

WHERE SILENCE SPEAKS

Vinoba

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(Preface to the first Hindi Edition)

“Upon analysis of what I do all day, the answer that I receive from my inner voice, is dhyana.” – Vinoba

Vinoba’s entire life, work and philosophy reflected *dhyana*. He always remained at the core of his own Self, but instead of becoming isolated he remained in constant contact with the society. He kept trying to find answers to the problems of society. In spite of incessant effort, he did not budge from his own plane, foundation and principles.

The inner sanctuary was his permanent and daily residence. The divine stillness was his constant state. Moved by compassion and love, he would come out of that sanctuary and would mingle with us. No sooner was the purpose served than he would return to his own place. He never lost the connection he had with the original Primal Source. This gave him an innate ability to touch and address the small and big, personal and social questions from a unique plane.

Purification of the *chitta* is the golden gateway to that inner sanctuary. Vinoba wanted to hold our hand and lead us there so that access to that Primal Source would be facilitated. For this he kept on reiterating the importance of *chitta-shuddhi* (purification of the mind). By taking *chitta-shuddhi* as the main pillar he would delineate different facets of *dhyana*. This is a humble effort to string

Publisher’s Note

This is the English translation of Vinoba’s thoughts regarding *dhyana* (meditation) and *yoga*.

Not only in Vinoba’s literature, but among the invaluable spiritual literature of the world, this volume has a significant place. It is a must-read for those who want to dive deeper into the realm of spirituality. It will help and enlighten the spiritual seekers as well as those interested in *dhyana*. Even curious readers will receive valuable insights from it. This book, previously published in many Indian languages, has touched and transformed many lives.

together the pearls of the different aspects of *dhyana* which are spread all over his vast literature.

Vinoba's language has the skill and power of condensing the ocean of wisdom into a drop. In his own words, some ripples of that ocean have been put into words here. To be honest, without the experience of having been in that inner cave, or sanctuary, one cannot have the power to fathom its depth. The effort will prove to be worthwhile if the ripples attract us towards the solemn depths of *dhyana*.

The effort of offering the oblation of sea water to the sea itself has a purifying effect. The one who takes even a sip of this with faith would be touched by that purity. Prostrating with gratitude to this unusual and novel *yogi* who always resided in that inner sanctuary, we request his blessings to help us in our journey inwards.

– Usha

Preface

(Preface to the English Edition)

In 1984 Vinobaji's thoughts on meditation were compiled and published in a special issue of '*Maitri*', the monthly magazine from Brahmavidya Mandir. Later its revised and enlarged edition was published in book form entitled '*Mahagruha men Pravesh*' which literally means 'entering the mega cave within'. Since then friends had been asking for its English version. It took long time to proceed in that direction. Dr. Amarjeet Singh, a great scientist and an ardent devotee of Vinobaji took personal interest in the matter and inspired Dr. Shyamnarain Mishra of Pilani to get it translated. Dr. Mishra readily translated the work. Dr. Amarjeet Singh went through the translation and revised it. Our friend Ms. Pranati Pratap, who is practising and teaching *yoga* in U.S.A. for the past 25 years, also gladly undertook the work of translation. Dr. Parag Cholkar and Sarvanarayandas went through the translation and offered valuable suggestions. At last, with the help of all these friends, Pranati finalised the work and the book came to the final shape.

The first Hindi version was published in 1984, i. e., 28 years ago. In the meantime the book was translated and published in five other Indian languages viz. Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannad and Tamil. We regret its late publication in English, but are happy that at last the work has been accomplished.

Question arose as to what should the title be? Finally 'Where Silence Speaks' was chosen. Unless we are able to

observe silence within and without we cannot enter into the realm of meditation. Silence is the inner voice where the Supreme whispers. It is the spring of vigour which bubbles the Song Divine, where wisdom shines without words.

So let all those who are interested in entering the inner sanctum practise silence on a daily basis. If done sincerely, it will certainly reveal the mystery of the inner world.

— Usha

Translator's Offering

Why did I take up this task? My contact with the great soul, philosopher and saint, Vinoba Bhave, is of a fairly short span. Short as it might be, it is intense and sharp. After reading his literature for the first time, I felt that all the quests and questions in life can be and should be either solved or transcended through the concrete, integral thought process and life pattern that Vinoba sets forth. Vinoba's thought process can be inscribed in one's being on different planes of existence through a spiritual, yet practical lifestyle which is integral to society. This is a mode of life which has a spiritual approach, yet a lay-person's life (with all its aspects) as its path and vehicle – a life that has *bhakti*, *jnana* and *karma* as its three firm, equally important pillars.

The prime cause of disturbance and distraction in the mind is our own perception of the world. When a question of transcending a problem arises in human life, to a large extent the problems are on the plane of mind. And it is here that in Vinoba's discourses and experiences one finds a manual to solve these problems.

Meditation, which is the seventh limb of Patanjali's Yoga-shastra, has always remained elusive to most common practitioners, and any effort in that direction is usually frustrating. This book gives both a diagnosis and prescription for the wandering, mundane mind.

Vinoba emphasises here two things, which are essential in various references and life situations. First is

chitta-shuddhi which is the purification of mind and everything else from the purification of one's food intake to the purification of one's livelihood. Second is the need of detaching ourselves from our minds. He points out that this detachment is necessary not only from a spiritual point of view, but even more importantly, it is crucial for service and to be able to thrive and benefit in the age of science.

In all his writings, Vinoba maintains that life with all its aspects is one evenly woven fabric. To be able to understand and feel this unity, one's mind and intelligence needs to be unfragmented. This deep conviction and faith in the underlying unity will remove all the causes and excuses for the wandering of the mind, and the mind on its own will become quiet. He goes on to show how the mind, once it is untangled and unknotted, will allow a person to easily dive within himself and taste the nectar of the soul, which is *sat-chit-ananda*.

The effort of translating Vinoba's thoughts on *dhyana* and *yoga* into English has been undertaken with utmost humility and without any claims to scholarship. My only earnest wish and hope is that this book will end up in a person's hands who, to begin with, will be guided in the path of *dhyana*, and then through the conviction of his own experiences, spread Vinoba's practice and philosophy for the benefit of a broader English-speaking audience.

My sincere gratitude and thanks to all my teachers for their guidance and friends for their help. I am deeply obliged to Shri Sarvanarayandas for his insightful and valuable comments and editing. Special thanks to Rosanne McGraw for her help in finding the right words to express the complex concepts in this book.

— Pranati

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Different Facets of *Dhyana* (Meditation)

1

The Nature of *Dhyana*^s

1.1 The mind is fickle

* *Dhyana is useful to scrutinize the fickle nature of the mind.*

* *Similar to dhyana, dreams are useful to scrutinize the mind.*

* *The mind is our servant – observe it with detachment.*

We all must i-culcate the habit of reflecti-g by goi-g i-side our i--er sa-ctuary. We must dista-ce ourselves from our work, ego, a-d eve- our dearest emotio-s.

If we practise detachi-g our *chitta* (mi-d) from our body, memory, experie-ce, work a-d society arou-d us, we will reach such a place which is the Primal Source—from where the world was created, where there was -o body, -o *chitta*, -o world, but somethi-g was there.

Some call it Pure Existe-ce, some call it No-- Existe-ce a-d some call it Supreme Spirit. People grasp it as per their capacity a-d comprehe-sio-. But that is the o-ly Primal Source. If we access that, the *chitta* will become extremely peaceful, pleasa-t a-d sere-e.

This is a matter of experie-ce, -ot of imagi-atio-. Similar to the experie-ces of a wakeful state these experie-ces are also objective, a-d from a particular poi-t of view ca- be regarded as more real.

Whe- we reach that Primal Source we become detached eve- from our ow- *chitta*.

Whatever is done by a human being is done by the agency of the mind. If this agency through which we act is distorted and corrupt, then all the work that is done by this agency will go wrong. Even if the eyesight is good, if what is seen is interpreted by a corrupt (perverted) mind, then the idea of what was seen will be perverted. Thus, although the actions are done by the organs, the state of the doer's mind decides the merit of the act, whether it is good or bad. Hence, the nature of the mind must be examined and diagnosed.

Dhyana is the acid test for the concentration of the mind. The mind gets easily concentrated when it hears melodious music or divine songs as it gets a point on

§ *Dhyana* – Normally translated as meditation. It is a process whereby the consciousness is transformed from the material plane to the transcendent/spiritual plane.

which to focus. Hence the capacity of concentration does not get tested here; it is truly tested in *dhyana*. Once you stop doing everything and sit quietly for *dhyana* you start seeing the true nature of the mind – *chitta*[¶]. *Dhyana* is the best tool to examine the fickle nature of the mind.

The moment we instruct the mind to be quiet for *dhyana*, it starts running around and will not settle down. It might think of a sacred place or some unclean, unholy place, but either would disrupt the *dhyana*. If a seeker wants to know whether his mind is under his control or not, *dhyana* is the one and only touchstone for this purpose.

When one sits for *dhyana*, the mind does not become one-pointed. It starts running around and one cannot meditate, but there is some benefit if one observes the wandering of the mind. When one does something with full concentration, the mind remains steady and hence one cannot see what its tendencies and inclinations are. *Dhyana* is an opportunity to examine the mind. In the morning I sat for prayers, and a bird chirped. This reminded me of an identical chirp I heard twelve years back in a place I had visited. Then I remembered the person I was visiting, and this friend telling me of his son's death in a railway accident. Then I remembered all the other places I had visited, such as Mumbai, Nagpur, etc. Thus the mind runs here and there, helter-skelter. It just needs a connection to continue wandering. After meditating, try writing down an account of that session. Do it for ten or twelve different *dhyana* sessions. Then read it as though you were reading someone else's biography. While reading, know very well that it is not your account; it is your mind's account. You will discover the mind's propensities. Next time, try to keep the mind from following them.

¶ *Chitta* – A composite word; comprised of mind, intellect and ego (sense of individual self).

Sometimes it so happens that a wish or desire arises in your mind. Upon a little reflection, you feel that the wish or desire is inappropriate. That means that there is some other agency that is restraining the mind, and this agency is the sense and ability of discrimination (*Vivek*). *Vivek* is different than mind, and we must realize this. To understand this, one should neither follow the mind completely, nor go totally against it. One should observe the mind as a witness, so that one can understand it better.

We fail to realize that we are the master of the mind; the mind is our servant. Suppose we are a businessman and the mind is the clerk; what will be the fate of the business if we leave it completely in the clerk's hands? Similarly, it is a disaster when we relinquish the reins of the mind. Sometimes we feel as if we are under attack, but in reality this attack or accusation is not on us, but on the desires of the mind. The mind is our servant, but we identify with it so much that we lose objectivity, and feel that we ourselves are under attack. Instead, if we can keep our 'witnessivity', and realize that it is the servant that has been accused, we will judge the servant, and if need be, we will reprimand him. However, we lose the status of a master and identify ourselves with the mind; hence cannot reprimand the mind.

Upanishad says, य इह मनुष्याणां महत्तां प्राप्नुवन्ति, ध्यानापादांशा इवैव ते भवन्ति (Whosoever has gained success in any field, he has gained it through *dhyana*). Great scientists become completely engrossed in their research. Their mind is completely absorbed in their work; that too is mediation, but they are using the contemplation of science as a support. Just by sitting quietly, the mind does not become focused, it needs some support.

The *dhyana* that we are aiming at is one without any support. Focus of a scientist's *dhyana* is noble, that of a sensual man would be ignoble. Yet both have the support

of their subjects for their *dhyana*. However, the true nature of one's mind can be tested only in *dhyana* when it is attempted without any support.

What is true for *dhyana* is also true for dreams. In dreams also, the mind is fickle because of impulsive tendencies. These mental mutations (*vikar*) are even more active in dreams, though in a wakeful state they might be latent. So one needs to examine and control one's dreams.

Through *dhyana* we can triumph over the mind, and it will become subservient to us. Slowly, gradually we will be able to have control over the dreams as well. This will not stop our dreams completely as there are other reasons also behind dreams. But it is possible to gain control over these other reasons as well.

Observe the movement of the mind in *dhyana* and dreams. Know that this is the game of the mind; do not be intimidated by it. The moment you identify with it, you will be afraid to scrutinize it. Just as whatever good or bad that comes in my mind is not your responsibility, in the same way you are not responsible for whatever comes into your own mind. Let it go on wandering, a thousand and one things will come across your mind, but no one can put you on trial for those thoughts. But if you act according to your mind, you can be charged and punished. If you remain detached from your mind, no one can punish you. It is easier for us to detach ourselves from the body – if we have a sore, we can still smile. That means it is easy to detach ourselves from the body. It is not as easy to detach ourselves from the mind because we have no cognizance that we are not the mind. Instead we become slaves of the mind and identify with the mind completely.

First, scrutinize the mind in *dhyana* and in dreams. Secondly, establish the fact in your *chitta* that we are always separate from the mind.

1.2 Purification of the mind: essential for *dhyana*

* *Cleansing of the mind is necessary before dhyana.*

* *One, dhyana is not beneficial without chittashuddhi‡.*

* *Second, if one accomplishes dhyana through strong will-power, without cleaning of the chitta, it will be detrimental to both the practitioner and the world.*

Many people try to meditate, concentrate without purifying the mind, but then the mind runs all over the place. According to Hindu tradition, one is expected to bathe prior to worship to cleanse the body. Likewise, before one starts to meditate, one should cleanse the mind of the impurities and the tarnish of the mind. Then and then only, can one meditate.

At times a flame or trickling water is used for *dhyana*; that is the external support. In reality, God is inside us, not outside, but God gets covered with the veil of the mind and intellect. This is the covering and God is veiled inside. In a lantern, there is a flame inside, but if the glass that protects the flame is covered in dust, the flame is not visible. If the dust is removed, the flame becomes clearly visible. Similarly, when the dust (that is, impurities) covering the mind and intelligence is removed, the light of the Lord within is revealed. This is the main process of *dhyana*.

It is difficult to concentrate during *dhyana*. Why is this so? Because the mind is full of impurities. Hence the best tool for *dhyana* is the removal of all these defects of the mind – the practice of purification of the mind. Once the mind is purified, one can start meditating. It is one thing to sit for *dhyana* for a short while, and quite another to be in a state of ceaseless *dhyana*. A ceaseless state of *dhyana*

‡ *Shuddhi* – Purification.

means there is no other state of mind than of *dhyana*. Even while working, one is meditating. There is nothing else in the mind, no agitation, no ripple. To attain such a state of mind, one must purge the mind of all impurities.

Only when the mind is purified will it start stabilizing. As long as there are impurities, there will be turmoil, and because of the turmoil the mind will run around. If someone is not contained and content in their current situation, one will try to change the situation. This process can continue ceaselessly. One will keep on looking for satisfaction outside oneself, without realizing that the reason for all sorrow and unhappiness is within, and it is due to the impurities of the mind. One keeps on looking for happiness outside oneself, when in actuality the happiness is within. In reality, one becomes contented not due to the situation, but due to the serenity of the mind. When the mind is quiet and serene, it becomes innately peaceful. Gita says, प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते. The pure mind will naturally remain steady and stable. The mind becomes even more fickle when one tries to make it steady without this basic preparation. Repression will result in a strong reaction. In a nutshell, how to attain purification of the mind is the crux of the problem.

First, one cannot fruitfully meditate without the purification of the mind. Secondly, even if one can meditate without purification, that will cause enormous harm both to the world and the practitioner. The demon King Ravana could meditate although he had not purified his *chitta*. He had the power of concentration, and God manifested Himself and allowed him to ask for a boon. Ravana asked for the power of destruction, which God granted to him. What was the result? He became the destroyer of the world, and in the end destroyed himself as well. This was the result of *dhyana* without purification of the *chitta*.

If the willpower is strong enough, one can meditate without purification of mind. The example of Ravana is a mythological example, which some might feel to be unsubstantiated. A present day example could be the person who discovered atomic energy. The scientist must have become completely focused; without this deeply focused state such a discovery would not have been possible. Due to tremendous willpower, his mind became one-pointed, but it lacked purification. Such a discovery could potentially destroy both the scientist and the world. This kind of *dhyana* is more a curse than a boon; it will do more harm than good. There is no benefit from this kind of *dhyana*.

1.3. How to purify the mind

- * Replace hatred with love.
- * Pratipakshabhavana† (प्रतिपक्षभावना)
- * Augment your own good qualities.
- * Destroy the mind.
- * Think of God wherever the mind may wander.
- * Japa†

The scriptures provide a methodology for purification of mind. It is called प्रतिपक्षभावना – When destructive thoughts are produced, use the strength of the imagination in the opposite, that is, more productive direction. I contemplated this and have tried to put this into practice. What is the opposite of anger? If you are angry with someone, go to that person and ask for his forgiveness, then your anger

‡ Thinking of the opposite. The term is from Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra.

† Repeated recitation of God's Name or a sacred syllable mentally or in whispering voice.

will dissipate. If you feel like assaulting someone, go to that person and try to help him with love. This practice is effective to some extent, but I feel the effect is negative. This will remove hatred, anger and conflicts. But even if you do not fight with anybody that does not mean that you will experience that your heart is filled with love. This is my personal experience; someone else's might be different. But my personal experience has brought me to the conclusion that the effect of this practice is negative. A lot of people will say that they have no animosity toward anybody, they have no enemies, but that is not enough. If there is no animosity that does not mean that there is love. You may not run to assault someone, but may lack the tendency to run to help them either.

Patanjali's second technique is: मैत्री, करुणा, मुदिता, उपेक्षा (Yoga-Sutra 1.33) – Have a friendly attitude toward those who are living in blessed contentment, have compassion toward those who are suffering, be happy with the virtuous, and ignore the sin. But in today's world a person begins to feel jealous if someone surpasses him in virtue and gets appreciation and fame for it. Seeing others engaged in virtuous deeds should rather make one joyful.

I have tried this as well; this is helpful for general purification. This is a more positive approach, but it does not give a solution to the specific obstacles an individual encounters in *dhyana*. This solves general problems in *dhyana* but there are some personal problems which impede the *dhyana* and they are not resolved. Effect of this technique is more general, so the question remains: what should I do to overcome my individual problems while meditating?

I have found a solution to overcome individual problems in *dhyana*. The idea is not to see others' faults, as well as our own faults. There are innumerable faults out there, but there has to be at least one good quality in everyone. God has not created a single human being who

is bereft of a single good quality (virtue). Have you ever seen a house without a window or a door? In the form of a good quality, God exists in everyone. Compassion, love, enthusiasm, kindness, adventurousness and a forgiving nature are some of those good qualities. So I decided to observe my own good qualities, and found that I was compassionate by nature. So I must constantly accentuate and augment this quality so that I can increase its scope and depth. I must be more compassionate today than I was yesterday; this should be everyday's practice. By practising it every day, I increase the potency of my compassion. How much do I increase that? God is the perfect manifestation of compassion. God is the mountain, I am the foothill. So draw a straight line – my compassion is a point at the foothill, God's compassion is a point at the top of the mountain. On a daily basis, proceed from the foothill to the peak. This is your path. What will be the experience? Day by day the quality will increase. It will seem as though you are getting closer and closer to God. But this just seems to be true, as God will keep on going farther and higher. As I get closer to God, God goes farther and farther. As you climb one mountain, you see peaks one after another. That is the secret of human progress. God has no limitation, no end. Hence, the quest to reach God is endless. As a result, the mind will become healthy, nourished, and strong. The problems in *dhyana* will disappear and concentration will be attained.

So, there are three techniques: the first removes impurities in the mind; the second removes general difficulties and the third removes difficulties specific to the practitioner.

There are two different paths to purification. First, wherever you see muck in the mind, cleanse it. If it reappears, wash it again. Repeat as many times as needed. Find out the impurities in the mind and wash them off one by one. The second path is to shred this mind completely

and discard it. The first way can be described as sewing the garment wherever and whenever it gets torn. The second one is, throw it away.

It is God's grace that we do not remember our past lives. If we had to remember the bad things we did in our past ten to twenty lives, it would be a terrible thing. Hence, whatever good or bad you have done, just shred it, end of story, rather than perpetually cleansing all the bad things you remember.

Saint Eknath has said, जेथें जेथें मन जाईल वासना, फिरवावें नारायणा – "Think of God wherever the mind may wander." Suppose you see tomatoes in the field, and a desire to eat those crops up in your mind. Then eat the tomatoes, taking them verily as God Himself. Whatever appears before you is in reality God Himself. Due to devotional association, one can see God in everything. So I suggest: Keep your mind under constant vigilance. Once the mind is aware of this vigilance, it will keep quiet. As Eknath said, "Think of God wherever the mind may wander."

There are many means of purification of the mind. *Japa* is particularly important. Address God by any name with faith and devotion, this will be your saviour. The effect of *japa* is due to faith. Faith is the foundation of *japa*.

1.4 Making concentration possible

* *The inner spinning of thoughts must be stopped.*

* *Do not waste the energy of contemplation on mundane things.*

* *Regulate every aspect of life.*

* *See auspiciousness everywhere.*

There are three principles in the path of *dhyana*[§]; first is concentration of the mind, second is moderation in

life which is conducive to the concentration of the mind, and third is to have equanimity and evenness in outlook.

Without these three things, one cannot begin *sadhana*[‡], that is, spiritual practice. Concentration of the mind means controlling its fickle nature. Moderation in life means every action is regulated. Equanimity and evenness in outlook mean a positive and constructive outlook towards the world. *Dhyana* is comprised of these three things.

Concentration is a prerequisite of every task, be it temporal or spiritual. Success is elusive without concentration. Yes, you want to concentrate, but how to do it? Lord Krishna says in Gita, "Keep your mind anchored in the Self and think of nothing else."

But how can this be attained? Our mind is filled with *samsara*[†]. Unless that is emptied out, concentration remains an impossible goal. We waste the Self's boundless power to gain knowledge of external, petty things. But this must be stopped. Due to a wandering mind, human beings lose all their power and strength and this results in lack of self-control or self-regulation.

Unless the mindset is changed, concentration remains impossible. The mind must have an inclination towards purity. A *yogic* posture alone will not give you this purity of mind. For that, you must purify every aspect of daily

§ *Yoga* means union or integration. It entails detachment from suffering and perverse propensities—in fact, from all outside interests—and integration with the Divine. Different types of *yoga* are different means or processes to achieve such integration or, in other words, spiritual liberation. *Dhyana* is one such process.

‡ *Sadhana*: Sustained practice for spiritual attainment.

† *Samsara*: In fact, *samsara* does not have a direct translation in English. It includes the whole of man's worldly life and affairs in the material world in which he is totally immersed and to which he is attached.

life. Purification of all our dealings needs change in the motive behind them. Our daily dealings should not be for personal profit, gratification of the sensory organs, or for external goals. Such purification is needed for concentration.

Another catalyst for concentration is moderation in life. Every action should be measured and weighed. Apply mathematical rules to every action. As we take medicine in measured doses, food and sleep etc. too should be measured. Count everything. Every sensory organ must be watched vigilantly. Am I eating too much, sleeping too much, are my eyes seeing something that they should not be seeing? Keep constant watch with a keen mind.

Bring regularity and moderation to life. Not only should you not hear, read or see bad things, nor gossip, but do not overdo good things either. Fruit is good for you, but do not over-indulge in that either. The inner master should not tolerate the undisciplined behaviour of the tongue. All organs of perception must be afraid of the inner master, knowing that if they do not behave, they will be punished or reprimanded. Regulated behaviour is moderation in life.

Moderation is more important than reading many scriptures. Through the practice of moderation, the organs of action and perception are disciplined. The light of the soul shines through these organs. The organs are to life what a door is to a house. The power of the soul will dissipate unless every exit is watched. The organs should be so cultured and educated that they naturally do not see, hear, taste or speak what they should not. This state will be achieved only when they are made to do this on a daily basis. Control your arms, legs, speech, eyes, and ears. Regulation means stopping them from going toward bad things, and directing them to go toward beneficial things. This is renunciation and discrimination. These are the tools for subjugating the mind.

The third thing is to have equanimity and evenness in outlook. This means having a positive outlook infused with goodwill. Without this, one cannot concentrate. The whole universe should appear to be holy and pure, without evil. The way I trust myself, I should trust the entire creation. What is there to be afraid of? Everything is pure and auspicious. विश्वम् तद् भद्रम् यदवन्ति देवाः (RigVeda 23.19) – This universe is auspicious because God is looking after it. British poet Robert Browning says, “God is in His Heaven, all is right with the world.”

There is nothing wrong or crooked in the world. If there seems to be anything wrong, it is due to my flawed perception. Reality is perverted by my misconstrued perception.

One cannot concentrate without the conviction that the world is holy and pure. A suspicious mind cannot concentrate. As long as I assume that the world is crooked, I will be on my guard from all directions. I cannot concentrate unless I get rid of the idea that I am my only saviour, and the rest of the world is looking at me like a hunter looks at its prey. The only way to concentrate is to bring that feeling of purity and sanctity. See auspiciousness everywhere and your mind will automatically become quiet. Equanimity of the mind is the best means of concentration.

1.5 Untainted mind

* No deed or action should impact the mind, nor should the mind become unhappy for lack of something.

* The mind should have neither colour nor impurity.

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It is not only a black stain that will dirty a white garment, even red or yellow colour will soil it. Like coloured clothes some people gladly allow their minds to be

coloured. They become joyous and excited by looking at the different colours of their mind. But this joy and happiness is an impurity—and this idea needs to be digested. If a son passes an examination with flying colours, a parent becomes happy. The flip side is that if the son does poorly the parent is unhappy. What we must understand here is that happiness is also an impurity of the mind. With a coloured mind, a person might look happy, but as the colour fades, the happiness too fades. We should neither have colour nor impurity. The mind should be untainted.

I often give the example of good and foul smells. In reality, both are harmful. Usually, people do not complain about fragrance, but they do complain about foul odours. My nose is such, it complains about fragrance too. When the fragrance enters the nostrils, the brain becomes dull. What is chloroform? It is also a form of smell which makes the brain lose its sensitivity. Fragrance is a mild form of chloroform. Any kind of smell diminishes the reflective power of the brain; hence, you should have neither a good smell nor a foul smell. Crisp, odourless air invigorates the intelligence. In a garden with lots of fragrant flowers the brain gets tired. Contemplation becomes unclear and dull. As the molecules of fragrance touch the nostrils, contemplation becomes torpid. This does not happen in an odourless place. The same thing happens with colour. Some people like things to be colourful, but if colour is constantly in front of you, the brain gets tired. However, one never tires of the blueness of the sky (because of its vastness). That blueness is therefore attributed to God.

It is difficult to have a perfectly untainted mind. It is difficult to attain a perpetual state of mind without any impurities like desire, anger etc. Even though it is a difficult task, it is worthwhile as the fulfilment of human life lies in doing what is onerous and formidable. No

virtuous, righteous deed or action should impact the mind, nor should it become unhappy for lack of something. This is the untainted and unconditioned state of mind. It is very difficult to free the mind of our own good, virtuous deeds. If the mind is coloured with such actions, you may ignore it temporarily, however let us at least remove that part which is impure.

To sum up, we cannot obtain stability by simply being obsessed with it. Stability can be attained only after removing the impurity. As long as the mind is not pure, stability cannot be attained. Purity will give tranquillity from inside and the mind will give up its wandering nature.

1.6 Dhyana and spirituality

* *Spiritual power cannot be abused.*

* *The powers of action and dhyana can be used for good as well as bad purposes.*

* *Only that dhyana which is done for God, infused with God and is offered to God is spiritual.*

* *The power of chitta is not necessarily related to spirituality.*

People assume that sitting in seclusion and meditating is a spiritual practice; this is a wrong notion. This practice may or may not be spiritual. Like action, *dhyana* is a power, and both these powers in themselves are non-moral. Action done with a good, positive motive will be beneficial; action done with a bad, negative motive will be detrimental. Thus, actions can be used toward both good and bad purposes. The same applies to *dhyana*. One can become a destroyer or a saviour through *dhyana*; that is, *dhyana* can be done for someone's benefit or destruction. The powers of action and *dhyana* can be used for good as well as bad purposes, and that is why they are non-moral.

My definition of spiritual power is – it cannot be used toward an evil end, it cannot be abused. The power that can be used for either beneficial or destructive purposes is a physical power, not spiritual. An example is fire; you can use it to cook food, or burn a house. The same criterion should be used to classify the powers of action and *dhyana*.

Dhyana which is connected to God will be spiritual, if it is connected to matter, it will be scientific. If it is connected to fantasy, it will be mental. In any event, if it is to be regarded as spiritual it must be connected to God. If done for God, saturated in God and done with surrender to God, then that *dhyana* is spiritual. The same thing applies to action. Actions can be mundane, destructive, service-oriented, desire-motivated, or spiritual. If the action is connected to God, for God, and offered to God, then it is spiritual. What is true for action and *dhyana* is true for *japa* as well. The field (gamut) of spirituality is a field where, because of purity of heart, a person experiences unity with the whole universe. One's attachment and hatred are completely attenuated; the mind becomes perfectly tranquil and blissful. The purity of the soul is manifested in the *chitta*. This is the nature of spirituality.

The mind has multiple powers. We want to go beyond and transcend all those mental powers. We can readily distinguish ourselves from a watch. We must learn to experience the same separation and distinctness from the mental powers. This has the highest value in the realm of spirituality. We must experience the separateness from the mind, and we must practise and study how to keep the mind aloof and away from all types of work and actions. This cannot be achieved from an unproductive verbal exchange. The mind must be driven in that direction. For that, the mind must be kept detached, it must always be vigilant. But even this effort should not turn into an action because tendencies follow actions. We do not want to be in the flux of tendencies; we want steadiness of mind. We do not have

to keep reminding ourselves that we are human; it is a natural awareness. Likewise, staying detached from the mind should be a natural state. When this is accomplished, there will be a fountain of tranquillity in the mind. It will be pure bliss, and bliss alone will give equanimity.

There is no dearth of misconceptions with regard to spirituality in India. When people see someone who behaves outside social norms in respect of eating and other bodily functions, they think that such a person is spiritual. For example, some people dress and behave erratically, and this leads others to believe that these people have reached a higher spiritual plane. I tell people that such a person should not be considered wise spiritually; that person could be deluded, hypocritical, stupid, ignorant or confused. At the most, one can say that because this person is completely absorbed in *dhyana*, there is no awareness of the body and surroundings.

The practice of *dhyana* can belong to three different categories: luminous, passionate, and inertial (*sattvic*, *rajasic*, *tamasic*[‡] respectively). It is possible to lose awareness because of absorption in *dhyana*. I used to be in that state in my childhood. If my mother, by mistake, doubled the salt in my food, I would never notice. However, that was a meditative state, not a state of knowledge. We cannot assume that all *dhyana* is spiritual. It can be used toward both good and bad ends.

‡ According to the *Sankhya* philosophy, *Prakriti*, or the Nature, is constituted of three *gunas*, i.e. basic elements or essential qualities or modes: *Sattva* is the principle of luminosity, equilibrium and harmony; *rajas* is the principle of passion, restlessness, endeavour and initiation; and *tamas* is the principle of ignorance and inertia.

2

The Purpose of *Dhyana*2.1 Practice of *dhyana*: to explore the Inner Mystery

- * *Three categories: conventional, mystic and stupid*
- * *Ignoring dhyana will impede one's own progress.*
- * *Experiencing the inner world through dhyana.*
- * *Experiencing the Universal Consciousness in the individual.*
- * *Without dhyana a whole aspect of experience will be missed.*

In today's world, our main aim is to serve humankind, as the whole of humanity is in a dire state. In fact, humankind needs even more attention in that direction. However, the subjects of prayer, spiritual practice and *dhyana* still need to be properly understood. There are mystical aspects in our lives; ignoring these will be a kind of spiritual blindness.

When it comes to the conventional aspects of life, some are blind believers. When it comes to mystical aspects, some are blind believers and some are blind skeptics. They have no valid proof or reason for their skepticism; blindness is the only basis for it. Hence the experiences in the realm of prayer and *dhyana* can be divided into three categories—those resulting from ignorance, mysticism and tradition. After appropriate analysis, rejecting something may be the right thing to do, but rejecting it without analysis is stupidity. If something does not have a firm basis and cannot be

conclusively proven, then it is mystic, which requires further investigation. Blind faith, without using due diligence, is based on convention.

Today's education, which is widely propagated, is the very reason that educated people do not understand mysticism. This education is like a golden veil – *हिरण्मय पात्र*. Although it is called knowledge, it is really ignorance. When the sun rises, the stars disappear and then aspects of nature, like trees and mountains, become visible. The sun makes nature visible but veils the innumerable stars. The sun is very small and insignificant compared to the stars which it veils. Similarly, today's knowledge unravels the mysteries of the physical world, but veils the mystical experiences.

Here, in front of my hut there is a statue of Goddess Ganga. Over her head is the symbol of ॐ (Om). At night and even during the day I meditate upon the Ganga and ॐ (Om). If you look at a person who is absorbed in *dhyana*, nothing much can be comprehended. The posture that one sits in for *dhyana* is the only thing that can be seen. The mental state cannot be seen or inferred by looking at the physical posture. To make matters worse, the process of *dhyana* cannot be explained or taught in a concrete way. But ignoring this aspect of life will impede one's spiritual growth.

Jesus Christ taught the importance of service to humankind. We learn from the New Testament that he was crucified at the age of 33, and his ministry spanned just three years. We know nothing from the New Testament about his activities between the age of 12 and 30. When Jesus Christ was twelve, he went to a temple and stayed there for a long time. His family noticed that he was missing and searched for him. When they finally found him, they asked him why he had not been concerned about his parents. He replied that he was with

his Heavenly Father, which we may take to mean that he was in a meditative state. He never revealed this aspect of his spiritual life to the people. Instead he taught the minimum human duty of "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Prophet Mohammed told his disciples not to over-indulge in fasting. His disciples asked why he was not allowing them to fast when he himself fasted frequently. He replied that he got his nourishment from within.

Lord Buddha fasted for forty days. After breaking his fast, he gave sermon on compassion and service. Some people interpret this incident incorrectly. They feel that after meditating Lord Buddha realized that doing *dhyana* was wrong. However, as I understand it, he has never said so. While describing the characteristics of a *brahmin*[‡], he says that a *brahmin* should be so emaciated that every vein on his body should be visible. Buddha did not discourage the practice of *dhyana*; in fact, he made *dhyana* the main pillar of his spiritual practice. Hence, this aspect should not be avoided.

We get a glimpse of this aspect in Gandhiji's autobiography as well. We are also aware of the discussions that he had with Rajachandrabhai. He started his work only after his spiritual doubts were satisfactorily answered. He did not have mystical experiences prior to devoting himself to service. He used to say that Truth is God. People took that to be a scientific statement, but it was not merely scientific. Once I asked him about God-realization. I asked, "It is fine that you say that Truth is God, but you did talk about your inner voice at the time of your fast. Is there any mystical element in it?" He replied, "Yes, there is something mystic which is beyond the ordinary. I heard that voice clearly, as if a human being was speaking. I

‡ The class entrusted with priestly duties and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

went on asking, 'What should I do?' I heard the reply, 'You should fast.' I asked, 'For how many days?' The voice replied, 'For twenty one days.'" Here, one was asking questions, and the other was giving replies. So it was like a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Gandhiji was fully committed to truth, so there was no scope for illusions. He said, "I heard the voice of the Lord." Upon which I asked whether God could have form. He answered, "No, God does not have form, but I heard His voice." I replied, "Form and voice, both are transient. If you heard the voice, then the form can be seen too." I then referred to the spiritual experiences of others as well as my own, and he conceded that it was possible to have the vision of God.

What I want to emphasize is that we do not normally delve into the deeper truths of life, but instead we carry on our lives on the superficial level.

If I am asked whether everyone should practice prayer, *dhyana* and worship, I would say that each person should follow his own personal experience. But if some innocent-minded person asked the same question, I would definitely recommend practice of these things. Then let one's own experience decide; if one experiences peace through that practice, one should continue it, otherwise not.

One more thing needs to be added to this idea. The field of devotion is a distinctly independent realm, and its experiences too are unique. Desireless, egoless service will give a true sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. However, devotion and its experiences are altogether different than the experiences of service. If a person is working from a humanitarian plane, is doing desireless and egoless service, his experiences will be from a humanitarian, ethical plane and not from a scientific plane. Therefore, scientific experiences will be excluded from this. Beyond the plane of benevolence and science is a third dimension,

that of devotion. Scientists have experience in the field of science, humanitarians experience desireless service. Both these experiences are incomplete in the absence of experiences in the realm of devotion – what Lord Buddha calls अधिचित्तेन आयोगः, which means a transcendental state in which one has a direct vision of that which lies beyond the mind. This vision can be in the form of images and symbols. As vast as the universes of science and humanity are, there is still a third universe within ourselves which is an implicit, intangible universe that can be experienced through the practice of *dhyana*, worship etc. Even without these experiences, the mind can have a sense of contentment and fulfilment, but with these experiences, the mind will become strong. Contentment will become more profound, and divine consciousness will manifest through such a mind. It is due to this that many have had the direct vision of the Divine. These visions cannot be explained from the plane of morality or compassion, nor through the lens of science or objective reasoning. If one ignores *dhyana*, prayer and worship, the experience of one's life will be incomplete and ultimate spiritual liberation will remain elusive. One can become pure and wise without them; but cannot attain Self-realization.

Selfless, egoless service and being rooted in the Self will make one pure, and with commitment to science one will achieve serene intelligence, however one will attain Self-realization only when one experiences the manifestation of the Universal Consciousness within one's own consciousness. A person will become aware of the completeness of life and become Self-realized only when he experiences the Universal Consciousness in his own consciousness in wakefulness as well as in dreamless sleep. This plane is different than the plane of wisdom and objectivity. Life is a constant search and quest.

Even in a homogeneous group, it is impossible that

everyone would have the same dream. It is quite possible that in a wakeful state, everyone can be contemplating the same issue, and cooperating to achieve something together. However, having the same dream is unheard of. The reason is that in dreams, an individual remains an individual. Unless and until the individual is absorbed into the group, his individuality remains intact. The experience of the Supreme Consciousness within one's Self too will remain a personal experience; it can be shared for enrichment; however, it will remain an individual experience.

The second example is death. Everybody will die separately, even when a lot of people die at the same time because of some natural calamity. They do not share an identical death as they have not merged into each other and become one. In spite of the time and space being common, the experience of death is personal. Death, birth, dreams, and deep absorption (*samadhi*[§]) are completely personal things. Deep, dreamless sleep is the only state which is bereft of I-ness. Here, the individual consciousness is completely absorbed in the Universal Consciousness, where all become one. If not for this experience, the theory of *advaita*[‡] could never have been established. If not for deep, dreamless sleep, everybody would have remained a separate, distinct entity. The extraordinary experience of deep sleep is where humans, animals, birds and all living beings become bereft of their distinct identities. Based on this experience, the underlying unity of the universe is proven.

In a nutshell, most of our experiences are personal and

§ *Samadhi*: The state of total absorption with no awareness of outer world, wherein the individual Self is in communion with the Divine.

‡ Theory of non-dualism; the philosophy that the whole creation is one; that there is no duality between the individual Self and *Brahman*, the Supreme Self.

individual; they can be shared through dialogue, but they remain one's own.

If we avoid these experiences and think of life, one might be content but not perfect. One can be absorbed but will not be Self-realized. Here, I am distinguishing between the states of deep absorption (*samadhi*) and Self-realization. The state of Self-realization is different from the state of absorption. By the state of Self-realization, I do not mean *yogasiddhi*†. *Yogasiddhi* is altogether a different subject wherein a human gets supernatural powers, but they are trivial. Some of those are particularly prominent and have been named as the eight great superpowers. But even these eight together are insignificant. The *siddhi* that I am discussing is the *siddhi* of Self-realization. It is the experience of Universal Divinity. To experience that, one must experience the Universal Consciousness within one's individual consciousness. If one practises *dhyana*, worship, etc. with faith, then this whole field of experiences will reveal itself. Otherwise, it will remain closed.

It is possible that one may not need this element of mysticism, but in that case everyone must remain truthful to one's own self and to others. One must accept the facts with objectivity. One must have the capacity to accept things as they are. A time may come when one is in despair and although others offer sympathy and love, it does not prove to be helpful. At such times, your firm conviction and faith in the mystic principles will keep you afloat so that you do not drown in life's challenges.

† *Siddhi*: Fulfilment of *sadhana* or the supernatural powers.

Yogasiddhi: The supernatural powers attained through the practice of *yoga*.

2.2 Dhyana is symbolism

* In reality there is a fundamental difference between a symbol of God and God Himself.

* However, the symbol draws your mind to the original thing.

* Gross conventions and emotional associations can be used as rungs of a ladder, and we can benefit from them.

* Dhyana upon idols, pictures and colours of light can be used to contemplate and assimilate positive qualities.

Allegory, simile, metaphor, analogy and drawing a picture of an object are, truly speaking, different forms of *dhyana*. Ascribing a quality of one thing onto another is *dhyana*. To accept a symbol or image as the representative of something else is the principle of *dhyana*. *Dhyana* is thus make-believe. In the sphere of language, for instance, one can write the word "chair" on a piece of paper, through which one conceptualizes a wooden object: this is *dhyana*. This does not add to knowledge. Outside the realm of written language, this has no independent use. It simply constitutes an image or symbol of an object. Different languages will have different symbols for the same thing. Representing one thing with a symbol is make-believe. If you write "sugar" on a piece of paper and send it to someone, they will send you the sweet and edible thing known as sugar. Real sugar and the word "sugar" are two different things. The same magnitude of difference lies between the symbol for God and God Himself.

God has innumerable forms and images. Whatever form is in harmony with your aptitude will work. Whatever satisfies you and helps you to meditate is sufficient. However, personally, form does not satisfy me. By looking at a particular form, devotional fervor is aroused and imbibed. This helps growth. If I sit for

dhyana and an image of Bharat-Rama¶ appears before me, it is not meditation on God. It is meditation on the symbol of God as it is connected to a form. If I write “sugar” on a piece of paper, would that satisfy you? You would need real sugar to be satisfied. Similarly the images are useful to draw your attention toward the Absolute. But if you remain unduly focused on the image, the real thing will elude you and you will be left with only the image.

I imagine different qualities when I meditate upon God. I find saint-poet Guru‡ Nanak’s† dictum relevant in this context: “True devotion is possible only by imbibing the qualities of the God to which you pray.”

If we take it for granted that God is compassionate, then we must become embodiments of compassion. The compassion and love for all is a divine quality. If love or compassion is limited to one person or to a limited group, then it is just an ordinary human quality. Truly speaking, love with boundaries cannot be called real love. Love must be expansive and vast. God is the embodiment of all great qualities. It is a lifelong *sadhana* to imbibe at least one of those qualities at God’s level. If even one person achieves this, it will be a great achievement. It is believed that such a manifestation occurred in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu§; love was manifested in its fullest possible extent in him. Even if one divine quality is completely manifested in one heart, there are other qualities to be imbibed, and humankind needs those too. There are different sects and faiths because

¶ Reference here is to the stone image depicting the meeting of Ram and Bharat, brothers from the epic Ramayana, which Vinoba found while digging at Pavnar.

‡ Teacher, particularly a spiritual teacher or master.

† Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was the founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh *Gurus*.

§ Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534) was a Vaishnava saint and social reformer in Eastern India.

people see God in different forms like mother, father, and *guru*. Hence there are different ways to worship and meditate. I like to see God in the form of a mother. Friendship too has a special place in my life. In addition, I have great respect for *guru*. My relation to God is that of disciple and *guru*. Upon realizing that even these three are limiting conditions in true meditation, I renounced these emotional aspects. However, even now, when God is described as a *Guru* or Mother, my eyes well up. These tears, though pure, are an obstacle in meditation.

But this kind of limiting condition is useful for meditation; there is no point in giving it up early in one’s practice. To an extent, such conditions are helpful in the growth and journey. Great souls can advance without the help of these tools. However, it must be remembered that for the rest of us, meditating on God’s idols and qualities is helpful. Many saints have meditated on different idols; I too have meditated upon Bharat-Rama. In childhood I used to read the devotional songs of various saints from Maharashtra¶ and hence I have meditated upon Lord Vitthal§ for some time. In Baroda§ I used to meditate upon Lord Buddha. So I have been meditating upon different forms at different times. In Brahmailydia Mandir† I meditated upon the idol of goddess Ganga. Looking at her, I realized that there is compassion in her eyes, serenity in her face, motherly love in her bosom, and strength in her waist. This cluster of qualities was derived from a

¶ Maharashtra: A Central-Western state of India. This is the birth state of Vinoba and he founded Brahmailydia Mandir there.

§ Lord Vitthal: A deity worshipped particularly in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

§ Baroda: A city in the Indian state of Gujarat.

† Brahmailydia Mandir: The ashram of celibate sisters founded by Vinoba at Pavnar in Central India.

stone idol; this is the process of meditation.

As the idols are helpful, so are different pictures of incarnations of the Lord. Although personally I do not hang actual pictures, I put up mental pictures of the Lord which are not a hindrance. Meditating upon Christ means meditating upon the symbol of ultimate love. He sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity. Christians meditate upon Him, which imparts the idea that we must sacrifice ourselves for the service of humanity. Such service is meditation upon God's qualities of love and sacrifice. Whether one meditates upon an idol or an incarnation, the important thing to remember is that the goal is to imbibe the divine qualities.

It is a common experience to see different colours during meditation such as red, yellow, blue, etc. The colour black describes a quality of changelessness, as no other colour can alter it. Colours signify different qualities in different cultures. In our culture, red is the colour of love. Suppose you go to see a great person and you receive a red fruit as a sign of grace. That should be interpreted as a blessing that one's heart should be filled with love. White is the colour of purity. If you receive a white flower, make your heart pure and illumined. Maybe, while meditating, Lord Buddha saw a colour, and he interpreted it as far-reaching compassion. This constitutes contemplation of qualities through light.

In summary, meditation uses symbols as tools. The symbol can be internal or external. Various letters and idols are all symbols. Some people object to this assumption, saying that it is a delusion. I will gladly accept this to be a delusion only if we agree that the whole world is a delusion as well. But taking the whole world to be real and the symbols to be delusion is beyond my comprehension. All literature and the knowledge acquired through it is a delusion, which has no corresponding

objective reality behind it (*vikalpa*[§]).

But our daily life experience is quite different. If I write on a piece of paper, "Send me a watch," you will send a watch to me. You do not argue as to what is the connection between the letters W A T C H and the actual watch. We all understand that the letters W A T C H denote the object, watch. We have all agreed to this attribution, and that is why we can have various types of dealings between us, whether the dealings are of goods, thoughts, or ideas. If you ask for a watch in a non-English speaking place, you will not get one. You will have to use the word from the local language which means "watch." An object can be denoted by different words, that is, symbols. This is the idea behind idols and objects of worship of different sects. Hence, when people approve of literature and denounce worship, support education but oppose worship, I find it illogical. No education is possible without this symbolism. The whole education and literature has delusion (*vikalpa*) for its foundation, which is similar to idol or symbol worship. If asked whether there is something higher than this, I will say, 'Yes'. There can be a higher plane of practice and experience. But this kind of symbolism has its place in daily practice and personal growth. Only when the world is taken as a delusion will the practice of symbol-based meditation become meaningless.

We should have empathy with the natural world around us. Bhagavat says, महानुभूतिः सकलानुभूतिः (empathy with all is the greatest empathy). Without such empathy we will lose sensitiveness. This empathy has a great value as it makes us humble and sensitive. The world around us should be experienced with all its shades and colours. This sensitivity to the world does not negate science. In

§ *Vikalpa*: Verbal delusion which has no objective reality behind it.

this way, when we meditate upon the moon in its different stages, we will imbibe different qualities. The things in nature can become symbols of different qualities. In Buddhism, for example, the moon is a very significant symbol for meditation.

Someone can ask me, "Does a stage come when all these symbols cease to exist or lose their meaning in meditation?", and I will say, 'Yes.' Finally even a scripture like the Gita is to be set aside. We use words to develop our understanding and refine our experiences. Finally, undoubtedly, we want to dispense with the support of verbal symbols for meditation. Hence I will not insist upon the path of prayer and worship if one has an evolved mind. One can judge for oneself whether one's mind is evolved or not. Asked with a child's innocence how to proceed, I will advise the path of prayer and worship. I do not want to misguide anybody by saying that there is no valid justification for prayer and worship. It definitely has a mystic aspect to it, which one must experience.

3

The Process of Meditation

3.1 Process

- * *Witness the wandering of the mind.*
- * *Idol, picture, reflection and japa are all supports.*
- * *The power of meditation is the power of assimilating good qualities.*
- * *Increase the gap between two resolves.*
- * *Use your strong desire for concentration, and then give up that desire.*
- * *Compared to external tools, concentration is more important.*
- * *Intensity of meditation is not dependent on duration.*

Every day we should spare some time for meditation. At the beginning of the meditation session, observe the wandering of the mind. Follow the mind wherever it goes, and after the session, make a log of it. Witness and study the wandering of the mind for ten or twelve days. You will see why and where the mind goes and will observe that it has its set routes like a horse on a milk run. The mind goes on the same ten or twelve paths; it wanders on the familiar path or some combination of one or more paths. If the mind is chased and examined every day, it will get exhausted. The mind will realize that "this person

has ceased to identify with me," and it will give up its wandering. The mind becomes conscious of being watched and gives in. It is as though the mind is camera shy and being photographed at every moment, it will eventually just hide out.

After some days we should tell our minds, "Enough of this wandering, stop." This is the process of restraint, which is possible after witnessing the mind. Once we have the map of the movement of the mind, we can restrain its movement, stop the movement of the mind and stabilize it repeatedly on the chosen object of meditation. For meditation, choose an object that is based on faith, something that evokes some noble feelings. This object could be an idol or a *mantra*[§]. For a while we will need the support of a *mantra* or an idol to stabilize the mind. But after a while we will see that the mind remains stable and at peace without such support.

So the process of meditation will be: first, witnessing the movement of the mind, then restraining the movement of the mind through various symbols, and finally achieving a sense of peace and stability without any external support.

After daily self-examination of the mind, remove whatever is impure and reveal the good things. As we keep a record of daily external activities, we should keep an account of the working of the mind as well. We should have complete control over the closing and opening of the door of the mind, and this should not be difficult. For the people who have big egos and ambitions, this might sound difficult, but those who just want to discharge their duty and have no attachment to it or to its fruit, should have an easier time.

§ *Mantra*: A sacred word imbued with subtle potency.

Sadhakas[†] (spiritual seekers) have suggested many ways to achieve concentration in meditation. One should follow the way that appeals and is accessible to him. One way is to reflect upon the meaning of a verse or a sentence. You can choose different sentences. Although the sentences are different, through that method the mind learns to stabilize. Christians follow this practice when they meditate. Hindus choose an idol, visualize the idol and reflect upon it.

Another way is to chant God's name, wherein the practitioners use various names of God. The people who belong to sects which believe in an attributeless God use the method of breathing while silently chanting सोऽहं ("So hum"). *Brahman*[§] which means "the Absolute" is denoted by "सः". The individual ego is denoted by "अहं" which should be exhaled—let go of it since it is toxic. "सः" is the in-breath, which represents the Divine. Let yourself be infused by it. This is a time-proven method.

Another way is by reflecting on the virtues. You see various positive qualities of high magnitude in different people. Reflect on them and try to assimilate those qualities. You see love in Lord Krishna. In Him you see the full manifestation of love without any kind of attachment. You see the full manifestation of Truth in Lord Rama. This means that meditating upon Lord Krishna is meditating upon Love. Meditating upon Lord Rama is meditating upon Truth. Different qualities are

† *Sadhaka*: Spiritual aspirant.

§ The Absolute, the Supreme Truth, the Ultimate reality. *Brahman* is the Supreme principle that is the root cause of the generation, evolution and extension of the world. It pervades everything and transcends everything. It is said to have three aspects: *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. *Sat* means being. *Sat* also means abiding, actual, right, self-existent essence. *Chit* means perception, knowledge or consciousness. *Ananda* means bliss.

manifested in nature as well. The milk in a mother's breast is a manifestation of love. Similarly there is the quality of love in nature. Consistency is another quality that you see in nature. The sun, moon, and seasons come very regularly, and one should strive to imbibe that degree of consistency.

"Truth, love and compassion" can be a *japa*. It can be a good form of remembering these qualities. Good qualities can be remembered in two different ways, one is gross and one is subtle. The gross way is to remember the stories that delineate those qualities. For instance, remember the stories that describe the truth-abiding quality of Lord Rama, the love of Lord Krishna and the compassion of Lord Buddha. On a subtle plane, contemplate on the qualities such as truth etc., which are pervading the universe in an unmanifested form.

Do not try to assimilate the quality that you lack. Instead respect those who have that particular quality. Respect others' qualities more and more and evolve your own qualities. This process would eventually culminate into *samadhi*. We might have some faults, but do not envy those who do not have those faults.

The world is full of good and bad qualities. When you have achieved the power of drawing out the good qualities, you can deduce that you have mastered the power of meditation. Just sitting in lotus pose with eyes closed does not give you the power of meditation. Only when you have gained the ability to draw the good qualities from the surroundings, you will have gained the power of meditation.

Some people choose symbols, like a zero, or a vertical or horizontal line, instead of idols for support in meditation. These different symbols are taken to stabilize and support the mind.

Ideally speaking, one should be in a state which is neither sleep, nor meditation. It is a pure state of "being," complete, unwavering and untainted wakefulness without the awareness of being awake. Sleep is a state of nothingness and emptiness; hence meditation should not be a sleepy state. If the mind is completely quiet without any ripples, and the body is completely motionless, one will experience the primal state. The primal state of being is quiet, peaceful and unalloyed. The question is, how to attain this?

The seekers have found a solution for this. Shankaracharya[†] has mentioned this as well. As one resolve comes in the mind and then leaves the mind, the next one immediately emerges like a revolving door. Suppose I think of cooking. Once that is done, I think of eating. Because of these different resolves the mind gets tired. As one kind of tiredness ends, another type of tiredness begins. If observed minutely, one can notice that between two such resolves, the mind is quiet and in its primal form. One should increase the duration of this state.

Science tells us that there is a pause between two breaths. There is a space, and hence peace, in the pause or gap between breaths. Even in deep sleep, moments of wakefulness and sleep alternate. Likewise the *chitta* is always covered with different thoughts, but as one thought departs from the mind, and before another comes to it, the *chitta* is momentarily revealed in its true state. When the *chitta* is experienced with its clarity and purity, that moment is illuminated. That moment is a state of absence of thought and reflection. Shankaracharya says, "This is the moment of liberation; increase these moments." As we suggest to a tired person to take rest,

[†] Shankaracharya is one of the greatest Indian philosophers and a propounder of non-dualism. He restored the *Vedic Dharma* and *Advaita Vedanta* to its pristine purity and glory.

the *chitta* demands rest from the thoughts and reflection so it can show its true nature. This is the demand of the inner consciousness.

Shankaracharya says that in a pearl necklace, the string is hidden by the pearls, but one can see a little bit of thread between two pearls. Similarly, the cosmic consciousness is hidden by the resolves or modifications of the mind and can be experienced in between two modifications. The mind is constantly covered or hidden by these modifications. These modifications are a result of different resolves and fantasies of the mind. But the time gap in between two such modifications is the one that needs to be harnessed and increased in length. During such intervals the cosmic consciousness reveals itself. When sleep is complete but one is not fully awake, that twilight state is the quiet and pure state. The cosmic consciousness surfaces when the mind is free of these waves of modifications. One may not be aware of this pure, modification-free state, but it is there.

Truly speaking, the cessation of thought happens naturally, but that lasts only for half a moment. Shankaracharya says, "Increase that time to one moment, two moments, three moments - -" Those who want to realize the Supreme should gradually restrain the thought process. Go on increasing the gap, so that the gap increases from moments to minutes, from minutes to hours.

Saint-poet Jnanadeva[‡] has tried to explain this phenomenon with different analogies. For example, a river is overflowing after a heavy rain and dries out in summer. But in between, it is flowing within its own banks, in its true nature. Another example is that the day has ended

[‡] Jnanadeva or Jnaneshwar was a great poet-saint from the 13th century who is well-known for his commentary on Gita (Jnaneshwari) in the Marathi language.

and so have the hectic activities of the day, but the idleness of night has not set in. The twilight time has no predominance of any quality, and hence it is quiet. Similarly, one must pay attention to the time gap between deep sleep and wakefulness and lengthen that.

Shankaracharya says, "Restrain the modifications." In order to learn restraint, sit silently and quietly before going to bed. Meditate for a while as you are sitting on your bed. Once you get up in the morning, meditate for 5, 10, 15 minutes. Whenever time permits, meditate. This will increase the power of meditation.

* * *

Compare all the desires in your mind, and find out which is your dominant desire. Leave all other things aside for a time and follow only that strong desire. Be consumed with that desire and concentrate on the fulfilment of that desire alone. For instance, a student has other desires as well as a desire to study scriptures. But if the desire of studying the scriptures is the strongest of his desires, he will sacrifice other things for it. He will stay and study with his *guru* in the *ashram*, and eat whatever he gets, curbing his desire to eat delicacies. He will customize his life, which will be conducive to fulfilling this prominent desire. This is a tactic of *dhyanyoga*. Let go of all other desires, and concentrate on only one for a while, and then let go of that desire as well. Use that strong desire to teach the mind to concentrate, and finally free yourself by giving up that desire as well.

In different places, music, a flame etc., are used to help the mind concentrate. This is all right as an experiment. In my mind this kind of one-pointedness does not have high merit as it is just changing the form of the desire. A child, while eating sweets, has a one-pointed mind. So does a student who is studying, or a doctor who is performing surgery. Similarly, one can get absorbed while listening to

music. No task can be successful without such one-pointedness. But spiritually and for the purpose of meditation this does not mean a lot, although in daily life it has undeniable importance. These external props (like music) are just like a bridge that helps people in going from the banks of sensual pleasures to the banks of devotion.

One-pointedness comes spontaneously to a toddler, but as his brain is not fully developed it does not last long. This one-pointedness comes very easily to a child as he has a pure heart. In a nutshell, purification of the mind is the main and actual means of enduring one-pointedness. All other things are just external devices of little value.

Expecting that the mind will become one-pointed in spite of being full of different desires is an illusion. Imagine that it is dawn, and you have just awakened from sleep. Your mind is fresh as you have just bathed, are sitting in the right posture and have chosen an idol on which to concentrate. In spite of these conducive conditions, the mind might remain focused for only 5 to 10 minutes. The mind has become one-pointed with the help of these external conditions, so the state does not endure. In reality, if *samadhi* is the original state of the soul, it should be spontaneous, and should not need any external effort. It should happen without doing anything. Eating, drinking, swimming, listening, and walking, all these are actions and require effort and energy, which is obvious. But *samadhi* is the original state, where external effort and labour have no need, purpose or place.

The Gita says, "The moment the *chitta* is purified, it becomes one-pointed." This state can be described as giving up all effort. When the cessation of all effort is the nature of a state, it goes without saying that it should be attained spontaneously. My brother always complains that no matter how hard he tries, he cannot fall asleep. I keep telling him, "Because you try, you can't fall asleep. You

fall asleep only after you give up effort." Similarly, when one gives up all the efforts toward one-pointedness, one gets true and natural one-pointedness. Sometimes the props of one-pointedness give exactly the opposite results, and after a momentary one-pointedness, the mind becomes many-pointed and scattered.

As long as the true and natural one-pointedness is not attained, one should take the help of different means. It is proper for the practitioner to use this help.

The best time for meditation is before sunrise. It is a symbol of *sattvaguna* – luminosity. The darkness is gone, but the light has not yet come. The day is the representative of *rajoguna* – hectic activity. Night is representative of *tamoguna* – laziness or inertia. Dawn is the time of *sattvaguna*, which represents the equanimity and tranquillity of the soul. The view at that time is grand, auspicious, and edifying. It is very conducive to achieving one-pointedness. If that early morning hour is wasted, it is like wasting the whole day. It will be extremely beneficial to use that time for meditation. However, it is one thing to keep the mind steady with such external support, and it is another thing to keep the mind erect and steady on its own, like a wall. When the mind is purified and is without any modification it will remain quiet and steady on its own. Patanjali has given the same advice. According to him, meditation should be practised after *yamas*[†] and *niyamas*[‡] have become an integral part of your personality. The practice of *yamas* and *niyamas* is the practice of purification of the *chitta*. Purification of *chitta* will give tranquillity, and once that is

† *Yamas* : Absolute moral values or rules of conduct which are social observances. They are five – truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession and *brahmacharya* (celibacy).

‡ *Niyamas*: Rules of conduct which are individual observances. They are – purity, contentment, austerity, study of the Self and dedication to the Lord.

achieved one should not have to worry about stability of the intelligence, or one-pointedness. प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते । Tranquillity of the mind is the quickest way to achieve stability of the intelligence.

* * *

We expect that the external conditions should be conducive for meditation. If the surroundings are noisy and not conducive, then you cannot get the expected level of concentration. If dogs are barking when we sit for meditation, the meditation and concentration will be disturbed. Hence, choosing a peaceful place for meditation is the right thing to do. However, this aspect can be looked at from a different perspective. If in the middle of the meditation some disturbance erupts around us we should be able to turn that to our advantage. For example, if we think of barking dogs as a form or a manifestation of God, we will experience *samadhi* instantaneously.

A sick person may go for a retreat and return after getting better. We too can go into solitude for meditation, and once the power to concentrate is achieved, we can return to society. We should never forget, or overlook the fact, that one who lives in isolation also needs society to fulfil one's basic needs like food, etc. Hence do not give up society. At night, before going to bed, remember God in silence. Real solitude consists in the silent recollection of God at night and falling asleep while meditating upon God.

Some people like isolation and solitude for concentration. However, wild imagination and fears erupt and bother some people when they are alone. Ideally speaking, one should be equally comfortable in solitude and in a crowd. We should get equal joy from both.

* * *

Dhyana is not a task or work which can be evaluated or calculated in labour-time. The hours of labour can be counted, and one can be paid accordingly. There is no significant difference between the physical work done by two different people. One's output may be two or three times more than the other, but it is not possible that one's output in an hour is one thousand times greater than another's. However, in meditation it is very likely that the level of concentration and absorption one can get in five minutes is one hundred times better than the level achieved by another in fifteen minutes. Hence, mathematical calculation or chronological time is absurd in this respect.

One of my colleagues started meditation by doing it for 10 to 15 minutes, and increased his time to 2 to 3 hours. Once he sat for meditation for 8 to 9 hours, and after coming out of it described the blissful state and the joy he got from it. I wrote to him that his meditation had become similar to a sensual pleasure and he was getting addicted to it. "Try shortening your meditation to twenty-four minutes, and you will get more bliss from it," I advised him. He followed that advice and after a month or so, told me that he experienced bliss like never before, and that I had saved him from getting addicted to meditation and turning it into a sensual pleasure. This goes to prove that he had in fact become addicted to it. As one meditation would end, he hopped onto the next one, like as one desire fades, we hop onto the next one. There is a kind of relish in meditation, and spending more and more time meditating is enjoying the pleasure of it. That goes against the vow of not gratifying the senses.

To gain Self-knowledge, we must spend time in solitude on a daily basis. Many people say that they wish to do it but there are too many obstacles, such as the people around them. This is a wrong notion that if there

are people around you, you will not get solitude. If your companions value solitude, and are devotees, their company will not be harmful to solitude. Then whose company is detrimental to solitude? The company of our own mind and organs of action and perception is harmful. Once you get control over your mind and organs, no matter where you are, you will be in solitude. Still, it is beneficial to have different conducive things around you. In wide open spaces where the vision can go far, one will not become narrow-minded. The open air makes the mind and thoughts free and vast. Pure radiant rays of the sun and the serene moonlight create pure, pious ideas in the mind.

* * *

Some wonder which form of God they should meditate upon. If you commit a sin, God punishes you. Then should you meditate upon God in the form of a punisher? I would say, God can be meditated upon in infinite forms and manifestations. God can create fear too, but although a lion is ferocious, it is not ferocious for its cubs. It is ferocious for the deer. Demons regard God as ferocious. But we are the children of God; hence God comes to us in a loving, forgiving and compassionate form. We might commit sins but we want a God who will teach and guide us lovingly. God as a punisher would be like a police officer! I dislike this form. I like to see God in the form of boundless love. From early childhood, we all have experienced that loving God in the form of our mother. We come to know God's love through God's loving scheme to provide for us from the time of our birth. God's other benevolent forms are experienced at different times as well. We do not wish to keep people on the path of righteousness by instilling fear; we want to keep them on that path by the power of love.

* * *

When urban people watch us sitting quietly and meditating upon God, they cynically say, "You are just sitting quietly, you are just pretending to meditate upon God." God is not a subject of intellectual pursuit; it is a matter of heart and experience. When the birds chirp in the morning, I think that they are singing praises to God. The trees are meditating upon the Supreme Self. The whole universe has come from God, and all meditate upon God. Some people understand this, some do not. Those who live in the company of saints easily understand this.

* * *

In silent prayer, contemplate on the indwelling God. Meditate upon your own original form. Our external form which includes mind, body and intelligence is not of much value or significance. This external form is mixed, good and bad, sweet and sour. All these things have both sides to them. In our mind, we have both good emotions and maladies. Rationality and delusion coexist in the intelligence, but our primal form which is known as the Self is pure, taintless, stainless, unattached, tranquil and serene. We must meditate upon that God who is the embodiment of all these qualities.

* * *

Dhyana has three aspects. The first is cleanliness and purity. When you see a pure and clean spring, a meditative state is quickly attained. Second, for anything we need to do and learn, we need awareness and vigilance. We do not need a separate time for this. The third is solitude. On a daily basis we must sit in solitude, detaching ourselves from the mind. We should be able to observe the mind as a witness would. This practice should not be longer than two *ghatikas* (48 minutes). Such meditation will bring harmony in life. A word of caution here: the experience of a blissful state develops an

attachment in the practitioner. Because of the experience of bliss during meditation, the practitioner can become attached to it, and may want to increase the duration and intensity of practice. Due to this attachment, he gets drowned in that bliss. The practice of meditation then becomes a perversion. We do not want to get drowned in the bliss. In essence, we are bliss. This bliss is to be moulded in the form of service. Hence, it must be borne in mind that meditation is necessary on a daily basis, yet if the duration is increased irrationally, it can prove detrimental.

3.2 Three categories of *dhyana*

- * *Shabal meditation is introspection.*
- * *Shukla meditation is meditation on the pure Self.*
- * *Shyam is contemplation of the Supreme Self.*

There are three categories of meditation: first, *shabal*; second, *shukla*; third, *shyam*. *Shabal* is the meditation on the individual self. *Shukla* is meditation on the pure Self. *Shyam* is contemplation of the Supreme Self.

Shabal meditation is the beginner's stage, which is introspection. Sitting alone in a quiet, serene place, stabilize the mind with the help of *pranayama*[‡]. Introspection is not possible unless the mind has become steady. Through this self-examination, we want to experience the independent existence of the soul from the body.

After that comes *shukla*, meditation on the pure form. We started with the meditation to purify the individual Self. Now, you want to meditate upon the pure Self. The body has defects, but our soul is immaculate, and

‡ An important *yogic* technique which involves control of the *prana*—the vital force.

that is the Self. I am not the body nor the organs, nor the mind nor intelligence. I am the pure Self. We should meditate upon that pure, beautiful, divine Self which is beyond the body. This is called *shukla dhyana*. In this type of meditation, the mind becomes steeped in Self, and then the mind gets transcended and cosmic consciousness is revealed.

Between two thought-waves or between two breaths, we get a glimpse of our true Self. The space between two breaths is experienced on the plane of *prana*. The pause between two thought-waves is experienced in the *chitta*. Between these two, the experience of the *chitta* is more important. In this meditation, there is absorption and oneness. This can be called "genuine meditation."

Third meditation is on the Supreme Self. This should be called contemplation rather than meditation. Contemplation and meditation are different. We can meditate on our own form or own Self, and be absorbed in it as well. But it is a formidable task to meditate upon the Supreme Self. In the beginning one can only contemplate (not meditate) the Supreme Self. For support you will have to take the omnipresent form of the Supreme. To be able to contemplate this omnipresent form of the Supreme, one can take support of the sky. The sky is without beginning and end, it has no colour of its own, and it does not oppose anything. It gives space to everything. Really speaking, the sky has no colour, yet it appears black or blue. Hence, this meditation is called *shyam*.

In a nutshell, there are three categories of meditation: one, meditation on the individual self (*shabal* or semi-pure mediation); second, meditation on pure Self (*shukla* or pure mediation) and the third, contemplation of the Supreme Self by visualizing the infinite expanse of the sky (*shyam* meditation).

3.3 Meditation and action

- * *Action and meditation are complementary powers.*
- * *The combination of the two gives rise to discriminative wisdom (prajna[‡]).*
- * *Work with full absorption is meditation.*
- * *The work at hand should be a support for meditation.*
- * *Spirituality does not mean lessening the physical activities, but curbing the impulses.*
- * *Vigilance of the mind is more important than concentration.*
- * *The path of dhyana needs to evolve further.*

With the desire of immersing myself in meditation, I wanted to go to the Himalayan Mountains, and under that pretext, I left home. But as destiny would have it, instead of the Himalayas, I reached Gandhiji. At Gandhiji's feet I got the benefit of meditation. Service to humankind gives an opportunity for meditation. If service is done with the feeling that it is service to God, it will be *dhyana*yoga, but not otherwise. If it is regarded only as service to humankind, it will be service only. If one has a feeling that through this service one is establishing a direct contact with God, it will be meditation.

Sadhana (spiritual practice) should be imbued with action. This is a very Euclidian derivation. However, any action intrinsically has two flaws: first, one can become obsessed with it and the second flaw is, one can become hectically active. *Yoga*, on the other hand, is wrongly understood as imaginary and action-less meditation. The person who is insistent upon action loses the perception that the soul does not do anything, it is action-less. Conversely, to give up action (work, duty) to pursue the

‡ Discriminative wisdom

misconstrued meditation is like cutting off one's own legs and then trying to complete a journey. The *karmayogi*[†] keeps himself away from both these flaws. He does whatever work comes his way naturally, unasked and dedicates it to God, and remains free from the effects of that action (whether good or bad).

To advance in the spiritual practice, people take up meditation. But I personally do not feel that meditation has an essential relationship to spirituality. Action is a power which can be used for good, bad, selfish, unselfish, and spiritual purposes. Similarly, meditation is a power which can be used for these same things. Action in itself is not spiritual and the same is true for meditation. While performing an action, one has to pay attention to multiple things. That can be called a multi-faceted meditation. While cooking, a person has to watch the fire, pay attention to what is in the oven, etc. One cannot say that the person is not paying attention because one is doing so many tasks. Doing all these things does require concentration, although it is many-pointed.

On the other hand, in meditation we remove our attention from all other things and direct it towards one, and only one, thing. Just as paying attention to many things simultaneously is a power, paying attention to one, and only one, thing is also a kind of power. Both power of action and power of meditation can be used to accomplish different things. But Indians have this misconception that action is the domain of a worldly person and meditation is a "spiritual" practice. This misconception must be dispelled.

Meditation may or may not be connected to spirituality. Only when it is connected to spirituality will it become

† *Karma* literally means action. However, in the term '*karmayoga*', *karma* refers to selfless, desireless action done without any attachment and in the pursuit of duties. *Karmayoga* means the path or philosophy of such action. *Karmayogi* is one who follows *karmayoga*.

spiritual. The following is my personal experience: I have worked in the field with a pick axe, I have dug wells, and I have done spinning, weaving, cooking and cleaning. As a child, my father had me do painting, drawing, and weaving. I did all these tasks with the mental state of worship (*upasana*). Through them I used to connect myself with other human beings, with nature and the animal kingdom, and with God, the centre of it all.

Action and meditation are complementary powers. All actions demand multiple activities. This means that one has to pay attention to different things simultaneously. Without this skill of multi-pointed concentration no task can be completed. This develops a particular kind of power, whereas meditation develops another type of power because one focuses only on one thing. When one focuses on many things, the power of action evolves. When one focuses on only one thing, the power of meditation evolves. Action requires thinking of many things, whereas meditation requires thinking of only one thing at a time. These are complementary. If a clock is disassembled, that is action. Assembling those parts is the process of meditation. The former is the easier one, even kids can do it. The second is more difficult. Disassembling and assembling, the first is action, the second is meditation. When both the processes are mastered, it gives rise to discriminative wisdom (*prajna*) which gives unerring decision-making ability.

* * *

On a personal level, it is necessary that everyone should practise meditation on a daily basis. But more importantly, all our work should become meditative. For example, on a daily basis, I clean the yard for an hour or two. While doing so, I collect dry leaves, twigs etc. and put them in a basket. But my experience of this work is of beautiful meditation. Compared to the experience of saying a rosary, this is not inferior or different. In fact, it

is of a superior category. While picking up each and every leaf, I mentally recite God's name, and sometimes even count the leaves. In doing so, the mind is completely at rest. This is a kind of meditation. Moreover, a person who does not like any garbage or dirt outside will not tolerate any inner impurity or dirt, and will have a powerful motivation to remove it. This is a spiritual effect. Not that everybody will get this kind of inspiration, but if one does this work with full absorption, one can be blessed with *dhyana*yoga.

So the job undertaken must be done perfectly, with full attention and with a meditative mind. Upanishad says, तस्मात् य इह मनुष्याणां महत्तां प्राप्नुवन्ति, ध्यानापादांशा इवैव ते भवन्ति, that is, in this world, if anyone achieves a position of significance, it is through meditation only. The Earth meditates, Space meditates; they achieve their eminence through meditation. Therefore, meditate—*ध्यानं उपास्वेति* । Nothing can be done without meditation. Complete absorption in work is meditation for us.

If someone is idle and sits for meditation, what happens? Saint Kabir† says, the rosary moves in your hands, the tongue in the mouth and the mind all over the place, engrossed in worldly affairs. Meditation needs support (people use a flame, a flower, a *mantra*). The work at hand should become that support. Then complete absorption in work becomes the meditation. Spirituality does not mean lessening the physical activities (*pravritti*‡),

† Kabir (1440-1518) was a great Indian mystic and poet.

‡ *Vritti*: A mode of being or mental state; tendency. In the context of *yoga*, the name given to different tendencies which come to our mind without our conscious knowledge.

Pravritti: Strong inclination towards doing something.

Apravritti: Disposition towards inactivity, laziness.

Nivritti: Cultivated withdrawal from *pravritti* and *apravritti*.

but curbing the impulses (*vritti*), that is the activities of the mind. Impulses such as desire, anger and greed arise in the mind. They need to be attenuated. In spirituality, mental impulses are the hurdles rather than the physical activities. First remove the negative impulses that cause disturbances, and preserve the positive ones. Eventually, get rid of the positive ones as well. Systematic practice of steadying the mind leads to the waning of good tendencies too.

Concentration of the *chitta* is not so important. What is more important is the vigilance of the *chitta*. Like multi-pointed concentration, one-pointed concentration is only a power, and not necessarily spiritual. Alertness signifies that *chitta* always remains in its own place without deflecting. Even while engaged in a general conversation, the *chitta* should not dare to be turbulent. Even when a counter argument or a verbal blow is necessary, it should not be impulsive or done with vengeance. The inner equanimity should be such that it does not give rise to any impulse, wave, or turbulence. Concentration is important, but what we need for twenty four hours of the day and night is vigilance. The *chitta* should be insulated from the attack of impulses. This is being ever-alert.

* * *

Any work or action should be done with the mindset of prayer or worship, and no spiritual practice should be devoid of action. We have been practising meditation as a part of a spiritual practice, but there has been no place for physical labour therein. Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, all these religions recommend meditation, but the seekers following these religions were not supposed to do any physical or productive work. Physical labour was regarded as inappropriate for these spiritual seekers. But in present times, if a spiritual practitioner does not undertake any physical work, he will prove himself an anachronism, unfit

for current times. Work based on non-hoarding and manual labour can prove to be equivalent to meditation. The science of spiritual practice has not been perfected as yet. Science continually evolves; similarly the concepts of spiritual practice should also continue to evolve.

In India, the path of meditation is highly evolved. From what I know, perhaps only Sufis of the Muslim tradition can come close to it. But this *dhyana-marga* (path of meditation) was regarded as opposed to the path of action. Any action was regarded as an impediment and obstacle to meditation. *Dhyanyogis* refrained from actions as it was believed that it caused distractions in the meditation. In a given society, *dhyanyogis* and *karmayogis* existed simultaneously, and were complementary to each other. People who were *karmayogis* deemed it to be their responsibility to support the seekers who chose the path of meditation. And *dhyanyogis* felt that they offered a kind of service to the society that others could not.

It was an accepted belief that action was detrimental to meditation. I think this belief is seriously flawed and must be rectified. My personal experience is that while working, if one has the proper mindset, a deep absorption can be achieved, which can even be deeper than what can be achieved by giving up all action. Till today, it was regarded as essential to give up all action and sit in one place for meditation. This might be necessary in the beginning stages, but it is not conducive to the evolution of the meditation process. Meditation progresses when action goes on incessantly without one being conscious of it. For example, the action of breathing goes on continuously without causing any obstruction to whatever you are doing. On the contrary, if it is even and balanced, it proves to be helpful. Similarly a quiet, serene, and conflictless action; a compassionate, labour-oriented and exploitation-free action can go on simultaneously with meditation. Such actions are never a hindrance to

meditation. If *dhyānayoga* evolves in this direction, I feel it will complement what has been done so far.

Spirituality is not just the practice of techniques of body purification (*pañchakarmas*.) Those are helpful for cleansing the body. However, from my own experience, I proclaim that the most conducive and the closest thing to spiritual knowledge is productive labour. Hunger is God's motivation which gives us the direction to follow on the path to spirituality.

When we offer everything of ours to the society, use our physical strength for the service of society, and involve ourselves in productive work, we are redeemed from our hunger-related sins. A person becomes distressed by hunger; consuming food at such times inherently is a sinful act in itself. The easiest way for redemption from these sins is to produce food with our own hands. Scriptures say, food is *Brahman*. Productive labour brings us in contact with the deities like Earth, Space, Fire, Sun, Trees, Mountains, Water, etc. It is as if we are serving these deities, and what we will receive as a fruit of that service, we dedicate to the society. And after having dedicated that, the portion of the food we get back as the gift of grace is what we should consume. This whole process is conducive for spiritual progress. This is not to say that this alone constitutes spirituality, but this is certainly more helpful than *yogic* practices like *asanas*[‡] and *pranayama*.

Young people can easily do physical labour. From a practical point of view, productive labour will keep them from being a burden on the society. In addition, such work will create support for meditation from within. Work done with full absorption is outwardly *karmayoga*, and inwardly *dhyānayoga*.

Sanskrit words have a rare beauty and depth which is

‡ *Yogic* exercises.

revealed upon deeper contemplation. There is a word, "*udhyog*" (industry) which etymologically means "*ut-yoga*", that is, lofty *yoga*. If not for hunger, humankind would be unlikely to have a tendency towards physical work, and the laziness would have given way to such destructive qualities and vices that the whole humankind would have been destroyed. Hence work is the loftiest *yoga*. Whatever is produced through physical labour should be dedicated to the society. This creates a spirit of sacrifice. Everything that has spirit of dedication and service, whether work or meditation, becomes spiritual. Anything that is not connected to sacrifice and dedication is not spiritual. Sacrifice and dedication are imperative for spirituality.

It is absolutely necessary that we have a clear understanding of the concepts such as meditation and spirituality in India. Otherwise, we get caught up in things which may have material and physical benefits, but no spiritual benefits. Any task which is necessary for society should be done with purity of heart and a global perspective, and such tasks should be dedicated to God. This whole process is necessary for spirituality. When I declared that this is the only solution to the problems of the world, people wrongly interpreted it to mean that such meditation will give us some supernatural powers which can be used for the benefit of the world by propelling them wherever and whenever they are needed. To avoid such misunderstanding, all this delineation regarding meditation is necessary.

We cannot imagine a tree that does not have its roots in the earth. Similarly, every human being must have roots in the earth. Everybody must work in the field on a daily basis. Amongst the many unchangeable economic maxims, one is that every human must have connection with the earth. As long as human beings cannot be sustained directly from the air instead of the earth, this will be an unavoidable maxim. If in the future it so happens that we

can receive sustenance directly from the air, then working in the field will no longer be necessary. At that point, *dhyana yoga* will become more important than *karmayoga*. The importance of different types of *yoga* is subject to time and space. One must think as to why, in the past, *dhyana yoga* was more important than it is today. People were more inclined towards worshipping in the past than they are today. These aspects are worth contemplating.

Trees take some nutrients from the ground and some directly from the air. Similarly, if science can make it possible for human beings to get sustenance directly from the air, then man's tendencies will become more meditative, and his labour will take a different form and purpose.

3.4 Meditation different from *pravritti* and *appravritti*

* *Apravritti is not meditation; it is a reaction.*

* *Nivritti is different from pravritti and apravritti.*

The Gita looks at *nivritti* differently than *pravritti* or *appravritti*. *Pravritti* is *rajasic*, *appravritti* is *tamasic* and *sat-pravritti* (good *pravritti*) is *sattvic*, which originates from righteousness. *Nivritti* is different from these three. In India, due to lack of proper understanding, people have interpreted *nivritti* as *appravritti*, with the result that anyone who wants to follow the path of spirituality right away wants to give up action. He gives up work and association with people, observes silence, and goes into seclusion, or practises some mental exercises. However, it must be understood that, as much as *pravritti* is a powerful force, so is *appravritti*. *Apravritti* is a reaction, not an independent state.

Apravritti also is necessary as *tamoguna* enables us to fall asleep at night. If we can transform this sleep into deep absorption (*samadhi*), we can benefit from this sleep. When

people are inspired by such sleep, their sleep is akin to *samadhi* and their wakeful state is worship. Those who cannot do this spend their days in *pravritti* and nights in *appravritti*. It is true that for survival of the body both are necessary in the right proportions; not in excess. Both these are useful for physical existence, but *appravritti* must be recognized or understood in its true form. When *appravritti* is misinterpreted as *nivritti*, it destroys the basic foundation and the whole thought-process takes a wrong direction.

Nivritti cannot be one-dimensional; regarding one strong and forceful tendency as *nivritti* is a total illusion. *Nivritti* encompasses all aspects of life; it is not rejection of action. It is said that to subdue the desires, we must take up some practices like meditation in seclusion. In India, due to a lack of understanding of the main principle, as soon as anyone is inspired toward the path of spirituality, one leans towards *appravritti* and follows a wrong path. The *sannyasis*, the monks etc. have mostly inclined towards *appravritti* by wrongly interpreting *appravritti* as *nivritti*.

To recapitulate, meditation can be good, bad or an intense action. We fail to understand this thought process and take *appravritti* for *nivritti*. It must be remembered that *appravritti* is an extremely strong tendency of the mind.

3.5 Meditation in unconditioned awareness

* *Meditation should be free from any cult or sect.*

* *Forget the past.*

* *Forget history, scriptures, words, and even God's name.*

* *Live in the present, without the burden of past and future.*

When we want to practise meditation, the mind should not be burdened with any cult or sect; meaning, it should be free from the burden of *guru* or scriptures. In ordinary times, the *guru's* words are helpful, and this is a

gift to us. However, when we sit for meditation, that becomes a burden; thus we must free ourselves from all the different denominations. *Gurus*, scriptures and idols are useful and should be revered. But this all must be set aside at the time of meditation. Only then will meditation take us to the Primal Source. Otherwise, the meditation will be stunted, cut short. It is possible that even in such meditation one might experience bliss. But know very well that this experience of bliss is an obstacle to the final goal, because when you want to reach the Primal Source, even that bliss is an obstacle.

* * *

Being neutral is being a witness. To understand the subject of meditation with witnessivity, one must understand the concept of *kal-jaranam* (mitigating time's influence on us; wearing it down). The time passes through three phases: past, present and future. The mind should not be burdened by the past, and it should not be worried about the future. I am reiterating what has been said by our ancestors. In the Upanishads, this is known as *kal-jaranam*. We should mitigate time's influence on us, wear it down. The present is real, but how big is it? As we start a sentence, while speaking, word by word, each moment becomes the past, and whatever we are going to say is part of the future. Only a few words are in the present. This is how momentary the present is. Even if you cannot go into this subtlety, we should be able to keep today for today and tomorrow for tomorrow. Even the Vedas corroborate this: अद्याद्याः श्वः श्वः – Today for today and tomorrow for tomorrow, i.e. no memory of yesterday and no worry of tomorrow.

The one who lives in the present remains vigilant. We either live in the past or in the future. Mahavir[‡] has

‡ Considered the founder of Jainism.

said, "Know the moment." Watch the movement of the moment. This is called living in the present. The one who lives in the present is not troubled by memory or imagination, nor is he excited about them. The one who is not intoxicated with the past or future can remain vigilant. By forgetting the past, a big part of the hectic activity of the mind is shut down. This is absolutely necessary for spirituality. The memory of the past is a characteristic of the mind, and forgetting that is the culturing (educating, shaping) of the mind.

The people who are sitting in front of me and I are all fresh and new. However, we recognize each other with the baggage of the past. This feeling obstructs us and is detrimental to our growth. Hence, do not think of the past. Whenever you remember the past, the present slips away, and then what is left? Nothing. Do not let the present that is in your hands slip away. The present is in our hands, the future is in God's hands. Shankaracharya says, अतीतानागतं किञ्चित् न स्मरामि न चिंतये । राग-द्वेषं विना प्राप्तं भुञ्जाम्यत्र शुभाशुभम् – "I do not remember the past nor worry about the future. Whatever auspicious or inauspicious that comes across, I experience that here and now, I face that without attachment or aversion." Unless and until one is on this plane of neutrality and witnessivity, one's meditation will not be unalloyed and unconditioned.

Gandhiji used to suggest many things which people embraced. I too followed many of his suggestions, except for one. He used to say, "Look at your own faults." What he was saying was right; that we should look at our faults and analyze them. Although his intentions were good, I did not accept this idea. Why should we remember the past? My thinking was influenced by the scriptures. They propound that as long as one cannot forget the past, attachment and aversion will remain. Both good and bad memories must be forgotten. Forgetting the bad is the

minimum, but even good is to be forgotten. I am at such a stage that when a person is talking to me, I go on forgetting his previous sentences. Hence, for me, unconditioned meditation is effortless. On the contrary, if I have to pay attention to multiple things, that is bothersome. For neutral witnessivity it is necessary that we forget the past, whatever you have done and others have done. We must forget the past, even what is said in the old scriptures. And how to do this is also described by the scriptures, पलालमिव धान्यार्थी त्यजेद् ग्रंथं अशेषतः – the way we take the grain and discard the chaff, similarly, take the essence and forget the scripture. This is not an easy task. An ordinary practitioner cannot do this. Only when the essence of the scripture is assimilated can you give up the scripture. With God's grace I could do it, but it took a lot of time. It took a great deal of contemplation and reflection. Finally, you want to give up the grip of the words as well. Otherwise, the words will condition you. Hence the past, scriptures and words must be forgotten. The best word is God's name. Even that is to be forgotten. From scriptures to God's name, everything is to be given up. That is *nivritti*. Forgetting history, which is burdensome, is the minimum requirement. You can go on taking the support of God's name as long as you need it without any hesitation.

4

Miracles and Mystic Visions

4.1 Miracles

* Siddhi is an impediment in the path of Self-realization.

* Siddhi is the result of purification of chitta.

* I want to attain liberation through my own discretion, not through someone else's grace.

* Therapeutic use of yoga means going farther from God's feet, or Self-realization, just for the sake of health.

* Science has achieved many miracles.

I have observed and analyzed miracles to a great extent. Among those, only the ones which originate due to the evolution and development of good qualities are beneficial and *yogic*; all other miracles are illusory. Among these, some are beneficial as they give assurance to the seeker. However, some miracles are detrimental. That is why in Gita, faith is categorized as *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*.

As kids during India's freedom movement, we thought that if we achieved some supernatural powers, it would be easy to get Independence. During that time, I read the news about a freedom fighter who in a state of deep absorption levitated from the ground. For some reason, from then on I forever lost faith and respect for such things.

Another incident is about Annie Besant. Although she was in Chennai giving a lecture, a friend of hers who was

a renowned doctor in Mumbai saw her sitting in front of him and discussing an entirely different matter in his office at the very same time. I was surprised to hear this, but since he himself was narrating the incident, there was no room for doubt. So I concluded that one can get such experiences. It is quite plausible that Annie Besant did not purposely use her power, but it must have happened automatically. This doctor's experience was the result of intense faith and the power of meditation. May be he was constantly in her thoughts. I felt that there was some significance to this, and it was not improbable.

I have my own peculiar view regarding miracles. Saint-poet Jnanadeva got marks on his back when a buffalo was hit with a whip. It was out of compassion that Jnanadeva shared the buffalo's pains; I am prepared to accept these types of miracles since Jnanadeva's *chitta* was identified with that of the buffalo. This miracle was the result of his compassion. However, when people say that Jnanadeva made a wall move, I do not believe it. What kind of a miracle is that? With that definition, a train is also a miracle, and I have no interest in that. I think it is just an analogy. As the story goes, Changadeva, a great *yogi*, had come to see Jnanadeva riding on a tiger. For a befitting welcome, Jnanadeva, who was sitting on a wall, made the wall move to see and greet him. One must understand the import of this analogy. Changadeva's life was so permeated with non-violence that even a ferocious beast like a tiger became docile, and his vehicle. This was a miracle brought about by the perfection of non-violence. Jnanadeva was a step ahead; he could bring sentiency even to an inert insentient thing.

A long time back, I met a person who practised hypnotism. He claimed that he could bring anybody's mind under his control, and make that person do anything that he desired. When I asked him to try his power over me, he tried his utmost but to no avail. Then he said,

"Your willpower is very strong, and hence you are not coming under my influence." I reprimanded him, and told him that it was really deplorable to use weak people's minds and make a business out of it. I am dead set against taking advantage of weak-minded people with false promises of improving their lot.

There is another crazy and silly thing known as *shaktipat*. It means an instant transformation with an embrace, or with a blessing—with hand on the head of the recipient. If liberation can be achieved just with a touch, instantaneously, I do not want it. I want to reach there with complete discretion. What is achieved on the basis of faith is not always in one's best interest if it makes the heart and intellect weak. If one feels a sense of fulfilment under those conditions, it could prove to be detrimental, as after that there is no room for progress.

The practice of *yoga* will bestow some supernatural powers, but that is not the ultimate emancipation. In reality, it is an impediment in the path of Self-realization. Once, a *yogi* came walking on the water, and he told Ramakrishna Paramhans[‡] that "after twenty years of practice, I have achieved the power of being able to walk on the water." Ramakrishna responded, "This is neither *yoga* nor Self-realization. You could have paid two pennies to the boatman to cross the river. It is a waste of twenty years of practice." In Ramakrishna's eyes, twenty years of practice were worth two pennies only.

Some people use *yoga* for therapeutic purposes. But to use *yoga* for material purposes will prove detrimental for spirituality. Hence, we often see that even great *yogis* endured serious diseases. True *yoga* means to remain disease-free rather than to use this power to cure a disease.

[‡] Ramakrishna Paramhansa: A saint and seer of the 19th century and the *guru* of Swami Vivekananda.

However, if that is not achieved and *yoga* is used for therapeutic purposes, one may cure the disease and become healthy, but will go farther from God's feet, or Self-realization.

Some miracles are the result of purity of heart, some are the result of the faith of others and some are the culmination of *yogic* practice. Even poisonous snakes become docile in the company of one who has perfected non-violence, has no animosity towards anybody and has a pure mind. This is a miracle and extraordinary at that. If the mind is without any maladies, egoless and steeped in non-violence, these kinds of miracles can take place.

Compared to the miracles of science, *yogic* miracles are insignificant. If one thinks with a neutral, impartial mind, the fact that we can hear and talk to a person who is actually hundreds of miles away is a wonderful miracle. No *yoga* can achieve a miracle like this.

4.2 Divine Revelation: not realization of the Supreme Self, only an assurance

* *The revelation of God that comes as a result of meditation should be treated only as an assurance.*

* *Realization of the Supreme Self is unfathomable. It means seeing God everywhere and in everything.*

* *Assurance – Sudden revelation*
Realization – Continuous revelation

* *Do not stunt the growth by mistaking sudden revelation for realization.*

* *Do not let good come in the way of better.*

God is both manifest and unmanifest. He is formless, yet has different forms. He is and is not, and is with and without attributes. He is manifest in all the different forms and types that one can imagine. The whole universe that

we witness is suffused with God in various forms, but we fail to recognize God in all these forms. The external vision can see the physical form, but fails to see the inner principle that is God.

Besides, depending upon the tendency of the mind while meditating, God will manifest in a particular form. Practitioners have devised meditation to escape from the clutches of the attractions of the organs of action and perception, and for concentration of the mind. Different people meditate upon God in different forms. They see, imagine and accept God in different forms. If you meditate upon a cross, you will see Christ, and if you meditate upon Rama's idol, you will see Rama. If someone is doing intense meditation, reflection and contemplation upon a particular form of God, then for the comfort of the practitioner, God will manifest in that form. Except for that person himself, no one else can tell whether a person has seen God in a particular form or not. However, it can be judged from his behaviour after meditation is over. He has clearly seen the God of his conception—a partial manifestation—but even that will alter the person's *chitta*. You will see love and compassion in the life of a person who has been touched by such a revelation.

The realization of the Supreme is of two types. One is through meditation; another is through devotion and love. The realization of Lord Buddha was of the meditative type which expressed itself through compassion. Sri Aurobindo's^{\$} realization was through *dhyana*. One finds *jnana*[†], *dhyana*, and *karma* in his realization; love was perhaps to a lesser degree. Gandhiji's realization originated from *bhavana*[‡]. The

^{\$} Sri Aurobindo: A 20th century philosopher, *yogi* and *guru*.

[†] Spiritual knowledge.

[‡] Literally, sentiments and feelings. Vinoba has defined it as the reason which is fully convinced and settled.

aspect of love is predominant in the realizations of various saints. Jnanadeva's realization of the Supreme was complete with all the four abovementioned aspects. He was a *dhyanyogi*, and he has given a detailed description of that in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. One also sees his absorption in *karmayoga* when he delineates that aspect of the Gita.

The vision of Karl Marx is incomplete and one-sided, as in his theory there is no realization of the Supreme (all-pervasive experience of the divinity). Without such revelation one cannot see the world in its complete, true form. This is the reason that even Karl Marx's followers are not completely satisfied by his theory. The ultimate Truth (universal unity) is not attainable through external means nor through the discoveries of the physical sciences. For that, one must get an experience which is beyond any physical entity by transcending all the physical aspects and components like body, society and nature.

To understand something is the function of ordinary intelligence, and to become completely doubtless and be able to answer any question or objection satisfactorily with conviction is the function of a discriminative, firm, steady intelligence. This is realization through perfected intelligence. Another type of realization is through deep absorption where there is no room for logical reasoning. The knowledge in both these types is comprehensive and extensive.

How to experience the omnipresence of God is an impenetrable and mysterious question. Unless and until one knows how to transcend the mind, one cannot even get a clue as to how to answer this question. Wakefulness and dream are all aspects of the mind. Only when one goes above this plane of the mind will one see God. Then it becomes unnecessary to look for God in far off places. The experience of God's presence comes from

within. To be able to see God in all the people, trees and animals around us is the real realization of God. We are living beings and full of consciousness. If an ant comes and sits on our leg, it has no awareness that it is touching a living organism; it sits on our leg as if it was just another piece of matter. Our state of awareness is similar. An ant has no cognizance of the touch of a living being, and thinks that it is sitting on a clump of clay. Similarly, we are in the embrace of God all the time, but we see a house as a house, a tree as a tree, and land as land; we do not see God there. We are constantly touched by God, or sitting in His lap, yet unfortunately we have no cognizance of it.

Saint Eknath says that one sees the grain of sugar but does not see the sweetness therein. The sweetness will be felt only when one tastes it. Similarly if one gives up ego, I-ness, then one will see God, who is present in everything and everywhere. Wherever you look, the presence of God will be felt. The intelligence will not be able to analyze it, as it is a matter of intuitive experience only.

The meaning of realization of the Supreme Self is: the unity of the universe that the consciousness has accepted through reflection should be experienced in practical life as well. If meditation makes one experience that unity, then one must see it in the external world as well. If one sees an ant moving, one should feel as if God is moving. God is present in human beings, cows, rocks, and stones. Acquiring this knowledge of unity is coming to an important beginning stage, but one must go beyond that. One might see God in a particular idol or object of worship, but fail to see God in another human being; that means there is a lack of realization. Being able to see God in a particular idol is an outcome of intense faith, whereas being able to see God in everything and everywhere is an outcome of the realization of Supreme Self.

One cannot tell with any certainty who has realized the Supreme Self. *क्वचित् पात्रीभूतः क्वचिद्वमतः क्वाप्यविदितश्चरत्येवं प्राज्ञः सतत-परमानन्द-सुखितः* – People might respect and honour him, or ignore and insult him. People might not even notice his presence, yet he will be in permanent bliss. Just as a blind person cannot recognize another person who can see, similarly others will not know whether a person is Self-realized. On the contrary, if others think that he is Self-realized, know well that he is not.

Only the person himself knows whether he is Self-realized or not. One, if a person is Self-realized he is bereft of desire and anger. Two, if not Self-realized, these revelations should be taken as assurances of being on the right path. Three, if the mind returns to strong desire and anger, loses all restraint, one must understand that even that partial revelation and vision were really just an illusion.

A gentleman wrote to me that Lord Krishna came into his dreams and spoke to him and he received the Lord's blessings, etc. I replied to the gentleman that such a vision in dreams is only an assurance, not a realization of the Supreme Self. His *chitta* was yearning to see God in the form of Lord Krishna, and hence God appeared in his dreams in that form. As a devotee of Krishna, he envisioned Krishna. If one is meditating on Christ, one will envision Christ. If one is meditating upon Krishna with the flute, a vision of Lord Krishna without the flute will disturb one's meditation. One will feel that this is not one's Lord, as one can accept only the form that one is conditioned to envision. This is conditioned meditation. The vision which is the result of such a meditation should be regarded only as an assurance.

I gave the gentleman four criteria to test his vision: (1) Lord Krishna appeared before you in a dream. Since then, do you get the same vision in every dream? (2) Do you see Lord Krishna in the wakeful state as well? (3) Do

you see Him constantly in the wakeful state? (4) Do you see Him as distinct from you or see Him as yourself? If the experience fulfils these four criteria, then it is a realization of the Supreme Self, otherwise it is only an assurance, a flash.

The lives of different sages and saints are full of experiences of God in a particular form. However, I personally feel that these are just assurances and not the realization of the Supreme Self. The realization of the Supreme Self is a constant, continuous state; there are no ups and downs. The absorption one feels in meditation comes and goes; it is a temporary noble tendency; it is an assurance. Progressively, this should become a constant state. Wherever the vision goes, all that should be suffused with the presence of God. The experience of the presence of God in trees, birds, rocks, etc. should become stable and constant. The permanent state should be that of a constant experience of the presence of God, all the time, everywhere and in everything. Whatever work is done in this state of mind will be suffused with the consciousness of the Divine.

The experiences (which I call assurances) are not false. They are undoubtedly real. Not all seekers will have such an experience, only a few will have it in a particular state of mind. These assurances mean "Bravo! You are doing good work!" These are like a pat on the back, like the praise a child waits for from his mother, which tells the child both: "good work", and "you are on the right path". If this makes the child complacent, the mother will rebuke him for his complacency, as that complacency will stunt his growth. Similarly, if one misinterprets the assurance and takes it as the final destination, one will be deprived of attaining realization of the Supreme Self. The cause of stagnation is negligence and heedlessness. Sometimes, good gets in the way of better.

5 *Samadhi*

5.1 Effortless achievement of *samadhi*

** There is no duality between inward and outward.*

** A pilgrim's mind pushes God, who is within, to holy places.*

** A meditator's mind refuses or fails to see the God that is in front of it, and insists upon pushing God inside.*

** Brahman is both inside and outside; in between them is the mind, which is all illusion.*

While performing a task, the common experience is that the mind has an external focus. However, for inwardness we need seclusion and meditation. How do we reconcile these opposites?

What needs to be remembered and imbibed is that as long as the duality like external and internal or outward and inward remains, we have not even really begun. We differentiate something as inner and something as outer. We understand that the inner is *Brahman*, and what is outside is not. This means we have broken *Brahman* into two, which is unrealistic. God that exists inside is the same God that exists outside as well. The external God will be recognized with the eyes. The inner God will be experienced in the consciousness. Appreciate the beauty of the God that exists outside, accept it with open eyes,

open ears, open mind. Then you will attain *samadhi* effortlessly.

I often talk about a pilgrim's mind. God is within us, with us all the time. But we forget that, we push Him away and seek Him in different holy places, one after another. Similar to this pilgrim's mind is a meditator's mind. God is both inside and outside, but we refuse or fail to see the One in front of us, and insist upon seeing the One which is deep within us. This way we move the God that is in front of us and send Him inside. In fact, there is no such difference as inner and outer.

So, as long as the duality exists, you will not experience ultimate unity. It is a matter of continuous practice to be able to see and experience God everywhere. As God is both inside and outside, there is no fear within or without. All the fear is in the mind, hence remove or transcend the mind. One cannot get rid of the inner or outer world; we must get rid of the mind. *Brahman* is both inside and outside; in between them is the mind, which is all illusion. Hence if you can free yourself from the mind, then the job is done. Transcending the mind is the thing to be achieved. We see different manifestations around us. We see different types of people, different forms of nature; as long as one does not experience God in all of these, one cannot achieve Self-realization.

Learn to see God in everything. In Gita, Lord Krishna has said, "I am Himalayas amongst the mountains, Ganga amongst the rivers." So the practice should be such that we should gradually start seeing God in everything and all activity should be done as worship. Whatever walking you do, do as a pilgrimage. Whatever work you do, do it as a service unto God. See God in everything that comes into your sight.

5.2. Sleep : state of deep absorption

* A seed is sown under the soil, and it sprouts.

* Meditation and contemplation allow the development of noble thoughts by keeping them under the soil of sleep.

* Meditation is wakeful, deep sleep.

We all sleep every night, but what is the meaning of sleep? Sleep is the rest after work, and preparation for the next day's work. In this respect, sleep is a state of *samadhi*. To understand this, let us look at the true meaning of the word "*samadhi*". *Samadhi* is merging of the individual intelligence and mind into the God Supreme. *Samadhi* is a state where the power of the soul is manifested. *Samadhi* will purify our minds and intelligence. This purified mind and intelligence will purify our daily business as well. This is what sleep should bring about. After sleep, all our daily dealings, or the business of life should become more pure, more creative, more spirited.

To a real *karmayogi*, sleep entails *samadhi*. It is dreamless. Such sleep allows the thought process to evolve. This sleep is a sign of equanimity, not inertia. Once you are awake there should be no effect of dullness or inertia. Conversely, it does not mean that while awake there should be a constant buzz of thoughts. There should be a natural witnessivity. This natural witnessivity is a characteristic of pure wakefulness.

Really speaking, there is no better meditation than deep dreamless sleep. In my personal experience, perfect sleep is a state that allows the evolution of noble thinking. The only other state where a similar evolution can occur is *nirvikalpa samadhi*†. Dreamless, deep and perfect sleep

† *Nirvikalpa samadhi*: A state of consciousness which is wakeful yet contentless.

can be both a spiritual and a material thing. Animals sleep, but it is a material sleep, not spiritual. However, when a desireless *karmayogi* sleeps after a day of hard work, in that dreamless and perfect sleep he can experience all those things that can otherwise be experienced only in *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

When a seed is sown, although unseen, it is growing underneath the earth. After 3 or 4 days, when it sprouts, one realizes how many subtle developments were going on. Similarly, a person who prays and practises meditation, contemplation and reflection goes to sleep and finds answers to many of his questions which remained unanswered in the conscious wakeful state. Therefore, it is a common experience that right decisions are arrived at in the morning easily. The state of *samadhi* facilitates the evolution of thoughts. However, when some questions remain unanswered even in deep *samadhi*, they get answered in deep sleep. At such times, one understands that sleep is a state of *samadhi*.

Sleep has remained an intriguing and mysterious phenomenon. Nobody has been able to explain what happens when we fall asleep. Where does the inner consciousness go? What happens to the inner living principle? *Brahmavidya*‡ is based on this principle. One has to keep progressing by contemplating and thinking on this aspect. Imagine a cow, a tiger, and a human being, all asleep. In such sleep, does the human being have an experience of being human? No, it is there only in dreams, not in deep sleep. It is quite possible that a cow and a tiger also lose their sense of identity. Chhandogya Upanishad says that all living beings visit the land of *Brahman* every day but do not realize it, are not aware of it. In dreamless sleep a tiger, a cow, you and I, we all lose

‡ Science of the realization of *Brahman*.

our individual identity and get absorbed in the one principle of unified existence. Hence, everyone experiences bliss.

Sleep is bereft of I-ness. There is an experience of bliss which proves that the nature of the soul is pure bliss. This also proves that the soul is pure existence because in sleep the I is there. The next morning, on waking up, one says "I slept well." Who is that "I"? The experience is, I went to sleep and I woke up. The principle of existence is timeless. It has different forms, states or stages. But the truth and existence are permanent.

While going to bed, the brain must be kept under lock and key. In deep, dreamless sleep, a person merges with his true original state. However, the ignorance is still there; hence he wakes up the next morning. If this ignorance is removed, the person will straightaway see God. He will be free from any kind of bondage. The more our sleep is deep and dreamless, the more is the opportunity of merging with God. Why should it be lost?

In sleep, the individual Self merges with the Supreme Self. The question is, how does the Self come back? Shankaracharya gives an analogy. A pot is filled with water from the Ganga and is sealed shut. If the same, sealed pot is left in the water of the Ganga again, the inside water will remain isolated. Similarly, the Self is sealed with I-ness. When that seal is broken, it will merge with the Supreme Self.

In deep sleep, we experience *Brahman*. Having the same feeling while awake is the final goal. We want to experience the vacant mind in wakeful state. Remain neutral and detached while in a wakeful state. Whatever you see, see it with witnessivity. Do not allow it to influence your mind, in either a positive or negative way, with good or bad effect. You are just a witness.

Irregularity in sleep is disrespect toward *samadhi*. Deep

sleep is an automatic, effortless *samadhi* for a *karmayogi*. In such *samadhi* there is great potential for evolution of thinking, here the discriminative power is enhanced. In my own experience, the reflection done in a wakeful state does not even come close to it. Hence, when I sleep I feel as if I am Lord Vishnu, who sleeps on a cobra. In dreamless, deep sleep the individual soul merges into its own original state and it receives strength from it. Hence seekers of Truth should be particular about their sleep.

Everybody's sleeping habits are different, but mostly people who sleep in the first half of the night rather than the latter, receive double the amount of energy from sleep. One does not get as much rest and strength from the sleep in the latter half of the night compared to the first half.

The phenomenon of dreams is extremely subtle. Many factors come into the picture – some physical, some mental, some experiences from previous lives which are beyond one's control. Sometimes we get dreams because of some trivial mundane things; for example, the quilt comes up to the nose and suddenly you dream that you are being strangled. An insignificant or trivial thing can become terrible or frightful. In sleep, the mind is like a helpless child. There is no control or regulation of intelligence and the mind takes a flight of fancy during dreams. Physical illness, laziness, irregularity in meals, imbalance in food intake can all be the reasons for dreams. Deep sleep is *samadhi*. One gets the benefits of *samadhi* from it. To get those benefits, one should prepare well for sleep. Chant God's name prior to going to bed. It will have a great effect on your *chitta* and the sleep will be dreamless.

Subjugation of dreams is of two types. One is good dreams, the second is no dreams. *Sushupti-jaya* means having constant growth of thoughts in deep sleep.

Good qualities of sleep and wakefulness give rise to *samadhi* and the flaws therein give rise to dreams.

From time unknown, how to get sound sleep has been a problem. In Vedas, the sages pray, "Lord, take away my nightmares." Amongst the thousand names of Lord Vishnu, one is पुण्यो दुःस्वप्ननाशनः – the virtuous one who destroys nightmares. Rabindranath Tagore[‡] says of God, "Oh Mother, while we were under the influence of nightmares, you comforted and protected us by taking us in your lap." Upanishad says that sleep should be like that of an infant or a *yogi* or a sage – deep and free from worry and dreams.

The following things will contribute toward deep dreamless sleep. First, after a day's work, if the body is tired from doing physical work, one will fall asleep the moment one lies in the bed. Second is the satisfaction of finishing that day's work and third is deep long breathing, about 10 to 12 breaths per minute. Deep breathing destroys the greed, anger and thought cycle. Fourth, chant God's name. Fifth, do not go to bed right after dinner. It is difficult to fall asleep when the food is getting digested.

In meditation, there should be wakeful sleep. In deep sleep one completely forgets the body, mind and senses. In dreams you are aware of them. In meditation there should be an experience of deep sleep, but wakeful deep sleep. In deep sleep, organs of perception and action as well as the mind and everything else, become quiet, and we exist only as witnesses. If we can replicate the same experience in meditation, it will be the experience of *samadhi*. And that experience will become constant. This means, it will stay even while performing our daily activities and it will be natural.

In sleep, we forget our differences and diversities and become one. The same thing is experienced in meditation. In sleep there is no hierarchy of any kind, it is the same

‡ A twentieth century poet, philosopher and educationist.

for meditation. But the experience of unity in meditation is of a much higher grade and quality, because in sleep a person reaches a state almost of nothingness, forgets his own existence, whereas in meditation the awareness of self-existence is constantly there. Hence, the experience of unity which is achieved in meditation is very useful in the practical life.

5.3 Dhyana-samadhi and Jnana-samadhi

* Dhyana-samadhi (*meditative samadhi*) is a tendency which rises and ebbs.

* Jnana-samadhi (*samadhi of a sthitaprajna[§]*) is a permanent state that neither rises nor ebbs.

* According to Patanjali, yoga, not samadhi, is the climax.

* Dhyana-samadhi is a means of attaining discriminative wisdom.

Gita's concept of *samadhi* is different than is generally understood. Commonly, it is understood that to be in *samadhi* is being in a deep meditative state, being unaware of one's surroundings, and forgetting oneself. One can withdraw one's mind from everything and concentrate on something that he wishes at will. In sleep, there is an emptiness in the mind, whereas in the wakeful state the mind is multi-pointed, and in *samadhi*, the mind is one-pointed. The multi-pointed activity of the mind makes the person tired, and he goes into emptiness, which is sleep. But in the state of sleep, there is no motivation or striving. When the mind is in the state of concentration, both the

§ One who has attained "steadfast wisdom," whose intellect is settled in a state of union with the Divine as a result of assimilating the fundamental principles of life and mastering the art of living in accordance with them.

peace and tranquillity of sleep and the achievement (*purushartha*) of the wakeful state are present simultaneously. This is called *dhyana-samadhi*. But the *samadhi* of *sthitaprajna* is not *dhyana-samadhi*, it is *jnana-samadhi*. Just as the depth of sleep can vary, so can the depth of *samadhi*. In *dhyana-samadhi* the mind gets so concentrated that one does not experience physical sensations. A blow or the prick of a needle cannot disturb this state. It can be said that such a concentrated state of mind will anaesthetize the one who is meditating, so that even the pain of surgery will not be felt.

This is the ideal of *dhyana-samadhi* that is achieved through meditation. However, it is possible that in spite of such a deep meditative state, such a person may not be Self-realized. The ideal of Gita is of a much higher category. Gita speaks about *jnana-samadhi*. The person who is in such *samadhi* can detach himself while undergoing surgery, as if it was someone else's body and discuss the process with witnessivity. A *dhyana-yogi* withdraws his consciousness from the surgery and merges in *samadhi* through meditation, whereas the *sthitaprajna* experiences the surgery while being completely conscious of it. This is how these two are different. When the practitioner of *dhyana-yoga* is aware of the world, he is not aware of his soul, and when he is aware of his soul, he is not aware of the world. The state of a *sthitaprajna* is the perfected state. He sees and experiences both the Self and the world simultaneously. There is complete identity both within and without. Saint Kabir says, it is a state of spontaneous *samadhi*.

A *sthitaprajna* constantly sees only the Self, i.e. *atman*, in the ever-changing world of infinite forms. Irrespective of their external state and shape, he sees only one essence. It is easy and natural to see God in the holy river Ganga. It is difficult to see God in a stagnant pond. However, the *sthitaprajna* is able to see God in both these forms. In the

world, there are differentiations because of appearance and denomination. But the *sthitaprajna* realizes the single underlying principle which transcends any difference or differentiation.

Dhyana-samadhi is helpful for purification of the *chitta*. Yet, it is a passing mental phase (*vrutti*), whereas *jnana-samadhi* is an abiding state. Mental modifications keep on alternating; as one recedes the next comes. When one becomes tired of a mental modification, one lets that go, and another comes in, and the cycle goes on and on. Sleep, wakefulness and all such modifications are alternating phases. Whether good or bad, no modification remains for an extended period of time. All our mental states are modifications, for example, if one goes to school as a teacher, the mental state is that of a teacher, at home it is that of a mother or a father while pampering the children. There are many modifications, but in all these, one's nature of being a human is abiding. This human state is a constant state, but if I look at my different lives the human state is a modification, and the pure Self is the permanent state.

In *dhyana-samadhi*, the awareness of being human merges in the Self. But one needs effort for that, and that brings fatigue. Once out of such a state, the person returns to being the same person again. *Dhyana-samadhi* rises and ebbs, whereas *samadhi* of a *sthitaprajna* has neither high tide nor low tide. It is permanent. He is not in any state of mental mutations. Hence this state is called *Brahmi sthiti*[†]. He is always one with the *Brahman*. Deeply absorbed in *atman*, he is not of the world in spite of being in the world. As an illustration, one does not have to discontinue breathing to do a task. Similarly, identification of the *sthitaprajna* with the *Brahman* is continuous and permanent. Even breathing can be considered an action; however, God-

† The state of oneness with the *Brahman*.

Realization is not an action. The *sthitaprajna*'s wisdom is steadfast. Whatever modifications occur in such a person, those are of the body and not of the Self. This is an abiding state. Such a person does the daily chores like the rest of us, but all those tendencies are of the body and not of being. *Sthitaprajna* has neither desires nor attachments. When a person is not in a pure and pristine state, that person is in a state of mental modification. *Sthitaprajna* is constantly in the true state.

According to Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, when the modifications of the mind cease, a person merges into the Self. To attain this state Patanjali has given the science of *ashtanga-yoga*[‡], in which *samadhi* is the last limb, but it is not the final state. In that respect the *samadhi* of *ashtanga-yoga* is also a modification. We have to transcend this and go beyond all *vrittis*, which is *nivritti* and be established in the Self. *Nivritti* is different from both action and actionlessness. It assimilates both action as well as its absence.

5.4 Collective *sadhna*, collective *samadhi*

* *Collective sadhana is a challenge in the age of science.*

* *When a drop merges into the ocean it becomes great.*

* *Samadhi is equanimity par excellence.*

* *The samadhi of society means a society with non-duality as its foundation.*

* *This is the age of collective spiritual revelation.*

Yogis practise *yoga*, meditation and contemplation in solitude. The same contemplation can be done collectively.

‡ Eightfold *yoga*. The eight aspects are *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahar* (withdrawal of the senses from their natural functioning), *dharana* (fixing the mind in a particular spot), *dhyana* and *samadhi*.

This collective contemplation gives immense benefit. Any spiritual practice, as long as it is practised on an individual basis has limited potency, but when practised collectively, its real power is revealed. In reality we are not bound by one body, we are pervasive. To give an example, while living in a mansion, physically we are only in one room. Similarly, while having commonality with all other living beings, we live in a particular body. If asked, "Where do you live?" we give the address of the house, while in reality we live in a room. While we live in one room, we think of the whole house as ours. No doubt we have more responsibility for the room that we live in, and hence keeping it clean is our duty. In reality, we are responsible for the whole house in general, but we are particularly responsible for that room. Similarly, everyone is responsible for their individual practice, but that individual practice may be flawed. Only when the practice becomes collective does it become flawless. Hence, devotion, meditation, *yoga*, contemplation and in fact all virtues should become collective. Before a thing can be used on a collective level, experiments are done on an individual level. An individual's practice is like that of an experiment in a laboratory, but the discoveries made in the laboratory are meant for the whole society.

Upanishad says, प्राणो ब्रह्मेति, मनो ब्रह्मेति, विज्ञानं ब्रह्मेति।[§] *Prana* (the plane of *vital force*) is *Brahman*, *mana* (the mental plane) is *Brahman*, *vijnana* (the plane of discriminative intelligence[‡]) is *Brahman*. Even in the ancient times, while

§ Human beings exist on five different planes or *koshas* (sheaths) that cover the *atman* (Self), according to Vedantic philosophy. The five sheaths are: *Annamaya kosha*, food-apparent-sheath; *Pranamaya kosha*, *prana*-apparent-sheath (force of vitality); *Manomaya kosha*, mind-stuff-apparent-sheath; *Vijnanamaya kosha*, wisdom-apparent-sheath (*Vijnana*); *Anandamaya kosha*, bliss-apparent-sheath (*ananda*).

‡ *Vijnana*: The plane of discriminative intelligence.

evolving on an individual level, human beings were reaching the plane of *vijnana*. However, the ideal was of individual evolution. Now the entire humankind inevitably will have to come onto the plane of *vijnana*. In this age of science we will have to forget the mental plane and this is possible only through spiritual efforts.

The thought process is flawed when one talks of “my interest, my happiness.” Similarly saying, “my liberation” is spiritual exclusivity and selfishness. This shortcoming was realized in the earlier days as well. The great devotee Pralhad has criticized this, saying प्रायेण देवमुनयः स्वविमुक्तिकामाः, मौनं चरन्ति विजने न परार्थनिष्ठाः, नैतान् विहाय कृपणान् विमुमुक्षुरेकः – People with a wish of self-liberation go into solitude and observe silence, with little concern for the rest of humanity; I do not want to leave these hapless people behind and be liberated alone. This is a marvellous quote from Bhagwat. A true devotee is not satisfied by his own solitude, meditation, contemplation. He is eager to share his experience with all. This is a higher plane of morality. In the phrase “my liberation” the word “my” nullifies liberation. True liberation is attained only when the idea of ‘my’ and ‘mine’ disappears from the consciousness. Hence “my liberation” is a flawed concept. True liberation is attained only when one loses one’s own identity and completely merges with the society. Liberation, in other words, is dissolution of ego, that is, I-ness, and what remain are only the society, nature and God.

As there is a sense of fellowship between the body and its organs, we need that same fellowship in society. Everybody is entitled to equal liberation, equal enjoyment and equal status. Dissolving one’s individual ego in the society is, in fact, true individual liberation. Society will then surrender everything to God. Individual liberation is really an oxymoron; it is in fact only self-gratification.

The society is like an ocean, and the individual is like a drop. The fulfilment of a drop is in merging with the ocean. If it remains isolated, it will dry up, whereas, if it merges with the ocean, it will become vast and great. If we confine ourselves to our body only, we will become petty and insignificant. But if we identify with the society, and with full understanding merge our individuality in it, we will be blessed with ultimate fulfilment. My welfare and that of the society are identical. Serving society constitutes my self-interest. My own self-interest has no separate existence. My *sadhana* and service of society are one and the same. In my service to society, my spiritual practice is taken care of; there is no need of any additional practice. Self-effacement is but another name for *sadhana*. This kind of thought process helps us mitigate the contradictions in life. The difference between an individual’s interest and society’s interest dissipates. Even the difference between self-interest and spirituality disappears.

In spiritual practice, you have to remove “me, mine and I” and replace them with “Thou,” meaning God. But He is not easily comprehended, and we keep on searching for Him. In this state, how can we replace “I” with “Thou?” The easiest process is to replace “mine” with “ours.” Instead of remaining restricted to our own body only, we should become of society and of nature by completely identifying with it without any self-interest or ego, and render service to the society. As long as the ego does not dissolve completely, the practitioner will remain like a pebble in water. But when the ego is transcended, one will dissolve in society like a crystal of salt in water. In other words, one will be of society, nature and people. Thus, individual liberation means the beginning of extensive desireless service.

I left home with an intense urge to know *Brahman*. That has abated, and now my quest is for collective *samadhi*. My quest is to discover how the entire group can become imbued with the *Brahman*-consciousness.

In Bengal, in a village called Vishnupur, Ramakrishna Paramhansa had gone into a trance. Sitting at that very place, I said with utmost humility and courage, "What Ramakrishna Paramhansa attained on an individual plane regarding *samadhi*, I want to do on the collective plane." The *samadhi* that was attained by Ramakrishna Paramhansa was on an individual level. The same *samadhi* must be attained by a group. He did not go into solitude; he did that under the great expanse of the sky and open air in the company of nature. He was not afraid of anything. The one who is afraid of other people, nature and open air may therefore go into a cave to meditate. This makes the mind even weaker. What good is that mind? With the slightest pretext, that mind wanders. Even if a bird flaps its wings, the meditation gets disturbed. The true meaning of *Brahmavidya* is union of your heart with mine. And I must love all of you as much as I love myself. The one who loses the awareness of any difference between his own self and others gets to taste the flavour of *Brahmavidya*.

At Vishnupur, while putting this thought in front of a gathering, I had said courageously that the *samadhi* that Ramakrishna Paramhansa achieved was not his personal property. He did not have an exclusive right to it. I want it to be the property of society. I do not want to keep it personal, but want to distribute it. *Samadhi* means joy of fulfilment par excellence. Everybody desires that but cannot achieve it due to ignorance and unfavourable conditions.

Ramakrishna never used to touch gold. Its touch caused him excruciating pain as though he had been stung

by a scorpion. In reality, gold is harmless. Gold too is a manifestation of God. Yet, Ramakrishna could not tolerate its touch. What this means is that he used to see gold as representing the acquisition of wealth, hoarding of wealth, and in his eyes, that was a sin and hence it caused pain. If a society's wealth is concentrated in a few hands, society suffers from it. Evenly distributed wealth is a manifestation of God, and the touch of such wealth will not be painful like that of a sting of a scorpion, but a touch of God. Throughout his life, Ramakrishna taught us how to attain affliction-less *samadhi* and how we can spare ourselves from the acquisition and amassing of wealth. The task of people who want to serve the society is to make the experiences of great people applicable and practical to the whole society, so that the society can benefit from them. As there are no afflictions in *samadhi*, there should be none in the collective *samadhi* either. In today's world and society there are many types of conflicts, afflictions, and fights going on. If we can free ourselves from these, we can get the joy of fulfilment in collective *samadhi*.

In *samadhi* there is equanimity par excellence. It dissolves all differences and distinctions as in dreamless sleep. In such sleep, the differences disappear into emptiness. In *samadhi* they disappear due to all-pervading unity. We want to attain *samadhi* in the wakeful state, and build a society with non-duality as its foundation. Generally people respect and revere the concept of non-duality and unity, but take it to be utopian and not practical. The whole life and the whole structure of society must be built upon the foundation of non-duality and indivisibility. We must build the courage to undertake this task. We do not want the contradiction like non-duality in sleep and duality in a wakeful state, non-duality in a state of *samadhi* and duality otherwise, non-duality in thought and duality in the business of life,

non-duality in religious faith and duality in politics. Otherwise, non-duality becomes just an empty verbal concept. We must courageously establish non-duality in our practical lives.

In *samadhi* one experiences that all the differences and divisions are just an illusion, and that the Self is all-pervasive. Instead of one person, when an entire group gets such an experience, that is collective *samadhi*. *Samadhi* means a mind saturated in equanimity, untouched and unaffected by any impurities such as ego, attachment, or parochialism. In *samadhi*, the *chitta* is on the plane of *vijnana* which is beyond the planes of food, *prana* and mind. Either we attain such collective *samadhi* or face complete destruction—these are the only two options that the age of science has presented to us.

Jnanadeva prayed, “God, let me see You through the eyes of all, let me listen to Your message through the ears of all, let me perceive You in all the forms in the world, and let me walk on Your path with the feet of all.” We walk with our own feet, but the sublime idea of walking with everyone’s feet is what is motivating me. We have to seek and discover Truth collectively as our aim is collective *samadhi*, and we must strive in that direction. The time has come for collective realization and it is feasible. The conditions are conducive for that. In the past, the condition was not so, but because of the advances in science, the world now has a collective conscience, and there is an atmosphere of global compassion. The compassion or nobility in the world will not remain isolated, it will manifest collectively. Evil has always asserted itself collectively, and goodness has always been confined to individual level. Now is the time of transition. The force of evil will remain strong for a while, but in the future goodness and virtue will spread naturally; hence people whose lives are filled with

goodness will have a commanding effect in their speech and they will prevail.

It is my deep conviction that the mind of the public is ready for acceptance of spirituality and collective *samadhi*. Hence, we must dive deeper; we must look upon one another as God’s devotees and must connect all our actions to God as if they are performed in the service of God. We want to bring spirituality to active social service. The saints had begun this work, but they did not engage themselves in the gross form of social service. In those times there was not much scope for such social service, so they remained content in expressing the idea that spirituality and social service are one and the same. In today’s world we have to engage in the gross work of social service, and spell out its nature. The saints from earlier times did not do this. But they did mention that the spiritual level that the devotees can achieve collectively will not be matched by the *yogis* practising in isolation.

This whole thought needs to be incorporated with the idea that for worldly progress, collective practice is necessary. We want to attain this with the help of science. The much needed and desired energy and force will be created if science and spirituality join hands.

6 Supramental Psyche

6.1 Detachment from mind, beyond mind and vacant mind

* *We are not the mind, but the witness of mind.*

* *We are witnessing the play of the universe by rising above the mind.*

* *We are like space – extensive outside, vacant inside.*

* *Vacant mind is when all the thoughts are stilled.*

* *Meditation is a mental action, whereas Self-knowledge is not an action.*

As long as the practitioner does not realize that something exists beyond mind, all the actions and reactions create bondage. When one rises above the plane of mind, then the whole world and what one considers to be one's own mind become external things and one experiences pure joy free from all entanglements.

I do not give any importance to the mind. As far as the plane of mind is concerned, I neither want to please anyone nor hurt anyone. Often times I have become completely insensitive regarding the plane of mind. If all the people rise above the plane of the mind and trust each other, their strength will greatly increase.

Mind is a very small, insignificant thing. In ancient

times, more importance was given to the soul and *buddhi*[§]. Mind was the least important aspect. In the age of science, the importance of mind has even further diminished. Science gives importance to direct empirical experience, and spirituality gives importance to subtle experiences. In both cases, mind is completely belittled. If we make it a habit to act according to the *buddhi* and not according to the mind, then we will fully utilize the power of *buddhi*.

If one's body is diseased, one has to detach from it and take care of it to cure it. If a clock breaks down, it cannot repair itself. If I am only just my body, how can I cure it? To remove impurities of the mind or to correct any of its flaws we have to detach ourselves from it. The moment we detach ourselves from the mind, it gets repaired automatically. It then becomes a part of the external world; it does not remain a part of our being. Both virtuous deeds and sinful deeds are performed by a human being. If one can detach oneself from both of these, then that is liberation.

Yet people do not follow this advice. Again and again, they keep on accusing themselves of being evil or bad, of being a sinner. In reality this is a false charge. For this, the scriptures have prescribed the act of renunciation (*sannyas*[‡]). *Sannyas* means tearing down all that is old, to the extent that even the name is changed. The previous name and the actions performed by that person become nonexistent. The one who had parents is now dead for them, and has neither mother nor father.

Generally people ask how to get rid of desire, anger,

§ Intellect, the inner faculty through which human beings make decisions; the faculty of discrimination.

‡ *Sannyasa* means renunciation of the worldly possessions and attachments for the sake of spiritual *sadhana*.

jealousy etc. The simple solution is to discard that mind where all these impurities reside. We need to understand that just as we witness someone else's mind, we can witness our own mind too. I do not have to do anything with someone else's mind as well as my own mind. If someone gets angry, I realize that anger is unjustified since I am a witness of that mind. Similarly if I get angry, I should recognize that this is not right, as I am a witness of my own mind too. In this way, if I become the witness of my mind, then I am no longer my mind. If we are our mind, then we cannot be the witness; if we are the witness we cannot be the mind. To become the witness, we must detach ourselves from the mind. The one who is not aware of this separation, even if told hundreds of times that what he is doing is wrong, will not listen. But the one who is aware of this distinction becomes detached from the mind and tears the mind. Then one will not commit blunders. One will still make small mistakes, as these come with the body naturally. But if this awareness is constant and uninterrupted, even these small mistakes will not occur.

The fact of realizing one's own faults is of paramount importance. The person who recognizes one's faults gets automatically detached from them. The flaws or faults are in the mind and in the organs of action and perception. If someone's memory becomes weak, he goes to the doctor, and to him the doctor says, "It is your memory that has become weak, not yourself. You are separate from that." And the doctor treats the condition. Similarly, we are the ones who recognize the faults; we are separate from them, we witness them. As long as we cannot separate ourselves from those faults, we cannot correct them. Hence, the first step is to identify those faults, and then we automatically become separate from them. If we observe ourselves with neutrality and impartiality, the faults and flaws will automatically be corrected. We must spare half an hour on

a daily basis for this. We must reserve some time for meditation, contemplation, observation and analysis in the same way that we spare time for our daily chores. While doing this, one may chant or mentally recite God's name to keep the mind from wandering.

There are two approaches to cultivate a witnessing mind. First, God is manifest in the world through various qualities. One needs to comprehend, assimilate and imbibe these good qualities, and evolve them. The second approach is to do any task or engage in any discussion in such a way that the mind does not get involved in it. There are two different processes, one is to go outside the mind, and the second is to go above the mind. While discussing subjects like mathematics and grammar, mind is not involved. It is easy to be objective. Hence, scientists are very objective, as they have to study science which has no connection to mind, and that can be done easily. However, the concentration that one needs for the study of mathematics or geography is of the ordinary kind. This type of concentration does not take one beyond the natural tendencies of the mind. Only the concentration resulting from orientation towards the inner Self is important and helpful for the purification of the mind.

Rising above mind implies 1) rising above one's own mind, 2) rising above everyone else's mind, and 3) rising above the plane of mental contemplation.

When one has to go beyond one's own mind, it is a dual process. First, the process of purification of mind must go on constantly, and secondly, the process of recognizing that the mind is separate from the body should go on simultaneously. We should distinguish ourselves from others' minds as well, which needs the analysis of good and bad qualities. Acquire good qualities wherever you find them and in whatever measure; absorb them and reiterate them. Contemplation,

reflection and repetition of good qualities must constantly go on. Every person has imperfections, but they exist to highlight the good qualities. Once the habit of assimilating and absorbing good qualities is inculcated, you will be able to separate and free yourself from others' minds as well. Once this has been accomplished, the next stage of going above everybody's mind will begin.

Then the third stage of going above mental reflection or contemplation arises. A surgeon who is filled with compassion performs surgery with equanimity of the mind. However, if a time comes that he has to perform surgery on his own son, although he is filled with compassion, attachment comes in and he loses the composure and equanimity. Then the surgeon feels as though both the hands and the intelligence are failing him, hence he lets another surgeon perform the surgery. The plane above the mind is the plane of contemplation without agitation. A student of mathematics solves the problems of profit and loss. Sometimes the answer is that great loss is incurred, but the student remains unperturbed. Whereas if a businessman sees that his business is suffering great loss, he gets butterflies in his stomach. The student is not affected by the outcome of the answer, and he does the problems with a neutral intellect. If a businessman can keep the same equanimity when he suffers the losses, then know that he has risen above the mental plane.

So there are two different states: 1) going outside the mind, and 2) going above the mind. There is a third state as well: the state of no mind. The mind is there but we are not in it or with it, we are watching it as a witness. There are different waves rising and abating, and I am watching and recognizing them. I see this clock by my side every day. If it falls behind by a minute, I realize it and adjust it. Similarly if I know the nature and tendency of my mind, I can correct it. Suppose my mind has a habit of talking too much, then what should be done? Keep the

mouth shut? If we simply become the witness of the mind and recognize its nature, then the fault can be corrected.

Going above the mind is not that easy. For that, we must analyze ourselves and recognize ourselves. This analysis is not possible unless one rises above the mind. I often use the analogy of a thermometer. Since the thermometer itself does not have a fever, it can measure someone else's fever. If you want to measure someone else's fever, you yourself must not have a fever. In the world there is a lot of mental baggage in the form of tensions and conflicts. If you want to mitigate them, then your mind must be free from tension and conflicts, otherwise there will be clashes. The main point is that unless one goes above the mind one cannot gain control over it.

The state which is beyond the mind (*unman†*) is the best state. In that state the mind-factor disappears completely. What needs to be attained is that transcendental state in which the mind disappears altogether. We need *buddhi* and we need organs of perception and action, but the presence of the mind between these two is completely unnecessary. The mind comes under the influence of the organs and becomes impure or passionate. It oscillates between resolves and doubts. If it remains under the influence of *buddhi* it will not come under the influence of the organs. In other words, dissolution of the mind means amplification of *buddhi*. That is all.

The practitioner who has gone beyond the mind becomes the witness of the whole universe, and observes its play. He watches how the play is going on. This transcendent state is like the state of Lord Vishnu reclining on the serpent head. There is a beautiful verse: मय्यखण्डसुखांभोधौ बहुधा विश्ववीचयः, उत्पद्यन्ते विलीयन्ते माया-मारुत-विभ्रमात्

† The state of being beyond the mind.

–“I am the indivisible, continuous ocean of bliss. In it, the waves of the universes are continuously rising and subsiding. The wind of illusion created by *maya*[†] is blowing furiously and it creates waves. Like the cycle of waves, the cycles of creation and destruction are continuously going on. But I remain the same indivisible, continuous ocean of bliss.” This is the state of Lord Vishnu, and it is mine as well. It is the same uninterrupted bliss under all conditions, whether someone is born or someone dies. Bliss is the essence of everything. This is the transcending of mind (*unman*). Rise above the mind and witness the play of the creation ever unfolding.

Shankaracharya gives a technique to attain this state: पश्यन् उदासीनतया प्रपञ्चम् संकल्पं उन्मूलय - - - Look at the world around you dispassionately, observe everything with neutrality and vigilance and uproot the *sankalpas*[§]. There is no harm in observing the world around you, but do it dispassionately. There is a mango tree that bears nice, sweet mangoes. I look at the mangoes but, in spite of looking at them, there is no wave of desire to pick and eat them. There is no resolve to knock them down with a stone. Look at everything dispassionately and without desire. Then even with the eyes open, one can achieve the *unmani* state. Once this state is achieved, it becomes unnecessary to keep the eyes closed. Sometimes, even with the eyes closed, different resolves keep arising. Hence, one must observe the world dispassionately to destroy the chain of various resolves. संकल्पं उन्मूलय सावधानः। Remain vigilant and alert. Being alert is important since the

† The creative power of the Lord which creates illusions. It is the *maya* which makes us forget that we are Divine. It is the veil that hides the Real from us.

§ Thought waves resulting from incessant impulses of the mind (desire waves). Mental resolves.

resolves do not come in isolation. If there were just one or two, it would be easy to be saved, but they are innumerable so it is not easy to protect ourselves. They come in succession, one goes and another takes its place; the cycle goes on. Hence constant vigilance is necessary. संतत सावधानम्। Suppose a person swims across 1,400 feet with vigilance and determination, and in the last leg becomes careless. That person will drown. Then the value of the previous determination and effort is zero. As long as one does not bring one's feet on the opposite shore, one must keep swimming. The chain of *sankalpas* must be broken. It demands all of our strength. It is neither easy nor pleasurable to do so, in fact it is painful. If it is an evil *sankalpa*, we can easily break it, but a positive, good *sankalpa* is hard to break. If one is shackled by an iron chain of 10 pounds, one will give it up without complaint, but if the shackle was of gold, one would, in fact, gladly wear it. To break the golden shackle is difficult, but the virtuous *sankalpa* also must be destroyed since we want to go beyond the mind and not a virtuous, positive mental state. Initially, an evil *sankalpa* is replaced by a good one – that is progress, improvement, but still the mind is not transcended. Hence constant vigilance is required.

After this stage, we must dispense with the support-base upon which the *sankalpa* stands, then the mind will wane and become weak. A boy stays at his parents' home. The scriptures ask him to leave home and go to the *guru's ashram*, that is, to give up his dependence on his parents. Similarly, all the supports that the desires latch onto should be given up. If one support goes, the mind latches on to something else for support. Gita says, अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिः. *Buddhi* becomes steadfast when all supports are dispensed with. If one possesses such a *chitta*, one will gradually attain peace. But this too cannot happen all at once. To know the Self, all the supports have to be broken down, which wears out the mind. To go beyond

the mind, the mind needs to be completely worn out. Gita says, "Still the mind gradually and progressively with the help of *buddhi*, and by having patience and perseverance." To this, one might argue that then the support too can be given up gradually, but that is not valid. If you think of discarding the support base slowly and gradually, the support base will never get discarded. On the contrary, it will get more deeply rooted. Hence, do it immediately, at once. The mind may rebel, become agitated; let that be. Once the mind realizes that "this person does not allow me to wander," it will quietly come to acquiesce, surrender.

* * *

Vacant mind is the one where the mind is completely free of thoughts. The mind in a wakeful state is as quiet as it is in deep, dreamless sleep. The eyes respond to whatever comes in their sight but there is no reaction in the mind to what is being seen. Attaining a mind that is free of all maladies and impurities is the first step in attaining a vacant mind. Hence, the practitioner must strive to attain freedom from all maladies and impurities through practice. The next step is reflection on the Self, and only after that comes the freedom from any kind of thought. That is the vacant, thought-free mind.

These days, nothing remains in my mind; in fact there is no mind. I go for a morning walk, I see Venus, I see the thoroughfare, and I see everything around me. I see people, I see trees, and it is all bliss. I spend long hours where the mind is absent. When I discuss some things with people, the *buddhi* is at work but not the mind. Do not let anyone's mind, neither yours nor others', intrude in any kind of work. Under this condition, there is no harm in playing games like chess. Who wins or loses is then immaterial. It is then all bliss. Then this playing is spiritual. If there is mental pleasure or pain,

then that game is on the mental plane.

I do not need any special effort for one-pointedness of *chitta*. On the contrary, I need effort for multi-pointedness. If someone asks me to shut the mind out, I feel it is always shut. If I have to speak, then I open it. Even while speaking, I keep myself detached from the mind. As a person swims on the surface of the water and does not dive deep for the fear of drowning, similarly while speaking, walking, laughing and working I swim on the surface and do not get involved or attached. The mind does not wander when there is no reason for it to move. The centre of all attractions is in one place. It is here and will remain here only.

In my room there is a window. I can see through it. I see whatever is visible. I casually look around. But the normal impact of sight on the mind is absent.

If one keeps or uses an idol, picture or symbol like a cross or ॐ (Om) for concentration of the mind, that is a sort of activity. I do not do that. During the prayer sometimes I keep my eyes closed, sometimes open; it does not make any difference as there is no attraction for the mind, and that is the most important thing.

Thinking with the mind is a mental activity like working with the hands is a physical activity. While differentiating between meditation and knowledge, *dhyana* and *jnana*, Shankaracharya says that meditation is a mental activity while Self-knowledge is an abiding state of non-action. (Gaining other knowledge requires activity.) Many people talk of "doing meditation." In my experience "doing meditation" is an oxymoron. For me, meditation is not a mental activity. Meditation means void. I give space only to what I want to reflect upon, otherwise I am empty. By empty I mean remaining untouched, uninfluenced by any imprint. What is the result of this? There is no drain on mental power.

When the thought of cleanliness came to my mind from a spiritual angle, I presented it as meditation. I do cleaning work for half an hour. The experience gained thereby is very close to the experience of meditation. My study and practice of meditation constantly goes on, mainly during the night and less during the day. The experience that I get while doing cleaning work is close to that of *samadhi*; not exactly, but very close. Hence I call it meditation. And so I have suggested to the seekers at Brahma Vidya Mandir, "Do not count the time spent in cleaning as a part of the daily work hours, look upon it as meditation." Different types of meditation involve reining of the mind, but I ask, "Why should we rein the mind?" Follow the mind, do not be lax; if the mind wanders, follow it. Watch its movement by being a witness of it.

When I sit for reflection and contemplation, the mind is absent. Only I am there. To put it more correctly, there is only pure existence which is bereft of me, or I-ness. "Me" is particular, I do not experience this particularized state. My state is similar to that of an open sky. I use the analogy of the empty sky for a liberated, free mind. It is expansive from outside and empty from inside. It is detached from everything. Even when it rains, the sky does not get wet. Let the clouds come and go, let the storm come and go, there is space for everything, but nothing touches the sky. Everything is given space and accommodated, that is all. Similarly, reflection is going on constantly, but I remain untouched. This is the state of a free and liberated mind.

The main point is to find out whether the mind is free and unconditioned or not. A sectarian mind is narrow and shackled; a non-sectarian mind is unrestrained and wayward. An unconditioned mind is different from both. Do not mistake a wayward mind for a free mind. When I think of a liberated mind, I consider both the old

traditions and customs, and uncontrolled behaviour. Both conventional and uncontrolled behaviours shackle the mind. The uncontrolled behaviour creates the illusion of a mind without shackles, but that is far from true. People often say, "We behave as per our mind" which means the master obeys the servant. What kind of freedom is that? There is none. The mind is but our slave, servant. Hence, free mind means freedom of the mind. In a way, freedom of the mind is a verbal delusion, as once the mind is bereft of any mental modifications, there is no mind left.

What does one need to do to attain a free mind? One must forget the I-ness, the ego.

* * *

Once one attains the state of being detached from the mind, meditation becomes child's play. One must not stay on the plane of the mind. Likes and dislikes, friendliness and unfriendliness, attachment and aversion are all games of the mind. But becoming separate from the mind is only the beginning, the starting point of the spiritual practice, not the end. The next stage is transcending the mind. Detaching oneself from the mind is one thing, and transcending it is another. Any cognition or reflection on the plane of calm, unruffled *buddhi* will take place only after transcending the mind. If one can harness the *buddhi*, then the mind will work like a slave. Yet for this to happen, one needs to transcend the mind, as *buddhi* is on a higher plane than the mind. The mind has the capacity to work, to execute things; that is a characteristic of the mind. However, instead of using the mind as the executor of decisions, we use the mind for the wrong activity; we allocate the task of decision-making to the mind that should be allocated to the *buddhi*. That means we identify ourselves with the mind; then the mind not only does not do any kind of work, but on the contrary, it does more

harm than good. First, get detached from the mind, then transcend it to move onto the plane of *buddhi*, and employ the mind as a labourer. If someone is writing with a pen, the pen moves according to the mind of the writer. The mind should be like the pen, it is simply the executor, executing the command of the *buddhi*. When one achieves a higher plane than this, the mind will cease to exist. On that plane there will be liberation from mind, that is, dissolution of mind. Dissolution of mind is another name for liberation. No doubt there is a plane of dissolution of mind, but until that stage is attained, the mind should be used as a labourer.

People allow the mind to get involved in trivial matters when it is completely unnecessary. This is because the *buddhi* is contaminated. For example, in the game of chess the game itself is make-believe. There is no question of winning or losing. But we bring our mind and money into this game. Competitions are held even on international level and winning and losing becomes an issue of pride and prestige for the involved nations. Chess is simply a game where the mind should have no relevance. This is a perversion of *buddhi*. Wherever the mind has no relevance, we should not bring it. When this is achieved, then meditation will be easy, effortless.

People ask me, "How can you meditate so easily and effortlessly?" I tell them, "Because I am lazy!" I need to put in a lot of effort to send my mind in different directions. Hence, for a lazy person like me, meditation is easy. To keep the mind one-pointed, I do not have to do anything, but to make it multi-pointed, it takes effort. As long as people do not appreciate the value of my laziness, they cannot attain this plane of existence.

In a nutshell, detaching from the mind is far more important than meditation.

6.2 Supramental plane: need of the Age of Science

A. Sri Aurobindo's Concept

* *Rise above the mental sheath and go on the sheath of vijnana.*

* *To go beyond the ego and mind, one must eliminate all the conditioning factors.*

Sri Aurobindo delineated the concept of supramental plane. The idea of liberation until now has been that a person rises up to the level of the mind, then goes up to the *buddhi*, and in that ascendance reaches the Supreme Self. There he gets established in the state of *mukti*†. *Mukti* is the end of everything; it is the climax of one's individual evolution. In this state, one's complete potential has been realized, and one is free from the cycle of birth and death, and does not return back to that cycle. However, Sri Aurobindo propounds that such a person would descend to the plane higher than the mind. Lord Krishna came to the level of the body when He manifested Himself in Gokul. He played with the shepherds, played pranks on the milkmaids and fought battles too. He descended to the lowest plane of existence, the physical plane. But Sri Aurobindo does not approve of this. He envisages that a liberated soul should come down to the plane that is higher than that of the mind and serve the universe. In his idea, first there is ascension to the level of the Divine, and then descension to a particular level; and then, taking up the mission of redeeming the world.

† *Moksha/Mukti*: The liberation of the individual soul from bondage of the cycle of births and deaths, whereby the individual soul unites with the *Brahman*, the Supreme Self. It is believed to be the ultimate goal of human life which everybody should aspire and strive for. It is often translated in English as "salvation."

But my idea of liberation is different. I do not want to take the trouble of descending, because after attaining *mukti* by transcending the mind and reaching the destination, there is no valid reason to descend. It is also not necessary for the same liberated person to come down for the redemption of others. After having merged with the Divine, one does not need to come down. If God wills it, an emanation of God Himself can come instead of the liberated soul; but it is quite another thing when God commands a liberated person to descend, that person will have to do so, since all are bound by His command. In any case, to be useful to the world, the supramental plane should become pervasive as quickly as possible. But it looks as if Sri Aurobindo's programme is going to take a long time, as it is an individual process. What really matters is that we must think about the application of this concept from a social point of view.

It is believed that there is a particular element or principle named "I". This must be recognized early on. The "I" is bound with the body, and through my spiritual practice I want to liberate myself from it. But in this entire process the "I" becomes even more firm. It is as though with the intent of removing something, you are actually making it more deeply rooted.

We are limited by various conditions. We lose one condition and take another. For example, "I am an Indian", then "I am an Asian." Finally I say, "I am a human being." But are we ready and willing to go even beyond this? Can I identify with a donkey? In reality, when we belong to the whole universe, we become a universal human being. Still even after becoming a universal human, it does not include a donkey. If we can identify with the donkey, then we have evolved to a higher plane. Going even further, we will have to identify with the insentient as well.

What I want to say is that in this idea of liberation and descension, the I-ness remains intact. "I, Vinoba, got liberation" means that the existence of Vinoba in my mind remains intact, and he will descend with his I-ness. Why should we struggle to keep that identity, ego, I-ness? Really speaking, a state should come which is bereft of I-ness. This whole concept of descension of the liberated one is like sending a spacecraft into space and then bringing it down. The idea of the descension of the *muktatma* (liberated one) is similar to that kind of an experiment.

I believe that Sri Aurobindo's concept means that *mukti* is not the pinnacle of spiritual evolvment of an individual, yet I admit that the word 'supramental' does create some confusion. Hence I prefer to say that one must rise above the plane of the mind up to the plane of *vijnana*, and for now that is sufficient for me.

B. The demand of the Age of Science

* *Getting detached from the plane of mind is the demand of the present age.*

* *Destruction of the mind means the end of love and hatred.*

* *Psychology is futile. We will have to learn the science of the Supramental Psyche.*

I repeatedly talk about going above and beyond the plane of mind, emphasizing the urgency of reaching the supramental level. Rising above the plane of mind is a pragmatic necessity of the present era; it is not *Vedanta* (spiritual wisdom). This is necessary for the benefit and welfare of our practical, worldly life and not of our other-worldly life. Watch what people do when they want to destroy on a mass scale. When Hiroshima was bombed, the whole city was burnt to ashes. Children, the elderly, women, men, trees, animals, birds – nothing was spared. An atomic bomb can cause mass destruction. To

counter this fact, we have to learn the art of living a collective life, i.e., living collectively in love and cooperation, sharing collectively in labour and production. We will have to create a collective power of non-violence through the process of the individual minds merging with the mind of the group (where the group has the same ideal and is dedicated to the same cause).

Many people are familiar with the skill of controlling the mind, but to remain detached from it, isolated from it, is a different process. The latter process opens lots of other fields and through those, man can reach God. In a way, he attains liberation. But some imperfections persist; hence you may not call it *mukti*. Sometimes, even after liberation, due to God's inspiration or one's own strong resolution, one will be motivated to work, but in that case, one works as the incarnation of God. In this case, it is not one's own mind, but the cosmic mind which is at work. This is called supramental plane. But work of this kind does not really fall into the category of action. Shankaracharya placed it in the same category as renunciation. With intense will, a human might work with God's inspiration, and that is the concept of supramental plane. In any case, the need of this age and time is that we must remain detached from mind, and do the work which will lead us to a comprehensive reflection. This will increase our capacity of making decisions, which is an urgent need in this age.

Buddhi must have the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong. Society possesses *buddhi* in a much greater degree than an individual does. It is true that *buddhi* can evolve on an individual basis, but generally the *buddhi* that a person has is not his own, but is of the society. In a vegetarian society, the *buddhi* of an individual will develop disgust for animal flesh, which will teach him that it is wrong to eat meat.

A person has a mind and has a psyche (मानस). Individuals' minds are different, still the psyche is similar. Mind and psyche are different things. Two individuals' minds will be different, but we are passing through such a phase that their psyches have almost become similar. When the minds of two people differ, this dissension is expressed through the organ of speech, but the actions done after that are not only through the organs of action, but some tools or equipment are used to perform them. Organs of action are the doers, they do the action. Weapons are the tools with which the actions are performed. In olden times, the actions were done mainly through the organs of action, not through the tools. Hence, spiritual *gurus* used to advise restraint and control of the organs of action and perception. In those times, it was not so necessary to have restraint over the use of tools. But in the modern age of science, tools have become extremely preponderant and potent. Hence, even a slight conflict between minds results not only in action through speech, but action through weapons as well. Since the weapons are terrible, their psychological effects too are devastating. Hence it is the responsibility of today's humankind not to get entangled in the mental conflicts. Here we are left with two options. First, restrain the progress of science or second, restrain the mind. We cannot stop the progress of science, as that is a kind of knowledge, and knowledge should not be restrained. On the other hand, if the mind remains uncontrolled, without any reins, the world will be destroyed; hence we must keep the mind under control.

In a human being, mind is the driving force, not *prana* (vital force). Smaller insects perform lots of activities; they have rudimentary, subtle minds too, but their main driving force is *prana*. In a human being, mind is the driving force. Emotions, desires, attachments, inspirations, hope, dejection, all these mental tendencies are active in a human being. A game of mental tendencies is going on with

emotions such as fear, courage, honour, dishonour, attachment, detachment, love and hatred. In current times, science is telling us that the plane of mind has become obsolete. What is known as psychology will now become completely useless.

Mankind has harnessed the power of the atom from which the entire universe came into being. By fusion of the atoms the universe was created, by fission the universe can be destroyed. Such atomic power, which can create and destroy the world, has become available to humankind. We have sent spaceships into space, and hence, thinking on even the international plane will not be enough. We will need an inter-planetary perspective and thinking. We will have to keep in contact with other worlds. We cannot do it by remaining on the plane of mind. Humankind has become God-like as a result of attaining the power of creation and destruction of the world. Entanglement of the mind in this scenario will prove to be detrimental and destructive.

The plane of *vijnana* is above the plane of mind. Science is forcing us to go on that higher plane. Even in earlier times, Upanishads declared that प्राणो ब्रह्मेति, मनो ब्रह्मेति, विज्ञानं ब्रह्मेति. The subhuman creatures such as animals live on the plane of *prana*, humans live on the plane of mind, and the seers live on the plane of *vijnana*. Hence it is not enough to make just minor modifications to psychology. We have to discard it completely; the study of psychology is useless. We need to learn the science of supramental plane. Remaining content to live on the plane of *jiva* (individual soul) will not suffice. We must transcend it and reach the plane of *Shiva*, the pure Self. That is the relentless demand of the age of science.

In this age of science, in the fields of philosophy and religion, old religious concepts constructed on the ideas of the mental plane will not last. If we keep on giving undue

importance and authority to the religions of old times in this age of science, we will not survive. We will have to change the mind itself. Science is forcing the supramental plane onto humankind. Sri Aurobindo says that the power of supramental plane will now do all the work.

Science has progressed beyond imagination. Because of that, today's conditions force us to handle all the questions with a global view and outlook. Enhancing the power of mind alone will not suffice; we will have to go above and beyond that. We need to hang the mind itself on some peg. This process is called dissolution of mind in *Vedanta*. We do not have to worry about what will happen when the mind is dissolved. There is *buddhi* and that will solve the problems of the world by going beyond attachment and aversion. Disappearance of attachment and aversion is verily the dissolution of the mind. That is sublimation. Socialism, communism, and other such theories will not solve the problems of the world; only enlightened *buddhi* is capable of doing that.

As science progresses, the importance of the mind will go on diminishing. Mind cannot survive in the age of science. Mind has maladies; it is conditioned by attachment and aversion, resolves and doubts, and is constantly assailed by those. As a result, cracks and schisms are created which break and divide society, and stop the process of unification. Science demands unity. We will deprive ourselves of all the benefits of science if we give any scope or place to mental agitation and turmoil. In addition, we will have to bear all the disadvantages and destruction that science can inflict upon us. When fire was harnessed, we could use it at our will. Prior to that, it was not possible either to cook the food or burn the house down. After physical fire came under our control, it became imperative to extinguish the fire within our minds, only then could we use the physical fire to our advantage. Otherwise if there is both mental and physical

fire, everything that is inside and outside will burn to ashes.

Now we have even more powerful weapons than fire. Hence, it is of utmost importance and necessity that any existing differences be removed from the plane of mind and brought to the plane of *buddhi*. On the plane of *buddhi* we need to transform each others' thoughts. We must watch that whatever approach we use is not causing any agitation in our minds, nor in the minds of those we are dealing with. Normally leaders and social reformers who bring change to society appeal to the mind and arouse the emotions. But Shankaracharya never makes an appeal to the mind, only to the *buddhi*. He is trying to make you understand things on the plane of *buddhi*. This process will reappear in the age of science. The power of making someone understand the thought process is a scientific power.

The pressing need of this age is that the supramental psyche should manifest on a broader scale. 'Supramental' is a new word that has found currency, but the idea is not new. The need of going beyond the mind has always been there, particularly on an individual basis, but because of science it has become more intense. Science has reduced the distance between peoples and has brought them in closer contact. Some ideas and concepts remain fixed in the mind because of intellectual inertia, dullness of mind or because they were dear to us; those things will have to be given up. Predilections and prejudices like language, cult, religion, class and political party originate on the plane of mind; all those will have to be discarded.

The second important thing is that we must change the mode of thinking right now. The current mode of thinking is very subjective, which is limited and conditioned. What we call *buddhi* does not give us the correct perception, but gives us warped knowledge. When

the *buddhi* starts doing this, it is self-destructive. Hence, in our practical and social aspects, the *buddhi* must be kept objective, like that of a mathematician. Gita calls it pure and unerring *buddhi*. This is one more meaning of being on the supramental plane.

The first meaning of supramental plane is to give up all those thoughts and ideas which make the mind parochial. Secondly, we must keep our *buddhi* unconditioned and learn to think scientifically.

The third aspect is that the problems that at one time were personal gradually became social, national, and now they have become global. Problems on the plane of food, *prana*, and mind have not remained limited to an individual or nation, but have become global. Hence, evaluate and solve them through pure and universal *buddhi*. Mind is conditioned by narrow views and perceptions. It is imperative that we free ourselves from all those. Only then will the individual problems of humankind which have now become universal be solved with a neutral *buddhi* and an accommodating attitude.

To my mind, the main characteristic of unconditioned *buddhi* or supramental psyche is that the mind does not get either excited or agitated for any reason. We must learn not to react at the first moment. If we succeed in having a reaction-free mind at the first moment, we will learn to control our reaction in the long run as well. There is no reason for reaction or resentment if we detach from ourselves.

This neutral *buddhi* is the supramental state, which is needed the most in this age. In a way, it was always needed, but in this age of science its urgency has become acute and intense. On one hand, *buddhi*, which is reasoning, has increased to a great extent, but on the other hand, the witnessivity (capacity for keeping the mind uninvolved or detached) has not increased commensurately.

Due to science, the neutral *buddhi* has become an existential necessity. It is obvious that today humankind stands in dire need of pure and steadfast wisdom.

Hence the first task is to detach ourselves from our minds. There will be no outcome if the process of detachment is not started from our own self, and there will be no effect on the outside world either. Secondly, we must practise looking at our work from a broader perspective.

In the Vedas, there is a hymn (Aghamarshan *sukta*) for absolution of sins. It describes only the immense vastness of the cosmos. The sage is suggesting that if one's vision is expansive, vast, then one will get absolution. This hymn places the vision of the infinite nature of the cosmos around us. This helps us to realize that from the spiritual point of view, we are omnipresent and expansive. Our true nature is pure consciousness. And with constant awareness of that, no sin is committed.

In my view, this great idea is that of supramental psyche itself. If everyone starts to think with a calm, unruffled *buddhi*, the entire nature of life will change; it will become what the Upanishads call *anand*, which means pure bliss. It lies further ahead of the plane of *vijnana*, which is pure *buddhi*. Ordinarily, what we call happiness or joy is associated with the mind, and is of a much lower level. It comes through sensual pleasures or mental concepts. The word "bliss" applies to that very state which is a result of the innately unruffled *buddhi* of the society as a whole, which lies beyond the plane of *vijnana*.

Today what we need is steadfast wisdom; there should be no agitation in the *chitta* at any given time. Lots of questions and problems will disappear where there is such peace, which cannot be disturbed. It is not enough only to restrain the mind through external forces. The restraint should come from within; we must seek the direction from

the unalloyed *buddhi*. In the absence of this, we cannot possess the power of unerring judgment. We must have the power of independent decision-making. When the process of purifying the *chitta* by detaching from the mind goes on, one sees God. After this God-Realization, the person's mind does not remain his own; it becomes universal. The universal mind will use him as an instrument to accomplish different tasks. He becomes a divine instrument in the hands of God, and this is the supramental plane.

All work should be done by going above the mind, which is hassled with attachment and aversion, and is hence parochial. Do the work with pure equanimity. Even if one *yogi* works from this supramental plane, it can mitigate the whole world's afflictions and sorrows. Gandhiji put it simply, saying that even if there is just one perfect *satyagrahi* (one who adheres perfectly to truth), he can remove all the injustice in the world. His concept does not talk about God and hence is easier to comprehend.

Do not be sceptical and ask, "When will people grasp this thought as everyone is mostly caught up with petty things?" Do not worry. This concept will enter their heads by itself. This is the age of science and a new era of supramental plane is in the offing.

The concept of supramental plane is like the sun. A tree has many mangoes, and the sun gives light to all. However, because of the direction of the sunlight a few mangos ripen earlier than the rest, and suggest that all the mangoes are ready to be picked. Similarly, amongst the entire population, a few persons who are ready from within will draw on that supramental energy, rise above the rest and become like a lighthouse; and this phenomenon creates faith in a new possibility.

7

Abhidhyana[§]**7.1 Meditation on the Omnipresent God**

* *Entering the sookshma[‡], the subtle realm of existence*

* *Entering the subtler plane of existence*

* *When activity diminishes, action becomes more potent.*

* *The result of abhidhyana is dependent on two points. At point A there should be total lack of ego, and at point B there should be a radio set to receive mental wavelengths with an open mind.*

Since time unknown, there have been two different approaches concerning the contemplation of spiritual pursuit. The first is serving humanity until the moment of death. The perfect example of this was given to us by Gandhiji. He was busy discussing social affairs until 5 to 10 minutes prior to his death.

The second process holds that the gross form of service has a limit, and after that one must enter *sookshma* (the subtle realm of existence and action). Attachment, greed, insistence, desire, inspiration and motivation of gross service must be given up in order to progress. This subtle

§ Meditating upon the entire creation as the cosmic manifestation of God Himself.

‡ Subtle.

realm of existence is immensely vast, not less than the gross one. While still being alive prior to actual death, one must die to the external world. I have been more disposed to this second approach. I left home in 1916 in the name of *Brahman*. Now (1966) I have received a calling from within that I must surrender all the service that I have done as an offering to God and enter the subtle realm. In reality everyone has to go on that subtle plane upon the death of the body at God's will. But the effect of that is entering the subtle body only, nothing else. Hence, after some contemplation, I have named the second process "*Sookshma karmayoga*," (yoga of subtle action) instead of calling it devotion, *dhyana* or *jnana*. I have been thinking about this for a while, but now I am executing it and I am experiencing that my state of being is approaching non-existence, although not completely as of yet.

I thought research in the subtle realm was needed. In the field of science too, since the discovery of nuclear energy, subtle weapons have been invented that are far more powerful than the conventional ones. As the subtle weapons in the physical world have been invented, exploration should be done in the spiritual field as well to actualize its potential. With this vision I have entered the realm of *sookshma karmayoga*. In a way, the founding of Brahma Vidya Mandir (1959) was the beginning of *sookshma karmayoga*. I am interested in this type of research where there is no connection with mind. A search must be made into *unman*, that is, a plane beyond mind.

Meditation, devotion, *jnana*, all these things are very dear to me, and I have been engaged in them along with gross *karmayoga*. Everyone needs those; I call them *vikarma*[†]. When the action is united with *vikarma*, there is an explosion of power. Even then, I am not saying that I

† Special actions done for the purification of mind.

am entering into devotion, *jnana* or meditation; I am entering *sookshma karmayoga*. Gross action has a limit, and hence, at a certain point should be given up, and one should enter the subtle realm.

One teaspoon of sugar is needed to make a cup of water sweet; that is gross *karmayoga*. However, a grain of saccharine has the same effect. *Sookshma karmayoga* is like saccharine. *Sookshma karmayoga* has a hundred times more potency than the gross one.

The secret of entering into the subtle plane is that one has to become like the sky. The sky has space. In the sky there is space for light, but the sky does not get attached to the light. It is not affected by whatever movements occur in it. The *chitta* should be like the sky, which is infinite and a void simultaneously. In this state, the action in inaction can be and will be experienced.

Some of my friends requested that I write on the Vedas. By doing so, my mind will become particularized; it will lose the quality of vastness. Performing gross actions makes the mind particularized. It is not helpful for *sookshma karmayoga*. Now, on my own, I do not get involved, or do anything that will condition or limit my *chitta*. In whatever work my friends undertake, if they seek my advice, I may give it spontaneously, without any insistence. For years together, I have experienced inaction in action when I worked incessantly. Now I want to experience action in inaction and it need not be judged by the yardstick of external action. If there is inaction in the *chitta*, as well as an absence of initiative and ego, then monumental work will be done on a gross level. But even if that does not happen, it does not matter. One cannot say that on the yardstick of external action, the inaction did not hold true. The real yardstick is within. The external work can happen after a thousand years. People can expect the external action since they do not have any other

yardstick; hence they have every right to expect a remarkable result from inaction. But this is not the real yardstick. क्रियोपरमे वीर्यवत्तरम्—As the activities subside, the action grows in potency; I am a firm believer in this aphorism. This principle has been experimented upon in both ancient and modern times, and hence my belief in it has been strengthened. Hence I asked my friends not to expect any more gross action from me hereafter. This will benefit them too. My *chitta* is favourably disposed towards all, which I call *abhidhyana*. It is not that no external action will happen; some actions may happen in the natural course of things.

After all is said and done, human beings have limitations and nothing can be done beyond those limits. It is my faith that we have to quit our field of action at some point on our own, otherwise our tendency to get involved and act will never cease. *Nivritti* is a state of spiritual withdrawal in which one has retreated both from *pravritti* (activity) and *appravritti* (non-activity). *Nivritti* is not non-action. Tendency towards both *pravritti* and *appravritti* is the positive and negative form of the same thing. *Nivritti* is quite different from these. Casting the mind, body and society aside, the *chitta* has to be permeated with blissful consciousness. This is a tall order. I desire and hope that progressively the activity should diminish and the effect of action should increase. After having reached that perfection of pure consciousness, *karmayoga* will not wane but will become more potent and effectual. The less the activities, the greater the action.

In the *sookshma karmayoga*, there is no thought of quitting society; on the contrary it is entering society in the true sense of the term *abhimukh*† (where the mind is open and fully disposed toward society). I have found a word

† Oriented with a positive disposition.

in Upanishad for that, *abhidhyana*, which means meditating upon the entire creation as the cosmic manifestation of God Himself. It is my conviction that what cannot be done by gross *karmayoga* can be accomplished through *sookshma karmayoga*. *Sookshma karmayoga* means meditating by embracing the world and sending mental (not verbal) blessings. Do the meditation and *japa* for the world and when it is done for the world, it is for you as well if you take it to be so. This is my vision in this aspect. I tell everyone to write letters to me, but I will not reply. I reflect on those letters, and I add my mental goodwill to whatever is auspicious, good in them. This is a process.

This is my *kshetrasannyas*[‡] (confining oneself to one place only.) This is an ancient concept. For self-evolution and meditation, people used to do this in olden days. But my thinking is different from this. Although I am confining myself to one place, I am entering into the subtler realm while being fully disposed towards the society.

People are driven by passion and desire, and hence are obliged to act. They engage themselves in gross *karmayoga* helplessly. But in life a state should come when gross *karmayoga* will become unnecessary, and the power of subtle willpower will do the work.

I believe that great service can be rendered through contemplation and meditation. In fact, greater service can be rendered through contemplation and meditation than through tangible, physical actions.

Generally speaking, it appears that there is more power in speech than in contemplation, and still greater power in action than in speech. But when the *chitta* becomes naught (ceases to exist) the speech is charged with more power than action, and contemplation is charged

‡ Confining oneself to one place only.

with even more power than speech. In this state, the physical body is not needed to communicate, and this is the true meaning of entering into *sookshma*.

When the field of action is limited, the body can do some particular gross work. The work will become subtler and more abstract in degree as the field becomes larger. A small place can be cleaned with a broom, but purifying the universe is the work to be done on the mental plane. Physical work should be done where we live, but the work for the universe must be mental. If we have no maladies or impurities in the mind, it means that we have worked towards purifying the universe.

The best means for world peace is to mentally identify with the world. Any work becomes easier as activity diminishes and contemplative meditation increases. In a small field, the power of action is more effective than the power of speech, but when the field is vast, speech is more effective, and perfect silence will be far more effective.

One must reduce the ego to naught while decreasing one's activity; otherwise the *sookshma karmayoga* will prove to be meaningless. The heart or the sanctum sanctorum is a very tiny place. Either you or God can live there; they cannot co-exist. *Sookshma karmayoga* means the ego vacating the heart for the Lord to come in. Thus far you were working only with your own strength, now you will work with God's strength.

I was inspired by the in-dwelling Lord to take *kshetrasannyas*. I, Vinoba, am sitting here at Brahmailaya Mandir; and what do I do? I am doing *abhidhyana*, being fully disposed towards the society. Our workers are working in different places, and as far as my mental reflection can go, it sends messages to them. I read whatever information I receive about their work, and I reflect upon it; this is *abhidhyana*. It is *sookshma karmayoga*.

The effect of *abhidhyana* is dependent on two end points. One is me (Vinoba), where there should be complete and perfect egolessness. At the workers' end, there should be a radio set to capture mental wave-lengths. They should be receptive and open-minded, only then will it be effective. Truly speaking, we are not the doer, God in the form of Time-Spirit impels us do all the work.

Meditation gives peace to the individual mind and if the meditation is done collectively, it will bring collective peace. The person must be completely egoless, a perfect zero, if peace and harmony are to be brought about amidst the troubles and turbulences that are going on in the world. Even one such person whose *chitta* is completely *abhimukha* towards the world, and is completely egoless, can influence the course of events, and the turbulence can be calmed down; but for this, two things are essential. That person must be *abhimukha* to the world, and must not have even a speck of ego. That person should be a naught.

It is extremely difficult to be completely bereft of ego for then the body will instantly drop dead. That is the subtle ego but I do not mean that ego here. I am talking about that ego which gives rise to attachment, and the divisive ideas of mine and thine. Gandhiji said that even if there is but one *satyagrahi* who is completely egoless, he can influence the world.

7.2 Outcome and the process

* *Abhidhyana is meditation done face to face with God.*

* *When the body is severed for the third time, a person will attain vishwaishwarya[§].*

तस्याभिध्यानात् तृतीयं देहभेदे । विश्वैश्वर्यं केवल आप्तकामः । This verse from Shvetashvatar Upanishad describes a *mukta*

§ Almightyness, authority, wealth, glory and grandeur of God.

(perfectly liberated person). The verse's definition omits nothing, it is perfect and all-encompassing. For such a person, the word "*keval*", which literally means "only, alone" has been used. *Keval purush* is the one who has attained *kaivalya*. He is in the state of *kaivalya*, meaning he perceives only himself in the universe. Believing that there is nothing besides God existing in the universe is the characteristic of a devotee. He believes that there is God alone. But the *mukta* sees himself alone pervading the universe. And this characteristic has been indicated by the word *keval*.

The second characteristic of a liberated person is that all his desires are completely extinguished (as opposed to fulfilled). A desireless person achieves *vishwaishwarya*, which is the all-pervasive grandeur or the infinite glory of God. The Self-realized person achieves this *vishwaishwarya*.

Vishwaishwarya means *aishwarya*, that is, the grandeur of God pervading the universe. These days the word *aishwarya* is used to mean power and wealth, but here the word has an altogether different connotation. It implies the almighty, authority, wealth, glory and grandeur of God. This gives rise to the next question of how and when one becomes Self-realized or attains *jnana*.

Does it then mean that one should go on terminating all the desires one by one? As the universe is infinite, so is the mind, and so are the desires as well. Does it mean that one should go on fulfilling the desires one by one, and then give them up? Or without fulfilling the desires, use the discrimination to go on giving them up one after the other? Both these processes are futile, as the desires will not come to an end in this way. There are infinite desires; if you satisfy or give up ten thousand, a million will remain. If you satisfy or give up a million desires, ten million will remain, as they are infinite. I have studied several branches of learning. A short while ago, when I came to know about radio astronomy, I was tempted to

study that too. But even if I gain knowledge about that, still a lot more will remain unknown. Hence this effort and process are both useless.

The answer to the question 'when will Self-knowledge be attained?' is: तृतीयं देहभेदे – after severing the body for the third time. There are three sheaths over the Self, which are like progressively subtler bodies. These three planes or sheaths of existence with which the Self is covered need to be destroyed.

When one develops the conviction that one is different from the physical existence and limitations the body is severed for the first time. This conviction is called *vivek* in the scriptural language, that is, discrimination. We commonly use the word 'discrimination' in a general sense. The particular meaning in this context is the constant awareness of being distinctly different from the body. The next layer is the subtle ego, called *asmita*. Destroy that. That subtle ego must be vanquished; this is the severing the body for the second time. This subtle body follows the gross body. Third is destroying the nescience (*avidya*). After these three planes of existence are destroyed, the Self-realized person will experience the Divine Grandeur.

How can these three bodies be severed? The answer is: तस्याभिध्यानात् – through *abhidhyana*. It is easy to understand; and can be easily explained as well. For example, when a mother has served food to her child, she does not leave him alone and go to do other chores. On the contrary, as long as the child is eating, she sits and watches him eat; it may be said that she is doing *abhidhyana*. *Abhidhyana* means face to face meditation. Meditation is of two types, one is neutral meditation, another is visualizing God face to face. It is not only that I am meditating upon God; God is meditating upon me as well. The meditation done with the awareness that God is actually present before me is *abhidhyana*.

Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra is primarily about meditation, but he does not consider meditation to be the ultimate goal. *Dhyana* is followed by *samadhi*, complete absorption. After that, one achieves *prajna*, which means fully enlightened *buddhi*, and *yoga* follows *prajna*. But here, what is implied is not *dhyana*, but *abhidhyana*.

When you meditate by keeping the universe aside, that is *dhyana*. But when you meditate upon God along with the universe, you are practising *abhidhyana*. Here the seer declares that the *vishwa* (the universe) is God, and therefore *vishwaishwarya* is acquired. The seeker perceives God in the entire universe. His *dhyana* is with the universe in view as God. It is rather mutual *dhyana*; I meditate upon God in all His forms in the universe, and God is meditating upon me. This process has been beautifully illustrated in the psalms of Jnanadeva. All the forms of *dhyana* by Jnanadeva are *abhidhyana*. He says, "I have seen with my own eyes all that which is hardly attainable to the *yogis*." Daring philosophers have declared that the creation is an illusion, but Saint Tukaram says, "Yogis meditate upon God by keeping the rest of the universe aside, as that is an illusion for them. But I say, what is seen by keeping the universe aside is an illusion." Kabir says, "See, appreciate and recognize God with open eyes in all God's manifested forms, and appreciate God's beauty." This illustrates the tradition of the practice of *abhidhyana* by various saints.

On the other hand, the practice of indirect *dhyana* is prevalent. I say that the *dhyana* done by evading the universe (sitting in seclusion with the eyes closed) is indirect *dhyana*. Is it not strange that this very *dhyana* is considered direct and supposed to lead to *sakshatkar* (direct, open vision) and that which is actually in front of you is called indirect? If some Self-realized person describes things which have never been seen in this world, people believe that he has had *sakshatkar*. And, even though they

see trees, fields, animals and humans with open eyes, they do not regard that as *sakshatkar*.

If we are seeing the entire universe in front of us all the time, that means we are doing *abhidhyana*. If this is true, then *vishwaishwarya* must reveal itself to us. But that is not a common experience. And why is that so? यद्वैतत्र पश्यति पश्यन् वैतन्न पश्यति. Because we see the entire universe, people and animals, but we do not really see in spite of looking, do not hear in spite of listening. We fail to see God who is present in them. It will be *abhidhyana* only when we look at the person sitting in front of us as God-manifest. If we look at him only as a human being, then that is just physical cognition.

The reality is that we do not actually see humans, animals, or trees. They are not seen through the eyes. The eyes only see the external form of these things, and not the spirit of the things themselves. The ears hear the voice of a person; they do not hear the person. The person remains beyond what we see and hear. We cannot see, touch or hear the human being. The human being eludes our comprehension. This is a profound thing. When we practise and imbibe on our minds through study that it is God who has taken so many forms of human beings to reveal Himself to us, that is *abhidhyana*.

The whole process of *abhidhyana* has been succinctly described in *Samyasutras*[‡]. First it says, मानुषं सौम्यम्—a human being is a gentle form of God. This might seem hilarious as there is nothing more terrible than a human being in the world. Men have created atomic weapons to

‡ Vinoba divided his 'Talks on the Gita' in 108 sections and composed 108 *sutras* (aphorisms) encapsulating the gists of those sections. These he named '*Samya-sutras*'. But, as Vinoba himself averred, these *sutras* are much wider in scope, and are comparable to *Yoga-sutras*. They delineate a whole philosophy of life.

destroy each other, but intrinsically men are gentle. Where there is gentleness, there is humanness. This is the definition of a human being. If this gentleness is lacking, know for certain that it is only the external shape of a human, but inside there is a beast. In a nutshell, if there is no gentleness, there is no humanness. An ordinary person as a rule is a gentle being. Hence, if you want to see the gentle God, see God in humans.

Then follows, सृष्टौ रम्यम्—God has manifested in nature in enchanting forms. Look at that. प्राणिषु चित्रम्—In the animal kingdom, God manifests in strange forms. If you can see God in animals, that is *abhidhyana*. The last part of the *sutra* is the most difficult one. दुरात्मसु चिन्त्यं तदेव—Contemplate God in the wicked. One would have to work hard for this. It is as if wicked people have vowed to hide the God which is inside them. Generally speaking, even we hide the God within us, but we have not vowed to hide Him. It is difficult to see God where wickedness prevails; this is a matter of contemplation. Bharatiyar[‡] has said, "If a tiger is standing in front of you to eat you, see Divinity Incarnate in that tiger, and welcome its jaw." I do not find this to be very difficult, because the tiger is not wicked; it is just hungry and foolish. It looks at me as its food. Yes, when it attacks me it looks cruel. But think, if a banana on our plate starts running, how cruel will we become? In spite of that it is not that difficult to see God in a tiger, but to see God in a wicked person is a difficult task; it is the final stage of *abhidhyana*.

‡ A famous saint-poet of Tamilnadu.

8

Meditation upon the Sun

8.1 The Sun: the source of illumination and inspiration (तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यम्)

* *The sadhaka will meditate upon the radiance of the Sun which inspires.*

The Sanskrit word for Sun is *Soorya*, which means the one who gives lofty, sublime inspiration. The Sun is also known as *Savita*. When chanting the celebrated *Gayatri Mantra*,[‡] the meditator, while meditating upon Sun's desirable form, is asking for the bestowal of noble and enlightening inspiration for the *buddhi*.

तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यम् भर्गो देवस्य – Which object is meditation-worthy? The object has to be such that it can be meditated upon. Hence, the Sun has been given another name, *Savita*. This name implies the gross form of the Sun which is rising in the sky, and is standing before us. *Savita* also means the one who inspires. The practitioner is asking for inspiration from the God who is an inspirer. God has infinite qualities, but one can meditate only upon a particular one. Which one can be meditated upon? – the quality that the practitioner aspires to attain. If one aspires for devotion, it will mean attaining good qualities. Guru Nanak gives a unique characteristic of devotion. He says,

‡ A highly revered *mantra* from the RigVeda, attributed to the sage Vishwamitra.

inculcating good qualities is the true form of devotion. In other words, to achieve the virtuous qualities, we meditate upon God, who is the embodiment of virtuous qualities. To be able to meditate we need some form and shape, some tangible attributes. So we are told to meditate upon भर्ग, the blazing radiance of the Sun. This blazing radiance burns away our flaws.

We meditate upon the Lord that inspires and upon His blazing radiance that purges the impurities and burns away the sins. This blazing radiance is to be desired, and when we aspire for it and worship it, we receive it. It is our duty to take the initiative. The blazing radiance is not forced upon us; if we aspire for it, we attain it.

Although the *Gayatri Mantra* is chanted in solitude, it is collective in intent. The seeker, embracing all the people in himself, prays on behalf of all for His grace, धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् – “Illumine and inspire our *buddhi*.”

8.2 Innermost radiant Sun (अंतःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयः)

* *Worship the Creator, not the creation.*

* *Sun is the best temple for inspiration.*

* *There is a highway between the Sun and the heart.*

* *Earth and water are dominant in karmayaoga. Fire, air and space are used in dhyana yoga.*

The worship that I do is of the Sun in the form of *atman* (soul). There is a *mantra* from Upanishad which I use to meditate upon the Sun.

सत्येन लभ्यस् तपसा ह्येष आत्मा सम्यक् ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम्
अंतःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः

This is a solemn *mantra*. Though it has not been considered a *mantra* for the worship of the Sun-god, I use

it for the contemplation of the Sun. The Self within is the Sun, and the Sun that we see is also the Self. So on one hand the Sun in the sky is the symbol, and on the other hand, the Self is the symbol. This is how our ancestors worshipped. As there is illumination from the Sun outside, there is illumination of Truth within, and they used to worship both these sources of illumination. When the *mantra* is interpreted in this way, one can attain Truth. The Sun is the idol of Truth. This worship of the Sun is for revelation of Truth.

अंतःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो – As you cannot see the Sun when it is covered by clouds, similarly the blazing radiance of the inner Sun remains invisible due to the veil over the mind. The inner Sun is extremely luminous. As the Sun has its own light, so has the inner Sun.

सूर्य आत्मा जगत्स्तथुषश्च – The Sun is the soul of the cosmos. The Sun is the other name for *atman* in Sanskrit, hence we can look upon the Sun as *atman*. A sentence in the Koran expresses a particularly significant type of faith. It says, if you want to worship God, do not worship whatever He has created. Do not worship God's creations such as the moon and sun; instead worship the Creator Himself. Worship the Subject, not His creation. When the sun rises, it is the common experience that the body, the sense-organs, the mind and *buddhi* come to life. The one who has experienced this will easily accept this, but the one who has not can understand it through imagination. Hence to me, the time of sunrise is very important. I do not find any other house of worship as inspiring as the Sun. He is a great source of inspiration. Hence it can be taken as a symbol of God and can be worshipped upon.

Since Vedic times, the observance of *sandhya*† has been

‡ A form of worship of the Sun, performed thrice in a day, at the times of transition – dawn, midday and dusk.

practised. This worship is particularly associated with the Sun. Saint Madhavdev† says, in the firmament of the heart, the Sun of pure consciousness is ever shining. Hence, it neither sets nor rises. The Sun in the sky rises and sets, but the inner Sun of pure consciousness is ever risen. Once the darkness of nescience is dispelled, this Sun which is pure consciousness never sets. As there is neither rising nor setting, when would one perform *sandhya*? There should be constant, ceaseless *sandhya*.

It is my conviction that there is a connection between the Sun and us. In an Upanishad there is a sentence which says that the Sun's rays reach our heart through the channels in the body. The Sun and heart are connected through a highway from which you can go to and fro. It is my experience that as the Sun's rays reach the heart, the heart can reach the Sun as well. I have even experienced it with the stars. While gazing at the stars, I feel that there is a path between the stars and me.

In our life, we throw out the intellectual thoughts and take in the spiritual thoughts. Looked at from this aspect, the Sun is the symbol of thoughts, and the air is the means of purification of the desires. To purify the mind, the intellectual thoughts must be thrown out, and spiritual thoughts must be taken in. Meditation is comprised of these two. Hence, meditation is done in association with breathing. Yogis have given a simple *japa*, सोऽहम् (So-Hum – I am That). In this, you do not have to utter anything, the air expelled during the exhalation is अहं (I), and the pure air that is taken in is सः (That – that is, *Brahman*). Exhalation is ego, I-ness, and the pure air that is inhaled is God. The Sun's rays inform our thoughts, which exalt our *chitta*. As there is a vast expanse of the sky outside, there is a miniature sky within. Meditation should be done under the

† A saint-poet from the Indian state of Assam.

vast sky. If the weather is inclement, you can sit inside; it is not necessary that the body be overlooked. This *dhyana* is a dual process. First, purifying the desires and *prana*. Second, giving up all negative thoughts as the Sun's rays are entering within us. Attuning to the vast expanse of sky and renunciation of the negative thoughts, both are thereby accomplished simultaneously.

Out of the five elements, earth and water are dominant in *karmayoga*, and the other three—fire, air and space are used in *dhyana*.

8.3 The secret of the Sun's Divinity (तत् सूर्यस्य देवत्वं)

* *The greatness of the Sun lies in its capacity to withdraw all of his rays.*

* *The Lord that dwells in the Sun dwells within us as well.*

* *"Lord Sun, please show me the one that is formless."*

There is a beautiful hymn in the praise of the Sun-god in the Vedas: तत् सूर्यस्य देवत्वं तन्महत्त्वं मध्या कर्तोर विततं सं जभार ह् The greatness of the Sun lies in its capacity to withdraw all of his rays that are spread during the day in the evening. The Sun can withdraw them within Himself. This power of retraction is lacking in some leaders and social workers. Hence they continue to be dragged along with the flow of action and remain too scattered. They cannot come back to their own place. Instead of becoming the masters of their actions, they become the slaves of those actions, and hence cannot look at their faults and shortcomings with detachment and neutrality. The result is that the action does not have the intended effects.

A friend once asked me, "We are busy with our social work, hence we do not have enough time for spiritual reflection. If we spend time in reflection, our work suffers

to that extent. What should we do about this?" I told him, "When an artist is painting, he stands near the painting. Still, every now and then he moves away from it to check whether his ideas are coming on the canvas or not, and to notice any defects. Similarly, the spiritual contemplation helps our work. It is wrong to assume that the social work suffers on account of taking time for reflection. If we can remove ourselves from the flow of work from time to time and go into our original Self, it will be of immense benefit."

It is necessary to take some time off from the actual work to do inner contemplation, become stable in the soul, and evaluate the work with neutrality. This is all necessary for the purification, nourishment, vitality and growth of the work. It is also needed for the purification of our mind. As long as we cannot remain detached from the work and the tools like organs of action and mind, we will remain vulnerable and get carried away by the activities. Hence, intermittent introspection is necessary.

When we sit quietly at the time of sunrise we do not sit to worship the Sun in the sky. But using the Sun as an excuse, we worship the Lord that dwells in the Sun as well as within us. This reflection does not hamper our work. Instead, whatever energy is consumed in doing the work is replenished.

Saint Ramdas says, "Oh Lord Sun, I bow before you. Please show me the one that is formless." This is indeed a strange prayer. How can the Sun reveal the formless? The Sun, by its nature, brings the whole universe into light, and reveals the form and shape of everything. But Ramdas asks the Sun to reveal the formless (the soul). In fact the formless dwells within us and we have to access it. This will prove helpful in truly understanding the work that we do.

8.4 Sun, the Sustainer (पूषन् एक ऋषे)

* *The Sun-god spreads His rays in the morning, and withdraws them in the evening.*

* *We too should disseminate our tendencies for service in the morning, and withdraw them in the evening.*

* *Meditation becomes perfect when both the principles of invocation and dissolution are constantly meditated upon.*

पूषन्नेक ऋषे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह
तेजो यत् ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत् ते पश्यामि
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि

“Thou art the sustainer of the universe; Thou art watching it and controlling it and Thou art taking care of all as Your subjects. Please unfold the rays that contain these qualities, and then gather them together. I am beholding your radiant and most benevolent manifestation. I am That, the Transcendent Being.”

Here God is to be meditated upon in the form of the Sun. The indwelling Lord who inspires the inner Sun inspires my *buddhi* too. Truth is its name. Both the Sun and *buddhi* are golden lids.

In this verse, the first two lines constitute the prayer. It is presumed here that in response to this prayer, God has revealed Himself to the devotee. The third line describes the revelation, and the fourth line describes the experience of realization.

This verse presents a complete picture of meditation. Prayer, revelation and realization are the three aspects of complete meditation. As long as there is no revelation, have hope and conviction, and as long as there is no realization, have devotion, and by these elements, meditation will have to be supplemented.

Any philosophy becomes whole only when it combines analysis and synthesis. In contemplation of the physical, material world, analysis is predominant, whereas in spiritual contemplation it is synthesis that is predominant. The Supreme, upon analysis, consists of nurturing + regulation + observation + protection + inspiration; and upon synthesis the Supreme represents benevolence perfected.

The Sun-god, while rising in the morning, disperses His rays which possess many-fold powers, and in the evening He withdraws them within Himself. A spiritual life is comprised of both dissemination and withdrawal. This is the basis for worship and meditation twice a day, at dawn and at dusk. In this connection there is a beautiful description in Veda. At dawn one kind of function takes place and at evening another one. At dawn the rays are dispersed and in the evening they are withdrawn. Meditation becomes perfect when both these aspects are constantly meditated upon. In the language of worship, this is called invocation and dissolution.

We unfold ourselves in the morning and withdraw in the evening. Some people complain that we sit for meditation in the morning, but the mind does not become one-pointed. Upon hearing this I ask, “Did you sleep well last night?” They answer, “Yes.” Then I ask them, “If your mind was one-pointed for 6 or 7 hours, why do you want to force it for more?” The mind says, it is morning; so let me go out and do some service. Instead you coerce it to sit still. The Sun-rays are spreading, the birds have come out of their nests, travellers have started their journeys, and the light that had waned in the evening has manifested again and is illuminating the earth. Is this not God’s manifestation? Why are you afraid of it? Hence, in the morning, get out of the house, serve others. If the mind gets engrossed in work, let it do so. At the time of dusk, withdraw that mind. But if you try to withdraw it

in the morning instead of night, it rebels.

Sometimes we need to attain many-pointedness as well. For example, while cooking you need to pay attention to many tasks simultaneously. Thus, we must be able to be many-pointed whenever it is needed, and one-pointed when that is needed. We need both of these.

योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि – That Supreme Transcendent Being is I: the God which is beyond and above everything is close by, and I am That.

The first phase of contemplation is of an analytical nature where we use the five qualities of the Sun such as nurturing and protection etc. The second phase of contemplation is the vision of ultimate well-being (supreme good) that we get through synthesis. And beyond that is the third phase of complete harmony, the realization of “I am That.”

The question arises whether सोऽहम् (“So-Hum”) is an experience, or a *mantra* for *japa*? Here, it is explained as an experience, but for a seeker, it is a *japa* which is to be done with *pranayama*. However, there is no harm in doing it at other times with normal breathing. Yoga-Sutra gives an elaborate description of this. After Self-realization the *japa* form of the *mantra* disappears and becomes ceaseless and automatic, which is then called *ajapa*.

9

My own experiences

I am meditative by nature. But I cannot differentiate between *dhyana*, *karma*, *jnana*, devotion and service. These are all different aspects of only one thing. Speaking about myself, I would like to stay constantly in a meditative state. For the past several years I have been engaged in a pilgrimage on foot. I remain in one province for many months, then saying goodbye to that province I enter another one. To me it all feels like make-believe, and it truly goes against my grain. However, after Gandhiji's demise, I felt that I would have to move onto a wider scale of *karmayoga*. Even previously with my *dhyana*, the *karmayoga* was on-going, but that was restricted to a particular place, not comprehensive, meaning that the *dhyana* was of prime importance and the *karmayoga* came as an aspect of it. Now, for the Bhoodan movement[‡], I have started this comprehensive *karmayoga* without disturbing my meditative state. Upon analyzing what I do during the whole day, the inner answer is, “I do *dhyana*.”

Whatever is happening in front of me helps my *dhyana*. It could be that someone is painting or I am

[‡] Bhoodan (Land-gift) Movement was initiated and led by Vinoba during 1951-1969 for solution of the land problem and through it, to bring about total revolution. Around 1 million hectares of land have been distributed to the landless labourers through this voluntary effort. In the course of this Movement, Vinoba travelled throughout India on foot.

listening to a devotional song or the chirping of birds, or maybe there is a mountain or sunrise in my sight. All of that is conducive to my meditative state, which inspires me on a daily basis. The way God has infused everything with His presence intrigues me.

* * *

When we were on a pilgrimage in Akrani Mahal (Maharashtra), we saw a mountain at some distance. It looked as if it was one mountain, but had two peaks. In the previous seven years of my pilgrimage, I had never seen a mountain like that; it was really unique. After having reached there, I meditated in the company of that mountain. Like Westerners, we modern people also take photographs and move ahead. If one really wants to absorb such extreme beauty, it cannot be done without *dhyana* and worship. Hence, I did not like the idea of just walking by that mountain. We should not miss these opportunities of absorbing ourselves in such beauty. On the contrary, we should look out for such opportunities. Such emotional contemplation is necessary for *karmayoga*; this is what *vikarma* is. This process will lead to the stages of non-action, *sannyas* and the experience of the presence of God everywhere.

I named this twin mountain Hari-Har. There are two principles in the world which complement each other. Hari-Har is the dual form of God, one gentle and the other ferocious. The Supreme God is comprised of these two. Gentleness is the manifestation of love; ferociousness is the manifestation of detachment. The first is called Self-realization, and the latter is *sannyas*. These are the two aspects of spiritual life. They are complementary. Hari (Lord Vishnu, god of sustenance) is the manifestation of love and compassion, and Har (Lord Shiva, god of destruction) is the manifestation of Truth. There is an element of ferociousness in Truth. This principle manifests

in many forms, like Truth and love, Truth and non-violence, and we should meditate upon those. The habit of *dhyana* and worship should go on constantly while walking, speaking, working and in sleep. In fact, they should go on incessantly. For this, occasionally, we have to do experiments with *dhyana* and worship. I have been doing this since childhood. As a result of these experiments, my life has been imbued with sweetness; and study, contemplation and *karma* in the form of service have become major aspects of my life. All of these came out of my *dhyana*, and all these things together make up a beautiful, blissful *sadhana*. Hence, one cannot move ahead without fully appreciating the beauty of such a mountain.

* * *

Between 1916 and 1920 I lived in the Sabarmati Ashram. At night, after everything quieted down, I started meditating by just sitting on my bed in the dark. Quickly I attained concentration. I started getting tremendous satisfaction, but later on I started doubting that may be this was not pure *samadhi*, there might be an element of sleep in it. After having thought about it, I let go of this three months old experiment and then instead of meditating at night I started meditating at 3 o'clock in the morning. It took me a while to attain concentration, but with effort gradually it became possible. I did this for 6 months. This was my first experience of *dhyana* and *samadhi*.

* * *

In 1938, because of the experiment of spinning cotton 8 hours a day, I had become very weak. I had a fever and a cough. At that time, Gandhiji called me and told me to move to a different place for recuperation. I accepted his suggestion, and on March 7, 1938 I went to Pavnar. As the car was crossing the bridge over the Dham river, I said, "I renounce, I renounce, I renounce." Giving up the worry of all the work and organizations that I was

affiliated with, I entered the house with an absolutely worry-free mind. There I would lie down for hours at a time with a completely vacant mind. This was my experience of a zero-like state. As you can stop a clock, I had stopped my mind. For hours on end, I stayed in that vacant state of mind. I had already achieved the freedom from passion and desire, now the question was of becoming free from thoughts. In the game of chess, even though the game is an illusion, still the *buddhi* has to work, to think. I did not even want that, so I stopped playing chess as well, with the effect that everything seemed empty. I experienced a feeling as if nothing existed. This experience of nothingness was so powerful that to feel some existence, even in a wakeful state, I had to touch something and feel it to get some experience of material existence. It felt like the whole creation around me had disappeared. The only experience was of "being."

* * *

In 1932, in Dhulia Jail, I gave talks on the Gita every Sunday. During the discourse on the twelfth chapter, I was explaining the devotion towards God, Who is with and beyond attributes. I had given an example of the devotion of Laxman and Bharat towards Ram. In that talk, I had drawn a verbal picture of the meeting of Ram and Bharat. In 1938 I went to stay at Paramdham, Pavnar. I used to dig there on a daily basis. While digging, I hit a rock and when I excavated it, I found a beautiful sculpture of the meeting of Ram and Bharat. It was exactly as I had described in my talk. I took it as God's blessing, and I concentrated all my faith and devotion on it. I had heard lots of stories of God's grace like this in various saints' lives. I was deeply moved by the sight of this idol.

* * *

I benefitted in three different ways at Paramdham: one, the experience of vacant mind; two, receiving the idol

of Bharat-Ram; and three, a special grace from Jnanadeva.

* * *

On April 18, 1951, at Pochampalli (Telangana), the *harijans* (untouchables) asked for land and a donation of one hundred acres (40 hectares) was received. That night I could not sleep for more than three or four hours. I was trying to comprehend what had happened. I have faith in God and in arithmetic. I began calculating: if one were to ask for land for all the landless people in India, it would take 50 million acres to satisfy their needs. Could so much land be received by asking? After this I had a dialogue with God; it was as if I was talking face to face with another human being. God said, "If you doubt, if you fear this task, you must give up your faith in non-violence and stop claiming to be non-violent. Keep faith and ask repeatedly." He also said, "The one who gave hunger to a child also put the milk in the mother's breast. He does not have any haphazard schemes." This conversation set all my doubts to rest, and I started asking for land. This experience in Telangana was a kind of God-revelation. There is intrinsic goodness in a human being, and it can be kindled. I worked with that faith, and God helped me see that goodness.

* * *

During Bhoodan pilgrimage, I contracted malignant malaria at Chandil. I had a high fever and became so weak that no one was sure I would survive. I was prepared either to live or die. I would not have felt sorry if God had taken me away. On December 17 (1952), I felt as if the time for my departure had come. I was running a high fever, and I asked the people around me to help me to a seated position. Immediately, I became absorbed in contemplation. I may have remained in that state of total absorption for 25 to 30 minutes. Although I had a good deal of practice of meditation, never before had I experienced such a sense of

bliss and revelation. It was boundless bliss and peace beyond comprehension. I felt as if I was getting closer to God, and seeing Him face to face. One can call this hallucination, illusion, or anything else. Shankaracharya calls the whole universe an illusion, and this too, being a worldly experience, can be called an illusion. After half an hour I came out of that state and became conscious of my surroundings. It was an experience of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is a state where the knower, knowing, and known become one, which is beyond words.

* * *

While in Bihar, I went to Vaidyanathdham where some of my friends suggested that I should visit the temple with *harijans* (untouchables). I agreed to this provided the owners of the temple would give me permission. I am a devotee of the gods in the temples, and I have faith in idol worship, yet I have trained myself to see God everywhere. Hence, it was not possible for me to enter the temple without the owners' permission. Those people gave their permission; hence I went there with my companions. Amongst them were some *harijans*. As it was against the custom to allow *harijans* in the temple, some people there started hitting us with sticks. This went on for five to six minutes. All these blows were directed at me, but my companions intercepted those blows. Still, God will not let you go without some blessing; and hence I got one blow on my left ear. As it is, my ear was weak, and the blow caused me to start getting ringing in my ear which continued for four or five days. I did not take any medication, as I was looking at it as God's blessing. When I reached my halting place, I was feeling indescribable bliss. I had gone to get a glimpse of God, and I was touched by Him. Because of the devotion and love, I relished that blow.

* * *

On August 22, 1957, just two days prior to my entry into Karnataka, I was sleeping inside a mosquito net. Suddenly I felt a sharp sting. Thinking that it might be a scorpion, I got up and shook out the bedding. A poisonous scorpion fell out. The pain of the sting was so intense that I could not sit still. I had to keep walking to and fro. This might have gone on for five hours. After that, I lay on the bed and tears started trickling from my eyes. One of my companions thought that they were due to pain, and he was consoling me. I told him that I was fine, and that my companions should go to sleep. During those five hours I had been inwardly repeating a Sanskrit prayer to myself,

नान्या स्पृहा रघुपते हृदयेऽस्मदीये, सत्यं वदामि च भवान् अखिलांतरात्मा
भक्तिं प्रयच्छ रघुपुंगव निर्भरां मे, कामादिदोष-रहितं कुरु मानसं च ।

—“Oh God, give me devotion, cleanse me of faults, let me be without sin, O Thou who dwells in the hearts of all, this is the desire of my heart, I have no other desire. O, God, I am speaking the truth.” But in reality, as I repeated those words, I did have another desire. I longed for the pain of the sting to subside. I was saying “I am speaking the truth,” but in reality I was lying. In fact, that was my ego. At last, I cried aloud in my mind, “How long are you going to torment me?” And suddenly all of my pain disappeared completely. I felt as though I was in God's deep embrace and my eyes overflowed with tears. After that, within two minutes, I fell asleep. I experienced God through his quality of kindness.

* * *

As I travelled through Maharashtra, I came to Pandharpur. Those who were in charge of the temple of Vitthal invited me there. The people who were accompanying me were of different castes and religions. I shall never in my life forget what I saw that day as it is so deeply imprinted on my heart. It is hard to find words

for what I experienced then as I stood at the feet of Vithoba, tears flowing freely from my eyes. I looked at the image, and saw no stone sculpture there, but God Himself. Beside me there stood those I had revered, some from boyhood, saints like Ramanuja, Nammalvar, Jnanadeva, Chaitanya, Kabir, Tulsidas and many more. I bowed before the image of the Lord, looking at His feet, and saw all those dear to me, all those who had nurtured me, mother, father, *guru*; and I drank my fill of joy.

* * *

What happened in the valley of Chambal during Bhoodan pilgrimage was that some bandits came to see me and surrendered their weapons at my feet. This was God's grace and all the credit goes to God. This would be regarded as a manifestation of non-violence. I had revelation of collective non-violence thrice: first, in Pochampalli, where the first piece of land was donated, second in Bihar at Vaidyanathdham, and third in the valley of Chambal.

* * *

I am a very hard-hearted person. I am neither moved by someone's birth nor by someone's death. But due to the different experiences in the Bhoodan Movement, I became very gentle. My heart became soft, and I received such devotion which I had not received even through my *sadhana* of *dhyana* and contemplation. My heart became soft and humble. I had many pure and holy experiences.

One who does not come in contact with the general public loses a big opportunity of seeing God face to face. God manifests in three different ways: one, in the form of common people; two, in the form of vast nature; three, as the indwelling God. These three together constitute perfect God-realization.

* * *

During my pilgrimage, I was camping at Bettiah in Bihar. I dreamed that a person with a luminous appearance was sitting and discussing Vinayanjali[‡] with me. He asked me about the meaning of two of the devotional songs, and asked me to explain some points to him, which I did. He listened with great attention and nodded from time to time in agreement. Suddenly, I realized that this person was Saint Tulsidas himself, and I woke up. Upon contemplating that dream, I realized that particular day was his birthday. I would normally commemorate that day by reading something from his holy texts. But that year I had missed it, so Saint Tulsidas himself appeared in my dream and talked to me. Since that day, those devotional songs from his texts have had a new meaning for me.

* * *

I often mention that I still continue talking with Gandhiji. When he was alive, I had to walk five miles to meet him. It took two hours. It was an effort. But now, I just close my eyes and I am with him that very second. I can ask him questions and receive answers very easily. Previously he was confined within a body, now he is free. He is everywhere; there is nothing to bind him. I am still bound in this body. But as long as I am in the body, I will continue to receive inspiration from him. There are more comprehensive revelations, too, in which we may have the company of the great souls who have lived in the past. Their voices fill the air around us. Those who are on the right wavelength can hear these voices and be inspired by them.

* * *

[‡] A collection of devotional songs by Tulsidas, a saint-poet of the 16th century.

I have faith in idol worship. Some of my friends comment, "How come you have faith in idols? It is naïve." I say, "I cannot give up this naiveté. It's good for me." Upon sight of an idol, my eyes well up. My experience is that the idol speaks to me as it spoke to Saint Namdev.

* * *

People ask me, "Have you seen God?" I respond, "Not only have I seen Him, I speak with Him too. Who are those who are sitting in front of me? They are all God. During my pilgrimage, I had this revelation of the thousand-headed, thousand-legged God (representing all the people). The idols that we excavated from the land are God, the trees are also God.

* * *

"Are you as certain of the existence of God as you are certain of this lamp in front of you?" someone once asked me. "I am very certain of God's existence," I replied. "But as for the lamp, I am not nearly so sure whether it really exists or not." This exchange, which is recorded in my book, *Vichar-pothi*, took place thirty years ago, in 1928. On a number of occasions I have had a face-to-face Vision of God, or so it appeared to me. I owe my faith in God partly perhaps to the attitudes I inherited from my family, and partly to my reverence for certain Holy Scriptures. But my faith rests more on my direct experience than on these factors. Various forms of existence (such as people, animals, trees, etc.) are manifestations of God's *sankalpa*.

* * *

I never lose the awareness of God. I know that God has been with me for many years. This knowing is not like that of history or geography, nor can it be called *jnana*. It is an experience, an experience of God-awareness. What is this awareness? It is that only God is happily and blissfully existent in everything, everywhere.

10

Random thoughts on *Dhyana*

Yoga means meeting with one's own Self. We meet a lot of people in the world, but are we ever eager to meet with our own Self? Meeting with one's own Self is a very difficult task. People see their reflections in the mirror and assume that they have met with themselves. But that is not a true meeting. *Yoga* means meeting with one's own Self.

* * *

We must set aside an hour on a daily basis to detach ourselves from all work for study and *dhyana*. An hour a day, a day in a week, a month in a year should be set aside for study, reflection, contemplation and *dhyana*.

* * *

The night beckons us to contemplate, and the day beckons us to work. The day unveils the earth and the night unveils the infinite sky. Hence, during the day, be in the company of other people and nature; at night be in the company of your own Self and *chitta*. A short *dhyana* before going to bed and after waking up enhances inner strength.

* * *

It is one thing to meditate by sitting in a particular posture for hours on end, it is a different thing if you do it for 10 or 20 minutes, and it is quite another thing to be

in a meditative state throughout the day. When one is constantly aware that all work being done is service unto God, then it is *dhyana*, and this concept is of paramount importance.

* * *

Concentration of the *chitta* is the beginning of *yoga*, not the end.

* * *

God that seems to be farthest from you is actually the closest to you. The awareness that there is a complete identification between the in-dwelling God and one's own Self is expected in *dhyana*.

* * *

The idols in the temple are for *dhyana*. As is one's *dhyana*, so becomes one's mind. Such is the state of a *dhyani*-devotee. Then, in such a state, when we do our work with equanimity, it produces a sweet, abiding, meditative resonance in the inner recesses of our hearts.

* * *

The formula for water is H_2O . For a sublime and lofty life, the formula is M_2A – two parts meditation and one part action.

* * *

Dhyana is a temporary device to dodge the world's blows, whereas *jnana* gives a blow to the world and makes it permanently disabled (ineffective). To make the world disappear is *dhyana*, to see the world verily as *Brahman* is *jnana*.

* * *

Sitting is for *dhyana* and movement is for thinking

* * *

Six-fold *dhyana*: 1) Introspection, 2) Contemplation upon God, 3) Reflection on great axioms, such as "I am That" and "Thou art That", 4) *Japa*, 5) Watching God's playful drama being unfolded on the stage of the world, 6) Studying the lives of the sages and the saints.

* * *

Meaning of silence:

- 1) Restraint of speech
- 2) Acquisition and preservation of truth
- 3) Conservation of energy (vital and psychic)
- 4) *Dhyana-sadhana*.

* * *

For *karmayoga*, regulation of the intake of food; for *dhyana-yoga*, very limited intake of food; and for redemption, fasting.

* * *

Dhyana means merging the organs of perception and action in the mind, merging the mind in the *buddhi*, and finally absorption of the *buddhi* in the Self, and attaining thereby the state of *samadhi*, that is experiencing the void i.e. emptiness like that of the sky.

* * *

To experience the final stage of *dhyana*, complete dissolution of speech would be beneficial.

* * *

There is a subtle difference between active and passive *dhyana*. The *dhyana* and contemplation done during the day is active, and the one done in the night is passive. There is strength in active *dhyana*, and peace in passive *dhyana*; devotion is common to both.

* * *

Sometimes I do *salamban dhyana* (meditation done with support of an idol etc.) and sometimes *niralamban* (unsupported meditation). People ask me why even I need support. I reply, some support is necessary for devotion.

* * *

You will see the effects of sorrow on a *jnani's* body, but his mind will not be filled with sorrow. He recognizes or acknowledges sorrow, but remains firmly rooted in the Self and does not waver. However, the sorrow has no effect whatsoever on a *dhyani*, as the *dhyani* is constantly under the anaesthesia of *dhyana*.

* * *

Jnana is on a higher plane than *dhyana*. *Dhyana* will give concentration whereas *jnana* will give equanimity. Once the *jnana* abides in the Self, one feels peace and serenity everywhere. Rather than a state of *dhyana*, we should strive for the state of *jnana*.

* * *

There is no contradiction between service to humanity and *dhyana*-contemplation. The service that is bereft of *dhyana*-contemplation is illusory, and the *dhyana*-contemplation which wants to give up service, even temporarily, is illusory as well. In spiritual *sadhana*, egolessness and detachment are the most important aspects. For both service and *dhyana*, detachment and desirelessness should be the touchstone. Only then will they become identical.

* * *

Speaking regarding self-examination and self-purification, I want to suggest that one must search for the time in life when complete peace and solitude can be experienced, and try to go in a complete meditative state

at such a time. In these times, one must keep on practising *dhyana* and remain in contact with society simultaneously. Only then will the *buddhi* remain steady, and one will be able to contribute to the society.

* * *

Whether it is service, work, *dhyana* or study, as long as it is not related to God, it cannot become spiritual. On the other hand, even sports can become a spiritual *sadhana* if they are related to God.

* * *

The sages say that in the proximity of mountains and confluence of rivers, *janis* are born. We see wild animals in the company of mountains, then why do the sages say so? It is because *jnana* is attained there through *dhyana*. Wild animals do not meditate.

* * *

It cannot be claimed that *dhyana* is a spiritual practice. Similarly, how can it be that closing one nostril and exhaling gradually (*pranayama*) is a spiritual practice, and if you do something for poor people out of compassion and love, it is just mundane work?

* * *

Dhyana will become possible only when the mind becomes active (thinks of different things) with our explicit wish, not otherwise. For *dhyana*, the mind must always remain under your control.

* * *

If our eyes are completely closed, we cannot observe the world. If they are wide open, the external world will constantly keep attacking. Hence, scriptures have suggested half open and half closed eyes for *dhyana*

* * *

How should one prepare for dhyana?

Do physical labour and pray.

What is the goal of dhyana?

Purification of the mind. There should be no impurity or malady in the mind.

What constitutes true dhyana?

There should be perfect peace in the mind. There should be no agitation.

What is the difference between dhyana and contemplation?

Dhyana means trying to attain a state that is completely free of thoughts, whereas in contemplation, you think about one particular subject.

What is the connection between dhyana and other urges of eating, drinking, sleeping etc.?

If all those urges are accompanied by *dhyana*, everything will become holy and sanctified.

How can we keep the mind restrained?

It is difficult but can be attained with constant effort. How? Stop worshipping wealth as God and cling to the true God.

What is the state after the thought-free state is attained?

Life becomes natural and spontaneous after a thought-free state is attained.

What is the difference between a thought-free state and a vacant mind?

Vacant mind is the mind in repose and quiescence. In deep sleep the mind is completely stilled, but we must saturate the mind with God-consciousness.

* * *

Dhyana is essentially of the abstract. A form or manifestation is just a support; an idol is a form given to the abstract. These manifested forms are around us all the time. What need is there to meditate upon them? Instead we should serve them. The kind of *dhyana* that is required even for service is taken for granted in service.

* * *

What does a dream signify? – 1. Illusory nature of the world, 2. The capability of imagination and 3. Incompleteness of one's spiritual *sadhana*.

* * *

According to Yoga-Shastra, it is important to be able to forget the past while maintaining the power of contemplation; this is a sign of spiritual progress. One can benefit from past experiences but they also can prove harmful if memories are entangled with them. How to benefit by the experiences of the past without the memory of the past is a matter of *sadhana*.

* * *

In Vyasa's commentary on Patanjali's *sutras*, he says, *yogis* are very delicate. The way the eyes cannot even bear a minute particle in them because they are delicate, similarly *yogis* cannot tolerate even a speck of maladies like desire or anger in them.

* * *

The faculty of thinking is the power of *buddhi* and love is the power of the heart. Similarly, *sankalpa* (making resolves) is a power of the *chitta*. To attain the power of the soul and purification of the *chitta*, it is essential that there should be purity and sanctity in our resolves. This is the premise of education. The *yoga* of Patanjali enhances and evolves one's power of *sankalpa*.

* * *

It is said that *yogis* smell a divine fragrance. This is because a *yogi* cannot control the nose. It is connected to the *prana*. This is my experience too. As restraining the *prana* is difficult, so is controlling the organ of smell. Even when it is under control, the divine fragrance continues to be experienced.

* * *

Non-identification with the mind means to witness the movement of the mind. When one becomes the witness, the mind becomes still. "I do not exist in one body only, I exist in all bodies." – This awareness must be there even in *dhyana* done in seclusion. And this same consciousness should permeate the whole life.

* * *

The vision of Vedas is comprehensive. It is a perfect, holistic scheme. *Jnana* is innately present in the Vedas along with *karmayoga*, *dhyana*, and *bhaktiyoga*. But these aspects are covered by a thick shell, and without removing that the absolute and esoteric truths of the Vedas do not reveal themselves.

* * *

Hiranyagarbha is the author of the *yoga* of Vedic *dhyana*. People fail to understand Vedic *dhyana*. The deities of rain, wind, etc. are different symbols in Vedic *dhyana*. The experiences, visions, and contemplation of Vedas are all extremely subtle.

* * *

The Buddhist practice of *vipassana* is looking at the whole universe as a diversified manifestation of God; that is, God is present in this, that and everything. The second, *sampashyana* is looking at God as a unified manifestation of these three. Vedas prescribe both *vipashyana* and *sampashyana*. These two together make the spiritual

practice perfect. A practitioner can do both. One who meditates with the universe in view, transcends all types of aversion.

* * *

A practitioner should use and apply all his strength to attain serenity and peace of mind. People try different things for the stability of the *buddhi*. They close their eyes, sit erect. Still the mind keeps wandering. Why does the mind keep on wandering everywhere? Because it is not at peace nor serene. Hence the Gita says, "Make the mind serene, then all the sorrows will disappear and concentration will become easy." First of all, make the mind pure and clean. It will then automatically experience the state of nothingness. Then one will have to make efforts to have the mind occupied with different things. This means that the whole process of meditation becomes redundant. We do not find the process of meditation described in the Gita.

* * *

God has given us both legs and eyes. *Karmayoga* acts as the legs, *dhyana* as the eyes. In the path of *dhyana* do not forget your legs, otherwise you will stumble. In the path of *karmayoga*, do not forget your eyes; otherwise you will bump into things. We should watch both what is close and far. Watching what is close and walking is *karmayoga*, and walking and looking in the distance is *dhyana*, meaning prayer.

* * *

The greatest amongst all *yogas* is *udiyog* which means being industrious. Etymologically *udiyog* means *ut* + *yoga*, that is, highest *yoga*. Physical labour and productive labour are the highest forms of *yoga*. In spite of having such an inspiring idea represented by this word, we are non-industrious, non-enterprising and evade physical labour.

So, along with your *asana* practice, use a shovel and pick axe too.

* * *

Dhyana is not a great thing. Remaining vigilant and aware all the time is *dhyana*. Giving up effort happens on a daily basis. This allows us to fall asleep, and in sleep we merge with infinity. One should be able to fall asleep at command. Lying down makes it easy, some people do it while sitting; I can do it while walking. Any position where effort becomes effortless is conducive for *dhyana*.

* * *

When I watch the movement of the mind, it just becomes immobile. Then for the next five minutes I become one with the entire community, and the moment I start getting joy from that, I discard it. What is the need of joy for me? On the contrary, I tell that joy, "See if you need me."

Yoga-Sutra

Vinoba's expositions on Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra made on different occasions have been included here as they can provide valuable guidance to the seekers. This part of the book can be regarded as a supplement to Vinoba's thoughts on dhyana.

There is a legend about Patanjali that he gave grammar for the purification of speech, *yoga* for the purification of the *chitta*, and *vaidyak-shastra* (medical science) for the purification of the body. This legend is described in the prostration composed by Bhartrihari. He continues, "I prostrate before Patanjali, the foremost among the sages." This all-encompassing vision of life is a superb vision. Only a person who is perfectly rooted in the Self, like Patanjali, can have such vision.

1

Yoga-Sutra† of Patanjali

The originator of the *yoga-shastra* (science of *yoga*) is Hiranyagarbha. The Yoga-Sutra was most probably written in the post-Buddha era, and is regarded as the best treatise on *yoga*. The main subject of *yoga* is the power of the *chitta* and the power of the *prana*, which are intertwined with each other. It is essential to keep both *prana* and *chitta* restrained in order to realize the infinite and unmanifested power of the soul. The unmanifested and great energy of the soul cannot be acquired without the purification and restraint of the *chitta* and *prana*. The *chitta* is purified by unflinching and uncompromising adherence to the *yamas*, like *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (Truth) etc. and the *prana* is purified by the practice of *asanas*, *pranayama* and a pure, *sattvic* diet§. *Dhyana* regulates *chitta*, and *pranayama* regulates *prana*. This is *yoga-shastra*, the science of *yoga*, which has been known in India since ancient times.

Patanjali might have been a contemporary of Buddha, but the science of *yoga* is ancient. Only when a science reaches perfection can its tenets be put in the form of aphorisms. *Yoga-shastra* had reached its perfection prior to Patanjali. He compiled it and presented the whole *shastra*

† *Sutra* — Aphorism.

§ In the Indian tradition, it is believed that food significantly affects the mind.

in 195 aphorisms. Patanjali is the most penetrating and accomplished authority on *yoga-shastra*. Although his treatise was written twenty five hundred years ago, it is respected in India even in these modern times, and many *yogis* have received invaluable guidance from it.

Among the many gifts that India has given to the world, *yoga-shastra* is an important one. This is the most systematic science of meditation. These days we talk a lot about psychology, and it is regarded as useful and essential for teachers, leaders, etc. But psychology does not take us beyond the mind. Psychology is not a subject that I study in depth, but whatever I have read has led me to the conclusion that psychologists have yet to realize the importance of detaching ourselves from the mind. Those who remain on the plane of their own minds cannot think about or study others' minds. Psychology observes and understands the movements of the mind; it is not the science of control and subjugation of the mind. Psychology does not give us a procedure or process for detaching ourselves from our minds the way we can detach ourselves from a watch. Psychology is the science of the modifications of the mind, and it depicts the picture of the functioning of the mind. It does not tell us how we are different from the mind and how we can rise above the mind. *Yoga-shastra* gives us a tool to transcend the mind; it is the science of the subjugation of the mind. This is why *yoga-shastra* is a gift of the experiences of India to the world.

Putting immense depth and intensity of meaning in a few words is a characteristic of Sanskrit literature; Yoga-Sutra is an ideal example of this. The entire *shastra* of *chitta-vritti-nirodh*† (science of restraining the modifications of the mind) has been set forth in 195 aphorisms. Patanjali

† *Nirodh* — Restraint.

has put all his life's wisdom in them. For over two thousand years, the light-shedding jewel of Yoga-Sutra has been shining with unabated lustre.

* * *

Among all the treatises about education in Sanskrit, Yoga-Sutra is the crown jewel. In Yoga-Sutra, education has been dealt with both from the psychological and supramental points of view. It is necessary to think of education from a psychological point of view; without that, education cannot begin. Although psychology is necessary in the beginning, we need the supramental point of view to realize the ultimate destination of education and to know how far it can take us. After having thoroughly analyzed the modifications of the mind, Patanjali has given instructions for both—behaving in accordance with those modifications and also transcending them. If one does not behave in a way that is in concurrence with one's natural tendencies, nothing can be done in the world. Hence, it becomes necessary to think in tune with them. On the other hand, it limits us in our thinking if we do not go beyond those tendencies, and we lose neutrality and witnessivity. We lose the wider perspective, and get bogged down in petty matters. Hence, the supramental view is as necessary as psychology. Considering both these aspects, Yoga-Sutra has been put forward very succinctly. Many commentaries have been written on it. The science of *yoga* has been ever-evolving, even up to the present in India.

In Sanskrit literature, Gita, Vedanta-Sutra, Upanishads and Yoga-Sutra are the treatises on which numerous commentaries have been written, in this order. We find commentaries on Yoga-Sutra in different Indian languages, as well as in foreign languages. Among the five most important commentaries on the Yoga-Sutra, Vyasa's commentary is considered the most authoritative. And

again there are commentaries on the commentary of Vyasa as well.

Aphorisms are very short, consisting of two, three or four words. In those times, they did not have paper, so the *guru* would delineate a subject through an elaborate discourse, and after having explained the subject at length, he would put it in the condensed form of *sutras*, as an aid to memorize the whole subject. The disciple would learn the *sutra* (aphorism) by heart. As an example, there is a *sutra*, देशबन्धश् चित्तस्य धारणा – “To keep the mind confined in one place is *dharana*.” The master would discuss this in a long discourse. Hence in ancient times the concept of sect (संप्रदाय) was sacred. In modern times, the connotation of “sect” has degenerated, but in those times it was a very sacred concept. The purpose of the sect was to preserve the knowledge that was acquired through the tradition of the *guru*-disciple lineage. Only if you had heard the discourse from the one who composed the aphorism were you considered the authority. Shankaracharya even says that one should disregard even a wise person if he does not belong to a sect. The meaning of the *sutra* or aphorism has a tradition. Without knowing the tradition, one cannot correctly interpret the aphorism or the terminology. One must know the traditional meanings of different words. If someone wants to give new meanings of one's own liking to those *sutras*, that person should better write his own independent book. Hence, ancient commentators on the ancient *sutras* are regarded as more authoritative, because they had heard those *sutras* and their delineation from the original composers themselves.

2

Restraint of Consciousness

The subject of Yoga-Sutra is *yoga* – अथ योगानुशासनम् (YS 1.1), and it is defined as *chitta-nirodh*, योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः (YS 1.2) (regulating, purifying, sublimating and restraining the consciousness). *Yoga* and *chitta-nirodh* are possible only after embracing all the aspects of life. Human life has many dimensions, like material, *pranic*, psychological, social and that of speech. To attain *yoga* and *chitta-nirodh*, all these aspects must be considered and included. The word *yoga* is positive, while the term *chitta-nirodh* is negative. The term *yoga* implies some kind of union and accomplishment, whereas in *chitta-vritti-nirodh* disconnection and removal are involved. Our minds are stuck to many useless ideas and conceptions; those must be removed. The veil must be torn. Strange as it may seem, a positive concept like *yoga* is defined in negative terms. Gita too defines *yoga* as the disconnection from sorrow (Gita 6.23). Whether you choose the positive definition or the negative, without that disassociation, *yoga* cannot be accomplished. Gita says that disconnection from sorrow is *yoga*, hence the science that Patanjali created is the science of *chitta-vritti-nirodh*; it is a science of the mind. But we cannot stop there. Hence, Gita enters into the realm of devotion and knowledge; and it incorporates *karmayoga* as well.

The *yoga-shastra* of the Gita is included in the *Brahmavidya*. The manifest visible form of life is the human body; similarly, the manifest visible form of *sadhana*

is *karmayoga*, and the inner core of that practice consists of *bhakti* (devotion), *jnana* and *dhyana*. As in a marriage ceremony the guests are invited along with their families, the Gita has included all these forms of *sadhana* and has formulated an all-encompassing science of spirituality. Therefore, the *yoga-shastra* propounded by the Gita becomes easier to understand.

Chitta-vritti-nirodh is the main tenet of the book of Yoga-Sutra. A subtle subject has been given prime importance. Compared to that, *bhakti* (devotion), *kriyayoga* etc. are given a secondary place. The word *kriyayoga* is Patanjali's own word, which is the same as the *karmayoga* of Gita. Patanjali also coins another word, *purushkhyati*, which means *jnana*, or Self-realization. Similarly, *chitta-nirodh* is Patanjali's own word. But what he has really in mind is the regeneration, the transformation of *chitta* – निर्माणं चित्तान् अस्मितामात्रात् (YS 4.4). Some degree of *asmita* (I-ness) is required to bring about desired transformation of the *chitta*. If the *chitta* is transformed, the society too will get transformed. Whatever transformation or change we want to bring about, transformation of *chitta* is the prerequisite. If *chitta* is transformed, everything we are seeking will follow. Finally this boils down to education. Learning language, mathematics, music etc. does not constitute education. Regeneration of *chitta* is the real education.

Patanjali gives importance to only one aspect of life, it is nonetheless an exceedingly important aspect. Since this aspect of life is of prime importance, it cannot help influencing the other aspects also. Other things have their importance, but they are of secondary importance. Buddhism, Jainism and all the sects have fascination for this aspect; and they have complemented it with *karmayoga*, *dhyanyoga* etc. as per need. The Gita's precept of *sadhana* is easier to act upon, since it has been woven around our body. But the *sadhana* centred around the *chitta* is a tough

task. Tough as it is, it is of immense importance, and cannot be avoided. If the *chitta* is not transformed, nothing worthwhile is going to be achieved.

* * *

Worship of the abstract form of the Supreme, as outlined in the Gita (chapters 6-8) is akin to the Patanjali's science of *yoga*. We can list the following aphorisms in this connection:

1) अथ योगानुशासनम् (YS 1.1) – The science of *yoga* is now being enunciated.

2) योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः (YS 1.2) – Regulating, purifying, sublimating and restraining the consciousness is *yoga*. Transcendent stillness of mind-ripples is *yoga*.

3) तदा ब्रह्मः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् (YS 1.3) – That being attained, one is established in the Self.

4) अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः (YS 1.12) – *Chitta-vritti-nirodh* is accomplished by constant practice and dispassion.

5) ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा (YS 1.23) – It can be attained also by devotion.

6) तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः (YS 1.27) – ॐ (Om) denotes God.

7) तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् (YS 1.28) – God is best worshipped by constant *japa* and reflection on ॐ (Om).

The subject of the first four aphorisms is in the Gita's 6th chapter, of the fifth one is in the Gita's 7th chapter and of the sixth and seventh ones is in the Gita's 8th chapter. Here it needs to be pointed out that devotion to God (*ishwarpranidhan*) is not an alternative to *abhyas-vairagya* (practice and dispassion). *Abhyas-vairagya* have to be accompanied by *ishwarpranidhan* (meditation upon God the unmanifest).

* * *

The concept of God in the Yoga-Sutra is found in the Gita also. God is both, with attributes (*saguna*) and without attributes and forms (*nirguna nirakar*). God with attributes can be with or without form (*saguna saakar* and *saguna nirakar*). Muslims believe in God with attributes but without form. Shankaracharya believes in *nirgun-nirakar* and the saints have embraced *saguna-saakar*. Whatever is conducive to your nature is what you should choose. In the Gita, God is described both as *nirguna* and *saguna*.

3

From *Shuchita*[§] to Self-realization

1. Disgust for One's Own Body (स्वांगजुगुप्सा)

What is now known as cleanliness used to be called *shuchita*. But in Indian culture, the word *shuchita* has a wider, deeper meaning than “cleanliness”. In Sanskrit, the word *shuchi* denotes light, and it has a very subtle meaning. While describing the characteristics of a *brahmin* in the Gita, *shuchita* is referred to as a social obligation. It has also been described as a divine quality, and in the 13th chapter, it is described as a characteristic of *jnana*. Thus the Gita has mentioned *shuchita* in three contexts. *Shuchita* is necessary in all the spheres of life, namely the individual, collective and spiritual. Therefore two *sutras* have been devoted to it in the Yoga-Sutra.

Shuchita includes other practices such as *brahmacharya* (abstinence from all sensualities) and the rest of the *yamas* and *niyamas*. Yoga-Sutra is specifically concerned with how we behave in our social interactions and that there should be no malaise in the mind, no dirt in the mind. In Yoga-Sutra there is a beautiful discourse on *shuchita*. What

§ Literally, cleanliness and purity, holiness. The wide scope of the meaning has been explained at the beginning of the chapter.

are the results of the pursuit of *shuchita*? Patanjali describes seven different results. The first *sutra* (शौचात् स्वांग-जुगुप्सा परैः असंसर्गः) (YS 2.40) describes two gross i.e. external results, and the second *sutra* describes five subtle results. The external, gross form of *shuchita* is comprised of (1) lack of attachment with one's own body (स्वांग-जुगुप्सा) and (2) creation of the society and the social institutions should be in such a way that there is connection between people but no unhealthy proximity (परैः असंसर्गः).

The first effect is loss of attachment and affection for one's own body, which will create dispassion (*vairagya*) for the body. It is an insightful expression. Patanjali says, we develop a dispassion for our own body. Am I so clean that I can disdain someone else? We have to clean our organs and body on a daily basis. We have to evacuate as well. The body becomes dirty again and again; in sickness, it becomes even dirtier. It is as if the body has vowed to be ever-dirty. I always suggest that one should examine one's own excreta in the morning; it tells you about the results of eating different things. This will induce one to control one's palate and, if one prepares compost from the excreta, it will generate wealth. Thus, this will lead to non-attachment, health and prosperity.

Disgust for one's own body leads to dispassion. The human being has an intense attachment towards his own body. I have seen lepers whose lives had become unbearable, and the stench of their bodies enveloped them, yet because the idea of *shuchita* was lacking they had the will and wish to live. If they had the idea of *shuchita*, they would have developed disgust for their own body and lost attachment to it. Hence the first effect of the pursuit of *shuchita* is decreasing attachment towards one's own body. These days, a lot of importance is given to decorating the body, and various cosmetics are used to make the face look attractive. If the inside is pure and clean, it will be

reflected on one's face, and it will look very attractive. However, the attractiveness that comes through cosmetics is only seen by others; we ourselves cannot see it. It is of no use to us, whereas the purity inside will be reflected in the serenity and happiness in one's demeanour. One can directly experience it. I fail to understand the pleasure in decorating the body. Socrates had very wide nostrils, and hence people thought him ugly. But he said that wide nostrils were good, as they made respiration easier. Chinese regard a flat nose as a sign of beauty. Thus, the concept of beauty is very subjective and superficial, and gives undue importance to the body.

The concept of *shuchita* that had evolved in India has been depicted by Patanjali with great subtlety and discretion. Based on that, he explained that when the idea of *shuchita* is imbibed, the first result is *swang-jugupsa*, dislike and disgust for one's own body. *Swang-jugupsa* is Patanjali's own word. Patanjali coined his own terms that are not found in the scriptures prior to Patanjali's period, such as Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita. *Swang-jugupsa* is one of them.

2. Keeping contact from reasonable distance

(परैः असंसर्गः)

The second effect of purity is to keep a connection and contact with others without it being excessive. The contact should be from a reasonable distance. It should not be aggressive and should not cause physical discomfort.

Today's urban planning is more conducive to contagion. In modern cities there is a state that creates uncleanness; this disturbs the peace of mind of the inhabitants. A village should be planned in such a way that there are spaces between houses.

Indian custom is to greet each other with the gesture

of *namaskar* (which is joining one's own palms). In the West, people shake hands. Indian custom has connection, but no physical contact. It is just a common example, and the intention is not to criticize Western culture. In my eyes, the Indian custom is more modest. In Western countries, they greet with a bouquet where the flowers have no freedom; they are bound together. Whereas, Indians offer garlands, where each and every flower is separate. In a bouquet there is contact, in a garland the flowers are connected by a thread. They are symbols of the Western and Indian civilizations respectively.

Any physical contact with another person with ignoble intentions should be avoided. The mind is the main thing. Modesty between women and men is not the subject matter here; we go beyond that. We must have disgust for our own body, which is made up of skin, flesh and bones, and maintain physical distance from others. Physical contact should only be done with the intention of service or nursing a sick or disabled person. Saintly people touch others, but that touch gives assurance and blessings.

Having close physical contact with another person to save him from drowning or to nurse him is not an example of excessive contact, and hence not objectionable. But the practice of kissing is improper. There is no benefit; on the contrary, it is harmful. Upon seeing an innocent child, people want to kiss him. It is not that anyone is using a disinfectant; so it is a dirty practice.

Western people have made a lot of scientific progress, and hence have adopted many hygienic practices, which should be adopted by everyone.

In a nutshell, I feel that Patanjali is well aware of the value of physical contact and being connected, but at the same time he talks about avoiding excessive physical contact and contagion. Hence, the planning for villages and towns should be done in such a way that there is

scope for social interaction while avoiding contagion.

The next *sutra* deals primarily with the effects of *shuchita* on the mental level.

3. Purification of *sattva*† (सत्त्वशुद्धि)

In this *sutra*, Patanjali speaks of the inner spirit. He explains when the *shuchita* will be perfected, meaning the individual and society will attain *shuchita* (be perfectly pure). His *sutra* describes five lofty qualities which will bring about this perfection. The first one is *sattva-shuddhi* (purity of the *sattva*). The word *sattva-shuddhi* used by Patanjali is not his own. This word occurs in the Chhandogya Upanishad. There is a story in it about the sage Narada. He did not become sorrow-free in spite of acquiring all knowledge. So he went to Sanatkumar and asked earnestly, “I have heard that people who have known *Brahman* are sorrow-free, but this has not happened to me. Please tell me how to cross over the mighty ocean of sorrow?” The advice he received contains a *sutra*: आहारशुद्धौ सत्त्वशुद्धिः (*Aharshuddhau Sattwashuddhi*) – “Purification of intake will result in purification of *sattva*.” The short sentences in the Upanishads are very cryptic; the deeper you go, the more you contemplate, the more wisdom you will receive. When the intake is pure, the mind becomes pure. This is a fact which is proven by experience. I have not come across such an unequivocal pronouncement in any other treatise.

Indian culture has undertaken great experiments regarding diet. First, beef-eating was given up, and after that, eating all types of meat was given up. Manu (the great law-giver) says, “The animal that I am eating today is going to eat me tomorrow.”

† Its meanings include *chitta*, the quality of *sattva* (among the three *gunas*) and *prana*.

For *shuchita*, giving up meat is of utmost importance. A Westerner once told me, “If you tell people to give up meat based on kindness towards animals, they may not accept the idea very easily. Whereas, if they are told that meat is not a natural food for humankind, and that giving up meat-eating is necessary for purification of the diet, they might accept it more easily.” Patanjali has said that purification of intake will bring about purification of the psyche. In spite of being meat-eaters, some people have a pure heart. There are kind people who eat meat. You see such instances. Even then, there is no doubt that purification of diet will lead to purification of *chitta*. That is why Manu has spoken harshly against the consumption of alcohol and meat. He regards both, the consumption of alcohol and keeping contact with an alcoholic, as great sins. Alcohol has been condemned with such strong words. Islam too condemns alcohol as well, though not to as great an extent as Manu.

Life remains pure for people whose means of livelihood are noble. Otherwise, the whole life becomes polluted. *Sattwashuddhi* is a word of deep and multi-dimensional meaning; it implies that both intake and means of livelihood should be *sattvic*.

The word *sattva* has many meanings: *chitta*, *sattva-guna*, and *prana* (vital force). Sometimes we will say that in spite of treatment, there is no *sattva* left in the body, meaning no *prana*, or life-force, is left.

Sattwashuddhi also means making the mind agitation-free, being calm and in a composed state. *Chitta* should be utterly pure. How pure? सत्त्वपुरुषयोः शुद्धिसाम्ये कैवल्यम् (YS 3.55). When the *chitta* becomes as pure as the Self, one will enter into *Kaivalyam*. *Kaivalyam* means, ‘I alone am pervading and permeating all the world.’

Thus the word *sattwashuddhi* encompasses four aspects:

- 1, keep the heart pure;
- 2, the intake should be pure;
- 3, the means of livelihood should be noble; and
- 4, the body should be pure.

4 Serenity of the mind (सौमनस्य)

As far as the individual psychology is concerned, the meaning of *saumanasya* (सौमनस्य) is contentment and serenity of the mind. In all our scriptures, while describing this serenity, the example given is of water. The water is always clean and pure; you can see through it. Similarly the mind should be serene and pure. Serenity of the mind is the effect of *sattvashuddhi*. When the *sattvaguna* is manifested in the *chitta*, the *chitta* becomes serene and contented. As *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* wane and wither away, the *prana* becomes infused with *sattva*, and the *chitta* is cleansed inside out and becomes serene and contented. Such a *chitta* is bereft of any desire. Here, nothing remains to be attained and nothing remains unattained. The Gita says, ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा – when a person is established in the *Brahman*, the mind becomes serene. Such serenity is like a fully blossomed flower.

Another meaning of *saumanasya* is that there should be harmony in our social dealings. You should be amiable towards all; there should be no indifference towards anybody. For indifference, Patanjali uses the word *daurmanasya*, which also means expression of sorrow. Where there is mutual disrespect, distrust and suspicion, that is the state of *daurmanasya*. In these days, people speak about difference of ideas, difference of opinions, and difference of temperaments. In spite of all such differences there should be mutual amiability and good will. There should not be any kind of bitterness or estrangement. This is the social dimension of *saumanasya*. We must have mutual respect in spite of difference of

opinions. If there is no respect for others, nothing worthwhile can be achieved. And that will be an obstacle to dissemination of thoughts, as the most important vehicle for that is *chitta*. When the thoughts make an impact on the *chitta* of a person, the real dissemination of thought is possible. When there is lack of communication there is no means of entry as all the doors are shut. Hence, the *chitta* should be open, we should not have misunderstandings amongst us, and the consequent bitterness should not be there.

Saumanasya thus implies that we should have inherent mutual respect. A difference in opinion should not change that. From the point of view of the society, respect is the greatest virtue. Human beings should have regard for all living beings. But in actuality we witness a lack of respect in human beings' interactions. In the Gita, the Lord says, "Not knowing my Supreme nature, the foolish look down upon Me in a human form." Bhagwat deplores that a cow, tree, mountain and the Ganga are looked at with respect, but the human form does not get even that much respect. Hence, the emanation of divinity, the inner principle which is inherent in everyone, should not be disrespected or humiliated. Affection induces attachment, but reverence enriches the innermost core, and reveals the best aspect of a human being. If we show reverential respect for someone, it will be reciprocated. A human being continues to live as he has reverence for his own life. In other words, he has respect for himself. Without that, he cannot continue to live. He has some quality which makes him believe that he deserves to be alive; that same quality brings joy and satisfaction to his life. We must recognize and revere that quality. A person may not be able to verbalize that, but we must appreciate it.

I often say that the faults come as the shield for virtues. If a person is of strong volition, sometimes he becomes obstinate. Like a shadow emphasizes the light of

the lamp, faults highlight the virtues. Had there been no faults, manifestation of virtues would have been feeble and faint. Great capabilities and achievements are often accompanied by egotism. No doubt, we will consider egotism as a fault, not a virtue, but it is like the shadow of the virtue. If we know that a person has great capabilities and achievements, we should bow before him and give him the due respect. Our humility might make him realize his fault in being haughty. If we only see the faults we will not be able to know his true worth, and hence will not have reverence for him.

The husk of the grain is there for protection. Before eating the grain, we have to remove it. It is not possible to find a man without virtues and faults; such a person would remain unmanifest. If you want to draw a picture, you have to ruin the whiteness of the paper. Similarly, for the revelation of virtues, faults are necessary. If we realize this, we will revere every human being. We should never lose regard for each other. This mutual respect is a means for *saumanasya*. When we lose respect for each other, disrespect takes its place, and there is no common ground for interaction. Hence, in the Vedic way of thinking, utmost emphasis has been laid on *saumanasya* in social life and mutual interactions. Patanjali has placed *saumanasya* with *sattvashuddhi* (i.e. serenity and contentment of the mind with purification of *sattva*). Contentment and serenity of the mind, respect for others and goodwill for others—these are comprised in *saumanasya*. Jnanadeva writes that a non-violent person walks in such a way that even small insects are not hurt or disturbed; he is ever careful that the sleep of the Lord, who exists in the form of these insects, is not disturbed. Thus, great respect is shown for the whole creation. The Lord is present everywhere, and hence the spirit of reverence should be ever-present in us. With constant awareness of this fact, we must treat each other graciously.

5. One-pointedness of mind (एकाग्र्य)

When self-purification reaches a stage where *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* have been completely removed and only *sattvaguna* subsists, that is *sattvashuddhi*. *Sattvashuddhi* results in the serenity of mind and respectful, courteous behavior towards all. The next word is एकाग्र्य—one-pointedness. It is worth contemplating that Patanjali is describing the importance of cleanliness in connection with one-pointedness. It is a common experience that whenever you see a clean place, or lush meadow or the quiet bank of a river, the *chitta* automatically turns inward. In reality, *chitta* is an external thing, but the tendency (*vriddhi*) goes inward and results easily in one-pointedness. That is why the scriptures say that a bank of a river or a holy place is conducive for *dhyana*. RigVeda says, “Where there is a confluence of rivers or a serpentine path to a mountain peak, it naturally induces a meditative mood.” Cleanliness gives rise to concentration, but this is external cleanliness, and hence that experience is extrinsic.

Wherever there is serenity, one-pointedness comes easily. The Gita says, प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते—“Where there is serenity of the mind, the *buddhi* quickly attains steadiness, which leads to one-pointedness instantaneously.” The mind becomes multi-pointed due to different attractions. The *chitta* stores many *samskaras*†, (imprints) which soil the *chitta*. These *samskaras* remain lodged in the mind in the form of memories. We acquire these *samskaras* from what we see, hear, touch and read. Some are due to the company we keep. Some get handed over from previous births or through heredity. All the *samskaras* tend to soil the mind in one way or the other.

† *Samskaras* mean the imprints of actions, associations and experiences that remain indelibly engraved on our mind and mould our behaviour, our personality and our world-view.

The effects of the *samskaras* are not limited to the time when they actually occur, but they remain with us in the form of memories for a long time. Our dreams are a kind of memory. Remembering the past while awake is like dreaming in a wakeful state. It is because of this dreamer-mind packed with past memories that the *chitta* wanders hither-tither and consequently one-pointedness eludes us. These memories enter into our sleep and trouble us in the form of dreams. They also trouble us in the wakeful state. There are layers of memories upon our mind, which result in lack of one-pointedness.

Children are among those whose *chitta* is the least soiled by *samskaras*. Hence, concentration comes easily to them. Their memory is better too. Hence learning at a younger age is stressed. It is another thing that their minds are not strong enough to remain concentrated for a long time.

My experience corroborates the fact that one-pointedness is quite natural and spontaneous for a serene mind. I need effort to make my mind multi-pointed; however, I do not have to make any effort for one-pointedness. I do not need to do anything; I do not have to strain my eyes or do anything else to concentrate. To do nothing requires no effort. Effort is required to take the mind to various places. Hence, being one-pointed should be a natural, innate state; being multi-pointed is unnatural. When there are no *samskaras* on the *chitta*, there are no memories either. Sometimes, when I look at a map, the memories run helter-skelter, such as, one person lives here, I went to a meeting there, something else happened there. *Chitta* is a warehouse of memories, and these memories get mixed up with each other. This is impurity, uncleanness. If we can wash away these *samskaras*, *chitta* will easily become one-pointed.

It is believed that Vyasa, the author of Mahabharata,

needed six months to attain *samadhi*. In fact, one-pointedness should be attained instantaneously. If Vyasa took six months, it only means that it took six months to wash away the *samskaras*. When the illumination of pure *jnana* is achieved, *chitta* can become one-pointed instantaneously; hence there is no cause for any dismay or despair. To those who may despair, Saint Tulsidas says, even if something is lost for many lives, redemption can occur in one moment, hence do not give up. Although there could be darkness in a cave for thousands of years, when someone takes a lamp inside the darkness will be dispelled instantaneously. It will not take a long time; inner illumination can come in a moment. Sometimes such illumination can come in the company of the saints or sometimes from God's beatific vision, and then mind is washed clean. If illumination does not come, the process of purification is long and laborious. This is a lofty goal and an arduous ascension. How much endurance and patience do you need? It is as if you are trying to empty out an ocean with a blade of grass, drop by drop. You need that much patience, enthusiasm and resolve, giving up despair and dejection, working with endurance, patience and enthusiasm. The mind must be restrained. On one side, you are being asked to be patient; on the other, Tulsidas gives hope that redemption may happen instantaneously.

For this to happen, the mind should be wide open so that it is receptive to all the *jnana* from wherever it comes. Of course, *jnana* can come from a wise person, but it can come even from a child. For this to happen, the *chitta* should always be eager and open. I often give the example of the Sun. The Sun can only enter a room to the extent the door is open. Similarly the light of knowledge that you get from a *jnani* depends on how much your mind is open and receptive. Like the Sun, the *jnani guru* will not forcefully enter; he does not give a blow to the

chitta. If the heart is open and the *sadhana* is done with perseverance, the light will surely come from one source or another. There is no reason for despair.

The process is: *sattvashuddhi* (purification of *sattva*), then serenity of the mind, and finally, as a natural consequence of these, one-pointedness. The one-pointedness that one needs to study subjects like mathematics or geography is of an ordinary kind. That one-pointedness does not take us beyond the urges and impulses of the mind. The one-pointedness that is described here is of the kind which results from one's orientation towards the Self.

Patanjali cautions that the practice of meditation must be accompanied with the observance of *yamas* and *niyamas*. Otherwise, the meditation will have disastrous consequences. No doubt there is power in concentration. But if it is utilised for the wrong ends, it will turn man into a demon. If the *chitta* is concentrated on an evil desire, that will destroy everything.

6. Subjugation of the sense-organs (इन्द्रियजय)

We are reviewing here how the *yogis* scientifically evolved the concept of *shuchita*. The fourth characteristic of inner *shuchita* is perfect mastery over sense-organs. Purification of the *chitta*, *saumanasya*, one-pointedness, subjugation of the sense-organs, and finally, Self-Realization—this is the process. I have not come across any other scripture in the world that teaches how to subjugate the sense-organs better than the Yoga-Sutra.

Having perfect mastery over sense-organs is different from the restraint of organs and the controlled use of organs. Not using a particular organ for a specified time period for the purpose of conserving strength is restraint of the organ. If you just think of restraint, and there is no thought of building up a reserve, it will not help you

progress in your spiritual practice. The restraint of the organs is observed for a limited time. For example, observing silence on some days is for acquiring strength. Fasting and giving up a particular item of food are similar types of restraint. Such restraints are needed to be employed. Means employed will be different for different people; and they will depend on the qualities and faults present in the person and the condition of his mind. Not using the organs or stopping their usage for a particular time or closing their gates for a while is called निरोध (*Nirodh*).

Samyam (संयम) means regulated, limited use. Regulation of speech means moderation in speaking or complete silence for a limited time. It is often easier to observe complete silence. What is difficult is moderation in speaking. Some people have no trouble in keeping a complete fast, but find it very difficult to moderate their intake. Eating as if it was a scientific experiment is difficult.

Sometimes we need moderation and sometimes we need complete abstinence. Perfect mastery over sense-organs is different from either. To bring the sense-organs under control is a *sadhana*. The Gita gives the example of a turtle. Whenever there is danger, the turtle pulls its limbs inside; when there is no apparent danger, it lets its limbs come out of the shell. In this way a turtle has complete control over its organs. As Saint Kabir said, "It is as if the *guru* has given me the lock and key. I can open and shut the doors (of the organs) as I wish." When a person has such control over the organs, he intuitively knows when and how to use them, and when not to use them. One inherently understands when it is time to speak, and when it is time to be silent. Then only one attains mastery over the sense-organs. In the path of devotion, you can give full liberty to all the organs as there is no danger. This path is perfectly safe. The cartman sleeps when the road is familiar

and level and the bullocks keep on slowly pulling, but when the road goes up and downhill, he cannot sleep. The path of devotion is like that level road, it requires no vigilance as it is perfectly safe. One should have an insatiable appetite when it comes to God's name and chanting. In short, a devotee should content himself with what he has been given, except in the area of devotion where he can grant full liberty to the sense-organs, and there is no need of any restraint.

For *dhyana* and *jnana*, the organs should be restrained. Without that, *dhyana* is not possible as different organs are dragging one's mind in different directions. If all five organs are dragging towards their respective objects of attraction, one cannot meditate. Hence for *dhyana*, organs need to be completely restrained. They should be used with moderation when it comes to service, and in devotion they can be let loose. To sum up, in *dhyana-yoga* the organs must be completely restrained, in *bhakti-yoga* they can be let loose fully, and while serving others, they are to be used with moderation. This ability to use the organs as the situation demands is necessary for mastery over sense-organs.

Restraint of the organs and discretion in their use will be needed time and again. To fully judge an occasion, a comprehensive vision is essential. Only then can one have mastery over the sense-organs; and can then have *shuchita* in his life. Habits like listening what should not be listened to, eating what should not be eaten, overeating, overlistening result in impurities in life – these are the antithesis of *shuchita*, and give rise to physical diseases and mental delusions. Hence mastery over the sense-organs is a step in the direction of *shuchita*. This step makes one ready to dive deep within. After completing the *sadhana* from *sattvashuddhi* to the acquisition of mastery over the organs, the practitioner comes to the entrance gate of the Lord. Herefrom *yoga* in the real sense of the term begins.

7. Self-realization (आत्मदर्शन)

When *shuchita* reaches its culmination the *sadhaka* becomes entitled to Self-realization. As a result of this process, the *buddhi* becomes faultless. This faultless *buddhi* becomes illuminated, and one enters into the orbit of *jnana*, and becomes eligible for Self-realization. The Gita too uses the same language: one who can look at sorrow and joy with equanimity becomes eligible for liberation. On the strength of this equanimity, the *sadhaka* earns the right to Self-realization. Now the question arises: When will the *sadhaka* have actual Self-realization? What will be the time gap between having earned the qualification and actually being Self-realized? Ideally, there ought to be no time gap in between; both should happen simultaneously. But that does not happen because the *samskaras* linger on in the mind. These imprints create fissures in the illumined *buddhi* and they become an impediment to Self-realization. These imprints need to be eradicated with the help of *jnana* and other means. If Self-realization remains elusive, either the eligibility is not there, or the *samskaras* are creating a veil. That is why *shuchita* had to be introduced as a qualification for Self-realization. We cleanse ourselves both mentally and physically before entering a temple, similarly to enter the *sanctum sanctorum* we need utmost purification of body and mind.

4

Ashtanga-Yoga (Yoga of eight limbs)

यम-नियम-आसन-प्राणायाम-प्रत्याहार-धारणा-ध्यान-समाधयोऽष्टांगानि ।
(YS 2.29)

अहिंसा-सत्य-अस्तेय-ब्रह्मचर्य-अपरिग्रहा यमाः । (YS 2.30)

शौच-संतोष-तपः-स्वाध्याय-ईश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः । (YS 2.32)

In the aphorism 2.29, Patanjali describes *ashtanga-yoga*. Among its eight limbs the *yamas* and *niyamas* are the foundation for all the other means for *sadhana*. The entire edifice of *dharma*[‡] stands on this foundation and so does the path of devotion. Non-violence, truth, non-hoarding, celibacy and non-stealing are the *yamas*, and cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of the Self and devotion to God are the *niyamas*. Law-givers of *dharma*, like Manu and others, mention the same *yamas* and *niyamas*. These form the foundation of all religions. The *yamas* are also known as *panchasheel* in Buddhism. Buddhists made these more practical and put them forward as social observances. *Panchasheel* consists mainly of the *yamas* and *niyamas*, only that they have replaced non-possession with giving up of

‡ *Dharma* is normally translated as 'religion', but is a much wider concept. *Dharma* is that which holds and supports everything in the world. Its meaning includes right conduct and duties that become obligatory to a man because of his nature and station.

addictions like alcohol. Such addictions cause hoarding. Hence, they should be given up. This will make non-possession a social practice. Buddhist thought this much as sufficient. They also replaced celibacy with monogamy and faithfulness to one's spouse.

In recent times, Gandhiji is the one who gave utmost importance to this subject. He declared that non-violence, truth etc. are fundamental principles and a society can stand on the basis of those fundamental principles alone. During the intervening period *yamas* and *niyamas* were not given as much importance. Importance was accorded to it in *dhyana-sadhana*; and to some extent in the path of devotion and *jnana* also. Their observance was regarded necessary for good behaviour and character. But it was Gandhiji who unequivocally declared that the observance of these absolute moral values (non-violence, truth, non-stealing, non-possession and *brahmacharya*[‡]) is necessary for social service also; in fact, they are the touchstone on which the quality of the social service should be judged. This is Gandhiji's most valuable contribution in the field of theology and spirituality. Otherwise, all these *yamas* – absolute moral values – had been watered down by giving so many concessions and remissions by way of exceptions etc. in their observance. So much so that exceptions had been allowed even in the observance of truth.

The followers of the paths of *jnana*, devotion, *dhyana* had no doubt acknowledged the value of observance of *yamas* in their own ways. But Gandhiji added a new dimension by asserting that these observances are indispensable for service to humanity; and that 'service' without them will in fact be disservice. He even said that

‡ *Brahmacharya* is normally translated as chastity or celibacy, but it is a much wider concept. Etymologically, it means a course of conduct adopted for the realization of *Brahman*. It includes control of all the senses.

he would not accept *swaraj* (freedom of India) at the cost of Truth. He said so at a time when people of India were longing for freedom. He also said that freedom could come only through Truth. His prophetic vision and genius is reflected in this declaration. We find a glimpse of it in the Christ's teachings as well.

It is highly imperative today that there is no duality between the way of disinterested action and service to others. In modern times, this thought was given first by Swami Vivekananda. He syncretised the non-duality of Shankaracharya with Christ's charity and philanthropy. It is heartening to see Ramakrishna Mission moving ahead in this direction. Gandhiji complemented this fusion by giving philanthropy the form of constructive programme. If you see a hungry person and give him food, that will be philanthropy. But if you give him some means of self-employment such as a spinning wheel or land to farm for sustenance, that will be a real and lasting service. This idea had both good and bad results; good because there was compassion in it and service was accompanied with constructive, productive work; and bad because this also resulted in the fading away of the spirit of service and over-emphasis on productivity.

Thus, it was Christ who first emphasised the necessity of *yamas* and *niyams* for service; and this was restated by Gandhiji.

5

Samadhi

Due to Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, the word *samadhi* came to be understood as a state of absorption that is achieved through meditation. But even he does not regard this as the culmination of the spiritual practice.

Yoga-Sutra is a well-delineated, systematic science which is based on experience. The first three *sutras* are the sum and substance of all the 195 aphorisms:

1. अथ योगानुशासनम् – The science of *yoga* is now being enunciated.
2. योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः – Regulating, purifying, sublimating and restraining the consciousness is *yoga*. Transcendent stillness of mind-ripples is *yoga*.
3. तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् – That being attained, one is established in the Self.

However, we do not find any mention of *samadhi* therein. It is stated there that what is to be attained is *yoga*, and it is defined as *chitta-vritti-nirodh* (restraining the consciousness). *Samadhi*, that is *dhyana-samadhi* too, is but a modification of the *chitta*, and Patanjali has described this as the paramount means to attain *yoga*. According to Patanjali, श्रद्धा-वीर्य-स्मृति-समाधि-प्रज्ञापूर्वकः (YS 1.20) denotes the steps therefor. The pursuit begins with faith, which generates vigour, which leads to Self-awareness which in turn leads to *dhyana-samadhi*, that is, a state of absorption,

which culminates in intuitive wisdom (*prajna*), and when *prajna* becomes steadfast, *yoga* is attained. For Patanjali, *yoga* is the final goal, and *prajna* is the means for it; while *samadhi* is the means to have *prajna*. When *dhyana-samadhi* becomes a permanent natural state, it is known as *prajna*.

Dhyana-samadhi is a temporary phase, a modification of the mind which rises and abates. The *samadhi* of a *sthita-prajna* is different than that. It is achieved through *jnana*, or intuitive wisdom. It neither rises nor abates. It is a permanent state, not a tendency, whereas *dhyana-samadhi* is a temporary phase, a modification of the mind. It might last for 4 or 5 days, but sooner or later it is going to abate.

The word "*samadhan*," meaning a state of equipoise, has the same etymology as the word "*samadhi*". *Samadhi* is the state where the *chitta* is in equipoise. Equipoise is a balanced state where the mind does not cling to nor is attached to or crave for anything, anybody, nor has fancy for any sensual pleasure or gross notion. When both the pans of a scale are equal, then we say that it is balanced. That is a state of equipoise for the scale. When the *chitta* remains like the beam that is attached to the pans, balanced and stable, equipoised, then *samadhan* has been achieved. The *samadhi* that comes through *samadhan* is abiding and constant, it never breaks. *Samadhi* is a state of unquivering and steady peace. The highest possible attainment in life is to realize this state; that is blessed contentment. This is something not only to be attained, but rather it is one's duty too. The job worth doing in life is to attain this '*samadhan*' i.e. blessed contentment. This very thing has been called *samadhi* by scriptures.

Yoga-Sutra has classified the *vruttis* in five categories (YS 1.6). To remain insulated from them is *yoga*. These *vruttis* are *praman* (cognition), *vikalpa* (verbal delusion), *nidra* (sleep), *smriti* (memory) and *viparyaya* (perverted cognition). What does it mean to restrain these *vruttis*? Can we stop

sleeping or avoid using language? *Vikalpa* is a verbal medium. Without verbal communication, practical life is impossible. Among these five categories of *vruttis*, *praman* is always good. *Vikalpa* can be either good or bad, and *nidra* is necessary, but must be regulated. *Smriti* can be either good or bad, and *viparyaya* is always bad. *Yoga* is transcending all these good and bad *vruttis*. This means that these *vruttis* may surface, but the core of one's being must remain absolutely unaffected. This unperturbed state of the mind is *yoga*. *Yoga* is a natural, abiding state, whereas *dhyana-samadhi* is only a passing phase. It is not that essential.

To detach from these five tendencies, eight aspects of *ashtanga-yoga* have been prescribed. Of these, *dhyana-samadhi* is the last one, but that is not *yoga*. *Yoga* means absence of all the *vruttis*. To be more precise, *yoga* is being immune from the effects of all of the *vruttis*. *Samadhi* is the result of *dhyana*. Normally the *vruttis* of the human mind are mercurial, wandering or vacant. In *dhyana-samadhi* they become still and quiescent, but only temporarily.

The prime benefit of *samadhi* is that it dispels all other *vruttis* and only the *vrutti* which reflects on the personal deity remains. We regard the personal deity, *Ishtadevta*, as the embodiment of all the virtues, and contemplation on that deity helps us to purify the mind. But this *samadhi* abates after a while. Only upon transcending this *dhyana-samadhi* does one attain a stability that is immune from all *vruttis*. This state has been described as *prajna* (intuitive wisdom) by the Yoga-Sutra. Once this state becomes stable, the *chitta* becomes perfectly pure and blissful and eternally anchored in Self. This is the abiding state of *sthitaprajna*.

6

Psychic Powers (सिद्धि)

In the Yoga-Sutra, Patanjali discusses extraordinary powers, and he mentions that these *siddhis* are a nuisance and an impediment to the progress of a *yogi*. These powers, when they occur in a non-*samadhi* state, create obstacles in the state of *samadhi*. ते समाधौ उपसर्गा व्युत्थाने सिद्धयः (YS 3.37).

I have studied Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras and reflected on them for years, and I realized that some of the powers are real and some are faith-born. We should analyze the causes which lead to these *siddhis*. One finds mention of the *siddhis* in Sanskrit literature as well as in the literature of other countries and religions.

Upon analysis one realizes that some of these extraordinary powers come as a result of *chitta-shuddhi*. They are not a goal, they come as a by-product. A *yogi* may have such powers but may or may not be aware of them. Some *siddhis* are the result of overflowing love, compassion and devotion. When love and compassion reach culmination, these *siddhis* come on their own. There are *siddhis* that originate from a meditative state and others are attained for some specific purpose. Patanjali cautions that if the *siddhis* are used they will diminish the *samadhi*, hence they should not be used.

Some *yogis* have consciously striven for, and have succeeded in achieving psychic powers which result from meditation. It is all right if someone makes experiments

in this regard and develops a science of such powers; but one must keep in mind that these *siddhis* have no connection to spirituality. I am interested only in those *siddhis* that are obtained as a result of the purification of mind or perfection of devotion, love or compassion. I feel those *siddhis* are spiritual.

In this atomic age, we can send ballistic missiles from one corner of the world to the other. Similarly, we should have such tools that will enable the effect of good work done in one place to quickly spread far and wide. When I said so, people thought that I am talking about *yoga-siddhis*. I am not. I am in search of a social process whereby an experiment done in one place will have wide acceptance all over the world and will spread everywhere.

* * *

Many people get attracted to the Yoga-Sutras because of the descriptions of the *siddhis*, but in reality, they are mere husk. Modern dietetics says, we must eat the husk as well as the kernel within it. Accordingly, one might study the concerned *sutras*, but remember, the husk is the husk, and it is the kernel that is the essence. Everyone must keep that sense of discrimination. Many practitioners have failed to discriminate and have fallen into the whirlpool of *siddhis*. The Gita, by its boundless mercy and compassion, has saved us from this trap. The essence of the *yoga-sutras* is contained in the sixth through eighth chapters of Gita, and in the eighteen verses that describe the characteristics of a *sthita-prajna* in the second chapter.

* * *

I have classified *siddhis* into six categories:

1. *Yogic Siddhis* that are achieved through *pranayama*.
2. *Siddhis* that result from the experiments in science,
3. Metaphysical *siddhis* that are achieved through

reflection on subtle principles.

4. *Siddhis* that are achieved through complete subjugation of the mind.

5. *Siddhis* conferred on us through the grace of God.

6. *Siddhis* that are the result of the evolution of the divine qualities.

Yogic siddhis are achieved through the process of *pranayama* etc. One can easily understand that through the purification of the body and the regulation of *prana*, some *siddhis* can be attained. These days people have a fascination about *yogic siddhis* in India as well as all over the world. Many people are attracted to the *siddhis* that are attained through restraint of the *prana*.

But I do not have any attraction to these. Similar to the way a person can strengthen his body by becoming a body-builder, a person can achieve the strength of *prana* through the practice of *pranayama*. As there is science behind the cosmos, so is there a science of the individual self and *prana*. Both these are material sciences. As physics can work miracles in the world, the science of the individual self can make miracles happen in a person. But I do not see any spiritual principle in this.

In the field of science, many *siddhis* are acquired. An experiment is done in a laboratory. Once it is successful, it has a wider application in society and takes human life a step forward. In today's world, many such *siddhis* have been discovered and people have tremendous attraction for them. Both *yogic* and scientific *siddhis* are useful for the betterment of life, but they are not helpful in God-realization nor in attaining a state of blessed contentedness. Both these *siddhis* are material and they are useful for material life only.

Some *siddhis* result because of reflection on subtler

metaphysical principles and they throw light on the basic principles of life. Because of that, our mistakes become obvious to us and we can correct them and give a proper direction to our lives. We can also correct our way of thinking. This *siddhi* due to metaphysical reflection comes in the spiritual realm, and is useful for inner fulfilment.

But this metaphysical *siddhi* cannot be attained by everyone. As there is a limit to a person's physical strength, so there is a limit to the strength of the *buddhi*. I am talking about the limitation of the strength, not of purification. There is no limit to the purification of the *buddhi*, but there is a limit to the strength of the *buddhi*. Purification of the *buddhi* is possible for everybody. It is not possible for everybody to become President of the nation or a body-builder, in spite of their wish, but it is certainly possible for everyone to become a *sthitaprajna*. It is the result of pure, steadfast, and unwavering *buddhi*. There is always a limit to the strength of the *buddhi*. You see a profound *buddhi* in only a few persons with exceptional capacity for reflection and vision. This can be attained by only a very few; everybody need not aspire for this. Hence, this *siddhi* cannot become a collective *siddhi* and naturally does not come into the public domain.

So, the first two *siddhis* are material, the third one comes in the sphere of spirituality but is limited to a few people. Three remain. Through the practice of the restraint of the organs and observance of celibacy, one can subjugate the mind, and this is an important spiritual *siddhi*. This *siddhi* enriches the life of both the individual and the society by enhancing their calibre and capability. The strength that is acquired through subjugation of the mind is spiritual and is helpful in the path of spirituality. It will prevent the world from going in the wrong direction, and hence is highly important from the moral perspective.

Even so I am not particularly enamored of this fourth type of *siddhi*. I greatly value the fifth and sixth type of *siddhi*, and everybody should attain those. This does not mean that the one who gets *siddhi* through the perfection of compassion or because of God's grace does not need to subjugate his organs and mind. This is always essential.

The last two types of *siddhis* are the most important from a spiritual point of view and have a direct bearing on God-realization, and are valuable for the inner, serene contentedness.

The *siddhis* that are bestowed by the grace of God are God's miracle, and the person concerned is God's instrument. If that bloats his ego, it will cause his downfall. If that person becomes completely egoless, God will make him his instrument. Wherever the devotion reaches a climax, ego will drop off and there God's power will be revealed. Devotion is verily the complete extinction of ego. Only then will God's grace shower on that person. Humility will then be at its height. Such a person will be constantly aware of God's presence around him and will not have any awareness of his own body. *Siddhis* will be attained through such egolessness, and God will use this person for His work.

In order to become God's instrument, one will have to become a naught. Egolessness cannot be attained by effort, just as one cannot fall asleep by effort. As long as the effort is ongoing, sleep will not come. Similarly you cannot become a naught through your own efforts. If we surrender ourselves heart and soul to God, then He will do the rest.

The *siddhis* that are achieved through the perfection of the qualities like compassion and love are spiritually important. You see these qualities perfected in different sages in different countries. Perfect compassion makes a sage one with those who are downtrodden or exploited.

There are a number of instances in India as well as in other countries where sages and saints have effected complete transformation of a wicked person into a saintly soul.

I firmly believe that the *siddhis* that is attained through the perfection of the qualities like compassion and forgiveness are true *siddhis*, and those are attainable by all.

7

Miscellaneous

अभाव-प्रत्ययालंबना वृत्तिः निद्रा (YS 1.10) – Everybody is familiar with the experience of sleep, but how exactly one falls asleep has not yet been analyzed. Yoga-Sutra says, sleep is a mental modification, with the experience of nothingness as its basis.

* * *

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्काराऽऽसेवितो दृढभूमिः (YS 1.14) – When does one get a firm ground for *samadhi*? And when do *samadhi*, dispassion and practice become firm? They become firm only when they are pursued with zeal for a long time without a break, without wasting a moment. Then the *samadhi* becomes firm.

* * *

तीव्रसंवेगानां आसन्नः (YS 1.21) – If one wants quick progress, one's *sadhana* must be intense and have a sense of urgency.

* * *

स एष पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः (YS 1.26) – Patanjali saw God as *Guru*. Some people look at God as Father. If you look at God as Father, it means you are seeking protection from Him, whereas if you look at God as *Guru*, you are seeking enlightenment from Him. God is the *Guru*, even of the ancient sages. No other religious scripture looks at God as *Guru*. God is our ideal role model. He teaches us, but with perfect detachment.

Those who saw God as the *Guru* gave utmost importance to education. The word *anushasanam* from the first *sutra* is clearly indicative of education. God is our *Guru*, so we can learn from Him and we can meditate upon Him too. This *dhyana* can be done in conjunction with the repetition of God's name.

* * *

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां... (YS 1.33) – Charity is comprised of three things: friendliness, compassion and joyousness. Friendliness means being happy upon seeing the happiness of others. Compassion is seeing someone's sorrow, becoming sympathetic and being moved to help that person. Joyousness is becoming glad upon seeing someone's virtuous deeds. But over-expression of these emotions is not called for. Another aspect is the attitude of indifference. When we live together, mistakes do happen, but we should have indifference towards them. This is an important thing; this keeps a person's mind serene.

* * *

यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा (YS 1.39) – Gita says, the mind is fidgety and it keeps wandering. Hence whichever direction it runs in, pull the mind back and establish it in the Self repeatedly (Gita 6.26). This way the whole responsibility has been given to the individual's sense of discretion. This is what Yoga-Sutra, which has *chitta-nirodh* as the main goal, also does. It suggests several methods to subjugate the mind:

1. Sometimes the trivial desires should be fulfilled.
2. Sometimes make the mind immune from sorrowfulness.
3. Sometimes reflect on the lives of Self-realized sages.
4. Sometimes make the mind dull and torpid.

All these are different ways that have been given in YS 1.35-38 to restrain the mind, and these methods are helpful. But the final suggestion is to play by ear or as the occasion demands, keeping presence of mind.

* * *

निर्विचारवैशारद्येऽध्यात्मप्रसादः (YS 1.47) – When a *sadhaka* goes beyond intelligence, masters and transcends the thinking plane, he receives spiritual bliss. This state is similar to *samadhi*. A thought-free state confers one kind of power and thoughtfulness gives another. We must use thinking power for tangible work for others, and for work on our own selves, we need the power of thought-free state which leads us into the higher realm. Practitioners should and do become free from mental modifications, but they must also attain freedom from the thought plane.

* * *

अविद्या-अस्मिता-रागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाः क्लेशाः (YS 2.3) – *Avidya*, *asmita*, *raga*, *dvesha* and *abhinivesha* are the five afflictions. *Avidya* means nescience about the fundamental things. *Asmita* means the idea of I-ness, self-importance. *Raga* and *dvesha* – fondness and aversion – are positive and negative emotions. *Abhinivesha* means insistence for continuity. These afflictions start a whole chain of other afflictions. Shankaracharya says, all afflictions are removed or destroyed because of *jnana* (Self-knowledge). As a seed burnt in a fire can never sprout, the afflictions that are burnt in the fire of *jnana* can never cover the soul.

Abhinivesha means the strong will to survive, which is common to all living beings. We have a fear of dying, which gives rise to unwarranted clinging to life. This fear is the reflex response to the thought of self-extermination. *Yoga-Sutra* 2.9 says that *abhinivesha* is inherent even in the wise.

* * *

दुःखमेव सर्वं विवेकिनः (YS 2.15) – Worldly people feel that there is an equal share of joy and sorrow in the world. Spiritual seekers, who are yearning for liberation, feel that the world is filled with sorrow only. For Self-realized people, the whole world is bliss.

* * *

प्रतिपक्षभावनम् (YS 2.33) – Every human being has some negative *samskaras*, but they can be eliminated by effort. Human beings are capable to eliminate them; they do not necessarily require God's help. A negative *samskara* can be eliminated with its opposite *samskara*, like violence with non-violence, hatred with love. It is a process that is required in the practitioner's journey. If the bad *samskaras* are deeply rooted, one will need herculean effort, but it is possible.

* * *

कृत-कारित-अनुमोदित (YS 2.34) – For the *sadhana* of non-violence, we must refrain from all forms of violence, whether actually doing a violent deed, causing it, or encouraging it.

* * *

अपरिग्रहस्थैर्ये जन्मकथंतासंबोधः (YS 2.39) – *Aparigraha* (non-hoarding) is when the *chitta* is completely free from any kind of hoarding and possessiveness. It means not collecting any unnecessary things, having no attachment towards the body nor money, and cultivating a mind which is bereft of any kind of worry and has no clutter of unnecessary thoughts. Having a collection of unnecessary thoughts is like dying while being alive. Patanjali says that when one has reached a state where there is no accumulation of anything, not even of unnecessary thoughts, one will know things about one's past life.

When a person's mind is caught up with the accumulation of thoughts, the memory gets stunted.

However, when the mind is not stuck in the accumulation of thoughts, then the memory is intense and one can recall the experiences of the past life, and those experiences can be inspiring. This gives the knowledge of the cycle of birth and death. One understands how the previous life led to this life, and this provides guidance for the future life. The awareness of the previous life is beneficial, one does not need all the details; the details might have undesirable effects. The awareness of particular important experiences and their nature can be helpful in this life.

* * *

स्वाध्यायात् इष्ट-देवता-संप्रयोगः (YS 2.44)—Veda mentions various deities, but they are the manifestations of one and the same God. Each deity is a manifestation of a particular quality of God. God's qualities are infinite, and the practitioner chooses a particular quality for the purification of his *chitta*, and that particular quality is represented by a particular deity. The true form of the deity is revealed to the practitioner in the *dhyana-samadhi* rooted in the study of the Vedas.

* * *

Asanas are means for physical health. They are a primary limb of *yoga*. *Yogasana* is a good physical exercise. A good thing about *yogasanas* is that they do not need a lot of room or equipment. It has no speed or excitement, like other forms of exercise. There is quietness and peace here, so with *yogasana* we get health and peace. *Pranayama* is also a good *pranic* exercise. It should be practised in the open.

* * *

बाह्याभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थः (YS 2.51)—Patanjali mentions three types of external *pranayama*: *pooraka* (inhalation), *kumbhak* (retention), *rechak* (exhalation). The fourth type of *pranayama* is contemplative and effortless. Form, flavour and smell are

external, and mental ripples are within. The fourth type of *pranayama* removes them all. Upon exhalation, all the desires are removed and one should then inhale the pure air, considering it as coming from God.

* * *

देशबन्धश् चित्तस्य धारणा (YS 3.1)—Whenever the mind creates a crack in the awareness and starts to wander, creating a blockage there to stop the mind is called concentration. *Dharana* by definition means effort for confinement of the mind in a particular region or on an object.

* * *

शांतोदितौ तुल्यप्रत्ययौ चित्तस्यैकाग्रतापरिणामः (YS 3.12)—In this *sutra*, Patanjali says that when the arriving and departing frame of mind has an identical content, this is the consummation of *dhyana*. Patanjali does not say that the same thought should continue ceaselessly. That too is concentration. This aphorism tells about the effect of concentration. When an image or idea rises and subsides in quick succession, this constant process creates a flow. But when the subsiding and arising idea is the same all along, that is the fruition of concentration.

* * *

क्रमान्यत्वम् परिणामन्यत्वे हेतुः (YS 3.15)—When the sequence of a process changes, the result of the process will change too. For example, to cook rice, one needs rice, fire, a pot and water. But if the proper sequence is not followed, you will not get the expected result.

* * *

पूर्वजातिज्ञानम् (YS 3.18)—Some idea about the past lives. I feel that through *dhyana*, *dharana* and *samadhi* one can go backwards and get a glimpse of previous lives. One becomes aware of the intense experiments, whether they

were good or bad. The insignificant things that happened in the past lives do not count. But what was done deliberately, and that too with intensity, can be remembered. But I did not pursue that path, as I did not feel its need.

It is Divine dispensation that we forget what happened in the previous lives. This forgetting is beneficial to us. We should not try and peep in there out of curiosity; that would be childish. The merit of the past lives becomes our capital for the present life. We do need that; and that is with us even though we may not be aware of it. One does receive inspiration and impetus from the previous life. So I did not allow my *chitta* to move in that direction. But I feel it is possible to have knowledge of previous lives. If one reflects on the causation between action and reaction in the world, one may get a glimpse of the future as well. But I did not pay any attention to that.

* * *

ते समाधायुपसर्गा व्युत्थाने सिद्ध्यः (YS 3.37)—When a *yogi* enters into deep *dhyana* for Self-realization, *Prakriti* takes him on a detour to the *siddhis* instead. If he, on acquiring these *siddhis* considers them as the steps towards Self-realization, and clings to them, they will prove to be obstacles in the way of Self-realization. This is an important tenet of Yoga-Sutra. Everybody easily understands that vice is the antithesis of liberation, but many times virtuous deeds also become obstacles in the path of liberation, in no way lesser than the vice. People can see vice as vice, but when a virtuous deed takes a beautiful form it creates an illusion and the practitioner mistakes that as the ultimate goal and becomes deluded.

Karl Marx said a similar thing in a different way. He said that reform is the antagonist of revolution. In the beginning both look alike and seem equally radical. But the difference between those two is like the difference

between a horse and a donkey. A donkey carries a load, and a horse is an agile, speedy animal. Revolution is like a horse, and reform is like a donkey. He presented this extraordinary idea to the people. What he meant is that reformism is an obstacle in the cause of revolution. Yoga-Sutra deals with the liberation of human beings, and Marx talks about social revolution. The two ideas appear to be different, but they are of the same kind. In a nutshell, in the attainment of the final goal, *siddhis* and reforms are obstacles.

* * *

चित्तस्य परशरीरावेशः (YS 3.38)—The recollection of sacred memories of holy people has a deep impact on the human mind. The world's as well as my own experiences attest to this. I get so engrossed in such remembrances, that at times it becomes difficult for me to get out of it. It is as if I exit from my body and enter into theirs. The *chitta* enters into those holy persons through words. I do not follow the *yogic* process described in Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, yet my mind does it naturally. Images or temples have some effect on the mind. But recollection in the form of words is the most effective.

* * *

विवेकनिम्नं कैवल्यप्राग्भारं चित्तम् (YS 4.26)—This *sutra* says that if one wants to attain liberation, one must follow the path of discriminative wisdom. What is the destination of the *yogi*? Spiritual liberation. But what is the route? It is through discriminative wisdom. As the water goes downwards and finally reaches the sea, similarly the *yogi* follows the direction of discriminative wisdom and reaches ultimate liberation. We should traverse the path in the direction of compassion and reach equality. As for our social order, it can be said in the language of the Yoga-Sutra that it should reach equality through the path of compassion.

A Note on *Hathayoga* and *Kundalini*

Hathayoga means subjugating the mind by regulating and controlling the *prana*. In *Brahmavidya*, *prana* is subjugated by the subjugation of the mind. In *Brahmavidya*, first one restrains the mind, and through that one regulates the organs and the surroundings. Upon seeing some danger ahead, by retaining the breath, the impact of the danger is diminished. By retaining the breath, one gets courage. This means that *prana* has power over the mind. Similarly even if there is a disaster in front of you, if the mind is quiet, the *prana* will also remain quiet. Otherwise, it will become panicky. This is the process of *Brahmavidya*. Making the mind calm by calming the *prana* is *Hathayoga*, while making the *prana* calm by calming the mind is *Brahmavidya*.

Depending on the bent of the mind one can decide which path to follow. If the mind is stubborn, refuses to listen, then restrain it by *pranayama*, this is *Hathayoga*. But one must be well-versed in the practice of *pranayama*, otherwise he would not be able to resort to *pranayama* in the critical moment. By making *prana* and *apana* (outgoing and incoming breaths) even, one can pacify the *prana*, and the mind will be restrained, but one must be a practitioner of *pranayama* from early on. For that, one has to subjugate the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, space). Through *asanas*, one can get control over the element of earth, since the body's element is clay. That is why astronauts practise *asanas* and *pranayama*. From the point of view of science, it is not difficult to restrain *prana*. *Brahmavidya* says: Bring the mind under control of *buddhi*. If the mind listens to *buddhi*, it will remain quiet. However, it must be noted that different people will have different experiences in this field.

* * *

Kundalini Yoga means awakening the *Sushumna nadi* (central energy channel). It is assumed that there are 100

nadis and *Sushumna* is the 101st, and it is filled with light. But in his commentary on *Brahma-Sutra*, Shankaracharya says that nothing can be attained through the awakening of *nadis*; liberation would come through *jnana* only.

What I understand about *Kundalini* is this: *Kundalini* is the spinal cord. In the spine there are sensory nerves, so we should sit erect as much as possible. This is regardless of whether we want to practise *Kundalini Yoga* or not. If we hunch, the nerves become dull. Science has acknowledged this fact.

It is assumed that *Sushumna* flows through the spine. The main point is that all of our contemplation should be concentrated at the seat of cognition, which is between the eyebrows. This is the function of *Kundalini*. To withdraw all the strength of the body from different points and to concentrate it at the centre is the process of *yoga*, and this is called 'awakening the *Kundalini*'. What happens thereafter is that the body is drained of the elements of earth, water, fire and air one by one. It is common knowledge that the practitioner of *Kundalini Yoga* does not take food. While fasting, first the fat dries, then the water. With this process the body is brought to the point of death, but is not allowed to die. After having faced the near-death experience, the body is to be brought back to normalcy with food. This is the process.

Awakening the *Kundalini* is mainly the process of *Hathayoga*, and Patanjali delineates *Raja-yoga*. Although *Hathayoga* is not mentioned in the *Yoga-Sutra*, it is found in the commentary on *Yoga-Sutra*. It is a terminal and extreme process. While fasting, one by one, all the organs will begin withering. Once you come to the point of death, if you want to keep the body, you can keep it; if you want to let it go, do so. So it is a process of giving up the body. It is the process of the *siddhi* of death.

Glossary

	Footnote on page no.
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