life.

We are greatly helped if we understand a few practical points. The first point is that control over our emotional nature can be acquired only in circumstances we usually seek to run away from. Only in conditions of stress and strain, can we acquire the conscious mastery over our lower nature that is a prerequisite of real spiritual development. Only when we are surrounded by objects that attract us, can we develop dispassion (*vairāgya*). Only when we have to deal with people who dislike us, thwart us, or even hate us, can we develop the sublime patience and equanimity that are the

hallmarks of mastery over the lower self. It is easy to be calm and unruffled when we are placed in circumstances where our patience is not tried and tested. It is easy to be virtuous where there are no temptations.

If we really mean business in this difficult task of subjugating our lower nature, we should refuse to run away from the trying and even painful circumstances we are often placed in. Instead we must use them to develop the good qualities they can bring out in us. It is not usually necessary to go out of our way to find trying circumstances to test us and develop the qualities we want. The Lords of Karma send us karma of a nature that is suited to our next stage of development, and the stronger we become, the more severe are the ordeals we face. We are living in a cosmos; so the circumstances we are placed in are not merely those we deserve as “reward” or “punishment,” but also those needed for our development.

The question may come to mind: “What is left to live for if we analyze and dissect our emotional and desire natures in this ruthless manner? The zest of life comes from feeling deeply such desires and emotions.” This is a pertinent question, and as a matter of fact, all those who try to subdue their desires at some point have to experience their life as a void that does not appear worth living. Many aspirants cannot face this ordeal, lose courage, and sink back again into the old life with all the zest and pain that come from identifying oneself with one’s desire nature.

But, according to the experience of those who have disciplined themselves in this way, this “dark night” is only a passing, though frequently painful, phase from which those who aspire to spiritual knowledge should not shrink. As our lower nature gets subdued and the emotional body becomes tranquil and free from impurities, the light of buddhi is able to shine through the mind more and more to give us the “peace which passeth understanding.” When buddhi irradiates the mind, it not only enables us to see the problems of life in proper perspective without illusion, but it also gives us a taste of that bliss (*ānanda*) which is our essential nature. The joys and pleasures of the lower life pale in the light of that bliss, just as artificial lights and even the light of the stars and the moon fade away when the sun rises.

In order to gain this permanent peace, this bliss of the higher life, we must be patient, resolute, fearless, and ready to forego the temporary pleasures and joys of the lower life. We should not lose heart when life seems dreary and desolate, because only when life seems to have completely ebbed away are we nearest to its fullness. At the darkest moment, we need to work with greater earnestness and intensity at the purification of the lower nature and the thinning of the veil which hides the light of the higher consciousness.

Controlling the emotions does not mean repressing them, which produces harmful effects. A repressed desire or emotion passes into the subconscious regions of the mind,

from where they may give rise to symptoms that seem to have no relation with the repressed emotion. Such repressed desires and memories are known as “complexes.” They are an important factor in our emotional, mental, and even physical life because, unknown to us, they powerfully influence our behavior.

Our emotions and desires represent psychic energy, which, according to the law of conservation of energy, cannot be annihilated but can only be changed from one form into another. We cannot destroy emotional energy after we have generated it, but we can determine the form it will take. In repressing a desire or emotion, we keep the source of the supply of energy intact and only divert the current of energy into the subconscious mind, where it may take various undesirable forms that are ultimately thrown up to the surface.

If we have a garden hose hooked to a tap with no cutoff valve and we want to stop the flow of water, no useful purpose will be served by thrusting the end of the hose underground. The water will continue to flow and sooner or later come up to the surface in a chaotic manner with mud and filth. We must either turn off the water at its source to stop its flow or else use the water in some suitable manner—by directing it into the garden, for example, where it can promote the growth of plants.

Similarly, if we do not want a desire, we must either stop generating the energy behind it or change it into some other form desirable or usable for our progress. We do the former when we so thoroughly understand the desire that we simply rise above it. We become so intensely aware of its real nature that it ceases to affect us. The desire simply dies in such a case because the motive power that can keep it alive is cut off. We may, on the other hand, change the form of the energy, sublimate it or transform it. The new form of the energy then helps us rather than hinders us in our progress.

We now come to the purification and development of the emotional body, which involves the way this body is built up and maintained. Desires, feelings, and emotions appear in our consciousness as the emotional body vibrates either in response to external impacts or to activities initiated from within. Corresponding to each kind of emotion, such as love, there is a particular rate of vibration and a particular density of the material composing the emotional body, as well as a particular color associated with that rate of vibration.

An analogy on the physical plane is in the color in a fireworks display. If the gunpowder in the fireworks contains the metal barium, when it is heated by the explosion, its particles begin to vibrate at a certain rate and give off a green light. If we substitute strontium for barium in the gunpowder, it produces a scarlet color, and so on. Corresponding to each kind of material is a specific rate of vibration and a specific color, on both the physical and the emotional planes.

Clairvoyant investigation has shown that, when the emotional body begins to vibrate at a particular rate corresponding to some specific emotion, the violent agitation produced has the effect of throwing out material that is not consonant with the vibration and absorbing from the surrounding emotional atmosphere other matter that can vibrate at the same rate. The result is that each vibration in the emotional body increases the proportion of those components that vibrate at its rate and correspondingly decreases others. So the tendency for a particular kind of emotion increases as that emotion is expressed repeatedly. On the other hand, the less a particular kind of emotion is expressed, the feebler is its ability to exist in the emotional body.

Thus an emotional body changes its constitution and vibratory powers with every desire and emotion expressed through it. Even the slightest quiver of emotion or desire to some extent changes that body. So if we frequently express higher emotions and noble desires, the emotional body becomes progressively more refined and able to reproduce the finer vibrations, whereas desires and emotions of a low type coarsen it more and more and make the expression of the higher emotions increasingly difficult.

The proper understanding of these laws and their application to our life are the basis of the methods to purify and develop our emotions. Purity of any body means the presence in it of constituents that harmonize with and help the expression of the Higher Self, and the absence of constituents that are disharmonious with, and therefore prevent or hamper the expression of that Self. The subtler energies whose origin is in the spiritual part of our nature can be expressed on the emotional plane only if the emotional body consists of matter that can respond to them. The more refined the emotional body, the more easily it can vibrate in response to the impacts from the higher consciousness and the less responsive it is to coarse vibrations.

Refinement or purification of the emotional body takes place, as we have seen already, by controlling our emotions and desires and allowing expression to only those that are in harmony with our spiritual ideals. The more we develop love, reverence, sympathy, devotion, compassion, desire to serve our fellows and the great Masters of Wisdom, the finer and purer will our emotional body become. Then the slightest impulse coming from our Higher Self will throw the whole emotional body into harmonious and delicate vibrations of a beautiful nature whereas heavy and violent impulses from the lower planes will not affect it. When this stage is reached, the emotional body really become a fitting and efficient instrument of the soul—an instrument vibrant, sensitive, and refined, able to reflect the higher consciousness in the lower.

To start a vibration in the emotional body requires some kind of stimulus. Our emotional nature appears to be something like a harp: only touching a particular string

brings forth the corresponding note. The secret of the capacity to arouse any particular emotion that we want lies in developing an ability to touch the right strings of our emotional nature. Lower emotions are easily aroused by stimuli from the outer world, because the emotional body is used to responding to such stimuli. To arouse higher kinds of emotions, we have to go into the inner regions of our being for the necessary stimuli.

Creating the right sort of emotional nature is a difficult task but one that is greatly helped by the regular practice of meditation. Meditation opens up and gradually widens the channel between the emotional body and the buddhic vehicle, making possible the descent of those energies whose play upon the emotional body arouses those exalted and noble emotions associated with spiritual development.

The finer emotions are expressions on the lower planes of the higher consciousness and represent merely a stage in our evolution. They become unnecessary and less and less prominent as their higher counterparts unfold. Thus, for example, when higher devotion is sufficiently developed the devotee becomes quiet, serene, and Self-sufficient, with no trace of the contradictory and constantly changing emotions of passionate love, apathy, happiness, and misery that characterize lower stages of devotion. Saints, sages, and adepts do not generally show outwardly the emotions of sympathy and love. This does not mean that they have become indifferent or callous. On the contrary, because they are directly aware of the oneness of all life, they express their awareness not in emotional ways but with a compassionate understanding that is calm and all-embracing.

The development of finer emotions is not so much a question of building up or creating something as of letting the inner splendor break through into our awareness. It is the result of purifying the mind, unfolding our spiritual nature, and opening up the passage between the lower and higher parts of our nature. When, for example, our devotion for that form of the divine reality we particularly respond to has developed to a high degree and the emotional body is flooded with love descending from the buddhic plane, all the impurities in our lower nature are washed out, as it were, and the baser kind of emotions are rapidly eliminated. One such upsurge of intense love does more to purify the mind and open up the channel between the buddhic and emotional planes than months of ordinary meditation and mental discipline.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points in this chapter are the following:

1. To control our emotions, we must be able to “objectify” them—see them as something apart from ourselves.
2. We objectify our emotions by observing them and reflecting upon them as transitory states, a process that requires constant practice and patience.
3. To gain control over the emotions, we must be in situations in which we are challenged; that is the way we grow and develop.
4. At times the process will be discouraging and we will experience a “dark night,” but eventually the light breaks through.
5. Control is not repression; instead it involves transcending or transforming—making spiritual gold out of emotional lead.
6. We purify and develop our emotions by fostering noble feelings, which will attract or generate other similar emotions.
7. Regular meditation is a technique for opening our contact with our own higher selves, from which will radiate the inner splendor that replaces all lower feelings.

APPLICATIONS

1. Practice being aware of your emotional reactions to events and things. Do not judge, but simply be aware. Look upon them as you would upon something external to yourself.
2. Meditate regularly, and in doing so concentrate your mind on some form of the highest and purest reality.
3. In times of stress or challenge, remember that experience of the highest which comes through meditation, and draw on it; recollect moments of tranquility in the midst of turmoil.

Chapter 9

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE LOWER MENTAL BODY

In this chapter, we consider the functions of the “lower” mental body, the vehicle of “concrete” or empirical thought. This is the aspect of the mind that relates most directly with our perceptions of the world around us.

The human mind is not only the most wonderful thing in creation but also the greatest problem for those who are trying to tread the path leading to perfection and enlightenment. The mind is the separative principle in us that makes us see the One as many. It is the center of egoism that makes us feel that we are an individual with interests in conflict with those of others. It is the creator of illusion that produces in our consciousness a distorted view of Reality. To know the Reality underlying the phenomenal universe, we first have to control and finally transcend the mind.

The term “mind” is often used today in a general way to include a great many different things: sensations, instincts, emotions, thinking about our sensory perceptions, our ability to form generalizations, our ability to draw conclusions from generalizations, intuitions, our ability to recognize patterns and understand connections, and so on. In the Wisdom Tradition, various of those functions are usually sorted out and considered separately as distinct functions or “principles.”

Behaviorist psychology has generally considered thought processes of all kinds as “epiphenomena,” that is, products or even incidental byproducts of the physical activity of the brain and nervous system. As a nineteenth-century Italian physician, Cesare Lombroso, put it, “The brain produces thought as the liver secretes bile.” The physical brain is, to be sure, intimately connected with our thought as long as we are alive in the body, but the Wisdom Tradition regards the body and its functions and these various “mental” faculties as interrelated but independent faculties in our total nature. It does not reduce or subordinate one to the other.

One of the greatest contributions of the Wisdom Tradition has been to clarify all mental phenomena, trace them to their sources, and classify them according to their nature, thus enabling us to understand the human mind more fully. The first important step in this clarification is to see that our feelings, empirical observations, and rational thoughts are derived from three distinct sources. They are, in fact, the results of consciousness working through three different subtler vehicles, the brain and the nervous system merely bringing down into the physical consciousness these various principles working on the higher planes.

We have already dealt with one set of these phenomena which work through the astral body and produce our sensations, feelings, desires, and emotions. We now turn to

the organ of thoughts, the instrument the soul uses for its expression on the mental plane, the third plane of the Solar System.

Unlike the astral body, which is one indivisible whole and contains the matter belonging to all seven subplanes of the astral plane, the mental body is composed of two separate vehicles of consciousness. The “lower” mental body, composed of matter belonging to the lower four mental subplanes, serves as the organ for thinking about our experience of the world around us, and the “higher” mental body, or causal body as it is also called, composed of matter belonging to the three higher mental subplanes, serves as the organ of abstract rational thought.

These two bodies are quite separate from each other and have distinct functions. The lower mental body is part of the transient personality, formed anew with every incarnation, whereas the causal body is the lowest vehicle of the individuality, which endures from life to life and expresses itself partially in successive personalities. Thus our mind is the meeting ground of the “lower” and “higher” selves, of the temporary personality with all its limitations and illusions and the permanent individuality which expresses itself through *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* and is our spiritual soul. As these two mental bodies have quite distinct functions, this chapter confines itself to the functions of the lower mental body, the organ of empirical thought, the functions of the higher mental body being left for a subsequent chapter.

Although the desire body and the lower mental body are quite distinct and belong to two different planes, they are closely related to each other and work much in combination in actual life. In fact, so close is their relationship, that they are frequently treated, for all practical purposes, as one vehicle. Thus in early Theosophical literature, *kama-manas* was treated as one principle, which Vedantic terminology calls *manomaya-kosha*, the mental veil or sheath.

This close relationship between *kama* and *manas* has its origin in the joint evolution of the two bodies, for desire and thought act and react on each other from the very beginning of their development. In tracing the genesis of desire, we observed that the memory and anticipation of pleasures and pains gives rise to attractions and repulsions and so to desires of various kinds. This interaction between pleasurable and painful sensations of the astral body and memory and anticipation in the lower mental body is the beginning of the connection between desire and thought. Later on, as desire develops, it uses the lower mind constantly to gain its ends and devise means for its satisfaction. For a long time, the lower mind is nothing but a servant of desire and develops gradually by ministering to its needs. But as the mind develops and gains strength, it begins to exercise an ever-increasing control over desire and ultimately becomes its master. In this work of subduing desire, added strength comes from our inner spiritual sources as they become accessible in the later stages of evolution.

This joint working of the desire and lower mental bodies can be seen also in our emotional life. Emotions are derived from the interaction of desire and thought, so every time we experience an emotion, the two bodies vibrate simultaneously.

After these preliminary considerations, we turn to the functions of the lower mental body. The first function of the desire body is to convert vibrations received by the sense organs of the physical body into sensations. The vibrations impinging upon the sense organs are carried by the nerves to the corresponding centers in the physical brain, reflected from there into the desire body, and converted by the centers in the desire body into sensations. From there, the sensations reach the lower mind, where they are converted into perceptions.

Just as light waves passing through the lens of a camera produce an image of the surrounding landscape on the film, so do these various vibrations coming through the various sense avenues produce different kinds of images on the film of the mind. These images are produced in a medium called *chidakasha* in Sanskrit, a word derived from *chitta*, the image making aspect of the lower mind. It may appear rather strange to extend the use of the word "image" for these impressions produced on the mind by the vibrations coming through the five sense organs, but this extension of the meaning of the word is now recognized in psychology. Thus, when we hear a note sounded on a musical instrument, we call the impression an auditory image, just as the impression produced by the form of an object is called a visual image. So the first main function of the lower mental body is to convert emotional sensations into mental perceptions of color, form, sound, taste, smell, and touch.

Its second important function is to combine these mental perceptions or images, derived from different sense organs, into a composite image. Here is a concrete example. Suppose I have an orange before me. The impression received through the eye gives me an idea of the form and color of the orange. The impression received through the nose gives an idea of the odor. If I handle the orange I find out how it feels to the touch. If I bring it in contact with my tongue I get an idea of what it tastes like. Now, a complete idea of the orange is composed of all these four elements, and it is the function of the lower mental body to combine these four elements into one composite image giving a complete picture of the object.

The mind not only combines various elements into one composite image, but also supplies from its storehouse of memory elements that may not be present. When we see an orange from a distance the only image which actually reaches the mind is the visual one, giving its form and color, but we see mentally much more in the visual image of the orange than what is justified from the partial report of the senses. The mind has gathered various kinds of impressions of oranges on previous occasions and has kept these impressions in the storehouse of memory, from which it can supply some of the

missing elements thus giving a fuller idea of the orange than we would otherwise get from a distant encounter.

Closely connected with the function of combining images coming through the sense organs (*jñānendriyas* in Sanskrit) is the reverse function of breaking up into its components any mental impulse that can find expression through a number of motor organs (*karmendriyas*). The lower mental body is the coordinating factor in all the movements that we make in our ordinary life to meet every situation in the outer world. Thus, when we see an object coming towards us that threatens the physical body, our legs, hands, and all muscles instantaneously and automatically adopt the position best suited to escape injury, but all these complicated and efficient movements are made possible only as a result of the coordination and control exercised by the lower mental body, though it happens too swiftly to be noticed.

As our experiences increase, the number of these images in our storehouse of memory becomes ever greater. Eventually the mind begins to arrange and rearrange these images, classifying and comparing them. So gradually, one after another, our various mental faculties of reasoning and judgment evolve. We learn to think.

Thinking is establishing relations between the images present in our mind, and therefore the quality of our thinking depends upon the nature and number of these images. A mind full of clear and correct images in relation to any subject is in a far better position to think well with regard to that subject, than one which is poorly supplied with such images. Frequently, thinking appears to be done without such images, but in such cases we are using tokens for these images. When we go into a bank, we see very little cash. Most of the transactions are done through checks and electronic transfers, but we know that those are tokens for the cash that is the real basis of all the transactions.

However, although images are essential, the mere presence of a large number of clear-cut images in the mind is not enough for good thinking. They must be arranged in such a way that thought patterns are produced. If you put a box full of all kinds of precious gems in the hands of ordinary people, they can do nothing with them, but a good jeweler can produce from them jewelry of exquisite beauty. So merely increasing our knowledge by reading and observation and thus multiplying our mental images is not enough. We must also think hard and persistently until we learn to produce from the images patterned thoughts that can be put to use in our life.

The lower mind also involves the illusion inherent in any refractive medium. In the lower mind, we are confined to names and forms—to our mental images—and with it alone we can never know things as they really are. An image is a relative thing. It gives us, as it were, only a cross section of the real thing, although we may falsely imagine that we know the thing as it is when we contact it with our minds. Even in the case of

sensuous perception, we can get thousands of different impressions of a simple object by looking at it from different sides and distances. None of these represents the object as a whole.

In the case of non-sensuous perceptions, the difficulties of getting a true idea of the object are much greater. This should put us on our guard against taking our views and ideas, based on the working of the intellect, for the realities of life of which they are partial, if not distorted, representations. We cannot know things as they really are unless we transcend the intellect and see them in the light of ultimate Reality.

We do not see things as they really are. Ordinary physical objects are conglomerations of vibrating atoms. The shape, size, and colors, which we see, do not exist in them but only in our mind. The object is an instrumental cause for exciting a mental image in our mind. Thus we really live in a world of mental images which we form and project outside us by a process called *vikshepa* in Sanskrit. This process of projecting our mental world outside us should be obvious to anyone who thinks about the nature of sense perception. It should convince us of two things. First, the world we live in is really inside us, in our mind; and second, we are really living among illusions without even being aware of the fact.

The last point to note is that the mental body and empirical mind are two different things. The mental body is a vehicle made of subtle matter, a nonsentient instrument rooted in *prakriti* (or substance). Empirical mind or lower *manas* is a modification of consciousness working under the limitations of the lower planes and using the lower mental body for its expression. It is sentient, of the stuff of awareness, rooted in *purusha* (or consciousness).

SUMMARY

Some of the major points in this chapter are the following:

1. The mind or *manas* is a form of consciousness; the mental body is a vehicle of matter through which that consciousness works.
2. There are two types of mind and mental body. One responds to the sensations that come to it, and so is empirical, and belongs to the personality; the other is more abstract and logical and is part of the individuality.
3. The empirical or lower mind is closely connected with the emotions.
4. When we think we perceive something, the mind actually supplies many of the details from memory of past experiences.

5. Thinking involves calling up from memory images of past experience and relating them together.
6. The reality of the world around us is not like our images, which are projections of our mind; we live amid illusions of our own making.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we not take things as definite Truths based only on what we have read, heard, or seen?
2. How does the relationship between the mind and desire change over the course of the soul's evolutionary journey?
3. Why is it said that we do not see things as they really are?

APPLICATIONS

Have several people observe the same thing or event, and then write down what they have observed. Compare their descriptions. What accounts for the differences in the descriptions?

Call up two memories of past events in your life, and relate them to each other in at least two different ways—make two patterns out of them.

Chapter 10

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOWER MIND (Part 1)

As with the desire body, we shall first deal with the question of controlling the lower mental body, because both its purification and development require that we have some control over its activities. Because our desire and mental natures are so much alike and so closely connected, the methods of controlling these two bodies are also much alike. Therefore, much of what was said in chapter 6 about the desire body is applicable to the lower mental body also.

In controlling the lower mind, the first step is to objectify it and thus separate it from our consciousness. Most of us do not identify ourselves completely with our physical bodies, though some people still do so primarily. Some people can also partially separate themselves from the desires and emotions that constantly surge and sway them. But there are really very few people who can separate themselves from their minds.

The mind seems to be the essence of our very being, and when we try to separate it from our consciousness, nothing seems to be left over, so close is the identification of our consciousness with its mental vehicle. Yet to control the mind, this objectification is absolutely necessary. The effort to control the mind and make it pure and strong by subjecting it to a systematic discipline will gradually make us increasingly aware of the distinction between the controlling consciousness and the controlled mind. In the beginning it is necessary to concentrate for some time upon observing the movements of the mind in order to objectify it. Only then will we become familiar with our mental tendencies and characteristics and learn to separate ourselves from them.

When we have gained some ability to objectify the “lower” mind, we can begin to exercise general control over its activities. The first step is to form the habit of doing everything that has to be done throughout the day with one-pointedness. Most people who start practicing concentration and meditation do not know that the results they achieve during the short period of their mental exercises depend to a very great extent on how they control and use the mind during the rest of the day. A person who allows his mind to wander while doing his ordinary daily work can never be successful in concentrating it during the period of his meditation, because the wandering of the mind throughout the day sets up a tendency to wander and this tendency cannot be overcome all at once during the short time given to exercises in concentration and meditation.

We should form the habit of taking up each piece of work as it comes and concentrate our minds fully in doing it, instead of giving it only part of our attention. Whether the work is important or unimportant does not matter as far as this tendency to wander is concerned. So, even though we may be writing a letter, reading a book, or conversing with somebody, the mind should be made one-pointed. The whole of our mind should be behind every action that we do in the normal course of our life. This practice will not only enormously improve the quality of our work but also lay the foundation for that mastery over our mind, which is one of the main objects every student of self-development must work towards.

Most people who are used to letting their minds wander imagine that life will be extremely tedious and strenuous if they have to give their concentrated attention to everything they do. That is a misconception. Though concentration does require a certain amount of alertness and produces a feeling of strain in the beginning, the habit of concentrating is gradually formed, and the mind then automatically becomes one-pointed in doing everything without any strain. The mind is a creature of habit, so it is easy to concentrate once the habit is established.

In addition to concentration, we need to select the thoughts that come into our minds. That may sound odd at first, because we tend to think that we ourselves originate all of our thoughts, but in fact many of "our" thoughts are actually the thoughts of others that we pick up. When we are not actively engaged in mental activity, all kinds of thoughts that are floating about in the mental atmosphere come and impinge upon our mental body and reinforce in it any responsive vibrations.

Clairvoyant research has shown that thoughts are not the vague things we imagine them to be. They are actual "things" on the mental plane, with characteristic forms and vibratory power. When any such thought forms strike our mental body or when the vibrations emanating from them impinge upon us, they evoke sympathetic vibrations, and we become aware of the corresponding thought. Of course, all the thoughts in our minds are not of external origin; some of them are due to the self-initiated activity of our own mental body itself, but it is difficult to distinguish between the two classes of thoughts.

Whether thoughts come from outside us, or are self-initiated by us, the mental body must be trained to exercise constant discrimination with regard to them, so that it does not dwell on thoughts of an undesirable nature. Thoughts of sensuality, hatred, revenge, suspicion, anger, jealousy, and pride are all crowding round us. There are also good thoughts of wholeness, love, generosity, trust, joy, respect, and justice, which are generated by noble souls. So we need to discriminate between the various qualities of thought and to learn to respond in a positive way to all kinds of negative thoughts.

The best way to deal with a negative thought that tries to enter our mind is to turn our attention instantly to some other thought of a high and noble character. The mind can think of only one thing at a time, so the mere turning of the attention to something else eliminates the first thought in a natural way. On no account should we try to fight the thought by dwelling upon it, for this gives it added strength and makes its expulsion more difficult. If a burning match is dropped accidentally in combustible material, the best method of preventing a fire is to put it out instantly. If we give the material time to catch fire, then the task of putting it out becomes far more difficult.

When the practice of paying attention to our thoughts has been continued for a long time and the habit of discrimination has been formed, the mind repels automatically negative thoughts and no conscious effort is required to keep them out. A new rate of vibration has been set up in the mental body as a whole, and nothing which does not harmonize with that higher rate can affect it. This is a way of saying that the mental body is becoming purified. What has actually happened is that the constitution of the mental body has gradually changed and the finer combinations of mental matter composing it have become predominant, thus making it easier for it to express the higher kind of thoughts and difficult to respond to coarser negative ones.

No evil or negativity from outside can affect us if there is nothing in us to respond to that negativity. A person who is entirely free from any craving for alcohol can move about in the company of drunkards without being affected by their desires, whereas a person with a craving for drink, even in a latent form, needs to be careful. We cannot always choose our environment or our companions. So the way to safeguard our mental health is to make ourselves positive in our response to negativity. Then we can move safely in any environment and by our higher rate of vibration even gradually lift up those with whom we come in contact.

This practice of constant alertness and positive attitude towards thoughts coming from outside not only promotes our mental health and gradually brings about the purification of the mind but also develops that stability of the mind that is necessary for practicing meditation successfully. One of the most difficult problems in meditation is to keep out intruding thoughts. The way to deal with such thoughts is to adopt a positive attitude towards them and then not dwell upon them.

The general discipline of the mind outlined in the previous paragraphs will, if adopted in earnest, be found helpful by those who are living an ordinary worldly life, as well as by those with aspirations for a life of spiritual unfoldment. They will find that they have become more efficient, more balanced, and better able to meet the trials and difficulties of life. But this general discipline is only a preliminary preparation for the more intensive mental training required of those who aspire to live the life of the Spirit

and to tread the path which leads toward perfection. This more intensive mental discipline aims at unifying the lower with the higher consciousness.

This higher discipline has two aspects. The first is a more rigorous training of the mind in concentration, so that it becomes an efficient instrument for meditation and other spiritual exercises. The second frees the mind from the impurities, aberrations, and distortions that stand in the way of its becoming a fit instrument of the higher consciousness.

The first step in learning to concentrate, as noted above, is to make the mind one-pointed in everything we have to do as part of our daily life. We learn to pay attention and check the tendency of the mind to wander. The degree of concentration needed to do various kinds of jobs varies within very wide limits, so the aspirant has to aim at progressively increasing the depth of concentration, the ultimate aim being to make the mind so concentrated while considering any subject or problem that we become oblivious of our surroundings and of ourselves. Most successful people of the world who have risen high in their respective spheres of work possess this power of concentration in some degree; the greater the power of concentration, the higher the quality of work they are able to produce.

In acquiring such power of concentration, we will derive great help if we go through certain set exercises for some time every day. In these exercises we do more intensively and deliberately what we are already learning to do in connection with our ordinary daily work. There is nothing spiritual, as some people imagine, about these exercises, which are a sort of mental gymnastics. They are meant to teach, as quickly as possible, the art of concentrating the mind on any subject that has to be mastered and thus turning it into an efficient and obedient instrument.

Our mastery of the mind should be so thorough that we are able to set it on any task for any length of time, and it is able to remain fixed on that task, either till the task is completed, or till we deliberately take it off. This capacity for voluntary attention, as opposed to the involuntary attention that is due to our interest in a subject, is the only test by which we can measure our mastery over our instrument.

When this kind of mastery has been acquired to a considerable extent, we are then in a position to take up the regular practice of meditation. Many people mistake idle reverie or consecutive thinking for meditation. They sit down to meditate and then allow the mind to ramble or to pursue an accustomed train of thought for the set period, and get up feeling quite satisfied with themselves for having spent so much time in meditation. No wonder they meditate year after year with practically no result and very little real progress.

For successful meditation a certain degree of abstraction is absolutely necessary and no one who has not mastered the initial steps, which have been discussed already, can really meditate with profit. For meditating on any subject we have to get out of it, as it were, its very essence, to penetrate into its innermost meaning and significance. It is possible to do this only when we have acquired, in some degree at least, the power of abstraction—the capacity to leave the superficial regions of the mind, as it were, and dive into its depths.

The subject of concentration and meditation is vast and complex, so it is not possible in this brief survey to enter into its details; but there is one important point that needs to be understood. According to modern psychology, it is impossible to keep the mind concentrated on a particular image for any considerable time. By concentration is meant, in modern psychology, the power to keep the mind moving within a limited narrow circle that has been determined as the focus of consciousness. The mind is not to be allowed to go beyond the limit fixed for it, but it is free to move within that limit, indeed must be kept moving within that limit if attention is not to flag.

The assumption that concentration requires the mind to move within a limited area is to some extent responsible for their ignorance of the technique by which the mind can be transcended. For to transcend the mind, that is, for consciousness to work on planes beyond those of the mind, we must be able to fix the mind on one particular idea. We must not allow it to move within a small sphere, but actually concentrate it on one idea and to go deeper and deeper into that idea—rather than allow it to roam around a fixed area.

When we have acquired the capacity to still the mind for a considerable time, when we can keep our mind fixed on a single idea without wavering, without being affected in the least by outside impacts, then we are ready for the next important step. That step is to drop the idea from the mind while keeping the mind still concentrated and alert, without any idea in the focus of consciousness. When we are able to do this successfully, consciousness escapes from the mental body and passes into planes beyond those of the lower mind. Then only do we gain direct knowledge of our real nature, know that we are immortal, and share the divine life.

We are then able to transcend, to some extent, the illusions of the lower life and to understand life as it really is. It is true that before us lie still greater vistas of achievement and enlightenment, but we have gained a glimpse into the realities of life, and can never be the same again. When we descend again into the lower planes, all those limitations inherent in those planes hedge us around once again. But we have seen the Vision, and although we now see all the same things that we saw before, we see them in a new light—the light of the Reality which we have glimpsed.

This is the culmination of the mental discipline and training that the aspirant for direct knowledge of the realities of life has to go through. Its higher stages form part of that particular technique of spiritual life which is called “yoga” in Eastern terminology. The student of yogic literature will easily recognize in the practices for keeping the mind fixed on a single idea and then dropping the idea, various stages of that state of togetherness called *samadhi*.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points of this chapter are the following:

1. General mental discipline includes objectifying the mind, paying attention to our thoughts, and taking charge of what we think by replacing negative ideas with positive ones.
2. A more advanced discipline includes abstracting from the concrete thoughts of daily life and finally dropping all content from the focus of concentration.

QUESTIONS

1. What would help us exercise “one-pointedness” during our meditation period?
2. Describe the first step in the process of gaining control over the lower mind.
3. How shall we deal with negative thoughts that enter our mind?
4. What can we do during our waking hours at work, or at home, that will help us to gain control over the lower mind?

Chapter 11

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOWER MIND (Part 2)

The second aspect of mental discipline is the purification of the mind and the elimination of distortions that hinder its proper functions in our life.

As already noted, constant vigilance and an effort to keep out all negative thoughts lead gradually to an improvement of the mind. Meditation accelerates this process and carries it to a higher stage. In meditation the mental body vibrates regularly at high rates because we are thinking intensely of spiritual subjects. It also brings an influx of very powerful spiritual forces from the higher planes into the mental body. This dual process frees the mental body from coarser mental matter, which cannot vibrate at high rates, and replaces it with finer matter that instantly responds to spiritual thoughts and impulses. That is why meditation is one of the most powerful means for quickly and effectively purifying the mental body and making it responsive to the subtler energies that flow from the inner planes.

Another hindrance to using the mental body effectively as an instrument of the divine life within us is the distortion produced in the mind by complexes and biases of various kinds. Clairvoyant examination of the mental aura has shown that, when a person develops a prejudice on any subject, a peculiar transformation takes place in the area of the mental body corresponding to that type of thought. Various types of thought are found in different areas of the mental body just as different portions of the brain are associated with various senses and types of mental activities.

When a person suffers from a deep-seated prejudice on any subject, the particular part of the mental body corresponding to that subject is affected. The mental matter in that part ceases to circulate freely, and an unhealthy condition sets in. As a result, the mind loses its capacity to think clearly and correctly about that subject. If a person has many such prejudices and the mental body is upset to a considerable extent, then its capacity for healthy activity is considerably limited.

A student of the Wisdom Tradition must resolve all such complexes, so that the mind is made open and free to serve as an instrument of the Higher Self. Even in our ordinary life, we know what a cramping effect prejudices of various kinds have on our mental activity and how they narrow our outlook. The presence of such distortions is disastrous for aspirants after spiritual knowledge because they have to bring into their mental bodies knowledge from higher planes. They must systematically comb out all such knots from their mental bodies if they want to have a healthy and reliable instrument for their mental work.

The serious distortions that deep-seated prejudices produce in the mind are merely highly intensified forms of the general tendency to be biased in our mental life, so it is worthwhile to dwell for a while on the question of mental bias, the tendency to see everything in life through colored glasses. This is not a digression from our main line of thought but an integral and essential part of self-discovery. To see things as they really are, as far as is possible within the limitations of the lower planes, is a requirement for developing a spiritual outlook, and nothing stands more in the way of that than the presence of deep-seated prejudices in our mind. The lack of sufficient information to judge things can be made up, to some extent, by the illumination coming from buddhi or intuition, but because buddhi cannot work through the distorted medium of a mind full of all kinds of complexes, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for such a mind to see things truly and in their proper perspective.

Until we can rise above the mind and see life without its refractive influence, a certain amount of distortion in our view of things is inevitable. Each mental body has its characteristic set of vibratory capacities, the result of its past evolution, its composition, and the various ways it habitually vibrates in thinking about problems. Some of these vibratory capacities are active while others are present in a latent form called in Sanskrit *samskāras* or tendencies. Every experience we have leaves an impression on our minds—whether we are aware of it or not. And every such impression is a predisposition to respond in the future in the same way we did in the past.

The presence of such tendencies and predispositions in our mental body modifies, to a greater or lesser extent, all our thoughts and viewpoints. The ideas or mental impressions we have about things are not the result of just the experience we have actually had of those things; rather they combine pure experience with our active or latent patterns of thought, our habitual mental vibrations. Unless we can hold in abeyance our mental tendencies, we will never see things as they really are.

Neutralizing the active and latent tendencies of the mind is what is meant by keeping an open mind. It is hard to do. Most people pass through life wearing colored glasses of one sort or another, through which they see everything without being aware that their views of the things and people around them are not accurate. When the general tendency to bias becomes specific, localized as it were, it develops prejudices of the most absurd kind that shut our mental view within narrow limits by putting blinders on our mind.

To escape such mental blindness, we need to be very cautious about our opinions. We need to hold them lightly, instead of tenaciously as most people do. For our opinions are only certain ways of looking at things that we are led to by our previous thinking—ways that can be changed, indeed must be changed as we grow and acquire more experience. They are merely passing phases of our mental life, subject to alteration

like everything else in our life. If we realize clearly that our opinion on any matter is only one particular thought pattern among many others, not necessarily containing more truth than other patterns, we will be more inclined to respect the opinions of other people and attach less importance to our own. Truth is something beyond opinions and particular points of view, and it is only when we can rise into the region of Reality that we will see everything in its correct perspective and as it really exists.

Many books treat the subject of mental development from the ordinary point of view. But a few fundamental points should be kept in mind by those who aspire to spiritual wisdom. The first is that the general attitude of the esotericist toward the acquisition of knowledge is somewhat different from that of the ordinary person.

Modern science has encouraged a search for detailed knowledge and has led to many wonderful discoveries. It has enabled us to control nature in a way undreamed of a hundred years ago. But the scientific search for knowledge has also produced a craving for information of all sorts, much of which is of little use. This indiscriminating attitude toward acquiring knowledge would not be detrimental if it did not undermine our sense of correct values and make us sacrifice important things for those that are more or less useless. What matters is not the information we have, but the use we make of it. That information is good which help us to avoid mistakes and to reach our goal.

Esotericists know the value of all knowledge but exercise discrimination in acquiring knowledge about the phenomenal side of nature. In the first place, they know that all knowledge derived through the lower mind is relative, and therefore they do not attach to it the importance it has in the eyes of the world. They acquire knowledge that is necessary and useful to them in their work but do not burden their minds with detailed information for which they have no immediate use. They do not regard knowledge as a sort of ornament or hobby, as some of our scholars and scientists are apt to do. In the second place, they know the possibility of developing superphysical faculties that can enable them to gain the particular knowledge they may happen to need at any time. This makes the accumulation of detailed knowledge in the lower mind unnecessary.

This does not mean, of course, that the aspirant for Divine Wisdom should despise knowledge relating to the phenomenal side of life or can afford to neglect the development of the lower mind. Only a very few people are now in a position to develop their superphysical faculties, and for many lives to come, the large majority of candidates for treading the path to Self-Realization will have to work in and through their lower mental bodies. Even when higher faculties are acquired, a well-developed mental body is still necessary to bring down and correctly formulate the knowledge derived from higher planes. Otherwise, that higher knowledge cannot be applied. So a student of the Wisdom cannot dispense with the development of the mind but has to

use discrimination to guide it along right lines in accordance with the great purpose and ideals of life.

What are the general principles that should guide us in the development of the lower mind? Here are a few basic ones.

In acquiring knowledge we should, as far as possible, confine ourselves to those subjects that directly concern our life, and in studying these subjects we should always look for the essential and fundamental facts. It is necessary to exercise great discrimination because the number of things to be known is limitless and our life is short. If we have a purpose in life, we cannot afford to waste our time and energy in accumulating useless facts and ideas, especially when there is so much knowledge of real and permanent value to acquire in the short time at our disposal. Of course, each of us has to decide for ourselves what knowledge is of real and permanent value to us, but it may be said in a general way that all knowledge which helps us in realizing our purposes in life is important, whereas that which does not do so is useless, at least for the time being.

To exercise discrimination in this manner, we need to learn to estimate the value of facts and ideas, just as a jeweler learns to appraise the gems and precious stones he has to deal with in his trade. Facts and ideas vary enormously in their value, and with some practice it is not only possible to separate the useful from the useless but even to grade the more and less useful according to their relative worth. Students of Divine Wisdom should see that, as far as possible, their minds contain only valuable ideas—treasures of wisdom and experience of permanent value.

Not only should the ideas in our mind be of high quality, but we should make sure that they are in the proper form—clear, precise, and organized. Only then can we use them easily and profitably. Vague ideas and disorganized facts, even when they are of great value, cannot be used in thinking of a high order or in the solution of the real problems of life. They are like uncut and unpolished precious stones that may be very valuable but still cannot be used for making jewelry.

The second important principle that should guide us is that the development of mental faculties and powers is as important as, if not more important than, the accumulation of knowledge, because the evolution of a mental body is measured not so much by the number of facts it contains as by the capacity it possesses of easily acquiring knowledge on any subject and making use of it as needed. A mind that can grasp quickly a new type of thought, can think accurately, and can apply efficiently the knowledge it possesses to the solution of all kinds of problems is far more valuable than one that cannot, even though the latter may be crammed full of unassimilated facts and ideas. All knowledge is already present in the consciousness of the Logos of our system, and only the lack of responsiveness in our vehicles prevents us from bringing that

knowledge into our limited consciousness. A perfect mental body is like a sensitive radio. It can be tuned in to any wavelength of thought in the Divine Mind, which contains all the knowledge pertaining to that subject.

And finally, we should learn to correlate all our knowledge. This means that all the various facts we know should be seen in proper relationship with one another, as parts of a great synthesis. Only then can we see the place and value of each part in the whole and thus be able to develop our mental life in a systematic and orderly manner. There is a plane from which all branches of knowledge appear like the branches of a great tree joining in one trunk and rooted in one consciousness. If this is so, then the effort we make to correlate all the separate things we know must put us into rapport with that plane and bring us nearer to a synthesizing vision in which all true knowledge derives from the Universal Mind.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. We improve our minds by being aware of how our minds are working, by filtering out negativity, and by strengthening our minds through meditation.
2. We should especially guard against the restrictive influence of prejudices and biases, which distort our perception of reality; we must be open to new possibilities.
3. All knowledge is useful, but we must be careful that our minds do not become wastebaskets of useless information; information is good only when we can use it for some productive purpose.
4. To be discriminating about what knowledge is useful, we must be able to estimate the value of facts and ideas.
5. The knowledge we have should be clear and precise, not vague, and should be organized, not chaotic.
6. Knowing facts is less important than knowing how to use facts—how to think.
7. Particularly, we need to know how to relate facts to one another, to see the overall pattern of things and to be able to synthesize separate bits of information into a system.

QUESTIONS

1. When we harbor a “deep-seated” prejudice, what exactly happens to our mental body and why?
2. Explain what is meant by *samskāras*.
3. Why do we need to be cautious about our opinions?
4. How is the attitude of the esotericist toward the acquisition of knowledge somewhat different from that of the ordinary person?

Chapter 12

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CAUSAL BODY (Part 1)

In Western psychology the word “mind” stands for a complex group of phenomena connected with consciousness. It includes feelings and emotions, particular ideas about things, general or abstract thoughts, and that little understood faculty called intuition. Western psychology also generally regards the brain as the originator of all these phenomena.

The brain, according to the Wisdom Tradition, is instead an instrument that serves two purposes. On the one hand, it collects vibrations coming through the various senses; and on the other hand, it brings into physical consciousness various kinds of energies from higher, superphysical worlds. The brain is, in a way, merely a screen onto which the phenomena of various worlds project their shadows, and it is as difficult to understand these phenomena from their shadows as it is to get an idea of the real nature of the objects behind the screen in a Javanese shadow play. Scientists and psychologists investigate the shadows on the screen, unaware that the shadows are cast by realities that may be studied by going behind the screen and looking at them directly.

The phenomena that manifest through our brain have their origin in various other parts of our being. We have, as already noted, a complex constitution. A set of vehicles connects us with all the inner planes, each vehicle sending its peculiar vibrations into the brain and producing the complex and varied phenomena of our physical consciousness. Thus our sensations and feelings are due to the repercussions on the cerebrospinal system caused by vibrations coming from the emotional plane. Our thoughts are due to the reproduction in the physical brain of vibrations from the mental plane. And our true intuitions are the faint echoes of vibrations coming from subtler planes that lie deeper still.

Thoughts are of two kinds: (1) concrete, particular, or empirical, and (2) abstract, general, or purely rational. Concrete thoughts have to do with names and forms; they are based on our sensory experience of particular things and events: apples, raining, thunder, automobiles, and the taste of sugar. Abstract thoughts deal with general concepts and principles; they are independent of our particular experiences and include concepts like the relationship of parts to a whole, the incompatibility of affirming and denying, and the distinction between quantities and qualities, and the contrast between earlier, now, and later.

Both kinds of thoughts appear in our physical consciousness through the physical brain. But they are quite distinct from each other in origin, coming from two different

vehicles of consciousness on the mental plane. The mental plane with its seven subplanes is sharply divisible into two groups, the lower four subplanes, which are the medium for concrete thought, and the higher three subplanes, which are the medium of abstract thought. So also we have two entirely distinct vehicles of consciousness on the mental plane—the lower mental body, the vehicle of concrete thought, and the higher mental body, the vehicle of abstract thought.

These two bodies not only serve as the vehicles of two distinct types of mental phenomena but belong, as chapter 2 pointed out, to two different components of our inner constitution. The lower mental body is the subtlest constituent of the transitory personality, which changes from incarnation to incarnation, whereas the higher mental body, which is called the “causal body” in Theosophical literature and *Vijñanamaya Kosha* in the Hindu Vedanta philosophy, is the lowest vehicle of the reincarnating individual, which endures from life to life and goes through the evolutionary process in eons of time. Thus the demarcation between the lower and the higher mind also separates the lower and the higher selves in us.

The last two chapters dealt with the constitution and functions of the lower mental body, the vehicle of concrete thoughts. This chapter takes up the causal body and considers its functions and place in our inner constitution. The causal body is composed, as already pointed out, of matter of the three higher subplanes of the mental plane and forms the outermost vehicle of the higher self functioning through *atma-buddhi-manas*.

The causal body is formed for the first time when individualization takes place, a process that forms a distinct individual reincarnating entity from the group soul of an animal. At that time, a ray of the First Logos enters the group soul and makes an individual human being by forming a permanent causal body. That body is the repository of all experiences through which the individuality passes in its successive incarnations and of the faculties gradually developed during the course of the individual’s evolution.

In the beginning, just after the causal body’s formation, its aura resembles a colorless soap bubble. But as evolution proceeds and the faculties of the individuality are aroused one after another from latency into potency and begin to work through it, brilliant colors gradually appear in the causal body until, in the case of the Adept, it has grown greatly in size and shows flashing iridescent colors of unimaginable beauty.

The functions of the causal body are sometimes confused with those of the lower mind and sometimes with those of buddhi, but three functions are unique to it: thinking abstractly, preserving what the individual learns during evolution, and determining the nature of each new personality.

The first function of the causal body is to serve as the organ of abstract thought. What we call abstract concepts are the result of vibrations in the matter composing this vehicle of consciousness. Just as feelings and sensations are due to vibrations of the emotional body and concrete thoughts of things with names and forms are due to the vibrations of the lower mental body, so abstract thoughts are due to the vibrations produced in the causal body.

In one sense, all thoughts are abstractions. The thoughts in our mind range along a continuum from the most immediate and concrete to the most remote and abstract, but all thought involves some degree of the abstract. For example, I have the thought "dog." That thought is relatively concrete compared to other thoughts I may have: "canis," "mammal," "animal," "being," and so on. But "dog" is also relatively abstract compared to other thoughts: "spaniel" or "terrier," and "Rover," "Daisy," or "Rin-Tin-Tin."

Even the name of a particular dog is really an abstraction because Rover on June 1, 1992, is not the same as Rover on September 15, 1999, and Rover playing with the neighborhood children in his yard during the afternoon is different from Rover faced with a stranger inside his house in the middle of the night. The most concrete thoughts we have are impressions formed by experiences at a particular time, in a particular place, under particular circumstances. Everything else is more abstract.

The difference between concrete and abstract thought is, however, useful and genuine. Take a triangle, for example. It is possible to draw or imagine innumerable triangles of all shapes and sizes: isosceles triangles, right-angle triangles, scalene triangles, equilateral triangles, small triangles, large triangles. But whatever the size or shape of the infinite number of triangles drawn or imagined, there are some peculiarities which are common to all triangles, which in fact make a triangle a triangle. They are the distinguishing properties of "triangle-ness." If we examine all the triangles that we can possibly imagine, we will find that all of them have certain properties in common, and therefore we can, as it were, abstract from these triangles those properties and conceive of an ideal triangle. The ideal triangle has no shape or size. It is an abstract concept. We cannot imagine it in our mind because as soon as we imagine a triangle we have come down to a particular concrete triangle.

In addition to the abstract concepts derived from our experience of particular concrete things, such as dogs and triangles, there are also some abstract concepts that seem to be innate in us—not derived from our experience, but basic to and determinative of the experiences we have. These are very general and abstract, but they are the basis of all rational thought. Some of these abstract concepts are the contrast between "same" and "different," "now" and "then," "present" and "absent," "true" and "false" "me" and "not-me" "cause" and "effect," "here" and "there," "good" and "bad," and

so on. We are likely to think that such concepts are inherent in the nature of the universe. Perhaps they are not, but they are certainly inherent in our minds.

All scientific generalizations and laws, all philosophical systems, all principles of action are concerned with defining the relations of things or ideas to one another and come within the domain of abstract thought. We think about the world in terms of these great abstractions. The concrete and abstract are thus inseparable although they are different in nature. They are intertwined in the field of the intellect as the warp and woof are in a fabric.

Our vehicle of consciousness that is the organ of abstract thought is the causal body. It is true that we do all our thinking—both concrete and abstract—through the brain, but the brain is merely the instrument that reproduces faintly in our physical consciousness the vibrations originating in our subtler bodies. These vibrations are reflected from vehicle to vehicle until they appear in the physical brain, having lost much of their intensity and clearness in the transmission.

On the plane of the higher mind, abstract thoughts are not the vague, indefinite things they appear to us to be, but actual realities which can be perceived by the faculties of the causal body. The individuality in the causal body can manipulate and work with these abstract ideas and principles just as we, working in the lower mind, can manipulate concrete ideas and images. When one of these ideas is projected into the lower mind, it takes a definite shape and form, the abstract changing into the concrete. When that change occurs, the abstract thought can assume innumerable forms all related to one another by the essential features embodied, as it were, in the abstract idea.

To take the example of a triangle again, when the abstract idea of triangle descends into the field of the concrete mind, it can give rise to an infinite number of triangles. On its own plane the individual knows the *essence* of a triangle. On the lower mental plane it can know a *particular* triangle, having the essential qualities of “triangle-ness,” but distinguished by a number of particular, specific, concrete features.

The great advantage of knowing the essence of things in distinction to knowing concrete things is obvious. When we know the universal, we know, as it were, all the particulars included in that category. The mathematician who has the abstract idea of a triangle knows, in a way, all the triangles that can possibly be imagined. The scientist who discovers a scientific law acquires command over all the phenomena covered by that law. The esotericist who discovers an inner law becomes master, at once, of a particular aspect of life.

If we know innumerable facts or details, but do not know the underlying relation between them, do not know their essential nature or quality, we neither know them

really nor can use them in our work. A mass of facts unrelated and unconnected is useless. It is an example of the computer expression GIGO, that is, “garbage in, garbage out.” Discover the underlying principle which connects those facts, and it becomes valuable material that can be utilized in innumerable ways.

The great Masters of Wisdom, it is said, have full knowledge of all the fundamental principles in every sphere of life and so do not bother about the details. If they want detailed information about anything, they just apply their lower mind to the task and get it much as you and I do, but assisted by their command of the general principles and so without the difficulty we may experience because we do not have that same command of fundamentals. As their causal bodies are fully developed and they can function in full consciousness on the higher mental plane, they can know and deal with the fundamental principles on their own plane without having to work through the heavy and comparatively less responsive medium of the physical brain.

These principles exist eternally in the Universal Mind of the Logos, so the development of the causal body just enables the individual to contact or know them. Everything that can be known in the Solar System is already present in the Mind of the Logos. It is the lack of development of our vehicles of consciousness that prevents us from knowing anything. The moment we develop the capacity to respond to any particular kind of vibrations, we can come into touch with the corresponding part of the consciousness of the Logos.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. A variety of different functions, which we tend to lump together as “mind” and think of as originating in the brain, are actually produced in various parts of our constitution and are only reflected into the brain. These include (1) feelings and emotions, (2) particular and concrete thoughts, (3) general and abstract concepts, and (4) intuitions or insights.
2. Thoughts are either particular and concrete, or general and abstract. The former are derived from our experiences through the senses, though they are modeled on or influenced by the latter. The latter are innate in us and are the foundation on which we form our particular ideas.
3. Particular, concrete thoughts are produced in the lower mental body. General, abstract thought is the product of the higher mind or causal body.
4. Those who have conscious command of abstract, generalized thought can more easily acquire whatever particular, concrete information they need. The Masters

of Wisdom function consciously in their causal bodies and so have such command.

QUESTIONS

1. As an instrument, the brain has two functions. What are they?
2. How would we get to the “real” nature behind an object or an idea so we are no longer seeing or receiving the mere shadow or partial phenomena?
3. What are the three functions of the causal body?
4. What are the two broad categories of thoughts mentioned in this chapter?
5. What does the author mean by, “The ideal triangle has no shape or size”?

Chapter 13

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CAUSAL BODY (Part 2)

As observed last month, the causal body has three functions: it is the means for abstract thinking, for preserving what we learn in our various incarnations, and for determining the basic nature of our personality in each new incarnation. Last month's paper discussed at some length the first of those functions, abstract thinking. This paper examines the other two functions, which are closely related.

As mentioned in the last paper, the formation of the causal body marks the birth of the individual human soul, after which the soul goes through the processes of human evolution according to the laws of reincarnation and karma. As a result of this process of human evolution, qualities that are present but only germinal in the soul are gradually aroused from latency to potency. And so the soul passes, through many incarnations, over eons of time, from a condition of spiritual somnolence to that of a gradual awakening to higher realities, and eventually to that of the Perfect Human, aware of material, intellectual, and spiritual reality in a balanced way.

This gradual unfoldment of human and divine characteristics is marked by a parallel development of the causal body, with an increase in the size of its aura, the appearance of bands of brilliant colors within it, and a general enhancement of its luminosity. A study of the causal bodies of different individuals has shown a relationship between the colors present in those bodies and the characteristics developed by the reincarnating individuality. By looking at a causal body with clairvoyant sight, it is possible to infer the stage of development reached by the individual and the characteristics thus far developed.

So we can see that the second function of the causal body is to act as a repository of the fruits of human evolution as these fruits are gathered during the course of the successive lives of the individual. There are, however, two points worth noting in connection with this gradual growth of the causal body.

The first of these is that during the period spent in Devachan (or the heaven world) at the close of a life cycle, the experiences of the life last spent on earth are slowly digested and their essence, in the form of faculties, is transferred to and made a part of the constitution of the causal body. The personality, as it were, distills all its experiences and, before it dissolves and vanishes, hands over the distilled product, the valuable essence of all these experiences, to its parent, the individual who gave it birth.

So the individuality has incorporated into its very constitution all the valuable lessons learned in that life and starts each new life with the accumulated experiences of the previous lives. This growth of the causal body is remarkably like the growth of a

tree which sheds its old foliage every year in autumn after transferring the sap to the branches and then puts forth a new foliage in spring to absorb fresh nourishment from the atmosphere and grows still further.

This also accounts for the fact that, when we start a new life with a new set of physical, emotional, and lower mental bodies, we have no specific memory of the experiences gone through in the previous lives, but we have the fullest advantage of all those experiences in the form of faculties and powers developed in those lives and preserved in the causal body. There is no specific memory because the new mental body did not pass through those experiences and has no record of them. Instead, the individuality, which functions through the causal body, has passed through all those experiences and retains the memory of all its past lives. That memory can be revived by those who are able to rise in consciousness to the causal level and then bring down into the physical brain mental pictures concerned with those past lives.

The second point we should note is that much of the evil we see in people is not something positive but is merely due to a lack of development of the corresponding opposite good qualities and faculties in the causal body. During the process of our evolution, we have varied experiences, and the various qualities that constitute a complete character are developed, one after another, in an irregular fashion rather than simultaneously or sequentially.

It is as if different people started painting their own portraits and each person took to the work in an individual way. If anyone looks at those portraits while they are all still incomplete, they will see that some painters will have depicted their heads, some their upper bodies, some their whole form but indistinctly, and so on. The portraits will have symmetry and comprehensiveness when they are all completed, but while they are still in progress, they will appear quite different and lopsided.

That is the case also with our characters. We each develop different qualities in our character in different orders and start developing them at different times and hence appear lopsided and unlike one another. What we generally call vices are in most cases due to the absence of the corresponding virtues, which have not yet been unfolded in the causal body. They are the dark bands in the spectrum of our character. Thus a habit of lying is due to a lack of the particular quality in the causal body that corresponds to truthfulness, and so on.

If we regard our fellows in this light, we will be inclined to adopt a more charitable attitude toward their weaknesses and deficiencies of character and, instead of considering them evil or sinful, regard them merely as incompletely developed. They have yet to complete their portraits. All of us have to complete our portraits, and we cannot reasonably adopt any attitude except that of sympathy and helpfulness toward one another.

Another point to keep in mind is that, although ultimately we will develop all the qualities needed for perfection, the aim of the evolutionary processes is not to produce the same pattern in all of us. We all have to become perfectly complete and to develop in an all-around manner, and yet to remain unique. No two individualities are meant to be exactly the same, although sixty billion souls are evolving toward completeness in the scheme of which we are a part. The evolutionary scheme for humanity is not like a factory that turns out millions of copies of a given product, all exactly similar and hardly distinguishable from one another. How Nature in her laboratory is able to bring to completeness such a huge number of souls, while preserving their individual uniqueness, is one of those mysteries of life that we cannot hope to solve while we are still living in the realms of illusion and are able to see everything only in a partial manner.

The third function of the causal body is to generate new personalities for each incarnation. The causal body serves as a repository not only of the quintessence of experiences gone through by the personalities in different incarnations and of the faculties developed through them, but also of the karma, "good" and "bad," that these personalities have made during their incarnations. That karma remains as potential impressions or seeds in the causal body and gradually comes to actuality in new personalities and determines the conditions of future lives. That is why this vehicle is called the "causal" body: it causes new personalities to come into being.

From its stock of karma, a certain number of effects are worked out during every incarnation, and other causes are produced, adding new karma to the storehouse of the causal body. A sort of running account is maintained throughout the successive lives of the personalities. This personal account is closed only at the time of liberation or "salvation" (to use the Western term) after the individual's karma has been completely exhausted or balanced.

The last point to note in connection with the functions of the causal body concerns the factors that determine its growth. We have seen already how the experiences gone through by an individual, life after life, through the instrumentality of its successive personalities determine its growth. But this growth is not haphazard. It is guided by two underlying factors that exercise a constant pressure and determine the direction of the individual's growth.

One of those factors is the uniqueness of the individual who is being evolved. As has been pointed out already, every soul is destined to be individually unique, and its growth is determined partly by this uniqueness, which is already present in some mysterious manner in the eternal monad as hinted at in the esoteric maxim, "Become what you are." This individual uniqueness exercises a constant and steady pressure on the growth of the soul throughout the period of its evolution, and it is this pressure

from within which ensures that the soul will attain completeness in accordance with its individual uniqueness. Our individual uniqueness, which guides our evolution, is called in Sanskrit our *swadharna*, or our own inner nature.

The other factor, which is closely connected with the first, is the part the individual or the monad is to exercise in the Divine Plan. Every soul has to play a particular part in the scheme of cosmic evolution, and its growth takes place in such a manner that it is fitted to play that part effectively. The experiences we go through and the faculties we develop, especially in the later stages of evolution, are such as bring out our individual uniqueness (or *swadharna*) and prepare us for playing the part assigned to us in the Divine Scheme.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The second function of the causal body is to serve as a repository of what we have learned in all of our incarnations—not specific facts but the essence of our experiences.
2. Those essential experiences can be seen clairvoyantly as the size, colors, and luminosity of the aura of the causal body.
3. The memory of all our experiences in past lives is available through the causal body, but in a normal incarnation they are not available to our conscious minds, but only as the tendencies and habits of response that we have developed, often call “character.”
4. Flaws of character are basically undeveloped qualities, qualities lacking within us, not positively evil ones.
5. Each evolving soul or individuality is unique and will develop into its own unique complete identity.
6. The causal body is also the repository of an individual’s karma, which causes new personalities to form and therefore gives rise to the term “causal body.”
7. The two factors that determine the direction of our individual growth are, first, our own unique natures and, second, the part we have to fill in the total scheme of world evolution.

QUESTIONS

1. Second function: Explain the gradual unfoldment of the human in the causal body?

2. What two points are characteristic of causal body growth?
3. Why don't most people remember their past life?
4. What makes each of us different in terms of our character?
5. What is the aim of the evolutionary process?
6. Besides being a repository of past experiences and developing new faculties, what is the third function of the causal body?
7. Explain what is meant by the "Karmic Storehouse."
8. What are the two underlying factors that determine the direction of the causal body's growth over the course of successive incarnations?

Chapter 14

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGHER MIND (Part 1)

The last chapter looked at the role of the higher mind in our life and at the vehicle (the causal body) through which it works. In dealing with these things relating to the superphysical planes, we should be careful not to take our ideas about these matters for the realities. These ideas expressed here are merely hints pointing to the realities that lie behind them—realities we can really know only when our inner development lets us perceive them directly. We all tend to mistake words for ideas and ideas for realities.

We need to remember the tremendous limitations under which we work on the physical plane. Most of the time, we are satisfied with ideas about things, if not with mere words, and we forget that between our idea about a thing and the thing itself there is a big gulf which must be bridged if we are actually to know that thing. Many people go around talking about things of the higher life, oblivious of the fact that they are merely dealing with ideas—and very vague ideas at that. There is no harm in discussing such ideas; in fact, it is necessary to do so. The trouble comes when we feel satisfied with the ideas, instead of pressing forward in search of the realities that lie behind them.

Before dealing with the general methods for developing the causal body, we need to clear the ground by considering a few important matters. The first point we should note is that the development of this causal body, which is the outermost vehicle of the immortal *jīvātmā*, individuality, or “Ego” as it is sometimes called in Theosophical literature, is a very slow process, taking hundreds of lives for bringing it to perfection. It is said that the average number of lives spent on earth between individualization and the attainment of adeptship is about 777. Out of these, about 700 are spent in lives concerned chiefly with the essentials of physical subsistence and survival, about 70 in developing our esthetic, intellectual, and moral natures, and the last 7 in treading the Path which leads to adeptship.

When we recall that quite a large proportion of our time is spent in the superphysical worlds between incarnations, we see what a long and tremendous journey the soul undertakes when it starts on its human evolution and how slow must be the development of the causal body, which records and embodies this evolutionary process. In the earlier stages this evolution is guided solely from without by hosts of divine agencies at work in the solar system, and the soul has hardly any share in its own development. Only when it is approaching the end of its journey and becomes conscious of the purpose of that long journey, does it begin to take an ever increasing

share in its own growth and unfoldment—the last stages of its development being almost solely guided from within.

The mere fact that the soul develops an urge to take its evolution into its own hands is a sign of its maturity showing that it is approaching its journey's end. A large proportion of the work has already been accomplished when this urge is born, so only a few lives of intensive training and discipline are enough to complete the work. Those who feel a strong urge to attain perfection as soon as possible have a reasonable chance of reaching their goal in a few lives, and sometimes seem to accomplish miracles in just one life. In some cases, the individuality is well developed and the causal body is sufficiently well formed, but the chief trouble is with the communication between the higher individuality and the lower personality, because of the impediments created by karma in previous lives. As soon as this karma is worked out, the individuality begins to shine through the personality, and it appears as though a miracle of development has taken place.

Those who feel the urge to take up the work of perfecting their nature should clearly understand that it is a long and tedious task that normally takes many strenuous lives to accomplish. No one can tell when it will be completed. Infinite patience and determination to persevere in the face of all kinds of difficulties, disappointments, and failures are the only guarantee of final achievement.

The second point to understand clearly is the relation between the personality and the individuality. As observed earlier, the experiences that a personality goes through in a particular life are worked up into different kinds of faculties in the heaven world between incarnations, and the essence of these experiences is thus passed on, at the close of the life, to the individuality to be incorporated into its constitution. This addition to the faculties, life after life, is what makes the individuality grow and unfold its powers. The individuality lives a life of its own in the higher worlds, but the impact of the vibrations from the lower planes helps to arouse its divine faculties from latency into potency.

The extent to which a particular life on earth promotes the growth of the individuality depends very much upon the relation between the individuality and the personality. The personality comes out of the individuality, like an emanation from it, but during the course of its incarnation, the personality develops a semi-independent life of its own, which may or may not be in accord with and serve the interests of the individuality.

If the personality aligns itself with the interests of the individuality so that the latter can use it for its own higher and far-seeing purposes, the incarnation is a great success and the experiences of the personality yield a rich harvest for the use and development of the individuality. On the other hand, as often happens, if the personality strikes out

on an independent line of its own and is not amenable to the influence and guidance of the individuality, but remains absorbed in the temporary and trivial interests of the lower worlds, the purpose of the incarnation is to a great extent defeated. Although some progress is made, the harvest from the higher point of view is poor.

These comments on the relation between the personality and the individuality should not give the impression that we have two independent entities within us. In reality, only One Life of the Logos exists everywhere. A ray of that divine consciousness works in the *jīvātmā* through the vehicles appropriate to the various planes. On the higher spiritual planes of *atma-buddhi-manas*, this ray of consciousness produces a center of individuality that is pervaded by an overwhelming consciousness of unity with the divine life in which that center is rooted. The veil of *māyā* is thin enough there to enable the individuality partially to see the Reality in which it is embedded.

When this ray of divine consciousness descends further into matter and works through the three lower bodies in the physical, emotional, and lower mental worlds, where the veils of illusion are thick and hard to pierce, its sense of unity with its source is lost. The constant association, and thus identification, of consciousness with its three vehicles develops a false sense of "I," which is the essence and root of the personality, the pin that holds together all our memories and experiences in one composite whole. That is how the "I" of the personality, although it is based upon and derived from the individuality and ultimately from the monad, functions as an independent entity, oblivious of its divine origin and of the purpose for which it exists.

In the earlier stages of evolution that oblivion does not matter, for in these stages, experiences of all kinds are needed to build up the nascent individuality, and any kind of experience can serve that purpose. But in the later stages when discrimination has to be exercised in the selection of experiences to refine the individuality and bring out its divinity and individual uniqueness, the personality must become a servant of the higher self. Of course, this illusion-bound personality with its I-ness is only a temporary entity that is destined to dissipate and disappear at the end of the incarnation, when its experiences have been assimilated in the heaven world and their essence transferred to the individuality. Yet how it functions does make a difference in the development of the individuality in the advanced stages of evolution.

So, from one individuality, many personalities arise, each personality living its life and enriching the individuality with its experiences until the individuality is sufficiently developed to need no more experiences connected with the lower worlds of illusion. Each of those personalities is not only derived from the individuality but is also only a partial manifestation of it. All of the personalities are different facets of the Diamond Soul.

That is why the various personal incarnations of the same soul are not as similar to one another as one would expect them to be as manifestations of the same individuality. In each incarnation only certain aspects and faculties of the individuality are brought out, the others remaining latent, to be expressed in future incarnations. Each incarnation has to take place in a certain set of circumstances, determined by karma and the evolutionary requirements of the soul, and these circumstances confine within narrow limits the set of qualities that can be expressed in that personality.

The culture and ethnicity in which the soul is born, the heredity of the body, the climatic conditions, the sex of the physical body, the karma it has to work out, the faculties it has to develop in that incarnation—all these factors contribute to restrict the expression of the individuality, and only a limited number of the large number of faculties and qualities already developed can find expression in one life. But the personalities that appear, one after another, in the wider life of the individuality provide the necessary variety of circumstances and opportunities for an all-around development and the attainment of that completion which includes all divine powers and faculties. Nature works slowly, but its methods are sure and its purposes are carried out with skill and perseverance.

This discussion of the relation between the personality or lower self and the individuality or higher self is not of merely theoretical interest. A clear grasp of this relation is one of the most important requisites to begin the difficult task of unfolding our higher spiritual nature. Spiritual evolution cannot go far until we understand thoroughly the relation between the lower and higher selves and succeed in bringing the lower personality under the control of the higher individuality. To effect that control, we must realize the evanescent, illusory character of the personality.

At some point we *realize*—not merely think superficially—that this entity which feels, thinks, and acts in the lower worlds and with which we identify ourselves, is merely an evanescent thing—a creature of short life that will give place to another creature of alike nature in the next life. Then we will become sensitive to the need for higher interests. As long as we are unaware of the truth and oblivious to the relentless fate that pursues our lower self, we remain complacent in this impermanent world of illusions. The moment we wake up to the fact that the personality is transitory and the seemingly solid ground of reality begins to slip away from beneath our feet, we start our search for something real and lasting.

That search is not careless and leisurely, but like a drowning man catching at a life-support, we are then in dead earnest. Unwillingly and painfully, we decide to leave this doomed ship of the personality and take refuge in our higher self, which we believe—we do not yet know—to be immortal. More and more, we identify ourselves with the higher self and address ourselves seriously to the task of making the personality its

instrument and expression. Eventually, the lower self will be completely subdued and transcended, and we will be centered in the Divine Life. Only with this attitude of mind can we usefully take up the task of developing the higher mind working through the causal body.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Because we tend to confuse reality with the ideas we have about it, and those ideas with the words we use to express them, we must be clear about several points before we can proceed with the work of developing our higher mind.
2. First, we must realize that the spiritual evolution of the higher mind requires a very long time, stretching over hundreds of incarnations, during most of which progress is very slow and is the result of external forces acting on us.
3. In the later stages of spiritual evolution, however, the impulse comes from within ourselves and is manifest by a strong urge to realize our true and full natures.
4. Second, the relationship between the personality and individuality is very important, for the individuality grows and develops through the personalities that express it.
5. If the personality is not aligned with the individuality but goes its own way, it will have little to contribute to the latter's development; but if the personality is closely connected with the individuality, it will promote the latter's growth.
6. The personality and the individuality are not two separate entities, but expressions on different levels of reality of the One Life, expressions that reinforce each other when properly aligned.
7. The many personalities of a single individuality are quite diverse, for each manifests only certain aspects of the individuality within the environment and heredity of that personality.
8. When we realize the impermanence and evanescence of the personality we now have, we are led to assess our identity and to begin the work of developing the higher mind or individuality, which is more truly our real self.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the statement, "We all tend to mistake words for ideas and ideas for realities"?
2. Explain the journey of the Ego expressed in this chapter.
3. What factor indicates that the journey's end is approaching, and why?
4. What is the relationship between the personality and individuality?
5. What determines a successful or unsuccessful incarnation?
6. Why are the successive personalities emanating from the same individuality so different from one life to the next? Why are they not all of a similar type?
7. Differentiate or explain these two different, yet parallel, statements: "The subconscious mind is the servant of the conscious mind," and "the lower personality must become a servant of the higher individuality."

Chapter 15

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGHER MIND (part 2)

The methods of developing the causal body are implicit in the functions of that body. The law of growth applicable not only in the physical world but also in all subtler worlds is thus: when any function is exercised, it improves, and this improvement is accompanied by a better organization of the vehicle through which the function operates. This better organization of the vehicle, in turn, allows a more varied exercise of the function, so that the life and the form both improve and provide consciousness with a more efficient instrument for its expression.

This is the one fundamental law at the basis of all methods of Self-development in every sphere of life and on all the planes. If you exercise the physical body, more life flows through the muscles, arteries, and nerves; the body becomes stronger, the muscles stouter, and the capacity for exercise and endurance grow in proportion.

Similarly, consider the desire body, the vehicle of emotions and feelings. If you find that it is dull and does not respond to certain emotions such as those of love and sympathy, you can place yourself in circumstances where those emotions are aroused. You guide the body to respond to such emotions. Gradually more life begins to flow in the new channels that have been created, the constitution of the desire body changes, becomes more refined, and you will find that it now easily responds to these finer emotions.

So also if you find that the lower or empirical mental body is not able to think correctly and coherently, you can start thinking with concentration on various topics. The practice will be tedious and tiresome in the beginning, but as more and more mental energy flows into the mental body, the task will become easier, and gradually what in the beginning was tedious and tiresome becomes a pleasant and easy exercise. The flow of energy in the mental body gradually organizes that vehicle, makes it a better instrument for the exercise of mental powers, and thus prepares it for a more effective exercise of its chief function—thinking. And at the same time the mind's instrument on the physical plane, the brain and the cerebrospinal system, also improves and allows a better expression of thought in the physical consciousness.

Every function of every vehicle of consciousness improves by exercise, whether it is visible or invisible, and the causal body is no exception. As observed earlier, one of the main functions of the causal body is to serve as a vehicle of abstract thought, so it follows that, if we want to develop it, we must give it exercise in abstract thinking.

Some people have a wrong notion about abstract thinking. The moment the word "abstract" is mentioned, they begin to feel uncomfortable and imagine themselves

going through dull and dreary processes of unprofitable, recondite mental gymnastics. That feeling is in itself an indication of the inadequate development of this function of their causal body because exercising any well-developed and therefore easily used function is always a pleasure. We have difficulty with a function when we have not learned to exercise it or there is some defect or obstruction in the vehicle through which that function operates.

In fact, abstract thinking is not dull or difficult. Just what is it after all? It involves two movements of the mind. On the one hand, we recognize certain similarities among a number of experiences; that is, we “abstract” a feature common to all of them and think of it as an abstraction distinct from any of its particular expressions. So we become aware that some apples, roses, fire, blood, traffic lights, raspberries, sunsets, rubies, rust, Santa Claus suits, and beets have a quality of color in common, and we abstract that quality and call it “red.” This is the process of going from the particular to the general, and is what we do whenever we recognize similarities between things.

In addition, however, the mind already has built into its structure certain categories that allow us to recognize similarities and differences in our experiences. We instinctually know that things have color, size, shape, position, and other such qualities. We learn to recognize particular colors, sizes, shapes, positions, and so on, but the abstract categories themselves are already inherent in the mind and need only to be activated by the experience of particulars. In this way, the general categories already in our minds give direction to the particular experiences we have.

It is helpful to be aware of these two movements of the mind, for then we will know that our habits of thinking are the products of two things: the inherent structure of our minds and the particular experiences we have had. Persons who have had different particular experiences will develop different habits of thinking. Being aware of this can help us to realize why other people may think about and respond to the world in ways different from ours. But also, if our human mind were structured differently, we would experience the world differently. Being aware of that will remind us that, as Hamlet told Horatio, there are more things in heaven and earth than we can ever imagine.

Our minds move in these two ways every day in our lives, but we do so unconsciously, so those movements do not promote our mental growth as well as they could. In fact, generalizing is inevitable, but most of us generalize from our daily experiences in an unsystematic and sometimes foolish manner. I take raw vegetables for a few days. They do not agree with my stomach, perhaps because it is temporarily upset or even constitutionally weak. I conclude that raw vegetables are bad for health and go about propagating the idea that vegetables should not be eaten raw. What I have done is to exercise my faculty of abstract thinking clumsily, on insufficient data, and without using my commonsense.

We all generalize ineffectively and crudely most of the time. We need to learn to generalize scientifically, deliberately, and systematically. Doing so will not only improve our mind but also enormously increase our effectiveness in life. Right generalization is the first step on the road back from the many to the One. It is preliminary training in acquiring the synthesizing vision that sees the One among the many. We find, as we continue this search for laws and principles, that the minor principles of life join together like the tributaries of a mighty river until we find ourselves ultimately in that Ocean of Existence—the One.

How are we to train the higher mind to do its abstract thinking effectively? Here is a simple example. Draw a circle and divide its circumference into a number of small arcs of irregular length. Erase some of those arcs, so that only small bits of the circumference are left, and show them to someone else. That person will be able to say that they form part of a circle although the whole of the circle is not visible. Why? Because the shape and position of these arcs suggest naturally to the mind the circle of which they are parts.

In the same way, whenever the mind experiences a number of particulars, it classifies them and seeks a relationship between them. All scientific laws have been discovered in this way—by the mind’s grouping them and discovering a generalization that relates them to one another. The more highly developed the causal body, the more easily it is able to see relationships between facts. Science is not the only field that provides us opportunities for learning to generalize. In every sphere of life we can exercise this faculty if we are on the look out for opportunities to do so.

The second method for developing the causal body is based on the other function of this vehicle referred to previously, namely that it serves as the medium for making a permanent part of the soul’s constitution all the virtues and faculties acquired during the process of evolution. It has been pointed out that, when a particular characteristic or faculty is developed or improved in any life, the gain that has been made is not lost with the destruction of the personality but is transferred to the causal body and made permanent as a result of the reorganization of that body.

Research in physiology indicates that thinking modifies the matter of the physical brain, so prolonged and continued thinking permanently improves the quality of the brain, thus making it a better instrument for thinking. This improvement is only in the instrument on the physical plane, which is destroyed with the destruction of the physical body. But there is a corresponding improvement in the causal body which endures from life to life, and thus the gains made in each life go on accumulating, making the soul a more and more effective instrument of the Divine Life.

The second method of developing the causal body is, therefore, systematically to build our character, aiming at all-around development. Qualities like truthfulness,

courage, and humility, which are mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita and other sacred scriptures of the world, should be made a permanent part of our character by simultaneously practicing meditation and exercising these qualities in our daily life. This is a long and tedious process, but the work has to be done if the soul is to become a fitting instrument of the Divine Life—a center through which flow out love, power, and wisdom.

When the process has been significantly furthered, the causal body is a resplendent object to look at, a globe of blinding glory of which we can have no conception on the physical plane. Such are the causal bodies of the Masters of Wisdom, who have already attained perfection as far as the lower worlds are concerned.

Another important factor in the development of the causal body is the unfoldment of the buddhic and atmic vehicles. The causal body grows on the one hand by impulses coming from the physical, emotional, and lower mental planes, and on the other, by the spiritual forces acting upon it from the buddhic and atmic planes. Our spiritual development therefore provides the most powerful impetus for the growth of this body, accomplishing in a few lives what would otherwise take an enormous period of time.

Just as the functions of the physical, emotional, and lower mental bodies cannot be separated into watertight compartments in the life of the personality, so the functions of the atmic, buddhic, and higher mental vehicles cannot be separated in the life of the individuality. When the lower mind is exercised, it is not only the lower mental body that improves. Its instrument in the physical body—the brain—also improves simultaneously. Similarly, when the powers of atma and buddhi begin to function actively, the causal body, their instrument, develops simultaneously.

Remember that the causal body is like a mirror that can reflect the truths present in the Universal Mind back to the lower mind. So those whose causal bodies are sufficiently developed and in communication with their lower mental body are able, at least to some extent, to contact the Universal Mind. All serious students of the esoteric sciences should try to develop this faculty within themselves as a source of unlimited and true knowledge that can be tapped whenever it is necessary and that will ultimately make them independent of all external sources of knowledge.

Direct contact with the Universal Mind can be made only through the practices of higher Yoga, when one can function consciously through one's causal body. But even before this stage is reached, an advanced student who practices meditation and has purified and harmonized his mind can develop the capacity to be in rapport with the higher mind and through it to contact the Universal Mind indirectly in increasing measure. When this happens, knowledge with regard to the inner realities of life begins to appear within the mind of the student in ways that have to be experienced in order to be appreciated.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. By the law of growth, the functions of our consciousness, the organs or vehicles through which the functions operate, and the expression of consciousness through those vehicles and functions all develop interactively by use.
2. Abstract thinking is a part of everyday life. It has two aspects: a drawing of conclusions or generalizing from specific experiences and a modeling of how we experience reality by certain general or abstract categories inherent in the mind.
3. The higher mind can be developed by recognizing how we perceive overall patterns from fragmentary experiences and by meditating on the qualities we would build into our permanent character and putting them into practice in our everyday lives.
4. The causal body grows from the impression made on it by both the lower or outer part of our nature (physical, emotional, mental) and the higher principles (buddhi and atma). When the causal body is open to the higher principles, we can glimpse an insight into the Universal Mind.

QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, describe the one fundamental law that lies at the basis of all methods of Self-development.
2. What is the reason that other people think and respond to things differently than the way we do?
3. What two ways can we effectively develop the causal body?
4. How does improving the instrument of the brain enhance the causal body if the brain and the entire physical body are destroyed at death?
5. Explain the purpose behind developing the causal body.

Chapter 16

THE ROLE OF BUDDHI IN OUR LIFE (Part 1)

The process of evolution resulting in our present human state lasted eons of time, and further stages of development lie ahead in the future. As observed in an earlier chapter, before human self-consciousness developed, evolution was guided solely from without by external agencies, and life embodied in various forms was not able to cooperate consciously with these external agencies. With the appearance of self-consciousness, however, marking the birth of the human soul and the formation of the causal body, the possibility opens for us to share in our own unfoldment and development.

In the earlier stages of human evolution, the conscious cooperation of the soul in its own development is nominal, and evolution is still guided, to a very great extent, from without. It is only when the soul has developed and matured that it can take an active and intelligent part in its own development and cooperate with the forces that are always exerting a steady pressure upon it in the direction of evolution. When this stage is reached, the soul has already developed to a considerable extent its lower vehicles of consciousness and is ready to begin its spiritual evolution. The development of buddhi marks the beginning of the phase in our inner spiritual unfoldment, so those who want to encourage that unfoldment need to understand the role this principle plays in our life.

Buddhi is the particular manifestation of consciousness through the buddhic body, the vehicle that comes immediately after the causal body as we penetrate inwards from the periphery to the center of our being. Its field of expression, therefore, lies just beyond the mind, not only the lower concrete mind but also the abstract mind that deals with general principles and works through the causal body. Consequently, the functions of buddhi transcend those of the mind and cannot be judged by the criteria of the intellect. Intellect alone cannot understand those finer perceptions whose origin is in the buddhic consciousness. The only state of consciousness that transcends and embraces the buddhic is that of the spirit or *ātmā*, which is the very center of our life, the core in which lie buried all our divine potentialities.

To understand how buddhi functions in our life we have to grasp clearly the difference between two ways consciousness manifests. The primary manifestation of consciousness is through a vehicle working on its own plane. A secondary manifestation is on a lower plane, when the vibrations of consciousness are stepped down to work through that heavier medium.

Take, for example, the working of consciousness on the lower mental plane. Vibrations produced when consciousness works through the lower mental body are known as thoughts, but there is a world of difference between thoughts as they are seen on their own plane through the organs of the mental body and their expression through the dense and inelastic medium of the physical brain. When thoughts are perceived on their own plane by clairvoyant sight, they are seen to make a world of their own, full of forms and colors of entrancing beauty, a world that the various religions of the world have tried very imperfectly to portray in their descriptions of heaven. But these thoughts, when expressed through the physical brain as physical consciousness, in spite of retaining some of their essential characteristics, lose many of the qualities and the force which characterize them on their own plane. On their own plane they appear real, while on the physical plane they appear to have a vague and subjective character.

The same is true of the emotional plane. The vibrations of the emotional body on their own plane produce the phenomena known as feelings and desires and give rise to all kinds of forms and colors. On the emotional plane, these forms and colors have an objective character and form a world of their own. But when the vibrations come down into the physical plane and find expression through our sympathetic nervous system, they lose many of their characteristics, and nothing is left but that peculiar state of consciousness we call "feeling."

These examples should help us to understand the difference between consciousness on the buddhic plane as it functions consciously in our buddhic vehicle and that same consciousness as it appears in our physical brain after being stepped down through the intermediate vehicles. The buddhic vehicle has a name in Vedanta philosophy that reveals something about its nature: it is called the *ānandamaya-kosha*, which means "the sheath of bliss."

When Yogis achieve the state of unified awareness that is the goal of Yoga (*samādhi*) and rise in it to the buddhic plane, they become conscious of a new world full of tremendous bliss and knowledge. In comparison with the sea of buddhic bliss in which they find themselves bathing, even the happiness of the heaven world pales into insignificance. Words cannot describe the bliss and the transcendent knowledge of the buddhic plane, so all the mystics and seers who have obtained even a glimpse of that plane feel utterly helpless when they try to give to others some idea of the beatific vision they have seen.

When the vibrations of the buddhic plane are stepped down into the physical brain, however, they lose much of their intensity and appear in physical consciousness greatly toned down by transmission through the intermediate planes. Thus the direct perception of the unity of life on the buddhic plane becomes merely an all-embracing compassion and sympathy and direct insight into truth becomes merely intuition and

knowledge of the truths of the higher life. So when we study the manifestations of buddhi in physical consciousness, we are merely dealing with the faint reflections of an indescribable radiance, feeble echoes of a divine music that have their source in the inner and much deeper parts of our being.

After these preliminary considerations, we are ready to pass on to the main issue before us, namely a clear understanding of the functions of buddhi in our life, as far as we can understand them under our present limitations. The first point to note is that buddhi appears to be a multifunctional faculty and not a simple one, as many suppose. A "multifunctional faculty" is one that enables consciousness to function in a number of ways which, at least down here in the realms of the mind, appear different from one another. It is possible that on its own plane these different modes of manifestation may not appear essentially different, but they do seem so when we view them through the prism of the intellect.

We can best understand this multiple nature of the function of buddhi by taking the analogous case of the mind. The word "mind" stands for a very complex thing. It has many faculties, such as those of reasoning, memory, judgment, and observation, which appear one after another in the natural course of its evolution. We may call these different modes of action "functions" of the mind.

Similarly, there are different modes of manifestation or functions of buddhi. They also develop one after another with the evolution of the buddhic vehicle. If we identify buddhi solely with any one of its functions, we will not understand it properly, and we will involve ourselves in contradictions and confusions. Many people who read a book like the Bhagavad Gita get confused for this reason. Sometimes the word "buddhi" is used in one sense, at other times in an entirely different sense. If we remember that in all such cases different functions of buddhi are referred to, it will be easier to follow the meaning.

Let us now take some of the various buddhic functions one by one and try to understand them as far as we can. We are, as it were, holding a diamond and turning its different facets successively in front of us. Although these facets reflect different amounts of light and show different colors, we know that the diamond is one and the light which shines from it is also one.

Let us start with the simplest function of buddhi, namely, that of understanding. Understanding in its ordinary sense is usually thought of as a function of the mind, but it is really a function of the next higher principle, namely buddhi. The mind merely combines and coordinates the impressions received from an object through the various sense organs and forms them into a composite image. But until the light of buddhi illuminates the image, we cannot know that object.

Books dealing with philosophical Yoga recount that impressions are received from the outer world through the sense organs and are reflected inwards, first into the mind, then from the mind into the buddhi, and are then presented before the *jīvātmanā*, the indwelling Self. Many people do not understand what this reflection in buddhi means. It means the transformation of a thought image into an understanding of the object represented by that image. The lower concrete mind by itself cannot understand any object unless the light of buddhi shines through its mental image. The mind, according to Eastern psychology, is mechanical and does not have in itself the capacity to understand anything. So an understanding of objects presented by the mind before the indwelling consciousness is one of the primary functions of buddhi, and this function is present from the very beginning, even when the buddhic body is still rudimentary.

The next in order to develop, and somewhat allied to the first, is the function common parlance calls intelligence—not intellect, but intelligence. We are apt to confuse one with the other, but the two are different from each other. We all know vaguely the difference between an intellectual and an intelligent person. The former is one whose mind is well developed, is loaded with facts, and can perform various mental operations easily and effectively. The intelligent person is one who has the capacity to understand the significance, the import of the knowledge they possess, who have distilled that knowledge and experience and obtained the subtle essence known as wisdom.

The intelligent person can see things as they are—to see things as they are is perhaps the most important characteristic of intelligence. All of us are familiar with people who are very intellectual but not intelligent, who are constantly missing the real significance of things and situations. The difference between intellect and intelligence is due to the fact that one has its source in the mind alone while the other has its source in the next spiritual principle, namely buddhi.

After dealing with these elementary but little recognized functions of buddhi, we may now come to some of those functions that develop in the later stages of its evolution. One such function is called discrimination or *viveka* in Sanskrit. We read frequently in books on Yoga and related subjects that without the development of *viveka*, no treading of the Path is possible. It is, as it were, the ABC of spiritual life. *At the Feet of the Master* lists it as the first of the four qualifications for the Path.

What is this faculty known as *viveka*? It is often said to be discrimination between the real and the unreal, but we can get a better idea of it if we consider it as the capacity to see life and its experiences as they really are. We are living in a world of illusions without being conscious of this fact. When we begin to wake up spiritually, we gradually become aware of these illusions; and this waking up and beginning to see the illusions as they are, one by one, is discrimination or *viveka*. Although discrimination is

usually considered different from intelligence, the former is merely a more developed form, an extension of the latter—the working of intelligence at a higher level. When the light of buddhi shines on the ordinary problems of daily life, it is intelligence. When it illuminates the deeper and more fundamental problems of life and lays bare its illusions, it is discrimination. It is a difference of degree and sphere of action.

An important idea follows from the relationship between intelligence and discrimination. In living the spiritual life we need intelligence, in fact, far more intelligence than in leading the ordinary life of the world. Those who make a mess of their ordinary lives, showing a lack of intelligence in dealing with everyday problems, are not likely to be very successful in dealing with the far more difficult and exacting problems of spiritual life. Some persons who aspire to lead a spiritual life think that when they embark upon the search for Truth they can put their intelligence in cold storage and the grace of God will do everything necessary. That is a comfortable idea, but it is not corroborated by the experience of those who have embarked upon the divine adventure and are actually engaged in the struggle to master their lower nature and penetrate through the illusions of life on the lower planes.

At the Feet of the Master lists other things between which discrimination is necessary: the right and the wrong, the important and the unimportant, the useful and the useless, the true and the false, the selfish and the unselfish. In all these distinctions, the choice is not simply between two alternatives, but between degrees. And it is said that another kind of discrimination is also needed: “Learn to distinguish the God in everyone and everything, no matter how evil he or it may appear on the surface.”

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The development of buddhi marks the stage in our evolution when we begin to play a conscious role in our own unfoldment.
2. Consciousness manifests fully through a vehicle on the plane of that consciousness and partially in a reflected way in lower vehicles; in our physical consciousness we can know high forms of consciousness only imperfectly, as expressed through our brains, and the intensity of bliss and knowledge that is buddhi on its own plane is only dimly echoed on the physical plane.
3. One of the functions of buddhi is understanding—a recognition of the reality behind the sense impressions and images recognized by the mind.
4. Another buddhic function is intelligence; which is the capacity of knowing what to do with knowledge.

5. A third function is discriminative wisdom, the ability to choose wisely between options. It is a most practical function, one that applies to the daily experiences of life.

QUESTIONS

1. When vibrations from the Buddhic plane are “stepped down” through the physical brain, how do the direct experiences of the Buddhic plane change and why?
2. Why is the intellect incapable of judging the experiences that arise from the Buddhic plane?
3. Just as the mind has many faculties developed through evolution, the Buddhi also is a multifunctional faculty. List the different functions (from this chapter only) of Buddhi and how they work.
4. How may you use the faculty of *viveka* to enrich your own spiritual life?

Chapter 17

THE ROLE OF BUDDHI IN OUR LIFE (Part 2)

Let us now take another important function of buddhi, namely the capacity to recognize and understand the truths of the spiritual life. We have seen that *viveka* or discrimination enables us to become aware of the illusions of life. This is really only the negative aspect of that function, the positive aspect of which is the direct recognition of truths of the spiritual life—of the real rather than the unreal.

When we bring a light into a dark room, we not only chase away the darkness but also flood it with light. In the same way, when true discrimination is born, we not only become aware of the illusions of our everyday life but also begin to get a glimpse of those realities and truths that are covered up by those illusions.

This fact, that it is buddhi and not the mind that is the instrument of knowing spiritual truths, is very important and will explain many phenomena we observe in daily life, for example, the great differences in the way people respond to the truths of the higher life. Some people understand these truths as if instinctively, whereas others find them unconvincing or even absurd. This understanding is not the result of thinking or reasoning at all. Intuition, as this aspect of buddhi is called in Western psychology, enables a person to become aware of these truths without going through the cumbersome processes of reasoning, and until intuition is developed, a person is unable to see these truths.

Not only are spiritual truths recognized without the aid of the intellect, but knowledge that comes through buddhi is of a different nature altogether. It stands on firm ground and is not shaken by our ever-changing experiences and thoughts. On the other hand, knowledge based on the intellect alone can always be—and should be—changed when new facts are learned. Buddhist knowledge is not of facts, which change constantly, but of the basis on which facts are understood.

Some people are constantly wavering in their understanding of the truths of life. When they have agreeable experiences and are living in a harmonious environment, they feel that all is well with the world and God is in His Heaven. But when they meet with apparent injustice and are treated unkindly by others, they become bitter and skeptical. It is only when the light of buddhi shines steadily into our minds that we can go through life following our path to the goal unfalteringly, unaffected by all the difficulties we have to face.

We must be on our guard, however, against taking either our rational and often rationalizing ideas or our irrational and sometimes foolish emotions as the whisperings of intuition. Our power of reasoning and our emotions can both masquerade as

spiritual wisdom. It is better to maintain a cautious, even skeptical, attitude toward ideas that pop into our heads until our buddhi has become sufficiently developed to give clear guidance, than to abandon ourselves to impulses and superstitions that are too easily mistaken for the voice of God. A critical self-awareness is the beginning of buddhic wisdom.

Genuine buddhi not only enables us to recognize truths of the higher life but also gives us reliable guidance in living our ordinary life. All of us face the difficult problems of life every day and have difficulty in deciding how we should act. The intellect gives us some data that we can use to help us reach a decision, but that data is never complete—we do not know all the facts in a given situation. Besides, our judgment is likely to be biased by our preconceived notions and feelings. So we can never be sure whether our decision is right or wrong. Do we have any means of arriving at a correct decision in the affairs of our life, of knowing how to act under all kinds of circumstances?

We do have a way of gaining the wisdom we need for successful daily living. It comes only by developing buddhi within us. There is always a best way of doing anything in a particular set of circumstances, and this best way means doing the right thing at the right time by the right method without going through the processes of reasoning. Buddhi will not indicate to us in detail how to do it. That problem of the particular ways and means has to be worked out by the mind, but buddhi will indicate to us broadly and correctly what to do. The more our spiritual nature develops and the clear light of buddhi shines constantly through our mind, the more we can live each moment of the day as it should be lived—in perfect harmony with the Divine Will.

As an illustration, let us take the truth of the unity of life. Down here, on the lower planes, blinded by illusion, we see ourselves as separate from others. We identify ourselves with our bodies, our interests seem to clash with those of others, and we therefore fight and trample our fellow creatures in order to gain our separate personal ends. But some individuals, in varying degrees and in spite of this apparent diversity and conflict of interests, gradually develop a consciousness of brotherhood, a feeling of sympathy with all living beings. They cannot feel happy with the satisfaction of their personal wants, and their inner nature refuses to be satisfied until the needs of others about them are also fulfilled. When they see others suffer, they suffer too; and when they see cruelty, they feel an urge to help those who are ill-treated.

Real sympathy and deep concern for the welfare of others should not, however, be confused with purely ideological conceptions of brotherhood based on collective emotion alone. The latter are merely clannish or tribal extensions of personal selfishness. All over the world, where one group identifies itself in opposition to

another, usually neighboring, group, we see the most terrible conflicts and cruelty and callousness of the most barbaric nature.

Where does the feeling of real sympathy, of kinship with all living creatures, come from? Not from the separate mind, which is actually the source of the tendency to separateness and selfishness. When the buddhic body is sufficiently developed and the individual is aware of the unity of life on the buddhic plane, the knowledge of that unity gradually filters down into the lower consciousness and appears there as sympathy and tenderness for all living creatures, qualities that are characteristic of all saints and sages.

At earlier stages of evolution, selfishness and separateness are normal expressions and serve a purpose. But a turning point comes in the cycle of involution-evolution, when they must give way to cooperation and altruism. The extent to which the unity of life is sensed on the lower planes depends on two factors. The first is the degree to which the individual is conscious on the higher planes and the buddhic vehicle is developed. That depends on the long-term evolutionary progress of the individual. The second is the extent to which the passage between the lower and the higher is open and the knowledge of the higher planes can filter down into the mind. That depends on whether the personality can respond sympathetically to the higher impulses.

The buddhic vehicle may be well developed and the vision on the higher planes may be clear, but yet the passage between the lower and higher planes may be so blocked that the light of the higher world cannot penetrate the personal mind. In that case, while living in the all-embracing divine consciousness on the higher planes, we are yet unconscious of our divine nature on the lower planes. Such blockage between higher wisdom and the personal mind can have a variety of causes, such as karmic results from the past or present personal challenges unmet.

If the vision of unity has been seen on the higher planes, the way to bring it down into the lower planes of the mind is to take the mind in hand and work at its purification so that the light of the higher can shine through it without obstruction. Just as the causal body is a mirror reflecting the Universal Mind, so the Buddhic vehicle is a mirror reflecting the consciousness of the Universal Life, which is immanent in the manifested world and is shining in different degrees through all living creatures. The more polished the mirror, the more fully it can reflect this Universal Consciousness in a pure and harmonized mind.

The development of buddhi heralds the unfoldment of our divine nature and places in our hands a kind of compass with the help of which we can cross over the stormy waters of life and reach the further shore of enlightenment. One of the functions of buddhi, as we have seen, is the capacity to know spiritual truths directly without going through the ratiocinative processes of the intellect. The person in whom this faculty has

become active simply becomes aware of these truths. This knowledge is not communicated from outside, not even from the inner planes by a process of thought transference, but wells up spontaneously within the heart, just as water does in a spring. We may not know where it comes from, we may not be able to communicate it to others, but it is there, and the certainty of this kind of knowledge surpasses that acquired through the intellect.

Many of the saints and sages who have appeared in the world from time to time were not learned and did not acquire their important knowledge from books. Yet they showed an insight into the fundamental problems of life that placed them head and shoulders above their contemporaries.

There are two facts to note about knowledge from the buddhic plane. In the first place, it is not knowledge concerning ordinary matters. However enlightened saints or sages may be, if you give them a problem in differential calculus or ask them about the mechanism of an internal combustion engine, they will not be able to give you a solution unless they have previously studied these problems. Detailed knowledge of such things is a function of the mind and not of buddhi. When enlightened persons want to know anything about these matters, they have to gain that knowledge by ordinary means. It is true that they may be in possession of superphysical powers that make the acquisition of such knowledge easy and sometimes instantaneous, but those powers are still in the realm of the intellect and they have to work through the faculties of the mind.

The knowledge that comes through buddhi is of the essential nature of life and the relationships between things. It is more like a light illuminating the life inside and outside us. Buddhi gives us a sense of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, and the capacity of seeing all things in proper perspective and in their essence, but it does not do away with the necessity of using our mind while we are living in the lower worlds. So let us be quite clear about what we should, and what we should not, expect as a result of the development of this faculty. Let us not confuse buddhic consciousness with conscience about particular matters.

The second fact we should note about buddhic consciousness is its dual character. It is connected, on the one hand, with phenomena we associate with the intellect and, on the other, with phenomena associated with the emotions. When the energy of this plane descends into the lower planes, its manifestation depends upon the nature of the mechanism through which it works. When buddhi is reflected in the field of the intellect, it appears as spiritual knowledge. When it is reflected in the sphere of the emotions, it appears as spiritual love. The force is one, but its expression appears different to us according to the mechanism through which it works.

We are quite familiar with this kind of phenomenon in physical science, where the same force appears in different forms according to the mechanism through which it is working. Thus the same electric current gives light when passed through an electric bulb and heat when passed through an electric heater. Generally, when buddhic consciousness begins to develop in a person with an emotional temperament, it appears as intense love (in the form called *bhakti* in Sanskrit), whereas in a person of intellectual type, it appears as a clear-eyed vision embracing all of life's fundamental realities (called *jñāna*). As the love or the knowledge deepens, a new state gradually dawns in consciousness, a state called "wisdom."

It is this dual character of buddhi that makes it possible for us to adopt either of two ways for its unfoldment. We may develop it through an intense love that surrenders itself completely to the object of devotion or through discrimination, the searching intelligence that can pierce through all the illusions of the mind. This does not mean, of course, that either love or intelligence by itself will suffice but that one of these aspects of consciousness will be predominant in the early stages and ultimately merge in a synthesis of both.

Buddhi has a dual character in another sense also. In the function of Buddhi referred to above, we have been dealing with a function that may be called perceptive. This function has to do with "seeing" in the spiritual sense. It is a passive function corresponding to the mental function of the organs of knowing (*jñānendriyas*). Even in its expression as spiritual love, this function is essentially perceptive, for spiritual love depends upon the direct or indirect perception of the unity of life.

Buddhi has also an active function corresponding to the mental organs of action (*karmendriyas*). This function, connected with the role of buddhi as an instrument of the atma and an energizer of the mind, is just as important as the perceptive function. Buddhi is known as the *vāhan* or vehicle of Vishnu, and Vishnu is not only the Universal Consciousness embracing everything in his divine vision but also the Energizer, the Preserver, and the Ruler of the world. In the case of the monad, this dual function is exercised through the buddhic vehicle functioning on the buddhic and mental planes. It is because of this dual function of buddhi that real Wisdom is inseparably "seeing" the Truth and "living" the Life.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Buddhi, rather than the mind, is the instrument of directly knowing spiritual truths—not facts, but the essence of reality.

2. Buddhi also gives us reliable guidance in living our ordinary life, although we need to use our minds to figure out how to apply buddhic wisdom in action.
3. The influence of buddhi on the personality depends on two factors: (1) the evolutionary development of the buddhic consciousness combined with the opening of the individuality to that consciousness; and (2) the openness of the connection between the individuality and the incarnate personality.
4. Buddhic wisdom is not information about facts, but insight into the nature of life; it is reflected in the mind as spiritual knowledge and in the emotions as spiritual love.
5. Buddhi has both a passive function of perceiving and an active function as the instrument of atma in energizing the mind and emotions.

QUESTIONS

1. "Some people are constantly wavering in their understanding of the truths of life." What possible explanation does the author give for this?
2. What is the difference between intuition and a hunch?
3. Why is it better to maintain a cautious attitude towards ideas that "pop" into our heads instead of assuming they are "the word of God"?
4. If we are able to develop the power of buddhi, does that mean that we do not need to utilize our normal mental faculties? Explain your answer.
5. Explain the dual character of Buddhi.
6. Explain the passive and active functions of Buddhi.
7. It has been shown that another function of the Buddhi is the capacity to know spiritual truths. What are two facts that are worthy to note about the knowledge from the Buddhic plane?

Chapter 18

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHI (Part 1)

After dealing with the functions of buddhi we now come to the question of how to unfold this important faculty. The unfoldment of the buddhic consciousness is not an easy task. It requires great earnestness of purpose and is usually a matter of slow evolution, needing a series of lives for its growth and fulfillment. It is true that, in a few exceptional cases, where the spiritual nature is already well developed and the difficulty is merely in bringing down the higher consciousness into the lower vehicles, the growth may appear startlingly rapid. This is not growth, however, but the rapid release on the lower planes of a power that has already been developed on a higher one.

We read in the Jataka or "birth" stories of former lives of the Buddha how he perfected the buddhic faculty and his spiritual nature by living a series of lives of unselfishness and kindness before he became the Bodhisattva. Those stories may not be literally true, but they illustrate an important principle: namely that spiritual development, like all things in nature, is a matter of evolution and slow growth. Those who are not prepared to pay the price of patient self-discipline cannot hope to reap the fruits of enlightenment and of liberation from the illusions and sufferings of the lower life.

We need to remember the need for slow cumulative development, especially in these days of rush and hurry, when people want to acquire all things by quick methods and are impatient of anything requiring patience and perseverance. A determination to pursue the goal relentlessly, not daunted by failures and not elated by successes, is the first qualification for treading this path. Those who do not have this determination are doomed to disappointment and failure.

If a person has intensity of purpose and is actuated by right motives, the first requisite in embarking upon this divine adventure is to lay the foundations by developing three qualities: strength, unselfishness, and purity of a high order.

A strong character is needed because the descent of the higher consciousness into the lower vehicles imposes a very severe strain on those vehicles. Unless strength of character has already been developed, there is danger of a more or less serious breakdown. When we want to tap into an electric current of very high voltage, we need to test and improve the insulation of our installation; otherwise there may be serious leakage of current, or the whole mechanism may blow up. Similarly, when we make preparations to bring down the vibrations of the higher spiritual realms into our lower vehicles, all our weak parts should be tested and strengthened; otherwise a disruption of the personality may take place, retarding the progress of the individuality for a considerable time.

This testing and strengthening of our entire nature is carried out in our daily life by the ordeals that come in the form of temptations, difficulties, and trials of various kinds. Some trials come in the natural course of our life, and others are especially devised by those great teachers of our race in charge of the training of aspirants and pupils. As a result of this training and self-discipline, the aspirant gradually develops steel-like strength that can bear tremendous strains without breaking.

Another qualification needed in preparing the foundations is an unselfish outlook. For the greater the strength, the greater the need to develop unselfishness, so that the strength may not be utilized for selfish purposes or injuring others. The higher aspirants rise in the scale of evolution, and the greater their powers, the more capable they become both of doing good and of harming others. Those who guide the world from the inner planes see to it, as far as possible, that such power does not pass into hands that can use it for selfish purposes.

Besides eliminating from our nature the tendency to seek power and prestige for our personal glorification, we must try to get rid of that less prominent but more common kind of selfishness known as self-centeredness. The lives of most of us revolve round our own little personal interests and occupations. Our professional work, our family, our hobbies, our amusements take up practically all our time and thought, and we pass through life deeply absorbed in our own petty little affairs, hardly conscious of anything else. It should not be difficult to see that such an attitude cannot serve as a good basis for the all-embracing impersonal life of the Spirit. We have to break this shell enclosing our life and vision if we aspire to come into touch with higher forms of consciousness.

One of the most effective and rapid methods for acquiring an unselfish, impersonal attitude is the service of others in the right spirit. I say “right spirit” purposely, because that is the crux of the matter. There are thousands and thousands of people engaged in the service of others without making any progress toward an unselfish, impersonal attitude. They merely create good karma for themselves, and although it helps somewhat in the long run, it does not eliminate effectively from their life the personal element that is our chief impediment in seeking enlightenment. To be spiritually effective, service must be done for its own sake, without concern for its results (*nishkāma karma*), as an offering to the supreme reality of life.

The third requisite for laying the foundations of this higher life and consciousness is purity—of body, mind, and emotions. In the last chapter, it was pointed out that the extent to which buddhi can be brought down into the physical plane depends upon how far the passage between the higher and the lower is unobstructed. The chief obstruction in the way of higher consciousness is impurity of the lower bodies, especially of the mind.

Just as a mirror covered with dirt cannot reflect the rays of the sun, so an impure mind cannot mirror Truth, and even though our spiritual nature may be sufficiently developed on the higher planes, we remain cut off from our divine heritage and divine possibilities on the lower planes. A veil, as it were, separates the higher from the lower and prevents us from seeing the vision of our true Self. So systematic and patient efforts to purify our lower nature are an integral part of the training and self-discipline that prepares the ground for the manifestation of the buddhic consciousness in our ordinary daily life.

The three qualifications of strength, unselfishness, and purity must be acquired to an adequate degree if we want to prepare ourselves systematically for the descent of the Divine Life within us. Many people who aspire to experience the realities of the spiritual life remain where they are, without making any progress towards their goal, because they do not take any steps to lay the necessary foundations for that life, but are content merely with reading and thinking about these things. Reading and thinking do not take us very far. We must make an effort to create the conditions necessary for real progress because we work in a world governed by law.

On the foundations thus laid, the superstructure of a truly spiritual life can be raised with safety and certainty, and we can now consider some of the specific methods and practices that have been prescribed from times immemorial for the development of higher consciousness. Remember, however, that the methods a person has to adopt in this inner unfoldment are to some extent individual. We are each unique, so the path we follow is also unique, an idea well expressed in *Light on the Path* in the sentence "Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life." This means that we have to experiment with life, with different methods, in order to discover for ourselves our own particular way to the goal. There is no prescribed method we can follow blindly to reach enlightenment. But although our way is unique, there are certain general lines along which we can experiment in our search for our own individual method.

The first step we have to take in this search is to gather together all our scattered mental energies and concentrate them on the problems of life and the problem of living. As long as we allow the mind to run hither and thither in pursuit of all kinds of objects without any central aim, without any self-direction, we are bound to remain enmeshed in the toils of illusion, and Truth will ever remain hidden from our view. As *The Voice of the Silence* says, "The mind is the great slayer of the Real, let the disciple slay the slayer." Slaying the mind is acquiring the capacity to see through its illusions. We can do that if we focus the light of consciousness on the mind itself and try to see how it modifies and distorts everything before it reaches our consciousness. It is only when we are able to

see everything as coming into our consciousness through the medium of the mind that we can become aware of the illusions it creates.

This constant alertness and watchfulness is the only means of developing discrimination, the faculty which, in its highest form, gradually destroys the unreal world and reveals to us the real world. This is not a thinking process at all, but rather a form of consciousness that observes thinking processes in a panoramic view. This intense concentration on the mind and its activities must be practiced constantly, day after day, until this attitude becomes habitual, so that although we may be engaged in our ordinary activities we are aware all the time of this ceaseless activity of the mind.

This practice of mindfulness, if continued for a sufficiently long time, will lead to the gradual shifting of the center of consciousness from the region of the mind, where it is situated at present, to that which is beyond the mind—the region of buddhi. For buddhi is the spiritual faculty that helps the mind to become aware of its own activities. When the center of consciousness is stabilized in its new position and life is viewed from the higher plane of buddhi instead of from the plane of the mind, then all those truths that have their origin on the buddhic plane will burst forth into consciousness. In this method two things happen: discrimination or *viveka* is used to pierce through the illusions of life, and mind is used to attain the higher states of consciousness. This double method is the basis of the *jñāna mārga*, or the path of knowledge.

The method just given is the approach to buddhi through the intellect, but there is another approach through the emotions. As mentioned in the last chapter, buddhi is dual in its character, combining within itself the essence of the intellect and the emotions. The second method, which is suited to people of emotional temperament, is the *bhakti mārga*. In this method, the love and devotion to a particular form of deity is made more and more intense by various kinds of practices until the consciousness of the devotee fuses with the object of devotion.

We all know how lightning strikes an object on the surface of the earth. The frictional electricity generated in the clouds induces its opposite charge on the surface of the earth, and as the voltage of electricity in the clouds goes on increasing, the tension between the two opposite charges also becomes greater and greater. A stage comes when the tension is so great that the resistance of the air separating the two charges breaks down and a flash of lightning announces the coming together and fusion of the two opposite charges. Something similar takes place when the consciousness of the devotee and that of the object of devotion are fused together in a mystical ecstasy.

For a time, the consciousness of the devotee escapes into the buddhic plane, with a consequent realization of unity with the object of devotion. From that time onward, although the direct consciousness of the buddhic plane may not be present, the vision

serves as a powerful source of inspiration, and the currents from the buddhic plane continue to flow through the channel that has been created.

There are also some quite specific techniques that can be used to help open the channel between the buddhic consciousness and the personal mind. These are considered in the second part of this chapter.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The unfoldment of buddhi needs persistent effort over a long period of time. There is no “quick fix” to achieve it. It is an effort stretching over many lifetimes, but its eventual achievement requires that we start now to make the effort.
2. Unfolding buddhi requires the development of three qualities: strength, unselfishness, and purity.
3. Strength is needed to support the strain that may accompany the influx of new energies.
4. Unselfishness is needed in order to use for the good of others the strength we have developed; and a way of developing that unselfishness is to serve others with a motive free from desire for personal benefit.
5. Purity, especially of mind, is needed in order that the channel between the buddhic level and our brain minds may be open rather than clogged, enabling the mind to reflect the wisdom of buddhi.
6. Because we are each unique, the particular methods we use for spiritual development will vary with each of us; yet there are general lines we can follow.
7. One general method is to develop mindfulness—the practice of constant awareness of what is going on in our minds, self-observation.
8. Another general method is to direct love and devotion toward some expression of the divine, eventually leading to our identification with that expression.

QUESTIONS

1. We are told that the spiritual development takes many lives. What is the explanation given for those exceptional cases where the spiritual nature seems to unfold rapidly within one lifetime?

2. The first qualification for treading the path is “a determination to pursue the goal relentlessly, not daunted by failures and not elated by success.” In what ways are you personally constructing and living this “patient self-discipline”?
3. What is the importance of strength of character in relation to spiritual unfoldment?
4. What are some of the dangers and pitfalls that the aspirant may encounter?
5. What are the three qualifications we need to develop in order to lay a foundation for treading the Path, and why are they necessary?
6. What is your interpretation of the verse, “The mind is the great slayer of the Real, let the disciple slay the slayer”?
7. Explain the two general methods, as an approach to the Buddhi, we all may daily incorporate into our lives for spiritual development.

Chapter 19

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHI—SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES (Part 2)

The development of the buddhic consciousness can be assisted by a number of particular activities. Some of these are special techniques for developing the mindfulness and devotion mentioned at the end of the last part. But others are practices that can be applied in both those approaches. One such widely applicable technique is the use of mantras. A mantra is a word or phrase or other short text that is repeated with awareness and whose repetition (in Sanskrit *japa*) opens the mind to inspiration from higher levels. The word *mantra* is Sanskrit and is said to mean “a device for helping the mind” (from *man-* “mind,” as in *manas*, and *-trā* “helping”).

In India, one of the most famous mantras is the *Gāyatrī*, whose repetition is an essential part of the daily religious practice of Hindus. The *Gāyatrī* is a verse from the ancient wisdom literature of India (Rig Veda 3.62.10). It goes like this in Sanskrit:

Om bhūr bhuvah suvah. Tat savitur varenyam bhargo
devasya dhimahi, dhiyo yo nah pracodayat. Om.

The inner, spiritual meaning of such mantras cannot be translated, but the outer, literal meaning of the words of the *Gāyatrī* is as follows: “The eternal reality (symbolized by *om*) is in the three worlds, terrestrial, atmospheric, and celestial. We meditate on the divine Light of that adorable Sun of spiritual consciousness. May it stimulate our power of spiritual perception.”

There are other famous Hindu mantras, such as this one from the Upanishads: *Tat Tvam Asi*. It means, “You are That.” “That” is the ultimate reality behind all appearances, and the mantra is an affirmation of the identity of the individual soul or essence with the Absolute, as set forth in the third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. Another such mantra is from the Bhagavad Gita: *Om Tat Sat*.

Om cannot be simply translated because it is symbolic in meaning, but it represents the ultimate reality. *Tat Sat* means literally “That Being.” *Tat*, as just mentioned, refers to the ultimate Other (which paradoxically is ourselves). *Sat*, the present participle of the verb meaning, “to be,” translated as “Be-ness” by H. P. Blavatsky, suggests that the ultimate reality is the only true existence. (In that way, it is like the name God identifies himself by in Exodus, usually translated “I am that I am.”) In effect, all three words refer to the ultimate reality — which is beyond our ability to name or conceive, so we can only allude to it in various ways. The mantra is a symbolic statement of the existence of an ultimate reality that we can nevertheless experience directly. Another Upanishadic mantra is widely used by Theosophists in its English translation:

From the unreal, lead us to the Real.
From darkness, lead us to Light.
From death, lead us to Immortality.

A famous Buddhist mantra is the following:

Om mani padme hum.

Mani padme means “the jewel in the lotus”; *hum* is like *om*—a symbolical word that cannot be translated.

Several similar mantras can be found in various Western traditions. One is the Shemah of Judaism (Deuteronomy 6.4):

Shemah Yisrael, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Ehod.

Its meaning is “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” Like the Hindu mantras, it emphasizes the unity of ultimate reality.

Another is sura (or chapter) 1 of the Koran (London: Dent, 1909):

Bismillahi ‘rahhanmi ‘rrahheem.
El-hamdoo lillahi rabi ‘lalameen.
Arrahhmani raheem.
Maliki yowmi-d-deen.
Eyaka naboodoo, waéyaka nestāeen.
Ihdina ‘ssirat almostakeem.
Sirat alezeena anhamta aleihim, gheiri-‘l mughdoobi aleihim, wala dsaleen.
Ameen.

That is, “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds! The compassionate, the merciful! King on the day of reckoning! Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help. Guide thou us on the straight path, the path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, with whom thou art not angry, and who go not astray. Amen.”

In the Christian tradition, the most famous mantra is the Rosary prayer, whose full form is, however, much longer than any of those above. It consists of fifteen repetitions of the “Lord’s Prayer” or paternoster, each followed by ten repetitions of the “Hail Mary” or Ave Maria, and one of the “Glory Be” or Gloria Patri—a total of 180 short texts—recited while meditating on the fifteen mysteries in the life of Christ and the Virgin. The Hail Mary, which is the heart of the Rosary, goes as follows in Latin:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus rentris tui, Jesus. Sancta

Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostri. Amen.

That is, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death. Amen.”

The literal meanings of these and similar mantras reflect the assumptions and the exoteric traditions of their cultures. But those literal meanings are the least important aspect of the mantras. The inner, spiritual or symbolic sense of each mantra is its real essence and the key to its power. Any mantra, properly used, puts the user in touch with spiritual forces that have worked through it, often for centuries or even millennia.

It is true that the way many mantras are used does not in fact achieve that purpose, but that is because of faulty use. The Gāyatrī mantra, for example, is repeated by thousands of orthodox Hindus who do not understand its inner significance or pay attention to other aspects of its religious practice—and so it does not produce any results. But still there can be no doubt that the Gāyatrī is one of the most powerful and effective practices devised for developing the buddhic consciousness, provided its repetition is performed in the right way and under the right conditions.

Saying the Gāyatrī, or any other mantra, should be considered as a scientific experiment, and as in all scientific experiments, it is necessary to provide the exact conditions if we want to get the desired results. There are two important factors involved in the repetition of the Gāyatrī, one related to consciousness, the other purely mechanical.

When we aspire intensely and truly for the Light that can come only from within, we produce a peculiar tension in our aura, which opens up a passage for the descent of forces from the higher planes. We know, as a matter of scientific experiment, that if we have a closed vessel with two openings and we begin to exhaust the vessel by removing air through one of the openings, air will rush in to fill the exhausted vessel through the other end. Similarly, when we aspire intensely and earnestly for the Light of our Higher Self and empty ourselves of our personal thoughts and desires, the Higher Self immediately responds and the Light of buddhi radiates into our minds to illumine our personality. The response is automatic.

Of course, the aspiration must be real, must come out of our hearts, and saying the mantra should not merely be the repetition of a formula or a string of thoughts. The Gāyatrī, if we examine the meaning of the mantra, is a prayer addressed to the Solar Deity—the Universal Consciousness at the basis of the Solar System—to give us more Light. That Light is the Light of buddhi, and if we repeat this prayer constantly, earnestly, putting ourselves in rapport with the underlying idea, then the

corresponding force is, as it were, drawn down from the higher planes and makes the higher vehicles glow more brightly. This increased life from the higher planes is reflected in greater light of real knowledge and a more spiritual outlook in the personality.

The other effect of repeating the Gāyatrī is of a mechanical nature and depends upon the potency that resides in all true mantras. The effect produced by all mantras depends on the fact that the whole of this manifested universe is based on vibrations of various kinds, and by selecting vibrations of a suitable nature and combining them scientifically, any result in either the outer or inner worlds can be produced.

The Rishis or wise saints of old, before whose gaze the subtler worlds lay open, investigated this matter very thoroughly and devised a number of combinations of sound and thought for bringing about certain specific results. These combinations are embodied in mantras, and the Gāyatrī is considered to be one of the most important of them—a mantra that has been devised specifically for the unfoldment of the buddhic consciousness. It acts, not only by energizing the buddhic vehicle itself, but also by harmonizing the lower vehicles and putting them in tune with the higher vehicles, so that the forces from the higher planes can pass unobstructed through the intermediate planes and appear in our physical consciousness. Whatever may be the modus operandi of this mantra, its effects in the development of the higher consciousness are certain and important, provided of course that all other necessary conditions are fulfilled.

All these lines of development, which have been referred to above, converge towards, and ultimately lead to, the practice of Yoga, and the advanced stages of buddhic consciousness cannot be reached without going through those intensive mental exercises and the self-discipline that the practice of Yoga involves. The full functioning of consciousness in the buddhic vehicle is possible only when limitations of the mind and the emotions are completely transcended and the candidate is able to rise in consciousness to the buddhic and still higher planes. Then, and only then, is the aspirant able to see life as it is in reality, to know the secret of our being, and to realize actually those eternal truths of the spiritual life, which otherwise we can only think to be true or which we take for granted on the strength of our intuition.

After having seen the vision once, even though we may be again immersed in the lower life, we can never be mastered completely by its illusions. Thereafter, we live constantly in the glow of the Higher Consciousness. Gradually, as we rise in the scale of evolution, this transcendent consciousness of the buddhic plane becomes a part of our normal consciousness, and we then descend to the lower planes only when our work requires our presence down here.

Clearly, then, self-discipline of the right type is a necessary part of the training for the development of buddhic consciousness. It is true that the attainment of buddhic

consciousness is a matter of perceiving the inner realities, but such perception is possible only through vehicles that are pure, tranquil, and harmonized. These conditions are brought about not merely by wishing but by prolonged and rigorous self-discipline, which means transmuting our spiritual ideals into right living and thinking. The consideration of what these conditions are and how they can be brought about is a part of the Yogic philosophy and technique discussed briefly in later chapters.

SUMMARY

1. Among the techniques available for opening our minds to contact with the buddhic level is the repetition of mantras.
2. A mantra is a word or short text whose repetition with awareness opens the mind to inspiration from higher levels.
3. Traditions all over the world have mantras; a widely used mantra in the Hindu tradition is the Gayatri, which is especially designed to open consciousness to the buddhic level.
4. The right use of mantras is one of the techniques of Yoga for integrating our whole nature and grounding us in ultimate reality.

[Note: The brief discussion of Indic mantras other than the Gāyatrī and of Western mantras has been added to Taimni's original text to indicate the range of this technique and the variety of mantras in a number of cultures.]

QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief description of a mantra and its use.
2. What is the difference between an effective and a non-effective mantra?
3. Choose a mantra for yourself (if you have access to such books), memorize it, and meditate upon it daily. Note any effects that you may have noticed.
4. When repeating a mantra what are the two factors and their effects that are produced?
5. According to Taimni, why does the Gayatri mantra seem to be the most important of all mantras?
6. What must be done before we can function on the Buddhic plane?

Chapter 20

CONCEPTS AND INTUITION

Mental concepts and intuition are discussed in previous chapters, but because they are easily confused it is useful to consider them together, and especially to consider how they are different. Confusion between ordinary conceptual knowledge and true wisdom or intuitive knowledge is responsible for much of the stagnation we find in spiritual life, in both religion and philosophy. Mere learning, surrounded by religious paraphernalia is mistaken for spirituality, and many aspirants remain satisfied with the superficial satisfactions of conceptual knowledge, never realizing that the false sense of security they derive from such knowledge is illusory and can disappear completely by just a minor change in their outer circumstances. Understanding the relation between conception and intuition lets us assess conceptual knowledge at its true worth and look for a more stable and reliable basis for our spiritual life.

Let us start by considering the meaning of “intuition.” For most people, “intuition” is a nebulous and anemic word for a faculty often thought of—quite erroneously—as something vague and indefinite. People often talk about “intuition” when they mean only “hunch” or “general impression.” But that faculty is actually of the greatest importance for discovering the Reality within ourselves.

Eastern philosophy considers the conceptual mind an inadequate instrument of knowing because it holds that true knowing is possible only through the fusion of one’s consciousness with the object to be known. This “knowing by fusing” is direct, vivid, dynamic, and not subject to error or illusion, so we need another word for the faculty through which it is attained. The word “buddhi” is frequently used in Theosophical literature, but in Hindu philosophy it stands for a very large number of functions, such as perception, discrimination, reason, and others.

Although neither “intuition” nor “buddhi” is quite satisfactory, because of the various meanings each word has, we have no better term for “knowing by fusing.” So we can use these words, keeping in mind their limitations and inadequacy. An additional problem in talking about these matters is that the terms “intellect” and “intellectual” are sometimes used for conceptual knowledge and sometimes for intuitive wisdom or “knowing by fusing.” Because of that confusion, those terms are not used here at all.

In trying to understand the functions of the conceptual mind and buddhi and the different types of knowledge attainable through them, let us start with an experience on the physical plane that illustrates these differences. Suppose you are in a strange building in the predawn hours of a dark night with no electricity. You grope your way

cautiously in the dark among the various objects in the building, touching them and feeling their different parts, trying to decide what they are and how to find your way out. You feel the leg of a table and conclude that it is a long cylindrical object. Then you touch its top and revise your opinion and decide that it is a plane surface. In this way you go from one object to another making a mental note of the nature and position of each in the room.

While you are going through this process of investigation, the first, faint light of dawn begins to break into the room, enabling you to see indistinctly the various objects in it. The light gets stronger and stronger, so you see the objects more and more clearly until all the objects in the room are revealed to your vision clearly in their true nature, without your having to move from where you stand. The investigation of the objects in the dark is analogous to the functioning of the conceptual mind, and seeing them in the light of the sun to that of buddhi. We may say, therefore, that buddhi sees things directly, truly, wholly, and in their true perspective, whereas the conceptual mind sees them indirectly, partially, and out of perspective.

An important point about the functions of buddhi is that it is concerned not so much with facts themselves, as with the mutual relations between facts and their significance in the light of those relationships. Wisdom, which is the illumination of the mind by the light of buddhi, is the capacity to see facts in their proper perspective and true significance. A mind full of facts, even though they are correct, may be quite unintelligent without the light of buddhi to coordinate those facts and show their real significance.

How the perception of a new relationship between facts can alter completely the significance of those facts can be illustrated by a simple example. Suppose an infant has to be given up for adoption and is brought up by foster parents, without its biological parents knowing anything about its whereabouts. The child grows up and happens by chance to be hired by the biological parents to work for them, and does so for some years. Then one day the biological parents discover that the person who has been working for them is actually their own child. The discovery of this fact changes immediately their relationship. Nothing has been added to the facts in the situation, and yet the discovery of the relationship alters the significance of those facts and thus changes fundamentally their relationship. That is how buddhic perception can change completely our outlook and attitudes and consequently our life without any change in outer circumstances.

As an example of the tremendous change brought about in our life and outlook by discovering new relationships during our inner unfoldment, consider the relation between the individual soul (the *jīvātmā*) and God (the divine reality or *paramātmā*). This is one of the greatest mysteries of our life, which is resolved completely only in the

last stage of human evolution, as described in *Light on the Path*: "Inquire of the inmost, the One, of its final secret which it holds for you through the ages." Although the complete solution of this mystery comes at the last stage, at the very threshold of nirvana or liberation, the mystery begins to be sensed from an early stage in our spiritual unfoldment. And this "sensing" of the mystery is expressed through devotion, love, or bhakti for the center or source of our being. This "sensing" is the reflection into the lower mind of the buddhic perception, in various degrees, of the intimate relationship that already exists between who we are and what ultimate Reality is. But it is enough to transform a sinner into a saint.

Another relation of great importance in the wider life of the soul is the relationship of one soul to another. Since all individual souls are divine in essence and are centers of consciousness in the One Reality, an awareness of their true relationship to one another is dependent on knowing the relationship of each of them to the One Life, of which they are different expressions. So the mystery of our brotherhood with one another is closely related to the mystery of our divine origin. In fact, the two mysteries are aspects of the same great mystery.

Realization of the brotherhood of all living creatures depends therefore upon an awareness of our divine nature. Until this double realization is achieved, brotherhood is only a concept or a sentimental feeling of sympathy and kindness toward others. It is only to the extent that we "sense" our divine nature and the unity of all Life that we can feel and know true brotherhood. The problems of self-discovery and of the realization of universal brotherhood are, therefore, really one and not two. Ordinary expressions of brotherhood based on a conceptual ideal or self-interest or sentiment are easily corruptible. If your brothers do not do what you want them to do or harm you, you begin to hate them and may go to the extent of destroying them. A true realization of brotherhood based on the buddhic perception of our common origin and the One Life we all share is quite different.

The fact that buddhi has to do with relations is also seen in its function of perception, which is one of its main functions according to the psychology of Yoga. What is perception? It is a relation which brings together the perceiver and the perceived, or the subject and the object. When the subject-object relationship disappears, as it does in the state called "samadhi," the perceiver, the perceived and the perception all fuse together in one integrated state of consciousness.

Another function of buddhi is of great importance for the aspirant who has just set foot upon the Path. This is the discriminative function. The capacity to discriminate between right and wrong, and to do the right at all costs, must be acquired at an early stage if we are to tread this Path safely. The purification and tranquilizing of the mind, which are necessary for the light of buddhi to shine through it, depend to a great extent

on how far our life is governed by “righteousness.” “Righteousness” (in Sanskrit, *dharma*) is not following a particular code of conduct based on any religion or ideology, but instead is a constant habit of doing naturally and without effort or struggle what we know to be right.

Right and wrong are relative things, so what under some circumstances we consider right may not be right under other circumstances. But acting with purity of motive—that is, according to what buddhic intuition shows us to be right—has two direct results. First, it frees us from the inner conflict that bedevils the life of all unscrupulous people and produces a very unhealthy state of mind. Secondly, it purifies the mind gradually and makes it possible for the light of buddhi to illuminate it ever more fully.

One of the most undesirable consequences of compromising with evil is that it very quickly involves us in a vicious circle, from which it is very difficult to get out. Evil action, thought and emotion cloud the buddhi more and more, and the clouding of buddhi prevents us from seeing whether a particular action is right or wrong, thus tending to involve us further in evil. Thus it is possible gradually to slide into a life of evil and not even be aware of the fact that one is doing anything wrong because the discriminative function of buddhi has been shut off.

Just as we may involve ourselves in a vicious circle by unrighteousness (or *adharma*), similarly we can create for ourselves a virtuous circle by trying to do right. Every time we do what we consider to be right, irrespective of the consequences that may accrue to us, we purify our mind to some extent and the light of buddhi shines a little more brightly through it. This strengthens our discriminative faculty, and the capacity to see the right and the will to do the right increase in step. This action and reaction frees us ultimately not only from the tendency to do wrong, but also enables us to know almost instantaneously in each situation what is the right thing to do.

There can be no wooden rules to follow mechanically in leading a life of righteousness, for each situation in life is a new situation, requiring discrimination and action. The only thing that can enable us to know unerringly the right course under a particular set of circumstances and that can give us the strength and will to take that course is a purified mind, through which the light of buddhi shines steadily and undimmed. Because buddhi deals with relations, it enables us to discriminate between right and wrong in every situation.

Following this consideration of some of the important functions of buddhi, we can consider briefly a few facts showing the difference between concepts that are a product of ordinary mind and the wisdom that results from the illumination of mind by the light of buddhi.

First, there can be a great gulf between profession and practice in the case of conceptual knowledge, but that is not possible in the case of wisdom. A person whose knowledge is based on concepts alone can talk, lecture, and write brilliantly on the highest doctrines of religion, philosophy, and ethics, but lead a life that negates all those ideals. A person who has realized these truths through buddhic perception leads a life compatible with those ideals because he *knows* that these truths of the inner life are true. A person who knows that unrighteousness leads to suffering and demoralization avoids unrighteousness as an ordinary person avoids poison because it will kill him.

When wisdom points out to us a course of right action, we have no hesitation in following it, and no regret even if the action leads to present loss or discomfort or suffering, because we know with utter certainty that what is right must be for our good in the long run. On the buddhic plane, perception and action are inseparable. Doubt or uncertainty, which retard action, do not exist there, where everything is self-evident. Doubt bedevils all activities of the person motivated only by concepts, and that is why action may or may not follow even a right decision. When we are unable to translate into action our ideas of what we should do, there is a doubt or reluctance lurking somewhere in our mind, though we may not be aware of it. It is not so much a question of willpower as of right and clear perception. It does not require much willpower to abstain from swallowing something we know to be poison.

The means of acquiring concepts and wisdom also differ according to the nature of the two. Since concepts have content, the edifice of conceptual knowledge has to be built up, brick by brick, or like a picture, has to be painted, stroke-by-stroke, with a brush. It involves time and energy. But since wisdom has really no content and is just a matter of seeing relations and the significance of things as they are, nothing has to be built up. Acquiring wisdom is a question of increasing the penetrating power of perception and seeing deeper into things.

One penetrating flash of buddhic perception can change completely the life of a person by making that person see the realities of life in a way that is not possible by study, even devoted study of the deeper problems of life during many lives. A single flash of lightning can reveal a landscape more fully than hours of exploring it with a flashlight on a dark night. The lightning flash shows the scene instantaneously and comprehensively, whereas the beam of a flashlight shows it only successively and piecemeal.

So conceptual knowledge is acquired by reading books, engaging in discussions, or hearing lectures, all of which provide the raw material of facts needed to build an edifice of information. These facts have to be arranged properly, gaps have to be filled up, ideas have to be clarified, weak points have to be strengthened. And then we have to decide what to do with the edifice. But in acquiring wisdom, we have only to

increase our clarity of vision by removing the impurities, distortions, and complexes present in the mind; and the right modes of expressing that vision in action will automatically be realized. We have to penetrate inwards, to perceive at a deeper level, to rise to a higher level of consciousness, and to open the passage between the mental and the spiritual.

To distinguish between mental concepts and intuitive wisdom, a few simple tests are helpful:

1. Do we feel hesitation or disinclination in putting into action our decisions or well considered conclusions?
2. Are our decisions followed by action naturally, effortlessly, and without resistance from the lower mind?
3. Do our conclusions and convictions undergo constant changes, being definite and full of certainty one day but confused and full of doubts the next?
4. Do our conclusions need to be changed or renewed constantly in the light of new facts we are discovering?
5. Do new facts and experiences make clearer, more vivid, and more definite the basic structure of our knowledge, or do we have to make frequent major changes whenever we come across a new set of experiences?
6. Do we run constantly to other people for advice when we are in difficulties because we cannot make up our minds about what course to follow under new circumstances?
7. Are we in a habitually agitated and unhappy state of mind, out of harmony and out of tune with everything and everybody?

The answer to these questions will give us some idea of the extent to which our mind can receive the illumination of buddhi. Understanding the distinction between concepts and intuition is not merely a theoretical problem of psychology but affects intimately our life in various ways. A proper understanding of this distinction underlies our sense of values in life and our ability to discover our Self.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. There are two kinds of knowledge: conceptual and intuitive.

2. Conceptual knowledge (gained through the mind or manas) is acquired gradually, bit-by-bit, and is built up into mental systems combining individual facts.
3. Intuitive knowledge (gained through the buddhic faculty) may be acquired with variable intensity, but is holistic and comprehensive in relating facts to one another
4. Conceptual knowledge, however elaborate the constructs we build with it, does not tell us what to do and may in fact leave us in a state of confusion and uncertainty about right action.
5. Intuitive knowledge carries with it an unmistakable and irresistible direction for right action—to know intuitively is to act freely and correctly.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the difference between conceptual and intuitive knowledge.
2. What is your understanding of “knowing by fusing”?
3. Try to give an example from an experience you have had that illustrates how “buddhic perception can change completely our outlook and attitudes and consequently our life without any change in outer circumstances.”
4. How can we strengthen and embody true awareness of brotherhood and go beyond the concept of mere tolerance and sentiment?
5. How can we acquire more wisdom and go beyond the constraints of conceptual knowledge?
6. What are some of the consequences of making compromises with evil?
7. Why are rigid, fixed rules ineffective and inadvisable for following the spiritual life?

Chapter 21

THE ROLE OF ATMA IN OUR LIFE (Part 1)

Some religious traditions hold that Truth is something to be found within ourselves, in the depths of our consciousness, and not in the outer exoteric forms of religion. Among some who hold that tradition, the idea is widely prevalent that when we penetrate into the innermost depths of our being in our search for God or Reality, we finally arrive at a state of ultimate enlightenment, after which nothing further remains to be sought after or striven for. After arriving at this state, the Enlightened One is supposed to rest through eternity in a blissful state.

The idea of finality in reaching our spiritual goal and attaining perfection is, however, a mistaken concept based upon a superficial acquaintance with the real problems of religious life. Those who are familiar with the esoteric side of religion have always known that, as far as spiritual development is concerned, there is, and can be, no finality. This truth has been very clearly expressed in various texts scattered throughout esoteric literature. Thus the first Truth in *The Idyll of the White Lotus* may be paraphrased as "The human soul is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor has no limit." And *Light on the Path* adds: "You will enter the light but you will never touch the Flame." These texts point clearly to the fact that in the quest of Self-exploration by which we penetrate inward into the depths of our being we are led to greater and greater splendors and deeper and deeper realities. We never reach a stage when we can say, "Thus far and no farther!"

It was stated earlier that our spiritual soul is triple in its nature, its three principles being called in Sanskrit atma, buddhi, and manas, which function on three planes of reality: the atmic, buddhic, and higher mental. The atmic vehicle of consciousness is the core of the spiritual soul (the jīvātmā), and from it is governed not only the life of the temporary personality, which changes with each lifetime, but also that of the abiding individuality. Thus, as far as the human side of our nature is concerned, the atma is the ultimate principle in our spiritual soul, and this fact no doubt accounts for the widespread idea that the atma is the ultimate goal of our efforts and that the attainment of atmic consciousness means the liberation of the human soul.

It is true that as far as our human evolution is concerned, the atmic plane marks the limit of our Self-realization. However, there are other planes beyond it, and when our human evolution has been completed, new vistas of achievement, of which we can have no conception now, open out before us and our unfoldment continues on still subtler planes. That the atmic consciousness is not the ultimate goal of Self-realization is clearly

stated in sutra 4.25 of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, which refers to the further recession of consciousness into the eternal plane of the Spirit (or *Purusha*).

Understanding the functions of atma is an almost impossible task, for it is the Divine Life manifesting in us. The human intellect works under tremendous limitations in understanding, even partially, the truths of the spiritual life. The farther removed from the sphere of the mind any principle within us is, the greater is our difficulty of understanding it. Such understanding would indeed be impossible except for the fact that these principles exist within us, however deeply buried they may be, and faint echoes from those inner regions can, therefore, evoke a feeble response in our mind and enable us to catch glimpses of our transcendental nature. It is with an awareness of this tremendous handicap and with a reverent attitude that we should approach these problems, for where there is true aspiration and desire for knowledge, the Divine Life within us does respond by illuminating the mind to some extent.

In dealing with the role of atma in our life, a few words may be said about the nature of the vehicle through which consciousness works on the atmic plane. As is known to students of the Esoteric Tradition who can use their higher clairvoyant powers, the causal body—the vehicle of the higher mind—appears like an ovoid encompassing the auras of the emotional and lower mental bodies. This means that the vehicle of consciousness on the higher mental plane has still an enclosing surface, however much that surface may expand with evolution and under the impulse of spiritual forces radiating from within.

When we come to the next higher vehicle, which enables us to come into touch with the buddhic plane (called the *ānandamaya kosha* in Vedanta), we may imagine that the bounding surface disappears and the buddhic body—at least as far as it can be conceived by the intellect working through the physical brain—appears like a star, a center of light with rays radiating in all directions.

On the next higher plane, the atmic vehicle may also be imagined to consist of a single atom of the atmic plane, in which consciousness has the capacity of expanding and contracting alternately with inconceivable rapidity—expanding to include the consciousness of the whole plane and contracting to a point to give an individual coloring to this all-embracing consciousness. In this way can be reconciled in the same consciousness the diametrically opposed and seemingly incompatible attributes of all-pervasiveness and individuality, so difficult to understand by the human intellect and so well expressed in the description of this transcendental consciousness in the phrase “with its circumference nowhere and its center everywhere.”

It would serve no useful purpose to go into further detail about this matter, which is really outside the province of the human intellect. Instead, we can consider the more important and practical question of the functions of atma, or rather its functions as they

appear to us and affect us in the lower regions of the personality. What these functions may be on their own transcendental plane, no one living in the lower worlds of illusion can understand.

The plane of atma is the region from which operates the Will Power of the Logos, which drives the gigantic machinery of the solar system. The tremendous power which keeps the planets moving in their orbits in the heavens and electrons whirling in the atoms, which provides for the evolution and growth of innumerable lives, and which is “mightily and sweetly” ordering all things (as the Christian liturgy says) is the Will of the Solar Logos. It works on the atmic plane and supplies the power of the whole solar system on all the planes. The sun is its symbol and representative on the physical plane, a tremendous vortex of electromagnetic energy, supplying light, heat, and other kinds of energies to the physical planets. But on every plane it is the power and energy of the Logos that carries on the stupendous work of building and unbuilding the forms that embody its life. It is that Will which directs evolution.

As the atmic plane is the source of power for the solar system, so the atmic vehicle of a single spiritual soul serves as an instrument for specializing and using that general and all-pervading power for its own individual purposes. It is the outlet connecting the set of vehicles of a particular soul with the current from the spiritual powerhouse. The evolution of the spiritual soul is governed and regulated by the atmic vehicle during aeonic periods of time, and through the power from this source the spiritual soul is able to overcome difficulties, to pass through trials and ordeals, life after life, and ultimately to triumph over all obstacles and reach “perfection.”

Those who have been able to pierce through the intervening planes and obtain a glimpse of the atmic plane—whether they are mystics or higher clairvoyants—have reported a tremendous sense of power and strength, of which down here we can have no conception. All the difficulties and obstacles that engender despair or faint-heartedness down here are swept away, and a tremendous sense of confidence pervades the consciousness of the observer. Such observers gain confidence, not only in themselves and their final triumph over all obstacles, but also in the final triumph of the evolutionary scheme, of the ultimate victory of the forces of good over evil, and the fulfillment of the Divine Plan.

When the consciousness of the atmic plane is reflected below into the personality, it loses much of its intensity and vividness, but still it gives rise to a certain degree of confidence and sense of power that we find in varying degrees in all great persons of strong will. Those who have been in an electrical power plant will perhaps remember the peculiar sense of energy pervading the very atmosphere of the place. Outwardly there is nothing to be seen except the movement of ordinary machinery, but behind that movement one can sense the tremendous invisible electrical power generated by the

huge dynamos. It is similar with persons in whom true spiritual will has begun to awaken. They feel themselves in the presence of a tremendous and subtle power that they sense but are not yet able to use.

In considering the expression of the life and consciousness of the atma in the life of the personality, it is useful to keep in mind the inversion that takes place when consciousness descends from the level of the individuality to that of the personality. Because of this inversion, the lowest three planes, on which the personality functions, stand in relation to the higher three planes, on which the individuality functions, as an image reflected in water stands to the reality it reflects. Think of a mountain reflected in a lake. In such a reflection, the highest part of the mountain is reflected in the lowest part of the image on the lake, and the lowest part of the mountain meets the highest part of the inverted image as in figure 15.1.

As a result of this inversion, the atmic consciousness is reflected in the physical, the buddhic in the emotional, and the higher mental in the lower mental. This reflection means not only some kind of similarity of characteristics between the corresponding planes but also a more direct connection and rapport between them. Thus the life and consciousness of the atmic plane somehow finds a mysteriously fuller expression through the physical plane than on the other two planes on which the personality functions, in spite of the fact that the physical is furthest removed from the atmic. Similarly, buddhic consciousness has a mysterious relation with the emotional; and, of course, the relation of the higher mental and lower mental is well known.

The life of the personality in any incarnation is full and dynamic only on the physical plane, and therefore the period spent on the physical plane is the most important. On the physical plane, we are complete, can initiate causes and grow in capacities, whereas in the life after death, on the emotional and mental planes, we are merely reaping and consolidating the results of what we did in the previous life on the physical plane. It is because we, as personalities, are complete only on the physical plane that we can work out our liberation only during physical life and not in the life after death on the emotional and mental planes. The life lived on the physical plane is thus the most significant in an incarnation, and this is no doubt due to the fact that it reflects and especially embodies the life of the atma, the highest aspect of the individuality.

These special relations and correspondences between the planes of the personality and the individuality are of practical importance because they indicate to some extent lines of easy approach to the higher planes for the personality, on the one hand, and lines of descent of forces from the higher to the lower planes, on the other. Thus it may be said that the way to the higher mind is through the lower mind, that to the buddhi through emotions, and that to the atma through action in the world.

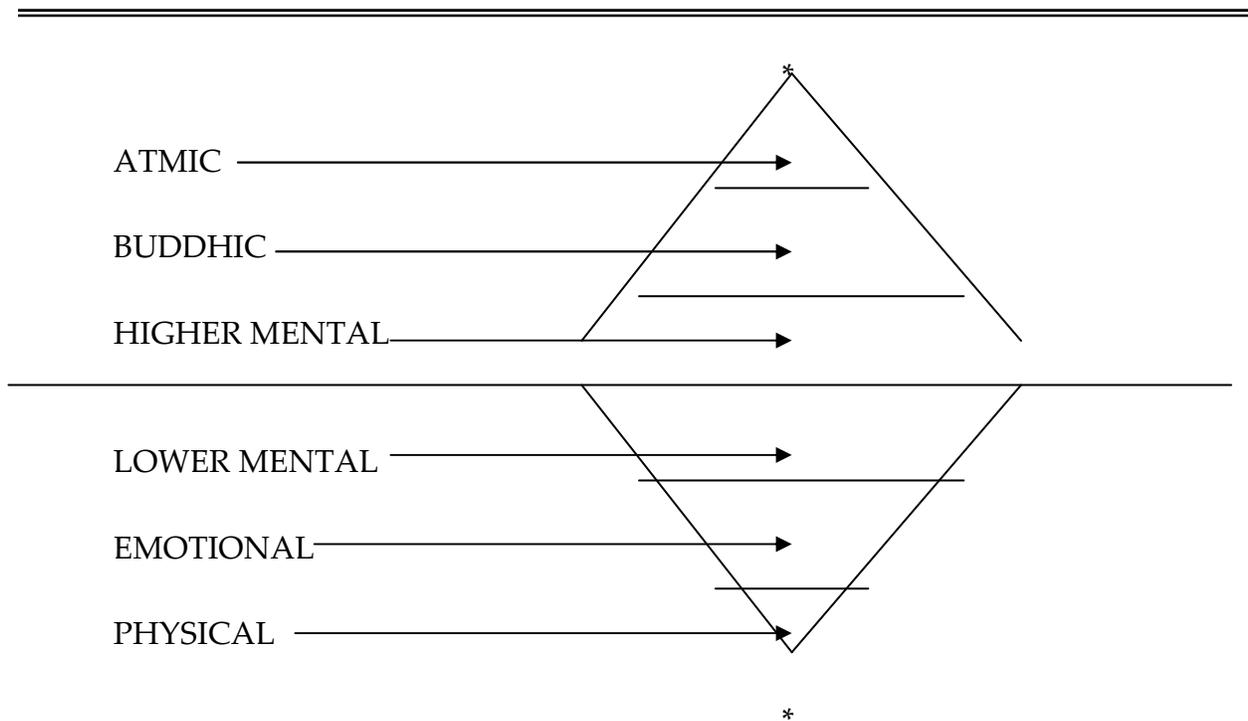


Figure 15.1 The Reflection of Higher Planes into Lower Ones

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. There is no final perfection, for evolution and development continue without end. Beyond even the atmic plane, which is the highest in the constitution of our spiritual soul, there are still greater worlds of experience.
2. Although we cannot understand the higher planes, such as the atmic, with our brain-minds, we can gain some idea of them by analogy because all the planes are in us.
3. The atmic plane is the plane of Will (that is, of intention) and of spiritual Power.
4. Our higher or individual nature is reflected inversely into our lower or personal nature. Thus higher mind is reflected in our lower mind, buddhic intuition is reflected in our emotions, and atma is reflected in our physical activities.
5. It is only in the physical world that we as personalities can make progress, so life on the physical plane is of great importance to our spiritual development.

QUESTIONS

1. What attraction might the idea of “finality” in regard to spiritual goals have for some people?
2. Explain the (a) atmic vehicle and (b) atmic plane.
3. How do you feel about the statement that there is no real end to spiritual growth, and that when one goal is reached, a new one appears upon the horizon?
4. Our higher Self is sometimes represented symbolically by a triangle. Why is this an apt symbol? (The author doesn't mention “triangles” *per se*, but the symbol is a natural and appropriate designation.)
5. Why does the atmic plane find a fuller expression through the physical plane than the other two planes on which the personality functions?

Chapter 22

THE ROLE OF ATMA IN OUR LIFE (Part 2)

Since we are dealing in this chapter with the role of atma in our life, we may dwell for a while on the approach to the atma in physical life—particularly, how we can draw nearer to this divine principle within us and try to establish our center of consciousness in it.

In this process, as said in part 1 of this chapter, action plays a predominant role. By action is meant here not merely the activity of the physical body but all activity initiated from within to transmute our ideals into dynamic living and make the personality an expression and instrument of the higher Self. Although the higher Self is seated in the heart of every human being, its will is not able to find free expression in the personality partly because of the inadequacy and resistance of the lower vehicles and partly because of egoism and the illusions in which the personality is involved.

Only when the personality actually begins to change its patterns and attitudes and to translate spiritual ideals into spiritual living by a process of self-development (called *sadhana* in Sanskrit) can the higher Self begin to find fuller expression through it. Then the higher Self acquires increasing influence over the personality and finally becomes the actual center of its life and consciousness, as it is always the potential center. So Self-initiated action forms the basis of Self-Culture as the method of approach to the atma, and in its highest aspects merges with the technique of Yoga.

Our main work in relation to the atma is to make this divine principle the center of our life, or to put it in another way, to become Self-centered instead of being self-centered. The atma is a Self-illuminated, Self-determined, Self-sufficient principle, so there can be no question of developing it. All that we have to do is to provide the conditions by which it can find increasing expression in our life. This is done effectively and fully by the practice of higher Yoga. But some preliminary work has to be done by the personality in order to provide the conditions for the successful practice of Yoga. This preliminary work has many aspects, of which we can deal here with only a few by way of illustration.

How can the attributes of the atma (Self-illuminated, Self-determined, Self-sufficient) find expression in the life of the personality? Self-illumination in the case of the personality means that it should be able to get the knowledge it needs from within instead of depending on external sources. This is possible to some extent when it can put itself in touch with the causal body, as pointed out in a previous chapter. Self-sufficiency means that we should depend for our happiness on the source of all joy (Sanskrit *ānanda*), which exists within us and not be dependent on external stimuli. This

is possible when we are in direct contact with the buddhic vehicle (or *ānandamaya-kosha* as it is called in Vedanta). The remaining attribute of Self-determination means that we should make the spiritual will of the atma predominant in our life and gradually free the personality from domination by desires. This is possible when the personality on the physical plane is to some extent in rapport with the atmic plane and has become responsive to the Divine Will.

When we try to become Self-illuminated, Self-sufficient and Self-determined in some measure, the center of our consciousness shifts gradually inward, and our life increasingly flows from and is governed by the spiritual part of our being. It is only when this has, to some extent, been accomplished that the practice of Yoga becomes possible, and through this practice the personality and the individuality are both made into more effective instruments and expressions of the atma.

Though the atma is triple in its nature, corresponding to the *sat-chit-ānanda* aspects of Divinity, and has all the three attributes of Self-illumination, Self-sufficiency and Self-determination, the last is its special characteristic. The first two are exercised chiefly through the two lower vehicles of the individuality, namely the causal and the buddhic vehicles. Self-determination finds expression in the personality as spiritual willpower, and therefore, in considering the role of atma in the realm of the personality, we may deal particularly with the question of strengthening the will. Until our will has become strong, which means that our life is governed by the will of the atma and not by the whims and desires of the personality, it is difficult to tread the path of Raja Yoga and reach the goal of enlightenment and liberation.

Because the nature of willpower is often misunderstood, it is important to be clear about its essential nature. It will help to start by considering the relation between will on the one hand and prana, desire and action on the other.

The word “power” is now used in a technical sense in science to denote the capacity for exerting mechanical force, and many people who have not clearly thought about these things vaguely associate willpower with the capacity for exerting force. However, the capacity for exerting force, whether on the physical or superphysical planes, is really a function of prana, the universal energy often referred to in the literature of Yoga. It is through prana that the matter of the different planes is moved and manipulated. And although the nature of prana varies according to the plane on which it is working, one of its functions is the same in every case, namely to bring about changes of all kinds in the matter of the planes.

Willpower is quite different from prana, yet there is a close connection between the two. This connection consists in the fact that exertion of will moves the currents of prana through the medium of the mind on every plane and through these currents it is possible to bring about any kind of change in the matter of the corresponding plane.

The relation may be compared to that existing between magnetism and electricity on the physical plane. Although the two phenomena are quite different, still the movement of a magnet induces an electrical current in a wire within its sphere of influence, and this current can then be made to do all kinds of work. Of course, the analogy is not perfect, but it helps us to understand how two forces which are outwardly of an entirely different nature can yet profoundly affect each other.

Will must also be distinguished from desire, which is a form will assumes on the lower planes in the earlier stages of human evolution. Spiritual will in the higher worlds of the spirit is free and works in harmony with the Divine Will. But when it manifests in the lower worlds, it is liable to be harnessed by the illusion-bound personality for its own separate ends, which may or may not be in harmony with the Divine Will. When working under these conditions, it takes the form of desires.

By identifying itself with the lower vehicles, the individual consciousness develops a false "I" or personality, which follows its own whims and inclinations instead of cooperating with the Divine Will in the fulfillment of the divine purpose. The force directing and controlling this lower self is desire and under its powerful impetus evolution takes place in the earlier stages of human life. Later on, in the final stages of the evolutionary cycle, with the dawning of the spiritual consciousness, a struggle begins between the desire nature of the personality and the spiritual will of the higher Self. That struggle continues with increasing intensity until desire is completely subjected to the spiritual will of the higher Self.

As the relation between desire and will has been dealt with already in connection with the functions of the astral body, it is unnecessary to go further into the matter here. But it may be worthwhile to give one or two examples of the confusion frequently found on this subject. We sometimes come across people who have the capacity of relentlessly pursuing any object upon which they have set their hearts and in spite of all kinds of difficulties succeeding in gaining their end. Such individuals are considered persons of great willpower, and from one point of view they are rightly so considered. But the pursuit of such ends is associated with selfishness and lack of wisdom and, therefore, reduces the phenomenon to the plane of desire. In spite of the outer similarity and the fact that the source of power in the case of desire and will is the same, it is not correct to regard such manifestations as those of pure will.

Ordinary obstinacy, which is also sometimes mistaken for willpower, is really a symptom of weak will. It is the natural reaction of a soul which does not have the confidence necessary to deal with situations as they arise and therefore sticks in a wooden manner to a particular line of action against all reason and commonsense. The real weakness underlying the outer mask of strength is sometimes brought out when

the person makes a change or even complete reversal of course as the result of some incidental event.

Another important point is the relation between will and action. Their relation may be compared to that of potential and kinetic energy. In a battery the energy is present in a potential form at a certain voltage and remains potential as long as the terminals are not joined by a conducting medium. When the terminals are so joined, the resistance is reduced and the potential energy begins to be converted into kinetic energy. The Divine Will at the center of every human soul is present as potential power of infinite voltage. It is drawn out as desire in the earlier stages of human evolution and supplies the motive power of ordinary action. It emerges as spiritual will in the higher stages of evolution and is then the motive power of impersonal action (called *nishkama-karma* in Sanskrit).

The intimate relation between will and action is also indicated by the remarkable manner in which action strengthens the will or, to put it more correctly, enables it to find a fuller expression in our life. The phrase “strengthening the will” is really a misnomer because will itself is the source of all strength. Action plays a very important part in the development of character. It is true that thoughts and emotions ultimately tend to materialize in action, and in changing our character we must also reform our emotional and mental habits. But until thoughts and emotions express themselves in actions, no fundamental change in our life can be effected. The road to hell is proverbially paved with good intentions.

A mere resolution is an ineffective force as long as it remains in the realm of the mind, but give it a practical expression, and the whole inner mechanism of our life is galvanized. Forces are immediately released to bring about change and to make this change a permanent part of our character. Hamlet told Queen Gertrude, “Assume a virtue if you have it not.” That is good advice because acting in a certain way can create corresponding inner conditions. If we have a smiling face, we will feel happier than if we scowl. The intentions of will generate actions; but actions also evoke intentions.

So let all those who are trying to change their habits take note of this important fact: Thought is the parent of action and strengthens the tendency for a particular kind of action. But, on the other hand, it is the action itself that precipitates thought, brings about a real change in the outer and inner life, makes pathways for the nervous system, and stabilizes the mental forces in the new mental grooves. Above all, action enables the will to manifest and guide the lower vehicles more fully.

Although will is the potential force behind prana, desire, and action, it itself does not take a direct part in the activities of which it is the center. Its function is that of a CEO (or chief executive officer) who sits in his office, making the whole administrative machinery of his company work. The CEO does not run about doing things. That is the

function of other employees. Yet it is the oversight of the CEO that makes the whole company function smoothly, and if the CEO were not at the center of things, the administration would collapse and there would be confusion and disorder in the business. This analogy will perhaps also serve to explain the mystery of the *Purusha* who is depicted as the Silent Watcher in Samkhya philosophy. He is not a passive spectator, but like the CEO does not mix with the activities that are going on around him. He is above all those activities and yet is their very cause and potential power.

The true spiritual power that comes directly from the atmic plane can be exercised only under certain rigorous conditions that are not easy to fulfill, and that is why it is so rare. As soon as this power is contaminated with the personal element, it is degraded to the lower form of desire and loses its pure and irresistible character. So it is obvious that impersonality, that is, freedom from the domination of the lower self, must be a condition for its exercise by any individual. The more an individual rises above the influences of the separative and selfish tendencies and is able to look at life from the vantage ground of the Spirit, the greater the measure in which he can use this power. And since a liberated individual (or *jivanmukta*) alone is completely free from the illusions and interests of the lower personal life, such an individual alone can use this power freely and effectively.

The more we are able to unify our consciousness with the Divine Consciousness within us, the more effectively we can exercise the true spiritual willpower of the atma. It would be truer to say that the Divine Will works unobstructed through our center of consciousness than that we exercise the spiritual will as an individual. Wisdom is a necessary prerequisite for the exercise of atmic power; that is really a safeguard devised by Nature against the misuse of a power with unlimited potentialities, which in impure hands would be capable of doing incalculable mischief.

These considerations, general though they must be, may suggest to the reader a glimpse of this transcendent principle within us, which forms the very heart and core of our being and is the source of that eternal, dynamic urge drawing us towards our destined goal. It is hidden from our view, so we can see only its weak and partial manifestations in the most sublime and awe-inspiring aspects of human life. Yet it is the guarantee that we will prevail over all the illusions and imperfections of the lower life and attain our divine heritage. The atma is our "Inner Ruler Immortal" who in silence irresistibly guides our life.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The atma is Self-illuminated, Self-sufficient and Self-determined; that is, wisdom, happiness, and motive power all come from it, not from some outside source.
2. The will of the atma works through prana, desire, and action as its expressions.
3. In particular, acting in a certain way will help to evoke the corresponding power of will.
4. Through its intentional will, the atma draws us onward in our evolution.

QUESTIONS

1. What prevents the free expression of Atma in our personalities? Explain the attributes of Atma and where these attributes function.
2. Briefly explain the connection between will and prana.
3. What is the difference between Divine will and personal will?
4. Explain is the intimate connection between will and action?
5. How does stubbornness differ from willpower?

Chapter 23

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL WILLPOWER

Chapter 15 deals with the theoretical aspect of willpower, which has its source on the atmic plane. This chapter considers some methods for developing this power on the physical plane.

Increasing the influence of atma in our lives requires us to raise the center of our consciousness from the region of the personality to that of the individuality. As long as we are completely immersed in the interests and illusions of the personality, it is impossible for us to manifest the true spiritual will, which has its source in the atmic plane. The passage between the lower and the higher has to be cleared for the continuous inflow of the Divine Life.

Some preliminary practices will make the spiritual will a more dominant factor in our lives. These practices, on the one hand, gradually develop the habit of dissociating ourselves from identification with the personality and its attitudes. And on the other hand, they help to accustom the lower vehicles to the control and direction of the higher Self. These practices are merely preliminary, for the atma can fully control and use the lower vehicles only when the individual has adopted the Path of Yoga and made considerable progress on it. In fact, the pursuit of the Yogic ideal has for its object the making of the atma the supreme ruler in the life of the Yogi through a systematic treading of the path of Raja Yoga.

The first of these preliminary practices is the cultivation of the habit of constant recollectedness of our true nature and purpose in life. This presupposes that the candidate has already thought deeply over the problems of life, has realized the urgent necessity of rising above the weaknesses and illusions of the personality, and has some idea of the altered attitude towards the circumstances of life that the attainment of higher consciousness necessitates. The habit of recollectedness is not acquired simply by making a resolution to that effect, but by persistent and intensive efforts along that line extending over a number of years.

Our lower vehicles have been used to functioning in an uncontrolled and chaotic manner, life after life, each vehicle acting and reacting according to its previous conditioning (or *samskaras*), and the task of bringing them into alignment with our life's purpose is not an easy one. Doing that will require both an ever increasing control and, especially in the preliminary stage, constant vigilance. We have not been used to keeping our lower bodies in check and centering our consciousness in the higher part of our nature. So for a long time we will relapse, again and again, into heedlessness and then

realize with a shock that we have been allowing our vehicles to function in their usual chaotic manner.

Relapsing is inevitable in the early stages. But if we make a persistent effort to rise above the personality, the center of our consciousness gradually shifts, and that shifting brings with it an increased power to deal successfully with the problems of life and to see them in their correct perspective. It enables us to act increasingly from the center of the individuality, the atma.

One of the principal functions of will on the lower planes is bringing our vehicles under control. What does “control” mean? It means, in a broad sense, two things. First, control means that each vehicle becomes a willing and efficient instrument of the higher Self. And second, it means that each vehicle acts only in response to the impulses coming from within. Let us see what these two general statements mean.

First, our physical, emotional, and mental vehicles acquire a distinct character of their own. That character is conditioned by the environment in which they have developed and by their inheritance—especially of the samskaras or impressions brought over from past lives. Because of that conditioning, our vehicles offer resistance to any directions from within that are contrary to their normal mode of action. A physical body used to a particular kind of food will resist all attempts to make changes in diet. An emotional body used to the stimulus of excitement obtained from alcohol will loudly clamor for it at the accustomed times and make any kind of work impossible until its demand has been met. A mental body used to wander listlessly as it wishes, will refuse to concentrate its energies on a task set before it.

The bodies of each one of us have well-established tendencies and habits that prevent us from using them as we might like, so one of the most important tasks the aspirant has to undertake is to teach the bodies to respond immediately and fully to any direction coming from within. For this, some tendencies and habits have to be completely eliminated, while others need to be rendered ineffective as far as our work is concerned. It is not possible to get rid of all our tendencies completely, until we have reached a very advanced stage of evolution, but it is enough if the tendencies do not cause any obstruction in our work and progress. Seeing to this is a difficult task, but if we address ourselves to it seriously and persevere, it can be accomplished.

Second, the other aspect of control may be called “reactionlessness.” As a result of their conditioning, each vehicle automatically responds to certain stimuli from outside in a peculiar manner determined by its previous history. The response to such a stimulus is reactive and mechanical. For example, somebody makes a show of striking you with a stick. The physical body instantaneously reacts by adopting a defensive attitude. Someone comes and says something to you that you consider insulting. Your emotional body immediately reacts, and you get into a fit of temper. You read

something in a book that gives a point of view opposed to the one you entertain on a particular subject. Your mind reacts automatically and rejects that view without examining it fairly and openly.

These are all examples of the innumerable ways in which our bodies react mechanically to external impacts, and these reactions are so much a part of our nature that we are not even conscious of them. When we begin to tread the path of spiritual unfoldment and our buddhi begins to function, these tendencies begin gradually to come to our notice, one by one, and as we eliminate the cruder ones, the subtler ones emerge into the field of our consciousness.

The problem of how to eliminate these reactions is a very interesting one and may be approached in two ways. Psychoanalysis holds that mental “complexes” have to be brought out into awareness. When we are made aware of them, they are naturally resolved. In a similar way, many of our tendencies, which are sometimes closely related to psychological complexes, have to be cognized to make them disappear. But there are other tendencies that do not dissipate in that manner and have to be eliminated by the careful application of psychological laws combined with a gentle but steady pressure of the will.

When reactionlessness has been developed to an adequate degree, then the bodies remain unaffected under the impact of stimuli coming from outside and respond only to the impulses coming from the spiritual soul. Their response may be either passive or active. So we may train the emotional body to remain unresponsive to sensuous vibrations and to respond to vibrations of hate with those of love. In both cases the response is determined by the will and is not mechanical.

The cultivation of reactionlessness develops gradually the Self-determination that is a marked characteristic of those in whom the atma is becoming the Inner Ruler, and this characteristic must be developed by people who want the spiritual will to direct their lives. The more we become reactionless to external stimuli and the more impersonal we become in our responses, the more our actions will express the Divine Life within us, instead of being merely products of the samskaras of the lower vehicles. Action done under these conditions is called “nishkama” or “desireless” and is free from egoism.

We can now deal with some general principles for developing the spiritual will. The will has two functions: controlling the activities of the lower vehicles and providing potential energy for their activities. Control of the activities of the vehicles has two equally important aspects. They are inhibition and regulation of activity. On all the three lower planes attention has to be paid to both these aspects of control, if a perfectly coordinated and harmonious working of the vehicles is to be achieved.

The power to inhibit activities of the bodies can be developed only by prolonged practices of various kinds. It is well to begin with the inhibition of positively harmful activities. Thus, for example, in the sphere of the mind, we may direct our efforts to the suppression of all evil thoughts. In the sphere of emotions, we may try to eliminate hatred in its various forms. And in the realm of the physical, we may try to get rid of bad habits that undermine the health of the body.

After such positively harmful activities have been gotten rid of, we may proceed to the gradual elimination of all those useless activities that are apparently harmless but sap our vitality in various ways and involve a waste of much of our time. If we scrutinize our life carefully, we will find that a large proportion of our time and energy is spent in useless activities. Those activities include seeking excitements of various kinds, earning money that we do not need, going through the round of social engagements that serve no purpose except killing time when it hangs heavy on our hands.

All such pursuits and activities must be gradually but relentlessly weeded out from our life if we have really decided to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to this task of making the will dominant. Every ounce of strength will be needed for our work and must be saved carefully and systematically. The inhibition of harmful and useless activities should lead, step by step, to the acquisition of that rare kind of power that enables an individual to inhibit completely the activities of the three lower bodies whenever it is necessary to do so. This means ultimately acquiring power of perfect concentration of the mind, perfect calmness of the emotions, and perfect stillness of the physical body for any length of time.

The culmination and highest kind of manifestation of the power of inhibition is found in the Yogi sitting in samadhi, with the body absolutely still and the activity of thoughts and emotions reduced to the zero level. For unless the ordinary activities of the three lower bodies can be completely suspended, consciousness cannot be set free to work on the higher planes and gain knowledge of those realms.

The second aspect of control by the will is in the regulated activity of the bodies. Here, as in the case of inhibition, we have to consider all the three lower bodies for two reasons. First all three of them are required for work on the lower planes, but also their harmonious and coordinated interactivity is required for effective working in the outer world and for bringing down forces from the higher planes into the lower vehicles. The spiritual soul, as it were, has to drive a team of three horses, any one of which, by its restiveness and erratic movements can retard progress and hamper the work. Those who begin to meditate realize at once the need for harmonious working of the lower three bodies. If the physical body is not in the best of health but is out of tune, or the emotions are disturbed, the concentration of the mind is immediately affected and the steady flow of inspiration and force from the higher planes is impeded.

Regulating the activities of the lower vehicles, involves three important aspects. The first of these aspects concerns the initiation of new types of activities. Carrying on activities to which we are accustomed or the beginning of activities associated with pleasure of some kind is easy. The force of habit or the force of desire enables us to overcome the natural inertia (or *tamas*) of our bodies. But when we have to initiate new activities that are not associated with any kind of pleasure, we have to draw upon our willpower.

Thus, practically no exertion of will is required, for instance, to play a game of tennis, to send thoughts of affection to a person whom we love, or to read an interesting novel. But our bodies will offer considerable resistance when we start to learn a skill like typewriting, or send thoughts of love to a person whom we dislike, or learn a new language. Those actions require willpower.

If we aspire to the ideal of perfection, we have to learn to do new things and to initiate new lines of activity constantly. We must gradually eliminate the automatic resistance from the lower vehicles and accustom them to take up new lines of activity, pleasant or unpleasant, without offering resistance. Our bodies must be much like a horse that has been broken to the bridle and so obeys automatically and immediately the slightest hint of his rider.

When this capacity to initiate new lines of activity has been acquired in an adequate degree, we come to the second aspect of regulating the bodies. The way has been opened for a gradual widening of the range of capacities connected with each vehicle. The number of things that a particular body of a certain individual can do effectively is limited and depends upon environment, training, and the extent to which that body has been developed. This range has to be slowly and systematically widened in order that the higher human energies may find an ever more varied and fuller expression in the lower world.

Of course the directions in which these capacities of the various bodies have to be enlarged will depend upon the needs and temperament of the individual, upon what may be called our individual uniqueness. But a steady pressure must be exerted all the time on the vehicles so that their vibratory capacities and usefulness may grow steadily. It is only when we seriously undertake this task of evolving an all-round perfection that we realize how “cribbed, cabined and confined” our lives are and how the irresponsiveness of our vehicles prevents the expansion of our consciousness and the flow of the divine life into us.

We would like to bring down the vibrations from the inner planes into our physical consciousness, but our brains offer insuperable difficulties by their denseness. We would like to feel the rapture of devotion that would carry us on its wings to the feet of the divine Beloved, but our emotional bodies prove to be dull and refuse to vibrate in

response to the divine music of Sri Krishna or gentle Jesus. We would like to pursue a particular line of study, but our minds have not yet developed any aptitude for understanding that line of thought.

It is no use fretting against such disabilities. We cannot have capacities we have not yet developed. If we are wise, we will accept the position in which we find ourselves and then set about enlarging the capacities of our bodies in any direction we want by a steady pressure of the will and by adapting our means to our ends. If we remember that all these capacities are already present within us in a potential form and that we have the unlimited power of the Divine Will at our disposal, we can proceed with greater confidence in the gradual unfoldment of our hidden possibilities. The more varied our capacities become, the richer is the melody that the Divine Player within us is able to bring out from the instruments of our bodies.

The third aspect of regulating our bodies is to deepen and intensify their capacities by practice. A partial development of a large number of capacities may lead to a life of futility. It is only when a capacity is developed to a high degree of efficiency that it is possible to draw upon our inner resources and serve the higher purposes of the soul. The intensity factor is of the greatest importance in spiritual life, and all achievements in the spiritual realm are made possible by the gradual intensification of effort in a particular direction. This intensification is brought about by the application of an ever-increasing pressure of will that in its turn helps to release willpower as nothing else does. By this interaction between intensive effort and willpower qualities like endurance, perseverance, and one-pointedness are gradually built up in our character. They provide faint reflections in the lower worlds of that mighty power that is associated with atmic consciousness.

Along with the capacity to initiate any kind of activity and sustain it under great pressure for any length of time, there must also be acquired a capacity to drop the activity instantly and completely at any moment. This marks the acme of control of the vehicle. This ability to drop, instantly and completely, activities of the physical, emotional, and mental bodies must be practiced as a follow-up to the activities themselves. We must be able to stop immediately any physical activity, any emotional enthusiasm, any mental absorption. Only when we can take up, continue, or drop any activity of the physical, emotional, and mental bodies, at will, can the atma be said to have gained control over these bodies and to be able to use them as its instruments in the lower worlds.

Opportunities for the development of this supreme power of will within us are provided in every sphere of life and under all kinds of circumstances, outer and inner. The atma is the ultimate principle within us, the core of our spiritual being, and through the spiritual will, it regulates, energizes, and controls all our forces and the vehicles

through which these forces work. It is this primary, energizing controlling power within us which has brought us safely through eons of time to our present stage of evolution and which is the guarantee of our final triumph over our weaknesses and of the ultimate attainment of our glorious destiny.

Those who take themselves in hand and begin to study and practice the science of Self-discovery begin to draw upon this unlimited source of Divine Power in an increasing measure until they become a vital center through which the Divine Will carries out, unhindered, the Divine Purpose.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Increasing the influence of atma on us requires us to identify ourselves with the individuality rather than the personality.
2. We must practice recollecting who we are and why we are here.
3. When our vehicles are controlled, they are efficient instruments and respond to inner impulses, not to outer ones.
4. The will both controls the lower vehicles and provides potential energy for them.
5. Control involves both inhibiting harmful and useless activities and regulating the vehicles by introducing them to new activities, widening their range of capacities, and deepening and intensifying capacities by practice.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it necessary to bring our vehicles under control?
2. Bringing our vehicles under control entails two things. What are they?
3. What is the first preliminary practice suggested for having the spiritual will play a greater role in our life?
4. What are the three important aspects of regulating the activities of the lower vehicles?
5. The author says that we should develop the "ability to drop, instantly and completely," any physical, mental, or emotional activity. Why is this ability of value?
6. How can we eliminate the mechanical reactions we have to external stimuli and develop "reactionlessness"?

7. What is the purpose of inhibiting useless activities?



Part 2 of Taimni's book dealt with our bodies and their functions on the various planes of existence. Part 3, Taimni says, deals with "Self-discovery and Self-realization and the techniques that are involved in them. It does not seek to give a detailed knowledge of these techniques, which has to be acquired from technical treatises. Its purpose is merely to give aspirants a general idea and to prepare their minds for the more intensive study and practice of these techniques."

Chapter 24

SELF DISCOVERY: THE UNREAL WORLD WE LIVE IN (Part 1)

Before we embark upon the adventure of discovering the Reality that lies hidden within ourselves, we have to ask two questions: (1) Do we really want to undertake this difficult task? (2) Why do we want to do so? Many people will answer the first question by saying, "Of course I want to do so. If I didn't, I would not be studying these things and looking for information about methods to follow." They may not be so sure about the answer to the second question, though they may reply in a general way that they want a better life, to be free from the difficulties and suffering that life is full of.

Although the answers to these two questions appear to be simple, let's not assume that we really understand them. For, if we really knew what we were talking about, many of the problems of the inner life would not exist for us. Then we would have a really strong urge to tread the path earnestly and steadily, and we would not find it so difficult to make changes in our life and attitudes. We have difficulty in translating our ideals and resolutions into practice because in the deeper layers of our minds lurk doubts about the fundamental problems of life. It is such doubts and reservations that paralyze our will to change ourselves. When we see a problem not just in the light of our intellect, but in that of intuition (or buddhi), we see it clearly and without doubt and have no difficulty in translating our decisions into action.

There is a Sanskrit word (*nishchaya*) that means real and firm conviction obtained in the light of intuition and so without doubt or reservation of any kind. If we have arrived at such a conviction, then action follows swiftly, without hesitation. If we have that sort of conviction about Self-discovery, our progress will be steady, unfaltering and joyful. Such conviction is the result of the dawning of *viveka* or spiritual discrimination in our mind, enabling us to see all the problems of life truly and in correct perspective.

The first step in developing discrimination and thus conviction is a process of deep and earnest thought (Sanskrit *vichāra*). By thinking over certain aspects of life carefully, persistently, and earnestly, we stir up activity by the higher mind, purify and attune the lower mind, and stimulate our intuition, and thus gradually open up the passage between our mind and intuition. When this happens, we begin to see things truly and the process of transformation within ourselves begins to take place naturally, effortlessly, and rapidly. Our inner life begins to move.

Deep pondering over the problems of life is recommended for everyone who aspires to Wisdom and wants to enter the path of enlightenment. They need to think about those problems until they are really convinced that the treading of the path of

inner unfoldment is not only desirable but inevitable and cannot be postponed. That is the sign of a real conviction.

How the process of thinking deeply and earnestly is to be started and completed is to a great extent an individual matter, but there are two basic approaches you can use to help you find your own way of proceeding.

The first approach is a close and careful examination of the world in which you live, not only in the light of what the great teachers have said, but also in the light of both your own experience and contemporary science and scholarship. The aim of this examination is to decide as dispassionately as possible whether this world is really what we take it to be or whether we are victims of illusions under whose influence we live complacently in spite of the warnings spiritual Teachers throughout the ages have given to us. If we examine the world quite dispassionately, we may decide that it is not what it appears to be, and that decision will bring about real change in our attitude and action. This work has to be done by each of us for ourselves. No person can open the eyes of another to see the realities of life.

The second approach is a consideration of the world we want to enter and about which one of the Adepts said, "Come out of your world into ours." Of course, we do not know directly what this world is, for we are only preparing to enter it and it is beyond our imagination and intellect. But persons who have already entered this world have given some indication of what it is like, and if we examine their testimony, we may catch a little of its beauty, splendor, and peace, and so be inspired to experience them ourselves by entering that world.

Just as the examination of the world we live in will strengthen our desire to leave all of its unsatisfactory conditions, so a consideration of the world we propose to enter will show that it is tremendously more beautiful and wonderful than anything our illusion-bound intellect and preoccupation with worldly pursuits can imagine. These two approaches are complementary, one negative, the other affirmative. In this chapter, we concentrate on the first, but remember that it is incomplete without the second.

Under the dual impact of these two impulses, one weakening our attraction to this unreal world and the other strengthening our attraction to the world of Reality, we may begin to move in the right direction. Once a beginning has been made, we are likely to continue in the right direction with increasing momentum and determination. The real difficulty for most of us is to begin. We think we have made a beginning when we have merely adopted an outer mode of life or a set of activities, physical or mental. But if there is no real urge from within, such external activities degenerate into mere routine, and we continue to follow that routine in the illusion that we are progressing toward our goal. We really begin only when we experience a real urge with the dynamic quality and momentum that ensures progress.

We can start by thinking about the familiar, everyday world. In particular, consider three things: (a) the insignificance of our little planet in the vast universe; (b) the inexorable effect of time in changing everything in the world; and (c) the relative nature of all our experiences—no two people experience the same thing in the same way. These considerations are not philosophical speculation, but hard facts and common knowledge.

Astronomers tell us that we live on a small planet revolving around an average star on the periphery of a minor galaxy among more than a billion other galaxies, each containing hundreds of billions of stars. Our earth is an insignificant place in the cosmos, a grain of sand on the beach of an infinite sea. And within our experience, nothing stays the same for an instant; everything is constantly changing, so nothing has a stable, independent reality. Everything is in flux and is relative to time, space, and the observer. Many people reminded about these facts will say, “Yes, we know all that, *but so what?*” That’s the trouble.

We know about insignificance, change, and relativity but do not see their significance. If we saw a bunch of ants moving around on a piece of wood floating in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and could enter their ant-minds, which were making all kinds of plans and taking themselves very seriously, we would laugh at their inability to realize their precarious situation. We ourselves are in just such a position from the physical point of view but do not realize it.

It is the same with time. Like a tidal wave, time advances relentlessly, swallowing up everything. Human beings, civilizations, and solar systems all disappear continuously. Nothing can stop the advancing tidal wave of time. Of course, an unlimited future lies before us, but it is going to meet the same fate as it passes through the partition of the present that separates the past from the future. We are intellectually aware of the inevitability of change, but we are not aware of its real significance. If we were, all our petty ambitions and vainglorious desires would shrivel up immediately. If we were aware of the reality of change, we would not take ourselves and our personal ambitions as seriously as we do.

But quite apart from space and time, the way we see the world around us is not the way that world really is. What we consider to be solid, tangible objects are composed of nothing but atoms with vibrations playing between them and the atoms of our own body organized in the form of sense organs. And what are those atoms like? They are like points moving in practically empty space. If the matter in the physical body of a human being were condensed by eliminating all empty space, it would be reduced to a speck of dust so small that a magnifying glass would be needed to see it. And more than that, those points are not so much “things” as “possibilities.” And what an

impression of reality these possibilities make on our consciousness. If this is not illusion or maya, it is hard to imagine what is.

When people talk about such realities as if they were just philosophical concepts, being utterly unaware of the awesome mysteries by which we are surrounded, we may think of the reply of an Indian sage when somebody asked him what was the greatest wonder in the world. The sage replied without hesitation that the most wonderful thing in the world is the fact that people see other people dying everywhere and all the time around them, but do not think that death will come to them as well. The sage mentioned only one aspect of the mystery, but the whole mystery is that we see life as quite different from what it actually is.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The process of Self-discovery requires that we answer two questions: Do we really want to go through it? And if so, why?
2. To answer those questions, we need to engage in some deep and earnest thought about the real nature of this world in which we live and that of its alternative, an altogether different sort of world.
3. To realize the nature of this world, we might think about the vastness of cosmic space and our insignificant position in it, about the inescapable effect of time and change on everything we know, and about the fact that all the reality we experience is relative.

QUESTIONS

1. What difficulties are you having, if any, in making necessary changes in your life and attitude to create a better future in this life and in lives to come?
2. What do you think may be the initial cause (or causes) holding you back and preventing you from taking the next step on the Path?
3. How can we begin to develop the quality of *nishchaya*, which leads towards Self-discovery?
4. What are the two basic approaches outlined in this chapter for helping you to begin thinking deeply about the problems of life?
5. What tends to be the principal difficulty in dedicating ourselves to further progression on the Path? Why?

Chapter 25

SELF DISCOVERY: THE UNREAL WORLD WE LIVE IN (Part 2)

Wise sages of the past examined ordinary human life from a detached point of view and found that it was not what it superficially appeared to be. When we enter life in the flush of youthful desires, we may see it as a bed of roses. As we advance in age, that rosiness gradually disappears, and we begin to realize that life is a mixture of pleasant and painful experiences. For the sake of the pleasurable experiences, we are prepared to tolerate the painful ones right up to the end of our lives, thus creating karma of all kinds in every incarnation and remaining bound to the wheel of birth and death.

That concept of human life is based on a superficial view. If we examine life in the light of intuitive insight, when real discrimination is born within us, we see it in an entirely new way, and the conclusion based on this deeper vision is best formulated in the well-known aphorism of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (2.15): "To the people who have developed discrimination, all is misery on account of the pains resulting from change, anxiety, and tendencies, as also on account of the conflicts between the functioning of the characteristics of matter (*gunas*) and the modifications (*vrttis*) of the mind."

This is the pivotal verse of the theory of the afflictions of life (*kleshas*), developed in the first part of the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras. It is good to study this verse independently and thoroughly, to arrive at our own conclusion. We should not accept the statement only because it is given in an ancient treatise that is considered authoritative. We should ponder over these ideas and try to realize their real significance without being afraid of facing facts.

Is Patanjali the only sage of ancient times who has taken this outwardly (though not inwardly) pessimistic view about human life? No. Every great Teacher who came to liberate humans from the bonds of illusion and the limitations of the lower life and to lead them into the realms of the Spirit has started from this point. Take, for instance, the following passages from *The Light of Asia*, which gives very clearly the teaching of the Buddha:

The First Truth is of *Sorrow*. Be not mocked!
Life, which ye prize, is long-drawn agony:
Only its pains abide, its pleasures are
As birds which light and fly.

Ache of the birth, ache of the helpless days,
Ache of hot youth and ache of manhood's prime;
Ache of the chill gray years and choking death,
These fill your piteous time.

The whole teaching of the Buddha is permeated with this idea that the life familiar to all of us is not what it appears on the surface. It is illusory, impermanent, and full of misery, and therefore we must try to transcend it by following a method that he outlined in his Eightfold Path.

This state of ignorance in which we live is depicted most graphically in *The Voice of the Silence*, as the following verses show:

Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. . . .

The name of the first hall is Ignorance—*Avidya*.

It is the Hall in which thou saw'st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die. . . .

If thou would'st cross the first Hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the Sunlight of life. . . .

The Wise Ones tarry not in pleasure-grounds of senses.

The Wise Ones heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion. . . .

The moth attracted to the dazzling flame of thy night-lamp is doomed to perish in the viscid oil. The unwary Soul that fails to grapple with the mocking demon of illusion, will return to earth the slave of Mara.

Behold the Hosts of Souls. Watch how they hover o'er the stormy sea of human life, and how exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after another on the swelling waves. Tossed by the fierce winds, chased by the gale, they drift into the eddies and disappear within the first great vortex.

The Bhagavad Gita is full of verses pointing out the illusory and impermanent nature of this life in which we are involved and from which we can gain release by means of knowledge and devotion. The following verses (3.38–40) depict the illusions created by our desires and lack of discrimination:

As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as the embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so This [knowledge of our true nature] is enveloped by it [desire].

Enveloped is wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire which is insatiable as fire.

Senses, mind and reason are said to be its seat; by these, enveloping wisdom, it bewilders the dweller in the body.

These few quotations throw some light on the initial problem facing every aspirant, namely the realization of the true nature of our ordinary life. From this realization arises the motive force that enables us to adopt the right means for rising above these undesirable conditions, in earnest and not as a matter of routine. Hundreds of such quotations

could be given from the sacred scriptures of the world and the great teachers of humanity. But many words are not necessary.

What is needed is not statements of these ideas, which are generally well known by students of the Wisdom Tradition, but a *realization* of the facts concerning our normal life. This realization is different from ordinary knowledge or belief. It is an awareness, not a thought. It is not the result of thinking but is an illumination of the mind by the discriminative wisdom denoted by the Sanskrit word *viveka*.

Can this awareness be developed by just pondering the illusory aspect of life? Probably not. But earnest, persistent, and deep thinking about these matters initiates a movement in the higher mind and stimulates our intuitive faculty, so the light of intuition can infiltrate and illumine our minds gradually. Some persons find that earnest and intense prayer can greatly help the process, especially when combined with deep thought. The combination of earnest thought and intense emotion is very effective in stimulating our intuitive faculty because thought and emotion are two aspects of intuition.

Another means is the use of a mantra, a sacred word or phrase. For example, Hindus can use the Gayatri mantra, which stimulates the intuitive faculty; Christians can use the Lord's Prayer, the rosary, or the Jesus prayer; Jews can use the Schma Yisrael; and those of other religions can use holy texts from their traditions. It is not the mechanical and routine repetition of a mantra that achieves results, but repetition under proper conditions of our mind and emotions.

Whether our consciousness can be illuminated by the light of intuition depends in part on the condition of our mind—how far our mind is pure, tranquil and harmonized, and thus able to receive the light of intuition. Life cannot be divided into watertight compartments, and Self-discovery cannot be tackled piecemeal, so our mind must be prepared. To prepare it, we may begin with a few simple things and gradually increase our effort.

Whatever means are employed, our object should be to gain actual awareness of the unreal nature of the lives we lead. This awareness may produce a sense of void or emptiness in the early stages, and it may appear as if life is not worth living if all our worldly interests are taken away from us and we are left hanging, as it were. But this is only a temporary phase that passes as the light of intuition becomes clearer and stronger. We must be prepared to face the facts of life and not allow our mind to run away from them, however unpleasant or awful they may appear to be in the beginning of this process of Self-discovery.

In the light of intuition, we not only see the illusory nature of our ordinary life but also begin to sense our real life, which is hidden beneath the illusory one. So this

unpleasant phase will gradually pass and give way to another, in which we feel an increase of strength, peace, and joy within ourselves, in spite of the awareness of the illusory and impermanent nature of things among which we live, move, and work.

The uncovering of the illusory and unreal aspect of our ordinary life would be a meaningless undertaking if there were no alternative. In that case, the best course for us would be to forget all about these things and like an ostrich keep our head buried in our ordinary pleasures and worldly pursuits. This is what people who do not believe in an inner life of the Spirit try to do—and have to do. Logically they are perfectly right. It would be absurd to deprive ourselves unnecessarily of the trivial pursuits and pleasures that life has to offer if nothing better was in store for us. But luckily, the life we know is not the only life. It is not the real life of the soul. A far greater and infinitely more real life awaits us and we are destined to find it sooner or later. It is hidden within us, within the very center of our being, behind the folds of our mind, under the illusory life we are living. What is more logical for those who believe in the life of the Spirit than to try to take off the veils that cover this inner Reality? What can be more foolish than to let this Light remain hidden and to live in darkness, ignorance, and misery when the Ocean of Wisdom and Bliss literally envelops us?

In the next chapter, we try to peer mentally into the inner and real world that is hidden within us and that all great spiritual teachers invite us to enter. The inspiration from such a glimpse may provide us with added incentive to try ourselves to enter this real world in earnest.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. If we look straight at life around us—as it seems to be—we find that it is, in the words of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”
2. To understand the meaning of that discovery, we need to engage our intuition, which we can do by techniques of meditation, prayer, or mantra recitation. And by that means we will be led to a realization of a Reality that transcends the limitations we experience around us.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the well-known aphorism from the *Yoga Sutras* of Pantanjali (2.15): “To the people who have developed discrimination, all is misery on account of the pains resulting from change, anxiety, and tendencies, as

also on account of the conflicts between the functioning of the characteristics of matter (*gunas*) and the modifications (*vrttis*) of the mind.”

2. How can we develop *viveka* and transcend the limitation in our lives?
3. What are you specifically doing (with dedication and devotion) to encourage the Light of Buddhi to filter through and stimulate your intuitive faculty?
4. In our goal of Self-realization, why should we focus on gaining actual awareness of the illusory nature of our life? How could doing this bring us peace and happiness?

Chapter 26

SELF DISCOVERY: THE REAL WORLD WAITING FOR US (Part 1)

The last chapter dealt with the problem of awakening within ourselves that spiritual urge without which the path of Self-discovery cannot be walked. Two kinds of approaches to this problem were suggested. The first involves a close and earnest examination of our life and the world we know and live in to find out whether we will make a determined effort to change our inner life instead of drifting aimlessly or making feeble and half-hearted attempts that become just ordinary habits. The second approach involves an earnest mental examination of the other world we desire and hope to enter in order to help us to realize what we are missing by our complacency and contentment with our present world.

The first approach was the main subject of the preceding chapter. There we saw that the world we live in is not what it appears to be on the surface and that we are complacent because we are not really aware of what this world is really like. This chapter considers the second kind of approach—a realization of the nature of the other world we can enter. We have seen one picture; now let us try to have a look at the other. The word “realize” in this context does not mean “actually be aware of,” which comes much later, but to understand that life in this other world is far more rich, real, and vivid than our highest conception of a full and happy life here. Some of the previous chapters have dealt with the nature of the spiritual and divine worlds hidden within us. It is these that constitute the real world that all great spiritual Teachers invite us to enter.

Despite the materialism of our time, the evidence for the existence of such a real world within us and the possibility of entering it is so overwhelming that anyone who examines it with an open mind will both become convinced of its existence and also be inspired by it. But the fact that such conviction comes easily does not mean that just thinking about that world will give us an accurate idea of what it is like. That’s the rub.

Even those who have entered that world cannot give us an idea of what it is really like. All they can do is to say that it exists and that every human being can enter it. Nothing more. The inability of those who know that world to talk about it is natural because it is beyond the realm of intellect, and one must transcend the ordinary mind to enter it. Any description of it must be indirect, symbolical, or expressed by negatives—saying what it is not. That is why the existence and nature of that real world will always remain a mystery, and only those who are ready to enter it will be able to recognize, in the veiled descriptions of it, the call of the Divine to those in exile to return to their true home.

Even though no adequate idea regarding the real world can be given, the following extracts from the writings of spiritual Teachers show that they have no doubt about its existence or the possibility of entering it by everyone with the necessary qualifications:

The opening of the bloom is the glorious moment when perception awakes; with it comes confidence, knowledge, certainty. . . . Know, O disciple, that those who have passed through the silence, and felt its peace and retained its strength, they long that you shall pass through it also. [*Light on the Path*, note to rule 21, first series]

Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an adept, when the hardships he has passed through are a thousandfold rewarded. In order to acquire further knowledge, he has no more to go through a minute and slow process of investigation and comparison of various objects, but is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth. . . . the adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths—the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, SHIVA, the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator. [*Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, letter 17 chronologically or 31 in the 3rd edition]

The highest knowledge born of the awareness of Reality is transcendent, includes the cognition of all objects simultaneously, pertains to all objects and processes whatsoever in the past, present, and future and also transcends the World Process. [*Yoga-Sūtras* 3.55]

The sacred scriptures of the world and the writings of mystics, saints, and sages all point not only to the existence of a real world hidden within this unreal world but also to the fact that the world of reality is full of bliss and transcendental knowledge. It is for the student to study and think deeply over such hints of the realities of the inner life and to awaken, if possible, intuition in this manner.

Apart from the testimony of seers and sages, the evidence of science—if studied with an open mind—points to the existence of a more real world within us. The preceding chapter pointed out that the physical world we perceive as form, color, and beauty is the product in our minds of an infinite number of points moving with tremendous speed. It is absurd to suppose that an infinite number of points in motion could produce or bring into existence such a world by themselves. They can only stimulate the perception of such a world, and therefore a much more real world independent of those moving points must already exist within us.

Similarly, for the illusion created by the succession of states we call time, a world of Reality must exist within the Universe and within us, unfolding as phenomena in time and space. How can this vast panorama showing intelligence and design, unfolding around us in space and time, come out of nowhere as the result of a movement of unconscious points in different ways and with different speeds? Yet that is the logical absurdity to which scientific materialism is reduced.

The esoteric teaching, based on the direct experience of great adepts and not on mere philosophical speculation, provides an explanation and reconciles the existence of both worlds, the world of matter and the world of the mind. It declares unequivocally that both these worlds are the expressions of, and rooted in, a real world, which by its differentiation produces phenomena based on the subject-object relationship. It declares that it is possible to transcend the phenomenal world and to know that real world, which casts its shadows in the form of the phenomena we experience.

When we see colored shadows on the screen in a movie and get interested in the shadow play on that screen, it is because we are aware of the fact that those shadows correspond to real men and women who produced the picture. We also know that the drama played before us corresponds to real situations we find in human life. It is these facts connected with our real life that are behind the interest we take in a picture, not the mere flitting about of shadows on the screen.

The pleasure we find in movies suggests why we take so much interest in the unreal and impermanent world around us. Our interest in this world comes from the fact that its phenomena are the shadows of unseen realities within us. We think the phenomena around us are real until we discover that they are merely shadows. This world of illusion is the shadow of a real world, and when we embark on the voyage of Self-discovery, we are merely trying to leave the unreal shadow in order to grasp the Reality that casts these shadows in our consciousness.

If we unknowingly run after a shadow and then realize suddenly that it is a mere shadow, what is there to be disturbed about? The feeling of void and emptiness that sometimes overtakes us when discrimination is born is also part of the illusion and will pass in time. We should be glad to be disturbed in our complacency and thankful for the opportunity to take our eyes off the shadows and lift them up to the Reality behind those shadows. Children who see the shadow of an airplane moving on the ground immediately lift their eyes to the sky to see the real airplane casting that shadow. So when we see life around us as a series of phenomena, which are unreal, we should look within ourselves for the Reality that produces these phenomena. For the center of our consciousness projects these shadows outside.

Thinking about the nature of this Reality as it is depicted in scriptures or in the writings of mystics and sages may give us some incentive to go within ourselves and start exploring the deeper recesses of our minds. But that will not give us adequate incentive if it is only on the plane of the intellect. What we really need is a powerful attraction towards the Divine Life within us and all around us to provide the motive power we otherwise lack. This attraction or drawing force is often called "love for God" or in Sanskrit *bhakti*. To have a powerful spiritual urge within us, we have to develop an attraction or love toward what we want to discover. This love combined with deep

thought will also stimulate our intuitive faculty; and with the development of intuition or buddhi, all our problems will begin to resolve and our inner life steadily to unfold

This love is the attraction between a fragment of Divinity and other fragments, or between the Whole and the fragments derived from it. It is an attraction felt when these fragments are separately sheathed in mind and matter. It is thus the reverse of the force that keeps these fragments apart in manifestation. By its very nature, therefore, love tends to take us out of manifestation and thus to regain an integrated state in which we are aware of our oneness with the Whole and with the other fragments that are also part of that Whole. The drawing together of the fragments is always accompanied by pleasure, happiness, or bliss—those words denoting the same thing at different levels. The deeper the level at which this oneness is achieved or felt, the finer and more exquisite the experience that results.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. To walk the Path, we must understand the nature of the world to which it leads.
2. Though that world exists and can be experienced by everyone, it cannot be described directly, but only by hints, symbols, and metaphors.
3. The world we live in is like a movie—being shadows cast on a screen—and that other world is like the real world that movies depict only imperfectly.
4. To experience that world, we need a powerful attraction to it—which has been called “the love of God” or “bhakti” and is the blissful attraction between a fragment and the whole of which it is a part or between separate fragments for each other.

QUESTIONS

1. Why will the true nature of the Real world remain a mystery or an obscurity for most people?
2. What is some of the evidence that indicates or suggests that beyond this material world lies a world of Reality which is unperceived by most people?
3. How would you attempt to describe the Real world to someone who was open-minded and ready to listen and learn?
4. What experiences of your own, if any, convinces you that the world of the Real is not just mere speculation and that it is possible to transcend this material world?

Chapter 27

SELF DISCOVERY: THE REAL WORLD WAITING FOR US (Part 2)

A problem may occur to us: what happens to love when full awareness of the integrated consciousness is attained and the fragment has become united with the Whole? Obviously, love can exist only between separate beings, and when union is attained, the relation which exists between them cannot be what we call love. What, then, is love transformed into?

On the one hand, it becomes a pure awareness of Oneness, and on the other hand, it becomes a state that was reflected as happiness or pleasure on lower planes. This state is called *ānanda* in Sanskrit. *Ānanda*, which is an aspect of Divine consciousness, is the source of happiness and pleasure on the plane where there is no separation, but Oneness. No English word exactly corresponds, but *ānanda* is often translated as “bliss” and sometimes as “peace.”

It is important to consider the place of love in spiritual life. Some people seem to think that you can tread the path to Self-knowledge without love coming into the picture at all. They quote examples of sages who did not show much emotional love in their lives, although they showed a remarkable degree of serenity and peace. Does this show that love had no part to play in their unfoldment? Not at all.

Love is not necessarily emotional. If love is expressed through the astral body, then it assumes the form of strong feeling that we usually associate with love. If it is expressed solely through pure intellect, it may lack emotional feeling, but will take the form of a fierce intellectual inquiry that can pursue the search for Truth and arrive at it by sheer force of penetrating discrimination. That is the path of Jñāna Yoga. Or if love is expressed through the third aspect of human nature—will—it will break down all barriers that separate us from the object of our search by sheer force of will and unite them by concentrating and then transcending the mind.

The same principle of attraction and drawing together operates in all the three cases, but it assumes different forms according to the medium through which it works. And that medium can and does change for a single individual, according to the phase of unfoldment through which the individual is passing, whether in a single lifetime or in several lives.

The level on which the principle operates can change, as well as the medium through which it works. Emotional love changes its character when it is transferred to the deeper level of the buddhic plane. It becomes subtler and less violent and demonstrative. That is why *bhaktas* or saints who show violent outbursts of feeling in the earlier stages of *bhakti* become serene and balanced when their love matures. The

intensity of love has not decreased but increased tremendously; however, it is flowing in a deeper channel, and so is more controlled and less demonstrative.

The same kind of thing happens when love is transferred to a still higher level in the integrated consciousness. It then assumes a form that we can hardly imagine, though we label it with such words as *ānanda*, *peace*, and so on. And since in the integrated consciousness all aspects of our nature blend, all forms of love, which appear very different on lower levels, assume the same form with perhaps a slight coloring due to the individual uniqueness of the individuality.

Don't think that love can express itself only in the form of emotional feeling, even though it generally does so in the earlier stages of development. But recognize that, whatever form love assumes, it has the essential quality of drawing together irresistibly the seeker and the sought, and so provides the necessary motive power or spiritual urge that is called *mumukshutva* in Sanskrit and that is the fourth of the qualifications for the Path in *At the Feet of the Master*. Love is essential in the process of Self-discovery. We consider its nature and some of the methods for developing it in chapters 20 and 21.

We now come to the second kind of difficulty that many aspirants feel when they start to tread the path of inner unfoldment—the difficulty of choosing the path that is most suited to their temperament and stage of development. This difficulty is rooted in a belief that for each individual there is only one path to tread from beginning to end. It is difficult to understand how this misconception arises, when there are very clear statements pointing to the contrary. Take, for instance, these two in *Light on the Path*:

Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life.

Seek it not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labor, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onward. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder.

We could not have a more unequivocal statement. But apart from such clear hints, our very nature, our origin, method of evolution, and final destiny preclude the possibility of gaining an all-around wholeness by following one particular path. We have many aspects in our lower and higher natures. How can we develop all-around wholeness by following one particular method of development? A whole human being has love, knowledge, will, and the capacity for efficient action all developed in a high degree. These various aspects of our nature can be developed fully only by training along various lines, in various circumstances, using various methods and techniques at various times.

It is obvious that we must adopt different methods from time to time in the course of our evolution. Naturally, we will concentrate on a particular method at one time and on a different one at another time. In the first place, a particular quality can be developed best by intense concentration on it for some time; and second, the environment and circumstances in which we are placed are generally suited to the development of one particular aspect of our nature. It is this necessity of concentrating on one aspect of our nature in one life or at one period of a life that makes it appear as if we are temperamentally suited to one particular path. But our environment will change and our inner needs will change, so a different method or line of development will become not only desirable but inevitable.

Concentration on a particular aspect of our nature by following a particular path is a phase of our development, not an indication of our individual uniqueness, and we should be prepared to switch over to another line when the needs of our inner unfoldment make it necessary to do so. Even when we are concentrating on one particular aspect, we should not make the mistake of neglecting other aspects that also have to be developed.

Life cannot be divided into watertight compartments, so it is not possible to develop one aspect of ourselves to a high degree without at the same time developing other aspects. If we try to do so, we are liable to become unbalanced and lopsided, and our efficiency will be greatly reduced. Our aim should be an all-around and balanced development even though concentrating on one particular aspect may involve extraordinary emphasis on that aspect for a time.

The full unfoldment of human consciousness is such a supremely delicate and individual process that to use the word “path” for it seems badly misleading. Every soul opens from within outwards according to the law of its own being, and no one can predict how it will open and what phase it will pass through next in its progress. To try to put it in a groove or make it open forcibly in a particular manner is like tearing open the bud of a rose to make it open like a lily. Where is the path when we see a rosebud opening and becoming a full-blown flower?

Can we say that a blooming rose is following a particular path of unfoldment? In a way perhaps it is, because it goes through a series of predictable transformations, one after another, under the influence of forces working from within and without. But this path is not a groove in which its activity is confined; instead it is a series of outward transformations taking place as a result of an inward impulse. In the case of a rose, the nature and order of such transformations conform to an archetypal pattern.

Human beings are different. We do not all evolve in the same manner or follow a predetermined series of transformations. If we did, all of us would have to wait for the seventh round—the far-off culmination of our evolutionary pilgrimage—as many of us

have in fact decided to do. But we don't all have to follow that pattern. Every soul is unique and has to express its unique perfection, eternally present in the monad. How this perfection is expressed in the phenomenal world is not predetermined.

This matter is discussed in the commentary on Yoga Sūtra 4.12 (I. K. Taimni, *The Science of Yoga* [Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1961], pp. 403–8). The relationship of the Plan in the Divine Mind to its realization in the world is not like the projection of a movie on a screen, in which no variation is possible, but is rather like the plan of an architect that can be constructed in more than one way by the builders, who have freedom in carrying out the plan. Or, to return to the metaphor of the Path, we do not all have to take the long and easy road of evolution that most of humanity is following. We can step off of that broad road and take instead a short, but steep climb to the mountaintop.

We do not have to choose any single path once and for all. Rather we follow a particular method for a time according to the needs of our inner unfoldment. How to know what our need is and what method has to be followed to satisfy it is a question that brings us to the third difficulty generally experienced by aspirants, namely that of guidance on the path. This question is discussed in the last chapter of this work.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. When we achieve a sense of the unity of all life, the love that exists between separated selves is transformed into a quality called *ānanda*, which is an experience of peaceful bliss.
2. The emotional feelings we associate with love are only one expression of it; love is also expressed by an unyielding search for Truth and by an indomitable will to achieve our goal.
3. The essential nature of love, however it is expressed, is to bring together in union the seeker and the object of search.
4. We do not need and should not expect to follow one path only at all times; many paths are needed because each develops some particular aspect of our nature, and a balanced and well-rounded development requires attention to each of our diverse aspects.
5. We need to concentrate on one aspect of ourselves and thus on one technique or path at a particular time, but ultimately we must develop all aspects by a diversity of techniques.

6. The “path” we follow is not imposed on us from outside or laid out for us—we need to develop according to our own unique inner nature. In doing that, we have options, alternatives, and choices to make.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the common expressions of love with which the ordinary person is familiar?
2. Why is love so important in the process of Self-knowledge?
3. What do you think might be the result of leaving out this crucial element in the search for Self-discovery?
4. How may love be expressed through the intellect?
5. What is the difference between love as expressed through the emotional vehicle and through the buddhic consciousness?
6. What are some ordinary examples of love that include a sense of attachment? Is it possible to feel a kind of love in which there is no attachment to the object of that love? Give examples, if you can.
7. Why is it advisable and even necessary to adopt different methods of development from time to time? Is it not better to find one method and stick with it to the end?

Chapter 28

THE STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, AND REALIZATION

We have already studied the total constitution of the Monad. It expresses itself on the spiritual planes as the immortal individuality and on the lowest three planes as the transitory personality.

The personality—a temporary expression for gaining experience and unfolding the mental and spiritual faculties of the individuality—disappears completely at the end of every incarnation after handing over the essence of its life to the individuality. So the personality does not evolve, though successor personalities become more complex and accomplished as evolution proceeds. The personality is only a temporary instrument of the individuality, nothing more. Though developing the three vehicles of the personality does not accomplish the purpose of spiritual evolution, they do provide the groundwork for that evolution, so we cannot ignore them.

The individuality (the *jīvātmā*), however, endures from life to life and evolves gradually, developing its mental and spiritual faculties and serving as a permanent instrument of the Monad. The individuality expresses itself through the three principles known as *ātmā-buddhi-manas*, and these principles find expression predominantly on the atmic, buddhic, and higher mental planes, respectively. The unfoldment of these three principles through their respective vehicles is the process of human evolution.

It is important to know that the unfoldment of the three higher principles and vehicles is generally from below upwards, that is, in the order of the higher mind, buddhi, and atma. The ray, or fundamental type, of the individual is also a factor in the order of evolution—individuals on different rays unfolding somewhat differently—but generally the higher mind unfolds first, then buddhi, and last atma.

Studying the theory of reality—trying to understand philosophical concepts of the hidden realities of life—will bring into activity and develop our higher mind. So we should begin with that. Next, we should try to translate those concepts into action and thus transmute our intellectual knowledge into wisdom. We should also try to develop devotion or love at the same time and make it an integral part of our character because it is the most powerful method of unfolding the buddhic faculty and acquiring true wisdom.

Buddhi must be developed through devotion to some Reality greater than ourselves, a reality called by many names, but general “God” in the Western world. That development must occur before we can pass on to the third stage, in which the veils of illusion that hide Reality are removed, one by one, culminating in the attainment of Self-realization. There are several reasons why that is so. The first is that, from

the very first, we must find the Light that can guide us on the Path unerringly, safely, and surely to the very end. This Light can come only from our buddhi. The second is that we must become Self-sufficient and independent of external sources of happiness. It is only love of the divine Reality that can make us Self-sufficient. The stripping of the personality and the resulting creation of an inner vacuum, which takes place in the flight of the alone to the Alone, is not easy to bear unless we have an inner fountain of joy. Many aspirants turn back and again plunge into the pursuits of the worldly life because they have no inner means of support to sustain them in the intermediate stages. The third reason is that devotion and wisdom are inseparable, and only wisdom can give a person all those qualities necessary for treading the path safely and steadily, namely, correct perspective, maturity of judgment and outlook, and freedom from the lower tendencies that drag a person down.

Wisdom is therefore a *sine qua non*, to be developed as thoroughly as possible in the second stage. Wisdom is necessary for evolution, and its possession marks a fairly advanced stage in achieving Self-discovery. That is true for several reasons. First, wisdom can be gained only by a strenuous and prolonged effort, which is as much as most aspirants can hope to make in one life. Second, the fruits of wisdom are not negligible.

We generally think that wisdom is merely the mature judgment and capacity to order our life properly that comes from long and varied experience. But wisdom, as it is understood in esoteric lore, is something quite different. It is the state that is attained when the mind is thoroughly irradiated by the light of the spiritual faculty called buddhi. No one can understand the peace that passes understanding, the insight that pierces through the illusions of life, the unerring knowledge that begins to flow into our minds from within, the tender sympathy toward all life, the ecstatic sense of our oneness with other human beings, the fountain of joy that plays within us, the security we feel when we sense that we live, move, and have our being in a greater Reality, the certainty that comes when we are even vaguely aware of a Consciousness that is sweetly and mightily ordering all things, the inner harmony in which we live with others even when we may be opposing them outwardly—no one can understand these things who has not experienced the illumination of the mind by the light of buddhi.

The experience of these things is no small gain in return for the efforts and sacrifices required in order to develop wisdom. In fact that experience is of such a satisfying nature that many aspirants would be quite content to remain in this stage without making any effort to advance further. That experience comes quite near to their ideal of an enlightened spiritual life. But this state is not the goal; it is only a stage in our journey. It is the foundation on which the superstructure of an enlightened spiritual life

is to be built, the spiritual life of a Self-realized and liberated being, which is the goal of human evolution.

So now we pass on to a consideration of the last stage in which wisdom is transmuted into Self-realization, when we not only “sense” Reality through the faculty of buddhi but *know* Reality directly through our atma by fusing our consciousness with it and thus becoming one with it. Realization may be defined as “knowing by becoming.” This is the field of real Yoga.

In the highest states of devotion, the consciousness of the devotee becomes more and more one with the consciousness of the object of devotion, and that is why the path of devotion is also called Bhakti Yoga. Raja Yoga, or Royal Yoga, as outlined in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali, is based on will. Through the use of spiritual will, the mind is purified, brought under control, and its modifications inhibited completely in *samādhi*. This enables the consciousness of the Yogi to transcend the various levels of the mind associated with the several vehicles, until the last barrier of the atmic plane is crossed, and the consciousness emerges out of the realm of the mind and becomes one with the consciousness of the eternal Monad or the *Purusha*.

What has just been said is looking at the process from below, from the point of view of the personality. If we look at the process from above, from the point of view of the Monad, we might say that the Monad extricates itself from the lower levels of the mind, one by one, until its consciousness has freed itself from its atmic vehicle and it stands free in its true divine nature, Self-realized with all the vehicles on the lower planes at its command. This is *jīvanmukti*, liberation, *nirvāna*, or whatever word one wants to use for that exalted state of consciousness that crowns human evolution.

In the third stage, in which the technique of Raja Yoga is utilized to obtain Self-realization, the spiritual will of the atma is used to attain the final goal, just as in the second stage love is used to attain wisdom. In this stage the highest principle is functioning in the individuality.

Thus the three higher principles are unfolded one after another in the three stages: intelligence in the first stage, love in the second stage, and spiritual will in the third stage. Love added to intelligence develops wisdom. Spiritual will guided by wisdom gives Self-realization. The relations of the three principles, functions, and methods of development may be represented as follows:

PRINCIPLE:	Manas, Mind	Buddhi, Insight	Atma, Self
VEHICLE:	Causal Body	Buddhic Vehicle	Atmic Vehicle
METHOD OF UNFOLDMENT:	Study, Reflection, Jñana Yoga	Devotion, Love, Bhakti Yoga	Spiritual Will, Intention, Raja Yoga
RESULT OF UNFOLDMENT:	Higher Knowledge, Intelligence	Wisdom	Self-Realization

Having seen the place of Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga in our spiritual unfoldment, we will proceed in the following chapters to discuss these two important systems of Yoga.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The Monad expresses itself on the atmic, buddhic, and higher mental planes through the three principles of atma, buddhi, and manas, or the individuality; it expresses itself on the lower mental, emotional, and physical planes as the personality. The personality is of one lifetime only; the individuality endures from life to life.
2. The process of Self-realization normally involves developing the three higher principles in an order from the lowest upwards; so seeking to understand ourselves, the world around us, and our place in it develops intelligence and is the first step on the higher path.
3. Devotion or love of the highest Reality combines with intelligence to produce wisdom, which is an insight into the truth of things as they are—and a joyful acceptance of the Reality around us.
4. The exercise of the spiritual will or intention, combined with wisdom, brings us to a realization of our oneness with all beings—Self-realization.
5. So we develop intelligence by study, wisdom by love combined with intelligence, and Self-realization by spiritual will combined with wisdom.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it inaccurate to say that the personality evolves through reincarnation?
2. Explain the threefold nature of the individuality.
3. In general, do all three aspects of the *jīvātmā* evolve simultaneously and at the same rate?
4. Explain why buddhi must be developed through devotion to something higher or greater than ourselves.
5. What is one reason why so any aspirants fail in their attempt to achieve Self-realization?

Chapter 29

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION (Part 1)

The *Bhakti-Sūtras* of Nārada is a small book containing 84 sutras or aphorisms dealing with different aspects of bhakti or devotion. Although not systematic, the book throws light on many aspects of devotion and is generally considered a standard textbook on Bhakti Yoga. Here are a few sutras to illustrate the nature and approach of the work:

The nature of love toward God cannot be described. (51)

It is like a flavor tasted by a speechless person. (52)

On the surface, these sutras state that the experience one has of intense love toward God cannot be expressed in words. Of course, that is true, but it is superficial because no experience we have can be described to anyone who has not had a similar experience. It is only because all of us have had similar experiences in life that we can describe them to one another.

What, then, is the deeper meaning? During our evolution, we are brought into touch with different people, in different relations, again and again. By such repeated contacts, we develop different kinds of love, such as that of a mother for her son, that of a daughter for her father, that of a husband for his wife, that of a friend for a friend. As we grow emotionally, the types of love we experience become greater in number and in intensity. The varied spectrum of our love becomes fuller and brighter. But what is this spectrum derived from? From that from which every thing, every faculty, every power is derived.

This spectrum of love of all types is derived from the white light of Divine Love by a process of differentiation. This differentiation helps us to develop our emotional nature more effectively because it is easier to respond to and develop one limited, particular type of love at a time, just as the differentiation of the mind into five sensations helps us to develop the mind much more effectively. But diverse colors are not the same as white light, even though the spectrum of colors may include all varieties. An individual who has lived only in the realm of manifestation, in the realm of colors, can have no idea of the white light of Reality. We have to experience, not just an infinite palate of colors, but the white light itself.

Similarly, an individual who has experience of all types of love that we find in human relationships cannot really have any idea of the Divine love from which they all are derived, without experiencing that Love itself. So, although we are familiar with love in its many differentiated forms, we do not know Divine Love, and the person who has experience of Divine Love cannot describe it or communicate its nature to another

person who has not experienced it. Without experience, we can have only a vague idea of that Love, based on the most intense and pure forms of love we have felt. But to know Divine Love, we must experience it directly by developing it within our own heart.

It is of the form of intense love towards Him. (2)

Because it takes the form of the highest peace and bliss. (60)

The first of these sutras merely describes the general nature of devotion as intense love directed toward God. Of course in the beginning, it is inevitable that this love should be like any of the differentiated types of love we are familiar with and capable of feeling. That is why in India devotees are encouraged to adopt any kind of attitude towards God and try to develop the corresponding kind of love to an intense degree. They may regard God as a friend, as a teacher, as father or mother, or as a lover. The kind of attitude does not really matter in the earlier stages. What matters is the intensity of the love.

The fusion of the consciousness of the devotee with the Consciousness of the Beloved is like a bolt of lightning striking the earth in a thunderstorm. The coming together of the positive and negative charges in the cloud and on the earth, which produces the lightening, depends on a difference in voltage so that the resistance of the air may break down. The difference in voltage is sometimes tremendous, up to a million volts. That accounts for the destructive and terrific nature of the phenomenon. Similarly, only when the love between the devotee and God reaches an intense degree does partial fusion of consciousness take place, and the devotee realizes what Divine Love is like. Through this realization, the devotee's love, and the consequent bliss, rises to a still higher level. This takes place again and again, and the devotee experiences more and more intense forms of love and the finer and subtler levels of bliss corresponding to them.

These experiences of deeper levels of consciousness and love correspond to the different levels of samadhi in Raja Yoga. The final stages of these experiences are quite different from the emotional love that is felt in the early stages, however intense the latter might be. They are generally referred to as *paramānanda* or "surpassing bliss" in the literature of the Bhakti schools, or as *shanti* "peace" in the terminology of Jñana Yoga. Though the love is intense and all-embracing, it is flowing in a very deep channel, so there is perfect peace and serenity and balance, with no turmoil or disturbance as in the earlier stages.

A question that sometimes troubles aspirants is the form they should select to develop their devotion. It was said just now that a devotee can adopt any kind of attitude towards God, and develop love along that line. The fact is that the form does not matter, provided it attracts the devotee and arouses only pure and holy thoughts

and emotions. If there are many doors leading to the inner sanctuary of a temple, what does it matter by which door we enter if our object is not to stop at the door but to enter into the presence of the Deity?

Love is a state of the mind, whereas the form of the Deity or the object of worship is merely an image in the mind. What really matters is not the image, but the state of the mind, which is quite independent of the image and is not affected by the form of that image. Whether it is the image of Christ or Krishna or Rama or Shiva or Mary or Buddha or a Master does not matter. What matters is the intensity of the devotion, self-surrender, and purity of the mind that makes it fit to be united with the object of devotion, and brings down the grace and blessing of the object of devotion upon the devotee.

The consciousness of the devotee fuses, not with the image, but with the Consciousness that the image represents. The union is not in the realm of the lower, concrete mind of names and forms, but in the realm of buddhic consciousness. The mental image disappears and is transcended in this union. In meditation, or otherwise, the image serves merely as a focus for consciousness through which aspiration passes upwards, and grace, blessing, or forces flow downwards. It is like a door through which communication takes place but the One the devotee seeks is on the other side of the door, and the devotee must pass through this door in order to meet that One. So the importance and value of the image depends entirely upon the aspiration it and previous lives. It is the condition of the mind, its alertness, intensity of love, purity, and self-surrender that are the factors of paramount importance.

What has just been said is true, not only of our spiritual devotion, but even in our ordinary human relationships. When we love someone or even talk to someone, are we loving or communicating only with the outer physical body or even with the mind of that person? Not at all. It is the Spirit that is communicating with the Spirit through the veils of the body and mind. If you doubt that this is true, try to imagine the person with whom you are communicating on the physical plane without the innermost self (the monad or atma) that is the animating Spirit behind all the bodies. The whole structure or mechanism of communication from the physical to the spiritual will become inoperative if the Spirit leaves it, and it will become meaningless to us. We see this to some extent when the higher principles leave the physical body at death. The body that was dear to us becomes a mere conglomeration of matter in which we are not at all interested. It is the Spirit behind the vehicles that is not only the cognizer but also both the object of our love and also our lover.

This idea has been put clearly in one of the Upanishads. Translated freely it means: "Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear. Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self is the

husband dear. Not for the sake of the son is the son dear, but for the sake of the Self is the son dear.” And so the text goes on, repeating the statement again and again with regard to other human relationships, to impress the idea on the mind of the reader. You can see the underlying significance of the statement. Although we imagine that all our relationships are based at our personal level, they are in reality at the level of the Spirit, and the intervening bodies are merely veils that hide the true participants in the actions and relationships.

So it is not the image in our mind which is the object of our spiritual devotion but the Universal Life and Divine Consciousness hidden behind it. That Life and Consciousness is the same for all images. That is why Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that he meets every devotee along any path on which the devotee comes.

Of course, as we are living in the realm of names and forms, we might as well take advantage of the attraction that particular names and forms arouse in us, enabling us to strengthen our devotion. At the same time, we should not worry ourselves, as some do, about the choice of the form to which we direct our devotion. What naturally attracts us and arouses our devotion is the form for us.

Its inmost nature is the nectar of immortality. (3)

This sutra says that the inner nature of devotion is the nectar of immortality. This is a rather mysterious statement that requires explanation. The nectar of immortality (*amrita* in Sanskrit) is a symbol of eternal life, as the parts of the Sanskrit word show: *a-**mrita*, with a meaning “not” (as in *atonal* or *achromatic*) and *mrita* meaning “mortality” (the English and Sanskrit words being in fact from the same ultimate source). Anyone who drinks *amrita* even once is supposed to become immortal, as having passed beyond the domain of death. Obviously, there is no such physical liquid or elixir of life that will make us immortal. *Amrita* symbolizes a state of consciousness above manifestation, by attaining which we are liberated from the illusion of birth and death—that is, become a *jīvanmukta* or one who is liberated while alive. Those who attain that state need not come down again into incarnation as a matter of necessity, though they may do so to help others who are still struggling in the realm of birth and death.

The fear of birth and death is rooted in the identification of consciousness with the vehicles. Once an individual has risen into the realm of Spirit or pure Consciousness, and realized identity with that Divine Consciousness, the illusion that leads to identification with the vehicles is destroyed forever. Then there is not only no fear of death and birth but also no necessity to incarnate in the lower worlds. This is real liberation or immortality.

This state is attained when the consciousness of the devotee, passing through more and more intense forms of ecstasy, is ultimately united with the Divine Consciousness

and becomes established in it permanently. Since that Consciousness is eternal and confers immortality, the highest state of devotion is called *amrita* or the elixir of immortality. Of course, the same consciousness can be attained along the jñana path of Raja Yoga.

This was the method that the ancient wise seers or *rishis* adopted for gaining immortality. But consider some of the methods that we, their “wiser” progeny adopt to gain immortality these days. We seek immortality by reputation.

In order that the name of our body may endure we desperately try, if we are important enough, to get it associated with some institution, or if not, with a road or even a lane. We do not realize that the name of the road may remain for some time, but not our association with it. Who will associate a place with us when we are gone? Even if we ourselves come down in another incarnation, we will not know that the institution bears the name of our body in a previous life.

We also write books; we try to find a place for ourselves in history as political leaders; we do so many things and sometimes very undesirable things, under the cruel illusion and in the vain hope that we will be immortalized. We do not realize that a name or form may endure at most for a few centuries, but we will not. The tidal wave of time is advancing, relentlessly, destroying not only the names of now famous people, but everything in its path, even civilizations and globes, solar systems, and universes. What an illusion to suppose that we can achieve immortality by a memorial!

There are better ways to pass beyond the limits of mortality. And they are the techniques we are considering, such as the process of Bhakti Yoga.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. During our life, and our series of lives in succeeding incarnations, we experience many varieties of love. Each of those varieties is like a particular color in a spectrum. All of those loves, like all of the colors, are refractions of one energy that comprehends all of its expressions and is different from any of them. It is not their sum, but their origin.
2. The form in which we think of the object of spiritual love, or devotion, is not important. Whatever form a person resonates to will help that person come into contact with the real object of devotion, whether we call it God or Allah or by any name whatever.
3. We approach the experience of that object of devotion by stages of ever increasing intensity and intimacy.

4. When we reach an identification of ourselves with the divine object of devotion, we have reached the end of human life and do not need to incarnate in this world any longer. For that reason, devotion is called the elixir of immortality.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Taimni mean by the phrase “spectrum of love.”
2. When working with novice disciples, why do Indian gurus emphasize the intensity of love toward God rather than the particular image the disciple has of the Divine?
3. As the love towards God becomes deeper and more intense, why does the devotee experience increasing levels of peace and tranquility instead of emotional turbulence and fluctuation?
4. What are the key elements that may induce the mind to become an open channel for receiving grace or spiritual blessings?

Chapter 30

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION (Part 2)

We continue our examination of the Bhakti-Sūtras of Nārada by considering a few more sutras, beginning with this one:

Devotion is not moved by selfish personal desire because it finds expression in the inhibition of all such desires. (7)

This sutra obviously does not refer to the lower stages of bhakti or devotion, which is mixed up with personal desires, but to the highest stage which is utterly unselfish and is motivated solely by love of the highest, however we conceive of it. It is pure Love, which draws a fragment of separated consciousness to the Whole from which it has separated, so that the two may become united again.

One of the remarkable characteristics of this love is that it frees us from our ordinary desires and attachments naturally and easily. We see this characteristic to some extent even in ordinary expressions of love. When, for example, two people fall in love, for the time being the comfort and happiness of the beloved becomes the sole concern of the lover, who becomes free from other desires. Of course, those desires are not eliminated really, but they cannot be expressed as long as the state of love lasts. The same thing happens in the case of a mother. Her love for her child makes her indifferent to her own comfort and interests, and she becomes free from many of the other desires that may have dominated her mind before.

What causes the transformation of a person whose desires are shed naturally when they are in love? The quality called in Sanskrit *ānanda* or “bliss” is our innermost essential nature, and we cannot live without it. We must have it somehow. If we cannot have it from within ourselves, we must try to get it from outside, through the satisfaction of sensory desires. Every time a desire is satisfied, it temporarily makes the mind tranquil for a brief interval, and in this tranquilized and harmonized mind, a little of the *ānanda* filters down from our greater selves. This is the source of the temporary satisfaction or pleasure or happiness we feel when desires are fulfilled. But such satisfaction does not last. The mind soon loses its equilibrium and desire is again aroused, making us seek satisfaction in other things. So we continue to run after things in the outer world, although the source of happiness is within ourselves.

When we are in love, we are, to a limited extent, independent of external objects that provide us with sensory pleasure or happiness. We are partially self-sufficient for the time being, even though the object of love is outside ourselves. In the case of ordinary love, this exalted state does not last, and so we revert to the search for happiness in external objects and pursuits. We lose our self-sufficiency again.

When true divine love is born within us, however, and begins to flow through our heart steadily and strongly, we become established in the source of all love or *ānanda* and become Self-sufficient enduringly and completely. The fountain of bliss and joy is eternally playing within our heart and we need nothing from or in the external world, although we may be working in it to help our fellows and carry on the work of the Logos that has been entrusted to us. We become like the Logos itself, which is in this world, working through it, but not dependent upon it. That Logos is the very Ocean of Love and *ānanda* from which we all derive our bliss.

So Love finds expression in the natural and rapid elimination of all desires and is the easiest and most pleasant method of making our minds pure, tranquil, and self-sufficient. It helps us in two ways. It increases our attraction to the divine life and consciousness at the center of reality, and at the same time decreases our attraction to the external objects on the periphery.

Devoid of *gunas* (the three fundamental qualities in nature), free from selfish desire, growing in volume and intensity every moment, and having a ceaseless flow, it is of the form of inner experience. (54)

This sutra seeks to describe further the devotion a devotee feels towards the divine after having reached an advanced degree of union with it. It mentions five characteristics of that devotion.

First, lower stages of *bhakti* associated with an ulterior object are characterized by one of the *gunas*: *rajas*, *tamas*, or *sattva*, that is activity, inertia, or harmony. Those stages do not seek the divine for its own sake, and so are secondary. The highest, primary kind of devotion referred to in this sutra is above the *gunas*, free from the conditioning associated with them.

Second, when we are free from selfish desire, we are motivated by pure love—the attraction of the fragments to the Whole mentioned above.

Third, this devotion is ever growing in volume and intensity because there is no finality with regard to anything connected with the divine life and consciousness. There are depths within depths *ad infinitum*: “Veil after veil will lift but there must be veil upon veil behind.” Every time the devotee attains a deeper union with the divine life within, the love grows. It is a kind of virtuous circle. The more we love the divine, the more we know it, and the more we know it, the more we love it.

Fourth, the flow of love is uninterrupted because the consciousness of the devotee is permanently united with that of the divine. Devotees in the earlier stages attain a glimpse of the beloved and their love shoots up in an ecstasy. But then they lose contact and therefore experience utter misery. This misery of separation (called *viraha* in Sanskrit) by its very intensity brings about union again. So this ebb and flow is a part of the

life of a mystic in the earlier stages, in fact even up to a fairly advanced stage. But there comes a time when the devotee cannot slide back into separation but remains continuously established in the consciousness of the Beloved. Then the flow of love is naturally continuous.

This experience is subtler or at a deeper level. In advanced stages of devotion, love flows in a very deep channel and so does not find expression in outer symptoms and loss of balance as in the earlier stages. A shallow river makes much noise and easily overflows its banks, but a river flowing in a very deep channel does not make noise and does not overflow its banks. So we should not judge the love of a person by the outer symptoms or by its demonstrativeness. This love is not an emotion, not a thought, not even a perception of the higher mind or buddhi. It is an awareness of the divine life and consciousness within the center of the individual's consciousness. It is the result of a fusion of the two.

This fusion of consciousness, however, leaves enough duality or sense of separateness to enable the devotee to feel the bliss of love. When two are fused together completely, in a perfectly integrated state of consciousness, there can exist no love in the ordinary sense, for love is the result of the relation between the lover and the beloved, and when those two have become fused together into one perfectly integrated state, love must disappear and only the bliss of *ānanda* can remain.

The primary (real) devotees are those who have only one end in view, or are single-hearted. (67)

There are two classes or types of devotees. Those in the one class (which we will consider later) are devoted, but they have some ulterior end in view so their devotion is contaminated in various degrees by their personal selfish desires. Those in the other class, who are referred to in the sutra above, have no selfish end whatever in view. They love the Highest because they cannot do otherwise. It is the Life of their life, Center of their very consciousness, drawing them irresistibly, unaccountably, and exquisitely to itself, and they surrender themselves completely to its irresistible pull.

What is the nature of this "Highest," the source of the bliss of *ānanda* and the object of the greatest devotion? Bliss (*ānanda*), like awareness (*chit*) and being (*sat*), is inherent in the very fabric of existence, or rather in that which underlies the fabric of existence. It is ultimate Reality. We can think of that Reality in many ways, each of which is right for a particular purpose and none of which is right in an absolute sense.

That is, we think about the Highest or ultimate Reality in ways that help us. But our thoughts do not limit or define it. So we can think and talk about it either impersonally or personally. But it, itself, is neither personal nor impersonal. It is what it is. When Moses encountered that Reality in a burning bush that was not consumed by its fire,

Moses asked the Voice that spoke to him from the bush to identify itself, to say who or what it was. The Voice answered, "I am what I am."

The Highest, however we think of it or encounter it, is what it is. But many devotional mystics think of it in personal terms, as of a Being (great beyond all words, but yet a Being) with whom they have a personal relationship. They call it "God." Others think of it as the ultimate Reality, transcending all personal limitations and pervading all that is. Neither way of thinking is "right," though each has its uses.

In the Gita (12.1–5), Arjuna asks Krishna about this very question. Arjuna wants to know whether it is better to direct devotion toward a personal embodiment of the ultimate Reality, like Krishna, or toward the unmanifested Absolute. Krishna answers that those who are devoted to a personal expression of the divine are "best in yoga," although those devoted to the Absolute also achieve the goal. Krishna does not say that it is better in the abstract to worship a personal God, only that it is easier for many to do, because "the difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach."

We may conclude that whatever works for us, works for us. There is no single "right" way to think of ultimate Reality. Each person who feels devotion, or wants to cultivate the feeling of devotion, can and should conceive of the object of devotion in whatever way that person finds most suitable. For some it will be devotion to Krishna or Rama or Jesus or Kwan Yin or the Virgin Mother or Durga. For others it will be devotion to the Power that moves the stars in their courses, vitalizes the cells of the body, and energizes every particle of substance in the cosmos. Finally, it is important to realize only that it is the same object of devotion, however we think of it.

SUMMARY

1. Our desires for ordinary pleasures and happiness are muted expressions of a longing inherent in each of us to experience directly the ultimate bliss of existence.
2. Devotion, in its purest form, is both a spontaneous response to the experience of that bliss and a means of achieving it.
3. The object of devotion can be conceived of, according to our frame of mind, either as a personal God or as the impersonal, ultimate Reality of existence.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the pure Love referred to in the *Bhakti-Sūtra* and how it differs from other forms of love.

2. Although the devotee will lift “veil after veil,” there will continue to be other veils behind those lifted. What does this mean?
3. What is the point of the analogy that compares a shallow river to one flowing in a deep channel?
4. What are the five characteristics of devotion that the devotee directs towards the Divine as expressed in *Bhakti-Sūtra* 54?

Chapter 31

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION (Part 3)

Last month's paper pointed out that there are two classes or types of devotees. That paper considered the first class, those who are single-hearted, whose devotion is untouched by personal selfish desires. Those in the second class are also devoted, but they have an ulterior end in view. They do not love the Highest for its sake alone, but in order to gain some personal benefit through the grace that flows from it. They are spoken of in the following sutra from the *Bhakti-Sūtras* of Nārada:

Devotion associated with personal selfish desires becomes threefold according as the worshipper falls into one of the three classes—of the suffering (*ārtā*), the seekers for knowledge (*jñyāsu*), or those desirous of wealth or any other worldly object (*ārtādi*). (56)

The unselfish, single-hearted devotee has no ulterior motive, only the joy of loving. That person has no other desire except the desire to find the Highest and to become one with it. Can the mother who loves her first-born child and is prepared to sacrifice everything for its sake say why she loves that child? Can the lover who has fallen deeply in love with another, and for the time being is oblivious of all personal comforts and desires, tell what the cause of that love is?

Yet these loves in human relationships, we must remember, are only reflections of reflections. They are based to a great extent on past associations in previous lives, though behind the association is also a spiritual bond that unites one fragment of the Whole with another fragment. The personal fragments are also united by an affinity between monads that brings them together in their life in the lower worlds, in anticipation of and preparation for their loving collaboration in the vast dramas in which they will have to act in the far distant future.

If reflections of reflections can temporarily evoke such a high degree of self-abnegation in ordinary human beings immersed in the illusions and interests of the lower world, what must be the nature and intensity of that self-surrender and devotion that the devotee feels when rising above the ordinary illusions and limitations of life, to offer self and love wholeheartedly at the feet of the Highest? These are the devotees referred to in sutra 67, quoted in the last paper:

The primary (real) devotees are those who have only one end in view, or are single-hearted. (67)

Sutra 56 quoted above, referring to the kind of devotee whose motives are not quite unselfish, is important because it draws our attention to the lower stages of devotion. It

raises a number of questions about these lower stages that we must try to understand, so that we may be able to use them as stepping stones to rise higher and higher until we transcend them and reach the level of devotion referred to in sutra 67.

According to sutra 56, there are three subdivisions of devotees belonging to the second class. The subdivisions are not described in detail, but merely hinted at. We can get a better idea of them by referring to verses 16, 17, and 18 in discourse 7 of the Bhagavad Gita:

Fourfold in division are the righteous ones who worship me, O Arjuna: the suffering, the seeker for knowledge, the self-interested, and the wise.

Of these, the wise constantly harmonized, worshipping the One, is the best. I am supremely dear to the wise, and the wise is dear to me.

Noble are all these, but I hold the wise as verily myself; he, Self-united, is fixed on me, the highest Path.

Gita verse 7.16 divides the devotees into the following groups: (1) those who are involved in trouble and suffering and turn to God for help in their extremity; (2) those who seek the Highest because of their quest for knowledge, either lower knowledge or higher; (3) those who turn to a higher Power as a way of gaining objects of various kinds in this world, for their pleasure or happiness; and (4) those wise ones who seek the Highest for its own sake and not from any ulterior motive.

The fourth group of the “wise” are the unselfish, single-hearted devotees of sutra 67; and the first three groups are the three subdivisions of devotees mentioned in sutra 56. This classification is based on the Hindu doctrine of the gunas, which we will not discuss here, but is treated in some detail in discourse 14 of the Bhagavad Gita.

Now, what we are concerned with here is not simply the classification of devotees but the place of the lower stages of devotion in the life of a devotee. The lower stages of devotion are important for us because practically all of us have to start from the very lowest stage and work our way up through the various stages into the higher stage of the “wise” referred to in sutra 67. We have to remain in the lower stage of bhakti for a long time, so we should try to understand it and use it to increase the intensity of our devotion, and to free our devotion from the taint of selfishness.

You will notice that in verse 18 of discourse 7, Shri Krishna does not speak disparagingly of the three groups of devotees in the lower stages. He calls them “noble,” but naturally he says that the devotees in the fourth group, the wise ones who worship him for pure love, are dearest to him. He does not say that he will not respond to the call of those who seek him for knowledge or those who in their affliction turn to him for help,

or even those who are seeking him neither for knowledge nor for relief in their suffering, but just from purely selfish motives.

Look at this magnanimity in Krishna's response, this large-heartedness, this love that responds not only to the suffering of the afflicted, but even to the desire of people to have the nice, though illusory, pleasures of this world. I consider this kind of response the highest, really godlike in its nature. Even we, blinded by illusion and selfishness as we are, can be moved by suffering and misery, so that we respond in various degrees to a call for help, but only God and those who are godlike can respond to every sincere call for help, whatever its nature.

Nobody can remain outside the vast and loving embrace of the Divine. Just as a mother cannot refuse when a toddler wants a toy or a chocolate, so God cannot refuse when a partially developed soul wants things of this world for its satisfaction and growth. So let us be cautious, and not look down in self-righteousness upon those who are young in soul and need the ordinary pleasures of the world for their growth. Even if we are not able to meet their demands for help, we can adopt an understanding and loving attitude and not think any the less of them on this account.

Do we have any doubt about whether the Divine responds to the call of every individual for what that person desires? A law operates in human affairs to bring to everyone sooner or later what they desire. It may not be possible to have what you want immediately, but it is possible to have it ultimately, if you continue to desire it and make the necessary effort to have it. We are the children of the Most High, and therefore our will, even when it operates under illusion in the form of desire, must be respected and therefore fulfilled in the long run. We may desire the wrong things and suffer accordingly, but that does not matter. It is a part of our education and gradually makes us desire the right things, and ultimately not things at all, but only the Highest. The Highest alone is the real and is the only source of all true happiness, which we mistakenly seek through things.

But what is the real significance of these two sutras in light of what Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita about the devotees who turn to him and love him, even though with an ulterior motive? I think, this clearly indicates that we must learn to turn to him, as the embodiment or symbol of what is most important in our lives, for what we want, even though our desires are selfish in the beginning.

It is by turning our face in the direction of the Highest that we take the first step toward the Highest. It does not matter if we ask God to satisfy our ordinary desires. The mere fact that we ask an embodiment of the Highest Reality to do so means that we have started trusting that Highest and depending upon it. In such an attitude of trust and dependence lies the great secret of developing love toward the Highest around us and within us.

The more we trust and depend upon the Highest we can imagine, the more our love grows, the more our desire for ordinary things is transformed slowly and steadily into the desire for the Highest Reality, which alone can supply all our wants. There is a divine alchemy involved in this process, which we will discuss in greater detail when we consider the means of developing devotion. Among these means, *ānanyatā* or “dependence only on Him” (sutra 10) has a preeminent position.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. In addition to unselfish, single-hearted devotees, who are “wise” because they love the Highest for its own sake, there are three other groups of devotees, whose devotion is based on other motives.
2. Some are driven to seek help from a higher reality to assist them to escape from the suffering to which all are subject in this world.
3. Some are seekers for knowledge and understanding, and therefore turn to the source of all knowledge to assist them in their quest.
4. Some want the good things of this life, and believe they can obtain those things by devotion to a powerful force outside themselves.
5. Whatever we want strongly enough, we will get. (However, when we get it, we may discover that it is not what we thought it was or that it is not what we really wanted after all.)
6. None of those motives is to be despised, however, because we have to begin somewhere, and find the path to higher motives. As Plato said, all love is good because, whether we know it or not, all love is ultimately love of the Good.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the three kinds of devotees mentioned in *Bhakti-Sūtra* 56.
2. What does the author mean when he describes examples of human love as “reflections of reflections”? Reflections of what?
3. The author quotes verses 16-18 of chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gita. Why is the response of Sri Krishna to the various types of devotees described as “magnanimous”?

Chapter 32

THE MEANS OF DEVELOPING DEVOTION

Several aphorisms in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada deal with the means for developing devotion:

Single-hearted devotion toward Him and indifference to all that conflicts with Him. (9)

Single-hearted devotion toward Him means giving up all other supports. (10)

Indifference to all that conflicts with Him means righteous conduct in accordance with social, moral, and spiritual obligations. (11)

This group of three aphorisms highlights two basic requirements in treading the path of love. Verse 9 enumerates them, and the following two verses indicate their general nature.

The first requirement is phrased as “single-hearted devotion toward Him,” that is, toward God or however we conceive of the Highest. It is explained in the middle verse as giving up all other supports. These phrases could also be expressed as “complete dependence upon the Highest for everything.” The crux of this paraphrase lies in the two words “complete” and “everything.”

It is easy to depend on the Highest whenever we find it convenient to do so, but it is extremely difficult to do so completely and for everything. That is why many persons who think they are depending on God do not find any significant change in their lives. Depending on the Highest when it is convenient to do so but on yourself or others most of the time is merely expedience, using God as a convenience, as you might use anybody else and that does not work.

Of course, it is not possible to develop single-hearted devotion suddenly by just making a resolution. It is a slow process of growth and involves a “virtuous circle.” The more you trust and depend on the Highest, the more readily and completely your trust will be responded to and all your real needs and requirements fulfilled. And when you find actually that your real needs are being supplied, sometimes almost miraculously, your trust and confidence grow rapidly. And then devotion begins to well up from within your heart in sheer joy and without expecting anything in return. And your only desire is to be worthy.

We are dealing here only with general principles. Exactly how single-hearted devotion is to be developed in one’s life is a personal matter that we must each resolve for ourselves. In real spiritual life, as distinct from ordinary religious practices, there cannot be hard and fast rules followed mechanically and unintelligently. We must put our whole heart into the work, be constantly alert, experiment along different lines, and

be prepared for failures. Then only can we succeed. But if we persevere, success is bound to come ultimately for we are living in a world of immutable laws. But it is no use trying to do these things in a halfhearted or slipshod manner.

Doubt is the great enemy of spiritual progress. It undermines the edifice of our spiritual life in an insidious manner. Doubt is useful in the earlier stages of inquiry, when we must try to consider things, ponder them, test them, and then arrive at conclusions. If our efforts succeed and if we really want to enter this Path, we must purify our minds for the light of buddhi. For real faith is the irradiation of the lower mind with the light of buddhi, which gives certainty because it reflects the realities of the inner life into our minds.

The faith we are talking about is not the blind faith that comes from believing what we are told. It is rather a rational faith based on what we have experienced and concluded. When our minds are irradiated by the light of buddhi, we no longer waver between a multitude of ideas and courses of action, unable to decide which is the right one. See what Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita (4.39–40) about the doubting self and the person who has real faith:

The person who is full of faith obtains wisdom, and also has mastery over the senses; and whoever obtains wisdom goes swiftly to the Supreme Peace.

But the ignorant, faithless, doubting self goes to destruction; neither this world, nor that beyond, nor even ordinary happiness, is for the doubting self.

Though doubt affects some people particularly, all of us suffer to some extent from doubts of which we are mostly unconscious. It is these doubts that prevent us from following wholeheartedly the instructions of the Great Teachers and giving a fair trial to the methods they provide for unfolding our spiritual nature. There is a story about two men, one of whom believed that all people are skeptical. They made a bet. The one who thought people are skeptical said, "I will stand on the Brooklyn Bridge with a hundred real gold coins on a plate for fifteen minutes and try to sell them for one dollar each to any one who is prepared to buy them. If even one coin is bought, you win. If none is bought you lose." He stood at the bridge as agreed. People came, felt very much amused but thought they were too clever to be taken in. There must be a snag somewhere they thought. So not one coin was bought by any of the hundreds of people who crossed the bridge and passed by that genuine offer.

Most of us are like those people passing over the bridge. The Great Teachers of humanity, the saints and sages who have trodden the Path and reached the goal, offer us the precious truths of the spiritual life, but we do not take their offers seriously. They tell us that a stupendous Reality is hidden within our hearts and that we can realize it, if we only make the necessary effort and are prepared to sacrifice the present illusory pleasures for the eternal life that is in store for us. We pay lip homage to them, but we

do nothing or do something in a half-hearted manner. Why? Doubts are lurking in our minds.

Nothing guards a truth more effectively, making it inaccessible to most people than skepticism. That is why one of the Masters has said that the best safeguard against the misuse of esoteric knowledge and powers is the skepticism of the people who could misuse them.

The second requirement is explained in the third of the three verses above. It speaks of “righteous conduct in accordance with social, moral, and spiritual obligations.” “Righteous” is a word that is often misunderstood because it is confused with “self-righteous,” which is quite different. The word “righteous” is derived from the word “right,” and righteousness is a life lived strictly according to what we know to be right in our heart of hearts and not as seen through the veils of our desires.

“Right” may also have some mysterious connection with the Sanskrit word *rta*, which denotes the dynamic moral order that underlies the universe and according to which the universe unfolds in time and space. *Rta* determines the inherent rightness of every action. If a thing is in harmony with *rta*, it is right; if not, it is wrong. But even if we decide to regulate our life according to the dictates of righteousness, how are we to determine what is right under a particular set of circumstances? There are no mechanical rules that can guide us in this matter. The only way we can find out what is right is through the light of buddhi, the spiritual consciousness in touch with *rta*.

Here again, is a “virtuous circle.” The more we live according to what we see as right, the more correctly and easily we can see what is right. And the more we are able to see correctly what is right by the light of buddhi, the easier it is for us to translate that perception into right action. This is the only way in which true righteousness can be acquired and made a part of our nature so that we do the right without struggle, without hesitation, and even without effort. Of course, in the beginning we have to follow certain well-defined rules. This kind of discipline purifies our mind and enables the light of buddhi to begin to irradiate it, but we cannot depend on rules alone—we have to depend ultimately on our intuition.

Those who have no eye to the fruits of their actions do the divine will in everything and truly become free of the influence of the pairs of opposites. (48)

This important verse deals with action, how to perform actions and yet be not bound by their karmic effects. As Shri Krishna has pointed out in the Bhagavad Gita, no one can remain without action even for a moment, for action in its widest sense includes our desires and thoughts. Whatever action we do produces tendencies to act in that same way in the future. So this process appears to be an unending one, a sort of vicious

circle that binds us to the wheel of births and deaths and all the illusions and limitations that are part of this wheel. Is there then no way out of this vicious circle?

A way exists, and it is indicated in the verse cited above. The method not only frees us from the binding effect of our actions, but also develops our devotion and makes us a conscious instrument of the Divine Life. It also frees us from the influence of the pairs of opposites, which cause constant disturbance in our minds. What we are dealing with in this verse is Karma Yoga, a preparation and indispensable basis for all advanced systems of Yoga. Unless we learn the techniques of acting without binding ourselves continuously in a series of causes and effects, we have no hope of becoming free.

The thing that binds us is not so much what we do, as why we do it. Every conscious action has a motive. We can substitute for lower, selfish motives a higher, unselfish motive. This is the technique called in Sanskrit *nishkāma-karma*, literally “desireless action.” *Nishkāma-karma* is not motiveless action, or even action without any desires. It is rather action without the *lower* desires of the personality, which can be satisfied only in the lower worlds. There has to be a motive and a desire behind every action, but if this motive-desire is spiritual, it does not bind us. Consider the first six aphorisms in *Light on the Path*:

- Kill out ambition.
- Kill out desire of life.
- Kill out desire of comfort.
- Kill out all sense of separateness.
- Kill out desire for sensation.
- Kill out the hunger for growth.

They are followed by another set of six aphorisms:

- Desire only that which is within you.
- Desire only that which is beyond you.
- Desire only that which is unattainable.
- Desire power ardently.
- Desire peace fervently.
- Desire possessions above all.

The first set of desires are desires of the personality whereas the second set of desires are those of the spiritual Individuality or the Higher Self. It is not all desires that have to be eliminated, but only lower desires. You may even desire power and possessions, but these must pertain to the pure Soul or the Higher Self.

What motive or desire has to be substituted for the lower personal desires that are generally at the back of our actions, to destroy their potentiality for producing future karma? The Bhagavad Gita, which is about the Path of Devotion, is quite clear in answering that question. Everything we do is to be done in service of the Highest,

dedicated as an offering. This change of motive stops the production of karma. But that is not all.

Offering all your actions all day long can become a continuous state of adoration that brings down divine grace in response and makes your devotion grow immensely. Many people think of “desireless action” as a dry, dreary performance of duty and, therefore, shrink from it. They do not realize that for the real devotee, it is a joyful offering of one’s life. It is a perpetual feast of love if there is real love in our heart. It takes out from our life all the apathy, frustration, and dullness from which most people suffer, so that we can do the dullest and most unpleasant work with a song in our heart if we feel that we are doing it for the Highest.

And as this process continues, you find a very subtle change coming about within yourself. You find yourself becoming more and more an instrument of life and love. You find that through you is going out power, love, and help to those among whom and for whom you work, *irrespective of yourself*. You become a mere channel, but through that channel flows divine life and love. And then comes another realization at a still higher stage. You find that it is He who is seated within your heart and directing all your actions. He has always been doing this but in your egoism and false consciousness of being the actor, you did not realize it and put all kinds of obstacles in His way and obstructed the flow of His power and love. But now you know, and you surrender yourself completely to that direction and flow from within. He rules within you now and you are happy to be His instrument. This is the consummation of Karma Yoga.

Devotion develops on renouncing objects and attachment to them. (35)

This verse points out the need to free our minds from attachments to all kinds of objects in the world. This need bothers many people, for it seems to imply that they have to give up things they consider necessary for their comfort or pleasure. Certainly a mind that is attached to a thousand and one things is hardly of any use as an instrument in the divine adventure of Self-discovery. Those things will keep the mind pinned down to the lower world in spite of our aspiration and desire to free ourselves from its limitations.

But does the attachment of the mind depend on the number of things by which we are surrounded and to which we are attached? Is a person who has a hundred things necessarily more attached than one who has only ten? Is a beggar who has nothing unattached? Obviously not. Our attachment to this world does not depend upon the number of things around us, but on how well we see the world and its problems in their correct perspective and without the illusions that desire weaves round our worldly possessions and pursuits. It is our state of mind that is the most important factor, not the things around us.

If discrimination has been adequately developed, we will not surround ourselves with unnecessary things that involve waste of time and energy, first in acquiring them and then in maintaining them. But sometimes karma puts us in circumstances where these things come our way naturally and sometimes in spite of ourselves. Or our work may require the use of many things which may appear unnecessary to others. To denude ourselves of these things with the idea that merely doing so will make us less attached is a false hope.

The fact is that external things are really immaterial. What matters is the love in our heart, the discrimination that sees the illusions of life clearly, and the consequent determination to overcome these illusions. When the light of discrimination is shining through our minds and the love of the Divine is filling our hearts, it does not really matter how we live and what we possess in the physical world. We then consider ourselves merely as stewards and are prepared to leave everything whenever circumstances make this necessary to do so.

So the real problem is to acquire the right attitude. We may need to renounce certain things to disburden ourselves and to develop the correct attitude. But we must keep our minds fixed on the inner attitudes and not rely on external changes in our environment to help us or fear that they will hinder us. External things do not matter at all. They sometimes engender a false sense of security and even pride and lull us to sleep in the spiritual sense. But their mere lack will not give us security either, or awaken us to reality.

Love towards those who are near and dear to us, if it is not associated with discrimination, can also be a cause of bondage. In fact this kind of love generally exercises a far more powerful attraction and can bind us more firmly to the lower worlds than inanimate things. What are we to do with these loves that we have developed during the course of our evolution through repeated association life after life with particular souls? Are we to kill out those loves as many pseudo-Vedantists advocate?

The problem is how to preserve and develop the germs of love in our personal relationships and yet not allow them to become fetters. It is through these personal loves that our capacity to love has developed, and to kill them out would really be a retrograde step, making us less sensitive and less fitted to tread the Path that leads to Liberation. Obviously, this is a wrong approach, and here again the key lies in discrimination. We must love, but we must love wisely.

What is wrong with ordinary human love is not the love itself but the attachment to the personality to such an extent that it affects the freedom of our minds and biases our judgment. So we have to adjust our attitude towards people whom we love so that we preserve the love intact and yet not allow it to become a fetter. This is difficult as all adjustments which require the use of our intelligence are difficult. It is much easier, in

developing nonattachment, to kill out all such loves and make ourselves hard and insensitive. But in doing that, we run the risk of straying from the right-hand path.

The solution to this problem is the development of awareness of our oneness with the Divine Life that enables us to see God in everything and everything in God. For, when as a result of this awareness, a great Love is born in our hearts, all smaller loves fall into their proper places and are seen and felt against the background of that great Love. Once a disciple asked the Buddha whether he still loved his son. The Buddha replied in the affirmative, and as the disciple appeared somewhat confused, he said, "The greater Love contains the lesser love." That is the secret of loving wisely—the capacity to see all loves, even personal loves, as reflections of that all-embracing Love that binds together all living creatures. So do not worry too much about personal loves. Let us concentrate all our effort on the development of that greater Love. When we succeed in doing that even to a limited extent, the problem of our personal loves will be solved, automatically and naturally.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. We develop devotion by having confidence that the intelligence of the universe will do all things well and by always acting rightly.
2. Right action is action not for personal benefit but to serve others and thereby also our Higher Selves, which is what "desireless action" really means.
3. Possessions and human loves are in themselves no problem, provided we respond to them within the context of the greatest Good, the love of the Highest.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we first begin to place our trust in the One and develop single-hearted devotion towards the Divine?
2. How is it that doubt can serve a useful purpose in the early stages of the spiritual Path but later becomes a most serious impediment to progress?
3. The second requirement in treading the path of life is "righteous conduct in accordance with social, moral, and spiritual obligations." Explain what this means using your own words.
4. How does *rational faith* differ from *blind faith*?

5. What is meant by a “virtuous circle,” and how does it relate to the path of devotion?
6. What is the “vicious circle” that binds us to the wheel of death and rebirth?
7. “Kill out desire for life.” “Desire only that which is beyond you.” Can you explain these seemingly contradictory statements taken from *Light on the Path* and how they might relate to the path of devotion?
8. Why do we want to strive towards “*Nishkama-karma*”? What specific steps can you take to begin to practice this in your own life?

Chapter 33

SAMADHI: THE ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUE OF YOGA

The *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali is a book of 196 sutras or aphorisms, divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals generally with the nature of Raja (“Royal”) Yoga and its technique, the essential element of which is *samadhi*. Even though *samadhi* is difficult to understand, because of its importance it is dealt with in the very first chapter of the Yoga Sutras.

The second chapter deals with the problem of human limitations, illusions, and consequent miseries (called the *kleshas*) and with a general method of freeing the human soul from these afflictions. It also deals with the preliminary preparation for leading the Yogic life and the first five of the eight parts of the technique into which the system of Patanjali is divided. It is the most important chapter for the beginner.

The third chapter deals with the purely mental practices that culminate in *samadhi* and the accomplishments that are possible through the successful practice of *samadhi*. These latter include not only the psychic powers of Yoga (called *siddhis* in Sanskrit), but the final liberation of consciousness from the limitations and illusions of the mind (*kaivalya*).

The fourth chapter deals with the philosophy and the psychology of Yoga in a general way and also with the final stages of Yogic technique leading to Self-realization or liberation.

The book covers all the problems involved in Self-discovery and Self-realization by means of Raja Yoga, presented in the form of aphorisms (*sūtras*), whose understanding needs careful thought and reflection.

The technique of Raja Yoga deals with the self-directed last stages of human evolution, which culminate in liberation or the transcendence of all human limitations and illusions. So we cannot expect either the theoretical study of this technique or its practical application to be easy. We may not be able to put the whole technique into practical use immediately, but since it gives us a general idea of the whole field of endeavor, we should master as much of it as we can and try gradually to apply it in practical ways, as our interest in the subject grows and our capacities increase. Raja Yoga is the “Royal Road” to our true home, so we should know it at least theoretically even though we still have a long way to go.

Here we cover only the general idea of the subject by looking at some of the most significant sutras. Another book, *The Science of Yoga*, deals with all the sutras in a

systematic way, so those who want to make a thorough study of the subject can consult that commentary or other books dealing with the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali.

THE NATURE OF YOGA

The first sutra we examine here is a well-known one that concisely defines the nature of Yoga:

Yoga is quieting the modifications of the mind. (1.2)

One cannot really understand the significance of this sutra just by knowing the meaning of its words. We have to master the whole book before we can fully grasp what this aphorism means, that is, we need to understand the technique of Yoga as a whole. In the beginning, we have to be content with understanding the general meaning of the sutra and not worry too much about its deeper significance until we have gone through the whole book.

We can start to understand this aphorism with a simple example. Suppose you have a glass tank full of clear water. Suspended in the water is a light bulb of a hundred watts and also a small engine that can churn the water at various speeds. As long as the water is perfectly still, you will see the lighted bulb clearly and you will not see the water. Suppose, however, you start the motor and let the water be churned with a gradually increasing speed. What will happen as a result of this agitation in the water? The moment the water begins to get agitated, the bulb is not seen as it is actually but rather in a distorted form. The greater the agitation, the more distorted the bulb appears, and at the same time, the water which was invisible before and did not assimilate any light from the bulb begins to reflect the light and becomes more and more visible.

As you increase the speed of the motor the agitation increases and patterns begin to appear in the water, forming and dissolving rapidly in succession. The temporary patterns produced in the water are visible because they have assimilated some of the light issuing from the bulb. They do not shine by their own light but with light borrowed from the bulb. If the speed of the motor is increased still further, increasing the agitation, the patterns become so numerous and dense that they completely blot out the bulb from view. You do not see the bulb at all. You see only the patterns in the water that are forming and disappearing in rapid succession and are shining with the light from the bulb, which itself is invisible.

Now reverse the process and let the speed of the motor decrease gradually so that the agitation in the water slowly subsides. The patterns become less dense and gradually, as the speed decreases, the bulb begins to come into view, although still in a distorted form. When the motor is stopped and the water is again perfectly still, the

bulb is seen without distortion, the patterns having disappeared and the water having become again invisible.

The water in the tank is like our mind; the light bulb is like the consciousness that functions through the mind; and the agitated patterns of the water are like the constantly changing modifications of the mind. Those modifications (called *citta-vrttis* in Sanskrit) obscure Reality and hide our true divine nature from us. If they are quieted and the mind is made utterly calm, it becomes transparent, and we become aware of the Reality that is always shining at the center of our consciousness. This is the state of Self-realization.

Although the process of removing the agitations and obscurations of the mind and becoming aware of the underlying Reality appears quite simple in principle, it is not so in practice. The strong tendencies present in the mind, the momentum of the past, impressions in the form of our conditioning and karma—these slow down the transformations that have to be brought about in our vehicles before the light can shine unobscured. That is why a long period of discipline and practice of Yogic techniques is necessary, and the simple, easy methods that are sometimes advocated do not work. The result is sure, if we work for it in the right way, but we must be prepared to pay the price in the form of effort and sacrifice.

Another point to note is that the mind shines with the light of Reality and is not self-illuminated. Reality is like the sun; the mind is like the moon. The mind absorbs the light of Reality hidden within it and thereby imparts the feeling of reality we have in our individual world of mental images. Our mental world, which is the world in which we really live, would be dead if the light of Reality did not illuminate and energize it.

The consciousness of the monad (the light bulb) is assimilated by and disappears in the modifications of the mind only in the realm of manifestation. On its own plane it remains Self-aware just as the electric light bulb remains shining even in the agitated state of water, when its light partially disappears in the water and the bulb cannot be seen from outside.

THE TECHNIQUE OF YOGA

The technique employed in Yoga to unveil Reality is a unified awareness called “samadhi,” which is the very heart and essence of Yoga. All other Yogic practices are preliminary or preparatory. The word “samadhi” denotes the highest state of meditation, in which there is awareness only of the object of meditation and not of the mind itself. It is preceded by two other stages: concentration (*dhāranā*) and contemplation (*dhyāna*). The Yogi begins with concentration. When concentration has become perfected, it changes into contemplation, and when contemplation is perfected it changes

into the unified awareness of samadhi. So the three constitute one continuous process of increasing depth of concentration as defined in the first three aphorisms of chapter 3:

Concentration is the confining of the mind within a limited mental area [defined by the object of concentration]. (3.1)

Uninterrupted flow [of the mind] towards the object [chosen for meditation] is contemplation. (3.2)

The same [state of contemplation] when there is consciousness only of the object of meditation and the consciousness of the mind itself has disappeared is unified awareness or samadhi. (3.3)

Concentration, contemplation, and unified awareness are the three progressive states of meditation. To understand the essential nature of the third state of samadhi, we can turn to aphorism 41 of chapter 1:

In the case of one whose mental modifications (*citta-vrttis*) have been almost annihilated, fusion or entire absorption in one another of the cognizer, cognition, and cognized is brought about, as in the case of a transparent jewel [resting on a colored surface].

This is a rather enigmatic aphorism, but it illustrates the state of samadhi very effectively by the example of a transparent jewel. Samadhi is the technique of becoming fully aware of the reality of any object, using the word "object" in the widest sense as anything that can be perceived by the mind. That awareness is "knowing by becoming," that is, the mind transforms itself into the very nature of the object to be realized. Ordinary perception is based on a subject-object relationship, in which there is present a triplicity of cognizer, cognition, and cognized; but the full awareness of samadhi is based on a fusion of the three into one integrated state of awareness. These ideas are illustrated by the example of a transparent jewel.

Let us consider a variation on the example of the transparent jewel. Suppose you have a beautiful painting spread out on a table, and you cover up this painting with a slab of variegated, mottled, opaque glass. The painting will disappear beneath the opaque glass and none of its parts will be clearly visible to an observer looking at it from above. Now imagine that you have a treatment to make any *part* of the opaque glass gradually transparent. So you mark out a circle on the top of the glass slab and apply this treatment to the area within the circle. Gradually the portion of the opaque glass below the circle becomes less and less opaque and finally becomes quite transparent.

The portion of the painting beneath that transparent part of the glass comes into view and is clearly visible, the rest remaining still hidden. The glass is still there over the entire painting, but one part of it has been assimilated by your eyes with the now

visible portion of the painting beneath it. You can mark out another circle on the slab and by repeating the process bring another portion of the painting into view. Each part of the glass that loses its blocking and distorting power disappears from your vision over the corresponding portion of the painting and assumes, as it were, the form of the painting, even though the glass has not disappeared but is still there. Each part of the glass that ceases to block and distort assumes the color, form, and beauty of the portion of the painting over which it lies and reveals that portion by becoming one with it.

Because you are treating different parts of the glass slab, you bring to light different portions of the painting, and thus the process is selective. And because the glass was variegated and mottled, the “individuality” of any part of it depended on the obstructions that made it opaque. One part of the opaque glass differed from another in having varying amounts and arrangements of obstructing material. But when it loses those obstructions, it becomes pure transparent glass that is the same in every part of it. Without those obstructions, it really ceases to have any separate existence of its own although it still exists. So we may say metaphorically that the assimilation of the glass with the picture depends upon the opaque glass losing its “individuality” or “I-ness.” This example illustrates the process of “knowing by becoming.”

MEDITATING WITH AND WITHOUT ATTRIBUTES

There are two kinds of unified awareness: that with attributes (*sabīja samādhi*) and that without attributes (*nirbīja samādhi*). In the former, the object is not to become aware of Reality itself, but a more limited one, namely, to become aware of the reality hidden within a particular object, whatever it may be. That is why a particular object is selected for the practice of meditation (*samyama*), and it is the reality behind that object which is revealed by meditation.

The reality of all manifested objects is present in the Universal Mind or the Divine Mind, which has “ideated” our particular manifested system in all its diversity. So when we select an object for performing meditation in order to discover the reality that lies behind it, we are really marking out on the glass slab the particular area of the picture that we want to see, the particular aspect of the Universal Mind that we want to “know by becoming.”

The Universal Mind, which contains the realities of all manifested objects, corresponds to the whole painting. Our mind corresponds to the opaque slab of glass. The object on which we concentrate corresponds to an area we have marked out on the slab. And the process of meditating on the particular object corresponds to the treatment of the opaque glass in that particular part to make it transparent so that it may reveal the corresponding portion of the painting. As the glass of our mind becomes less and less opaque, we begin to see the reality behind the particular object on which we are

meditating more and more clearly until the glass in that portion becomes quite clear and the reality of the object that was hidden in that particular area of the Universal Mind is revealed in its fullness.

It is like being in a circular hall situated among magnificent mountains with beautiful scenery all around. The hall has small windows on all sides, but they are closed. You open one window and a beautiful panorama in front of the window comes into view. You close that window and open another, and another panorama comes into view. You can repeat this process and get different glimpses of the surrounding landscape, one by one, by opening one window after another. In meditation, we open different windows of our mind on the landscape of the Universal Mind and get glimpses of the realities hidden behind different objects that we select for concentration.

The process considered above deals with realizations of a limited nature, namely of the realities corresponding to particular objects. But what about Reality itself? That is our final goal, rather than the realities hidden behind particular manifested objects. How is that Reality revealed within our consciousness? For that revelation we have to go deeper into our mind. In fact, we have to go beyond the realm of the mind into the realm of Reality itself.

In samadhi with attributes, we make our individual mind one with the Universal Mind with regard to particular realities, and by this unification we know what is present in the Universal Mind. But the Universal Mind is not Reality. It is the product of Divine Ideation. It comes out of Reality by differentiation into Self and Not-Self just as a picture comes out of the consciousness of an artist whose mind imagines it. We have to go beyond the Universal Mind to reach Reality itself. We have to go beyond Divine Ideation and become one with the Ideator or the Ultimate Subject, in order to know that Subject in its real nature.

That process is the technique of meditation without attributes (*nirbija samādhi*), which is described not in the first but in the last chapter of the *Yoga Sūtras*. Here we discuss one aphorism in that chapter because it throws light on the nature of meditation without attributes and its distinction from meditation with attributes:

Knowledge of its own nature through self-cognition [is obtained] when consciousness assumes that form in which it does not pass from place to place. (4.22)

This aphorism is very illuminating but to understand it we have to use another kind of simile that brings out the inner significance of the aphorism.

Suppose you have an electric light bulb at the center of a number of concentric globes of glass that are translucent and therefore progressively decrease the light that radiates from the bulb. The light becomes dimmer and dimmer as it passes through the successive globes, and therefore the outermost globe appears almost dark compared

with the brilliant light of the bulb itself because the intervening globes have absorbed most of the light. Suppose further that not only are the globes translucent but they have different kinds of designs and pictures engraved or painted on them so that the light shining through a particular globe illuminates the particular pictures engraved on it.

Now suppose you remove these globes one by one, beginning with the outermost. As each globe is removed, the light will become stronger and a new globe with its own particular pictorial designs will come into view. Every time you remove a globe, the next one coming into view will have a new picture that is better lighted than the last one. If you continue this process until you have removed the last globe, only the electric bulb shining with its own brilliant light will remain.

As long as the globes are in place, the light radiating from the bulb illuminates them. When all the globes have been removed, the light illuminates the electric bulb itself. The same thing happens with consciousness, which is hidden beneath the different levels of the mind, the outermost being our physical brain consciousness. As long as there is a mind to illuminate, it illuminates that, for the mind functions by the light of buddhi and is not self-illuminative like Reality. When all the levels of the mind have been transcended in the various stages of samadhi and all the vehicles of the monad have been left behind, what can the light of its consciousness illuminate? There is no mind to illuminate, so it must illuminate itself, for it is self-illuminative and does not depend upon anything else for its light. This self-illumination is the process of samadhi without attributes referred to in the aphorism above. It leads to Self-realization and the consummation of the technique of Yoga.

The aphorism describes the ascension of consciousness through the various planes in the several stages of samadhi, dealt with in aphorism 17 of chapter 1 (quoted below). When it reaches the atmic plane, the highest plane in the manifested system, only one barrier or thin veil has been left. Here we reach a peculiar situation. In the intermediate stages, there was always a further deeper level of the mind to dive into. But here we have reached the barrier that separates the subtlest realm of the mind from the realm of Reality. So the result of any further diving deeper into consciousness can mean only diving into Reality, which means Self-realization.

Then we come to another aspect of samadhi, the last we can deal with in this brief survey. It is the difference between unified awareness with knowledge of objects (*samprajñāta samādhi*) and unified awareness without knowledge of objects (*asamprajñāta samādhi*), which is hinted at in aphorisms 17 and 18 of chapter 1:

Samprajñāta samādhi is that which is accompanied by reasoning, reflection, bliss, and sense of pure being. (1.17)

The remnant impression left in the mind on dropping the object of concentration after previous practice of [*samprajñāta samādhi*] is the other [*asamprajñāta samādhi*]. (1.18)

In samadhi the intensity of concentration goes on increasing as it dives deeper and deeper into the object of concentration. The mind contains nothing else but the object on which it is concentrating and which it seeks to know. It reaches the utmost limit it can and finds it can go no further. All the aspects of the object on which it is meditating have been exhausted. Here it has to remain poised in an extremely concentrated condition. It can neither recede nor go forward.

At this stage the object of concentration is dropped and the mind remains in its concentrated condition, poised in a vacuum, as it were. Its retreat to any external sources of contact has been cut off by the intense concentration of *samprajñāta samādhi*. So the only way to go is through its center into the next higher plane, where a new world dawns on the horizon of consciousness. This new world reveals a deeper aspect of the object of concentration in a higher dimension.

The process of samadhi with an object occupying the field of consciousness is called *samprajñāta samādhi* or samadhi with consciousness and also an object. The process in which the object is dropped in consciousness is called *asamprajñāta samādhi* or samadhi with consciousness but no object. This is only one step in the diving process. The process has to be repeated over and over again on different planes until the atomic plane is reached. Further diving, as observed above, leads us into the realm of Reality itself.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali present the techniques of Raja Yoga in aphorisms, organized into four chapters, the first of which deals with the essential element of samadhi.
2. Yoga is defined as “quieting the modifications of the mind.” Those modifications, the busy thoughts that constantly pass through our minds, obscure the clear light of consciousness.
3. Meditation has three stages: concentration (focusing the mind on one object rather than many), contemplation (regarding that one object continuously), unified awareness or samadhi (becoming completely absorbed with that object).
4. Samadhi with attributes is becoming aware of the reality within any particular object; samadhi without attributes is becoming directly aware of Ultimate Reality itself.

5. Samadhi with knowledge of objects is unified awareness of an object in the field of consciousness; samadhi without knowledge of objects is consciousness having no object.

QUESTIONS

1. The *Yoga-Sūtras* is a book of aphorisms to be studied and not read. What value may the deep study of “Raja Yoga” (Kingly or Royal Path) have for the student?
2. What are the *citta-vrttis* that are mentioned in the *Yoga-Sūtras*?
3. Name and define the three progressive stages of Yoga practices.
4. Is the mind completely still during concentration (as defined in 3.3 of the *Yoga-Sūtras*) and if not, how does its movement differ from a mind that is moving about from one subject to another?
5. Explain “knowing by becoming.”
6. Describe the difference between *nirbija samadhi* and *sabija samadhi*.
7. Explain the following: *samprajnata samadhi* and *asamprajnata samadhi*.

Chapter 34

PREPARATION FOR YOGA (Part 1)

What the preceding chapter said about the nature of samadhi and the subtle mental processes connected with it might suggest that the practice of Yoga is not meant for the ordinary person. Readers might conclude that they can make, at best, only a theoretical study of the subject and must postpone its practical application to their own lives for some future incarnation when the conditions are more favorable and their mental and spiritual faculties have developed more fully.

That impression, though natural, is based on a misconception. Those who formulated the philosophy of Yoga and devised its elaborate technique were not ignorant of the weaknesses of human nature and the limitations and illusions under which ordinary people live. Those first teachers of Yoga would not have pointed out the need for us to free ourselves from limitations, and then have given us a method of doing so that is beyond our capacity. They knew the difficulties, but they also knew that these difficulties can be overcome by adopting a gradual course of training that accords with the laws of human growth and evolution.

Achieving any worthwhile object requires a systematic procedure and prolonged and strenuous effort. If I want to become a mathematician, I begin with the rules of arithmetic and gradually work my way from there. I do not start by attending courses on differential and integral calculus in a university. But when it comes to achieving the highest object of human effort, people forget common sense and experience. They begin to worry about the difficulty of practicing samadhi and wonder how soon they will be able to rise to the highest states of consciousness. Either they do not start at all, or they become disillusioned and give up, thinking either that there is nothing to Yoga or that they are incapable of it. But if we do not begin and persevere, we will never reach the end.

Yoga, like all other sciences, can be mastered by a gradual course of training. We begin with simple things that everyone can do and proceed, step by step, to more complex practices. Here we will deal with some preliminary practices that prepare us for Yoga.

The following verse from the *Yoga-Sūtras* gives in a nutshell the general outline of the preliminary training to lay a sound foundation for a yogic life.

Discipline, study, and devotion to the Divine are the path to Yoga. (2.1)

This verse sets out three different types of activity (discipline, study, and devotion) to develop the three fundamental aspects of human nature: will, intellect and love.

Intellectual knowledge lays the foundation of yogic life by preparing an adequate theoretical background. Developing love or devotion and the transformation and purification of life that it produces adds wisdom to knowledge. And then by applying spiritual will to control the modifications of the mind, the person who practices Yoga passes from wisdom to Self-Realization and Liberation.

These three types of activity constitute a real beginning of the Yogic life, and the speed with which we move from a preparatory to an advanced stage of progress depends on how we use them. If we are energetic and earnest, within a short time we can acquire a grip over our lower nature and by that concentration of purpose become fit to take up the more advanced practices of higher Yoga. Discipline, study, and devotion (or, to use their Sanskrit names, *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *Īśvara-pranidhāna*) appear to be mysterious practices, but there is nothing mysterious about them.

Tapas is generally translated “austerity,” but that gives a wrong impression. The Sanskrit word is derived from the root *tap*, which means “to heat to a high temperature.” If impure gold is heated to a high temperature, all its impurities are gradually burned out and only the pure metal remains. That is the essential idea behind *tapas*, which broadly means disciplining our lower nature to purify it, removing all the dross of weaknesses and impurities, so that our body and mind become obedient to our will and can serve as efficient instruments of the higher self.

Tapas is thus the transmutation of the lower into the higher nature by a process of self-discipline. Austerities of various kinds may be used if they are necessary, but they are not an essential part of the process. Purification and control can be brought about by more intelligent and effective methods than by observing rigid vows or subjecting the body to unnecessary discomforts and suffering. We must use our own individual methods intelligently.

Svādhyāya, literally “self-study,” is an intensive study of the problems of life so that we understand their nature, causes, and cures. But this study must draw out knowledge from within ourselves so that we become independent of external aids. It should be at a deeper level than merely gathering second-hand information from books. The main purpose of “self-study” is to unlock the doors of real knowledge within us and develop the capacity to draw on that knowledge whenever it is needed.

We are likely to forget that all knowledge is really within us in the Universal Mind and that we can draw on this knowledge by opening up the passage between the lower and the higher mind. This is intellectual knowledge, but it is much superior to ordinary second-hand knowledge from books or observation because it comes from a higher source and is free from the uncertainties and distortions of indirect knowledge derived by the concrete mind from external sources. So all practices like reflection, meditation, and the repetition of aphorisms (*japa*) that open up the channel between the lower and

the higher mind are techniques of “self-study” that we can use as our interests and abilities grow.

Īśvara-pranidhāna is usually translated “self-surrender to God.” It is really a method of developing devotion, which was treated in an earlier chapter. It requires practice, sincerity, and an indomitable determination to succeed. Devotion does not appear in us easily. We are tested and tried to the utmost limit, and that testing may throw us into despair. But when devotion does appear, it transforms our life and fills us with such joy and exaltation that the sacrifices, efforts, and sufferings we have gone through are nothing compared with the blessing we have received and the grace that has descended on us.

This verse, of only five words in Sanskrit, gives a comprehensive method of preparing ourselves for the higher stages of Yogic life. It covers practically every aspect of our nature; and if the methods hinted at in its triple discipline are followed, they will not only transform our lower nature and bodies into a fitting instrument of the higher self but also open up new vistas of achievement and unlock hidden energies and potentialities that we hardly suspect are within us.

SUMMARY

1. The practice of Yoga, which may seem very difficult, begins with three simple types of activity:
2. Discipline, which is not practicing austerities, but regulating our lives so that we can connect with our higher self.
3. Study, which is not acquiring facts from books, but understanding the nature, causes, and cure of life’s problems.
4. Devotion, which is coming into touch with a Reality beyond our limited selves.

QUESTIONS

1. Should we wait to apply the practice of Yoga in our lives after conditions are more favorable and convenient? Why or why not?
2. Describe the three preparatory steps of Yoga.
3. How have you applied *tapas* in your own life?
4. What is the deeper meaning of *Svadyaya* in the preparatory stage of Yoga?
5. What does *Iśvara-pranidhana* mean to you?

Chapter 35

PREPARATION FOR YOGA (Part 2)

If we start practicing the things we have learned, life will be transformed immediately for us and we will then cease to wonder whether it is possible to practice samadhi and whether we are capable of so developing love that we can achieve some measure of union with the object of our devotion. Take again the example of a student who determines to become a great mathematician. That student starts by doing problems in ordinary arithmetic, and from them springs an interest in mathematics. It is pointless in the beginning to worry about integral and differential calculus, which will come later on in due course. Although keeping the final goal in his mind all the time, the student does not waste time and energy thinking about things that are of no immediate concern. The work the student is engaged with at the present moment is so absorbing and interesting that it is enough for the time being.

Creative work of any kind gives joy to life, and the transformation of our nature by methods of preparatory Yoga is creative work of the highest order, more real and more dynamic than painting a picture or making a statue. Painters and sculptors create works that represent life out of comparatively dead material, pigment and stone. The person who brings the image of the real Self out of the lower nature is evoking living spirit from living matter. A life problem is being solved. A living picture of what we are to be in the future is being painted. A new statue embodying our future perfection is being chiseled out of the rough marble block of our lower nature.

The process of divine creativity in this work transforms our life into a song in spite of the troubles and tribulations through which we may be passing in the periphery of our consciousness in the external world. It is like the living process of a bud opening into a flower with all the natural joy that is always present in such natural unfolding processes. We are bringing the future into the present. We are becoming what we are. We do not know what the statue is going to be like but our innermost Self knows, and we feel its guiding hand as we take up the chisel in our hand and start shaping the marble block of our crude nature.

Artists know the joy of painting a picture or writing a poem. All of us can know the greater joy of bringing forth the living divine image that is our hidden potential. This living thing that gradually emerges from within is a Divine being of infinite potential that becomes more and more a vehicle of divine love, knowledge, and power. The completed image may be still in the future, unseen and unknown, but it is the creative work of the present that brings it into existence and imparts the joy and enthusiasm to the work in preparatory Yoga.

In this work, age does not matter, circumstances do not matter, even death does not matter. The work can go on continuously even after death if we are set in that direction, for our object or goal is within us and will always remain with us, wherever we are. All external things like age and circumstances belong to the phenomenal world, but when we have begun this work, we have hitched our wagon to the eternal Star of our soul, hidden within us and guiding us to itself. This joyous work is what preparatory Yoga potentially means and can actually mean to anyone who takes it up in earnest.

The second chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* gives an idea about the nature of the preparation that is necessary for the advanced practice of Yoga, and it also outlines very systematically and logically the philosophy on which its technique is based. The philosophy of Yoga is sometimes said to be derived from the philosophy of Sankhya, one of the six major systems of Hindu philosophy. There is no doubt that Yoga resembles the Sankhya system of philosophy, though there are fundamental differences that have made many scholars doubt whether there is any real connection between the two.

When two systems of philosophy have come down to us from the distant past and have existed side by side for thousands of years, it is very difficult to decide about their origin, which is of interest mainly to the academic philosopher. To most people such questions are not of much importance. What they are interested in is the practical technique that has withstood the test of time for thousands of years and can be used with confidence. The philosophy of Yoga provides an adequate basis for the technique of Yoga, and that is what matters most.

The theory on which an experimental science is based is important for correlating and integrating the techniques into a coherent whole, but the theory does not change the effectiveness of the techniques. For a long time electricity was used for many practical purposes although the theory of electricity was incomplete and unsatisfactory. If the theory of electricity we now hold is found in the future to be untenable, the practical use of electricity in industry and our daily lives will not change. That is true also for the philosophy of Yoga. Although it is a magnificent and reasonable philosophy, its validity does not affect the usefulness of Yoga as a technique for unveiling the deeper mysteries of Life and discovering Reality within ourselves.

With that caveat, we will make a broad overview of the philosophy on which the Yogic technique of Patanjali is based. This philosophy is outlined in the second chapter, step by step, in twenty-six sutras, from the third to the twenty-eighth.

The philosophy starts with the problem of human miseries, limitations, and illusions, in which all human beings, with very few exceptions, are involved. The sutra that sums up this fact of human life is 2.15. Freely translated, it states:

To people who have developed discrimination, all is misery on account of the pains resulting from change, anxiety, and tendencies, as also on account of the conflicts between the natural tendencies that they find prevailing in their nature, thoughts, and desires at a particular period of time.

Some people will be inclined to consider this statement as sweepingly pessimistic, but we have considered this question very thoroughly in a previous chapter and need not go into it again. All the great Teachers of the world have started from this basic fact of human life, and we may therefore assume the correctness of the statement.

The next question is this: Assuming that there is all-pervading misery in human life, is it possible to avoid or get rid of this misery? The answer to this question in sutra 2.16 is unequivocal:

The misery that has not yet come can and is to be avoided.

That is the kind of answer a true philosophy of life should give. What is the use of a philosophy that points out the miseries and limitations of life but offers no release from them? And yet, many of our modern philosophies are like that. They raise questions but leave them unanswered.

After asserting that the miseries of life can be avoided or transcended, the philosophy proceeds to analyze the cause of the misery. Here is another proof of its thoroughness and effectiveness. If you are suffering from any disease or malady, you can deal with it in two ways. Either you can apply palliatives that will remove the unpleasant symptoms of the disease temporarily and partially, or you can adopt the more effective and sensible course of going to the cause of the malady and removing it. Only in the second way can we root out the disease completely and forever. The philosophy of Yoga adopts the latter course. Yoga goes to the root cause of human suffering and limitations and suggests a remedy that removes the cause of the disease and therefore cures the disease completely and finally.

The cause of human suffering is a chain of causes and effects with five links called *kleshas* (literally "afflictions"). The first link is *avidya* (literally "unwisdom") or root ignorance of what we are, where we have come from, and why we are here. The second link is *asmita* (literally "I-am-ness") or the identification of pure consciousness (which is free, self-sufficient, and self-existent) with the paraphernalia through which it manifests when it gets involved in manifestation. The third and fourth links are *raga* (literally "color" or "passion") and *dvesa* (literally "hatred"), the attractions and repulsions of various kinds that arise as a result of our identifying consciousness with its vehicles and environment. The last link is the final effect of this chain of causes and effects: *abhinivesha*, an instinctive clinging to worldly life and bodily enjoyments and the fear that we may be cut off from all of them by death. So the first cause is ignorance and the last effect is human life lived in limitations and illusions of various kinds.

The first link in this chain, *avidya*, is not the ordinary kind of ignorance or even ignorance in its general philosophical sense. It is the lack of awareness of our real nature. Because we have lost an awareness of our real divine nature, we have become involved in manifestation. So *avidya* is the instrumental cause of the involution of the monad in manifestation.

If lack of awareness of our true nature is the cause of our subjective bondage, then obviously the only permanent remedy is regaining the knowledge of true nature. This is the next link in the chain of reasoning on which the philosophy of Yoga is based. It points out that the final effect in miseries of human life is traceable to the primal cause—loss of awareness of Reality—and therefore the only means of transcending the miseries of life is to regain permanently and completely that awareness. This is expressed in 2.26 as follows:

The uninterrupted practice of awareness of the Real is the means to disperse *avidya*.

The next question is how to practice an awareness of Reality. The answer is given in 2.28 as follows:

From the practice of the component exercises of Yoga, on the destruction of impurity, arises spiritual illumination that develops into awareness of Reality.

And this is followed by 2.29, which gives the well-known eight component exercises or practices of this Yogic technique, which are the subject of the next chapter.

This, in a nutshell, is the philosophy of Yoga. It shows how we as the monad get involved in manifestation through the loss of awareness of our real nature, which leads to our identifying ourselves with our vehicles and all that is associated with them. This identification leads to our developing all kinds of personal attachments, bonds of attractions and repulsions, with people and things in the world. It is such attachments that are the source of misery, actual or potential. The philosophy then points out the means that reverse the whole process of involution and enable the monad to regain awareness of its real nature. Yoga is nothing but a technique by which this reversal can be brought about systematically and scientifically.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. The practice of Yoga is joyously transformative.
2. We cannot expect instant success, but practice will produce results.

3. The practice of Yoga is independent of its theory, which is a useful explanation of what happens in the practice.
4. The theory says that life has frustrations that can be overcome by removing their causes, which constitute a fivefold chain of ignorance, egoism, attraction, repulsion, and clinging to experience.

QUESTIONS

1. What ultimate goal do you have in mind regarding your own spiritual path?
2. What is meant by the Sanskrit term *avidya*?
3. What does Yoga say is the root cause of human suffering?
4. Is there a point where we become too old to begin the practice of Yoga?

Chapter 36

THE EIGHT STEPS OF YOGA (Part 1)

The system of Yoga in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali is called “astanga,” which means “with eight limbs.” The Sanskrit word *anga* means “a limb” as a constituent part of a body. In Yoga it refers to any of the eight steps that make up the whole practice. The number of the steps and their identity vary from one system of Yoga to another, but those of Patanjali’s Kingly Yoga (*raja yoga*) are typical:

Self-restraints (*yama*), observances (*niyama*), posture (*asana*), regulation of breath (*pranayama*), going inward (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), contemplation (*dhyana*), and union (*samadhi*) are the eight practices of Yoga. [2.29]

The *Yoga Sutras* deal with these eight practices in detail. Here we will treat them only briefly. The first two (self-restraints and observances) concern moral qualities we need to develop if we want to practice Yoga. The next two (posture and regulation of breath) are physical techniques that help us to prepare for meditation. The fifth step (going inward) is an important mental practice that is also preliminary to meditation. Following those five preparatory steps come the three steps of meditation proper (concentration, contemplation, and union).

One general question is whether the eight steps are best thought of as consecutive and progressive stages in Yoga, or as independent techniques that can be practiced separately. It is obvious that some of them are sequentially related. For example, concentration (*dharana*), contemplation (*dhyana*), and union (*samadhi*) have to be practiced in that order because they are three progressive stages of the same process.

Similarly, self-restraint (*yama*), observances (*niyama*), posture (*asana*), regulation of breath (*pranayama*), and going inward (*pratyahara*) also should come in that order because the successful practice of any one of these techniques depends on at least partial mastery of the previous techniques. It is difficult, for example, to regulate your breath if you have not practiced self-restraint and the observances that lead to a certain degree of control over your emotions and desires.

In the same way, the three steps of concentration, contemplation, and union cannot be taken without good control over the physical body and elimination of those desires that exert great pressure on the mind. Of course, anyone who does not intend to practice Yoga systematically can use any one of the techniques independently, though it is difficult to get much overall benefit from a random practice of the steps. To be really beneficial, all the steps need to be taken sequentially. If we want to get somewhere, it is a good idea to take the right steps, one after another. So we consider them here in their natural order.

We therefore begin with self-restraints (*yama*) and observances (*niyama*), which are the foundation of a life of Yoga. Their practice builds up the right kind of character and produces the right state of mind for Yoga. Both steps help to transmute the lower nature into a harmonized, calm, and fully responsive instrument of the Higher Self. Each consists of five qualities, but the self-restraints are negative, concerning things we should not do, whereas the observances are positive, concerning things we should do. Two sutras list the five qualities of each step:

The self-restraints (*yama*) are abstinence from violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and greed. [2.30]

The observances (*niyama*) are purity, contentment, zeal, self-study, and divine resolve. [2.32]

It may seem that the five qualities of self-restraint do not represent a very high code of moral conduct. After all, abstaining from lying and stealing does not necessarily represent a very exalted standard of morality. But Patanjali has deliberately given the simplest forms of the tendencies we are to avoid so that everyone can see them and try to remove them. It is by the removal of the simple forms that we become aware of the subtler forms, which we can work on later. There is no other way.

Most of these qualities are simple and clear. They apply, however, on all levels of our being. Abstinence from violence is not just from violent action, but also from violent words, feelings, and thoughts. Abstinence from falsehood is not just from speaking an untruth, but from thinking and living untruths as well. Purity is not just physical cleanliness, but also moral and intellectual cleanliness too. And so on with all the rest.

Three of the observances merit special consideration because what they refer to may not be obvious from the terms used for them. The paper for September (the first half of chapter 23) dealt with these three observances in a preliminary way and under slightly different terms. Because they are important, it will be useful to look at them again here in connection with the full list of moral qualities.

“Zeal” corresponds to a very interesting Sanskrit word, *tapas*. That word is often translated as “austerity,” but it comes from a root meaning “to heat up” or “to burn.” The idea is that concentrating spiritual energy is like concentrating the energy of the sun, which results in heating up or setting afire whatever it is focused on. When we concentrate spiritual energy within ourselves, we are afire with zeal and burn up all the impurities of our nature.

“Self-study” (Sanskrit *svadhaya*, from *sva* “oneself” and *dhaya* “going over”) is often understood as applying oneself to the study of (that is, going over) scripture. But reading or studying by itself amounts to very little. A collect from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* advises us to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the words of

scripture. We begin by reading, but then we must “mark” or pay careful attention to what is being said, next learn the meaning of the text, and finally “inwardly digest” it or apply it to our lives. That is real self-study, which involves both studying wise books and studying ourselves to see how they relate to us and we respond to them.

The other quality that needs special attention is “divine resolve.” The Sanskrit term, *Ishvara-pranidhana*, is often translated as “devotion to God.” *Ishvara*, often translated “Lord,” comes from a root meaning “to rule.” It is a term for the Absolute or Ultimate Reality conceived of in personal terms and denotes the conscious and beneficent order of the cosmos. *Pranidhana* is a resolve to help all beings attain liberation from the limitations of ignorance—the bodhisattva vow. So together the two terms suggest a resolve to serve the divine in all beings by helping them discover their own true nature. It is not a passive, subjective feeling, but an active, objective intention.

Although each of these ten practices touches a different aspect of our nature and develops particular characteristics and attitudes, our life cannot be divided into compartments. All aspects of our nature are closely interlinked and cannot be isolated from one another. We need to work on our mind and character as a whole, although for a time we may give particular attention to improving one or another particular aspect of our nature. And a particular quality not explicitly mentioned in these lists may still be very important to control or develop. In fact, the two qualities of purity and contentment cover most of the other tendencies not specifically mentioned.

From later sutras it is clear that developing the ten qualities of the self-restraints and observances leads on to the highest state of perfection. Wonderful potentials lie hidden in these common things. Sutra 2.28 says that from their practice arises the Light of Gnosis, another name for Light on the Path.

Many sutras deal with the self-restraints and observances, but one in particular gives a practical recommendation for developing them:

When the mind is disturbed by improper thoughts, [the cure is] constant pondering over the opposites. [2.33].

Transmuting our lower nature is not easy. The chief difficulty is that in spite of our idealism and our determination to root out undesirable tendencies, they continue to trouble us. What are we to do? What is the best method of dealing with an undesirable tendency? Ignoring or repressing them won't work.

The key to dealing successfully with negative tendencies is to keep in mind that they are all rooted in the mind, even those which are purely physical in expression. Every action is preceded by thought either in the conscious mind or in the unconscious. The word “unconscious,” instead of “subconscious,” is right here because the motivating power of good actions comes from the higher or “superconscious” regions of the

mind. Because all tendencies are thus rooted in the mind, to eradicate them, we have to neutralize them in the realm of the mind instead of merely struggling to prevent their outer expression.

The neutralization of an undesirable tendency at its mental source is what the sutra quoted above advises us to do. But what does “constant pondering over the opposites” mean? It does not mean just thinking about something different. It means taking an opposite point of view into careful consideration. Thus, if you find someone to be disagreeable or annoying, try to think of that person’s good points, put yourself in that person’s place, and imagine the handicaps under which that person may be working. Or if you are inclined to yield to any kind of indulgence, think of the price you will have to pay later on.

Such thinking is not a mere mechanical repetition of a thought, but a really sincere and intelligent analysis of your own habits and attitudes. It should be done, not when the tendency is about to find expression, but when you are in a calmer state of mind and can ponder the opposite point of view coolly. At the moment of expressing a negative tendency, the only effective and safe recourse is to stop the expression without thinking, just because that is the right thing to do, and you have decided to do the right thing.

The self-restraints and observances are moral steps in Yoga. From them, we will pass on to the next two steps, which are techniques that help us to prepare for meditation.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Yoga has eight “limbs” or steps: self-restraints (*yama*), observances (*niyama*), posture (*asana*), regulation of breath (*pranayama*), going inward (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), contemplation (*dhyana*), and union (*samadhi*). They are best attended to in that order.
2. The first two steps are moral injunctions, to abstain from violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and greed; and to practice purity, contentment, zeal, self-study, and divine resolve.
3. The way to deal with negative tendencies is, at a calm time, consciously to take an opposite point of view into careful consideration in order to analyze our own habitual attitudes intelligently.

QUESTIONS

1. Name the essential parts of Patanjali's "Astanga" in the Yoga Sutras.
2. Why are the 8-steps of Yoga considered a spiritual system?
3. What is *yama*?
4. What is *niyama*?
5. How can attachments impede our growth on the Path?
6. Read *Yoga-Sūtra* 2.33. What is the approach suggested here to "cure" negative tendencies?

Chapter 37

THE EIGHT STEPS OF YOGA (Part 2)

In the last paper, we considered the first two “limbs” or steps of Yoga: the self-restraint of abstaining from violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and greed, and the observance of practicing purity, contentment, zeal, self-study, and divine resolve. We also considered a practical way of taking those steps. Now we turn to the next two “limbs,” which are preparatory techniques for meditation and are what most people think of in connection with Yoga: certain postures and ways of controlling the breath.

Of all the practices associated with Yoga, the one most widely known is posture (*asana*). In fact, many people think of Yoga as nothing more than these postures and related physical activities that are supposed to improve health. Few people know the essential role that posture plays in the life of those who practice real Yoga.

The basic purpose of the physical postures is to eliminate the disturbances that the body may cause in the mind. Our minds and bodies are interlinked, so the movements of the body affect the mind, causing disturbances in it that have to be quieted before we can practice meditation. When the body is steadied in a particular posture, it becomes insensitive to all external changes in the environment, such as heat or cold and all other pairs of opposites (*dvandvas*), so those variations cease to disturb the mind.

Some of the traditional postures of Yoga are quite complicated and, to be done well and safely, require a flexible body and considerable practice. They should not be attempted without knowledgeable assistance, as they can be physically dangerous. Other postures, however, are simple and can be taken by anyone without much difficulty.

For persons without experience or guidance in the difficult postures, a good one is to sit on the floor (using a thin cushion if desired) and bend the legs, placing each foot with sole upward on the thigh of the opposite leg. This is called the “lotus posture.” If one’s legs cramp, a variation called the “half lotus” is to place only one foot on the opposite thigh and let the other rest on the ground. A simple crossing of the legs, Amerindian fashion, is also possible. Many Westerners just sit in a firm chair with an upright back, legs parallel with the feet flat on the floor, lower arms resting lightly on the horizontal upper legs, and spine erect.

Because our bodies and minds are interlinked, posture is not just physical. We have emotional and mental postures too—positions we take with regard to feeling and thinking. Our bodily and mental postures reflect each other. We can change either by changing the other. If we are happy, we smile; but also by smiling, we can put ourselves into a mental posture of happiness. In our ordinary language, we talk about what

“stand” or posture we take on certain matters. So posture is not a trivial matter. It is our interface with the world.

The next technique of Yoga, breath control (*pranayama*), is also much misunderstood, especially in the West, where it is equated with breathing exercises done to improve bodily health. Breath control, if practiced correctly, does improve health because of the larger intake of oxygen in some of its forms and its effect on the nervous system. But such improvement is not its purpose in real Yoga.

An important purpose of Yogic breath control is to help us acquire complete and conscious control over the life currents (*prana*) in the etheric double, and thus to direct them wherever they are needed. The life currents are the connecting links between a vehicle and the mind functioning through that vehicle. By controlling the life currents, we can eliminate the disturbances that vehicle can produce in the mind. When the life currents have been mastered, they can be used to arouse a special energy called *kundalini* and connect the physical plane consciousness with that of the astral and mental bodies.

But such use of the breath to control the life currents and arouse kundalini is potentially dangerous, so it should never be practiced without the guidance of a competent teacher and adequate preparation. The simple practice of taking a few deep breaths at the beginning of meditation or at any time to help steady one’s thought, or the practice of observing the breath as it passes through the nostrils to quiet the mind and focus attention are quite different matters and are altogether harmless.

We should also control our breath in a metaphorical sense. When we breath, we exchange the air inside our lungs with that outside us. By breathing in, we are taking into ourselves the world all around us, and by breathing out, we are putting something of ourselves into the common air that all others breathe. Breathing is a symbol of our interchange with life all around us, and that merits careful consideration and control.

After the physical techniques of postures and breath control, next we come to “going inward” (*pratyahara*), the fifth constituent of Yoga and an important preliminary to meditation:

Pratyahara, or going inward, is (as it were) the imitation by the senses of the mind, by withdrawing themselves from their objects. [2.54]

The meaning of this “going inward” is not generally understood, and all kinds of interpretations have been suggested. It is a practice that cuts off completely all connections of the mind with the external world through the five sense organs. We know the external world through our sense organs. Vibrations or particles of various kinds strike the sense organs, producing in them certain responses, and the nerves carry these responses to centers in the brain. There a mysterious process converts the nervous

impulses into sensations in consciousness. The life energy and certain centers in the etheric double and astral body play a part in this process.

The joining of the mind with the centers in the brain or the subtler vehicles leads to the formation of a sensuous image in the mind. A continuous stream of sensuous images is pouring into the mind through the sense organs, as long as the mind is in contact with the external world. Of course, the mind does not take cognizance of all the vibrations that strike the sense organs. Many different kinds of sound vibrations are striking the ear all the time, but we do not notice all of them. Our sense organs and mind are not structured to recognize some of them. Others, we recognize some times and ignore other times.

The more the mind is absorbed in some kind of activity, the less it notices other vibrations, which are nevertheless constantly striking the sense organs. A teenager engaged in something he or she wants to do—reading, playing a game, listening to music—is impervious to everything else. This cutting off of the external world from the mind by concentration on any object, however, is partial and involuntary, and the mind can always be disturbed by a sufficiently strong sensuous impact.

The object of “going inward” is to cut off the mind completely and voluntarily from the external world, so that whenever meditators want to go inward into their mind and concentrate, they can cut off the external world voluntarily by shutting, as it were, the doors of the sense organs. They can then concentrate on the problem in their mind without any distraction through their sense organs. The sense organs are there, but the senses that work through them have withdrawn inward into the mind. The senses are parts of the mind and are like tentacles that the mind puts forth into the external world to gather sensuous material for its development. By going inward, the mind withdraws the senses into itself when it wants to engage in meditation without any disturbance through the sensory channels.

How this going inward works depends partly on the degree of concentration of the mind. A sufficiently concentrated mind can cut itself off from the external world automatically. But in advanced stages of Yoga, where a very high degree of concentration is necessary for prolonged periods, the meditator can take advantage of the fact that the sense organs function through the life energy. So, by manipulating the life-energy currents, the Yogi can stop the sense organs from functioning just as, by manipulating an electric current, we can stop a radio or television set from functioning. This is why the practice of breath control, which gives conscious control over the life-energy currents in the etheric double, is needed chiefly by advanced Yogis rather than by most meditators.

The last three constituents of Yoga are called “internal” in distinction to the preceding five, which are called “external.”

Concentration, contemplation, and union (*dhāranā*, *dhāyāna*, and *samādhi*), which are purely internal mental processes, are the real and essential techniques of Yoga, while the five practices already dealt with are subsidiary. The five external steps merely ensure that the necessary conditions are present for practicing internal concentration, contemplation, and union.

The impression that the practice of samadhi or union is an extremely difficult or almost impossible achievement is based on a misconception. We try to concentrate our mind with all the handicaps we usually have and consequently fail to attain even a moderate degree of concentration. From this experience, we naturally conclude that the attainment of the high degree of concentration needed for union must be an almost impossible task for the ordinary person. It is an almost impossible task, if we attempt it without any previous preparation, just as it is an impossible task for students of basic mathematics to solve problems of differential and integral calculus.

But if the mathematical foundation has been laid correctly and systematically and if students proceed step by step, they do not encounter any insuperable difficulty in solving the problems in advanced calculus. Similarly, the practice of concentration, contemplation, and union is easy after the necessary preparation has been made for that practice. The mind is essentially easy to control and manipulate when it has been freed from all the encumbrances, complexes, and pressures that distort it and prevent its natural and free movements.

The purpose of the external steps of Yoga is to bring the mind under control systematically. The self-restraints and observances eliminate disturbances from the emotions and desires, postures eliminate the disturbances caused by the dense physical body, breath control removes disturbances arising in the etheric double, and going inward cuts off the activity of the sense organs. So now, only the mind is left to be dealt with, and this mind has been freed already from the encumbrances and pressures referred to above. The Yogi can therefore practice concentration, contemplation, and union without any extraordinary difficulty and obtain, by inhibiting the modifications of the mind, realizations that have been referred to already in previous chapters. Just as in all other disciplines, results that seem difficult are easy to obtain by applying the right techniques properly.

It has been pointed out already that concentration, contemplation, and union are three progressive steps of a single continuing process. They differ from each other only in degree and in certain well-defined conditions that distinguish one stage from another. All these matters are discussed in detail in Taimni's commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtras*, so it is not necessary to deal with them here. But there are a few facts of a general nature that may remove certain common misconceptions and make it possible to understand that commentary more easily.

The first point is that the particular object on which the mind is concentrated in the triple process of concentration, contemplation, and union is not necessarily a tangible object. The word “object” in Yogic terminology can refer to anything—any principle, law, or phenomenon, any fact of existence. The triple continuous process of concentration and contemplation, culminating in union, is called “joint control” (in Sanskrit *samyama*) or simply “meditation,” and the third chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* gives many examples of the objects on which meditation can be performed.

The result of performing meditation successfully is a knowledge of the reality behind the object of meditation. And as each such bit of real knowledge is associated with a corresponding power, full meditation on any object leads to the development of some specific power associated with the knowledge it produces. These powers are called “attainments” or “accomplishments” (*siddhis* in Sanskrit or *iddhis* in Pali, the latter term used in *The Voice of the Silence*) or sometimes “psychic powers.” But it is only the inferior powers like clairvoyance that are referred to as psychic powers.

The higher powers developed by the processes of higher Yoga are really spiritual in nature, and a world of difference separates them from psychic powers. Some of the lower psychic powers can be developed by other methods also, such as the use of certain herbs, mantras, and so on. It is not necessary to achieve union to gain them. But all the higher powers of Yoga can be developed only by union, and are the result of the evolution of the individuality and the unfoldment of higher states of consciousness. They are under the control of the individual and always on call because they are gained by the unfoldment of one’s spiritual nature.

The development of special powers or *siddhis* is nothing to be surprised at. Even in the realm of the lower mind, any kind of knowledge, however trivial, confers a certain kind of power on the individual. The knowledge pertaining to any trade or profession confers on the one who practices that work the power to earn money and gain all kinds of comforts and luxuries. The knowledge that scientists have acquired about atomic energy has conferred upon them the power to raise the living standards of humanity or to destroy it. What is there to be wondered at if the transcendental knowledge that comes to the Yogi as a result of the development of higher states of consciousness by Yogic methods brings powers of a very unusual nature?

Attaining these powers, whether lower or higher, is not, however, the right motive for practicing Yoga. We will consider that right motive in the next paper.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. Posture and breath control are preparatory techniques for practicing Yoga that involve harmonizing the dense physical and the subtler etheric bodies. The more complex Yogic techniques of bodily positions and breath control should be attempted only under the supervision of a knowledgeable teacher. But simple postures and regular, steady breathing are good to develop, and we should all pay attention to our metaphorical posture and breath exchange.
2. "Going inward" is a process of deliberately withdrawing our attention from the distractions of the surrounding world so we can meditate effectively.
3. Concentration, contemplation, and union are three progressive stages of meditation leading to a knowledge of the reality behind the object of meditation and a consequent mastery of the power associated with that knowledge. Lower psychic powers can be gained in many ways; higher spiritual powers can be achieved only by the process of meditation.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain how the preparatory techniques of *asanas* and *pranayama* prepare one for meditation.
2. What is the purpose of *pratyahara* or "going inward?"
3. What are the five external steps of Yoga? What is their purpose?
4. What is the difference between the higher and lower *Siddhas* in Yoga?

CHAPTER 38

SELF-REALIZATION AND THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

The last chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* is the most difficult to understand because it contains some of the subtlest conceptions on which the philosophy and psychology of Yoga are based. There is not much about technique in this chapter, though it does treat the highest kind of samadhi (called *dharma-megha samādhi*), which takes the Yogi completely out of the realm of the mind, to be established permanently and irreversibly in the realm of Reality.

We have already considered in a previous chapter the philosophy of Yoga in one of its aspects, namely, the involution and evolution of the monad in manifestation. And we have seen that the monad's final emergence from manifestation is as a Self-realized individual who can remain centered in the realm of Reality, and yet function in the realms of the Relative. It does so through the set of vehicles that it has created and perfected for its use during the long course of evolution and the unfoldment of its potential divine nature. The total philosophy of Yoga is, however, of far wider scope and is really a part of the more comprehensive philosophy of the Ancient Wisdom that gives us some idea of the nature of Reality and its manifestation in the phenomenal worlds of the Relative. The whole of the Esoteric Doctrine revealed or unrevealed is thus the basis of Yogic philosophy.

The psychology of Yoga is naturally related to this greater philosophy, and though it differs somewhat according to the school to which a particular system of Yoga belongs, in its broad outline and essential character, it is practically the same for all schools of Yoga. The differences in the psychology of the different systems may appear marked, but they are not so actually. They are due to the different methods of approach and points of view, and to those who have intuitive perception of these things they do not appear basically important.

As has been pointed out already, the philosophy of Yoga is based at least outwardly on the Sankhya teachings, and so naturally is the psychology also. This psychology is not discussed systematically in the *Yoga-Sūtras*, so one has to piece it together from the verses about various aspects of Yoga. But the student who has studied the subject thoroughly will see clearly the main outline of this psychology and can formulate it as a system that is complete and self-sufficient though not at all related to modern systems of psychology.

The science of Yoga deals with the manifested universe and the Reality on which it is based, as a whole. Though it takes into account all phenomena of nature, it mainly concerns itself with the invisible realms of the universe. On the other hand, modern psychology is based upon the phenomena of the visible universe, which is just the outermost shell covering the inner realities and only very partially expressing them.

It is inevitable that a psychology dealing with all the phenomena of the manifested universe, visible and invisible, as well as the Reality that underlies these phenomena, must have a far wider and deeper basis than a psychology that touches only the surface of things. So one cannot expect anything to be in common to the two psychologies, which must be considered separately and independently. It is only if modern psychology goes much deeper into life's phenomena and accepts at least to some extent the esoteric worldview that it can be expected to come into any kind of relationship with the psychology of Yoga. For the time being, let us not try to reconcile them forcibly as some people do.

It is not possible in this short chapter to present even in outline the psychology of Yoga or the greater philosophy of which it is a part. But there is one important question on which some light has been thrown in the last chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras*, namely the universal quest for happiness. Since this question is based on our common experience in human life and is of great significance to everyone, we discuss the relevant verses below.

If we look at human life as a whole, dispassionately, and analyze it for its essential features, what do we find? We find that it is a continuous play of desire and mind in different forms and circumstances. All human beings are driven constantly by desire in search for happiness, and the mind is utilized by desire in various ways to provide means for extracting whatever happiness can be obtained from the innumerable things that are the objects of our pursuit. Patanjali starts from this universal phenomenon of human life and tries to trace it to its source. He has tried to show where both desire and mind originate, and what lies at the basis of this interminable and futile search for happiness by all human beings who are involved in the illusions and limitations of this world.

The two verses that provide a clue to this universal phenomenon of human life are these:

The modifications of the mind are always known to its lord on account of the changelessness of the *purusha*. [4.18]

Though variegated by innumerable desires, it [the mind] acts for another [*purusha*] because it always acts in association. [4.24]

The first verse means that all changes and modifications taking place constantly in the mind of an individual do so against the background of the consciousness of the monad, called *purusha* in the *Yoga-Sūtras*. Hence the monad is aware of everything that happens in the mind at any level.

The second verse means that the mind always acts as the instrument of desire, but as desires are constantly changing it cannot be really acting for desire. It must be acting for something that is constant and associated with it all the time. And the previous verse has shown that this constant factor is the monad or *purusha*. So we see that the monad must be the motivating force behind all desires and the witnessing agent of all modifications or changes in the mind.

Let us first consider mind and desire separately and see their significance in human life before we consider their joint action and interplay in the pursuit of happiness.

What is the theory of knowledge according to Yogic psychology? The mind or *citta*, as it is called in the *Yoga-Sūtras*, works through a form we call the mental body. Its function is to know. But according to Yogic psychology, alone it has no capacity to know because it is insentient. The capacity to know is given to it by *buddhi*, which is the light of consciousness derived from the *purusha*. The knowledge that springs up in the mind in the presence of an object of perception is derived from the unlimited knowledge of *purusha*. When the mind comes in contact with an object of perception, it is affected by both the consciousness of the *purusha* functioning through *buddhi* as well as the object that it seeks to know, and the response of the all-knowing *purusha* to this limited stimulus is the knowledge of the object that the mind obtains from it.

The *purusha* is always in the background and omniscient. It is the common factor in all processes of knowing, and also the storehouse of all possible kinds of knowledge that come into the mind. So from the background of omniscience, the object arouses a limited response, and it is this limited response that we call knowledge. The monad is the source of all knowledge and the objects that produce or stimulate the knowledge in the mind are merely instrumental in bringing out this partial knowledge from the whole knowledge in the monad.

Let us now consider desire. As we have seen already, our life is mostly a play of desires. What is this phenomenon of desire? We are always running after objects produced or provided by the mind at the instigation of desire. In fact, this seems to be the main purpose of the mind, namely the fulfillment of desire. What is the cause of desire? Let us find out. In order to find the cause of a universal phenomenon you have to search for the common factor in all the particular phenomena.

One constant factor in this drama, played by mind and desire, is the *purusha*. It is the invariable factor present in the constant pursuit of variable objects by desire. Is there

any other phenomenon associated with this pursuit of different objects by desire? Yes, the pursuit of happiness. This pursuit of objects by desire through the instrumentality of the mind is in search of happiness, conscious or unconscious. We do not desire anything without the motive of obtaining some measure of happiness from it. So here we have another constant factor present in human life--the search for happiness.

Now, the argument advanced in the *Yoga-Sūtras* is this. In our search for happiness, we are always desiring objects. The objects change constantly, the desires change constantly. There is only one thing in this drama that does not change and is always present. It is the *purusha* in the background. Is, then, the *purusha* responsible for our constant desiring?

To answer that question, we have to consider two facts. First, that desire is nothing but will, working under illusion and limitation, and will is derived from *sat*, one aspect of the triple divine *purusha*. The second aspect of the triple divine *purusha* is *ānanda*. Its very nature is *ānanda*, which is reflected in bliss or happiness on the lower planes. The third aspect, of course, is *chit*, which is reflected in the mind. Do you see the significance of desire and the constant search for happiness in external objects?

The *purusha*, whose very nature is *sat-chit-ānanda*, has been put down or involved in manifestation and has lost the awareness of its divine nature as a result. What is the result of its loss of awareness of its true nature? It seeks *ānanda* in the manifested world, in the objects present in the world, using the word "object" in its widest sense as anything that fulfills desire. Its *sat* nature, which should find expression as pure spiritual will, changes into desire because of its association with the illusions and limitations of the lower planes.

So this pursuit of happiness through the medium of all kinds of objects in the manifested worlds, visible and invisible, in which we are all engaged, is nothing but the monad searching for *ānanda* in the things outside itself because of the illusion or *maya* in which it is involved. And since its third aspect is *chit*, which finds expression in the image-making faculty and activity of the mind, it creates out of the manifold life around it one form after another, one situation after another, to find this *ānanda* where it is not present and so cannot be found. It can be obtained partially in a reflected form as happiness, and the degree of the *ānanda* aspect of the *purusha* that the object is able to stimulate in the mind is the measure of happiness that the object gives. This is the underlying significance of this drama in which we are all engaged.

To recapitulate the whole idea once again: We are triple in our essential divine nature. These three aspects are called *sat-chit-ānanda* in Sanskrit, and are reflected as will, higher mind, and bliss on the spiritual planes and as desire, lower mind, and happiness on the lower planes. Because we are involved in manifestation, we lose all these divine attributes and can manifest them only partially on the lower planes in the

forms of ordinary desire, mind, and happiness. The partial expression of our divine nature results in our running after all kinds of objects in the world, in search of happiness, motivated by desire and, supplied by the mind with suitable objects for this purpose.

Thus the whole stream of our life runs on and on interminably, slowly rising higher and higher towards its source. Desire ultimately changes into will, thought changes into direct knowledge, and happiness changes into pure bliss. This is the first stage in our upward journey as a result of partial realization of our true nature, and the consequent lessening of the veils of illusion. When we reach a higher stage of spiritual development, everything is in its subtlest form.

It is the monad's extricating itself from the last and thinnest veil of illusion on the atmic plane that is described in the technique of *dharma-megha samādhi* discussed in the fourth chapter. When the highest kind of discrimination is awakened and the monad realizes the subtle illusion present even on the atmic plane, it decides to take the last plunge into the world of Reality which gives it knowledge of its true divine nature as *sat-chit-ānanda*. The drama of its evolution is over.

The search for permanent and real happiness in the realm of manifestation is doomed to end in failure because the monad is destined to find its true nature and not to remain always imprisoned in the world of manifestation. This is also the reason why misery is a universal feature of human life. It is merely an expression of the fact that the desire for happiness cannot be satisfied fully in this world and should not be satisfied because a tremendously greater and more glorious destiny awaits us in the future in Self-realization. Why should we be sad that misery is universal? Should we not be thankful that it is so, because this is the best guarantee of our final liberation from the bondage of illusions and limitations of the lower life, and the safeguard against our voluntarily remaining exiled in this lower life indefinitely.

SUMMARY

Some of the major points made in this chapter are the following:

1. In our ultimate identity, we are a monad, a unit or quantum of the One Consciousness in the universe.
2. Like the Consciousness of which we are a quantum unit, our nature is threefold: we are unalloyed being, knowing, and rejoicing (*sat-chit-ānanda* in Sanskrit).
3. Those three aspects are reflected in the spiritual realms as will, higher mind, and bliss, and in the lower realms as desire, lower mind, and happiness.

4. In the lower realms we are ignorant of our true nature and so mistake ordinary desires, mind, and happiness for our true nature, and for that reason we identify with our minds and are motivated by desire to pursue objects we think will make us happy.
5. Because we are frustrated in our pursuit of a happiness that cannot last in an ever-changing world, we are gradually led to recognize our true nature of will, direct knowledge, and pure bliss.
6. Eventually, we will pass beyond even that recognition and come into a realization of our unity with ultimate being, knowing, and rejoicing.
7. The world is not a mistake or an exile; it is where we have the opportunity to discover who and what we are.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of what happens when a *Yogi* reaches *dharma-megha samadhi* and is established permanently and irreversibly in the realm of Reality?
2. In your own words, what is the basis of the science of *Yogic* philosophy?
3. What is the theory of knowledge according to *Yogic* psychology?
4. What is the fundamental cause of our constantly being subjected to one desire after another?

CHAPTER 39

THE QUESTION OF GUIDANCE

The real purpose of human evolution is to develop an individual who is Self-illuminated, Self-determined, and Self-sufficient. Such an individual can, obviously, be evolved in the final stages only through Self-direction. Guidance from without is necessary and is provided in the earlier stages, but the more we advance on the path of inner unfoldment, the more external guidance is gradually withdrawn and we are forced to turn for guidance within ourselves and to light our own lamps.

That such guidance should be available for us from within ourselves follows from the very nature of our constitution. The core of our being is a center in divine consciousness. Our life is rooted in the Reality that lies at the basis of the manifested universe and is energizing and guiding its evolution. We are each a microcosm containing potentially within ourselves all the powers and faculties that we see active in the macrocosm. It is these potentialities that unfold from within and gradually become active, one after another, as evolution proceeds.

The great Teachers of the Eternal Wisdom and the books dealing with Self-realization have pointed out again and again that the Light that can guide seekers in the search for Truth can come only from within. See what *Light on the Path* says:

For within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed on the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere.

The *Yoga-Sūtras*, in dealing with the question of guidance on the path of Yoga, treats the matter in one verse:

From the practice of the component exercises of Yoga, on the destruction of impurity, arises spiritual illumination, which develops into awareness of Reality.
[2.28]

If we are seriously engaged in the pursuit of Self-realization, we should ponder over this question of guidance on the path until no doubt is left in our minds that such guidance can come only from within. Then only will we seriously and in a determined manner try to find within our own heart that Light that can guide us constantly and unerringly.

When should we turn to the Light within for guidance? It hardly needs pointing out that we are incapable of taking advantage of this kind of guidance in the earlier stages of our evolution. For a long time, external agencies of education develop our mind, mold our character, and stimulate our nascent spiritual faculties.

But a time comes in the growth of every soul when these begin to prove inadequate and the need is felt not only for a clear, dynamic spiritual objective but also for a more effective means of attaining that objective. Then we turn within to discover the Reality that is hidden within our heart and begin to bring about the necessary changes in our mind and heart that will enable us to accomplish this task. We enter seriously the field of Self-development. This is the time to begin the search for that source of Light that alone can illuminate our Path.

We should be quite clear in our mind about two things. First, what is the goal that we have placed before ourselves, and second, who will guide us on the Path leading to this goal. The answer to the first question will naturally depend upon us individually, our temperament, our character traits, and the environment in which we have been brought up. But though our temporary aims may vary, depending upon the stage of our evolution and the phase through which we are passing, we all have the same ultimate object, namely liberation from the illusions and miseries of life and a life of enlightenment and love as a Self-realized individual.

The answer to the second question is given unequivocally in the *Yoga-Sūtras* in a well-known verse:

Being unconditioned by time. He is Teacher even of the Ancients. [1.26]

“He” is the Lord of our Solar System, the real and the only Teacher of the different humanities that come and go in the vast drama being enacted on different stages at different times. He is the World Teacher (*Jagat-Guru*), who teaches the Ancients, who then give out parts of this primeval teaching to different races and sub-races according to their needs and circumstances. His is the Light of Wisdom which shines pure and undimmed in the hearts of all true spiritual Teachers of humanity and also shines, though less brightly, in the hearts of all true aspirants as their Light on the Path. He is the source of power and inspiration in the case of all true Teachers of Wisdom, and he is also the unseen guide who guides every soul slowly but surely to its goal through the long cycle of its evolution.

The Hindu scriptures point out again and again that God and the teacher (*guru*) are one and the same and that the disciple should under no circumstances imagine they are different. This statement means simply that the same God who is the object of our spiritual endeavor is also our guide in our search. He speaks within our hearts, first as the voice of conscience and later as the Voice of the Silence. This significant truth pertaining to the inner life has been perverted in orthodox interpretations, for obvious reasons, as meaning that even an ordinary guru, with all his human limitations and weaknesses, should be worshipped as God!

The idea of the Deity in his function as a Teacher has been symbolized in the Hindu

scriptures as *Dakshināmūrti*. The following well-known verse describes beautifully in a graphic form his nature and functions as a *Jagat-Guru* or world teacher:

What a wonder! Under the banyan tree (near its root) sits the youthful Teacher among his aged disciples. The Teacher remains silent and still all the doubts of the disciples are dissolved.

This verse contains significant and profound ideas pertaining to the guru-disciple relationship. The name symbolizing the divine function of the Teacher is *Dakshināmūrti*. The clue to this name is found in the *Dakshināmūrti Upanishad*, where it is stated that *Dakshinā* stands for buddhi, the spiritual faculty in us that enables us to perceive truth directly without the aid of the intellect. And *mūrti* means “embodiment” or “manifestation.” So, *Dakshināmūrti* means “the embodiment or manifestation of buddhi,” a symbolic representation of that function of divine consciousness within us that enables us to realize and become aware of spiritual truths directly within the depths of our own consciousness.

Dakshināmūrti is represented iconically as a form that is highly symbolic and gives us a glimpse into some of the mysteries of spiritual experiences and the initiations that lead to them. He is shown with the same form as Shiva, the embodiment of the Ultimate Reality, the minor differences emphasizing his function as the *Jagat-Guru*. This no doubt means that the Reality that is the source of the creative, preservative, and regenerative functions of the divine is also the source of the knowledge and wisdom that are needed for the evolution of humanity and the enlightenment of individuals seeking liberation.

Dakshināmūrti is shown sitting under and near the root of a banyan tree. The banyan tree is a well-known symbol of human knowledge, its many rooting branches representing the different branches of learning. But the tree is a symbol of lower or empirical knowledge (*apara-vidyā*), and not of higher knowledge or wisdom (*para-vidyā*), which is knowledge born of direct contact with the divine consciousness. Empirical knowledge is expressed through the intellect and is capable of increasing differentiation and elaboration. Wisdom is integral, eternally present as a whole in the divine consciousness and is known through the buddhi, but takes the help of the intellect in its partial and imperfect expression on the lower plane of the intellect. That is why *Dakshināmūrti* is shown sitting near the root of a banyan tree and yet separate from the tree.

The paradox of the Teacher being young and the disciples old merely symbolizes the fact that the source of Wisdom is eternal and not subject to the laws of birth, growth, and decay, which apply to all things in the realm of time and space. This Eternal Wisdom has to be passed on to teachers in the realm of time and space, who though advanced spiritually have to work through the imperfect and impermanent medium of the intellect. They and their teachings both are subject to the laws of growth and decay.

It is not only the bodies of the teachers that become old and die like those of others. Their teachings also become corrupted through the passage of time and the ignorance and weaknesses of those who transmit them. But the Eternal Wisdom from which these teachings were derived remains ever as fresh, dynamic, and pure as youth, for it is part of the divine consciousness of the Logos.

The other paradox depicted in the verse, that the Teacher remains silent and yet removes all the doubts of the disciples, is perhaps the most significant feature of the symbolism of Dakshināmūrti. To understand this mystery, we have to recall the fact that the knowledge which can be communicated through the medium of language is empirical knowledge, pertaining to the intellect.

The highest and most profound secrets of life lie beyond the scope of the intellect and cannot be communicated through the medium of language. They can be communicated only as direct experiences. The consciousness of the receiver is raised to a higher level where he can experience directly the truth sought to be communicated and know the reality by actually becoming aware of it. The intellect is a cumbersome instrument for gaining knowledge, even concerning things of the lower life. In relation to things of the spiritual realms, it is utterly inadequate. Knowledge of the relation between the monad or individual quantum (*jīvātmā*) and the Ultimate Reality (*Paramātmā*), the nature of divine Love, the reason why the monad becomes involved in the world process—all such questions are not really matters for intellectual comprehension but for direct experience within the depths of our own consciousness at a level transcending the intellect.

Apart from the necessity of direct perception in gaining knowledge of transcendent realities, even our ordinary doubts and difficulties pertaining to our inner life are best removed through the light of buddhi, which comes from within and which may be considered as a ray of Light emanating from Dakshināmūrti. Until this Light irradiates our intellect, intellectual knowledge remains mostly sterile and its deeper and real significance remains hidden.

After having considered the nature of the Divine Teacher who is present in the heart of every aspirant, waiting to guide us by the Voice of the Silence, let us deal very briefly with the advantages of establishing our direct contact with him. One of the greatest problems of spiritual life is to find a reliable guide who can help us in overcoming its difficulties and ordeals, giving us strength when we feel disheartened and giving us light when we seem lost in the darkness of ignorance and despair.

Many earnest aspirants spend their life fruitlessly searching for a suitable guru in the outer world, ignoring the Supreme Guru, who is nearest to them and whose wisdom, strength, and compassion are boundless and ever at their disposal, who is always aware of even their slightest yearning of aspiration and responds to their

feeblest but sincere cry for help. The real difficulty in all such cases is lack of faith and confidence, lack of faith in the fact that the inner teacher is within us, ready to guide us, and lack of confidence in our ability to establish our contact with him and receive help from him.

All such doubts can be resolved if we experience him directly. And we can do that by turning resolutely in his direction and calling upon him to be our guide. As we persist in looking toward him for all the help we need in our inner life, we find that more and more help comes until we become independent of all external aids. Of course, we also have to try our utmost to provide the essential conditions for receiving help in this manner. For the light of buddhi can shine only in a mind that is pure, tranquil, harmonized, and full of devotion.

There is one more question that may be considered in discussing the function of Dakshināmūrti as the Supreme Teacher. Where do true teachers who guide aspirants on the Path of Liberation stand in relation to Dakshināmūrti? Such teachers of various grades and Masters of the Wisdom no doubt exist and help people in various ways in their spiritual unfoldment. Have they no place in the life of the aspirant who recognizes Dakshināmūrti as the Supreme Teacher?

In considering this question, we have to remember that all true teachers (*sat-gurus*) are liberated beings who are permanently established in *Sat* or Truth, and their consciousness is therefore one with the consciousness of Dakshināmūrti. They are, in a way, outposts of his consciousness and agents of his will in relation to all aspirants. When we need and deserve help, it is given to us in the best possible manner under the circumstances. But we must always use our discrimination to tell the true Master of the Wisdom from a would-be, pretend teacher.

We should remain alert and watchful, ready to receive help and guidance in whatever way it comes. We may be kept in physical contact with a teacher, or we may be guided from within; or again, we may be left entirely to our own resources to enable us to develop our inner strength and Self-reliance. The nature of help varies according to the circumstances and the needs of each of us. Lesser teachers can also act as imperfect instruments of Dakshināmūrti, according to their mental purity, freedom from egoism, and attunement of their mind with his Consciousness.

SUMMARY

We can be taught and guided in many ways. But finally we cannot depend on help from outside. We must learn to seek the Light within ourselves. The Light, from whatever source it comes, if it is the True Light, is the same Light. And that Light is ever available to us, from within us.

QUESTIONS

1. Few people ask the question, "Why are we here"? Write out a small paragraph of why you believe we are here and the purpose of our being.
2. In your own words explain the deeper meaning of sutra 2.28: "From the practice of the component exercises of *Yoga*, on the destruction of impurity, arises spiritual illumination, which develops into awareness of Reality."
3. Most people who are spiritual seekers look outside themselves for a teacher to help them along in their growth. Many go from teacher to teacher. Describe the advantages and differences of both the teacher without and the Divine Teacher abiding within.
4. What is the meaning and symbolism of *Dakshinamurti*?
5. Explain the double paradox of *Dakshinamurti*.
6. Why do many of us ignore the Supreme Teacher within? What are things we can do to become closer and invoke this Presence?
7. Now that you have finished this course, list 2-3 short-term goals that you intend to achieve. Also, list at least one long-term goal.