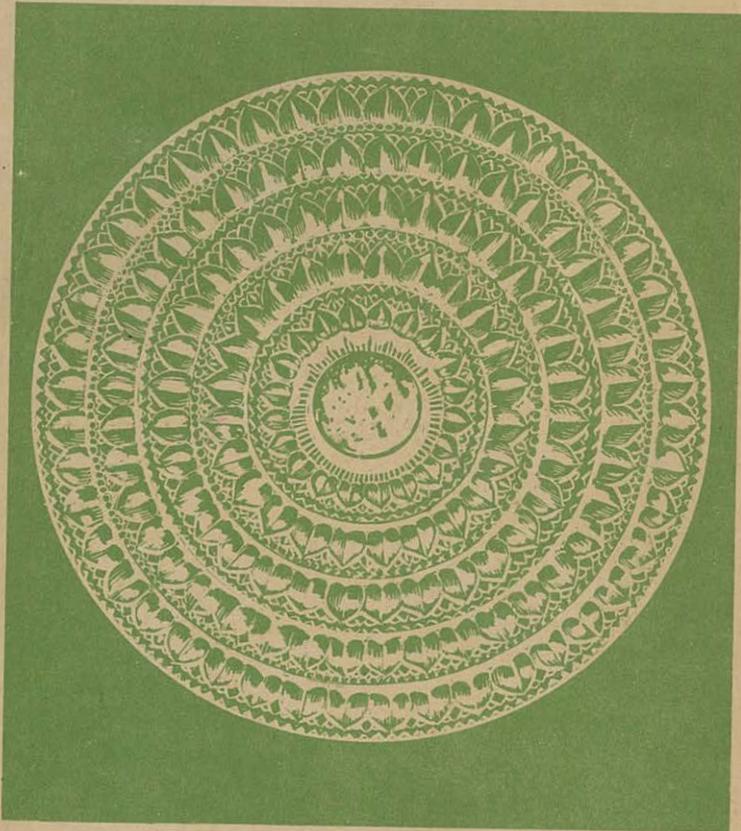


SELF-CULTURE

In the light of Occultism

I. K. TAIMNI



SELF-CULTURE

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THE PROBLEM OF SELF-DISCOVERY
AND SELF-REALIZATION IN THE
LIGHT OF OCCULTISM



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BY

I. K. TAIMNI

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PREFACE

MANY books have been written on the important subject of Self-Culture. Some of these books have been written by people whose outlook on life is coloured definitely either by materialism or religious orthodoxy, but practically all of them are based on the tacit assumption that we have to live only one life on this earth and should adopt such measures for self-improvement as will enable us to achieve whatever success or happiness is possible under the natural limitations of human life. Even those writers who discuss the subject against a moral or spiritual background leave the vital issues of life untouched and confine themselves generally to the small and restricted interests of one single life. No attempt is made to correlate man with the universe in which he lives or to indicate the nature of his ultimate destiny.

A narrow conception of human life such as this can hardly provide a satisfactory basis for a real science of Self-Culture. If we are to live on this earth only one isolated life of a few years, if the future of man after death is a dark or at best a nebulous thing, if there are no definite laws working in the realms of mind and emotions, if there is no definite goal which every human being can and must reach, then self-culture in the larger sense of the term becomes a meaningless and futile effort of man to reach a vague and unattainable ideal. What chance has the average man of today, burdened with his weaknesses and responsibilities, to rise to the high stature of perfect manhood exemplified in the lives of the truly great men of the world? And even in the case of those who are placed in the most favourable circumstances for reaching this high ideal, what certainty is there that they will be able to reach it amidst the uncertainties of life? And if there is no certainty of achievement, if life in the case of the vast majority

of aspirants is doomed to be cut short in the midst of the struggle to reach the goal, what is the use of striving for the ideal? The vague promise of reward offered by the orthodox religions of the day in some kind of post-mortem existence may be sufficient to induce ordinary people to live a virtuous life but it cannot give them the tremendous urge and determination which is necessary for treading the long and arduous path to perfection.

The fact of the matter is that a real science of Self-Culture can be built up only on that comprehensive and direct knowledge of life as a whole which is found in Occultism and those who are not prepared to accept that such a knowledge exists and can be acquired are not in a position to tread that path which leads through many lives to the goal of Perfection and Enlightenment. It may be possible to follow an ethical code for leading a virtuous life, or to go through a course of training for developing one's mental powers and faculties, or even to gain some kind of spiritual experiences, but these efforts must remain confined within the narrow and limited horizon of one brief and uncertain human life, unrelated to the larger and wider life of the soul of which a single human life is an isolated chapter.

It is not possible to deal in this book, even briefly, with that vast knowledge which goes under the name of Occultism, much less to give proofs for the many unfamiliar facts which are an integral part of this knowledge. But it would be only fair to the reader to give him some idea of the basic facts of Occultism upon which this book is based, and leave him to decide whether he can accept these facts as a basis for a comprehensive Science of Self-Culture. It is true that the effectiveness of the methods adopted in Self-Culture in no wise depends upon the truth of these postulates, just as our use of electrical power does not depend upon the current theory of the nature of electricity. Still, it is hardly to be expected that a person will be prepared to take up the long and arduous task of completely changing himself unless he tentatively accepts the truths of Occult Science or is at least prepared to consider them as a reasonable hypothesis for practical

purposes. The main ideas which are a part of Occult Philosophy and upon which this book is based are the following:

1. The manifested universe is rooted in an Eternal, Boundless, Immutable, Ever-unmanifest Principle which is called the Absolute, Parabrahman or the Ultimate Reality. This Principle transcends the power of human comprehension ✓

2. Consciousness and Power or Spirit and Matter are not two independent realities but two polar aspects of the Absolute. They are the first products of differentiation and the basis of Manifestation. ✓

3. From this Triad proceed all the numberless universes which appear and disappear in an endless cycle of *Srishti* and *Pralaya* or Manifestation and Dissolution. ✓

4. The innumerable Solar Systems which form part of the manifested universe are expressions of this Ultimate Reality, each Solar System forming an independent unit and yet remaining rooted in the Ever-Unmanifest Reality.

5. Every Solar System is a perfectly ordered mechanism which is not only governed by immutable laws of Nature but is the manifestation of a transcendent Intelligence which is called God or Logos.

6. The physical sun and the planets connected with it are the outermost or densest part of the Solar System, there being several invisible worlds composed of increasingly finer matter interpenetrating the physical world.

7. The whole Solar System with its planets, visible and invisible, is a vast theatre of evolution on which life in its various stages and innumerable forms is evolving to greater and greater perfection. ✓

8. All this stupendous process is taking place according to a definite Plan present in the Divine Consciousness and controlled and guided by various hierarchies of Beings at different stages of evolution. ✓

9. The evolution of humanity on our earth is guided by an Occult Hierarchy composed of perfected human Beings who have ✓

unfolded within themselves transcendent powers and faculties of which we can have no conception at our present stage. They are in constant and intimate touch with one another and with the affairs of the world and guide it according to the Divine Plan with consummate skill and wisdom.

10. Life evolves gradually stage by stage through the mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms, the evolution being continued even after the perfection of the human stage has been reached. ✓

11. Every human being is Divine in essence, contains within himself all the qualities and powers which we associate with Divinity in a germinal state and these are unfolded gradually, leading to an ever increasing perfection and expansion of consciousness which has no limit.

12. The unfoldment of these latent qualities and powers is brought about through the process of reincarnation, the soul incarnating again and again in different countries and under different circumstances to gain experiences of all kinds and then spending periods of rest on the superphysical planes to assimilate these experiences. ✓

13. Not only the physical but all other aspects of human life are governed by natural laws operating in their respective spheres. This all embracing law of cause and effect which is generally known as Karma makes man the master of his destiny and the dispenser of happiness or misery to himself. ✓

14. As the evolution of forms in the vegetable and animal kingdoms can be accelerated by utilizing biological laws, so the evolution of man can be greatly accelerated by the application of mental and spiritual laws operating on their respective planes.

15. The Science of Self-Culture is based on the application of these natural laws in their totality to the problem of human evolution and is therefore as certain and reliable in giving definite results as the laws working on the physical plane are in the field of modern Science.

Some of the facts enumerated above may appear strange and unconvincing to those who read about them for the first time but they are not really so when we consider them carefully in their totality and examine the evidence that exists in their support. These facts when studied carefully and in detail will be found to provide a comprehensive solution of practically all the deeper problems of life—a solution which is inherently reasonable and in accord with present day knowledge. The reader may take them, if he likes, in the light of a hypothesis, provided he bears in mind the fact that they are not a hypothesis in the same sense in which the word is used in Science. In Science the word is used for a comprehensive set of assumptions which are arbitrarily adopted for explaining a group of phenomena and for guiding further experimentation in that line. The doctrines of Occult Philosophy are not unproved assumptions in that sense. They are all matters of direct knowledge to the Occultists, at least to the more advanced among them, and are gradually verified by every candidate who treads the occult Path to Perfection. But to the newcomer they must remain unverified facts, although by studying thoroughly the literature of Occultism he can easily convince himself of their truth and inherent reasonableness. They can be verified and known to be true only by those who tread the path of inner unfoldment and themselves become Adepts in the Science of Self-Culture.

Occultism is very frequently confused with magic and the occult arts like astrology, hypnotism and crystal-gazing, and since the latter are frequently associated with charlatanism, educated people these days have naturally a shrewd suspicion against all such things which do not form part of the scientific knowledge of the day. It is true that much of the knowledge and practices that are advertised as Occultism either by societies or individuals are mostly spurious, but nevertheless, behind this pseudo-Occultism there lies a tremendous reality of which the ordinary man can hardly have any conception. There are subtler worlds of progressively increasing splendour behind and inter-penetrating

the physical world of which we are cognizant through our physical senses; and there are highly evolved human beings living in the world at the present time who have a thorough working knowledge of these worlds. These facts will naturally appear incredible to the man who hears of these things for the first time, but they are matters of ordinary experience to a number of people who are in touch with the Adepts of Occultism and have developed the necessary faculties for coming into touch with these worlds.

Those who are not obsessed with the materialistic philosophy of life and believe that man is an immortal being and his physical life is only a chapter in his long and continuous life on the super-physical planes, will be able to see how, if such superphysical worlds exist, knowledge concerning them must also be possible and there should be people who are in possession of such knowledge. As the religious and philosophical literature of some ancient peoples show, the advanced and cultured sections of such communities have been trying to peer into the deepest mysteries of life and also trying to evolve techniques for the solution of these mysteries for a very long time. There is also positive evidence for the existence of schools of Occultism and the imparting of occult knowledge concerning the deeper problems of life in the Ancient Mysteries. All these things point to the fact that genuine knowledge concerning the deepest mysteries of life is not only possible but available to some people.

From time immemorial there has always existed on this planet a body of highly evolved Beings who have acted as the custodians of this occult knowledge and used it under strict conditions for the advancement and guidance of the human race. Unknown and unrecognized by the outer world they have worked, age after age, from behind the scenes, co-operating with natural forces and divine agencies, working for evolution, and using men and events in the world as their instruments for the fulfilment of the divine purpose. From amongst this august body have come the great religious Teachers in the various races at different times. By them have been directly inspired most of the beneficent

movements in the world which have been slowly changing the different civilizations and taking humanity to higher and higher levels of evolution. All these Beings who constitute this occult body do not stand at the same level but form a graded Hierarchy, including within its ranks on the lowest levels their initiated disciples and on the highest Beings of such tremendous power and wisdom that we cannot even form any conception of Them.

All knowledge concerning everything which exists in the Solar System is in the possession of this Occult Hierarchy, though every member of the Hierarchy does not share all this knowledge. As an Adept advances in evolution and unfolds his faculties one after another, he comes into touch with deeper and deeper layers of the divine consciousness and acquires keener insight into the facts of existence and the subtler planes. Most of this knowledge which constitutes true Occultism is not like the ordinary knowledge of Science which can be formulated in language and communicated by one person to another. The lower aspects of it can be, no doubt, partially communicated in this manner but the higher aspects are beyond the reach of thought and it is only by direct experience that a person can contact them.

It is necessary to realize that all knowledge exists eternally in the Consciousness of the Logos of our Solar System and as we develop our inner faculties we acquire the capacity to come into touch with it at different levels. We have, as it were to tune ourselves in through our different vehicles, to different levels of His Consciousness in order to come into touch with everything at the respective levels. It is because the knowledge with respect to the transcendent realities of life can be acquired only in this peculiar manner and its acquisition depends upon our power to respond to different kinds of subtler vibrations on the inner planes that it is impossible to communicate it to others and to put it in the form of a formulated scheme before the world like other scientific knowledge. Every one must develop his own inner faculties and gain this knowledge from within.

Not only is most of this knowledge incommunicable, but much of it that is connected with the higher worlds is also incomprehensible to the human intellect. Used as we are to facts and ideas of a world of three dimensions we cannot naturally understand the realities of worlds in which consciousness works in an increasingly larger number of dimensions, unless we can 'rise' to those worlds and 'see' things for ourselves. The more we penetrate inwards into the unfathomable depths of the Divine Mind, the more difficult it becomes to formulate the realities of those worlds in terms of mental concepts with which we are familiar and the greater is the necessity of the development of our own inner faculties and powers to understand those realities. That is why Lord Buddha when questioned about God kept silent and all true teachers of the 'doctrine of the heart' refuse to discuss the deeper mysteries of life with the uninitiated and the curious.

From what has been said above it should be obvious how little we can understand true Occultism and the nature and powers of the Adepts of Occultism. All that we can hope to do in studying this Sacred Science is to come into contact with the mere fringe of this limitless knowledge and with the help of this to start unfolding our spiritual nature and inner faculties. As we succeed in our efforts we shall be able to get direct insight into the deeper mysteries of life and acquire first-hand knowledge of those realities which academic philosophers mistakenly seek in the realms of the intellect, and orthodox religious people within the pages of a sacred book.

Such an inner unfoldment is possible because the Adepts of Occultism possess not only a comprehensive knowledge of all the secrets of Nature but also of the practical Science of Self-Culture. Any one by making himself proficient in this Science can gradually unfold his inner faculties and verify, one by one, all the facts of Occultism. The elements of this Science of Self-Culture have been made known to the world at large in order to give everybody a chance to tread the path to Self-Realization, but the more advanced knowledge of Nature's mysteries

which confers powers on the Initiate is imparted only to trusted pupils of the Adepts, who have shown through a long period of probation and testing that they are utterly devoted to the interests of humanity and are incapable of being corrupted and of using the knowledge for their own selfish purposes. That is why all people in the world who are attracted to Occultism for selfish reasons, even when this selfishness is of a subtler kind, are ruled out from Their help. They cannot but remain in the outermost court of the sacred temple in which a superficial acquaintance with Nature's secrets and acquisition of some of the less important powers of the soul is all that is possible. It is only those who are prepared to give up all selfish aims and approach the Path of Occultism with a pure heart and a clean life that can be admitted into the inner secrets and can wield that power of the Ātmā which makes them mighty on the inner planes and yet appear 'as nothing in the eyes of men'. For, the more an Adept recedes into the inner recesses of his soul and gains a fuller knowledge of the realities of life, the more he rises above the petty and sometimes childish desires which make ordinary men seek power, temporary fame and popularity in the passing shadows of life. That is how the real Occultist remains unknown and deliberately avoids the public gaze while the pseudo-Occultists who are still full of the lower desires vie with one another in attracting the attention of their followers, and the world at large.

And because all true Adepts of Occultism keep hidden from the vulgar gaze of men their knowledge and power, men wonder whether there is anything real in Occultism or all this talk of the subtler planes and superhuman Beings is mere moonshine. But those who have real knowledge of these things deliberately let the world remain in its ignorance and incredulity regarding the tremendous potentialities which lie hidden in man and in Nature. For, as long as human nature is what it is as at present and selfishness, prejudice and unscrupulous aggrandizement are the ruling passions of men, it is well that they should remain ignorant of these mighty forces and tremendous possibilities to which

Occultism opens the door. Any one who watches what is taking place in the world at present and sees how grossly the knowledge of physical plane forces is being misused by unscrupulous people and nations, will realize at once the wisdom of keeping from an undeveloped, and in some ways still barbarous, humanity the knowledge of Nature's finer forces. These forces are far more powerful and potential for doing harm and therefore infinitely more dangerous.

It should not, therefore, be difficult to understand that the part of the Occult knowledge which is found in books and is accessible to the common man is the outermost and least important part, and behind the symbolism and veiled references that we find frequently, there are tremendous realities of which no one in the outer world can have any conception. Still, this little knowledge which has been given out is sufficient for any one who is an earnest seeker of Truth to provide him with a satisfactory clue for the understanding of life's problems and to enable him to take those preliminary steps which lead to the Path of Occultism. For, the real life of Occultism begins only when a man comes into direct touch with these realities which are present within him, and he depends more and more upon the unfoldment of his own inner faculties and powers and less and less upon instruction and guidance from without.

With this short preface the reader is left to decide whether it is worth his while to go through the book, and after reading it to take the further step of adopting the philosophy and technique of Self-Culture contained therein for embarking on the voyage of Self-exploration and Self-Realization.

The book has been divided into three parts. Part I deals in a general way with the theoretical basis of the Science of Self-Culture which has as its ultimate aim the discovery of the Reality hidden within the heart of every human being. Without at least a general knowledge of the relation of man to God in Whom he is rooted and to the universe in which he evolves, he cannot tackle the various problems of Self-Culture intelligently and systematically.

Part II deals with the problems of self-discipline and Self-Culture which are involved in making the vehicles of the aspirant efficient instruments for the expression of the Divine Life and Consciousness on the different planes. Without understanding these problems and taking the necessary steps to bring about the required changes in the vehicles it is very difficult, if not impossible, to tackle the problem of Self-discovery and Self-Realization. It is only when the vehicles have been adequately purified, harmonized and brought under the control of the Higher Self that the spiritual faculty known as Buddhi begins to irradiate the mind and the Ātmā can function through its vehicles on the lower planes.

Part III deals with the problems of Self-discovery and Self-Realization and the techniques which are involved in them. It does not seek to give a detailed knowledge of these techniques which has to be acquired from technical treatises or other sources. Its purpose is merely to give the aspirant a general idea of these problems and to prepare his mind for the more intensive study and practice of these techniques.

Chapters in Parts I and II are mostly a reproduction of those which appeared in the first edition of the book.* Part III contains new chapters which have been added to make the book more comprehensive in scope and to serve as a sort of introduction to *The Science of Yoga*. Some of the Chapters in part III have appeared in *The Theosophist* in the form of articles.

* Published by Ananda Publishing House, Allahabad.

PART I

THEORETICAL BASIS OF SELF-CULTURE

CHAPTER I

EVOLUTION IN THE LIGHT OF OCCULTISM

ONE of the most brilliant and fruitful ideas given by Science to the modern world is that of Evolution. But the materialistic bias given to scientific thought from the very beginning led to this idea remaining a half-truth, and deprived it of its real import and importance in human life. It is Occult Science which provides the other half of the truth and thus makes the idea really dynamic and of tremendous help in understanding life and its varied phenomena.

The basic idea of evolution as given to us by Science is easy to grasp. The theory of Evolution was originally formulated by Darwin to account for the large variety of species in the animal kingdom but it was soon applied and extended in other directions and found to throw light on phenomena of the most diverse kind. The main idea to grasp in this theory with which we are concerned, is that the changes which have brought about such a large variety of species in the animal kingdom do not take place in a haphazard manner but result from the effort of the form to adapt itself gradually to the environment in which it is placed. The forms go on changing continually to meet the peculiar conditions present in the changing environment, the bigger and more fundamental changes producing the different genera while the minor and local changes producing the large variety of species. The continuity of changes in the forms which was found to be a fact in Nature is thus accounted for by the dependence of these forms on a gradually changing environment. So what the theory really did was to introduce order in the confusion of biological phenomena by showing that the large variety of living forms

were not unrelated to one another but that a principle of derivation was working behind these changes in forms and making them more and more adapted to the environment in which they were placed.

It will be seen that in the idea of evolution as given by Science the changes in the forms were attributed solely to the effort of the forms to adapt themselves to the environment. This was the natural result of regarding the whole process as a purely physical phenomenon and considering the life side of the process as a by-product of the physical changes. As long as life was regarded as the result of the interaction of matter and force it was inevitable that it should be left out of account in considering the series of changes in the forms, and these changes be attributed solely to the influence of environment. The limitation in the scientific conception of evolution will thus be seen to be inherent in the position adopted by modern Science with regard to the nature of the universe, a position which can be summed up in one word—materialism.

The important and vital contribution made by Occultism to the idea of evolution was to show, as it were, the other side of the medal and thus to give a complete picture of the process. Occult Science has at its disposal means to investigate the phenomena of life in a more direct and comprehensive manner than Science can do and as a result of these investigations it has found definitely that life is not a by-product of matter and force but an independent principle which uses matter and force for its expression on the physical plane. Forms are there to enable the ensouling life to express itself and they change to meet the growing and varying demands of life for a fuller expression. Life takes to itself form after form and by means of the stimuli received through them all the possibilities that are hidden within it are gradually unfolded and made manifest. The forms die and disappear but the life which functioned through them grows more and more.

So, behind the series of changes in the forms, which according to the scientific theory of Evolution made the whole process

appear a meaningless panorama of endless change we now see a continuously evolving life using these various forms at its different stages of evolution. In the infinite variety of forms and their constant destruction, Nature is seen to have a definite, intelligible purpose which is even now denied to her by Science. Modern Science is like a deaf man studying musical instruments of great variety and increasing delicacy. He studies the instruments with great care but refuses to believe that there is such a thing as music.

No wonder then that Evolution as studied and expounded by Science is an extremely uninviting subject—a matter of dry facts, of fossils unearthed from the bowels of the earth and skeletons pieced together from them—and gives us a very partial if not distorted view of the process. On the other hand, Evolution as given to us by Occultism is a dynamic idea and the more we study it the more it fascinates us. It gives us, as if it were in a flash, an insight into all the processes of Nature which we see taking place before our eyes and fuses together in one integrated whole all the facts and phenomena of life that are within our knowledge. It not only illuminates the past and the present but also gives us a glimpse into the future, and this not only in relation to humanity, but also in relation to ourselves as individuals. It shows us the perfection which we shall all attain one day and also the steps of that ladder by which we rise to that perfection. In fact, the most important feature of this occult view of evolution is not the intellectual insight that we get with regard to the working of Nature but the certainty which it gives of our final triumph over all our difficulties, imperfections and limitations. We are thus enabled to treat the whole problem of Self-Culture in a scientific manner and to unfold all our powers and faculties with as much confidence as is shown by a scientist working in a laboratory.

As the object of this book is to deal in a comprehensive manner with the problem of Self-Culture and this treatment is possible only on the wider view of evolution as given to us by

Occultism we have to part company here with the scientific theory of Evolution, to see what evolution means in Occultism and what are the different stages on that long road which leads us to perfection. But before we do that let us first consider for a while what perfection means, perfection which is the goal of human effort.

It should be clearly understood that there is no limit to the gradual unfoldment of the Divine Life which is manifesting in the Universe in diverse forms. There is no point where it can be said that the ultimate perfection has been reached. But for the human stage there is a limit which may be considered to mark the boundary of the human kingdom and which is reached when an *Arhat* takes the fifth initiation on the Path of Holiness and becomes a *Jivanmukta* or a Master of Wisdom. When the Adept reaches that definite stage compulsory reincarnation is over for Him. He has passed out of the human into the Super-human stage and thereafter continues His Self-unfoldment on the superphysical planes. The perfection to which reference has been made above is this relative perfection which is reached by a Master of Wisdom.

It is also necessary for us to remember that we cannot know what this perfection is until we reach that stage ourselves, for the realities of the higher life can be known only by direct experience and no verbal description of them or even the highest effort of the imagination can enable us to know them as they truly are. So when we say that we are trying to understand these things, while still confined within the realms of the intellect, all that is meant is that we are attempting to catch broken lights or faint reflections, here and there, of that hidden splendour which is utterly beyond human conception and which can be realized to some extent only in our heart when our inner development makes this possible.

After this explanation, let us now take a panoramic view of this vast process of Evolution. Fascinating as this subject is, it is not possible in the short space at our disposal to go into details.

All that can be done is to state certain broad generalizations and to point out the important landmarks on this road along which all of us are travelling.

According to the teachings of Occultism all life which we see in manifestation around us has come from One Divine Essence or Principle and after unfolding all its potentialities will again merge in that Divine Source. All the qualities and powers which we associate with Divine perfection are present when life emerges from its Divine Origin in a latent or germinal state, just as a tree is hidden in a seed. They are very slowly unfolded, made to function, by the impacts from without provided by the evolutionary forces and the constant pressure of Divine Will being exerted from within, and when life after attaining perfection again merges consciously in Divinity all the qualities and powers pertaining to that particular stage of perfection are in full manifestation.

Another fundamental teaching of Occultism is that our Solar system, which is a vast theatre of evolution, is sevenfold in its constitution and interpenetrating the physical world, in which, we can cognize with our senses, there are six other worlds of progressively subtler matter. These worlds are called planes in Theosophical literature and have definite names given to them. The world next to the physical into which we pass in sleep and after death is called the astral plane and is related to our feelings, desires and emotions. The next higher world in which we spend the major portion of our time in the period between two incarnations is called the mental plane and is related to our thoughts. Then come the Buddhic, Ātmic, Anupādaka and Ādi planes in succession. These are related to our spiritual and eternal being and are the source of our highest spiritual knowledge and powers.

Now, man, and in fact all life in its various forms, is connected in a way with all the seven planes of the Solar System; but confining ourselves to man for the present we may say that he has a vehicle of consciousness on all the planes. His life is rooted in the life of the Logos on the highest plane and flows out

from that all-inclusive Centre through all the vehicles which connect him with the different planes. A ray of divine consciousness passes through and energizes, as it were, the complete set of vehicles which represent the Monad or *Jīvātmā* on the different planes, brings about their gradual growth, until the divine fragment stands fully developed, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient on all the planes.

These truths may be represented by the diagram on the opposite page (Figure 1). Of course we have to remember that this is only a two-dimensional figure which may be used as a symbol in order to help us to understand these truths and can in no way represent the transcendent realities of the higher planes. There is always a danger in using figures, symbols, and analogies, that we may try to stretch them too much and to draw inferences for which there is no justification in facts.

The seven planes of the Solar system are represented in this figure by the seven concentric circles while the Centre represents the Solar Logos or *Īshvara* who presides over the manifested Solar System during the period of manifestation. The important point to bear in mind in reading this diagram is that although the planes are represented on it by circles, they are actually spheres which interpenetrate one another, each subtler sphere lying within and interpenetrating all the denser ones. The circles are thus meant to indicate not the size of the different planes but their spatial relationships. Our consciousness, used to the three dimensions of space, cannot imagine the conditions on the higher planes where it has to work in more than three dimensions and so we can with difficulty get the barest idea of the relationship of the different planes to one another. The physical world to which our consciousness is mostly confined at present is the thickest, the outermost and subject to the greatest limitations and illusions. As we penetrate inwards, plane by plane, these limitations become less and less pressing, the veils of illusion become thinner until they disappear completely when we reach the consciousness of the Solar Logos which permeates and supports them all.

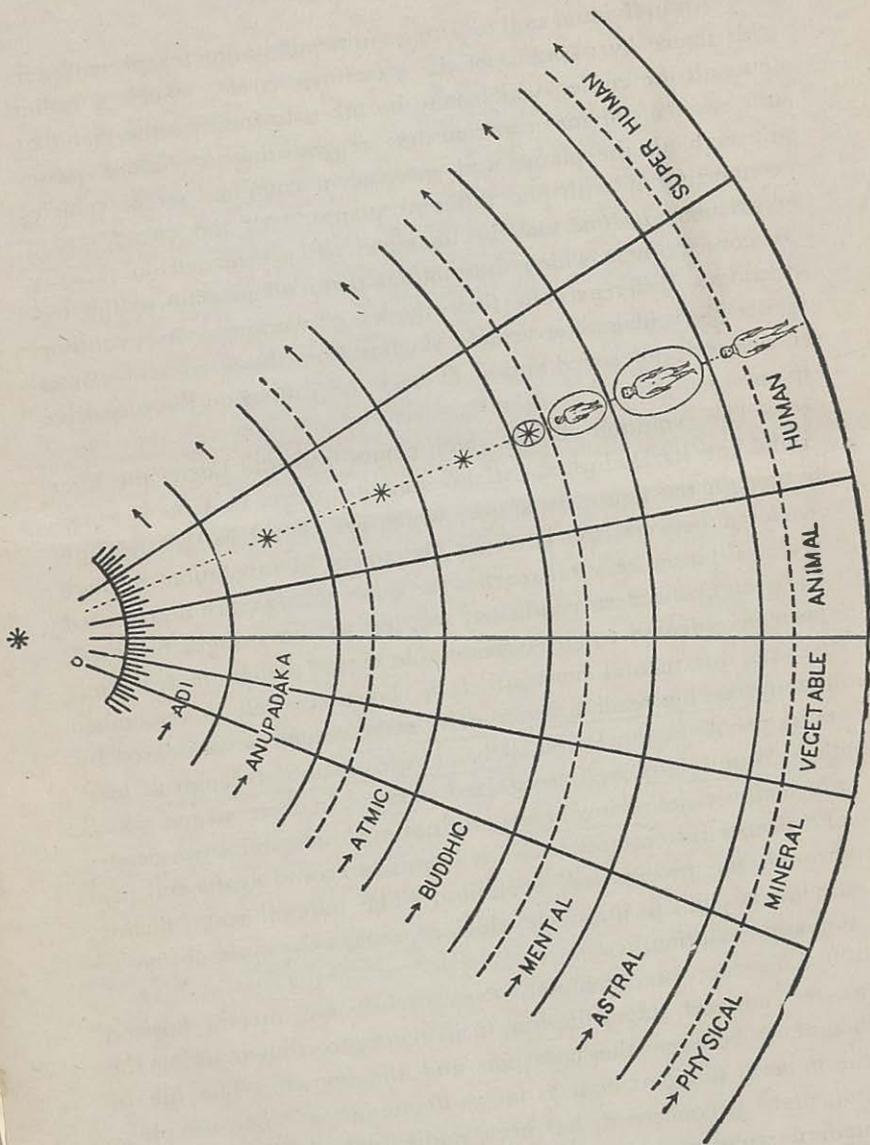


FIGURE 1

An individual soul or *Jivātmā* in manifestation is represented in this figure by a radius of the concentric circles. Such a radius cuts all the circles, which may be taken to indicate the fact that the ray of divine consciousness representing a *Jivātmā* passes through all the planes and energizes a complete set of vehicles connecting it with the different planes. All the vehicles of a particular *Jivātmā* may be imagined to be threaded on this ray of consciousness which thus unifies them all in spite of the tremendous differences in their modes of working. As evolution proceeds, vehicle after vehicle, starting from the physical, becomes developed, quickened and fit to serve the *Jivātmā* on the successive planes.

The evolution of Life which comes from the Logos and after unfolding its Divine potentialities again merges in Him is represented in the figure by arrows which are shown in the segments enclosed between the circles. The stages of involution through which it passes before it reaches the mineral stage, are represented by a blank because conditions relating to these stages have not been investigated to any considerable extent and lie more or less beyond our mental horizon. It is, however, well to remember that before life reaches the mineral stage, which is considered by most people as the lowest, it has already passed through at least three distinct and well recognized stages. In these stages, which are really stages of involution and not evolution, life sinks deeper and deeper into matter before it begins to ascend again and pass through the processes of evolution. The mineral stage is thus the lowest point in the circle which represents the cycle of involution and evolution.

Life, therefore, definitely emerges into our mental horizon at the mineral stage, the line O in the figure thus marking the boundary between the unknown and the known. The life in the mineral stage, at least as far as its manifestation on the physical plane is concerned, has been studied very thoroughly by our modern scientists and laws of its working are incorporated in the literature of sciences like chemistry, physics, geology, and

astronomy. But even with regard to the mineral stage about which science has made such a detailed study Occultism knows much more in certain respects. It is, however, not necessary to go into this question here.

The next stage in evolution is covered in the vegetable kingdom where the response to external stimuli becomes a little more well defined than in the mineral kingdom and the capacity to feel sensation is developed to a greater extent. The sensations are still indefinite because the astral body, which is the vehicle for feeling sensations, instead of being an organized vehicle, is a mere loose aggregation of astral matter. We cannot therefore say that plants and trees feel pleasure or pain but their response to external stimuli does resemble pleasure and pain of a sort. We should remember that in the vegetable kingdom itself there are great differences as regards the degree of evolution and the highest members of this kingdom have perhaps a greater capacity for feeling sensations than the lowest members of the animal kingdom. These kingdoms of nature are not sharply separated from one another but there is considerable amount of overlapping and it is sometimes difficult to decide to which kingdom a member on the borderland belongs. The life in the vegetable kingdom as it manifests on the physical plane through physical organisms has also been the subject of much investigation and the laws and facts pertaining to it constitute the science of botany.

Life in the vegetable kingdom is certainly much more evolved than in the mineral kingdom but the fact that the vegetable organisms are rooted to one spot greatly limits the variety of stimuli that they can get from their environment. This limitation is taken away in the next stage of the animal kingdom, and the capacity for movement which animals have opens the door to a larger number and variety of experiences. This, no doubt, accelerates to a very great extent the evolution of life and that is why perhaps we find in the higher animals not only the capacity for feeling sensations well developed but also the beginnings of mental activity.

It is necessary to point out that the astral bodies of animals and their nervous systems are quite well organized and therefore the capacity to feel pleasure or pain is fairly well developed. For this reason any injury inflicted on the physical body is felt acutely by the animal though it may not be able to express its feelings. Those who inflict pain on animals or cause it to be inflicted, either to obtain their food or in the field of sport, should make a note of this. Suffering inflicted on others recoils inevitably on the wrong-doer, sooner or later, and the all-embracing law of Karma does not cease to function in the case of those who are ignorant or try to find plausible excuses for their wrong doing. If people only knew what terrible suffering they are piling up on themselves by their callousness and cruelty inflicted on animals they would be less inclined to dismiss these unpleasant subjects with a shrug of their shoulders and continue in their evil ways in an utterly irresponsible manner.

An important contribution which has been made by Occult Science to the problem of evolution in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms is to elucidate the mechanism of such evolution. It has been found by means of clairvoyant researches on the higher planes that the mechanism of evolution in these tower stages differs in one fundamental respect from that of human beings, in that each physical organism does not have a separate 'soul' as every human being has. Instead a group of physical organisms of the same species are found to be attached to one "group-soul" which thus becomes both the repository of all the experiences undergone through all those organisms and also the informing and energizing life of those forms. This interesting fact of collective evolution throws light on many problems connected with the life of animals and plants and incidentally shows in a remarkable manner the ingenious methods adopted by Nature in gaining her ends. But as this question is not relevant to the subject in hand we need not go into it in detail and can now pass on to the human stage with which we, as human beings, are chiefly concerned.

Although to all outer appearances the human stage is merely a continuation of the stages going before, and in some respects it is such a continuation, it is very necessary to know that a fundamental change takes place when life enters this stage, a change which divides sharply the life in the human stage from that in the animal kingdom. This change, very briefly stated, consists in the formation of the causal body, the outermost vehicle of the individual spiritual soul, into which the life of the Logos descends directly from above, and through which it begins henceforth to work in a more dynamic manner. This introduction of the new divine element in man derived from the First Logos, which is not present in vegetables and animals, gives rise to that peculiar faculty in man which is known in psychology as self-consciousness and makes possible that rapid and unlimited unfoldment of the divine life that takes place in the human and superhuman stages. The life has become an individual unit of divine consciousness and this consciousness can go on expanding without any limit.

The earlier phases of the human stage are passed in the savage, semi-civilized and civilized conditions. The man gains experiences of all kinds under all manner of circumstances and his astral and mental bodies slowly develop as he reincarnates under different conditions which he himself has created by his thoughts, desires and actions. His feelings and emotions develop his astral body, thinking in terms of concrete images develops the lower mind, while thought given to higher things and abstract subjects brings about the unfoldment of the higher mind working through the causal body. The vast majority of civilized people in the world have reached the stage in their evolution where the astral body is fairly well developed, the lower mind is also developed to a certain extent, but only in the case of scientists, philosophers and other great thinkers can the causal body be considered to be functioning in the real sense of the term.

After an individual has passed through all kinds of experiences, life after life, and has gradually begun to give his thoughts to higher things and to live a noble and unselfish life, the next

vehicle, namely that on the Buddhist plane also begins to develop slowly and the illumination coming from this region into the mind shows itself as the faculty of discrimination or *Viveka* as it is called in Sanskrit. The man begins to appreciate spiritual truths and intuitively to recognize their existence even though he has no proofs for them. This Buddhi or intuition as it is called in Western psychology is the faculty with the help of which all spiritual truths are recognized and without its development a man cannot make any progress in the field of spirituality. The mere intellect is of no use in a region which is outside the scope of its activity.

When the Buddhist vehicle is sufficiently developed and begins definitely to influence the mind then is born that divine urge which heralds the awakening of the spiritual nature. The man begins to question life, to ask questions about the ultimate problems of existence of which the man who is spiritually asleep is not even aware. He begins to seek a way out of this world of illusions and suffering, aspires to lead the higher life of the Spirit and feels an inner kinship with his fellow men which the ordinary man can hardly understand.

If this urge is heeded and guided aright, the man, sooner or later, sets his feet on the path which leads to perfection, ultimately reaches the goal, and passes out of the human kingdom. If the urge is not heeded, is smothered by the lower mind or thwarted by worldly desires, then the man may have to wander through many lives drawn between rival attractions, the attractions of the lower life which pull him downwards and the aspirations for the higher life which draw him upwards. But, sooner or later, as a result of the repeated lessons taught by suffering, frustrations and disappointments of the worldly life, the divine call becomes too strong to resist, the man turns his back on the lower life and setting his face in the direction of the Divine begins to mount step by step, towards the mountain top.

We have been so far traversing rapidly in thought the long road of evolution on which we have been travelling since we came out of the Divine and have reached the stage where the divine

urge is born within us and makes us think of our true home and the means of returning to it. Let us now glance mentally over the path which still remains to be trodden and the stages which remain to be covered.

What should we do when we feel these yearnings for the higher life? The first thing to be done, of course, is to think deeply over the fundamental problems of life and clarify our mind until these problems stand out clearly before our mental vision and we realize that the only way in which they can be solved satisfactorily and permanently for us is by treading the Path which leads to perfection and Enlightenment. It is necessary to go through this preliminary process of deep reflection and searching of heart very thoroughly and to take time in coming to decisions with regard to these vital matters because in many cases these occasional urges which come from within are of an evanescent nature and are the result of reactions arising from the disappointments and frustrations of life. They disappear gradually as the attractions of the world again cast their veils of glamour over the mind and we sink back again into the usual condition of forgetfulness of our higher destiny. The divine urge which will carry us through many lives to our goal has to be steady and strong and must be the result of that maturity of soul which is reached when we have passed through all kinds of experiences and have learnt the lessons which they were meant to teach.

Supposing that the urge we feel is of the right type, our next step should be to consider carefully the means to be adopted for realizing our aim. For, there are in the world many paths and many teachers and we have to find our path and our teacher who can guide us with safety right up to the end. Some of the paths that we see stretching before us are like blind alleys and some of the teachers who offer to teach us are like the blind leading the blind and a right choice of our path and teacher will therefore save us much time and trouble. In the case of those who have thought deeply over the problems of life and understood the plan of evolution there should be no difficulty in making a choice.

The only path they can choose is the path which has been trodden by all the great Teachers and *Rishis* of the past and which leads to perfection of human life whether that perfection be called *Nirvāna*, Enlightenment, *Jivanmukti* or by any other name. And the only Teacher they can have is their Higher Self who is seated within their heart, has brought them to their present stage, and is capable of guiding them unerringly right upto the end, the goal of Enlightenment.

As this is a rapid survey of the stages of evolution through which we have to pass, it is not possible to give here the details of the qualifications which have to be acquired by those who aspire to tread the Path which leads ultimately to Enlightenment and Liberation from the illusions and miseries of human life. There are several books in occult literature which give very detailed and useful information on these matters, although important hints on this question are found scattered all over this kind of literature. Many of the important questions connected with problems of our spiritual unfoldment will be dealt with later in subsequent chapters at appropriate places.

Is it possible to have any idea with regard to this exalted condition of *Jivanmukti* or Liberation, the perfection of life which is reached by Him who has crossed the boundary which separates the human stage from those which lie beyond? No, except in the haziest manner. But the tremendous advance made by the Adept who has reached this stage can to some extent be judged from the fact that in His case all the five lower vehicles of consciousness—physical, astral, mental, Buddhic and Ātmic—are fully developed and vivified and He can function in any of them as the ordinary person can function through his physical body, in full consciousness. The Adept has only to focus his consciousness in any vehicle from Ātmic downwards to come at once into touch with the corresponding plane and know whatever he wants to know on that plane, although the word ‘knowing’ is a very clumsy one to express the functioning of consciousness on the higher spiritual planes. Not only this, but His consciousness is

normally centred on the *Ātmic* plane and when He has to work on any of the lower planes He focusses it partially on those planes for the time being; so that all the lower five planes of the Solar system with which humanity has to do anything are within His consciousness and form the field in which He works for the fulfilment of the Divine Plan.

It should be remembered that the development and organization of the lower three vehicles—physical, astral and mental—has taken us millions of years. It is only because, when a man is approaching the end of human evolution and is on the threshold of Divinity, his evolution in the spiritual realms is accelerated to a tremendous degree that it becomes possible for him to cover in a few lives the stupendous distance which separates an Adept from an ordinary man.

What further stages of evolution and unfoldment lie beyond in the superhuman realms we do not know except by name. The human intellect sinks back baffled when it tries to penetrate into these deeper mysteries and all that we can do is to wonder in awe and reverence what such exalted conditions of existence can be. **E**nough for us to know that they exist, and that there are Those who from those unimaginable heights are showering Their blessings on us who are still living in the valleys of illusion, suffering and death.

CHAPTER II

THE TOTAL CONSTITUTION OF MAN

AFTER showing what true Occultism is, we may now deal briefly with some of the facts which have been discovered by Occultists regarding the inner constitution of man. These facts are the result of discoveries made by a large number of investigators who have been able to develop their subtler faculties and to examine the phenomena of the inner planes in a perfectly scientific manner. In fact, to a number of advanced Adepts these things pertaining to the subtler planes are matters of direct experience in the same way as the phenomena of physical life are to an ordinary man living in his physical body.

It has already been pointed out in the previous chapter that man has a very complex constitution and functions in several vehicles of consciousness. His consciousness is rooted in, and is a part of, the consciousness of the Logos of our Solar system on the highest plane, and descends, step by step, down to the physical plane which lies, as it were, on the periphery of the divine consciousness. On each plane of the Solar System this individualized unit of consciousness appropriates matter belonging to the plane and gradually prepares a vehicle through which it can function on that plane with ever increasing efficiency. Let us take for our consideration one of such units of consciousness and note in a broad and general way a few facts regarding its appropriated vehicles and their relation to one another.

The first point to note with regard to these vehicles is that, as we go from the periphery to the Centre, the vehicles become less and less material and consciousness becomes increasingly

predominant. According to the occult doctrine the whole Solar System in its entirety is derived from and based upon the consciousness of the Solar Logos and manifestation on the successive planes means a greater and greater materialization of His Life and enclosing of His consciousness in progressively thicker veils. In this descent of consciousness, plane after plane, it loses its powers and attributes, step by step, until on the outermost physical plane these limitations reach their utmost limit. It is thus apparent that when consciousness recedes inwards, as for example in Yogic practices, and the process of descent is reversed, these limitations must fall away one after another and consciousness should be able to function in an ever increasing freedom—ever approaching in this progressive reversal the unrestricted and unconditioned splendour of the divine consciousness. This dropping away of limitations and obscurations is experienced by every Yogi as he transfers the centre of his consciousness from one plane to another and approaches the Source of all consciousness. It is necessary to realize this important fact because when we are living on the physical plane, engrossed in its passing and comparatively dull phenomena they appear to us to be the most vivid and full of vitality, while the realities of the higher planes appear nebulous and unreal, and therefore, without any attraction. We are afraid to lose touch with the physical plane, afraid of being deprived of its passing joys, not realizing that the physical is the dullest of all the planes and life on this plane is a distorted and gloomy reflection of the unimaginable splendours which are associated with the higher realms of the Spirit.

The second point we should note with regard to these vehicles is that in spite of the multiplicity of vehicles and the great differences in the nature of manifestations through them, the consciousness functioning through them is one and the same, and a ray of the divine consciousness. In studying man and his complex constitution we may divide him, for the sake of convenience into different components but this should not give the impression that there are different entities working within hi m

one inside the other. Consciousness working through a complete set of vehicles is indivisible; only its different aspects are brought out in a lesser or greater degree according to the nature and development of the vehicle through which it is working at a particular moment. And this manifestation on a particular plane depends upon the intrinsic nature of the plane and the colouring derived from the other planes through which consciousness has passed. Thus, for example, when the *Jivātmā* is functioning through the physical vehicle the consciousness is conditioned by the nature of the physical plane, but all the other vehicles of the *Jivātmā* are also present in the background and influencing the life on this plane. At death, when the physical body is dropped the astral body becomes the focus of consciousness and conditions its functioning but all the other vehicles are still present in the background and modifying the manifestation. In Samādhi when this centre of consciousness is deliberately shifted from one plane to another, one vehicle becomes the focus of consciousness for the time being while others remain in the foreground or background as shown on the opposite page (Figure 2).

The fact mentioned above will show the necessity of tackling the problem of Self-Culture in a comprehensive manner, taking into consideration our total constitution. All our vehicles are connected with one another and are interdependent and we cannot modify one without, in some measure, modifying others also. If any person wants emotional health he cannot isolate his emotional life and treat only that. He has to look to his mental and physical life as well, and if he wishes to be really thorough he will have to attend to his spiritual nature also.

The next point we have to note with regard to these vehicles is that although the different vehicles of a particular *Jivātmā* are on different planes and the manifestation of consciousness working through them differs from plane to plane, they seem to function in sets of three. Consciousness working in each set as a whole is a unity, though this unity is subordinate to, and is contained within, the larger unity of the next higher manifestation. This

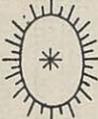
	PHYSICAL	ASTRAL	LOWER MENTAL	HIGHER MENTAL	BUDDHIC	ATMIC
NORMAL PHYSICAL LIFE					*	*
IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH					*	*
HEAVEN LIFE					*	*
IN SAMADHI ON HIGHER MENTAL PLANE					*	*
IN SAMADHI ON BUDDHIC PLANE						*
IN SAMADHI ON ATMIC PLANE AND NORMAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF A JIWAN MUKTA					*	

FIGURE 2

fact is illustrated in the diagram given on the opposite page (Figure 3).

The smallest circle represents the limited working of consciousness on the lowest three planes, through the physical, astral and lower mental bodies, and may be taken to be the sphere of the personality. The next larger circle represents the sphere of the individuality which works through the Ātmic, Buddhic and Causal bodies and includes the personality within it. The individuality is in its turn contained within the far wider consciousness of the Monad who is rooted in the Ādi plane, functions on the Anupādaka plane, and exercises his influence on the Ātmic plane in a manner which we cannot comprehend on the lower planes. And again, the Monad, in some incomprehensible manner, is contained within the all-inclusive consciousness of the Logos. So we see that the personality, the Individuality and the Monad are partial and differently limited manifestations of the consciousness of the Logos, each higher manifestation being fuller than the lower and containing the lower within its greater amplitude. The personality, the Individuality, the Monad and the Logos are called respectively *Jīva*, *Jīvātmā*, *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā* in Hindu terminology.

Let us try to understand what these three components of our total constitution are, one by one. The personality is that ordinary limited human consciousness which works through the physical, astral and lower mental bodies. As all these three vehicles are temporary and are formed anew with every incarnation, the personality is obviously a temporary manifestation, dissolving and disappearing as these three bodies are destroyed, one after another, during the progressive recession of consciousness which takes place, after death. Although the consciousness working through the personality is nothing but a ray of the Sun of Divine consciousness, still, owing to the limitations and illusions of the lower planes this awareness of its divine origin is lost and a temporary entity who considers himself independent and separate from others comes into being. This entity moves about upon the world stage for

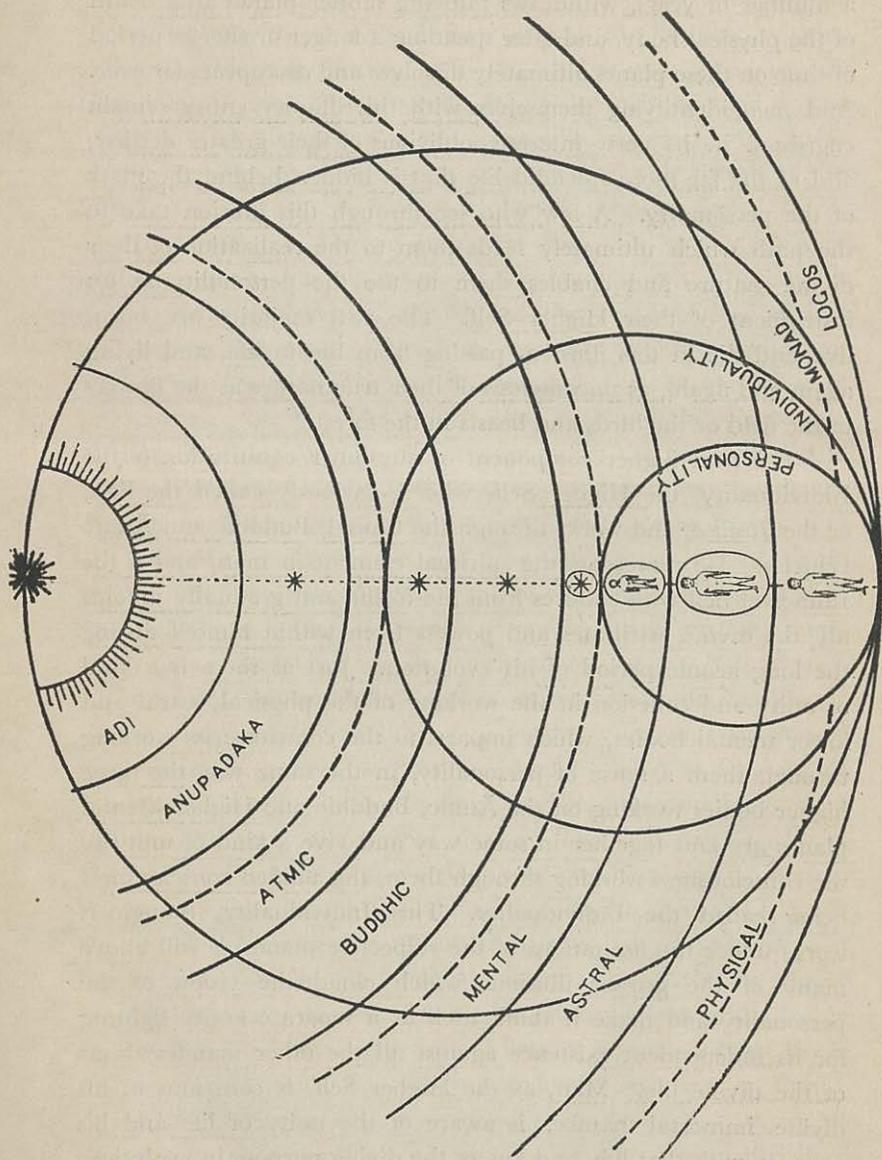


FIGURE 3

a number of years, withdraws into the subtler planes after death of the physical body, and after spending a longer or shorter period of time on these planes ultimately dissolves and disappears for ever. And men identifying themselves with this illusory entity remain engrossed in its petty interests, oblivious of their greater destiny, and of the far more splendid life that is hidden behind the mask of the personality. A few who see through this illusion take to the path which ultimately leads them to the realization of their divine nature and enables them to use the personality as an instrument of their Higher Self. The vast majority are born, live and die in this illusion, passing from life to life, and living again and again, as unconscious of their true nature as the flowers in the field or the birds and beasts in the forest.

The next higher component of our inner constitution is the Individuality, the Higher Self, who is variously called the Ego, or the *Jīvātmā*, and works through the Causal, Buddhic and Ātmic vehicles. He represents the spiritual element in man, and is the Immortal Self who endures from life to life and gradually unfolds all the divine attributes and powers from within himself during the long aeonic period of his evolution. Just as there is a kind of unity and cohesion in the working of the physical, astral and lower mental bodies, which imparts to the consciousness working through them a sense of personality, in the same way the three higher bodies working on the Ātmic, Buddhic and Higher Mental planes are knit together in some way and give a kind of unity to the consciousness working through them, this unified consciousness being called the Individuality. This Individuality, though it works under the limitations of the respective planes, is still above many of the grosser illusions which cloud the vision of the personality and make it think itself as a separate entity fighting for its independent existence against all the other manifestations of the divine life. Man, as the Higher Self, is conscious of his divine immortal nature, is aware of the unity of life and his oneness with that life, and knows the divine purpose in evolution. He has memory of all the separate lives through which he has

passed in the successive personalities, can identify himself in consciousness with all living beings through the Buddhic vehicle, and can, through the Ātmic vehicle, touch the divine consciousness. Gradually, as evolution proceeds, knowledge, wisdom and power which are the attributes of the Divine life appear in the Individuality in an ever increasing measure, for 'his future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit'.

But even this Higher Immortal Self, who is the spiritual element in man, does not represent the highest aspect of his nature. Within him abides eternally the Monad, the Purusha of the Sāmkhya philosophy, the Ātmā of Vedānta, that mysterious Being about whom we cannot form any idea though He is the very core of our complex being. The Ego is immortal and though he has an immeasurably long life as compared with the personality, still because he came into existence at a particular time—with the formation of the Causal body—he must also cease to be. But the Monad is beyond time and lives in eternity. He is one in essence with the Solar Logos, a ray of the Divine Sun, rooted in the Ādi plane, having His centre of consciousness on the Anupādaka plane and overshadowing and influencing the Individuality on the Ātmic plane. What appears as evolution and unfoldment of the Individuality on the lower planes is in some mysterious way eternally present within the Monad. That is why we do not evolve in a haphazard manner but become something which we already are in our eternal nature. This idea has been paradoxically expressed in the well-known occult maxim: 'Become what you are'. Each Individuality is unique because it is the result of the expression of an archetype, which in some way incomprehensible to the human intellect, exists within the Monad and is gradually expressed in terms of time and space in the evolutionary process. All this, of course, appears absurd to the mere intellect which is a very much lower expression of Reality and, therefore, cannot be expected to understand without the light of intuition the higher aspects of Truth. But in the vision of the higher planes what appears as nonsense to the intellect

becomes as clear as daylight and the paradoxes of the lower life turn into the indivisible and living realities of the higher life.

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

The function of the personality in bringing about the unfoldment of the Individuality can best be understood from the growth of a tree. A tree puts forth new leaves every year in spring and through the foliage absorbs carbon dioxide, which after going through many changes is assimilated into the body of the tree and subserves its growth. The tree sheds its leaves in autumn, but before this is done, the enriched sap is withdrawn into the body to be sent back again into the new leaves next spring. Year after year this process is repeated and the tree grows bigger and stronger in consequence. In a similar fashion the Individuality takes a new set of bodies on the lowest planes and puts forth a portion of itself in the new personality which is formed. This personality lives its allotted span of life on earth, gathers a number of experiences, but before it dissolves and disappears after enjoyment of the Heaven life, it hands over the *essence* of its experiences to the Individuality, in this way enriching its life and subserving its growth. Thus every successive incarnation serves to bring to greater perfection the faculties and powers which are latent in the *Jivātmā* and provides a more efficient instrument for the expression of the divine life.

In a similar manner, but which we can hardly comprehend, the Individuality is a partial expression of the Monad and subserves His unfoldment, although the word 'unfoldment' can hardly

give any idea of that process on the highest planes of which evolution is a reflection on the lower planes. We have no word for this process which must be taking place on the planes of the Monad and which corresponds to the gradual unfoldment of all the divine qualities and powers in the *Jīvātmā* on the planes of *Ātmā*, Buddhi and Higher Manas. Still, something of the sort and of a far more tremendous nature must be taking place on His plane because everything which takes place on the lower planes is a reflection of something far grander and more beautiful on the higher planes. 'As above, so below.'

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

The understanding of the relation subsisting between the personality and the Individuality will also throw some light on some of the fundamental problems of spiritual life. It will be seen from what has been said above that as long as consciousness is confined within the sphere of the personality, and we identify ourselves with this illusory entity which comes into existence in every incarnation, we are for all practical purposes that entity and must share its fate. If we live merely in our thoughts and emotions and remain completely engrossed in the temporary interests of the lower self, then with the dissolution of this self—which is inevitable—we also die. But suppose our centre of consciousness shifts from the personality to the Individuality and we realize—not merely think or feel—that we are that spiritual entity who is conscious of his divine nature, then the personality becomes merely an appendage of ourselves, just as our coat is, and what happens to the personality does not really affect us. If our coat becomes worn-out and gets torn we do not feel unhappy because we know that we can discard it and get another, but if our physical body gets old we feel unhappy as if all is over with

us. Why? Because we identify ourselves with the physical body even though we may intellectually know that it is only an instrument.

So the real problem of spiritual life is somehow to shift this focus of consciousness which is now situated in the personality into the Individuality and to live from that centre, using the personality as a mere instrument on the lower planes. When we succeed in doing this we still work through our physical body, our mind and emotions, but we are all the time conscious of this dualism between our real Self and the bodies which we use on the lower planes. We are all the time conscious of our higher nature and when we use the lower bodies we are aware of descending into them, as it were, for the purpose of using them on the respective planes. This establishment of consciousness in the higher spiritual realms gives us freedom, immortality and bliss because it makes us independent of the personality which is subject to all kind of limitations such as those of change, illusion and death. Immortality and peace can never be found in the sphere of the personality and it is futile to seek them there. We may be able to prolong our physical existence for any length of time, we may live in the Heaven world for thousands of years but a time must come when the causes we have generated in that incarnation are exhausted and that personality dissolves never to come into existence again.

So the wise man who realizes this fact and knows that he is sailing on a ship which is bound to founder one day takes the earliest opportunity to find *terra firma* from where he can view with equanimity the surging ocean of existence. And this *terra firma* is that spiritual consciousness which abides within us always and is our true home. In the later stages of evolution the focus of consciousness shifts still further inwards and gets stablized in the plane of the Monad and from there is controlled and guided by the life of the Individuality. Ever inwards towards the Centre which represents the consciousness of the Logos does the focus move in the long aeons of our evolutionary progress, though it

can never reach that Centre. ' You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame.'

It is also necessary to remind the reader that Spiritual evolution means shifting the centre of consciousness towards the divine Centre of our being and realizing our divinity more and more. It does not mean perfecting the personality which by its very nature must remain imperfect and limited to a great extent. The Spiritual unfoldment of the Individuality is certainly reflected in the personality but only to a limited extent, the limitations which are inherent in the lower planes preventing the full expression. It is necessary to point out this fact because of the confusion sometimes present in the minds of some people with regard to this matter.



CHAPTER III

SELF-CULTURE—A SCIENCE

ONE of the striking features of the present age is the lack of any real comprehension regarding the nature of man. Man is trying to know everything in the universe. He can say with certainty what stars, millions of miles away, are made of. He knows thoroughly the constitution of atoms and molecules. But about himself, he knows practically nothing, and what is more striking he is content to live his life without caring to know where he comes from, what his real nature is, why he is here in this world, and whither he goes after death. It is really amazing how the vast majority of people in the world can live through their life without asking these natural questions or even knowing that they exist.

One direct result of this absence of any definite knowledge regarding the nature of man and his inner constitution is the indefiniteness of our ideas with regard to human character. The word 'character' is used generally in a very vague manner for the mental and moral qualities as well as the idiosyncrasies which characterize a particular individual. The real man with his several vehicles of consciousness who stands behind the physical vehicle is unknown and unrecognised and whatever of his complex nature is able to find expression through the comparatively dense and inelastic medium of the physical vehicle is taken to be his real nature. Again, in considering human beings in the mass we find them behaving in a peculiar way under a certain set of circumstances. We call all such typical modes of behaviour human characteristics and give to each mode a particular name. But we know very little why human beings behave in those particular

ways and how these different elements of human character are related to one another. Some of these human characteristics are mere physical habits, others are related to our emotional or mental nature, while still others are obviously of a spiritual nature. But the word 'character' sums up all of them without distinction.

With such confusion of ideas on the subject it is hardly possible to evolve a Science of Character-Building. It may be possible, by the application of certain empirical methods, to bring about certain changes in our characters but such efforts are bound to be haphazard and of limited scope. For a real Science of Character-Building we should have, first of all, a clear conception of the nature of man, his total constitution and the powers and faculties that are latent in him. Then we should know the laws that govern the working of consciousness through the different vehicles which man uses on the different planes of the Solar System. But a mere knowledge of these laws is not enough. We must evolve an elaborate technique which enables us to apply these laws to the various problems connected with the evolution of vehicles and the unfoldment of consciousness. And lastly, we ought to have a clear idea with regard to what we are aiming at, the goal we have to reach and the different stages on the path which leads to that goal. It is only in Occultism that all these elements needed for evolving a satisfactory Science of Character-Building are to be found.

Let us try to understand what is character according to Occultism. The whole manifested universe, according to the Occult philosophy, is the expression of the Divine Life which is building up form after form and trying to express itself through these forms with ever increasing perfection. This expression has reached its acme in those individualized units of consciousness which are represented by human beings and whose vehicles offer a field for the manifold expression of the divine attributes. Taking one such unit for our consideration we find a constant interplay going on between consciousness and the vehicles through which it works, such interplay assuming different patterns, some of which

are common to all human beings while others are peculiar to each individual. These patterns of expression which are common to human beings are the ordinary human characteristics with which we are familiar, and with any peculiar characteristics that a particular individual may have, constitute his character.

In view of the great diversity of forms which these modes of expression assume in actual life, it is natural to enquire whether there is any underlying relation between these various human characteristics, and if so, what is the nature of such relationship. In spite of the apparent difficulty of classifying different elements of human character, the problem is not so difficult as it appears, provided we get the proper clue to this classification. This clue is found in the triple nature of the Divine Life, a doctrine which is found in one form or another in practically all the great religions of the world. This triple nature in relation to consciousness gives rise to three fundamental aspects which are called *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ānanda* and in relation to matter, to the three fundamental qualities which are called *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva*, consciousness and matter being the result of the primary differentiation of the Unmanifest Absolute.

The triplicities that are observable everywhere in Nature are the result of the reflections on the lower planes of these fundamental triplicities of consciousness and matter, the great variety of phenomena being due to the different conditions provided by the successive planes and the innumerable permutations and combinations which result in such manifestations.

Fascinating as this line of thought is, it is not possible to go into it in detail at this place. The point that is necessary for us to grasp here is that all those well-known positive qualities and traits which constitute characters of different individuals are merely modes of expression of these fundamental aspects of the divine nature on the lower planes of manifestation just as all the colours we find in Nature or prepared artificially are different combinations of the three primary colours—blue, red and yellow. A few illustrations will make this clear.

When the Sat aspect of consciousness is reflected in the sphere of the personality it can give rise to a number of qualities which though outwardly different from one another are found on closer examination to have a common basis. Take, for instance, the following well-known traits of character: courage, strength, decision. If we analyse these qualities we shall find that they represent merely different modes of manifestation of the principle of stability implied in the Sat aspect. When a person pursues a predetermined line of action in spite of the dangers which threaten him he is said to have courage. He is showing stability amidst difficulties. When a person pursues a predetermined course of action in spite of the temptations which assail him he is said to have strength. He is showing stability amidst temptations. When a person sticks to a chosen line of action in spite of the alternative courses of action open before him he is said to show decision of character. He is showing stability amidst mental distractions. So we see that these traits of character which outwardly appear so unlike are really the principle of stability manifesting under different conditions of life. Stability is a fundamental attribute of Will which is a reflection of the Sat aspect of consciousness.

The same considerations hold in the case of the other two aspects. When the Ānanda aspect of consciousness is reflected in the sphere of the personality it gives rise to wisdom. Now one of the fundamental attributes of wisdom is the perception of unity of life manifesting through all forms. On the higher planes of the Spirit this perception is direct and clear, but in the region of the personality this unity is merely sensed and appears as love in different forms. All qualities such as affection, compassion and devotion are based on this indirect perception of unity, the differences in outer form being the result of the different circumstances under which the sense of unity is expressed. Thus when we feel an inner kinship with another individual, whether that individual is related to us in this life or not we are said to have affection. It is love called forth by association in past lives in

various kinds of relationships. When we see another human being in a degraded condition—the divine life being overpowered by the weaknesses which beset the bodies—and our love goes out to that fallen brother we are said to have compassion. It is love going out to those who are weak and need our sympathy and help. When we see another individual embodying the ideal that we adore and our love goes out to that individual and we want to link our life to his larger life we are said to show devotion. It is love given to one whom we recognize our superior in wisdom, power or knowledge. We thus see again that a number of elements of human character are merely reflections of the aspect of consciousness called *Ānanda* in the various conditions of human life.

When the third aspect of consciousness is reflected in the sphere of the personality it gives rise to knowledge of concrete objects. Observation, memory, reasoning and other functions of the lower mind will be found on careful analysis to be mere reflections of the *Chit* aspect of consciousness under different conditions. Thus for example, when we put ourselves in touch mentally with any unfamiliar object through our physical senses we are said to observe it. Observation is an aspect of the mind gathering its material. When the mind takes impression of any object which can be used later on in its operations, memory comes into play. Memory is mind retaining its material for future use. When the various objects which have been observed are compared and contrasted and conclusions are drawn the mind is said to reason. Reasoning is mind establishing relations between the objects it has observed and retained in the store house of memory. All these mental faculties are connected with knowledge in one way or another and are derived from the *Chit* aspect of consciousness.

What has been said in the previous paragraphs should serve to show that all those human characteristics and faculties which we call by different names are merely manifestations of the three aspects of consciousness in all their permutations and combinations. Some of these characteristics are simple derivatives of

one particular aspect while others are complex derivatives of more than one aspect, the expressions being further modified and complicated by the distinctive character of the different vehicles according as the *Sāttvic*, *Rājasic* or *Tāmasic* element predominates in them. It will be an interesting piece of research if all the well-known elements of human character are analysed and traced to their respective origins and it is definitely shown that all the apparently diverse and complicated phenomena of human life and behaviour are due to the light of divine consciousness breaking up into myriad colours by the vehicles of the *Jīvātmās* taking part in the evolutionary scheme.

The above view of the nature of human characteristics and faculties will perhaps enable us to understand to some extent what human character is and thus to lay the foundations of a real Science of Character-Building. The character of a particular individual we can now see is the sum total of all the different modes in which his consciousness manifests through his various vehicles—physical, astral, mental and spiritual. This sum total can only be a small fraction of the totality of modes of manifestation that are possible to the divine consciousness working through him. As the individual evolves, all these possibilities that are locked up in that fragment of divinity pass, one by one, from latency into potency, and the character becomes richer and a more efficient instrument of the divine life working through him.

Modern science provides a beautiful analogy for this gradual appearance of qualities from a latent state. If a solid like a piece of metal is heated progressively it begins to give out vibrations of different frequencies. When the body becomes incandescent these vibrations can be analysed by a spectroscope and found to give a spectrum which shows us clearly which vibrations are active in the incandescent body. As the temperature of the body is raised, step by step, more and more lines appear and the spectrum of the incandescent body gradually approximates to the spectrum of the sun in which all possible vibrations are represented. Dark lines or bands in such a spectrum represent the

absence of vibrations of the corresponding frequencies and the number of such dark lines or bands becomes smaller as the temperature of the body rises and the gamut of vibrations become more and more complete.

Now the analogy of this phenomenon to human evolution and the progressive appearance of all kinds of faculties and powers is quite apparent. All attributes of the divine life are present in a latent form in any individual fragment of Divinity represented by a *Jīvātmā*. As the *Jīvātmā* evolves these attributes are brought into manifestation one after another and gradually the individual approaches that condition of relative perfection in which all the attributes are in full manifestation. So the character of an individual is really the incomplete spectrum of divine qualities that he shows at his particular stage of development, the light of consciousness manifesting through the imperfect vehicles producing the partial spectrum. The character of a Perfect Being shows the complete spectrum of divine qualities and is like the spectrum of the sun, while that of an ordinary imperfect individual can be only like the spectrum given by an incandescent solid body, showing some bright lines of developed qualities separated by dark lines of undeveloped qualities. Occultism does not recognize the existence of positive evil qualities. They are the dark lines or bands of the character spectrum which are bound to disappear in course of time as the individual evolves and develops the corresponding positive qualities.

From what has been said above it should be clear that the building of our character, in the widest sense of the term, is nothing but bringing out from the hidden recesses of our divine nature all those qualities that are already there in a latent form and thus approximating our imperfect nature more and more to that divine perfection which contains all these qualities in harmonious and balanced completeness. If character-building is a science it should be possible to do this systematically and scientifically. It can be done systematically because we know what we have to do, and how we have to do it, as a result of the

knowledge which has been placed at our disposal by the Adepts of Occultism. It can be done scientifically because this unfoldment of qualities is a natural process governed by laws which are as immutable and reliable as the laws which govern the physical world.

The use of the phrase 'character-building' for this process of inner unfoldment is not quite appropriate and may give a wrong impression to the student in two ways. Firstly, it may give him the impression that something has to be constructed like a building or a machine while the actual process is that of releasing an inner reality which already exists in its fullness somewhere within us. The process is really the gradual and increasing release of a life of infinite possibilities, the progressive expansion of consciousness which will ultimately embrace everything in the universe. What have to be constructed and evolved at this stage are the lower vehicles through which the divine life within us finds expression, and not the life and its expression. The second wrong impression which we might get from the phrase 'character-building' is that the character which we develop limits and restricts the freedom of Life's expression. If the mind is made to function in certain healthy patterns of behaviour, it no more restricts its freedom and activity than the formation of certain desirable and necessary physical habits restricts our physical life. It is not these habits, physical or mental, which restrict the freedom of expression but the lack of Buddhi or *Viveka* which makes us unaware of these limitations and thus to be dominated by them. The more our higher nature develops and takes control of the lower vehicles the less hampering and innocuous these habits become. They merely enable the soul to relegate to the mechanism of the unconscious mind physical and mental activities which would otherwise claim its attention and waste time and energy unnecessarily. If we keep these facts in mind we may continue to use the current well-known phrase 'character-building' for that transformation of our lower nature which enables us to express our Spiritual nature in an ever increasing measure.

The problem of evolving a perfect character is mainly a problem of studying all our vehicles and their functions and then taking the necessary steps to perfect the functions of those vehicles. It is not possible to do this on the basis of the present day knowledge that is available in Science, Philosophy or Religion. In none of these we find the requisite elements for building up a Science of Character-Building. The necessary knowledge for such a science is found only in Occultism, the Adepts of which have for ages been experimenting along these lines and have been able to evolve an effective technique for this purpose. An attempt has been made in the subsequent chapters to take up, one by one, the different vehicles of man, to deal with their respective functions, as far as they can be understood by us on the lower planes, and then to show the preliminary steps by which these functions can be improved. Only in this manner is it possible to deal systematically with the problem of Self-Culture.

Not only has this work of building our character to be attempted in a systematic manner but also in a scientific spirit. This means two things. First, that we should adopt the scientific attitude towards the whole problem. The scientific attitude means that we must realise clearly that in dealing with all these vehicles we are working in a sphere of natural laws which are as dependable as the laws of the physical world upon which the whole structure of modern Science has been built up. It is necessary to emphasize this fact because there is a general misconception prevalent with regard to all aspects of life that do not come within the domain of the physical. The ordinary man of the world and even advanced thinkers and scientists have generally very queer notions with regard to all things of a mental or moral nature. They take it for granted that everything in the physical world happens according to fixed natural laws, but in the sphere of our mental or moral life nothing is considered to be definite and certain, and very few people take the so-called mental and moral laws seriously. This really amounts to supposing that one portion of the universe is a cosmos while the rest is a chaos,

but the absurdity of this attitude is not generally realized by people who are too much engrossed in the physical to see anything beyond.

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

The scientific attitude towards these problems also means that we should not regard the phenomena of the higher life as something mysterious. It is true that we have to approach these higher realms of the invisible in a spirit of reverence but that should not make us forget the fact that these realms are subject to natural laws of their own respective spheres and the secrets of those realms can be obtained only by experimentation and the proper utilization of the laws operating in them. All the facts and laws, which in their entirety constitute Occultism, have been discovered not by any mysterious process but by experimentation with the help of superphysical faculties and powers. They have been verified again and again by the students and Adepts of Occultism who have trodden this path of inner development and found its laws to be utterly dependable under all kinds of conditions. So that when a student enters this vast and fascinating field of his inner nature and undertakes to dig out therefrom all kinds of extraordinary faculties and capacities, he should understand that he can get anything he wants provided he has the key of knowledge and the will to persevere in spite of all the

difficulties that are bound to come in his way. But mere theoretical knowledge is not enough. He must experiment. He must himself verify and gain direct knowledge of the laws of the inner life and evolve a technique for the effective application of those laws. Only in this way can he advance steadily in knowledge of his own unfathomable nature and the external universe in which he lives.

But we should be on our guard against one thing. The fact that the phenomena of mind are subject to natural laws does not mean that we can get the results as quickly and in the same manner as in the case of physical or mechanical phenomena. The results of experiments in the realm of mechanics, chemistry or physics appear immediately because no life processes are involved. Where life processes are involved the phenomenon does not only become far more complicated but the results are also obtained after a comparatively much longer time. In the case of biological phenomena the results take much longer time to appear and are not obtained with as much certainty as in the case of mechanical phenomena. On account of the complexity of the process we are far more liable to miss or ignore some factors and these account for the failure. As soon as this is remedied the results appear as expected. We do not say that biology is not a science because of this time-lag or uncertainty. It remains a science in spite of these because the result does depend ultimately on natural laws however long and complex the process might be. Similarly in the case of mental and spiritual phenomena time-lag or failure to get a result under certain conditions does not mean that there are no immutable laws operating in these spheres. It only means that the conditions are different, more complicated and require a far more intelligent adjustment of all the conditions which ensure success. So let us not imagine that because the field of Self-Culture is governed by natural laws our task is like that of fitting a motor car from a blue print and driving to our destination in a routine manner. The problem is full of all kinds of difficulties and complications which require

careful handling and patient and prolonged effort. But the results are based on natural laws and therefore our ultimate success is sure. It is only in this sense that Self-Culture or Yoga is a science.

The goal of Self-Culture has already been broadly indicated in a previous chapter. Essentially, it is living a life of perfect freedom in conscious at-one-ment with the divine Spirit and wielding with perfect mastery the powers and faculties belonging to all the planes in carrying out the divine Will. But this is a goal which an aspirant can reach only after several lives of intensive effort. Has then Self-Culture nothing to offer in the immediate present and have we to take this long and arduous journey merely in the hope of becoming perfect and enlightened in some future life? Decidedly not. Those who go through this book will see immediately that even a little progress made in this line will be of great advantage to the student and free him from most of the anxieties and miseries of life. Let the reader imagine, for a while, his life as it would be if he were able to acquire control over his physical body, emotions and thoughts and were able to regulate their activities in accordance with the dictates of his reason and higher judgement. Let him imagine himself without physical attachments, without emotional disturbances and the worries and anxieties of a disturbed and harassed mind, living a perfectly serene life amidst the circumstances in which his lot is cast, depending upon his inner resources for that strength and happiness which ordinary people seek, in vain, in the outer world. And amidst this calm and Self-controlled life let him imagine himself striving constantly and zealously for his ultimate goal which is the attainment of enlightenment. This is a state worth striving for by any man or woman and it can be acquired in this life provided the problem of changing the inner life is tackled with earnestness and determination. The time a man will take in reaching the final goal will naturally depend upon the efforts he has made in this direction in his past lives, upon his stage of evolution and upon his Karma, but nothing can

prevent him from acquiring a state of mental poise, calmness and peace in this life—now, if he is sufficiently earnest.

So Self-Culture has a message of hope and encouragement and a happy life for every one and no one who makes a beginning in right earnest can fail to reap its benefits from the very start. Even when death comes he knows that he has laid the foundations of an enlightened and free life, has set his feet on the path which leads to his goal, and will take up in his next life this fascinating work at the point where he has dropped it in this one.

PART II

SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SELF-CULTURE

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

IN ONE of the previous chapters was given a bird's-eye view of the whole problem of Self-Culture and it was shown that the problem consisted partly in bringing to perfection the various vehicles of consciousness which the *Jīvātmā* uses on the different planes. The outermost and densest of these vehicles is the physical body, the vehicle with which we are most familiar, and with which we have a great deal to do as long as our life is confined to the physical plane. We shall take up for consideration this body first. From the known to the unknown is always the natural and therefore the right method of attacking any subject and this line of procedure is also indicated by the fact that in the normal course of evolution of our bodies the physical is the first to be organized and perfected. Nature, generally, starts at the bottom and works, step by step, to the top.

There is a widely prevalent confusion in the mind of the average aspirant in India with regard to the function of the physical body and the proper method of dealing with it. While some aspirants give an undue amount of attention to the problems connected with it and fuss a great deal about non-essentials, there are others who totally neglect it, under a mistaken notion that the lower life on the physical plane is *Māyā* and it does not matter how we live and how we treat the physical body. The proper attitude to adopt towards the physical body is to consider it as an instrument of the soul for its work on the physical plane. It is a living instrument and not an insentient machine and so has definite tendencies of its own. An instrument which we use for

any kind of work should be kept in perfect order, and it should be treated and developed in such a manner that it is able to perform its specific functions with the highest degree of efficiency. A musician who neglects his violin and keeps it out of tune is as foolish as the one who fusses unnecessarily over his instrument and wastes his time and energy on its embellishments.

Before we take up for consideration the methods which are used for controlling and purifying the physical body and making it a sensitive and strong instrument for the work of the *Jivātmā*, we should try to understand the nature and the functions of this instrument. Anything which we want to control and train up for a particular purpose we must first understand and know as thoroughly as possible. A horse-trainer knows very thoroughly the nature of a horse and this knowledge enables him to bring it easily under control and to break it for ordinary work. A teacher should know thoroughly the nature of a child if he is to guide his budding faculties in the right way. So must we know and understand our physical body well if we wish to have for our use an efficient instrument which is fully under our control.

The first thing necessary for this purpose is to have a general idea of its constitution and its internal anatomy. Any elementary textbook on physiology will give us an adequate idea about its internal structure and remove many misconceptions which people in general have with regard to its working. Many people, educated and sensible people, do not know even the most elementary facts about their body and if you ask them on which side their liver lies they will not be able to tell you definitely. They can give you correct information about the constitution of the sun, what elements are present in it, they know everything about the engine of an automobile but they are quite ignorant about their physical body through which they have to work during their life on this earth. This is a sad commentary on our educational system which provides for stuffing our head with all kinds of useless knowledge with regard to non-essentials and ignores almost completely those things which matter most in life.

The most important result of this knowledge of the internal structure of the physical body is that it enables us more easily to objectify it, i.e. see it as something different from ourselves, and to realise that it is only an instrument and not ourselves. If we know only the outer appearance of the body we are more apt to identify ourselves with it than if we mentally see it as it is actually—a complicated living machine more elaborate in its working than some of the modern industrial plants.

The next thing we have to do is to realize very clearly the function of the physical body. We see that it is an instrument, but what is its use? It is an instrument with the help of which the *Jivātmā* comes in contact with the physical plane. Slowly, through the long processes of evolution, this instrument has been evolved and perfected by the different divine agencies working in the Solar System and it enables the *Jivātmā*, on the one hand, to come into touch with, and on the other, to affect and bring about changes in the objects and phenomena of that plane. With the help of the five sense-organs which are called *Jñānendriyas* in Samskrit and which have been slowly developed during the evolution of the physical body, the soul gains knowledge of the physical plane and through the organs of action, which are called *Karmendriyas* it brings about changes in the outer world. These organs have been developed one after another during the course of evolution of the physical body.

How dependent we are on these sense-organs for our knowledge of the physical world can be realized by any one who performs a simple experiment. Let him close the sense avenues one after another, as far as possible, and he will find his contact with the physical world becoming more and more limited until, when all the five avenues are closed, he will find himself completely cut off from the physical world and all that will remain will be the mental images conjured up by the imagination or the memory of his former experiences gained through his contact with the physical world.

Seen in this light, the physical body is nothing but a portable instrument combining in itself the functions of a wireless transmitting and receiving set. From the physical world it catches the vibrations of light, sound, etc. though the sense-organs and carries these vibrations inwards, thus making it possible for the *Jīvātmā* to cognize the various objects of the physical world. From the *Jīvātmā* seated within, it receives motor impulses and thoughts, and through the organs of action it transmits these motor impulses and thoughts to the outer world. We carry this portable instrument about, on our two feet, and put ourselves in touch with the different parts of the physical world as is necessary. And yet, so engrained has become our habit of identifying ourselves with the physical body, that if instead of saying 'I am doing this,' 'I am going there,' we used a language more in harmony with real facts and said 'I am making my physical body do this,' 'I am taking my physical body there,' it would sound strange in our ears.

We now come to a very important contribution made by Occultism to the understanding of the constitution of the physical body. Our modern scientists who have given two centuries of continuous research work to the investigation of the physical body have been able to gain very detailed information with regard to its mechanism. Every muscle, bone, nerve, and artery has been thoroughly investigated and catalogued, how the various metabolic processes take place has been determined, but in spite of this tremendous amount of work they have missed entirely, owing to their orthodox materialistic outlook, more than one half of the physical body—the etheric double as it is called in Occult literature or *Prāṇamāya-kosha* in Vedāntic terminology. The dense physical body or the *Annamāya-kosha* which the scientists have investigated and which we can see with our eyes is composed of the matter belonging to the three lower sub-planes of the physical plane—the solid, liquid and gaseous matter. Besides these three sub-planes of the physical plane, there are four other sub-planes, subtler than and interpenetrating the solid, liquid and gaseous

matter, of which the scientists at present know nothing. The matter belonging to these four finer grades of matter enters into the composition of a subtler counterpart of the physical body—the etheric double as it is called, etheric because these four finer grades of matter are referred to as ethers, and double because this subtler vehicle is the exact counterpart of the dense physical body, though it projects out from the dense body about three inches on all sides. The etheric double should not be considered as a separate vehicle of consciousness but as a complement of the dense body, the two together constituting the whole physical body.

The function of the etheric double is to serve as the vehicle of *Prāṇa*, the specialized energy which in its various modifications keeps going and regulates the activities of the physical body. This energy is obtained from the Sun, broken up by the *Chakra* situated near the spleen into its constituents, and then the currents of these different kinds of *Prāṇa* are carried to different parts of the body along well marked channels to do their specialized work in those parts. It is this vitality which is obtained from the Sun and specialized for its use by the etheric double which is the source of all those vital forces needed for the maintenance of the physical body, and science blunders when it regards food as the source, and on the basis of this assumption, builds up a faulty science of nutrition and medicine. Food and drink are needed by the physical body for the repair of the tissues, for producing heat, etc. and for some other purposes but not for supplying vitality. It is necessary to keep this in mind because our wrong ideas regarding the function of food engender in the mind groundless fears and doubts and make it difficult for us to get rid of the bad habit of over-eating which is responsible for a large number of the prevalent diseases. It is not necessary to go into any further details of this interesting subject because there are available in Occult literature several books which give all the necessary information that one may need.

While we are dealing with the constitution of the physical body, it is also necessary to refer to the functions of certain organs

and centres which are mentioned frequently in occult literature in connection with this body. These organs play an ever increasing part in the last stages of human evolution when the communication between the lower and the higher consciousness becomes more and more marked and the physical body becomes merely an instrument of the Higher Self.

Let us take first the two well-known organs, the pineal gland and the pituitary body, which are situated within the brain and about the real functions of which physiologists know very little. Both these organs are supposed to be rudimentary by biologists, as having played their part in the previous stages of evolution and in the present stage playing a minor role of supplying certain secretion for the growth and maintenance of the physical body. The real function of these organs, which will be of the greatest importance in the future stages of human evolution is known only to Occultists. The pituitary body is the organ which serves as a valve for the transmission of vibrations belonging to the planes of Buddhi and higher mind into the physical brain and its vivification forms part of the training which every advanced student of practical Occultism has to go through. The pineal gland is the organ of thought transference and its vivification enables a man to send any thought from his brain to that of another.

We may also deal here very briefly with the function of Chakras about which we read so much in the literature dealing with Yoga. If the etheric double is examined by clairvoyant sight there are seen to be situated in it at different points vortices in which matter is churning round and round with great rapidity. These vortices have a shining appearance and seem to be divided into a different number of coloured segments which are called petals. These vortices are called *Chakras* in Yogic terminology and serve as points of contact between the physical and astral vehicles. At these points various kinds of forces enter from the astral into the physical body and the peculiar churning motion observed is due to this rapid influx of forces which well up from a higher dimension. These Chakras have several functions, one

of the most important of these functions being that they serve as a bridge for consciousness, their vivification enabling us to establish direct communication between the physical and astral planes. When these *Chakras* are vivified and made active, astral clairvoyance is developed and it becomes possible to bring down into the brain clear and correct memory of all the experiences gone through on the astral plane. Then for all practical purposes the two planes become as one, as part of the waking consciousness.

The vivification of these *Chakras* is brought about with the help of *Kundalini*, that mysterious force which has its seat at the base of the spine and plays an important part in Yogic practice. By going through technique of certain Yogic practices, which should never be attempted except under the direct guidance of a competent teacher, this force is aroused and made to pass upwards along the *Sushumna*, as the inner passage in the spinal column is called. As this *Kundalini* passes through the *Chakras*, one after another, it vivifies them, and enables the candidate to come into touch with the astral plane. But all such practices are undertaken in the last stages of the path of discipleship which leads to Enlightenment and no novice can dabble in these things except at great peril to his physical body.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION AND SENSITIZATION OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

IN dealing with the constitution and functions of the physical body in the last chapter it was pointed out that its chief function was to serve as an instrument of the soul on the physical plane. It follows from this that if we are treading the path which leads ultimately to perfection we must train and develop this body in such a manner that it is able to discharge this function as perfectly as possible. It is true that there are certain limitations inherent in the nature of the physical plane which cannot be overcome, but even with these limitations, it is possible to bring the body to a very much higher stage of efficiency and perfection than it possesses just now as an instrument of the soul. We are told that in the far distant future, when the matter of the physical plane will be far more highly evolved than it is now, the physical bodies which will be available at that time will be far more fitted to respond to the vibrations coming from the higher planes and the Perfect Men of that time will be able to bring down far more of their divinity into the physical consciousness than they are able to do now. But that should not discourage us in any way. Within the limitations under which we work there are still vast possibilities of progress and advancement open to us, and all that can be expected of us is that we make the best use of the material that is available at present.

Now, it has been said already in the beginning that we are not dealing in this book with the problem of Self-Culture in general but with the pursuit of Self-Culture with a definite object, namely, Self-Realization. So what is said will be said from this

particular point of view as far as possible. This may to a certain extent restrict the scope of the subject but will probably add to the usefulness of the treatment.

The initial problem we have to tackle in dealing with the physical body is to bring it under our control. For without gaining some measure of control it is not possible either to purify it or make it sufficiently sensitive in its response to the exquisitely delicate vibrations coming from within. We should remember that the physical body is a living instrument, not an inanimate instrument like a motor car or a violin which obeys the laws of physics and chemistry only. It has got something which may be called semi-consciousness, also fixed habits and idiosyncrasies and something which corresponds to our will, so that it can, and does, resist our attempts to change its ways. All of us must have experienced this resistance from the physical body, if we have ever tried to change our physical habits and mode of living. It is true that most of the trouble that we have to encounter when we make an effort to change our mode of living is due not to the physical body but to the desire and mental bodies, and in most cases the physical body is only the instrument through which our desire and mental bodies try to gain what they want. But still, after leaving out the factors originating from our desires and mental nature, there is something left over, which has its origin in the physical part of our being and the physical body is something to be reckoned with in our attempt to acquire mastery over our lower nature.

The first step in bringing the physical body under our control is to separate ourselves in consciousness from it and realize as fully as possible that we are different from and master of this body. In dealing with the necessity of acquiring knowledge of the physical body it was pointed out that one result of gaining this knowledge was to give us the ability, to a certain extent of separating ourselves mentally from it—to objectify it, to use the technical phraseology. This power of objectification and dissociation of the body from ourselves should be sedulously developed

by a rapid course of training until we become fully conscious of this dualism, and identify ourselves with the body no more than we identify ourselves with our horse which we ride and which we use for doing our work. We feed the horse properly, we keep it fit and may even allow it to indulge in its innocent whims but we do not allow it to interfere with our work and always make it do what is necessary. Similar should be our attitude towards the physical body which we must recognize as a living thing with its whims and idiosyncrasies, its natural desire to feel comfort and to avoid anything to which it is not used. But this attitude is not acquired by merely thinking in this manner. It is the result of a persistent and rigid discipline to which the physical body is subjected. Without this discipline we cannot develop the capacity to dissociate ourselves from the body and unknown to ourselves, we shall continue to be its slave. This discipline does not mean, however, our going to the other extreme and torturing the body and subjecting it to unnecessary strain as is done by some misguided fakirs and religious people. These extreme methods are wholly wrong and the *Bhagavad-gītā* and, in fact, all great Teachers have warned us against them. The physical body is brought under control simply by applying a steady pressure of will in changing its wrong habits and using patience and commonsense in its management. The purpose of *Tapah* or austerities of various kinds, practised intelligently, is to acquire this kind of control over the physical body and make it an obedient servant of the soul so that it carries out efficiently and without resistance whatever it is required to do. Each *Sādhaka* or aspirant can devise his own methods for acquiring this kind of control, for the needs of each individual are different and what is needed in the case of one individual may be unnecessary in the case of another.

Supposing we have acquired the necessary control over the physical body and can do with it what we want, what have we to do next? We have to purify it. What does purity mean? Purity, not only in connection with the physical but also in connection with our emotional and mental vehicles, means the

pre-ponderance in our vehicle of those constituents, of those combinations of matter, which can respond easily to higher vibrations and do not respond to the lower vibrations. On all the planes combinations of matter are definitely and specifically related to certain vibratory powers, so that a particular grade of matter can respond only within certain limits of vibrations and not outside these limits. We are quite familiar with this phenomenon in Science and have only to apply the principle in a more general manner to the matter present in our various vehicles. It follows from this correspondence which exists between matter and vibration that the vibratory capacity of our body as a whole—and for the present we shall confine ourselves to the physical body—is determined and limited by the quality and the proportion of the various grades of matter present in it. A body which is composed preponderantly of the finer combinations, will be able to respond easily to the higher vibrations and will be more or less impervious to those which are lower, while a body which is composed predominantly of the coarser combinations will respond easily and instantly to the lower thoughts and emotions and will be unable to catch those which belong to the finer grades.

So that purification means nothing more than increasing the proportion in the body of the finer kinds of matter with the gradual elimination, or lessening at any rate, of the coarser kinds. It is also worth remembering that it is the nervous system through which the soul works when it uses the physical body. In one way the whole body is its instrument, but the nervous system is the special instrument through which the emotions and thoughts and other higher energies of the soul find expression on the physical plane and appear in physical consciousness. The whole body with its complicated mechanism feeds and keeps in order the nervous system and nothing hampers the functioning of the soul in the body more than any disorder in the nervous system. A clot in the brain may completely paralyse the body and stop all work of the soul through the body. The nervous system, the vibrations of whose particles produce all the phenomena of

consciousness, is dependent upon the whole body for its nourishment, and as is the quality of the physical body, so must be the quality of the nervous matter and hence its responsiveness to different kinds of vibrations.

The physical body is built up from the food and drink that we take and naturally the quality of its constituents will depend, to a very great extent, upon the quality of this food. Knowledge of the nature of different kinds of food and practical experience has enabled occultists to classify foods under different categories according as they affect the vibratory capacity of the body as a whole, and the classification which is most familiar is that in which they are divided into three groups: *Tāmasic*, *Rājasic* and *Sāttvic*. *Tāmasic* foods are those which promote inertia, *Rājasic* those which produce activity and *Sāttvic* those which produce harmony and rhythm. It is from the last group that the aspirant for spiritual knowledge has to make his selection as far as possible.

It is necessary to say here by way of warning that this principle of selection of our food may be ridden to death and may be applied in the most unintelligent and routine manner. Some Hindus make a fetish of this principle, and it is pathetic to see these people whose religion and efforts to spiritualize their life are confined almost solely to the sphere of the kitchen. Purity of body is only a means to an end and purity of the body alone can no more lead to spirituality than a good violin by itself can produce good music. Unless purity is combined with other conditions for leading the spiritual life it is almost meaningless.

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

of the mind it is considered as an obstacle on the path of Yoga and has to be overcome systematically by those who are preparing to tread this path. In many cases it is the result of inner disharmony and lack of self-control and disappears when these causes are removed. But there are a few cases in which *Kārmic* causes are involved and the person continues to suffer from ill-health in spite of the most vigorous self-discipline and abstemious life. In such a case the aspirant should go through this phase of his life cheerfully but maintaining resolutely the correct attitude and strict regulation of his physical life. The phase of ill-health must come to an end sooner or later and by the time it does he will have laid the correct foundation for a healthy physical life in the future.

We now come to another factor which we have to consider in dealing with the problem of making the physical body a fitting instrument of the soul and in enabling it to bring down into the physical consciousness to some extent, the life it lives on its own planes. We have seen that purity of the physical body is necessary, but mere purity is not enough. Something else is needed to enable the body, and especially the nervous system, to respond to the higher vibrations and energies and this quality can be best expressed by the word sensitiveness. Purity is related to the nature of the material while sensitiveness has to do more with vibratory capacity. We can best explain the difference by means of an analogy taken from the sphere of music. The musical note we can get from a wire depends firstly, upon the quality of the material, and secondly, upon the tension to which it is subjected. By selecting different kinds of materials, iron, copper, platinum, etc. we can get different kinds of sounds, the different kinds of wires giving different timbres as the technical term goes. But the notes which can be obtained from the wires will also depend upon the tension to which they are subjected and the higher the tension the finer the vibrations which are produced. So mere purity, good quality of material, in the nervous system will not enable us to contact the higher life; the nervous system has to be

sensitized, if we may use this term, to enable it to respond to the subtler vibrations. If mere purity were enough any child born of parents with pure and sensitive bodies and fed on pure food from birth should be able to contact the higher life most easily, but as a matter of fact he cannot. His nervous system has not been subjected to that special process which makes it sensitive and responsive to the subtler vibrations.

This sensitization of the nervous system is brought about by meditation, that intense concentration of the mind, combined with an ardent aspiration of the soul, which polarizes all the energies working in the lower vehicles in the direction of the Higher Self and thus makes the influx of the subtler forces into the physical brain possible. These preliminary practices, involved in ordinary concentration and meditation, gradually lead to that more intensive discipline and control of the mind which is known as Yoga, and ultimately culminate in the merging of the lower with the Higher consciousness.

What actual changes take place in the constitution of the physical body as a result of prolonged meditation has not been given out in detail, nor is it necessary to have this knowledge for the purpose of making the physical body sensitive to the subtler vibrations. But this much is known: that part of the process consists in bringing into activity those organs and centres to which reference has already been made in the previous chapter, and part in changing to some extent the forces flowing in the atoms composing the nervous system. It is not necessary to go into these things in detail firstly, because the problem is very complex and secondly, because it is not necessary to know the *modus operandi* for the purpose of sensitizing the vehicle.

So, we see that making the physical body a sensitive instrument through which the soul can work unimpeded on the physical plane is not an easy matter. It involves very deep-seated changes in the constitution of matter composing the body. That is why such a prolonged and rigorous training is necessary for making a real occultist and why only those who have exceptional patience

and perseverance can successfully accomplish this difficult task. It is true that in the case of some people it seems easy to bring about these changes, but that is only because they have worked in previous lives for these things, and what now appears as easy of unfoldment is really the recapitulation of progress already made in the past. Everyone gets what he deserves and has worked for. Nature has no favourites.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE ASTRAL BODY

In this chapter we shall deal with the functions of the astral body, the next component of our total constitution. As has already been shown in the second chapter this body comes next to the physical as we penetrate inwards from the periphery to the centre of our being. It is composed of matter belonging to the astral plane, matter of all the seven sub-planes of this plane entering into its composition. When we develop clairvoyant faculties by the vivification of the Chakras in the etheric double we are able to come into touch with the astral plane and to examine its phenomena with the help of the senses belonging to the astral body, just as we do in the case of the physical world with our physical senses.

As we are considering the subject from the special point of view of Self-Culture it is not necessary to describe here the appearance and the constitution of the astral body, which can be learnt from any elementary text book on Theosophy. A detailed and exact knowledge of the constitution and working of the astral body is needed only when we develop our clairvoyant powers by the proper methods and are required to use this body on the astral plane as an independent vehicle of consciousness. It is necessary to deal here only with such facts and data as will enable us to understand our desire and emotional nature and thus help us in purifying and controlling the astral body. For, the control of desires is one of the most difficult and necessary tasks which the candidate for enlightenment has to undertake from the very beginning and it is a task which is completed only when he is

standing almost at the threshold of Nirvāna. Our severest trials and sufferings come from our struggles with our desire nature and he who has obtained mastery over his desires has already advanced far along the path to Liberation.

In order to be able to understand the part played by desire in our life, let us first examine some elementary functions of the astral body. Its simplest function, which is not generally recognized, is the conversion of the vibrations which are received from the physical plane through the five senses into sensations. According to modern Science the vibrations which are caught by the sense-organs are carried along the nerves to the corresponding centres in the brain and there that mysterious change occurs which makes them appear as sensations in consciousness. The teachings of Occultism on this point are somewhat different because the Occultist, owing to his larger vision, is able to trace these vibrations very much further than the physical brain. The Occultist agrees with the physiologist as far as the transmission of vibrations from the sense-organs to the corresponding brain centres is concerned, but he asserts, on the basis of the investigations he has made, that these vibrations are first reflected from the dense brain into the etheric brain and from the etheric centres in the brain they are again reflected on to the corresponding astral centres, and it is only when they reach the astral centres that they appear as sensations. All the organs of sensation are situated in the astral body and the conversion of the physical vibrations into sensations is, therefore, one of the primary and important functions of this body. These centres in the astral body which have to bring about the transformation should not be confused with the sense-organs of the astral body through which impressions are received from the astral plane in the exercise of clairvoyant and clairaudient powers. These centres which are connected with the physical sense-organs and convert physical vibrations into sensations form a separate and independent set and came into existence much earlier in the course of evolution along with the sympathetic nervous system.

Then we come to another stage in this series of changes by which the purely physical vibrations reach the indwelling consciousness. Some of these sensations remain as mere sensations and are reflected inward again into the mental body where they appear as ordinary perceptions in the mind. But in the case of others the peculiar quality which is denoted by the words 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant' appears along with the sensation and it is perceived by the mind as a pleasant or unpleasant sensation. Such sensations are called feelings. But even up to this stage, i.e. the appearance of pleasure or pain, the sensation is still a sensation, though it is called by a different name. So we see that the second function of the astral body is to add this quality of 'pleasantness' or 'unpleasantness' to some of the sensations and convert them into feelings which are pleasurable or painful.

Now, at this stage, a fundamental, primary change may occur in consciousness. Along with the feeling of pleasure or pain there may arise a want for experiencing that pleasure again, or for avoiding the pain. This is desire in its simplest, most elementary form. It should be noted that this change which involves attraction or repulsion is connected with both, the astral as well as the mental body. The mental element, even in this primary form of desire, is due to the presence of memory or anticipation without which the desire could not arise. As more and more mental factors enter into this interaction between feelings and thoughts during the course of our evolution, desires become more and more complex and play an increasingly predominant role in our life. It would be a very interesting psychological study to trace the development of all kinds of desires and analyse them into their simpler components, but as this is not relevant to the subject in hand we need not enter into this question here.

The reason why we have gone into this rather subtle question and tried to trace the genesis of desire is that we may be able to understand the nature of desire and may be able to know clearly where we have to apply the brake in these series of changes in our consciousness when we want to control desire.

Let us take a few concrete examples to explain what is meant. Suppose I sit down for my meal. A particular item in my food comes in contact with my palate, affects the taste buds, starts physical vibrations and these vibrations ultimately appear as a particular sensation in the astral body. If the dish is palatable, the sensation caused will naturally be a pleasant one. When I finish the food the sensation disappears but the memory, at the sight of the same dish or through association of ideas, may at some future time arouse the desire to experience that sensation again and I may thus want to taste that particular dish.

Take another example. I go out for a walk and passing through a garden, notice a particular odour which appeals to my sense of smell. I go out of my way and find out the flower from which that odour emanates, and then want to have that tree in my own garden so that I may be able to experience that pleasant sensation of smell again. Such examples may be multiplied but these two will serve to illustrate the point in question and enable us to understand the principle underlying the control of desires.

It will have been seen that in such cases a point is reached where the pleasant or unpleasant sensation emerges in consciousness and that point is reached inevitably by every person who passes through that experience, because we cannot move about with our sense avenues closed. The change in consciousness which has to be guarded against, and prevented if possible, by one who wants to be desireless is the attraction or repulsion, the emergence of the desire to experience the sensation if it is pleasant and to avoid it if it is unpleasant. When we move about in the world and go through all kinds of experiences the vibrations which impinge upon us from all sides must produce their corresponding sensations and some of these sensations will be felt as pleasant or unpleasant. I mentioned 'some' because this quality of pleasure or pain does not characterize all sensations. Most of our visual or auditory sensations are neither pleasant nor unpleasant and, merely, are what may be called neutral perceptions in the mind. The man who does not understand the nature of desire, or is not

determined to control it, gets constantly caught in these attractions and repulsions and these are the bonds which bind him to the lower worlds, to the wheel of birth and death, while the wise man who has become desireless moves through the world, amongst those very attractions, pass through the same experiences, and yet, because he does not allow his mind to establish any connections with the objects of desire, he remains free. It is necessary to realize that no harm is done if we feel pleasure in going through certain experiences; the pleasure is the natural result of contacts between the body and the objects which cause the pleasure. The trouble arises when we allow ourselves to be bound to an object by the bonds of attraction or repulsion.

It follows from what has been said above that the man who is strong enough to remain unaffected by pleasure or pain while he is living in the midst of objects which give pleasure or pain is the true *Vairāgi*, not he who is afraid of being entangled in the meshes of desire and keeps himself aloof. This man will have to come out, sooner or later, in the open field to learn amidst temptation to be above temptation. While this is the proper course for those who have already gained sufficient strength and are used to controlling desire, the beginner may find it easier, in fighting any particular desire, to take himself out of the environment which is full of temptation, until he has gained sufficient strength to resist the temptation. A drunkard who keeps the company of those who are addicted to drink will find it much more difficult to give up his bad habit and would do well to place himself in a pure and sober atmosphere in the beginning. But he has not really conquered his desire until he can move unaffected in the company of drunkards amidst all the attractions of a modern bar.

We shall now deal with the relation of desire and will. It may appear to the reader that these are matters of purely theoretical interest and, therefore, irrelevant to the problem of understanding Self-Culture but this is not so in fact. Knowledge which enables us to know more fully the nature of desire is essential for attempting a practical mastery over our desire nature, and a

person who attempts to bring his desires under control without such knowledge will be as foolish and will have as little chance of success in his undertaking, as a general in an army who enters his enemy's territory without any knowledge of the terrain, the disposition of his enemy's troops and his strong and weak points.

We have seen in the previous paragraphs that the essential nature of desire is this drawing of a person towards objects which give him pleasure and repelling him from those which give pain. This drawing or repelling shows the presence of power and this power has been found to be the same in essence as will-power. There is, therefore, no essential difference between desire and will, desire being in a way only the reflection of will on the astral plane. The difference that we see lies in the fact that in the case of desire the power of the self is drawn out by external objects and is dependent upon attractions and repulsions while in the case of will it goes out independently of any external stimulus, is self-determined.

This essential identity of nature in the case of desire and will is shown by two important facts which anyone can observe for himself. Firstly, by the fact that both carry within them the power of accomplishment. Whatever we desire we can get, though not always immediately. The moment we place any object before us and begin to desire it, it begins to draw towards us, the attraction being proportionate to intensity of the desire. If the desire is sufficiently strong and the circumstances are favourable, we are able to grasp the object immediately. On the other hand, if the circumstances are unfavourable or if the object is of such a nature that it can be gained only by continued efforts, even then, this pull begins the moment we begin to desire it, and it is only a question of time when our desire will be fulfilled. Let us take a few examples to illustrate this point. Suppose I desire to hear some good music. I have only to tune in the radio to satisfy the desire. But suppose I desire to become a rich man. Then I will have to work, to sacrifice my comforts and enjoyments, to carefully husband my resources, and if I have a certain amount

of capacity in this direction I shall be able slowly to amass wealth and realize my ambition in this life. If I die, or am otherwise unable to realize my ambition in this life, and my desire continues, I shall be born in my next life with greater capacities in this direction and better circumstances and then realize my cherished aim. But suppose instead of desiring these transitory objects I desire to gain enlightenment. Obviously, this is not a desire which can be satisfied immediately. I shall have to labour for many lives, shall have to gradually build up a pure and strong character, to subdue my lower nature, to slowly unfold all my divine possibilities life after life, and if I have the necessary intensity of desire and perseverance, I shall one day find myself standing on the mountain top—enlightened and free. So we see in desire the same irresistible power of accomplishment which we associate with the human will.

The second fact which serves to bring out the essential identity of desire and will is the mergence of desire in will as it is purified and freed from the contamination of the personal self. As has been said already, when the energy of the self is drawn out by outer objects it is desire, and when it is impersonal and sent out in the accomplishment of the divine purpose it is pure spiritual will. So that, as this energy is purified from this personal element it must approach its pure unalloyed condition of will. It is the dross of the personal self which degenerates will into desire and when this dross is burnt up the pure gold of will remains.

In order to bring out this relationship, certain desires with which we are all familiar are arranged below in a serial order and the reader will see at once how the gradual purification of desire makes it approximate more and more to our conception of spiritual will, until the two become indistinguishable. Let us take the following desires in the order given below:

- (1) Desire for sensual gratification;
- (2) Desire to help one's family to live comfortably and decently;

- (3) Desire to serve one's country;
- (4) Desire to serve humanity;
- (5) Desire to make one's will one with the Will of the Supreme.

As we go down in this series we see easily that desire is merging in will and in its highest form it is only a question of using different words whether the energy is called desire or will. The reason why it may be permissible to use the word desire in describing the last stage is that a certain emotional element may be present while the consciousness is confined within the personality and the problem is looked at, as it were, from below.

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

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

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

We now come to another group of phenomena of consciousness which, though derived from desire form a class by themselves. These are called emotions and are the result partly of the activity of the astral body and partly that of the mental body. We have seen that desire in its elementary aspect is characterized by the attraction and repulsion for objects and setting in motion of the powers of the mind for grasping or avoiding these objects. One result of this constant and intimate association of desire and thought is the birth of different kinds of emotions. Emotion is thus a complex state of consciousness into the constitution of which enter both desire and thought. This may not appear quite obvious in the case of some emotions but a careful analysis of these emotions will always reveal the presence of the three essential elements—feeling, attraction or repulsion, and thought in different proportions and intensities. Thus when we admire a beautiful sunset the emotion may appear superficially to be without the element of attraction or repulsion but a careful analysis of the state of the mind will show that the element of pleasure and consequent attraction or desire is there. The very fact that we like to see such a sunset shows the element of pleasure and attraction. When we see a horrible sight we instinctively turn away from it. We need not go into this matter in greater detail but may now come to the more important question of the relation of different emotions to one another and their place in our life.

Looked at superficially, the large variety of emotions which we experience at different times and occasions seem to form a

mere jungle and there does not appear to be any definite basis for classifying them. Even modern psychology with its extensive researches and love for classification has not attempted this difficult task of bringing some kind of order in this apparently chaotic sphere of the mind. But this confusion and the absence of a guiding principle in classifying emotions is only apparent. Most emotions are related to one another and this relation has been worked out to a great extent by Dr. Bhagavan Das in his well-known book *The Science of the Emotions*. He has tried to show that most emotions spring from two primary emotions, Love and Hate, based on attraction or repulsion. As these emotions of love and hate are directed towards a superior, an inferior, or an equal, they assume different aspects and the permutations and combinations of these six secondary emotions—three derived from love and three from hate—combined with other mental factors can account for the large majority of the emotions which are known to the psychologist. We need not go into this question in greater detail but may come at once to the bearing of this fundamental idea in our life and how it can be utilized systematically in the building of character.

Since all life manifesting in different forms on all the planes, is one in essence and an expression of the Divine Life, we are bound together by bonds of spiritual unity which we may not be able to see in the lower worlds of illusion and separateness. Whatever is in harmony with this fundamental truth of existence, this law of unity, must bring happiness and whatever is in conflict with it must be shattered and cause unhappiness. That is why love which fulfils this law of the One Life invariably brings happiness and hatred which sets it at naught is the source of endless misery. This law of life is not a hypothetical religious doctrine which we have to take on faith but a law which we can easily verify for ourselves by experimenting for a few months. Let any one desirous of doing so observe carefully and note systematically in a notebook the condition of his mind—as regards happiness or misery—when he is entertaining these different kinds of emotions

based on love and hatred. He will find, to his surprise, that love and happiness go together and so do hatred and misery, and what religious teachers have taught about the necessity of cultivating love is really true and based on actual experience. It may appear strange to the ordinary man that all human beings are bound together by invisible bonds of spiritual unity and yet they fight and try to destroy each other and there is so much conflict in the world. But this is due to the fact that the lower mind covers and obscures this consciousness of unity and makes each centre of consciousness feel itself as an isolated and independent unit. When this obscuration is removed, the spiritual unity is revealed and it is then impossible for that individual to hate or harm anybody.

It follows from what has been said above that if we want to be happy always, then we must completely eliminate from our emotional life all emotions that are based on hatred and cultivate, as fully as possible, those that are rooted in love. But we are governed in the emotional world, as in the physical and mental, by the law of habit. We are apt to be carried away by emotions which we are in the habit of indulging and to find it difficult arousing emotions that we do not frequently express. So, the problem resolves itself into our cultivating the right emotional habits systematically—implanting and nourishing those that are based on love and weeding out those that are derived from hate. The classification of emotions to which reference has already been made in a previous paragraph will guide us in distinguishing between the two kinds of emotions, and building a healthy emotional life.

Now, when we start rebuilding our emotional nature in this manner we shall find that what we are really doing is cultivating virtues and getting rid of vices, for virtues and vices are in most cases nothing but emotional habits based on love and hatred respectively. We shall thus see that leading a virtuous life is not merely a matter of wishing or aspiring but also of forming correct emotional habits and that this work can be taken up in a

systematic manner and carried out with the help of the laws working in this realm.

This relation of emotions to virtues and vices also shows incidentally the place of a virtuous life in the bigger problem of Self-Realization. The cultivation of virtues merely ensures a healthy and correct emotional life and therefore plays a subordinate though essential role in Self-Realization. The leading of a virtuous life is necessary as a foundation for the higher life of the Spirit but it cannot be a substitute for that life. The goal of human endeavour is something much higher than merely living a virtuous life, and that is Self-Realization, *Jñāna*. It is only when an individual has found that Truth of Existence and lives in the light of this Realization that he can have permanent peace and be above the turmoils, illusions and the sufferings of the lower life.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION AND CULTURE OF THE EMOTIONS

AFTER dealing with the functions of the astral body we are now in a position to consider the important question of control, development and purification of this vehicle of consciousness. In dealing with the astral body it is first necessary to acquire a certain degree of control over it because until this is done it is not possible to undertake the more difficult task of its development and purification. As we saw in the case of the physical body we cannot properly control any vehicle of consciousness if we are used to identify ourselves with its activities. As long as we feel that we are our desires, that we are all the sensations which give us pleasure or pain, or the emotions that surge within us, we shall not be able to bring these movements of the astral body under our control. So the first step in acquiring this control is to disengage ourselves in consciousness from these various manifestations which have their origin in the astral body. We should learn to objectify these manifestations, as we say in psychology. We should, as it were, place them on the dissection table, observe them and analyse them until they are felt to be merely phenomena taking place within us, not really part of ourselves. When a desire springs up in our hearts we should realize that it is merely a vibration in our astral bodies which we can change if we will. When we experience any pleasure we should be able to trace the series of changes which ultimately emerge in our consciousness in the form of that pleasure. These changes have already been discussed in the previous chapter and it is not necessary to go into the question again. The point we have to note here is that we have to learn to dissociate ourselves

from our desires, emotions and sensations, and to rise above them, before we can hope to acquire real control over them. The more thoroughly this preliminary preparation is made the more permanent and swift will be our mastery over these activities of the astral body.

The development of this faculty of dissociation requires firstly, constant recollectedness, and secondly, observation and reflection. We are all used to let our desires and emotions have a free play in our lives and it is only rarely, when we become agitated to an extraordinary degree, that we become conscious of their dominance over us and our inability to control them. Recollectedness means that we put our astral bodies with their ever-changing desires and emotions under observation. We constantly watch their workings. Whenever we are, for example, angry or irritated or under the influence of any other emotion, whether good or bad, we should be aware of the movements in this body, however feeble they may be. In the beginning we shall find, again and again, that we allow ourselves to be agitated without even being aware of this fact, but with constant alertness and practice, gradually, a consciousness develops in the background of our mind which seems to be aware of all the movements taking place in our emotional natures which like a silent spectator notes each movement though it may not yet be able to control it.

The effort to be constantly on the alert should be accompanied by observation and reflection. We should always be trying to watch the development and working of all the desires and emotions that appear in our minds, examining them impersonally, tracing them to their respective sources, and judging their value in a critical manner. As this observation and reflection is not so effective when undertaken in the retrospect, as when we are actually under the sway of the emotions, we must learn to watch them in action and to dissociate ourselves from them while we are under their dominance. This need not necessarily mean interference with our work or normal routine of life because only a part of our minds will be occupied with this subsidiary activity as in the case

of a lady who can carry on conversation while knitting at the same time.

When a certain degree of success has been attained in objectifying our emotions and desires we may then begin to exercise a more direct control over them. Observation and reflection should already have developed the capacity for discriminating between different kinds of desires and emotions. What we have to do now is to prevent the expression of those that are not in harmony with our ideals and allow only those that help us on the path that we are treading. The mere effort to watch the movements in the astral body will have the effect of eliminating some of the cruder desires and emotions and toning down others, but this discrimination and control has to be practised intensively and persistently until we become complete master of our emotional life and only those desires and emotions are able to find expression through our astral body which we approve of and definitely allow. This is a long and difficult discipline and the degree of success we attain depends upon our stage of evolution and the intensity of effort and earnestness with which we attack the problem. Those in whom the higher principles of Buddhi and Ātma are unfolded to an adequate degree will find the necessary patience and strength within themselves to complete the job, while others, less evolved, will soon get tired of the tedious task and give it up as an unattainable ideal. But we must remember that the only way by which we can gain control over our emotions is by the long and tedious method of constant effort and practice. There is no magic formula which can give us a mastery over our lower nature overnight. But there is this thought to encourage us, that once this mastery has been attained, the need for putting forth constant effort in this direction practically ceases and our emotions and desires automatically align themselves with the ideals and requirements of spiritual life.

In acquiring control over our astral body we shall be greatly helped if we understand a few points of practical importance. The first point we have to note is that control over our emotional

nature can be acquired only in circumstances from which we generally seek to run away. It is only in conditions of stress and strain that we can acquire that conscious mastery over our lower nature which is a pre-requisite of real spiritual development. It is only when we are living surrounded by the objects which attract that we can develop *Vairāgya*. It is only when we have to deal with people who dislike us, thwart us, or even hate us, that we can develop that sublime patience and equanimity which are the hall-marks of mastery over the lower self. It is easy to be calm and unruffled when we are placed in circumstances where our patience is not tried and tested. It is easy to be virtuous where there are no temptations. But only he who can remain calm and pure under the most trying circumstances should consider himself master of his lower nature.

It should be thus quite obvious that if we really mean business in this difficult task of subjugating our lower nature we should refuse to run away from the trying and even painful circumstances in which we are often placed but should, on the other hand, definitely utilize them for developing the particular qualities which they can bring out in us. We may even go out of our way and place ourselves in trying circumstances sometimes to test and develop the qualities we want, though this will not generally be necessary. The Lords of Karma send us Karma of a nature which is suited to our next stage of development and the stronger we become the more severe are the ordeals to which we are subjected. We are living in a cosmos and the circumstances in which an individual is placed are not only the circumstances which he deserves but also those which are suited for his development at the stage which he is occupying. Our daily lives will, therefore, provide many opportunities which we need for acquiring control over our astral body provided we address ourselves to this task with earnestness.

The question may arise in the minds of some people: 'What is left to live for if we analyse and dissect our emotional and desire natures in this ruthless manner? The zest of life depends

not only in feeling these desires and emotions but also in identifying ourselves with them, in imagining that we feel these desires and emotions.' This is a very pertinent question, and as a matter of fact, all those who try to subdue their desires have to go through the trying experience of finding that their life has become a void and does not appear worth living. Many aspirants cannot face this ordeal, lose courage, and sink back again into the old life with all the zest which comes from identifying oneself with one's desire nature.

But, according to the experience of those who have taken to this kind of discipline, this is only a passing, though frequently painful, phase and one, from which the aspirant after spiritual knowledge should not shrink. As our lower nature gets subdued and the astral body becomes tranquil and free from impurities, the light of Buddhi is able to shine through the mind more and more and to give us that 'peace which passeth understanding'. When Buddhi irradiates the mind in this manner it not only enables us to see the problems of life in the proper perspective and without illusion, but it also gives us a taste of that bliss, *Ānanda*, which is our essential nature. The joys and pleasures of the lower life turn pale in the light of this bliss, just as artificial lights and even the light of the stars and the moon fade away when the sun rises. But in order to gain this permanent peace, this bliss of the higher life, we must be patient, resolute, fearless, and ready to forego the temporary pleasures and joys of the lower life. We should not lose heart when life seems dreary and desolate, because it is only when life seems to have completely ebbed away that we are nearest to the fullness of life. We should, on the other hand, work with greater earnestness and intensity at the purification of the lower nature and the thinning of the veil which hides the light of the higher consciousness.

In dealing with the general principles of control pertaining to the astral body it is also necessary to point out the dangers of repression. Recent researches in psycho-analysis have shown the harmful effects of repressing emotions and desires and those who

intend to bring these under control would do well to make themselves broadly familiar with the main results obtained in these researches. It is not necessary to go into this question in detail but the basic idea underlying the dangers of repressing emotions and desires may be briefly indicated.

According to the results obtained by the investigators in this field any desire or emotion which is repressed forcibly passes into the sub-conscious regions of the mind and from there gives rise to and maintains certain pathological symptoms which outwardly seem to have no relation with the repressed emotion. Such symptoms or groups of symptoms are known technically as 'complexes'. These complexes form an important factor in the emotional, mental or even physical life of a person, and unknown to him, they powerfully influence his behaviour. Psycho-analysts have devised a technique for resolving these complexes, and by removing the unnatural strain in the psyche, restore it to a normal and healthy condition.

We may or may not agree with the theories of psycho-analysis but the point we have to note is that our emotions and desires represent psychic energy, and energy according to the law of conservation of energy cannot be annihilated but can only be changed from one form into another. We cannot destroy the energy after we have generated it but we can determine the form it will take. In repressing a desire or emotion we keep the source of the supply of energy intact and only divert the current of energy into the sub-conscious mind where it may take all kinds of undesirable forms which are ultimately thrown up to the surface. If we have a water pipe without a tap and we want to stop the flow of water, no useful purpose will be served by thrusting the end of the pipe underground. The water will continue to flow and sooner or later come up to the surface in a chaotic manner with mud and filth. We should either plug the pipe and thus stop the flow of water or utilize it in some suitable manner, divert it into the garden, for example, and let it promote the growth of plants.

In a similar manner if we do not want a desire we should either stop generating the energy or change it into some other form which is desirable or utilizable for our progress. We do the former when we so thoroughly understand the desire that we simply rise above it. We become so intensely aware of its real nature that it ceases to affect us. The desire simply dies in such a case because the motive power which can keep it alive is cut off. We may, on the other hand, change the form of the energy, sublimate it, as we usually say. The new form of the energy should be such that it helps us in our progress towards our ideal instead of hindering. The problem of sublimation of our desires and emotions is a very interesting and important one, but we are not concerned here with its practical aspects.

We now come to the question of purification and development of the astral body. In order to understand this problem clearly we should have some idea of the way in which this body is built up and maintained. It is not built up and maintained, as in the case of the physical body, by taking food and assimilating it, and therefore the problem of its purification and development is more complex and difficult.

We have seen that our desires, feelings and emotions are the results which appear in our consciousness as the astral body vibrates either in response to external impacts or to activities initiated from within. Taking emotions as representative of all those different kinds of activities in the astral body, we may say that corresponding to each kind of emotion, there is a particular rate of vibration and a particular density of the material which composes the astral body, and in the astral plane a particular colour is also seen with a particular rate of vibration. For example, if anyone is feeling strongly the emotion of love at any moment, then, out of the innumerable combinations of astral matter which compose this body a few distinct types of combinations are thrown into vibration, the rate or wavelength of the vibration corresponding mathematically to the density of the material which is thus affected. At the same time a particular colour appears in the astral body,

this colour again being mathematically related to the rate of vibration of the emotion.

We have an analogy of this phenomenon on the physical plane in the well known colours which we see in a display of fireworks. When a metal like barium is made a constituent of gunpowder, on ignition of the gunpowder the barium is strongly heated and its particles begin to vibrate at certain rates and these particular light vibrations give us the green light observed in fireworks. When we substitute strontium for barium in gunpowder the strontium atoms on vibration produce a scarlet colour, and so on. Hence, corresponding to each kind of material we have a specific rate of vibration and a specific colour of the spectrum, both on the physical and astral planes.

Occult investigation has also shown that when the astral body begins to vibrate at a particular rate, owing to the presence of some specific emotion, the violent agitation produced has the effect of throwing out some material which is not in consonance with the vibration, and taking up from the surrounding astral atmosphere certain amount of matter which can vibrate at the same rate. The result of this is that each vibration produced in the astral body by an emotion increases the proportion of those components which vibrate at that particular rate and correspondingly, decreases others which cannot vibrate harmoniously; so that the tendency for a particular kind of emotion increases as that emotion is allowed to find expression repeatedly through the astral body. On the other hand, the less a particular kind of emotion finds expression through this body, the feebler is its response to that vibration in an impact from without or within.

It follows from what has been said above that an astral body changes its constitution and vibratory powers, as a whole, with every desire or emotion which finds expression through it. There is not the slightest quiver of emotion or desire which does not, to some extent, change its tendency to vibrate in a similar manner in the future. If we, therefore, constantly give expression to higher emotions and noble desires the astral body becomes

progressively refined and able to reproduce the finer vibrations, while desires and emotions of a low type coarsen it more and more, and make the expression of the higher emotions increasingly difficult.

The proper understanding of these laws and their application to our life form the basis of the methods which are adopted in the purification and culture of our emotions. Let us first take the specific question of purification. While dealing with the purification of the physical body it was pointed out that purity of any body essentially means the presence in the body of those constituents which harmonize with and help the expression of the Higher Self, and the absence of those constituents which are in disharmony with, and therefore prevent or hamper His expression. Now, the subtler energies which have their origin in the spiritual part of our nature can find an expression on the astral plane only if there is a preponderance in the astral body of those constituents which can respond to the subtler vibrations. The more refined the astral body the more easily it can vibrate in response to the impacts from the higher consciousness and the less responsive it is to the coarse vibrations which are associated with ordinary worldly life.

This refinement or purification of the astral body takes place, as we have seen already, by exercising a strict control over our emotions and desires and allowing only such emotions and desires to find expression through it as are in harmony with our spiritual ideals. The more we develop love, reverence, sympathy, devotion, compassion, desire to serve our fellow men and the great Masters of Wisdom, the finer and purer will our astral body become. Then, the slightest impulse coming from our Higher Self will throw the whole astral body into harmonious and delicate vibrations of a beautiful nature while the heavy and violent impulses from the lower planes will leave it utterly unaffected. The mere thought of the *Ishta-Devatā* or the object of devotion causes in the heart of the devotee an up-welling of the deepest and most exquisite love. If sympathy has been developed to a high degree

in a person, the mere sight of suffering brings out immediately a response of deep compassion and the desire to help in relieving the suffering. When this stage is reached then has the astral body really become a fitting and efficient instrument of the soul—an instrument, vibrant, sensitive and refined, and able to reflect the higher consciousness in the lower.

With regard to the development of the higher emotions it is necessary to remember that the initiation of a vibration in the astral body requires some kind of stimulus. Our emotional nature appears to be something like a harp and it is only when we are able to touch a particular chord that the corresponding note sounds forth. The secret of the capacity to arouse any particular emotion that we want lies in developing the ability to touch the right chords of our emotional nature. The lower kinds of emotions are easily aroused by the stimuli which come from the outer world, especially, because the astral body is used to respond to such stimuli, but to arouse the higher kinds of emotions, the student will have to go into the inner regions of his being for getting the necessary stimuli. Thinking of an exalted nature will sometimes provide such stimuli; at other times sincere prayer will help to release energies of the soul which find expression in beautiful emotions on the astral plane. Anyway, this is a difficult task, and it is only by patience and persistence that we can build up a beautiful and refined emotional nature. In this difficult task the student of Self-Culture will be greatly helped if he practises meditation regularly. This opens up and gradually widens the channel between the astral body and the Buddhic vehicle and makes possible the descent of those energies which by their play upon the astral body arouse those exalted and noble emotions that are always associated with spiritual development.

We have to remember that the finer emotions are the expressions on the lower planes of the higher consciousness and represent merely a stage in our evolution. They become unnecessary and less and less prominent as their higher counterparts in the spiritual values become unfolded. Thus, for example, when *parā-bhakti* or

higher devotion has become sufficiently developed the *Bhakta* becomes quiet, serene and Self-sufficient, and does not then show the violent, contradictory and constantly changing emotions of passionate love, apathy, happiness, misery, etc. which characterize the lower stages of devotion. Saints, sages and Adepts do not generally show outwardly the emotions of compassion, love, etc. This does not mean that they have become indifferent or callous. They are directly aware of the oneness of life, their unity with that Life and their response to that Life or its expression on the lower planes is therefore on a much higher plane, much above the astral plane.

From the above it should be clear that the development of the finer emotions is not so much a question of building up or creating something as of letting the inner splendour break through our minds. It is really a matter of purifying the mind, unfolding our spiritual nature and opening up the passage between the lower and higher parts of our nature. When, for example, the devotion for one's *Ishta-devatā* has developed to a high degree and the astral body is flooded with love descending from the Buddhic plane all the impurities in our lower nature are washed out, as it were, and the baser kind of emotions are rapidly eliminated. One such upsurge of intense love does more to purify the mind and open up the channel between the Buddhic and astral planes than months of ordinary meditation and mental discipline.

The secret of Self-Culture for the unfoldment of our spiritual nature lies in purifying the mind, in removing the mental course which obscures our divine nature, in making the lower self subordinate to the higher and ultimately liquidating the lower ego.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE LOWER MENTAL BODY

WE shall consider in this chapter the functions of the lower mental body, the vehicle of concrete thoughts. As in the case of the astral body the subject will be dealt with from the special point of view of a Self-Culturist and we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of facts and methods which enable him to understand and use this body efficiently in his work.

The human mind is not only the most wonderful thing in creation but also the greatest problem of the man who is trying to tread the path which leads to perfection and Enlightenment. It is the separative principle in man which makes him see the many in the One. It is the centre of egoism which makes us feel that we are an individual with interests in conflict with those of others. It is the creator of illusion which produces in our consciousness a distorted view of Reality. He who wants to know the Reality underlying this phenomenal universe has first to control and then to transcend the mind.

In considering the functions of the lower mental body we have to note that modern psychology uses the word 'mind' in a very general way owing to its ignorance of its real constitution, nature and functions. It lumps together phenomena having their sources in quite distinct parts of our inner being and places them under one general and rather vague term 'mind'. Our emotions, concrete thoughts, abstract thoughts and intuitions are all mixed up in a rather confused manner and the relationship between them is very imperfectly understood even by those who have made a special study of the subject.

The chief cause of the chaos prevailing in this field of psychology is the use of wrong methods in investigating the phenomena of the mind owing to the materialistic outlook of the present scientific age. Psychology studies mind as it works through its physical instrument, the brain, and has no means at its disposal of going behind the brain, as it were, and seeing or examining those forces and agencies which cause these varied manifestations of consciousness appearing in and through the brain. Up to very recent times the brain was even considered the originator, the source of all mental phenomena, which view found expression in the famous dictum of Lombroso 'The brain produces thought as the liver secretes bile.' But further investigation of psychical phenomena showed that this position was untenable and modern psychology had reluctantly to accept the view that mind is something independent of the physical brain, though it depends upon it for its manifestation on the physical plane.

One of the greatest contributions made by Occultism in the field of psychology has been to clarify all mental phenomena, trace them to their respective sources, classify them according to their nature and different sources and thus to enable us to understand the human mind as it never has been understood before. It has been possible to bring about this order and clarity in this field as a result of the investigations made by Occultists in the superphysical realms of Nature. By developing their superphysical senses these investigators have been able to examine the superphysical constitution of man, to separate from one another the different components of this constitution and to trace to their respective origins on the superphysical planes the different kinds of phenomena which take place through the physical brain.

The first important and general fact which has been discovered is that our feelings, concrete thoughts and abstract thoughts are derived from three distinct sources. They are, in fact, the results of consciousness working through three different subtler vehicles, the brain and the nervous system merely bringing down

into the physical consciousness these various principles working on the higher planes.

We have already dealt with one set of these phenomena which work through the astral body and produce our sensations, feelings, desires and emotions. We shall now deal with the organ of thoughts, the instrument which the soul uses for its expression on the mental plane, the third plane of the Solar System.

The first point which has to be noted in this connection is that unlike the astral body, which is one indivisible whole and contains the matter belonging to all the seven sub-planes of the astral plane, the mental body, the organ of thought working on the mental plane, is composed of two separate vehicles of consciousness. The lower mental body composed of matter belonging to the lower four sub-planes serves as the organ of concrete thoughts and the higher mental body, or the Causal body as it is called, composed of matter belonging to the remaining three higher sub-planes serves as the organ of abstract thought. These two bodies are quite separate from each other, have distinct functions and are part of two different components of our total constitution. The lower mental body forms part of the transient personality which is formed anew with every incarnation, while the Causal body is the lowest vehicle of the individuality, the *Jivātmā* who endures from life to life and expresses himself partially in the successive personalities. It will be seen therefore that our minds or intellect is the meeting ground of the lower and Higher selves, of the temporary personality with all its limitations and illusions and the permanent Ego who expresses himself through *Ātma-Buddhi-Manas* and is our spiritual soul. As the two bodies working on the mental plane have quite distinct functions, we shall in this chapter confine ourselves to the functions of the lower mental body, the organ of concrete thought, and deal with the functions of the higher mental body in a subsequent chapter.

Before dealing with the functions of the lower mental body it would be perhaps desirable to clear the ground by dwelling for a while on the close relationship subsisting between this body

and the astral body. Although these two vehicles of consciousness are quite distinct and belong to two different planes, they are very closely related to each other and work much in combination in actual life. In fact, so close is this relationship and often so indistinguishable are their modes of working, that they are frequently treated, for all practical purposes, as one vehicle. Thus in the early Theosophical literature *Kāma-Manas* was treated as one principle and in Vedāntic terminology *Manomaya-kosha* stands for both these vehicles.

This close relationship between *Kāma* and *Manas* has its origin in the joint evolution of the two bodies and will be best understood by considering how desire and thought act and react on each other from the very beginning of their development. We saw in tracing the genesis of desire how the element of memory and anticipation of pleasures and pains experienced in relation to outer objects gives rise to attractions and repulsions towards those objects and also further to desires of various kinds. This action and reaction between pleasurable and painful sensations belonging to the astral body, and memory and anticipation belonging to the lower mental body, is the beginning of that union and intimate relationship between desire and thought which has survived to the present stage of evolution. Later on, as desire develops, it uses the lower mind constantly, for gaining its ends, to devise means for its satisfaction, and for a long time the lower mind is nothing but a servant, nay a slave of desire and develops gradually by ministering to its needs. But, as the mind develops and gains strength, it begins to exercise an ever increasing control over desire and ultimately becomes its master. In this work of subduing desire, added strength comes to it from the inner spiritual sources as these become accessible in an increasing measure in the later stages of evolution.

This joint working of the astral and lower mental bodies is also shown in our emotional life. It has been shown already that emotions are derived from the interaction of desire and thought and so every time we feel an emotion we make the two bodies

vibrate simultaneously. How closely associated in their working the two bodies are, will become quite apparent when we realize the important role emotions play in the life of the average individual.

After these preliminary considerations let us now come to the functions of the lower mental body. In considering the functions of the astral body we saw that its first function is to convert the vibrations which are received by the sense-organs of the physical body into sensations. The vibrations impinging upon the sense-organs are carried by the nerves to the corresponding centres in the physical brain, reflected from there into the astral body and converted by the centres in the astral body into sensations. This process of reflection does not stop there, but by another reflection they reach the lower mind and are converted there into perceptions. Just as light waves passing through the lens of a camera produce an image of the surrounding landscape on the ground glass screen, so do these various vibrations coming through the various sense avenues, produce different kinds of images on the screen of the mind. These images are produced in a medium called *Chidākāsha* in Samskrit which is derived from *Chitta,* the image making aspect of the lower mind. It may appear rather strange to extend the use of the word 'image' for these impressions produced on the mind by the vibrations coming through the five sense organs, but this extension of the meaning of the word is now recognized in psychology. Thus, when we hear a note sounded on a musical instrument we call the impression produced on the mind an auditory image, just as the impression produced by the form of an object is called a visual image. So we see that the first primary function of the lower mental body is to convert the astral sensations into mental perceptions of colour, form, sound, taste, smell and touch.

Its second important function is to combine these mental perceptions or images, derived from different sense-organs, into a composite image. Let us take a concrete example to explain what is meant by this. Suppose I have an orange before me.

The impression received through the eye gives me an idea of the form and colour of the orange. The impression received through the nose gives an idea of the odour. If I handle the orange I find out how it feels to the touch. If I bring it in contact with my tongue I get an idea of what it tastes like. Now, a complete idea of the orange is composed of all these four elements and it is the function of the lower mental body to combine these four elements into one composite image and to give us a complete picture of the object.

The mind not only combines these five elements into one composite image but also supplies from its storehouse of memory the elements that may not be present. When we see an orange from a distance the only image which actually reaches the mind is the visual one, giving its form and colour, but we see mentally much more in the visual image of the orange than what is justified from the partial report of the senses: What happens is that the mind has gathered various kinds of impressions from an examination of oranges on previous occasions, has kept these impressions in the store house of memory, supplied some of the missing elements from this stock, and thus gives us a fuller idea of the orange than we would otherwise get. This outer world which we perceive through the senses would appear a very poor and uninteresting world if the mind did not do this work of storing and supplying the missing elements and we saw with our mental eye only what the senses brought before it.

Closely connected with the function of combining images coming through the *Jñānendriyas* or sense-organs is the reverse function of breaking up into its components any mental impulse that can find expression through a number of motor organs or *Karmendriyas*. The lower mental body is the co-ordinating factor in all the movements that we make in our ordinary life to meet every situation in the outer world. Thus, when we see an object coming towards us which threatens to injure the physical body, our legs, hands and all muscles instantaneously and automatically adopt the position best suited to escape injury, but all these

complicated and efficient movements are made possible as a result of the co-ordination and control exercised by the lower mental body, though this is generally too swift to be noticed.

As experiences multiply in the life of an individual the number of these images of objects present in his storehouse of memory goes on increasing and gradually the mind begins to work upon these images in different ways, arranging and rearranging them, classifying and comparing them, and so are gradually evolved, one after another, our various mental faculties of reasoning, judgement and so on. We learn gradually to think.

It is necessary to understand clearly that thinking is nothing but establishing relations between the images present in our mind and, therefore, the quality of our thinking will, to a great extent depend upon the nature and number of these images. A mind, full of clear and correct images in relation to any subject, is in a far better position to think well with regard to that subject, than one which is poorly supplied with such images. Frequently, thinking appears to be done without these images, but we shall find if we go deep into the matter that we are, in such cases, merely using tokens for these images or groups of images and the basis of our thinking process is really the images we have acquired by observation, reading or some other means. When we go into a bank we see very little cash. Most of the transactions are done, through cheques and drafts but we know that these are merely tokens for cash which is the real basis of all the transactions.

But although these images are essential the mere presence of a large number of clear-cut images in the mind is not enough for good thinking. There must be the artist who arranges these images in such a way that beautiful thought patterns are produced. If you put a box full of all kinds of precious gems in the hands of an ordinary man he can do nothing with them, but give it to a good jeweller and he will produce from them jewellery of different designs of exquisite beauty. So, merely increasing our knowledge by reading and observation and thus multiplying our mental images is not enough. We must think hard and persistently until

we learn to produce from the material we have gathered thoughts of beautiful patterns or thoughts which can be put to some kind of use in our life.

In dealing with the functions of the lower mind it is necessary to make at least a brief reference to the illusion which is inherent in knowing a thing through its refractive medium. The mere fact that while we are in the region of the lower mind we are confined to names and forms—to our mental images—means that we can never know things as they really are. An image is a relative thing, it can never give us the whole of the thing but only a cross section, as it were, of the real thing, although we may falsely imagine that we know the thing as it is when we contact it with our minds. Even in the case of sensuous perception we can get thousands of different impressions of a simple object by looking at it from different sides and distances. None of these represents the objects as whole. In the case of non-sensuous perceptions the difficulties of getting a true idea of the object are much greater. This should put us on our guard against taking our views and ideas, which are based on the working of the intellect, for the realities of life of which they are partial, if not distorted, representations. This should also show us the futility of trying to understand or know things as they are through the instrumentality of the intellect. We cannot know them in the real sense of the term unless we transcend the intellect and see them in the light of the Reality in which they exist, in the same way as an entity who is living in the coloured lights of the spectrum cannot know what white light is until he goes across the prism and sees the light which produces the spectrum.

There are two other points which may be brought to the notice of the student in dealing with the functions of the lower mind. One is that the sensuous image of the object which we perceive through our sense-organs exists only in our mind and does not truly represent the object by which it is formed. Ordinary physical objects which we perceive outside us are mere conglomerations of vibrating atoms, molecules and the shape, size

colour, etc. we see in them do not exist in them but only in our mind. The object is merely an unknown instrumental cause for exciting the mental image which is formed in our mind. We thus live really in a world of mental images which are formed in our mind and project this world outside us by a process which is called *Vikshepa* in Samskrit. This process of projecting our mental world outside us which should be quite obvious to any one who takes the trouble to think about the nature of sense perception, should convince us about two things. One is that the world we live in is really inside us, in our mind, and the other is that we are really living among illusions of the grossest kind without even being aware of this fact.

The last point we may note with regard to the functions of the lower mental body is that this mental body and concrete mind are two different things. The mental body is a vehicle made of subtle matter and is merely a non-sentient instrument rooted in Prakriti. Mind or lower Manas is a modification of consciousness working under the limitations of the lower planes and using the lower mental body for its expression. It is sentient, of the stuff of consciousness, rooted in the Purusha. This tendency to confuse the mental body with *Manas* is very common and the failure to discriminate between them is the cause of confusion which sometimes exists in the minds of some students in relation to the phenomena of the superphysical planes.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONTROL, PURIFICATION AND CULTURE OF THE LOWER MIND

As in the case of the astral body we shall first deal with the problem of controlling the lower mental body, because both its purification and culture require a certain degree of control over its activities. As will be seen presently there is a great similarity in the methods which are used in the treatment of the astral body and the lower mental body, chiefly on account of the similarity in their constitution and their close relationship. Therefore, much that has been said with regard to the treatment of the astral body will be found applicable to the lower mental body also.

In controlling the lower mind the first step to be taken is to objectify it and thus separate it from our consciousness. The large majority of cultured people have really outgrown the stage of complete identification with their physical body which we find in the case of savages and semi-civilized people. Some of them can also partially separate themselves from their desires and emotions and are vaguely conscious of the fact that they are not the surging emotions and desires which constantly sway them. But there are really very few people who can separate themselves from their minds. The mind seems to be part and parcel of their very being and when an effort is made to separate it from one's consciousness, nothing seems to be left over, so close is this identification of consciousness with its vehicle. And yet, for one who wants to control the mind this objectification is absolutely necessary. The effort to control the mind and to make it pure and strong by subjecting it to a systematic discipline will gradually make the student increasingly conscious of this dualism between

the controller and the controlled, but in the beginning it is necessary to concentrate for some time upon observing the movements of the mind in order to acquire to some extent this capacity of objectifying it. Only then will he become familiar with its tendencies and characteristics and learn to separate himself from them.

When some ability has been gained in this direction the student should begin to exercise general control over the activities of the lower mental body. The first step is to form the habit of doing everything that has to be done throughout the day with one-pointedness. Most people who start practising concentration and meditation do not know that the results obtained by them during the short period of their mental exercises depend to a very great extent on how they control and use the mind during the rest of the day. A person who allows his mind to wander while doing his ordinary daily work can never be successful in concentrating it during the period of his meditation, because the wandering of the mind throughout the day sets up a tendency to wander and this tendency cannot be overcome all at once during the short time given to exercises in concentration and meditation. So we should form the habit of taking up each piece of work as it comes and concentrate our minds fully in doing it, instead of giving it only part of our attention. Whether the work is important or unimportant does not matter as far as this tendency to wander is concerned. So, even though we may be writing a letter, or reading a book, or conversing with somebody, the mind should be made one-pointed. The whole of our mind should be behind every such action that we may have to do in the normal course of our life. This practice will not only improve enormously the quality of our work but also lay the foundation of that mastery over our mind which is one of the main objects which every practical student of Self-Culture must place before himself.

Most people who are used to letting their minds wander imagine that life will become extremely tedious and strenuous if they have to give their concentrated attention to everything they

do. This is a misconception. Though this practice does require a certain amount of alertness and produces a feeling of strain in the beginning, the habit of concentration is gradually formed and the mind then automatically becomes one-pointed in doing everything without feeling any strain. The mind is a creature of habits and it is easy to be concentrated once the habit is definitely established.

Side by side with this another practice should be taken up. This consists in exercising a constant selection with regard to the thoughts which seek admission into the mind. When we are not engaged in any particular mental activity all kinds of thoughts which are floating about in the mental atmosphere come and impinge upon our mental body and tend to produce in it responsive vibrations. Clairvoyant research has shown definitely that thoughts are not the vague things of which we become conscious on the physical plane but that they are definite things on the mental plane with characteristic forms and vibratory power. When any of these thought-forms strikes our mental body or when the vibrations emanating from the thought-forms impinge upon the mental body they tend to produce sympathetic vibrations and we become aware of the corresponding thought. Of course, all our thoughts which appear like this in our minds are not of external origin; some of them are due to the self-initiated activity of the mental body itself, but in most cases it is difficult to distinguish between the two classes of thoughts.

Whether the thoughts come from outside or are self-initiated, the mental body must be trained to exercise constant discrimination with regard to them and be not allowed to dwell on any thought which is of an undesirable nature. Thoughts of sensuality, hatred, revenge, jealousy, pride are all crowding round us and the few good thoughts generated by pure and noble souls are practically lost in the great mass of thoughts of the lower kind. So if we wish to preserve our mental health it is absolutely necessary to learn to be positive to all kinds of evil thoughts.

The best way of dealing with an evil thought which tries to enter our mind is to turn our mind instantly to some other

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

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

We should remember that no evil from outside can affect us if there is not something in us already which can respond to that evil. A person who is entirely free from any craving for alcohol can move about in the company of drunkards without being affected in the least, while this will be extremely risky for a person who, though not addicted to drink, has still in him the craving for drink in a latent form. We cannot always choose our environment or our companions or exercise any kind of control over them. So the only way left open to us to safeguard our mental health is to make ourselves pure and positive towards evil. Then we can move safely in any environment and by our higher rate of vibration even gradually lift up those with whom we come in contact.

This practice of constant alertness and positive attitude towards thoughts coming from outside not only promotes our mental health and brings about gradually the purification of the mind but also develops that stability of the mind which is so necessary for practising meditation successfully. In the case of those who take up these practices, one of the most difficult problems in the early stages is to keep out somehow the intruding thoughts during the period of meditation. The proper way of dealing with these thoughts is to adopt a positive attitude towards them and ignore them completely. The practice of constant alertness throughout the day will greatly help in maintaining this positive attitude and acquiring that resistance to impacts from outside which is a necessary condition for success in meditation.

The general discipline of the mind which has been outlined in the previous paragraphs will, if adopted in right earnest, be found helpful by anyone who is living even the ordinary worldly life without having any aspirations for the higher life of spiritual unfoldment. He will find he has become more efficient, more balanced and in a better position to meet the trials and difficulties incidental to life. But this general discipline is only a preliminary preparation for the more intensive mental training required in the case of those who aspire to live the higher life of the Spirit and to tread the path which leads to perfection. Let us now deal with the more advanced steps of this mental discipline which has to be gone through by every aspirant who wishes to unify the lower with the higher consciousness.

This higher discipline may be considered in its two aspects—the first aspect having to do with the more rigorous training of the mind in concentration, so that it becomes an efficient instrument for meditation and other spiritual exercises; and the second aspect by making it free from all those impurities, aberrations and distortions which stand in the way of its becoming a fitting instrument of the higher consciousness. We shall deal with these two aspects separately, taking up first the subject of concentration and meditation.

We have seen already that the first step in learning to concentrate is to make the mind one-pointed in everything we have to do as part of our daily life. We thus learn to pay attention and check the tendency of the mind to wander. The degree of concentration attained in doing these various kinds of jobs may vary between very wide limits, and the aspirant has to aim at progressively increasing the depth of concentration, his ultimate aim being to make the mind so concentrated while considering any subject or problem that he becomes oblivious of his surroundings and of himself. Most successful men of the world who have risen high in their respective spheres of work possess this power of concentration in some degree; the greater the power of concentration the higher the quality of work they are able to produce.

In acquiring this power of concentration the aspirant will derive great help if he goes through certain set exercises for some time every day. In these exercises he does more intensively and deliberately what he is already learning to do in connection with his ordinary daily work. There is nothing spiritual, as some people imagine, about these exercises of mental gymnastics. They are meant to teach, as quickly as possible, the art of concentrating the mind on any subject which has to be mastered and thus turning it into an efficient and obedient instrument. Our mastery of the mind should be so thorough that we are able to set it on any task for any length of time, and it is able to remain fixed on that task, either till the task is completed, or till we deliberately take it off. This capacity for voluntary attention as opposed to involuntary attention which is due to our interest in any subject, is the only test by which we can measure our mastery over our instrument.

When this kind of mastery has been acquired to a considerable extent we are only then in a position to take up the regular practice of meditation. Many people mistake idle reverie or consecutive thinking for meditation. They sit down to meditate and then allow the mind to ramble or to pursue an accustomed train of thought for the set period, and get up feeling quite

satisfied with themselves for having spent so much time in meditation. No wonder they meditate year after year with practically no result and very little real progress. For successful meditation a certain degree of abstraction is absolutely necessary and no one who has not mastered the initial steps, which have been discussed already, can really meditate with profit. For meditating on any subject we have to get out of it, as it were, its very essence, to penetrate into its innermost meaning and significance, and it is possible to do this only when we have acquired, in some degree at least, the power of abstraction—the capacity to leave the superficial regions of the mind, as it were, and dive into its depths.

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

This assumption of the modern psychologist is to some extent responsible for his ignorance of the technique by which the mind can be transcended. For, to transcend the mind, i.e. for consciousness to work on planes beyond those of the mind, it is necessary to acquire the capacity of fixing the mind on one particular idea, not allowing it to move within a small sphere, but, actually concentrating it on one idea and going deeper and deeper into it, a feat which is considered impossible by the psychologist. When a person has acquired the capacity to do this for a considerable time, when he can keep his mind fixed on a single idea without wavering, without being affected in the least by outside impacts, then he is ready for the next important step—to drop

that idea from the mind and keep the mind still concentrated and alert, without any idea in the focus of consciousness. When he is able to do this successfully, consciousness escapes from the mental body and passes into planes beyond those of the lower mind. Then only does he gain direct knowledge of his real nature, knows that he is immortal and shares the divine life. He is now able to transcend, to some extent, the illusions of the lower life and to understand life as it really is. It is true that before him lie still greater vistas of achievement and enlightenment but he has gained a glimpse into the realities of life, and can never be the same man again. When he descends again into the lower planes, all those limitations which are inherent in these planes hedge round him once again. But he has now seen the Vision, and although he now sees all things as he saw them before, he sees them in a new light—the light of the Reality which he has glimpsed.

This is the culmination of the mental discipline and training which the aspirant for direct knowledge of the realities of life has to go through. Its higher stages, as will be seen, form part of that particular technique of spiritual life which is called Yoga in Eastern terminology. The student of Yogic literature will easily recognize in the practices for keeping the mind fixed on a single idea and then dropping the idea, different stages of *Samādhi*.

We shall now consider the second aspect of mental discipline which has to do with the purification of the mind and the elimination of all those distortions which cause hindrance in the fulfilment of its proper functions in our life.

We have already seen that the habit of constant vigilance and the effort to keep out all evil impure thoughts leads gradually to the purification of the mind. This process is very much accelerated and the purification carried to a much higher stage by the practice of meditation. In meditation we make the mental body vibrate regularly at very high rates by thinking intensively of spiritual subjects. We also bring about the influx of very powerful spiritual forces from the higher planes into the mental

body. This dual process shakes out of the mental body all the coarser combinations of mental matter which cannot vibrate at these high rates, their place being taken by the finest kind of matter which instantly responds to spiritual thoughts and impulses. That is why meditation is one of the most powerful means of quickly and effectively purifying the mental body and rendering it delicately responsive to the subtler energies which flow into it from the inner planes.

We shall now deal with the other kind of hindrance which prevents us from using the mental body effectively as an instrument of the divine life within us. This is the distortion produced in the mind by complexes and biases of various kinds. Clairvoyant examination of the aura of the mental body has shown that when a person develops a prejudice on any subject a peculiar transformation takes place in his mental body in the area which corresponds to that type of thought. As students of Occultism know well, different types of thought have different areas of the mental body allocated to them just as different portions of the brain are assigned to different senses and types of mental activities. When a person suffers from a deep-seated prejudice on any matter, the particular part of the mental body corresponding to that subject is affected. The mental matter in that part ceases to circulate freely and an unhealthy condition sets in with the result that the mind loses the capacity to think clearly and correctly in connection with that matter. If the number of such prejudices is large and the mental body is upset to a considerable extent, then this limits considerably its capacity for healthy activity. In the case of a student of Divine Wisdom all these complexes must be resolved and the mind rendered open and free, before it can really serve as an instrument of the Higher Self. Even in matters relating to our ordinary life, we know what a cramping effect prejudices of various kinds exert on our mental activity and how they narrow our outlook. The presence of such distortions is even more disastrous for the aspirant after spiritual knowledge because he has to bring into his mental body knowledge from the

higher planes. He must systematically comb out all such knots from his mental body if he wants to have a healthy and reliable instrument for his mental work.

These serious distortions produced in the mind by deep-seated prejudices are merely highly intensified forms of the general tendency to suffer from all kinds of biases in our mental life, and it would be worthwhile dwelling for a while on this question of mental bias, the tendency to see everything in life through coloured glasses. This should not be considered as a mere digression from our main line of thought but an integral and essential part of Self-Culture. To see things as they are, as far as this is possible within the limitations of the lower planes, is one of the preliminary requirements for acquiring the spiritual outlook and nothing prevents this more effectively than the presence of deep-seated prejudices and complexes in our mind. The lack of sufficient data or facts in judging things and situations can be made up, to some extent, by the illumination coming from Buddhi or intuition, but as Buddhi is unable to work through the distorted medium of a mind which is full of all kinds of complexes it is very difficult, if not impossible, for such a mind to see things truly and in their proper perspective.

Let us see how bias is produced and how a certain amount of distortion in our view of things is inevitable until we can rise above the mind and see life without its refractive influence. We have seen already that each mental body has its characteristic set of vibratory capacities, the result of its past evolution, its composition and the different ways in which it has been used to vibrate in thinking about different problems. Some of these vibratory capacities are in an active state while others are present in a latent form as Samskāras or tendencies. The presence of these tendencies in the mental body results in the modification, to a greater or lesser extent, of any thought or view-point which is presented before the mind. The mental impression produced in consciousness is not what should be produced by the incoming thought in its pure state but the resultant of this and the mental

tendencies already present in the mental body. It is, therefore, quite obvious that unless we can hold in abeyance, or can eliminate the tendencies which are already present in the mind before receiving the thought from outside, we shall never see the thing or the subject represented by that thought as it really is, but always as modified by our own thoughts. It is this keeping in abeyance of, or neutralizing the active or latent tendencies of the mind, which is involved in maintaining what we call, in ordinary parlance, an open mind, and this is a capacity which is acquired with very great difficulty and after a very severe and prolonged mental discipline. Most people pass through life putting on all kinds of coloured glasses and seeing everything through these, not being even conscious of the fact that there is anything wrong with their views of things and people around them. When these biases become specific, localized as it were, we get prejudices of the most absurd kind which shut in our mental view within narrow limits, put blinkers on our mind, and sometimes practically make us blind as far as those particular matters are concerned.

From what has been said above we can see at once the necessity of exercising great caution with regard to our opinions and holding them lightly, instead of tenaciously as most people do. For, after all, what are our opinions but certain modes of looking at things mentally which we have acquired by our previous thinking—modes which can be altered, nay, will be altered as we grow and acquire more experience. They are merely passing phases of our mental life, subject to change as everything else in our life is subject to change. If we realize this fact clearly, that our opinion on any matter is only one particular thought-pattern amidst innumerable thought-patterns that can exist at the same time, and not containing necessarily more truth than other patterns do, we shall be more inclined to be tolerant of the opinions of other people and to attach less importance to our own. Truth is something beyond opinions and particular points of view and it is only when we can rise into the region of Reality

that we can see everything in its correct perspective and as it really exists.

With regard to the culture of the lower mind, it is not possible or necessary to deal with this comprehensive subject in this brief survey of problems connected with our mind. There are many excellent books available dealing with different aspects of mental culture, both from the point of view of the ordinary man who is after success in the worldly sense and also the aspirant for Divine Wisdom who wants to have an efficient instrument for his work on the lower planes. But there are a few points of fundamental importance which every aspirant would do well to keep in his mind with a view to acquire a correct attitude towards this question of mental culture.

The first interesting fact worth noting in this connection is that the general attitude of the Occultist towards the acquisition of knowledge is somewhat different from that of the ordinary intellectual man of today. The growth of modern Science which has naturally encouraged the search for detailed knowledge in various directions has certainly led to many wonderful discoveries and the opening up of new vistas of knowledge. It has enabled us to acquire control over the powers of Nature in the physical realm in a manner which we could not even dream of a hundred years ago. But this search for detailed knowledge which is necessary for scientific work has also produced an unhealthy craving for knowledge of all kinds which in many cases is manifestly useless. This indiscriminating attitude with regard to the acquisition of knowledge would perhaps not be so detrimental in our life if it were not for the fact that it undermines our sense of correct values and makes us sacrifice the important and essential things for those that are more or less useless. This is exemplified very clearly in our modern educational system. Most of the knowledge that we acquire in schools and colleges is of such a nature that we are never required to use it in later life, while all that knowledge which is of vital importance in living our life properly does not come into the picture at all. This we are left to

acquire in a precarious manner by our own efforts, often, after making many mistakes and going through much unnecessary suffering.

Now, the Occultist knows the value of knowledge but he believes in exercising discrimination in the acquisition of knowledge relating to the phenomenal side of Nature. In the first place, he knows that all knowledge derived through the lower mind is relative and therefore he does not attach to it the importance that it has in the eyes of the ordinary man of the world. He acquires the knowledge which is necessary and useful to him in his work but does not burden his mind with detailed knowledge for which he has no use for the time being. He does not regard knowledge as a sort of ornament or hobby as some of our scholars and scientists are apt to do. In the second place, he knows the possibility of developing superphysical faculties which can enable him to gain any kind of knowledge he may happen to need without much difficulty. The development of the Causal body and the Buddhic vehicle and the faculties pertaining to them makes the accumulation of detailed knowledge in the lower mind unnecessary, because of the ease with which such knowledge can then be obtained at any moment and its far greater reliability when acquired in this manner.

This does not mean, of course, that the aspirant for Divine Wisdom should despise knowledge relating to the phenomenal side of life or he can afford to neglect the culture of the lower mind. There are very few people who are in a position to develop their superphysical faculties in the immediate present and for many lives to come the large majority of candidates treading the path to Self-Realization will have to work in and through their lower mental body. Even when such faculties can be acquired a well developed mental body is still necessary to bring down and correctly formulate the knowledge derived from the higher planes. So, the student of Occultism cannot dispense with the culture of his mind but he has to use discrimination and to guide it along right lines in accordance with the great purpose and ideals of his life.

What are the general principles which should guide us in the culture of the lower mind? Here are a few of a basic character.

In acquiring knowledge we should, as far as possible, confine ourselves to those subjects with which we are directly concerned in our life and in studying these subjects we should always look for the essential and fundamental facts. It is necessary to exercise great discrimination because the domain of knowledge is limitless and our life is short. If we have a purpose in life we cannot afford to waste our time and energy in accumulating useless facts and ideas, especially when there is so much knowledge of real and permanent value which we must try to acquire in the short time at our disposal. Of course, every one has to decide for himself what knowledge is of real and permanent value, but it may be said in a general way that all knowledge which helps us in realizing our main and subsidiary purposes in life is important, while that which cannot be used in this way may be considered useless, at least for the time being.

To be able to exercise discrimination in this manner we should learn to estimate the value of facts and ideas just as a jeweller learns to appraise the gems and precious stones he has to deal with in his trade. Facts and ideas vary enormously in their value and with some practice it is not only possible to separate the useful from the useless but even to grade them according to their intrinsic or relative worth. The student of Divine Wisdom should see that, as far as possible, his mind contains only valuable ideas—treasures of wisdom and experience which are of permanent value.

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

The second important principle which should guide us in the culture of our mind is that the development of mental faculties and powers is equally, if not more, important than the accumulation of knowledge, because the evolution of a mental body is measured not so much by the number of facts it contains as by the capacity it possesses of acquiring with ease knowledge on any subject and utilizing it for any purpose in view. A mind which can grasp quickly any new type of thought, can think accurately and can apply efficiently the knowledge it possesses to the solution of all kinds of problems, is far more valuable than one which does not possess these capacities, even though it may be crammed with unassimilated facts and ideas. We have to remember that all knowledge is already present in the consciousness of the Logos of our System and it is the lack of responsiveness in our vehicles which prevents us from bringing that knowledge within our limited consciousness. A perfect mental body is meant to be like a first class radio set. It should be possible to tune it in to any wavelength of thought in the Divine Mind and to get all the knowledge pertaining to that subject.

And lastly, if we wish to acquire a correct perspective in our mental life we should learn to correlate all our knowledge. This means that all the different kinds of knowledge that we may happen to possess should be seen in their proper relation to one another, as parts of a great synthesis. Only then, can we see the place and value of each part in the whole and thus be able to develop our mental life in a systematic and orderly manner. There is a plane from which all the different branches of knowledge appear like the branches of a great tree joining in one trunk and rooted in one Consciousness. If this is a fact, then the effort that we make at the correlation of our knowledge must put us 'en rapport' with that plane and bring us nearer to that synthetic vision in which all true knowledge is seen to be derived from the Universal Mind.

CHAPTER X

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CAUSAL BODY

IN Western psychology the word 'mind' stands for a very vaguely defined and complex group of phenomena connected with the functioning of consciousness. It includes in its lower end feelings and emotions, while in its higher aspects it comprises abstract thoughts and that little understood and somewhat suspected faculty which has been given the name of intuition. This lack of definition in classifying the so-called mental phenomena is inevitable as long as we regard the brain as the originator of all these phenomena instead of an instrument which serves, on the one hand, to collect together vibrations coming through the different sense avenues, and on the other, to bring down into the physical consciousness various kinds of energies which play upon it from the higher, superphysical worlds. The brain is, in a way, merely a screen on which the phenomena of the different worlds produce their shadows and it is difficult to understand these phenomena from the shadows as it is difficult to get an idea of the real nature of the objects behind the screen in a shadow play. If one wants to study properly these objects and to gain a correct idea of their nature he must go behind the screen and see them directly instead of trying to speculate *ad infinitum* about them from the illusive forms they produce on the screen. Our modern scientists and psychologists are just now busy in investigating the shadows on the screen by examining their forms and speculating upon them, little knowing that these shadows are shadows of realities which lie beyond and which may be studied by going behind the screen and seeing those realities directly.

When the phenomena manifesting through the brain are examined by the Occultist they are found to have their origin in different parts of a man's being. Man has, as we have seen already, a complex constitution. A set of vehicles connect him with all the inner planes, each vehicle sending its peculiar vibrations into the brain and producing the complex and varied phenomena of our physical consciousness. Thus our sensations and feelings are due to the repercussions of the cerebro-spinal system caused by vibrations coming from the astral plane. Our thoughts are due to the reproduction in the physical brain of vibrations of the mental plane. And our true intuitions are the faint echoes of vibrations coming from subtler planes which lie deeper still. On account of this multiple nature of the sources from which the phenomena in physical consciousness appear, it is not possible for any one to classify these phenomena and allocate them to their respective sources unless he has the power to leave the physical vehicle at will and examine in full consciousness the phenomena of the superphysical planes. In fact the Science of Occultism in its true sense, which is the basis of the Ancient Wisdom, is the result of such investigations carried out by a long line of Adepts throughout the ages in unbroken continuity.

Now, when the phenomena which are known as thoughts are examined by psychologists it is found that they may be grouped together under two broad sub-heads—concrete thoughts having to do with names and forms, and abstract thoughts dealing with concepts and abstract principles, though both sets of thoughts appear in our physical consciousness through the physical brain. Occult investigation has shown that these two kinds of thoughts which are quite distinct from each other have their origin in two different vehicles of consciousness working on the mental plane. In fact, the mental plane with its seven sub-planes is sharply divisible into two groups, the lower four sub-planes forming one group and serving as the medium for concrete thoughts, and the higher three sub-planes forming another group and serving as the medium of abstract thoughts. This division into two groups is

not arbitrary but perfectly natural, inasmuch as the matter belonging to these two groups of sub-planes enters into the composition of two entirely distinct vehicles of consciousness—the lower mental body, the vehicle of concrete thoughts, and the higher mental body, the vehicle of abstract thoughts. These two bodies not only serve respectively as the vehicles of two distinct types of mental phenomena but belong as we have seen in Chapter II to two different components of our inner constitution. The lower mental body is the subtlest constituent of the transitory personality which changes from incarnation to incarnation while the higher mental body, which is called the Causal body in theosophical literature and *Vijñānamaya Kosha* in Vedānta, forms the lowest vehicle of the immortal Ego who endures from life to life and goes through the evolutionary processes in aeons of time. It will thus be seen that the line of demarcation between the lower and the higher mind not only separates these two mental principles but also the lower and the Higher Self in man. We have dealt already with the constitution and functions of the lower mental body, the vehicle of concrete thoughts. We shall now take up the Causal body, and consider its functions and place in our inner constitution.

The Causal body is composed, as already pointed out, of the matter of the three higher sub-planes of the mental plane and forms the outermost vehicle of the immortal Ego functioning through *Ātma-Buddhi-Manas*. It is formed for the first time when individualization takes place and a ray of the First Logos enters the group soul of an animal. It is the repository of all experiences through which the Ego passes in the successive incarnations and the faculties he gradually develops during the course of his evolution. In the beginning, just after its formation, its aura looks like an ovoid resembling a colourless soap bubble. But as evolution proceeds and the faculties of the Ego are aroused one after another from latency into potency and begin to work through it, brilliant colours appear in it gradually until, in the case of the Adept, it has grown greatly in size and shows flashing iridescent

colours of unimaginable beauty. It is not possible to imagine the conditions and forms of these higher worlds with the limitations of our physical consciousness because they belong to worlds of higher dimensions although some writers have tried to describe these on the basis of results obtained in clairvoyant investigations. We may, therefore, pass on to the consideration of the functions of the Causal body because many students find it difficult to understand these functions and confuse them sometimes with those of the lower mind and sometimes with those of Buddhi. Let us take these functions, one by one, for the sake of simplifying the problem.

The first function of the Causal body is that it serves as the organ of abstract thought, which means that the formation of abstract concepts depends upon the vibrations of matter belonging to this vehicle of consciousness. Just as feelings and sensations are due to vibrations of the astral body, concrete thoughts with names and forms are due to the vibrations of the lower mental body, so are abstract thoughts due to the vibrations produced in the Causal body.

As many people who have not made a study of psychology have a very hazy idea of the difference between concrete thoughts and abstract thoughts, we may dwell on this point for a while before proceeding further. What is the difference between a concrete and an abstract thought? The best way of understanding this difference is to take a few examples for illustration. Mathematics provides us with the best illustrations for this purpose. Take a triangle for example. It is possible to draw or imagine innumerable triangles of all shapes and sizes: isosceles triangles, right-angled triangles, scalene triangles, equilateral triangles, small triangles, large triangles. But whatever the size or shape of the infinite number of triangles drawn or imagined, there are some peculiarities which are common to all triangles, which in fact make a triangle a triangle. They are the distinguishing properties of a triangle. Mathematics has defined these distinguishing properties clearly, and if we examine all the triangles that can possibly

be imagined, we shall find all of them having these common properties and therefore we can as it were, abstract from these triangles these properties and conceive of an ideal triangle. This ideal triangle will have no shape or size. It will be a mere concept. We cannot imagine it in our mind because as soon as we imagine a triangle we have come down to a particular concrete triangle. Similarly, we can take another geometrical figure like a circle or a square and from the innumerable circles or squares that we can imagine, we can abstract the particular qualities of these figures and form concepts of a circle or square. Similarly in other fields of thought. When we say a 'horse' we hardly realize that we are not referring to any particular animal but to a mere concept which we have formed by observing a number of horses. All such common nouns are, in this way, mere concepts which we have formed by observing a number of things of the same class, taking out of them their essential qualities and building out of these qualities a concept which includes all those things and yet is not like any one of them. This is the point we have to grasp: the concept of a triangle is a thing belonging to a different category or different plane and is not like any triangle which we can imagine. The moment we imagine a triangle we descend from the plane of the abstract to that of the concrete.

We have taken a few simple examples merely to illustrate the difference between the concrete and the abstract but the domain of the abstract extends into all fields of human thought. In fact, wherever we have things with forms and qualities to consider and these things are related to one another in some definite manner. there comes in abstract thought to define the relations between them. All scientific generalizations and laws, all philosophical systems, all principles are concerned with defining the relations of things or ideas to one another and come within the domain of abstract thought. The concrete and abstract are thus inseparable although they are entirely different in nature. They are intertwined in the field of the intellect as the warp and woof in a fabric.

Now, the vehicle of consciousness in our inner constitution which is the organ of abstract thought is the Causal body. It is true that we do our abstract thinking through the brain, but the brain is merely the instrument which reproduces faintly in our physical consciousness the vibrations which are initially produced in the Causal body. The seat of the vibrations is in the Causal body. These vibrations are reflected from vehicle to vehicle until they appear in the physical brain, having lost much of their intensity and clearness in the transmission. On the plane of the higher mind abstract thoughts are not the vague, indefinite things which they appear to us down here but actual realities which can be perceived by the faculties of the Causal body. The Ego in his Causal body can manipulate and work with these abstract ideas and principles as we, working in the lower mind, can manipulate the concrete ideas and images. It is only when one of these ideas is projected into the lower mind that it takes a definite shape and form, the abstract condition changes into the concrete condition. From the relation between the abstract and concrete thoughts referred to already it should be clear that when an abstract thought descends from its own plane into the plane of the lower mind, it can assume innumerable forms all related to one another by certain essential features which are embodied, as it were, in the abstract idea. To take the example of a triangle again, when the abstract idea of triangle which is a definite reality on the higher mental plane descends into the field of the concrete mind it can give rise to an infinite number of triangles. On his own plane the Ego knows the essence of a triangle. On the lower mental plane he can know a *particular* triangle, having the essential qualities of a triangle.

The great advantage of knowing this essence of things in contradistinction to knowing concrete things is obvious. When we know the universal we know, as it were, all the particular that are included in that category. The mathematician who has the abstract idea of a triangle knows in a way all the triangles that can possibly be imagined. The scientist who discovers a

scientific law acquires command over all the phenomena covered by that law. The Occultist who discovers an occult law becomes master, at once, of a particular aspect of life. If we know innumerable facts or details of a particular type and do not know the underlying relation between them, do not know their essential nature or quality, we not only do not know them properly but cannot use them in our work. A mass of facts unrelated and unconnected is a mere rubbish heap. Discover the underlying principle which connects those facts and it becomes valuable material which can be utilized in innumerable ways.

This discovery of the underlying principles and laws in the physical world is one of the main aims of Science and it is the laws and principles which have been discovered so far that have given the scientist his control over natural forces of the physical world. The Occultist does the same thing with regard to the superphysical realms of Nature, because unlike the scientist he does not exclude any realm of Nature from his investigation. He thus acquires knowledge of and control over forces in all the realms of Nature.

We see thus that the knowledge of underlying principles does away with the necessity of interminable search for details and facts which are infinite and, therefore, means economy of time and energy. The great Masters of Wisdom, it is said, have full knowledge of all the fundamental principles in every sphere of life and do not bother about the details. If They want detailed information with regard to anything They just apply their lower mind to the task and get it without any difficulty. As Their Causal bodies are fully developed and They can function in full consciousness on the higher mental plane, they can know and deal with these fundamental principles on Their own plane without having to work through the heavy and comparatively less responsive medium of the physical brain. Their insight into the laws of Nature and fundamental principles of life is far more perfect than that of any one whose consciousness is confined to the physical plane only. It should be remembered that these principles exist eternally in the Universal Mind of the Logos and the



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

Then we come to another function of the Causal body. As we have seen, the formation of the Causal body marks the birth of the human soul and henceforth the soul goes through the processes of human evolution according to the laws of Reincarnation and Karma. As a result of this human evolution, qualities which were lying in a germinal condition in the soul are gradually aroused from latency to potency and it passes from the condition of the savage to that of the civilized man, and thence to that of the Perfect Man. This gradual unfoldment of human and divine characteristics is marked by a parallel development of the Causal body, development which shows itself in an increase in the size of its aura, the appearance of bands of brilliant colours and a general increase in the luminosity of the aura. A study of the Causal bodies of different individuals has shown a definite relation between the colours which are found present in these bodies and the characteristics that have been developed by the Ego, so that by merely looking at a Causal body by the clairvoyant sight of the plane it is possible to know definitely the stage of development reached by the Ego and the characteristics developed by him so far. Just as physiologists have studied the physical body and know everything about its anatomy, so have Occultists studied the Causal body and investigated fully its constitution and the laws governing its growth. Living as we do under the limitations of the physical plane consciousness we cannot understand, except very vaguely, the nature of the Causal body and the manner in which consciousness works through it.



So we see that the second function of the Causal body is to act as a repository of the fruits of human evolution as these fruits are gathered during the course of the successive lives of the Ego. There are, however, two points worth noting in connection with this gradual growth of the Causal body. The first of these is that during the period spent in *Devachan* or the heaven world at the close of a life cycle, the experiences of the life last spent on earth are slowly digested and the essence of them, in the form of faculties, is transferred to, and made a part of, the constitution of the Causal body. The personality, as it were, distils all its experiences and before it dissolves and vanishes, hands over the distilled product, the valuable essence of all these experiences, to its parent, the Ego who gave it birth. So the Ego has incorporated into his very constitution all the valuable lessons learnt in that life and starts each new life with the accumulated experiences of the previous lives. This growth of the Causal body is remarkably like the growth of a tree which sheds its old foliage every year in autumn after transferring the sap to the branches and then puts forth a new foliage in spring to absorb fresh nourishment from the atmosphere and grows still further.

This also, incidentally, accounts for the fact that when we start a new life with a new set of physical, astral and lower mental bodies we have no memory of the experiences gone through in the previous lives, but we have the fullest advantage of all those experiences in the form of faculties and powers developed in those lives and embodied in the Causal body. There is no memory because the new mental body did not pass through those experiences and has no record of those experiences. It is the Ego who passed through all those experiences and retains the memory of all past lives--memory which can be revived by those who can rise in consciousness to his level and then bring down into the physical brain mental pictures concerned with these past lives.

The second point we should note is that much of the evil we see in people is not something positive but merely due to the

lack of development of the corresponding opposite good qualities and faculties in the Causal body. During the process of being evolved, our experiences are different and the different qualities which constitute a perfect character are developed, one after another, in an irregular fashion and not simultaneously in an orderly fashion. It is as if different people started painting their own portraits and each man took to the work in his own individual way. If any one has a look at these portraits when they are all incomplete, some will have painted their heads, some their hands, some their legs, and so on. The portraits will have symmetry and uniformity when they are all completed but while they are still incomplete they will appear quite different and lop-sided. So is the case with our characters. We develop different qualities in our character in different orders and start developing them at different times and hence appear so lop-sided and unlike one another. What we generally call vices are in most cases due to the absence of the corresponding virtues which have not yet been unfolded in the Causal body—the dark bands in the spectrum of our character. Thus a habit of lying is due to the lack of the particular quality in the Causal body which corresponds to truthfulness and so on. If we regard our fellow men in this light we shall be inclined to adopt a more charitable attitude towards their weaknesses and deficiencies of character and instead of considering them evil or sinful, regard them merely as incompletely developed. They have yet to complete their portraits—all of us have to complete our portraits—and we cannot reasonably adopt any other attitude except that of sympathy and helpfulness.

Another point which it is necessary to keep in mind in this connection is that although ultimately we shall have developed all the qualities needed for perfection, the aim of the evolutionary processes is not to produce ultimately the same pattern. We have all to be perfect, all to develop in an all-round manner, and yet to be unique. No two individualities are meant to be exactly the same although sixty thousand million souls are evolving

towards perfection in the scheme of which we are a part. The evolutionary scheme for humanity is not like a modern factory which turns out millions of a given product, exactly similar and hardly distinguishable from one another. How Nature in her laboratory is able to bring to perfection such a huge number of souls, while preserving their individual uniqueness, is one of those mysteries of life which we cannot hope to solve while we are still living in the realms of illusion and are able to see everything only in a partial manner.

The Causal body serves as a repository not only of the quintessence of experiences gone through by the personalities in different incarnations and of the faculties developed through them, but also of the good and bad Karma which these personalities have made during these incarnations. These remain as potential impressions or seeds in the Causal body and gradually come to fruition and determine the conditions of future lives. That is why this vehicle is called the Causal body. Out of this stock of Karma a certain number are worked out and others are added during every incarnation and a sort of running account is maintained throughout the successive lives of the personalities. This personal account is closed only at the time of Liberation after the individual Karma have been completely exhausted.

The last point which we may note in connection with the functions of the Causal body concerns the factors which determine its growth. We have seen already how the experiences gone through by Individuality, life after life, through the instrumentality of the personalities determine its growth. But this growth is not haphazard. It is guided by two underlying influences which exercise a constant pressure and determine the direction of the growth. One is the uniqueness of the individual who is being evolved. As has been pointed out already, every soul is destined to be individually unique and its growth is determined partly by this uniqueness which is already present in some mysterious manner in the eternal Monad as hinted at in the Occult maxim, 'Become what you are'. This individual uniqueness exercises

a constant and steady pressure on the growth of the soul throughout the period of its evolution and it is this pressure from within which ensures the attainment of its perfection in accordance with its individual uniqueness.

The other factor which is closely connected with the first is the function which the Individual or the Monad is to exercise in the Divine Plan. Every soul has to play a definite part in the scheme of evolution and its growth takes place in such a manner that it is fitted to play that part effectively. The experiences which it goes through and the faculties which it develops, especially in the later stages of evolution, are such as bring out its individual uniqueness and prepare it for playing the part assigned to it in the Divine Scheme.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGHER MIND

IN the last chapter an attempt has been made to give some idea of the role of the Higher Mind in our life and the vehicle through which it works. In dealing with these things relating to the superphysical planes we should be on our guard against taking these vague and general ideas we have on the physical plane for the realities which they are meant to represent. These ideas should be taken merely as hints, pointers as it were, to the realities which lie behind them—realities which we can know only when our inner development makes direct perception of them possible. So great is the tendency prevalent among people to take the words for the ideas and the ideas for the realities which they stand for, that a constant emphasis on the tremendous limitations under which we work on the physical plane becomes necessary. A direct result of this tendency is that we are easily satisfied with the mere ideas about these things, if not with the mere words, and forget that between the idea about a thing and the thing itself there is a big gulf which must be bridged if we are to actually know that thing. So many people go about talking about these things of the higher life oblivious of the fact that they are merely dealing with ideas—and very vague ideas at that. There is no harm in discussing these ideas; in fact, this is a necessary preliminary step. The trouble comes in when we tend to feel satisfied with them, instead of pressing forward in search of the realities that lie behind them.

Before dealing with the general methods which may be adopted for the development of the Causal body it is necessary

to clear the ground by considering a few important facts relevant to the problem in hand. The first point we should note in this connection is that the development of this body, which is the outermost vehicle of the immortal *Jivātmā* or Ego as he is called in theosophical literature, is a very slow process, taking hundreds of lives for bringing it to perfection. It is said that the average number of lives spent on earth between individualization and the attainment of Adeptship is about 777. Out of these about 700 are spent in acquiring experiences in the savage and semi-civilized conditions, about 70 in acquiring experiences in civilized conditions and perfecting the moral nature, and the last 7 in treading the Path which leads to Adeptship. When we take into account the fact that quite a large proportion of our time is spent in the superphysical worlds between successive incarnations we see what a long and tremendous journey the soul undertakes when it starts on its human evolution and how slow must be the development of the Causal body which records and embodies this evolutionary process. In the earlier stages this evolution is guided solely from without by the hosts of divine agencies at work in the Solar System and the soul takes hardly any share in its own development. It is only when it is approaching the end of its journey and becomes conscious of the purpose of the long journey it has undertaken, that it begins to take an ever increasing share in its own growth and unfoldment—the last stages of its development being almost solely guided from within. The mere fact that there is an urge within the soul to take its evolution in its own hand is a sign of its maturity and shows that it is approaching its journey's end. A very large proportion of the work has already been accomplished when this urge is born and only a few lives of intensive training and discipline are, therefore, enough to complete the work. It is for this reason that those who feel the strong urge to take themselves in hand and to attain perfection as soon as possible have a reasonable chance of reaching their goal in a few lives, and sometimes seem to accomplish miracles in one life. In some cases the Ego is well developed, the Causal body is sufficiently well formed

and the chief trouble is with the communication between the Ego and the lower personality, owing to the impediments created by evil Karma in previous lives. As soon as this Karma is worked out, the Ego begins to shine through the personality and it appears as if a miracle of development has taken place.

So let those who feel the urge to take this work of perfecting their nature in hand clearly understand that this is a long and tedious task which they wish to undertake, a task which in the large majority of cases takes a number of strenuous lives to accomplish. No one can tell when it will be completed and infinite patience and determination to persevere to the end in face of all kinds of difficulties, disappointments and failures are the only guarantee of final achievement.

The second point to take into consideration and clearly understand is the relation between the personality and the Ego, for without a clear grasp of this relation confusion will constantly arise in the mind clouding the intelligence and throwing a dark shadow on the path one is treading. It has already been mentioned that the experiences gone through by the personality in a particular life are worked up into different kinds of faculties in the Heaven world and the essence of these experiences is thus passed on, at the close of the incarnation, to the Ego to be incorporated into his constitution. It is this addition to the faculties, life after life, which is partly responsible for the growth of the Ego and the unfoldment of his powers—partly because the Ego lives a life of his own in the higher worlds and the impact of the vibrations on his own plane and the planes above also serves to arouse his divine faculties from latency into potency. Now, the extent to which a particular life on earth subserves the growth of the Ego depends very much upon the relation subsisting between him and the personality. The personality comes out of the Ego, it is as it were an emanation of the Ego, but during the course of its formation in an incarnation it develops a semi-independent life of its own which may or may not be in accord with and subservient to the interests of the Ego. If the personality aligns

itself with the interests of the Ego and can be used by the latter for his higher and far-seeing purposes, the incarnation is a great success and the experiences of the personality yield a rich harvest for the use and development of the Ego. On the other hand, as happens in the case of the large majority of people, if the personality strikes out an independent line of its own, is not amenable to the influence and guidance of the Ego and remains completely absorbed in the temporary and trivial interests of the lower worlds, the purpose of the incarnation is to a great extent defeated. Although some gain invariably accrues, and some progress is made, the harvest from the higher point of view is poor.

The above view with regard to the relation between the personality and the Ego should not give an impression that there are two independent entities working within us. There is, in reality, only One Life of the Logos working everywhere. A ray of His consciousness works in a *Jivātmā* through the set of vehicles appropriated on the different planes. On the higher spiritual planes of *Ātma-Buddhi-Manas* this ray of consciousness produces a centre of individuality but in this centre the sense of individuality is overpowered by the overwhelming consciousness of unity and intimate relation with the divine life in which that centre is rooted. The veil of *Māyā* is there but it is thin enough to enable the Ego to see partially the Reality which it covers. When this ray of divine consciousness descends further into matter and works through the three lower bodies in the physical, astral and lower mental worlds, where the veils of illusion are thick and hard to pierce, the sense of unity and the consciousness of its divine origin is lost. The constant association and identification of consciousness with its three vehicles develops a false sense of 'I' which is the essence, the root of the personality, the pin which holds together all our memories and experiences in one composite whole. That is how the 'I' of the personality, although it is based upon and is derived from the Ego and ultimately from the Monad, functions as an independent entity, oblivious of its divine origin, oblivious

of the purpose for which it exists. In the earlier stages of evolution this does not matter, as in these stages all kinds of experiences are needed for building up the crude individuality and any kind of experience is good enough for serving as building material. But in the last stages when discrimination has to be exercised in the selection of experiences for refining the individuality and bringing out its divinity and individual uniqueness, the personality must become a servant of the Higher Self. Of course, this illusion-bound personality with its 'I'ness is only a temporary entity which is destined to dissipate and disappear at the end of the incarnation when its experiences have been assimilated in the Heaven world and the essence of these transferred to the Ego, but how it functions does make a difference in the development of the individuality in the advanced states of evolution.

So we see how from the one Ego there arise many personalities, each personality living its life and enriching the Ego with its experiences until the Ego is sufficiently developed to need no more experiences connected with the lower worlds of illusion. It is also to be remembered that each personality is not only derived from the Ego but is also only a partial manifestation of the Ego. It represents only one facet of the Diamond Soul. That is why the different incarnations of the same soul are not as similar as one would expect them to be from the consideration of the close relation subsisting between the Ego and his personalities. In each incarnation only certain aspects and faculties of the Ego are brought out, manifested, the others remaining in abeyance, latent, to be expressed in future incarnations. For each incarnation has to take place in a certain set of circumstances, determined by Karma and the evolutionary requirements of the soul, and these circumstances confine within narrow limits the set of qualities which can be expressed in that personality. The race in which the soul is born, the heredity of the body, the climatic conditions, the sex of the physical body, the Karma it has to work out, the faculties it has to develop in that incarnation, all these factors contribute to restrict the expression of the Ego and only a limited

number of the large number of faculties and qualities already developed can find expression in one life. But the different personalities which appear, one after another, in the wider life of the Ego, provide the necessary variety of circumstances and opportunities for an all-round development and the attainment of that perfection which includes all divine powers and faculties. Nature works slowly but its methods are sure and its purposes carried out with consummate skill and relentless perseverance.

The discussion of the relation between the personality and the Ego or between the lower and the Higher Self should not be considered in the light of a diversion or as a matter of mere theoretical interest. On the other hand a clear grasp of this relation should be considered as one of the most important requisites for embarking upon the difficult task of unfolding our higher spiritual nature. Spiritual evolution cannot go far unless and until we understand thoroughly this relation between the lower and Higher Self and succeed in bringing the lower personality under the control of the Higher Self. And in bringing the personality under the control of the Higher Self there is nothing which helps so much as the realization of its evanescent, illusory character. The moment a person *realizes*, not merely thinks superficially, that this entity which feels, thinks and acts in the lower worlds and for the satisfaction of which he gives all his time and energy, is merely an evanescent thing, a creature of a short life which will give place to another creature of a like nature in the next life, the moment he realizes this fact, he cannot remain indifferent to his higher interests. It is because we are unaware, oblivious of this hard and relentless fate which pursues our lower self that we remain complacent in this impermanent world of illusions. The moment we wake up to this fact and the seemingly solid ground of fictitious reality begins to slip away from beneath our feet, we are overwhelmed with fear and dismay and start our search for something real and lasting—not in a careless and leisurely way, but like a drowning man who catches at a straw, in dead earnest

It is then that we, unwillingly and with pain, decide to leave this doomed ship of the personality and take refuge in our Higher Self whom we believe—we know not yet—to be immortal. More and more we identify ourselves with the Higher Self and address ourselves seriously to the task of making the personality an instrument, an expression of the Higher Self, until the lower self is completely subdued and transcended and we are centred in the Divine Life. It is in this mood and with this attitude of mind alone that we can usefully take up the task of developing the Higher mind working through the Causal body.

The methods of developing the Causal body follow to some extent from the functions of this body already dealt with in the foregoing pages. The law of growth which is applicable not only in the physical world but also in the subtler worlds, is thus: when any function is exercised, it improves, and this improvement in the function is accompanied by a better organization of the vehicle through which that function is exercised. This better organization of the vehicle, in its turn, allows a more varied exercise of the function, so that the life and the form both improve side by side and provide consciousness with a more efficient instrument for its expression. This law is the one fundamental law of development and lies at the basis of all methods of Self-Culture in every sphere of life and on all the planes. Take a feeble physical body. You exercise the body; more life flows through the muscles, arteries and nerves; the body becomes stronger, the muscles stiffer and the capacity for exercise and endurance grow in proportion. Take the astral body, the vehicle of emotions and desires. You find that it is dull and does not respond to certain emotions such as those of love and sympathy. You place yourself in circumstances where these emotions are aroused. You force the body to respond to these emotions. Gradually more life begins to flow in the new channels which have been created, the constitution of the astral body changes, gets more refined, and you find that it now easily responds to these finer emotions. Take the lower mental body. You find that it is not able to think correctly and

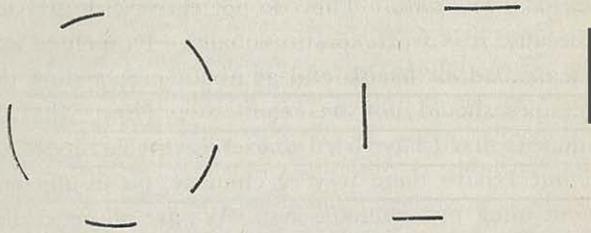
coherently. You start thinking with concentration on different topics. The practice will be tedious and tiresome in the beginning but as more and more mental energy flows into the mental body, the task will become easier, and gradually what in the beginning was tedious and tiresome becomes a pleasant and easy exercise. The flow of energy in the mental body gradually organizes the vehicle, makes it a better instrument for the exercise of mental powers, and thus prepares it for a more effective exercise of its chief function—thinking. And, side by side, its instrument on the physical plane, the brain and the cerebro-spinal system, also improves and allows a better expression of thought in the physical consciousness.

Every function of every vehicle of consciousness improves by exercise, whether it is visible or invisible and the Causal body is no exception to the rule. As we have seen, one of the main functions of the Causal body is to serve as a vehicle of abstract thought and it follows that if we want to develop it we must give it exercise in abstract thinking. Many people have a wrong notion about abstract thinking and the moment the word 'abstract' is mentioned they begin to feel uncomfortable and imagine themselves going through dull and dreary processes of recondite and unprofitable thinking. This in itself is an indication that this function of their Causal body is not properly developed and needs attending to; for, the exercise of any function which has been sufficiently developed to become easy is always a pleasure. If we fight shy of any function it is because either we have not learnt to exercise it or there is some defect or obstruction in the vehicle through which that function is exercised. Apart from this fact, abstract thinking is not such a dull and difficult thing as it is supposed to be by the majority of people. What does it mean after all? It means in many cases the abstraction of the essence of a large number of facts grouped together for any purpose. It is going from the particular to the general. We are all going through these mental processes every day in our life but we do so unconsciously, ineffectively, and unscientifically, so that they do not

subserve our mental growth, at least not to any appreciable extent. In fact, the tendency to generalize is very common and most of us are generalizing in connection with our daily experiences in a very unsystematic and sometimes foolish manner. I take raw vegetables for a few days. They do not agree with my stomach, perhaps because it is weak constitutionally. I conclude that raw vegetables are bad for health and go about propogating the idea that vegetables should not be eaten raw. Now, what I have actually done is that I have tried to exercise my faculty of abstract thinking, but I have done it very clumsily, on insufficient data and without using my commonsense. We are all generalizing in this ineffective, crude manner most of the time and what we have to do is to learn to do it scientifically, deliberately and systematically. We shall not only, in this way, improve our mind but also enormously increase our effectiveness in life. It should also be remembered that generalization is the first step on the road back to the One—from the many to the One. It gives prcliminary training in acquiring that synthetic vision which sees the One among the many. We find, as we continue this search for laws and principles, that the minor principles of life join together like the tributaries of a mighty river until we find ourselves ultimately in that Ocean of Existence—the One.

How are we to train the higher mind to do its abstract thinking effectively? Let us take a few simple examples to illustrate the process of learning. Suppose we take a circle and cut up its circumference into a number of small arcs in an irregular fashion. If we erase some of these arcs, so that only small bits of the circumference are left, any one who knows geometry will be able to say that they form part of a circle although the whole of the circle is not visible. Why? Because the shape and position of these arcs suggest naturally to the mind the circle of which they are parts. Of course, some people will be able to construct the circle in their minds with only a few arcs while others will require a larger number to arrive at the conclusion, depending upon their intelligence and knowledge. Similarly,

we have in the second figure given below another set of lines which will immediately suggest a square to any one with some knowledge of geometry.



Something analogous takes place when a number of particulars are arranged systematically, are classified and the mind considers them with a view to find out the relation subsisting between them. It is the function of the higher mind to see this relation—to see the whole of which they are a part—and to flash down into the physical consciousness the generalization; principle or law which fuses together all these details into one complete whole. All scientific laws have been discovered in this way—by the grouping of the detailed facts by the lower mind and the fusion of them in one generalization by the higher mind. The more highly developed the Causal body, the more easily it is able to see these relations between facts. Science is not the only field which provides us with opportunities for learning to generalize. In every sphere of life we can find opportunities for the exercise of this faculty provided we are on the look out for them and utilize them systematically for our training. Higher mathematics provides the most varied and wide field for the exercise of this faculty and there is perhaps no swifter method of learning to do abstract thinking than to go through an intensive course of higher mathematics. Philosophy comes next to mathematics as a training ground for the Higher Mind and from the point of view of a student of Self-Culture is perhaps more suited for developing the faculties of the Causal body.

The second method of developing the Causal body is based upon the other function of this vehicle referred to previously, namely that it serves as the medium for making a permanent part of the soul's constitution all the virtues and faculties acquired during the process of evolution. It has been pointed out that when a particular characteristic or faculty is developed or improved in any life, the gain that has been made is not lost with the destruction of the personality but transferred to the Causal body and made permanent as a result of the reorganization of that body. We know as a result of researches in physiology that when we think the grey matter of the physical brain is modified, and prolonged and continued thinking permanently improves the quality of the brain, thus making it a better instrument for thinking. This improvement is only in the instrument on the physical plane which is destroyed with the destruction of the physical body. But there is a corresponding improvement in the Causal body which endures from life to life, and thus the gains made in each life go on accumulating, making the soul a more and more effective instrument of the Divine Life.

The second method of developing the Causal body is, therefore, to take ourselves in hand and systematically build our character, aiming at an all-round perfection. All those qualities like truthfulness, courage, humility which are mentioned in the Bhagavad-gītā and other sacred scriptures of the world should be made a permanent part of our character by simultaneous practice of meditation and exercise of these qualities in our daily life. This is a long and tedious process but the work has to be done if the soul is to become a fitting instrument of the Divine Life—a centre through which flow out the love, power and wisdom of God. When the process has been completed the Causal body is a resplendent object to look at, a globe of blinding glory of which we can have no conception on the physical plane. Such are the Causal bodies of the Masters of Wisdom who have already attained perfection as far as the lower worlds are concerned.

Another very important factor in the development of the Causal body is the unfoldment of the Buddhic and the Ātmic vehicles. The Causal body grows, on the one hand, by impulses coming from the physical, astral and lower mental planes, and on the other, by the spiritual forces acting upon it from the Buddhic and Ātmic planes. Spiritual development of the Ego, therefore, provides the most powerful impetus to the growth of this body, accomplishing in a few lives what would otherwise take an enormous period of time. Just as the functions of the physical, astral and lower mental bodics cannot be separated in water-tight compartments in the life of the personality, so the functions of the Ātmic, Buddhic and Higher Mental vehicles cannot be separated in the life of the Individuality. When the lower mind is exercised, it is not only the lower mental body which improves. Its instrument in the physical body—the brain—also improves simultaneously. Similarly, when the powers of Atmā and Buddhi begin to function actively, the Causal body, their instrument, develops simultaneously.

It is necessary to remember that the Causal body is like a mirror which can reflect the truths present in the Universal Mind into the lower mind and he whose Causal body is sufficiently developed and in communication with the lower mental body has the means at his disposal of contacting the Universal Mind to some extent. This is a faculty which all serious students of Occultism should try to develop if they want to have within themselves a source of unlimited and true knowledge which can be tapped whenever it is necessary and which will ultimately make them independent of all external sources of knowledge.

It is true that direct contact with the Universal Mind can be made only through the practices of Higher Yoga when one can function consciously through one's Causal body. But even before this stage is reached it is possible for an advanced student who practices meditation and has purified and harmonized his mind, to develop the capacity to put himself in rapport with his

Higher Mind and through it to contact the Universal Mind indirectly in increasing measure. When this happens, knowledge with regard to the inner realities of life begins to appear within the mind of the student in different ways which have to be experienced in order to be appreciated.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROLE OF BUDDHI IN OUR LIFE

IN one of the previous chapters has already been given the broad outline of the evolutionary processes through which we have passed before arriving at our present human stage and the further stages of development that lie ahead in the future. It was pointed out in that chapter that in the stages below that of humanity, before self-consciousness is developed, evolution is guided solely from without by external agencies, and life embodied in various forms is not able to cooperate consciously with these external agencies. With the appearance of self-consciousness which marks the birth of the human soul and the formation of the Causal body the possibility opens for life to take a share in its unfoldment and development, although it is true that in the earlier stages of human evolution this conscious co-operation of the soul in its own development is nominal and evolution is still guided, to a very great extent, from without. It is only when the soul has reached an advanced stage of development and maturity that it is possible for it to take an active and intelligent part in its own development and to co-operate with those forces which are all the time exerting a steady pressure upon it in the direction of evolution. When this stage is reached, the soul has already developed to a considerable extent its lower vehicles of consciousness and is ready to begin its spiritual evolution. The development of Buddhi marks the beginning of that phase in our inner unfoldment which we associate with spirituality and those of us who want to hasten our progress towards our highest spiritual ideals should therefore try to understand the role which this principle plays in our life.

Buddhi stands for the peculiar manifestations of consciousness which take place through the Buddhic body, the vehicle which comes immediately after the Causal body as we penetrate inwards from the periphery to the centre of our being. Its field of expression, therefore, lies just beyond the mind, not only the lower concrete mind but also the abstract mind which deals with general principles and works through the Causal body. This fact should make it clear why the functions of Buddhi transcend those of the mind and cannot be judged by the criteria of the intellect which are taken to be final and conclusive by the ordinary intellectual man. This also accounts for the fact that the mere intellect cannot understand those finer perceptions which have their origin in the Buddhic consciousness. The only state of consciousness which transcends and embraces the Buddhic consciousness is that of the Ātmā which is, as it were, the very centre of our life, the core in which lie buried all our divine potentialities.

After noting the place of Buddhi in our constitution let us first deal with one general principle which we should bear in mind when we are taking into consideration the manifestation of consciousness on the different planes. This will clarify our ideas and prepare the ground for understanding the various functions of Buddhi in our life. The point we have to grasp clearly is the difference in the manifestation of consciousness through a vehicle, when it works on its own plane, and when the corresponding vibrations are stepped down to a lower plane and work through a heavier medium. Take, for example, the working of consciousness on the lower mental plane. The vibrations produced when consciousness works through the lower mental body are known as thoughts, but there is a world of difference between thoughts as they are seen on their own plane through the organs of the mental body, and as they are expressed and appear through the dense and inelastic medium of the physical brain. When thoughts are perceived on their own plane by clairvoyant sight they are seen to form a world of their own, full of forms and colours of entrancing beauty, a world which the various religions of the

world have tried very imperfectly to portray in their descriptions of heaven. But these thoughts when they are expressed through the physical brain and appear in our physical consciousness, in spite of retaining some of their essential characteristics, lose many of the qualities and the force which characterize them on their own plane. On their own plane they appear real, while on the physical plane they appear to have a vague and subjective character. The same considerations hold in the case of the astral plane. The vibrations of the astral body on their own plane produce the phenomena known as feelings and desires and give rise to all kinds of forms and colours. On the astral plane these forms and colours have an objective character and form a world of their own. But when these vibrations come down into the physical plane and find expression through our sympathetic nervous system they lose many of their characteristics, and nothing is left but that peculiar state of consciousness which we denote by the term 'feeling.'

These examples should help us to understand the difference between the life of the Buddhic plane as it is lived consciously on its own plane in our *ěnandamaya-kosha*, as the Buddhic vehicle is called in *Vedānta*, and the same life as it appears in our physical consciousness after being stepped down through the intermediate vehicles. When a Yogi rises in *Samādhī* to the Buddhic plane after transcending the mental body, he becomes conscious of a new world full of tremendous bliss and knowledge and in comparison with the sea of bliss in which he finds himself bathing, even the bliss of the heaven world pales into insignificance. Words fail to describe the bliss and the transcendent knowledge of the Buddhic plane and all the mystics and seers who have obtained even a glimpse of that plane feel utterly helpless when they try to give to others some idea of the beatific vision they have seen. When the vibrations of the Buddhic plane are, however, stepped down into the physical brain they lose much of their intensity and appear in physical consciousness greatly toned down by transmission through the intermediate planes. Thus the direct

perception of the unity of Life on the Buddhic plane becomes merely an all-embracing compassion and sympathy, direct insight into Truth becomes merely intuition and knowledge of the truths of the higher life. So we see that when we study the manifestations of Buddhi in physical consciousness we are merely dealing with the faint reflections of an indescribable radiance, feeble echoes of a divine music which have their source in the inner and much deeper parts of our being.

After these preliminary considerations we are now in a position to pass on to the main problem before us, namely the clear understanding of the functions of Buddhi in our life as far as this may be possible under our present limitations. And the first point that we have to note in dealing with this problem is that Buddhi appears to be a multi-functional faculty and not a simple faculty as is supposed by many people who have not gone deep into the problems of consciousness. By a multi-functional faculty is meant that it enables consciousness to function in a number of ways which, at least down here, in the realms of the mind, appear different from one another. It is possible that on its own plane these different modes of manifestation may not appear essentially different but they do appear so when we view them through the prism of the intellect. We can best understand this multiple nature of the function of Buddhi by taking the analogous case of the mind. The word 'mind' stands for a very complex thing. It has many faculties, such as those of reasoning, memory, judgement, observation, and these appear one after another in the natural course of its evolution. We may call these different modes of action functions of the mind. Similarly, there are different modes of manifestation or functions of Buddhi. These functions develop one after another, as in the case of the mental functions, with the evolution of the Buddhic vehicle. If we identify Buddhi solely with any one of its functions we shall not only make it difficult to understand it properly but also involve ourselves in all kinds of contradictions and confusions. Many people who read a book like the *Bhagavad-gītā* get bewildered on

account of the failure to keep this fact in mind. Sometimes the word 'Buddhi' is used in one sense, at other times in an entirely different sense. If we remember that in all such cases different functions of Buddhi are referred to, it will be much easier to follow the meaning.

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

Let us start with the simplest function of Buddhi, namely, that of understanding. The modern psychologist considers understanding in its ordinary sense as a function of the mind but it is really a function of the next higher principle, namely Buddhi. The mind merely combines and co-ordinates the impressions received from an object through the different sense-organs and forms them into a composite image but unless and until the light of Buddhi illuminates the image we cannot know that object. We read, again and again, in books dealing with Yoga how impressions received from the outer world through the sense-organs are reflected inwards, first into the mind, then from the mind into the Buddhi, and are then presented before the Jivātmā, the indwelling Self. Many people do not understand what this reflection in Buddhi means. It means the transformation of a thought-image into understanding of the object represented by that image. The lower concrete mind by itself cannot understand any object unless the light of Buddhi shines through its mental image. The mind according to Eastern psychology is mechanical and has not in itself the capacity of understanding anything. So this understanding of objects presented by the mind before the indwelling consciousness is one of the primary and simple functions of Buddhi, and this function is present from the very beginning, even when the Buddhic body is still rudimentary.

The next in order to develop, and somewhat allied to the first, is the function which in common parlance is called intelligence—not intellect but intelligence. We are apt to confuse one with the other but the two are different from each other, although it is difficult to define this difference. We all know vaguely the difference between an intellectual and an intelligent man. The former is one whose mind is well developed, is loaded with facts, and can perform various mental operations easily and effectively. The intelligent man is he who has the capacity to understand the significance, the import of the knowledge he possesses, who has distilled his knowledge and experience and obtained that subtle essence which is known as wisdom. He can see things as they are. To see things as they are is perhaps the most important characteristic of intelligence. All of us are familiar with people who are very intellectual but not intelligent, who are constantly missing the real significance of things and situations. The two world wars are remarkable object lessons on this difference between intellect and intelligence and show us the grim spectacle of what intellect can do when it is not permeated with intelligence. This difference between intellect and intelligence is due to the fact that one has its source in the mind alone while the other has its source in the next spiritual principle, namely Buddhi.

After dealing with these elementary but little recognized functions of Buddhi we may now come to some of those functions which develop in the later stages of its evolution. One of such functions is called discrimination or *Viveka* in Samskrit. We read frequently in books on Yoga and related subjects that without the development of *Viveka* no treading of the Path is possible. It is, as it were, the A.B.C. of spiritual life. What is this faculty which is known as *Viveka*? Generally, it is defined as discrimination between the real and the unreal, but I think we shall get a better idea of it if we consider it as the capacity to see life and its problems as they are essentially. We are living in a world of illusions without being conscious of this fact. When we begin to wake up spiritually we gradually become aware of these illusions; and this

waking up and beginning to see the illusions as they are, one by one, is discrimination or *Viveka*. Although discrimination is usually considered different from intelligence yet if we examine the matter carefully we shall see that the former is merely a more developed form, an extension of the latter—the working of intelligence at a higher level. When the light of *Buddhi* shines on the ordinary problems of daily life it is intelligence. When it illuminates the deeper and more fundamental problems of life and lays bare its illusions, it is discrimination. It is a difference of degree and sphere of action.

There is one important idea which follows from this relation between intelligence and *Viveka*: that in living the spiritual life we need intelligence, in fact, far more intelligence than in leading the ordinary life of the world, and he who makes a mess of his ordinary life, shows lack of intelligence in dealing with its problem, is not likely to be very successful in dealing with the far more difficult and exacting problems of spiritual life. It is necessary to sound a note of warning in this connection because it is thought by many aspirants that when they embark upon the search for Truth they can put their intelligence in cold storage and the grace of God will do everything necessary. This is a comfortable idea which those who want to live in an imaginary world of their own like to cling to, but it is not corroborated by the experience of those who have embarked upon the divine adventure and are actually engaged in the struggle to master their lower nature and penetrate through the illusions of life on the lower planes.

Let us now take another important function of *Buddhi*, namely the capacity to recognize and understand the truths of the spiritual life. We have seen just now that *Viveka* or discrimination enables us to become aware of the illusions of life. This is really only the negative aspect of a function, the positive aspect of which is the direct recognition of truths of the spiritual life—of the real as against the unreal. When we bring a light into a dark room we not only chase away the darkness but we also flood it with light. In the same way when true discrimination is born,

we not only become aware of the illusions of our every day life but also begin to get a glimpse of those realities and truths which are covered up by these illusions.

This fact, that it is Buddhi and not the mind which is the instrument of knowing spiritual truths, is very important and will explain many phenomena we observe in daily life; for example, the great difference which exists between different people in regard to the appreciation and understanding of the truths of the higher life. Some people understand these truths as if instinctively, while to others, they appear unconvincing or even absurd. This understanding is not the result of thinking or reasoning at all. Intuition, as this aspect of Buddhi is called in Western psychology, enables a man to become aware of these truths without going through the cumbersome processes of reasoning, and until intuition is developed, a man is unable to see these truths. Formerly, the intellect was supposed to be the final judge in these matters but reluctantly Western psychology had to recognize the presence in us of another faculty which is called intuition.

Not only are the truths recognized without the aid of the intellect but there is a difference in the nature of the knowledge which comes through Buddhi. Knowledge which comes through the direct perception of Buddhi stands on firm ground and is not liable to be shaken by the ever changing experiences and thoughts of the individual, while that which is based on the intellect alone is always liable to be swept away or vitiated by doubts and misgivings. We meet everywhere people whose faith in the truths of the higher life is constantly wavering. Today, they meet agreeable people and are living in harmonious environment, and they feel that man is divine and all is well with the world and God is in His Heaven. Tomorrow, they meet with apparent injustice, are treated unkindly by their associates and their faith in the divinity of man evaporates and they become bitter and sceptical. It is only when the light of Buddhi shines steadily through our convictions and our faith that we can go through life, treading our path to the goal unfalteringly, unaffected by

all the vicissitudes, difficulties, and even persecutions that we may have to face.

We must be on our guard, however, against taking our irrational and sometimes foolish ideas as the whisperings of intuition. It is far better to remain on the firm though barren ground of the intellect until our Buddhi has become sufficiently developed and gives clear guidance than to abandon ourselves to the impulses and superstitions which are too easily mistaken by emotional people for the voice of God.

Buddhi not only enables us to recognize truths of the higher life but it also gives us reliable guidance in living our ordinary life. We are all faced every day by the difficult problems of life and it is sometimes a most difficult thing to decide how we shall act. The intellect gives us some data which we can use for arriving at a decision but this data is never complete as we rarely know all the facts in a given situation. Besides, our judgement is liable to be biased by our preconceived notions and feelings. So we can never be sure whether our decision is right or wrong. Is there no means of arriving at a correct decision in the affairs of our life? Is there no way of knowing how to act unerringly under all kinds of circumstances? There is, but this capacity can be gained only by developing Buddhi within us. There is always a right way of doing anything, and this right way means the doing of the right thing at the right time by the right method without going through the processes of reasoning. Buddhi will not indicate to us in detail how to do it. That problem of the ways and means has to be worked out by the mind, but it will indicate to us broadly and correctly what to do. The more our spiritual nature develops and the clear light of Buddhi shines constantly through our mind, the more we are enabled to live each moment of the day as it should be lived—in perfect harmony with the Divine Will.

We have seen already that Buddhi is the instrument used in recognizing spiritual truths but it may be worth while dealing, for the sake of illustration, with one of these truths and showing how it appears in the lower physical consciousness. Let us take,

for example, the truth of the unity of Life. Down here, on the lower planes, blinded by illusion, we see ourselves separate from others. We identify ourselves with our bodies, our interests seem to clash, and we therefore fight and trample our fellow creatures in order to gain our separate individual ends. But in the case of some individuals, in varying degrees, in spite of this apparent diversity and conflict of interests, a consciousness of brotherhood, a feeling of sympathy with all living beings is gradually developing. They cannot feel happy with the satisfaction of their individual wants, and their inner nature refuses to be satisfied until the wants of others about them are also fulfilled. When they see others suffer they suffer to some extent with them and on seeing cruelty they feel an urge to spring forward to help their ill-treated brother. This real sympathy and deep concern for the welfare of others should not be confused with the purely idealogical conceptions of brotherhood based on the intellect alone. We see these latter finding expression in the modern world in the most terrible conflicts and being associated with cruelty and callousness of the most barbaric nature.

Whence comes this real feeling of sympathy, this feeling of kinship with all living creatures? Not from the intellect which is the very source of these separative and selfish tendencies. The fact of the matter is that when the Buddhist body is sufficiently developed and the Ego is aware of the unity of Life on the Buddhist plane this knowledge gradually filters down into the lower consciousness and appears there as sympathy and tenderness for all living creatures, two qualities which are such marked characteristics of all saints and sages. In the case of the younger souls whose Buddhist vehicle is not sufficiently developed and this unity is not seen on the higher plane, naturally this all-embracing sense of oneness and sympathy is absent and selfishness and cruelty are the normal modes of expression in their life. To what extent this unity of life is sensed on the lower planes depends upon two factors. First, the degree to which the Ego is conscious on the higher planes and the Buddhist vehicle is developed. Second,

upon the extent to which the passage between the lower and the higher is open and the knowledge of the higher planes can filter down into the mind. The Buddhic vehicle may be well developed, the vision on the higher planes may be clear, and yet the passage between the lower and higher planes may be so blocked by our selfishness, pettiness, and worldly-mindedness that the light of the higher world beats in vain against the walls of the mind and is unable to evoke any sympathetic response. And while living in the all-embracing consciousness of God on the higher planes, we are yet unconscious of our divine nature on the lower planes. If this vision of unity has been seen on the higher planes, the way to bring it down into the lower planes of the mind is to take the mind in hand and work at its purification so that the light of the higher can shine through it without obstruction. For, just as the Causal body is a mirror which reflects the Universal Mind, so the Buddhic vehicle is a mirror which reflects the consciousness of the Universal Life which is immanent in the manifested world and which is shining in different degrees through all living creatures. The more polished the mirror, the more fully it can reflect this Universal Consciousness in a pure and harmonized mind.

From the functions of Buddhi dealt with in the previous paragraphs we can obtain some idea of this spiritual faculty whose development heralds the unfoldment of our divine nature and places in our hands a kind of compass with the help of which we can cross over the stormy waters of life and reach the further shore of enlightenment. One of these functions, as we have seen, is the capacity to know spiritual truths directly without going through the ratiocinative processes of the intellect. The man in whom this faculty has become active simply becomes aware of these truths. This knowledge is not communicated to him from outside, not even from the inner planes by a process of thought transference but wells up, as it were, spontaneously within his heart, just as water does in a spring. He may not know from where it comes, he may not be able to communicate it to others, but it is there, and there is a certainty about this kind of knowledge

which can never come with knowledge acquired through the intellect. Most of the saints and sages who have appeared in the world from time to time were not learned men, did not acquire knowledge from books, and yet, showed an insight into the fundamental problems of life which placed them head and shoulders above their contemporaries.

There are two facts which we should note about this knowledge which comes from the Buddhic plane. In the first place, it is not knowledge concerning ordinary matters which come within the province of the mind. However enlightened a saint may be, if you take to him a problem on differential calculus or ask him a question concerning the mechanism of an automobile engine, he will not be able to give you a solution unless he has previously made a special study of these problems. Acquisition of detailed knowledge with respect to these things is a function of the mind and not of Buddhi and even when an enlightened person wants to know anything about these matters, he has to adopt the ordinary means of obtaining knowledge in those particular fields. It is true that he may be in possession of superphysical powers which make the acquisition of such knowledge easy and sometimes instantaneous, but these means are still in the realm of the intellect and he has to work through the powers and faculties of the mind.

The knowledge which comes through Buddhi is connected with life and its fundamental problems, with the essential relations of things as it were, and is more like a light which illuminates the life within and without us. Buddhi gives us an unerring sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, gives us the capacity of seeing everything in its proper perspective and in its essence, but it does not do away with the necessity of using our mind while we are living in the lower worlds. So let us be quite clear what we should, and what we should not, expect as a result of the development of this faculty. Let us not confuse Buddhic consciousness with Conscience.

The second fact we should note with regard to Buddhic consciousness is its dual character. It is connected, on the one hand,

with phenomena which we associate with the intellect, and on the other, with phenomena connected with the emotions. When the energy of this plane descends into the lower planes its manifestation depends upon the nature of the mechanism through which it works. When Buddhi is reflected in the field of the intellect it appears as spiritual knowledge. When it is reflected in the sphere of the emotions and works through the astral body it appears as spiritual love. The force is one but its expression becomes different or rather appears different to us according to the mechanism through which it is working. We are quite familiar with this kind of phenomenon in the field of physical science where the same force appears in different forms according to the mechanism through which it is working. Thus the same electric current gives light when passed through an electric bulb and heat when passed through a radiator. Generally, it is found that when Buddhic consciousness begins to develop in a man with an emotional temperament it appears as intense love in the well-known form of *Bhakti* while in a man of intellectual type it appears as a clear-eyed vision embracing all life's fundamental problems. As the love or the knowledge deepens, a new state gradually dawns in consciousness, a state which we generally call Wisdom. It is this dual character of Buddhi which makes it possible for us to adopt either of two ways for its unfoldment. We may develop it through *Bhakti*, that intense love which surrenders itself completely to the object of devotion, or through discrimination, that searching intelligence which can pierce through all the illusions of the mind and contact the life that lies beyond the mind. This does not mean, of course, that either love or intelligence by itself will suffice but that one of these aspects of consciousness will be predominant in the early stages and ultimately merge in a state of consciousness which is neither pure love nor pure intelligence but a synthesis of both.

Buddhi has a dual character in a different sense also. In the function of Buddhi referred to above we have been dealing with a function which may be called perceptive. This function

has to do with the perception of things, with "seeing" in the spiritual sense. It may also be called the passive function corresponding to the function of *Jñānendriyas* in the realm of the mind. Even in its expression as spiritual love this function is essentially perceptive, for, spiritual love depends upon the direct or indirect perception of the Unity of Life. But Buddhi has also an active function corresponding to the *Karmendriyas* in the realm of the mind. This function is connected with the role of Buddhi in which it serves as an instrument of the Ātmā and energizes the mind. This function is generally overlooked but a study of Yogic psychology shows that this conative function is as important as the perceptive function. Buddhi is known as the *Vāhan* of Vishnu and Vishnu is not only the Universal Consciousness embracing everything in His Divine Vision but also the Energizer, the Preserver and the Ruler of the world over which He presides. In the case of the Monad this dual function is exercised through the Buddhic vehicle functioning on the Buddhic and Mānasic planes. It is because of this dual function of Buddhi that in the case of real Wisdom 'seeing' the Truth and 'living' the Life are inseparable.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHI

AFTER dealing with the functions of Buddhi we can now come to the main problem, namely the unfoldment of this important faculty. And in discussing this problem it is necessary to point out, in the very beginning, that the unfoldment of the Buddhic consciousness which depends upon the development of the Buddhic vehicle is not an easy task and requires great earnestness of purpose. It is a matter of slow evolution in the case of the large majority of people and requires a series of lives for its growth and perfection. It is true that in a few exceptional cases, where the spiritual nature is already well developed and there is difficulty merely with regard to the bringing down of the higher consciousness into the lower vehicles, the growth may appear startlingly rapid. This is not growth but the rapid release on the lower planes of a power which has already been developed on the higher.

We read in the Jātaka stories how Lord Buddha perfected this faculty and his spiritual nature by living a series of lives of unselfishness and kindness before he became the Bodhisattva. Those stories may not be literally true but they illustrate an important principle that spiritual development, like all things in Nature, is a matter of evolution and slow growth, and those who are not prepared to pay the price of patient self-discipline cannot hope to reap the fruits of enlightenment and liberation from the illusions and sufferings of the lower life. It is necessary to keep these facts in mind in these days of rush and hurry when people want to acquire all things by quick methods, and are impatient of all ends and means which require patience and perseverance and do not even hold out any certain prospect of success in one

life. So we see that a determination to pursue the goal relentlessly, never daunted by failures, never elated by temporary or superficial successes, is the first qualification for treading this path. Those who have not got this determination and take to this line merely as a diversion or reaction from the excitements and attractions of the worldly life, are doomed to disappointment and failure.

If a person has this intensity of purpose and is actuated by right motives, the first requisite in embarking upon this divine adventure is to lay the foundations and this means developing strength, unselfishness and purity of a high order. A strong character is needed because the descent of the Higher Consciousness into the lower vehicles imposes a very severe strain on those vehicles and unless strength of character has been developed already, to a considerable extent, there is danger, nay the certainty, of a breakdown of a more or less serious nature. When we want to take in an electric current of very high voltage it is always necessary to test and improve the insulation of our installation, otherwise there may be serious leakage of current or the whole mechanism may be blown up. Similarly, when we make preparations to bring down the vibrations of the higher spiritual realms into our lower vehicles all our weak parts should be tested and strengthened where necessary; otherwise a disruption of the personality may take place, retarding the progress of the Individuality for a considerable time. This testing and strengthening of our entire nature is carried out in our daily life by the ordeals which come in the form of temptations, difficulties and trials of various kinds, some in the natural course of our life and others especially devised by those great Teachers of our race who have the training of aspirants and pupils in their charge. As a result of this training and self-discipline the aspirant gradually develops strength like that of steel which can bear tremendous strains without breaking.

Another qualification needed in preparing the foundations is an unselfish outlook. For, the greater the strength, the greater the necessity of developing safeguards, so that the strength may

not be utilized for selfish purposes and injuring others. The higher a man rises in the scale of evolution and the greater his powers the more capable he becomes not only of doing good to others but also of harming others. And the Powers who guide the world from the inner planes see to it that such power does not pass, as far as possible, into hands that can use it for any but unselfish purposes. Besides eliminating from our nature that tendency to seek power and prestige for our personal glorification that is so characteristic of all ambitious men, we must try to get rid of that less prominent but more common kind of selfishness which is known as self-centredness. The lives of most of us revolve round our own little personal interests and occupations. Our professional work, our family, our hobbies, our amusements take up practically all our time and thought, and we pass through life deeply absorbed in our own petty little affairs, hardly conscious of anything else. It should not be difficult to see that an attitude such as this cannot serve as a good basis for that all-embracing impersonal life of the Spirit. We have to break this shell which encloses our life and vision if we aspire to come into touch with the higher forms of consciousness. One of the most effective and rapid methods for acquiring this unselfish impersonal attitude is the service of our fellowmen in the right spirit. I have said right spirit purposely, because that is the crux of the problem. There are thousands and thousands of people engaged in the service of their fellowmen who hardly make any progress towards acquiring this unselfish impersonal attitude. They merely create good karma for themselves, and though this helps to some extent in the long run, it does not eliminate effectively from their life that personal element which is the chief impediment in the way of those who are seeking enlightenment. The service should be *Nishkāma* and rendered as an offering to the Supreme.

The third requisite for laying the foundations of this higher life and consciousness is purity—purity of body, mind and emotions. When dealing with the functions of Buddhi it was pointed out that the extent to which this Higher Consciousness

can be brought down into the physical plane depends upon how far the passage between the higher and the lower is unobstructed. And the chief obstruction in the way of the Higher Consciousness is impurity of the lower bodies—especially that of the mind. Just as a mirror covered with dirt cannot reflect the rays of the sun, so a mind which is impure is unable to mirror Truth, and even though our spiritual nature may be sufficiently developed on the higher planes we remain cut off from our divine heritage and divine possibilities on the lower planes. A veil, as it were, separates the higher from the lower and prevents us from seeing the vision of our true Self. So, systematic and patient efforts at purification of our lower nature form an integral part of that training and self-discipline which prepare the ground for the manifestation of the Buddhist consciousness in our ordinary daily life.

The three qualifications to which attention has been drawn, namely, strength, unselfishness and purity must be acquired to an adequate degree if we want to prepare ourselves systematically for the descent of the Divine Life within us. The chief reason why such a large number of people who aspire to experience the realities of the spiritual life remain where they are, without making any definite progress towards their goal, lies in the fact that they do not take any steps to lay the necessary foundations for that life and are content merely with reading and thinking about these things. Reading and thinking do not take us very far. We must take ourselves in hand, and provide the necessary conditions for real progress because we have to work in a world governed by Law.

On the foundations thus laid the superstructure of a truly spiritual life can be raised with safety and certainty, and we may now consider some of the specific methods and practices that have been prescribed from times immemorial for the development of the higher consciousness. It should, however, be borne in mind that the methods which a person has to adopt in this inner unfoldment are to some extent individual. Not only is each individual unique and different from all others but the path which he follows

to perfection is also to some extent unique, an idea which has been so well expressed in *Light on the Path* in the sentence: "Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life." This means that we have to experiment with life, with different methods, and to discover for ourselves our own particular way which will lead us to our goal. There is no cut and dried method which we can follow blindly and reach enlightenment. But although our way is unique, there are certain general lines along which we can experiment in our search for our own individual method, and we may now deal very briefly with some of these general lines of approach.

The first step we have to take in this search is to gather together all our scattered mental energies and concentrate them on the problems of life and the problem of living. As long as we allow the mind to run hither and thither in pursuit of all kinds of objects without any central aim, without any self-direction, we are bound to remain enmeshed in the toils of illusion, and Truth will ever remain hidden from our view. As has been well said, "the mind is the great slayer of the Real, let the disciple slay the slayer"; and we can slay the mind, that is, acquire the capacity to see through its illusions only if we focus the light of consciousness on the mind itself and try to see how it modifies and distorts everything before it reaches our consciousness. It is only when we are able to see everything as coming into our consciousness through the medium of the mind that we can become aware of the illusions it creates. This constant alertness and watchfulness is the only means of developing discrimination, the faculty which in its highest form gradually destroys the unreal world and reveals to us the real world. This is not a thinking process at all, but rather a form of consciousness before which the thinking processes take place and pass in a panoramic view. This intense concentration on the mind and its activities must be practised constantly, day after day, until this attitude becomes habitual, so that although we may be engaged in our ordinary activities we are aware all the time of this ceaseless activity of

the mind. It is easy to see how this practice, if continued for a sufficiently long time, will lead to the gradual shifting of the centre of consciousness from the region of the mind, where it is situated at present, to that which is beyond the mind—the region of Buddhi. For Buddhi is the spiritual faculty with the help of which the mind works and the in-dwelling consciousness becomes aware of the activities of the mind. When the centre of consciousness is stabilized in its new position and life is viewed from the higher plane of Buddhi, instead of the plane of the mind, then will burst forth upon its horizon all those truths which have their origin in the Buddhic plane. This method in which discrimination or *Viveka* is used to pierce through the illusions of life and mind to attain the higher states of consciousness is the basis of *Jñāna Mārga* or the Path of Knowledge.

The method just given represents the approach to Buddhi through the intellect but there is another approach through the emotions, because as has been mentioned already, Buddhi is dual in its character and combines within itself the essence of the intellect and emotions. This second method which is suited to people of highly emotional temperament is the well-known *Bhakti Mārga*. In this method the love and devotion to a particular Deity is made more and more intense by various kinds of practices until fusion of the consciousness of the devotee and the object of devotion takes place. We all know how lightning strikes any object on the surface of the earth. The frictional electricity generated in the clouds induces its opposite charge on the surface of the earth, and as the voltage of electricity in the clouds goes on increasing, the tension between the two opposite charges also becomes greater and greater. A stage comes when the tension becomes so great that the resistance of the air separating the two charges breaks down and a flash of lightning announces the coming together and fusion of the two opposite charges. Something similar takes place when the consciousness of the devotee and that of the object of devotion are fused together in an ecstasy which always precedes the vision of the Mystic. For a time the

consciousness of the devotee escapes into the Buddhic plane and he realizes there that he and his object of devotion are not two but one. From that time onwards, although the direct consciousness of the Buddhic plane may not be present, still, the vision which has been seen serves as a powerful source of inspiration, and the currents from the Buddhic plane continue to flow through the channel which has been created.

No treatment of the methods which are used for the development of the Buddhic consciousness can be complete without a reference to *Gāyatrī* the repetition of which forms an essential part of the daily religious practice of the Hindus. It is true that the way in which this *Mantra* is daily repeated by thousands of orthodox Hindus—without understanding its significance and without paying attention to other aspects of *Sādhana*—does not produce any appreciable results. But still, there can be no doubt that it is one of the most powerful and effective practices devised for developing the Buddhic consciousness, provided the *Japa* is performed in the right way and under the right conditions. The *Japa* of *Gāyatrī* should be considered as a scientific experiment, and as in all scientific experiments, it is necessary to provide the exact conditions if we want to get the desired results. What these conditions are, it is not possible to discuss here but it is necessary to say a few words with regard to the rationale of this religious practice prescribed by the ancient *Rishis* for keeping us in tune with our higher nature.

There are two important factors involved in the repetition of *Gāyatrī*, one purely mechanical, the other related to consciousness. When we aspire intensely and truly for the Light which can come only from within we produce a peculiar tension in our aura which opens up a passage for the descent of forces from the higher planes. We know, as a matter of scientific experiment, that if we have a closed vessel with two openings and we begin to exhaust the vessel by removing air through one of the openings, air tends to rush in and fill the exhausted vessel through the other end. Similarly, when we aspire intensely and earnestly for the

Light of our Higher Self and empty ourselves of our personal thoughts and desires, the Higher Self immediately responds and the Light of Buddhi immediately, almost mechanically, tends to illumine our personality. The response is automatic. But of course, the aspiration must be real, must come out of our hearts, and the *Japa* should not merely be the repetition of a formula or train of thoughts. Now, in *Gāyatrī* if we examine the meaning of the *Mantra*, there is a prayer addressed to the Solar Deity—the Universal Consciousness at the basis of the Solar System—to give us more Light, the Light of Buddhi, and if we repeat this prayer constantly, earnestly, put ourselves in rapport with the underlying idea, then the corresponding force is, as it were, drawn out, sucked in, from the higher planes and makes the higher vehicles glow more brightly, and this increased life on the higher planes is reflected in greater light of real knowledge and a more spiritual outlook in the personality.

The other effect of repeating *Gāyatrī* is of a mechanical nature and depends upon the potency which resides in all true *Mantras*. The effect produced by all *Mantras* depends upon the fact that the whole of this manifested universe is based on vibrations of various kinds, and by selecting vibrations of a suitable nature and combining them scientifically, any result either in the outer or inner worlds can be produced. The *Rishis* of old, before whose gaze the subtler worlds lay open, investigated this problem very thoroughly and devised a number of sound and thought combinations for bringing about certain specific results. These combinations are embodied in *Mantras*, and *Gāyatrī* is considered to be one of the most important of such *Mantras*—a *Mantra* which has been devised specifically for the unfoldment of the Buddhist consciousness. It acts, not only by energizing the Buddhist vehicle itself, but also by harmonizing the lower vehicles and putting them in tune with the higher vehicles, so that the forces from the higher planes can pass unobstructed through the intermediate planes and appear in our physical consciousness. Whatever may be the *modus operandi* of this *Mantra* its effects in the development

of the higher consciousness are certain and important, provided of course all other necessary conditions are fulfilled.

All these lines of development, which have been referred to above, converge towards, and ultimately lead to, the practice of Yoga, and the advanced stages of Buddhist consciousness cannot be reached without going through those intensive mental exercises and self-discipline which the practice of Yoga involves. The full and conscious functioning in the Buddhist vehicle itself is possible only when the mind and the emotions are completely transcended and the candidate is able to rise in *Samādhi* to the Buddhist and still higher planes. Then, and then only, is he able to see life as it is in reality, to know the secret of his being, and to realize actually those eternal truths of the spiritual life which till then he had only felt to be true, and taken for granted on the strength of his intuition. After having seen the vision once, even though he may be again immersed in the lower life, he can never be mastered completely by its illusions, and lives constantly in the light of the Higher Consciousness. Gradually, as he rises in the scale of evolution this transcendent consciousness of the Buddhist plane becomes a part of his normal consciousness, and he then descends to the lower planes only when his work requires his presence down here.

It will be seen from what has been said above that self-discipline of the right type is a necessary part of the training for the development of Buddhist consciousness. It is true that the attainment of Buddhist consciousness is a matter of perception of the inner realities but this perception is possible only through vehicles which are pure, tranquil and harmonized. These conditions are brought about not merely by wishing but by prolonged and rigorous self-discipline which means transmuting our spiritual ideals into right living and thinking. The consideration of what these conditions are and how they can be brought about is a part of the Yogic philosophy and technique which has been discussed briefly later on.

CHAPTER XIV

INTELLECT AND INTUITION

WE have dealt already with the functions of the intellect and intuition in previous chapters. But as these functions are not easily distinguishable and likely to be confused with each other it is necessary to go a little further into this question and obtain a clearer idea about the relation of intellect and intuition and the manner in which they differ from each other. For, the confusion between ordinary intellectual knowledge and true wisdom is responsible for much of the stagnation we find in our spiritual life and the undue emphasis which is generally placed on the value of intellectual knowledge relating to religion and philosophy. As a result of this confusion mere learning surrounded by the paraphernalia of religious life is mistaken for spirituality and many aspirants remain satisfied with the superficial satisfactions of intellectual knowledge and never realize that the false sense of security which they derive from such knowledge is illusory and can disappear completely by just a minor change in their outer circumstances. A proper understanding of the relation between intellect and intuition enables us to assess intellectual knowledge at its correct value and to search for a more stable and reliable basis for our so-called spiritual life.

Before we proceed further let us dwell for a while on this word 'intuition'. On account of the nebulous significance usually attached by the ordinary man to intuition it appears to be a very weak and anaemic word for indicating a faculty of the greatest importance in the discovery of the Reality within us. The adoption of the word 'intuition' for indicating that faculty has, I think, been a mistake. The word 'intuition' suited the Western philosopher

whose philosophy is mostly academic and accepts haltingly the possibility of knowing anything about the realities of life in a deeper sense than what is possible through the instrumentality of the intellect. Not knowing or not fully recognizing the possibility of perceiving directly the realities of the inner life the word 'intuition' served his purpose very well, for it kept such possibility vague and indefinite and the intuitive faculty still more vague and indefinite.

But according to Eastern philosophy the intellect is considered a very ineffective instrument of knowing and it is held that true knowing is possible only through the fusion of one's mind or consciousness with the object sought to be known. This 'knowing by fusing' or realization is direct, vivid, dynamic and not subject to error or illusion and it is therefore necessary to have another word with a more definite connotation to denote the faculty through which such realization is attained. The word 'Buddhi' frequently used in theosophical literature is a more satisfactory word but it suffers from the disadvantage that in Hindu philosophy it stands for a very large number of functions in the realm of the mind such as perception, discrimination, reason, etc. So a more suitable word denoting the instrument of attaining direct knowledge is needed. But as the introduction of a new word coined for this purpose may create still more confusion let us for the present use the current words, intuition and Buddhi, keeping in mind their limitations and inadequacy.

In trying to understand the functions of the intellect and Buddhi and the different types of knowledge which are attained through them, let us start with an experience on the physical plane which serves to illustrate these differences. Suppose you enter a hall in a museum on a dark night to investigate what it contains. You grope your way cautiously in the dark among the various objects which are present, touching them, feeling their different parts and thus trying to find out what they are. You feel the leg of a table and conclude that it is long cylindrical object. Then you touch its top and revise your

opinion and decide that it is a plane surface. In this way you go from one object to another making a mental note of their character and their positions in the hall. While you are going through this process of investigation the faint light of dawn begins to break through into the hall and enables you to see faintly the various objects filling the hall. The light gets stronger and stronger and you see the objects more and more clearly until all the objects in the hall are revealed to your vision clearly, truly and in their correct proportions without your having to move from where you stand. The investigation of the objects in the dark is analogous to the functioning of the intellect and seeing them in the light of the sun to that of Buddhi. We may say, therefore, in a general way that Buddhi sees things directly, truly, wholly and in their true perspective while intellect sees them indirectly, partially and out of perspective.

The first important point we have to note about the functions of Buddhi is that it is concerned not so much with facts as with the mutual relations and significance of facts. Wisdom which is due to the illumination of the mind with the light of Buddhi is essentially the capacity to see facts in their proper perspective and in their true significance. A mind full of facts even though they are correct may be quite unintelligent if there is not the light of Buddhi to co-ordinate those facts and show their real significance. The progress of modern Science and especially the discovery of atomic power has shown very clearly the dangers inherent in the development of the intellect without a corresponding development of Buddhi which adds wisdom to knowledge.

How the perception of a new relationship between facts can alter completely the significance of those facts will be clear from a simple example. Suppose a man loses his son while he is still a baby and that baby is brought up elsewhere without the father knowing anything about it. The grown-up son comes to the house of the father, and is engaged as a servant and works in that capacity for years. Then one day the father discovers that the servant who has been working for him is his lost son.

The discovery of this fact changes immediately their whole relationship. Nothing has been added to the facts in the situation and yet the discovery of the relationship alters completely the significance of those facts and thus changes fundamentally their relationship. That is how Buddhic perception can change completely our outlook and attitudes and consequently our life without any changes in the outer circumstances.

Let us take a few examples of the tremendous change brought about in our life and outlook as a result of the discovery of new relationships in the course of our inner unfoldment. Let us take first the relation between the *Jivātmā* and *Paramātmā* or the individual soul and God. This is one of the greatest mysteries of our life and is resolved completely in the last stage of human evolution as described so beautifully in the words of *Light on the Path*: 'Inquire of the inmost the One, of its final secret which it holds for you through the ages.' But though the complete solution of this mystery comes at the last stage, at the very threshold of *Nirvāna* or Liberation, the mystery begins to be sensed from a very early stage in our spiritual unfoldment. And this 'sensing' of the mystery, if I may use such a phrase, finds expression in the development of true devotion, love or *Bhakti* towards the Centre or Source of our being. This 'sensing' is nothing but the reflection into the lower mind of the Buddhic perception in various degrees of the intimate relationship that already exists at the deepest level of our being. But it is enough to transform even the worst sinner into a real saint.

Then we come to another relation of great importance in the wider life of the soul, namely the relation between the different souls amongst themselves. Since all the *Jivātmās* are divine in essence and centres of consciousness in the One Reality, the awareness of their true relationship to one another is really dependent upon the awareness of their relationship to the One Life of which they are different expressions. So the mystery of our brotherhood is related closely to the mystery of our divine origin. In fact, the two mysteries are two aspects of the same mystery.

It will be seen, therefore, that true realization of the brotherhood of all living creatures depends upon the realization, in various degrees, of the Fatherhood of God and awareness of our divine nature. Till then brotherhood, which exists only on the spiritual planes in its real sense, can mean only as an intellectual ideal or at best a feeling of sympathy and genuine kindness towards all. It is only to the extent that we 'sense' our divine nature and the unity of Life that we can feel and know true brotherhood. The problems of self-discovery and of the realization of Universal Brotherhood are, therefore, really one and not two. The ordinary forms of brotherhood based on an intellectual ideal or self-interest or even feeling are easily corruptible. If your brother does not do what you want him to do or harms you, you begin to hate him and may go to the extent of destroying him. Not so the true brotherhood based on the Buddhist perception of our common origin and the One Life we all share.

The fact that Buddhi has to do with relations is also seen in its functions of perception, which is one of its main functions according to the psychology of Yoga. What is perception? It is the relation which brings together the perceiver and the perceived, or the subject and the object. When the subject-object relationship disappears, as it does in *Samādhi*, the three, namely the perceiver, perceived and perception, fuse together in one integrated state of consciousness and that means the realization of the reality of the object by the subject.

Then we come to another function of Buddhi which is of great importance for the aspirant who has just set his foot on the Path. This may be called the discriminative function. The capacity to discriminate between right and wrong and to do the right at all costs must be acquired at an early stage if we are to tread this Path safely. The purification and tranquillization of the mind, which is necessary for the light of Buddhi to shine through it, depends to a great extent upon how far our life is governed by righteousness. By righteousness I do not mean

following a particular code of conduct based on any religion or ideology, but a constant habit of doing naturally and without effort or struggle what we consider right as we see it. Right and wrong are relative things and what we may consider right may not be the right thing under the circumstances, but the purity of motive has two direct results. First, it frees us from inner conflict which bedevils the life of all unscrupulous people and produces a very unhealthy state of mind. Secondly, it purifies the mind gradually and makes it possible for the light of *Buddhi* to illuminate it more and more. One of the most undesirable consequences of compromising with evil is that it very quickly involves us in a vicious circle from which it is very difficult to get out. Evil action, thought and emotion cloud the *Buddhi* more and more, and the clouding of *Buddhi* prevents us, more and more, from seeing whether a particular action is right or wrong, thus tending to involve us further in evil. That is how it happens that normal sensible people gradually slide into a life of evil and then are not even aware of the fact that they are doing anything wrong. The discriminative function of *Buddhi* has been shut off in their case.

Just as we involve ourselves in a vicious circle by unrighteousness, similarly we create for ourselves a virtuous circle—if I may be allowed to coin this new phrase—by doing right. Every time we do what we consider to be right, irrespective of the consequences which may accrue to us, we purify our mind to some extent and the light of *Buddhi* shines a little more brightly through it. This strengthens our discriminative faculty, and the capacity to see the right and the will to do the right increases *pari passu*. This action and reaction frees us ultimately not only from all tendency to do wrong, but also enables us to know almost instantaneously in each situation what is the right thing to be done. There can be no wooden rules which can be followed mechanically in leading a life of righteousness, for each situation in life is a new situation requiring discrimination and action. The only thing which can enable us to know unerringly what is the

right course under a particular set of circumstances and can give us the strength and will to take that course is a purified mind through which the light of Buddhi shines steadily and undimmed. It is because Buddhi deals with relations that it enables us to discriminate between right and wrong in every situation.

Having dealt with some of the important functions of Buddhi, we are now in a position to consider briefly a few facts which show the difference between knowledge which is a product of the mere intellect and wisdom which results when the intellect is illuminated by the light of Buddhi.

The first thing which strikes one in this connection is that there can be an impassable gulf between profession and practice in the case of intellectual knowledge, but this is not possible in the case of wisdom. A merely intellectual man, whose knowledge is based on the intellect alone, can talk, lecture and write brilliantly on the highest doctrines of religion, philosophy and ethics, but it is possible that his life is an utter negation of all those things which he professes. In the case of a man who has realized these truths through Buddhist perception this is not possible because he *knows* that these truths pertaining to the inner life are true. A man who knows that *Adharma* or unrighteousness leads to suffering and demoralization avoids *Adharma* as an ordinary man avoids poison knowing that it will kill him.

A course of action indicated by wisdom is not only followed invariably by right action but there is no hesitation, no regret even if the action leads to present loss or discomfort or suffering because of the utter certainty that what is right must be for our good in the long run. This difference in the translation of ordinary knowledge and wisdom respectively into action is derived from the very nature of the Buddhist faculty. On the Buddhist plane, perception and action are inseparable. Doubt or uncertainty is the retarder of action and they do not exist in that realm where everything is *Pratyaksha* or self-evident. Doubt bedevils all activities of the purely intellectual man and that is why action

may or may not follow the right decision. Whenever we are unable to translate into action what we want to do, there is always some hidden doubt lurking somewhere in our mind though we may not be aware of it. It is not so much a question of will-power as that of right and clear perception. It does not require much will-power to abstain from taking anything if we know it contains poison.

The means of acquiring knowledge and wisdom also differ according to the nature of the two. Since knowledge has content, the edifice of knowledge has to be built up, brick by brick, or like a picture, has to be painted, stroke by stroke, with the brush. It involves time and energy. But since wisdom has really no content and is merely a matter of seeing relations and the significance of facts known by the intellect, nothing has to be built up. It is all a question of increasing the penetrating power of perception and seeing deeper into things. The more penetrating the perception, the deeper the wisdom. One penetrating flash of Buddhist perception can change completely the life of a man and make him see the realities of life in a manner which is not possible even by devoting many lives to the study of the deeper problems of life. A flash of lightning can reveal a landscape in a manner which is not possible by trying to explore it with a lantern on a dark night. The first is instantaneous, integrated and in the correct perspective while the latter is piecemeal and out of perspective. The two not only take different periods of time but are not the same in their essential nature. So, knowledge is acquired by reading books, engaging in discussions or hearing lectures which provide the raw material of facts of different kinds needed in the edifice of knowledge. These have to be arranged properly, gaps have to be filled up, ideas have to be clarified, weak points have to be strengthened. But in acquiring wisdom we have only to increase the clarity of vision by removing the impurities, distortions and complexes present in the mind and their wrong modes of expression in action. We have to penetrate inwards, to perceive at a deeper level, to rise to a higher level of

consciousness and to open the passage between the mental and the spiritual.

What has been said above with regard to knowledge and wisdom will enable the aspirant to clarify his mind as to what he has to strive after, to decide how far he should rely on and devote himself to purely intellectual pursuits, to adopt the right means of developing wisdom, and lastly, to test to what extent his knowledge is intellectual or intuitional. To distinguish between the two, a few rough and simple objective tests with the purpose of judging the general condition of our minds may be applied as follows:

(1) Do we feel hesitation or disinclination in following our right decisions or well considered conclusions by appropriate action?

(2) Are our right decisions followed by action naturally, effortlessly and without resistance from the 'lower mind'?

(3) Do our conclusions and convictions undergo constant changes, being quite definite and full of certainty today and all in a mess and full of doubts tomorrow?

(4) Have our conclusions to be changed or renewed constantly in the light of new facts which we are discovering?

(5) Do new facts and experiences merely make more clear, vivid and definite the basic structure of our knowledge or do we have to make frequently major changes whenever we come across a new set of facts or experiences?

(6) Have we to run constantly to other people for advice when we are in difficulties and cannot make up our minds as to what course to follow under the circumstances?

(7) Are we always in a habitually agitated and unhappy state of mind, out of harmony and out of tune with everything and everybody?

The answer to these questions will give us some idea as to what extent our mind can receive the illumination of Buddhi.

It will be seen from all that has been said above that understanding clearly the distinction between intellect and intuition is not merely a theoretical problem of psychology but affects intimately our life in different ways. Upon the proper understanding of this distinction depends our sense of values in life and our ability to organize effectively our efforts to discover our Self.

CHAPTER XV

THE ROLE OF ĀTMĀ IN OUR LIFE

AMONG people who have been brought up in the religious tradition that Truth is something to be found within oneself, in the depths of one's consciousness, and not in the outer exoteric forms of religion, the idea is widely prevalent that when a seeker penetrates into the innermost depths of his being in his search for God or Reality he finally arrives at a state of enlightenment which may be considered ultimate, after which nothing further remains to be sought or striven after. After arriving at this stage the Enlightened One is supposed to rest through eternity in the blissful state which he has attained. The idea of finality in relation to our spiritual goal and the attainment of perfection is, however, a mistaken conception based upon a very superficial acquaintance with the real problems of religious life. Those who are familiar with the esoteric side of religion have always known the fact that as far as spiritual development is concerned, there is, and can be no finality in this field. This truth has been very clearly expressed in various texts scattered throughout Occult literature. Thus it is said in *Light on the Path*: 'The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit;' and at another place in the same book it is said: 'You will enter the light but you will never touch the Flame.' These texts point clearly to the fact that in the voyage of Self-exploration when a seeker penetrates inwards into the depths of his being and finds greater and greater splendours and deeper and deeper realities he never reaches a stage when it can be said to him 'Thus far and no further!'

As has been shown already in Chapter 2 man's spiritual soul is triple in its nature—*Ātmā*, *Buddhi*, *Manas*—and functions on the Higher Mental, the Buddhic and the Ātmic planes. So the Ātmic vehicle of consciousness is, as it were, the core of the spiritual soul, the *Jīvātmā*, and from it is governed not only the life of the personality but also that of the Individuality. It will thus be seen that as far as the human side of man's nature is concerned, the Ātmā is the ultimate principle in the *Jīvātmā* and this no doubt accounts for the wide-spread idea that the *Ātmā* is the ultimate goal of our efforts and the attainment of the Ātmic consciousness means the liberation of the human soul. But we should not forget that although, as far as our human evolution is concerned, the Ātmic plane marks the limit of our Self-realisation, there are other planes beyond, and when our human evolution has been completed new vistas of achievement, of which we can have no conception now, open out before us and our unfoldment continues on the still subtler planes. That the Ātmic consciousness is not the ultimate goal of Self-realisation is clear from Sūtra IV. 25 of the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali which refers to the further recession of consciousness into the eternal plane of the *Purusha*.

Before we take up the almost impossible task of understanding the functions of Ātmā, the Divine Life as it manifests through the Ātmic vehicle, it is necessary to remind ourselves again of the tremendous limitations under which the human intellect works and the consequent difficulty of understanding, even partially, these verities of the spiritual life. The further removed from the sphere of the intellect any principle within us is, the greater is the difficulty of understanding it. Such understanding would indeed be impossible but for the fact that these principles exist within us, however deeply buried they may be, and faint echoes from these inner regions can, therefore, evoke a feeble response in our mind and enable us to catch glimpses, here and there, of our transcendental nature. It is with the consciousness of this tremendous handicap and with a reverent attitude that we should approach these problems, for where there is true aspiration and

desire for knowledge, the Divine Life within us does somehow respond by illuminating the mind to some extent.

In dealing with the role of Ātmā in our life a few words may be said about the nature of the vehicle through which consciousness works on the Ātmic plane. As is known to students of Occultism who can use their higher clairvoyant powers, the Causal body the vehicle of the Higher Mind, is an ovoid corresponding to the auras of the astral and lower mental bodies. This means that the vehicle of consciousness on the Higher Mental plane has still an enclosing surface, however much that surface may expand with evolution and under the impulse of spiritual forces radiating from within. When we come to the next higher vehicle which enables us to come into touch with the Buddhic plane—the *Ānandamaya Kosha* of Vedānta—we may imagine that the bounding surface disappears and the Buddhic body—at least as far as it can be conceived by the intellect working through the physical brain—appears like a star—a centre of light with rays radiating in all directions. On the next higher plane also, the Ātmic vehicle may also be imagined to consist of a single atom of the Ātmic plane in which consciousness has the capacity of expanding and contracting alternately with inconceivable rapidity—expanding to include the consciousness of the whole plane and contracting to a point to give an individual colouring to this all-embracing consciousness. In this way can be reconciled in the same consciousness the diametrically opposed and seemingly incompatible attributes of all-pervasiveness and individuality, so difficult to understand by the human intellect and so well expressed in the description of this transcendental consciousness in the well-known phrase: ‘with its circumference nowhere and its centre everywhere’.

It will serve no useful purpose to go any further into details with regard to this question which is really outside the province of the human intellect, and we may now come to the consideration of the more important and practical question of the functions of Ātmā or rather its functions as they appear to us and affect us

in the lower regions of the personality. For, what these functions are on its own transcendental plane, no one who is living in the lower worlds of illusions can understand.

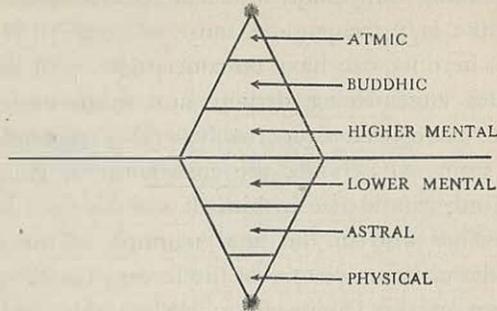
As has been said already the plane of Ātmā is the region from which operates the Will-Power of the Logos which is driving the gigantic machinery of the Solar System. Have we ever tried to think from where comes this tremendous power which keeps the planets moving in their orbits in the heavens, which keeps the electrons whirling in the atoms, which is providing for the evolution and growth of innumerable lives and is mightily and sweetly ordering all things? From the Will of the Solar Logos working on the Ātmic plane and supplying power of the whole Solar System on all the planes. The Sun is His symbol and representative on the physical plane, a tremendous vortex of electro-magnetic energy supplying light, heat and other kinds of energies to the physical planets. But on every plane it is His power and energy which is carrying on the stupendous work of building and unbuilding the forms which embody His life, it is His Will which is exercising an unceasing and resistless pressure in the direction of evolution.

As the Ātmic plane, as a whole, is the source of power for the Solar System, so the Ātmic vehicle of a single Jivātmā serves as an instrument whereby that general and all-pervading power is specialized and then utilised for its own individual purposes. It is the plug point, as it were, connecting the set of vehicles belonging to a particular soul with the Power House, through which the power needed by the soul for different purposes can be taken. Through the Ātmic vehicle is governed and regulated the evolution of the *Jivātmā* through aeonic periods of time and it is through the power derived from this source that the *Jivātmā* is able to overcome all difficulties, to pass through all kinds of trials and ordeals, life after life, and ultimately, triumph over all obstacles to reach perfection.

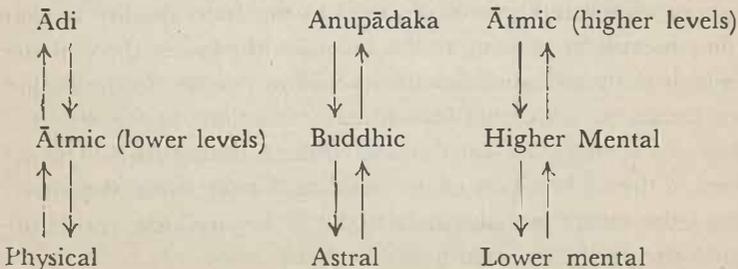
In the case of those who have been able to pierce through the intervening planes and have obtained a glimpse of the plane

the overwhelming impression made on consciousness as a result of this glimpse is a tremendous sense of power and strength of which down here we can have no conception. All the difficulties and obstacles engendering despair and faint-heartedness down here seem to have been swept away, and a tremendous sense of confidence seems to pervade the consciousness, giving the individual not only confidence in himself and his final triumph over all obstacles but also in the final triumph of the evolutionary scheme, of the ultimate victory of the forces of good over evil and the fulfilment of the Divine Plan. When this consciousness of the Ātmic plane is reflected below in the personality it loses much of its intensity and vividness but still it gives rise to a certain degree of confidence and sense of power which we always find in different degrees in all great men of strong will. Those who have ever been in a big power house of modern design will perhaps remember the peculiar sense of power which pervades the very atmosphere of the place. Outwardly, there is nothing to be seen except the movement of ordinary machinery but behind that movement one can almost feel the tremendous invisible electrical power generated by the huge dynamos. A feeling resembling this in some ways is experienced by a person in whom true spiritual will has begun to awaken. He feels himself in the presence of a tremendous and subtle power which he senses but is yet unable to manipulate.

Before we deal with the expression of the life and consciousness of the Ātmā in the life of the personality, it is necessary to remind the reader about the inversion which takes place when consciousness descends from the level of the Individuality to that of the personality. Owing to this inversion the lowest three planes on which the personality functions stand in relation to the higher three planes on which the Individuality functions, as the reflected image of a building in water stands to the building itself. In the reflection the highest part of the building is reflected in the lowest part of the image and the lowest part of the building meets the highest part of the inverted image as shown below :



As a result of this inversion the Ātmic consciousness is, as it were, reflected in the physical, the Buddhic in the astral, and the Higher Mental in the Lower Mental. This reflection means not only some kind of similarity of characteristics in the corresponding planes but also a more direct connection and rapport between them. Thus the life and consciousness of the Ātmic plane somehow finds a mysteriously fuller expression through the physical plane than on the other two planes on which the personality functions, in spite of the fact that the physical is furthest removed from the Ātmic. Similarly Buddhic consciousness has a mysterious relation with the astral and, of course, the relation of the Higher Mental and lower mental is easily seen and well known. What has been said above with regard to the relations and correspondences between the Ātmic and physical, the Buddhic and the astral, and the Higher Mental and lower mental may be represented diagrammatically:



It is not necessary to go into this interesting question here in detail but it may be pointed out with regard to the relation between the Ātmic and the physical that the life of the personality in any incarnation is full and dynamic only on the physical plane and therefore the period spent on the physical plane is the most important. On the physical plane man is complete, can initiate causes and grow in capacities while in the life after death, on the astral and mental planes, he is merely reaping and consolidating the results of what he has done in the previous life on the physical plane. It is because man as a personality is complete only on the physical plane that he can work out his Liberation only during physical life and not in the life after death on the astral and mental planes. The life lived on the physical plane is thus the most significant in an incarnation and this is no doubt due to the fact that it reflects and specially embodies the life of the Ātmā, the highest aspect of the Individuality.

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

Since we are dealing in this chapter with the role of Ātmā in our life, we may dwell for a while on the approach to the Ātmā in physical life and how we can draw nearer to this Divine Principle within us and try to establish our centre of consciousness in that Principle. In this process, as said above, action plays a predominant role. By action is not meant here the mere activity of the physical body but all activity initiated from within to transmute our ideals into dynamic living and make the personality a mere expression and instrument of the Higher Self. Although the Higher Self is seated in the heart of every human being his

will is not able to find expression in the personality partly due to the inadequacy and resistance of the lower vehicles and partly owing to egoism and the illusions in which the personality is involved. It is only when the personality actually begins to change its life and attitudes and to translate the spiritual ideals into spiritual life by *Sāadhanā* or Self-Culture that the Higher Self begins to find fuller expression through it, acquires increasing control over it and finally becomes the centre of its life and consciousness. So Self-initiated action which forms the basis of Self-Culture is the method of approach to the Ātmā and in its highest aspects merges with the technique of Yoga.

It will be seen from what has been said above that our main work in relation to the Ātmā is to make this Divine Principle the centre of our life, or to put it in another way, to become Self-Centred instead of being self-centred. The Ātmā is a Self-illuminated, Self-determined, Self-sufficient Principle and so there can be no question of developing it. All that we have got to do is to provide those conditions in which it can find increasing expression in our life. This is done effectively and fully by the practice of Higher Yoga. But some preliminary work has to be done in this connection by the personality in order to provide conditions in which Yoga can be practised successfully. This preliminary work has many aspects but we can deal here with only a few of these by way of illustration.

It has been said above that the Ātmā is a Self-illuminated, Self-determined, Self-sufficient Principle. How can these divine attributes find expression in the life of the personality? Self-illumination in the case of the personality means that it should be able to get the knowledge it needs from within in an increasing measure instead of depending upon all kinds of external sources. This is possible to some extent when it can put itself in touch with the Causal body as pointed out in a previous chapter. Self-sufficiency means that we should depend for our happiness upon the source of *Ānāda* which exists within us and not be completely dependent upon external stimuli in this respect. This is possible

when we are in direct contact with the Buddhic vehicle or Ānandamaya-Kosha as it is called in Vedantic terminology. The third attribute or Self-determination means that we should make the spiritual will of the Ātmā predominant in our life and gradually free the personality from the influence of desires. This is possible when the personality on the physical plane is to some extent in rapport with the Ātmic plane and has become subservient to the Divine Will.

When we try to become Self-illuminated, Self-sufficient and Self-determined in some measure, the centre of our Consciousness shifts inwards gradually and our life flows from and is governed by the spiritual part of our being in an increasing measure. It is only when this has been done to some extent that the practice of Yoga becomes possible and through this practice the personality and the Individuality are both made effective instrument and expression of the Ātmā.

It will be seen from what has been said above that though the Ātmā is triple in its nature, corresponding to the Sat-Chit-Ānanda aspects of Divinity, and has all the three attributes of Self-illumination, Self-sufficiency and Self-determination, the last is its special characteristic. The first two are exercised chiefly through the two lower vehicles of the Individuality, namely the Causal and the Buddhic vehicles, while the last has its source in the Ātmā itself. Now, Self-determination finds expression in the personality as spiritual Will-power, and therefore, in considering the role of Ātmā in the realm of the personality we may deal particularly with the question of strengthening the Will. Until our will has become strong, which means that our life is governed by the Will of the Ātmā and not by the whims and desires of the personality, it is difficult to tread the path of Rāja Yoga and reach the goal of enlightenment and Liberation.

As there are many misconceptions prevalent about the nature of Will-power let us first try to understand clearly the essential nature of this most important element of our character. It will help us to gain this end if we first clear the ground by showing

the relation between Will on the one hand and *Prāṇa*, Desire and Action on the other.

The word 'power' is now used in a definite sense in Science to denote the capacity for exerting mechanical force, and many people who have not clearly thought about these things vaguely associate Will-power with the capacity for exerting force. This capacity for exerting force, whether on the physical or super-physical planes, is really a function of *Prāṇa*, that universal energy to which reference is frequently made in literature dealing with Yoga. It is through *Prāṇa* that the matter of the different planes is moved and manipulated; and although the nature of *Prāṇa* varies according to the plane on which it is working, one of its functions is the same in every case, namely to bring about all kinds of changes in the matter of the planes. Now Will-power is quite different from *Prāṇa* and its phenomena belong to a different category altogether. But in spite of this difference there is a close connection between Will-power and *Prāṇa*. This connection consists in the fact that exertion of Will moves the currents of *Prāṇa* through the medium of the mind on every plane and through these currents it is possible to bring about any kind of change in the matter of the corresponding plane. The relation may be compared to that existing between magnetism and electricity on the physical plane. Although the two phenomena are quite different, still the movement of a magnet induces an electrical current in a wire within its sphere of influence and this current can then be made to do all kinds of work. Of course, the analogy is not perfect but it helps us to understand how two forces which are outwardly of an entirely different nature can yet profoundly affect each other.

Then we have to distinguish Will from Desire, the form which Will assumes on the lower planes in the earlier stages of human evolution. Spiritual Will in the higher worlds of the Spirit is free and ever works in harmony with the Divine Will but when it manifests in the lower worlds it is liable to be harnessed by the illusion-bound personality for its own separate individual ends,

which may or may not be in harmony with the Divine Will. When working under these conditions it takes the form of Desire, which is therefore only the power of will which has been degraded and utilized by the lower self for its own independent selfish purposes.

The individual consciousness working on the lower planes, by identifying itself with the lower vehicles develops a false 'I' or personality which follows its own whims and inclinations instead of co-operating with the Divine Will in the fulfilment of the divine purpose. The force directing and controlling this lower self is Desire and under its powerful impetus evolution takes place in the earlier stages of human life. Later on, in the final stages of the evolutionary cycle, and with the dawning of the spiritual consciousness in man, a struggle begins between the Desire nature of the personality and the Spiritual Will of the Higher Self, a struggle which continues with increasing intensity until desire is completely vanquished and the Spiritual Will of the High Self reigns supreme.

As the relation between Desire and Will has been dealt with already in connection with the functions of the astral body, it is not necessary to go further into this question here, but it may be worthwhile giving one or two examples of the confusion which is frequently found in the minds of people on this subject. We sometimes come across people who have the capacity of relentlessly pursuing any object upon which they have set their hearts and in spite of all kinds of difficulties succeeding in gaining their end. Such individuals are considered men of great Will-power, and from one point of view they are rightly so considered. But we have to remember in cases like this that the pursuit of such ends is associated with selfishness and lack of wisdom and, therefore, reduces the phenomenon to the plane of Desire. In spite of the outer similarity and the fact that the source of power in the case of Desire and Will is the same, it is not correct to regard such manifestations as those of pure Will. Of course, ordinary obstinacy which is also sometimes mistaken for Will-power is

really a symptom of weak will. It is the natural reaction of a soul which has not got the necessary confidence to deal with situations as they arise and therefore sticks in a wooden manner to a particular line of action against all reason and commonsense. The real weakness underlying the outer mask of strength is sometimes brought out by a complete change, or even reversal, in the course the person has been following by any trifling incident or event that may occur.

Another important point which we should clearly grasp in trying to understand the function of Will is the relation between Will and Action. Modern psychology recognizes the intimate nature of this relation and some psychologists go so far as to say that the chief function of Will is to supply the motive power for Action. The relation of Will to Action may be compared to that of potential and kinetic energy. In a battery the energy is present in a potential form at a certain voltage and remains potential as long as the terminals are not joined by a conducting medium. On joining the terminals by means of a wire, the resistance is reduced and the potential energy begins to get converted into kinetic energy. The Divine Will at the centre of every human soul is present as potential power of infinite voltage. It is *drawn out* as Desire in the earlier stages of human evolution according to the development of the lower vehicles and supplies the motive power of ordinary action. It goes out as spiritual Will in the higher stages of evolution and is then the motive power of *Nishkāma-karma*.

The intimate relation between Will and Action is also indicated by the remarkable manner in which Action strengthens the Will, or rather to put it more correctly, enables it to find a fuller expression in our life. The phrase 'strengthening the Will' is really a misnomer because Will itself is the source of all strength and nothing therefore can strengthen the Will. Ordinary observation as well as researches in psychology have shown very conclusively that Action plays a very important part in the development of character. It is true that thoughts and emotions ultimately

tend to materialize in action, and in changing our character we must also reform our emotional and mental habits, but one of the most important facts which has been discovered in connection with Character-Building is that unless and until thoughts and emotions are made to express themselves in corresponding actions, no fundamental change in our life can be effected. The road to hell is proverbially paved with good intentions and the utter inadequacy of merely forming pious resolutions is unfortunately too well known to people who are content merely with the wish to reform themselves. A mere resolution or a thought-image is a rather ineffective force as long as it remains in the realm of the mind, but give it a practical expression, and the whole inner mechanism of our life is galvanized, and forces are immediately released to bring about the required change and to make this change a permanent part of our character. Take a miserly man who wants to develop generosity in his character. He thinks of charitable deeds, day after day imagines himself doing such deeds in his daily life, but he does not do any charitable deed. Do you think he is very much nearer his ideal? No! But let him actually give something to a really needy person and then see the result. He changes appreciably his character by just doing that act, and the whole mechanism of his inner life begins to move. Of course, he will have to repeat such acts a number of times before the characteristic can become a permanent part of his character. It is true every time he thinks of charitable deeds he makes it easier for himself to do such a deed. But the fact remains that it is the charitable act which starts the process of change, precipitates the mental forces in the form of habit. Without this act the mind may remain saturated with the idea but nothing definite happens.

So let all those who are trying to change their habits take note of this important fact: Thought is the father of action, thought strengthens the tendency for a particular kind of action, but it is the actual action which precipitates thought, brings about a real change in the outer and inner life, makes pathways for the nervous

system and stabilizes the mental forces in the new mental grooves, and what is most important, enables the Will to manifest and dominate the lower vehicles more fully.

The relation of Will to *Prāṇa*, Desire and Action considered in the foregoing paragraphs, will have shown that although Will stands at the back of and is the potential force behind these, it itself does not take a direct part in the activities of which it is the centre. Its function in life is that of a king who sits on his throne, whose mere presence there makes the whole administrative machinery in his kingdom work according to his will. He does not run about and do things. That is the function of his ministers and other officers of the state. And yet it is his subtle power which drives the whole machinery of the state and if he were not at the heart and centre of things, the administration would collapse and there would be confusion and chaos. This analogy will perhaps also serve to explain the mystery of *Purusha* who is depicted as the Silent Watcher in the Sāṃkhyan philosophy. He is not a passive spectator, but like the king mentioned above does not mix with the activities that are going on around him. He is above all those activities and yet is their very cause and potential power.

The true spiritual power which comes directly from the Ātmic plane can be exercised only under certain rigorous conditions which are not easy to fulfil and that is why it is so rare. It has been shown before that as soon as this power is contaminated with the personal element, it is degraded to the lower form of Desire and loses its pure and irresistible character. So it is obvious that impersonality, that is, freedom from the domination of the lower self, must be a condition precedent for its exercise by any individual. The more an individual rises above the influences of the separative and selfish tendencies and is able to look at life from the vantage-ground of the Spirit, the greater the measure in which he can use this power; and since a *Jīvanmukta* or a Liberated Individual alone is completely free from the illusions and interests of the lower personal life, he alone can use this power freely and effectively. It will be seen that the more we

are able to unify our consciousness with the Divine Consciousness within us, the more effectively we can exercise the true spiritual Will-power of the Ātmā. Under these conditions it would be truer to say that the Divine Will works unobstructed through our centre of consciousness than that we exercise the spiritual Will as an individual. This making of wisdom a *sine qua non* for the exercise of Ātmic power is really a safeguard devised by Nature against the misuse of a power which has unlimited potentialities and which in impure hands would be capable of doing incalculable mischief.

The foregoing considerations, though they are mostly of a negative character, will probably have enabled the reader to obtain a glimpse of this transcendent Principle within us which forms as it were the very heart and core of our being and is the source of that eternal, dynamic urge drawing us towards our destined goal of perfection. Although it is hidden from our view and we can see only its weak and partial manifestations in the most sublime and awe-inspiring aspects of human life, yet it is that which provides the guarantee of our conquest over all the illusions and imperfections of the lower life and the attainment of our divine heritage. He is our 'Inner Ruler Immortal' who is resistless, and in silence rules over the kingdom of our life.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL WILL POWER

WE have, in the previous chapter, dealt with the theoretical aspect of the subject and are now in a position to consider those methods which may be employed for the development of this supreme power of Will which has its source in the Ātmic plane. As emphasized in the foregoing pages we can deal, while we are confined to the physical plane consciousness, only with those manifestations of Ātmā which take place on this plane and cannot presume either to understand or to control the mighty forces which are generated on the Ātmic plane itself. They lie beyond our ken and will continue to be beyond our reach until our inner development enables us to transcend the physical plane and function on the higher spiritual planes.

In dealing with the function of Will in our everyday physical plane life, the best mode of treatment will be to start from the general and then descend, step by step, to particulars, that is, first to deal with the general controlling function and then with those minor functions into which this general function resolves itself.

The first step in increasing the influence of the Ātmā in our life consists in trying to raise gradually the centre of consciousness from the region of the personality to that of the Individuality. As long as we are completely immersed in the interests and illusions of the personality it is impossible for us to manifest the true spiritual Will which has its source in the Ātmic plane. The passage between the lower and the higher has to be cleared for the continuous inflow of the Divine Life which brings with it true wisdom, power and love.

We can deal here, by way of illustration, with a few preliminary practices which make the spiritual Will a more dominant factor in our life. These practices gradually develop, on the one hand, the habit of dissociating ourselves from the standpoint and attitudes of the personality, and on the other, make the lower vehicles habituated to the control and direction of the Higher Self. These practices should be considered only of a general and elementary nature. For the Ātmā can fully control and use the lower vehicles only when the Individual has adopted the Path of Yoga and made considerable progress on it. In fact, the pursuit of the Yogic ideal may be considered to have for its object the making of the Ātmā the supreme Ruler in the life of the Yogi by treading systematically the path of Raja Yoga.

The first of these practices is the cultivation of the habit of constant recollectedness of our true nature and purpose in life. This presupposes that the candidate has already thought deeply over the problems of life, has realized the urgent necessity of rising above the weaknesses and illusions of the personality, and has some idea of the altered attitude towards the circumstances of life which the attainment of higher consciousness necessitates. This habit of recollectedness is not acquired by simply making a resolution to that effect but by persistent and intensive efforts along that line extending over a number of years. Our lower vehicles have been used to function in an uncontrolled and chaotic manner, life after life, each vehicle acting and reacting according to its previous Saṃskāras, and the task of bringing them in alignment with our life's purpose is not an easy one. This will not only require an ever increasing control, but what is more needed in the preliminary stage is constant vigilance. We have not been used to keep our lower bodies in check and to have our consciousness centred in the higher part of our nature; and we shall for a long time relapse, again and again, into heedlessness and then realize with a shock that we have been allowing our vehicles to function in their usual chaotic manner. This is inevitable in the early stages, but if we make a persistent effort to rise

above the attitude of the personality, the centre of our consciousness does gradually shift inwards, and this brings with it an increased power to deal successfully with the problems of life and to see them in their correct perspective. It enables the person to act in an increasing measure from the centre of the Individuality, the seat of the Ātmā.

So let all of us who are aiming to bring down into the personality the power of the Ātmā try first to bring all our smaller aims and activities within the magnetic influence of a dynamic purpose which is related to our higher destiny. Let us harness all our powers and faculties in the service of this greater purpose. Let us acquire a firm grip over our vehicles and like a master driver drive the chariot of our life to the goal of Enlightenment. This picture of our Higher Self, symbolic though it be, depicts correctly the true purpose of the Ātmā within us. Let us keep it constantly in our mind and gradually try to approximate our life to it.

Within the framework of this general attitude we may now consider the main problem of bringing our vehicles under control, for this, as has been said already, is one of the principal and essential functions of Will on the lower planes. What does this control mean? It means, in a broad sense, chiefly two things. First, that each vehicle becomes a willing and efficient instrument of the Higher Self. And secondly, that each vehicle acts only in response to the impulses coming from within—and is positive towards the impulses coming from outside, or arising out of the automatic activity of the vehicle itself. Let us see what these two general statements mean. With regard to the first statement we have to remember that under the stimulus of the environment in which they have developed and as a result of the *Samskāras* or impressions brought over from past lives our physical, astral and mental vehicles acquire a distinct individuality of their own and offer resistance to any direction from within which is contrary to their normal mode of action. A physical body used to a particular kind of food will resist all attempts to make changes in diet

with a view to reform the physical life. An astral body used to the stimulus of excitement obtained from alcohol will loudly clamour for it at the accustomed times and make any kind of work impossible until its demand has been met. A mental body used to wander listlessly at its own sweet will, will refuse to concentrate its energies on a task set before it. In the case of every one of us, these bodies of ours have got these well-established tendencies and habits which prevent us from using them in the manner we want them to be used, and one of the most important tasks that the aspirant has to undertake is to teach them to respond immediately and fully to any direction coming from within. For this, some of the tendencies and habits have to be completely eliminated while others rendered ineffective as far as our work is concerned. It is not possible to get rid of these tendencies completely until we reach a very advanced stage of evolution but we have sufficiently gained our object if they do not cause any positive obstruction in our work and progress. This is a difficult task, but if we address ourselves to it seriously and persevere, it can be accomplished.

The second aspect of control may be called 'reactionlessness'. As a result of the tendencies acquired by vehicles to which reference has already been made, each vehicle automatically responds to certain stimuli from outside in a peculiar manner determined by its previous history. The response to such a stimulus is mechanical and is called a reaction. Let us illustrate the point. Somebody makes a show of striking you with a stick. The physical body instantaneously reacts by adopting a defensive attitude. Some one comes and says something to you which you consider insulting. Your astral body immediately reacts and you get into a fit of temper. You read something in a book which gives a point of view opposed to the one you entertain on a particular subject. Your mind reacts automatically and rejects that view without examining it with an open mind. These are all examples of the innumerable ways in which our bodies react mechanically to external impacts and these tendencies are so much

a part of our nature that we do not consider them undesirable and are not even conscious of them. When we begin to tread the path of spiritual unfoldment and our Buddhi begins to function, these tendencies begin gradually to come to our notice. We begin to become conscious of them one by one, and as we eliminate the cruder ones the subtler ones emerge into the field of our consciousness.

The problem of the elimination of these tendencies or reactions is a very interesting one and may be attacked in two ways. Those who are familiar with the recent researches of psychoanalysis know that mental 'complexes' have simply to be brought to the knowledge of the subject, that is, he has only to be made aware of them, and they are naturally resolved. In a similar way many of our tendencies which are sometimes closely related to these complexes of psychoanalysis have only to be cognized to make them disappear. But there are others which do not dissipate in this manner and have to be eliminated by the careful application of psychological laws combined with a gentle but steady pressure of the Will. This second method forms an integral part of the Science of character-building but it is not necessary to go into this question at this point. When reactionlessness has been developed to an adequate degree, then the bodies remain unaffected under the impact of stimuli coming from outside and respond only to the impulses coming from the *Jīvātmā*. Whether this response should be mere immovability, or an action of a particular kind, is determined by the *Jīvātmā*. Thus we may train the astral body to remain utterly irresponsive to sensuous vibrations, and to respond to vibrations of hate by those of love. In both cases the response is determined by the Will and is not mechanical. This cultivation of reactionlessness develops gradually that Self-determination which is a marked characteristic of those in whom the Ātmā is becoming the Inner Ruler, and this characteristic must be developed by people who want the spiritual Will to direct their life. The more reactionless and impersonal we become, the more will our actions be the expression

of the Divine Life within us, instead of being merely products of the Samskāras of the lower vehicles. Action done under these conditions is Nishkāma and is free from egoism.

After these preliminary considerations which are of great importance for understanding this problem of developing spiritual Will, we may now come to more specific methods adopted for this purpose. Here, only general principles can be given, principles which can be applied to life in innumerable ways according to one's temperament and circumstances.

We have seen that Will has both the function of controlling the activities of the lower vehicles as well as providing the potential energy for their activities. This control has two aspects, both equally important. The first may be called the inhibition and second the regulation of activity. On all the three lower planes attention has to be paid to both these aspects of control, if a perfectly co-ordinated and harmonious working of the vehicles is to be achieved.

With regard to inhibition we have to remember that the power to inhibit activities of the bodies can be developed only by prolonged practices of various kinds. It is well to begin with the inhibition of positively harmful activities. Thus, for example, in the sphere of the mind we may direct our efforts to the suppression of all evil thoughts, in the sphere of emotions we may try to eliminate hatred in its various forms and in the realm of the physical we may try to get rid of those bad habits which undermine the health of the body. After these positively harmful activities have been got rid of, we may proceed to the gradual elimination of all those useless activities which are apparently harmless but sap our vitality in various ways and involve a waste of much of our time. If we scrutinize our life carefully we shall find that a large proportion of our time and energy is spent in useless activities, in seeking excitements of various kinds, in earning money that we shall never need, in going through the round of social engagements that do not serve any other purpose except that of killing time which hangs heavy on our hands. All

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

The culmination and highest kind of manifestation of this power of inhibition is found in the Yogi sitting in Samādhi with the body absolutely still, and activity of the thoughts and emotions reduced to the zero level. For, unless the activities of the three lower bodies can be completely inhibited and the vehicles are, as it were, paralysed, consciousness cannot be set free to work on the higher planes and gain knowledge of those planes.

The second aspect of control by the Will is shown in the regulated activity of the bodies. Here, as in the case of inhibition, we have to consider all the three lower bodies, not only because all three of them are required by the *Jivātmā* for its work on the lower planes, but also because upon their harmonious and co-ordinated working depends the effectiveness of the work in the outer world and the extent to which forces from the higher planes can be brought down into the lower vehicles. The *Jivātmā* has, as it were, to drive a team of three horses, any one of which, by its restiveness and erratic movements can retard his progress and hamper the work. Those who begin to meditate realize at once the need of the harmonious working of the lower three bodies. If the physical body is not in the best of health but is out of tune, or the emotions are disturbed, the concentration of the mind is immediately affected and the steady flow of inspiration and force

from the higher planes is more or less interrupted according to the extent of the disturbance in the vehicles.

In dealing with the controlling action of the Will on the activities of the lower vehicles, it is perhaps best to consider separately the three important aspects of this general controlling and regulating function which it exercises in relation to these vehicles. The first of these aspects is brought out in the initiation of new types of activities. The carrying on of activities to which we are used or the initiation of activities which are associated with pleasure of some kind is easy. The force of habit or the force of desire enables us to overcome the natural inertia or *tamas* of our bodies. But when we have to initiate new activities which are not associated with any kind of pleasure we have to draw upon our Will-power. Thus, while practically no exertion of Will is required, for instance, in playing a game of tennis, or sending thoughts of affection to a person whom we love, or reading an interesting novel, we shall find that our bodies will offer considerable resistance if we start learning a skill like typewriting, or in sending thoughts of love to a person whom we dislike, or in learning a new language, and under these conditions we shall have to use our Will-power to carry out our decision. A person who has placed the ideal of perfection before himself has to learn to do new things and to initiate new lines of activity constantly. He must gradually eliminate this automatic resistance from the lower vehicles and accustom them to take up new lines of activity, pleasant or unpleasant, without offering any resistance, much in the same way as a horse which has been broken obeys automatically and immediately the slightest hint of his master.

When this capacity to initiate new lines of activity has been acquired in an adequate degree, the way has been opened for the gradual widening of the range of capacities connected with each vehicle. The number of things that a particular body of a certain individual can do effectively is limited and depends upon his environment, his training, and the extent to which that body has

been developed. This range has to be slowly and systematically widened in order that the higher energies in man may find a more and more varied and fuller expression in the lower life. Of course the directions in which these capacities of the different bodies have to be enlarged will depend upon the needs and temperament of the individual, upon what may be called his individual uniqueness; but there must be this steady pressure exerted all the time on the vehicles so that their vibratory capacities and usefulness may grow steadily. It is only when a person undertakes seriously this task of evolving an all-round perfection that he realizes how 'cribbed, cabined and confined' his life is and how the irresponsiveness of his vehicles prevents the expansion of his consciousness and the flow of the divine life within him. He would like to bring down the vibrations from the inner planes into his physical consciousness but his brain offers insuperable difficulties by its denseness. He would like to feel the rapture of devotion which would bear him on its wings to the feet of his Beloved, but his astral body proves to be dull and refuses to vibrate in response to the divine music of Sri Krishna. He would like to pursue a desired line of study but his mind has not yet developed any aptitude for understanding that line of thought. It is no use fretting against these disabilities. We cannot have the capacities we have not yet developed. The wise man accepts the position in which he finds himself and then sets about to enlarge the capacities of his bodies in any direction he wants by a steady pressure of the Will and adaptation of means to ends. If we remember that all these capacities are already present within us in a potential form and also that we have the unlimited power of the Divine Will at our disposal, we can perhaps proceed with greater confidence in this gradual unfoldment of our hidden possibilities. The more varied our capacities become, the richer is the melody which the Divine Player within us is able to bring out from the instruments he has created for His use.

Not only have the capacities to be extended but deepened by intensive practice. A partial development of a large number

of capacities may go with a very superficial nature and lead to a life of futilities. It is only when a capacity is developed to a high degree of efficiency that it is possible to draw upon our inner resources and serve the higher purposes of the soul. The intensity factor is of the greatest importance in spiritual life and all achievements in the spiritual realm are generally made possible by the gradual intensification of effort in a particular direction. Now, this intensification is brought about by the application of an ever increasing pressure of Will, and this in its turn helps in releasing Will-power as perhaps nothing else does. By this action and reaction between intensive effort and Will-power are gradually built up in our character those qualities like endurance, perseverance and one-pointedness which provide in the lower worlds faint reflections of that mighty power which is associated with the Ātmic consciousness.

With the capacity to initiate any kind of activity and keep it up under great pressure for any length of time there must also be acquired the capacity to drop the activity instantly and completely at any moment. This marks the acme of control of the vehicle and although it is really a form of inhibition, still, this kind of dropping of activities of the physical, astral and mental bodies, instantly and completely, must be practised as a sequel of the activities themselves, to acquire this power in perfection. Thus, for example, we may carry on any physical activity intensively and when the habit has been formed, drop the activity. We may raise an emotion like enthusiasm to a high pitch and then make the astral body perfectly calm in an instant. We may engage the mind in any work, or study of a subject, and when the mind is thoroughly interested and absorbed, drop the work or the subject from the mind completely, not allowing it to revert to it or play with it as it is wont to do. When a man can take up, continue or drop any activity of the physical, astral and mental body, at will, then only can the Ātmā be said to have gained control over these bodies and to be able to use them merely as instruments in the lower worlds.

From what has been said above with regard to the development of Will it will be clear that the opportunities for the development of this supreme power within us are provided in every sphere of life and under all kinds of circumstances—outer and inner. The Ātmā is the ultimate principle within us, the core of our spiritual being, and through the spiritual Will which is its chief weapon, it is regulating, energizing, and controlling all our forces and the vehicles through which these forces work. It is this primary, energizing controlling power within us which has brought us safely through aeonic periods of time to our present stage of evolution, and which is the guarantee of our final triumph over our imperfections and weaknesses and the attainment of our glorious destiny. He who takes himself in hand and begins to study and practise the Science of Self-Culture begins to draw upon this unlimited source of Divine Power in an increasing measure until he becomes merely a centre through which the Divine Will carries out, unhindered, the Divine Purpose.

PART III

SELF-DISCOVERY AND SELF-REALIZATION

CHAPTER XVII

SELF DISCOVERY—THE UNREAL WORLD WE LIVE IN

BEFORE we embark upon the Divine adventure of discovering the Reality which lies hidden within us we have to ask ourselves two questions. (1) Do we really want to undertake this difficult task? (2) Why do we want to do so? Most aspirants will say, "Of course we want to do so; otherwise we would not study these things and want information about methods which have to be followed." They will probably not be so sure about the answer to the second question though they may reply in a general way that they want to enter the path because life is full of difficulties and suffering, and they want freedom from all these undesirable conditions.

Although the answers to these two questions appear to be simple let us not be so sure that we really know them. For, if we really knew them, many of the problems of the inner life would not exist for us. For example, the problem of the lack of a sufficiently strong urge to tread the path earnestly and steadily, or the problem of finding it extremely difficult to make any changes in our life and attitudes of mind. In dealing with the nature of Buddhi or intuition it was pointed out that the reason why we find so much difficulty in translating our ideals and resolutions into practice lies in the fact that there are doubts lurking in the deeper layers of our minds about fundamental problems of life and it is these doubts and reservations which paralyse or retard the will to action or to change ourselves. We do not see these problems as they ought to be seen. We have not arrived at final decisions in the real sense of the term. For, when we see a problem not merely with the light of the intellect, but with that of Buddhi, we not only see it clearly and without any doubts, but there is also no difficulty in translating our decisions into action.

There is a word '*nischaya*' in Sanskrit which means real and firm conviction obtained in the light of Buddhi and so without doubt or reservation of any kind. If we have arrived at such a conviction then action follows swiftly, without hesitation. It is this kind of *nischaya* we have to acquire with regard to these problems of Self-discovery and then our progress will be steady, unflinching and joyful. This kind of conviction is acquired really when *viveka* or spiritual discrimination dawns in our mind and enables us to see all the problems of life truly and in the correct perspective. This is mostly a matter of inner growth and unfoldment but if we are sincerely interested in these problems, it can be taken for granted that we have the potentiality of attaining this state of mind and this process of arriving at a firm conviction can therefore be hastened by adopting the necessary means. The first step in this direction is *vichāra* or deep and earnest thought. By thinking over certain aspects of life carefully, persistently and earnestly we stir up activity of the Higher Mind, purify and attune the lower mind and stimulate our Buddhi and thus gradually open up the passage between our mind and intuition. And when this happens we begin to see things truly and the process of transformation within ourselves begins to take place, naturally, effortlessly and rapidly. Our inner life begins to move. That is why *vichāra* or deep pondering over the problems of life is prescribed for all people who are aspirants for Wisdom, who want to enter the Path of Enlightenment. They must think over these problems until they are really convinced that the treading of the path of our inner unfoldment is not only desirable but inevitable, and is an urgent problem which cannot be postponed. That is the test of a real conviction.

How this process of thought and enquiry is to be initiated and completed until the necessary conviction is reached is to a great extent an individual matter but I suggest a few lines of thought along which an aspirant can proceed until either he has found true conviction or at least discovered his own way of tackling the problem.

These lines of enquiry are based on two basic approaches to the one problem. One is close and careful examination of the world in which we live, not only in the light of what our Great Teachers have said, but also in the light of our own experience and reason, and further in the light of researches made in the field of modern Science. This work has to be undertaken with a view to ascertain as carefully and dispassionately as possible whether this world is really what we take it to be or we are merely the victims of illusions of various kinds and under the influence of these illusions continue to live complacently in spite of the warnings given to us by spiritual Teachers throughout the ages. It is possible that if we examine the world in this manner, we may find that it is not what it appears to be and this may bring about real change in our attitude toward it, followed by appropriate unhesitating action. But although possible lines of enquiry may be suggested or recommended, this work has to be done really by each one for himself. One can only point out methods of approach—nothing more. As a great Adept has pointed out in one of the *Mahātma Letters*—one has to see these things himself. No one can tear open the eyes of another and make him see the realities of the inner life.

The second approach is based on the examination of the world which we want to enter and about which one of the Adepts said, 'Come out of your world into ours.' Of course we do know what this world is, for we are preparing to enter it and it is a world which is beyond the imagination and to a great extent beyond the intellect. But those who have entered this world have given some indication of what it is like and if we examine it in the light of their testimony and statements, it is possible we may catch a little of its beauty, splendour and peace and may thus be inspired sufficiently to want to enter it. This inspiration may provide some incentive which is badly needed in the lives of many aspirants who feel helpless against the inertia to remain where they are in spite of the wish to get out of the present conditions.

It is very probable that just as the examination of the world we live in will show that it is much worse than what we thought it to be and strengthen our desire and will to leave it, so the examination of the world we propose to enter will show that it is tremendously more beautiful and wonderful than what our illusion-bound intellect and pre-occupation with the pursuits of this world had led us to believe. And it may also strengthen, to some extent, our desire to enter it with all the earnestness and enthusiasm born of a real inspiration and spiritual urge.

Under this dual impact of these two impulses, one tending to weaken our attraction for this unreal world and the other tending to strengthen the attraction for that world of Reality, it is possible we may gain sufficient inspiration to at least make a real beginning in moving in the right direction. Once this beginning is made in right earnest we are likely to continue moving in the desired direction with increasing momentum and determination. For, the real difficulty in the case of most of us is making a real beginning. We think we have made a beginning when we have merely adopted an outer mode of life or a set of activities, physical or mental. But if there is no real urge from within, such external activities generally degenerate into a mere routine and we continue to follow that routine in the hope that we are making progress towards our goal. A real beginning is made only when there is a real urge, and a real urge alone has that dynamic quality and momentum which ensures real progress.

Let us now take up the question of the nature of the world in which we live and with which we are familiar. This world can be examined mentally in many ways, firstly, with regard to its existence on the physical plane. In doing so one can take up the following three lines of enquiry separately: (a) the utterly insignificant place of our earth in the vast Universe; (b) the nature of Time as an advancing tidal wave which is inexorably destroying everything in its path; (c) the illusory nature of the objects among which we live and move on the physical plane. All this enquiry, it will be noted, is not based on any kind of philosophical

speculation or reasoning but on hard facts of Science which cannot be disputed. This enquiry has to be made carefully and honestly by each individual for himself but it is worthwhile drawing the attention of the reader to a few facts of a scientific nature just to illustrate the method.

Anyone who goes through the many interesting facts gathered by astronomers about the physical Universe even in a cursory manner cannot but be struck by the utterly insignificant place our earth has in this infinite universe and the insignificant place each individual as a physical being has on this earth. It has been calculated that a cork floating on the surface of the Atlantic Ocean has greater significance from the physical point of view than what the earth has when it travels in its lonely orbit in the vast ocean of physical space. And a small insect moving on a hill has greater significance from the physical point of view than a human being moving about on this earth. Most people when reminded about these facts would say, "Yes, we know all this *but what of it?*" There lies the trouble. We see these awful facts as mere facts but do not see their significance at all. If we saw a colony of ants moving about on a piece of wood floating on the Atlantic Ocean and could enter their life and found them making all kinds of plans and taking themselves very seriously we would laugh at their inability to realize their precarious and insignificant situation. But we ourselves are in a worse position from the physical point of view and do not realize it at all, do not realize the illusion which makes us go about living our normal complacent life without even caring to think about the awful situation in which we are placed as physical entities.

Let us look at the same problem not from the point of view of space but from the point of view of time. Do we not know that the tidal wave of time is advancing relentlessly behind our life, swallowing up everything? Not only human beings but civilizations and even Solar Systems are disappearing in it continuously. Nothing can stop this advancing tidal wave in which centuries pass into oblivion as if in a moment when compared with the life

of the Universe. Of course, an unlimited future lies before us but it is also going to meet the same fate as it passes through the ideal partition of the present which always separates the past from the future. Are we aware of this awful reality connected with our very existence? Of course we are intellectually, but are we aware of its real significance? Not at all. If we were, we could not remain indifferent to the fact. We could not remain content to live our life as a mere physical being without even trying to tear open that veil of *māyā* which imposes this illusion on our minds and lets us remain content with our mere physical existence. If we were really aware, all our petty ambitions and vain-glorious desires will shrivel up immediately. If we were aware of this fact, we would not take ourselves and our personal ambitions as seriously as we do.

Let us now look at the same problem from another point of view. If we study the constitution of matter as discovered by Science we can see at once the utter illusion which lies at the basis of our physical universe. What we consider as solid, tangible objects round about us are composed of nothing but atoms and molecules with vibrations playing between them and the atoms and molecules of our own body organized in the form of sense-organs. And what are these atoms and molecules like? Practically empty space with points either stationary or moving about with incredible and unimaginable speed. It has been calculated that if the matter in the physical body of a human being is condensed by eliminating all empty space it would be reduced to a speck of dust so small that it would require a magnifying glass to see that speck. And yet think for a while what an impression of reality these moving points in space produce in our consciousness. If this is not *māyā* or illusion one would like to know what is. When people talk about these realities of life as if they were mere philosophical concepts, utterly unaware of the awful mysteries by which we are surrounded, one is reminded of the reply of an Indian sage when somebody asked him what was the greatest wonder in the world. He replied without hesitation

that the most wonderful thing was the fact that people saw others dying everywhere and all the time about them, and not wondering when death may strike their own physical body. He mentioned only one aspect of the mystery, but really referred to the mystery of life as a whole and the illusion which makes us see life as quite different from what it is actually. I think I have said enough about the method of enquiry along scientific lines and we can now consider another method directly connected with our daily experiences, which was the method adopted by the wise men of the past in examining the nature of life and the world in which we live.

They examined ordinary human life from a detached point of view and found that it was not what it appeared to be superficially. To a young man entering life in the flush of youthful desires, life generally appears to be a bed of roses. As he advances in age this rosiness gradually disappears and he begins to realize that life is a mixture of pleasant and painful experiences and for the sake of the pleasurable experiences he is prepared to tolerate and go through the painful experiences also right up to the end of his life, thus creating karmas of all kinds in every incarnation and remaining bound to the wheel of birth and death. But this conception of human life is based on a superficial view of life. If life is examined in the light of Buddhi, when real discrimination is born within a soul, it is seen in an entirely new complexion and the conclusion based on this deeper vision is best formulated in the well-known aphorism of the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali (II. 15): 'To the people who have developed discrimination all is misery on account of the pains resulting from change, anxiety and tendencies, as also on account of the conflicts between the functioning of the *guṇas* and the *vyrttis* of the mind.'

This is the pivotal *sūtra* of the theory of the *kleshas* which has been developed in the first part of the second chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras*. It is not necessary to discuss this *sūtra* here. But I do think we should study this *sūtra* independently and thoroughly and try to arrive at our own conclusion. We should not accept

the statement because it is given in an ancient treatise which is considered authoritative. We should ponder over these ideas and try to realize their real significance without being afraid of facing facts.

Is Patanjali the only sage of ancient times who has taken this outwardly pessimistic view about human life in general? No! Every great Teacher who came to liberate men from the bonds of illusions and limitations of the lower life and to lead them into the realms of the Spirit has started from this point. Take, for instance, the following quotation from *The Light of Asia* which gives very clearly the life and teaching of the Buddha:

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

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

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

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

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

‘ The name of the first hall is Ignorance—*Avidya*.
It is the Hall in which thou saw’st this light, in which thou
livest and shalt die.’

- ‘ If thou would’st cross the first Hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the Sunlight of life.’
- ‘ The Wise Ones tarry not in pleasure-grounds of senses.
- ‘ The Wise Ones heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion.
- ‘ The moth attracted to the dazzling flame of thy night-lamp is doomed to perish in the viscid oil. The unwary Soul that fails to grapple with the mocking demon of illusion, will return to earth the slave of Māra.’
- ‘ Behold the Hosts of Souls. Watch how they hover o’er the stormy sea of human life, and how exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after another on the swelling waves. Tossed by the fierce winds, chased by the gale, they drift into the eddies and disappear within the first great vortex ’

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is full of *ślokas* pointing out the illusory and impermanent nature of this life in which we are involved and from which we can gain release by means of knowledge and devotion. The following *ślokas* depict the illusions created by our desires and lack of discrimination:

- ‘ As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as the embryo is wrapped by amnion, so This [knowledge of our true nature] is enveloped by it [desire] (III. 38)
- ‘ Enveloped is wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire which is insatiable as fire. (III. 39)
- ‘ Senses, mind and reason are said to be its seat; by these, enveloping wisdom, it bewilders the dweller in the body.’
(III. 40)

The few quotations given above throw some light on the initial problem which faces every aspirant, namely the realization by him of the true nature of our ordinary life. From this realization arises the motive force which enables him to adopt

the right means for rising above these undesirable conditions, in right earnest and not as a matter of routine. Hundreds of such quotations could be given from the sacred scriptures of the world or the teachings of the great Teachers of mankind, but this is not necessary. What is needed is not familiarity with these ideas which are generally well known among students of Divine Wisdom but realization of the true facts concerning our normal life. This realization is fundamentally different from ordinary knowledge or belief. It is of the nature of 'awareness' and not thought. It is not the result of thinking or understanding but of the illumination of the mind by the light of Buddhi which is denoted by the Samskrit word 'viveka.' The question may be asked whether this awareness can be developed by merely pondering the illusory aspect of life as indicated above. Not necessarily. But earnest, persistent and deep thinking of this nature, by initiating movement in the realm of the higher mind, stimulates our intuitive faculty and as a result of this the light of Buddhi can infiltrate and illumine our minds gradually. Prayer, earnest and intense, can greatly help the process and may be combined with deep thought. The combination of earnest thought and intense emotion is very effective in stimulating our intuitive faculty because thought and emotion are two aspects of intuition. Another means at our disposal is the use of a mantra. For example, Hindus can use the Gāyatrī Mantra which stimulates the Buddhic faculty. But, of course, it is not the mechanical repetition of a mantra as a matter of routine which brings about results but repetition under proper conditions of our mind and emotions.

Since the illumination of the mind by the light of Buddhi depends upon the condition of the mind—how far it is pure, tranquil and harmonized—the general condition of the mind is also an important factor in the problem and cannot be neglected. Life cannot be divided into water-tight compartments and the problem of self-discovery cannot be tackled piecemeal though we may begin with a few simple things and gradually enlarge the area of our effort.

Whatever the means employed, our object should be to gain actual awareness of the unreal nature of life in which we are involved. This awareness may produce a kind of void or emptiness in the early stages and it may appear as if life is not worth living if all our worldly interests, etc. are taken away from us and we are left hanging in a void, as it were. But this is only a temporary phase which passes as the light of Buddhi becomes clearer and stronger. We must be prepared to face the facts of life and not allow our mind to run away from them however unpleasant or awful they may appear in the beginning of this process of Self-discovery. We should not forget that in the light of Buddhi we not only see the illusory nature of our ordinary life but also begin to 'sense' our real life which is hidden beneath the illusory life. So this unpleasant phase must pass gradually and give place to another in which we feel a peculiar accession of strength, peace and joy within ourselves in spite of the awareness of the illusory and impermanent nature of things among which we live, move and work.

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

to let this Light remain hidden and live in darkness, to live in ignorance and misery when the Ocean of Wisdom and Bliss literally envelops us?

We shall in the next chapter try to peer mentally into the inner and real world which is hidden within us and which all great spiritual Teachers invite us to enter, so that the inspiration which we may be able to get from such a glimpse may provide us with added incentive to try to enter this real world in right earnest.

CHAPTER XVIII

SELF-DISCOVERY—THE REAL WORLD WAITING FOR US

IN the last chapter we dealt with the problem of awakening within us that real spiritual urge without which the path of Self-discovery cannot be trodden. Two kinds of approaches to this problem were suggested. The first of these depends upon a close and earnest examination of our life and the world we know and live in. This is with a view to find out whether it is necessary for us to make a determined effort to change our inner life instead of drifting aimlessly, or making feeble and half-hearted attempts which generally degenerate into mere routine activities of our mind or body. The second approach depends upon an earnest mental examination of the other world we desire and hope to enter in order to make us realize, if possible, what we are missing on account of our complacency and contentment with this world.

We have already discussed the first kind of approach in the previous chapter and have probably seen to some extent that the world we live in is not what it appears to be on the surface and our complacency is due to the fact that we are not really aware of its true nature. Let us now deal with the second kind of approach and try to realize the nature of the other world we can enter. We have seen one picture, now let us try to have a look at the other. When we use the word 'realize' in this context we do not mean realization in the sense of actual awareness, which comes much later, but ordinary realization of the fact that life in this other world is far more rich, real and vivid than our highest conception of a full and happy life here. We have dealt in some

of the previous chapters with the nature of the spiritual and divine worlds which are hidden within us. It is these which constitute the real world which all great spiritual Teachers invite us to enter.

Notwithstanding the wide prevalence of materialism at the present time, the evidence for the existence of such a real world within us and the possibility of entering it is so overwhelming that one who examines it with an open mind is likely not only to become convinced of its existence but also to derive considerable inspiration from such an examination. But the fact that it is easy to get such a conviction does not mean that we can also obtain from such an examination some idea with regard to the nature of the real world. There is the rub. Even those who have entered this world cannot give to those who know only the unreal world, any idea of what the real world is like. All that they can do is to bear testimony that it exists and every human being can enter it. Nothing more. This inability on the part of those who know this world is natural and is due to the fact that this world is beyond the realm of the intellect and one must transcend the lower levels of the mind in order to enter it. Any description of it, if attempted, must be vague, indirect, symbolical or expressed by means of negatives. This fact can be made an excuse by the sceptic for sticking to his agnostic position, and by the half-hearted for doing nothing to free himself from the illusions and attractions of this world. That is why the existence and the nature of this real world will always remain a mystery and only those who are fit and ready to enter it will be able to recognize in these vague and veiled descriptions the call of the Divine to those in exile to return to their true home.

Even though no adequate idea regarding the nature of the real world can be given the following few extracts from the teachings of spiritual Teachers will show the unequivocal nature of their statements regarding the existence of this real world and the possibility of entering it for every individual who possesses the necessary qualifications.

- ‘The opening of the bloom is the glorious moment when perception awakes; with it comes confidence, knowledge, certainty.
- ‘Know, O disciple, that those who have passed through the silence and felt its peace and retained its strength, they long that you shall pass through it also.’ (*Light on the Path*)
- ‘Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an adept when the hardships he has passed through are a thousand-fold rewarded. In order to acquire further knowledge, he has no more to go through a minute and slow process of investigation and comparison of various objects, but is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth. . . . the adept sees, feels and lives and in the very source of all fundamental truths—the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, Shiva, the Creator, the Destroyer and the Regenerator.’ (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*)
- ‘The highest knowledge born of the awareness of Reality is transcendent, includes the cognition of all objects simultaneously, pertains to all objects and processes whatsoever in the past, present and future and also transcends the World Process.’ (*The Yoga-Sūtras* III 55)

We could take hundreds of extracts from the Sacred Scriptures of the world or the writings of Mystics, Occultists and sages, all pointing not only to the existence of a real world hidden within this unreal world but also bearing testimony to the fact that this world of reality is full of bliss and transcendental knowledge. But it is for the student to study and think deeply over such hints concerning the realities of the inner life and to awaken, if possible, his intuition in this manner.

Apart from this testimony of seers and sages, the evidence of Science itself, if studied with an open mind points to the existence of a more real world within us. We saw while dealing with the physical world and its nature in the last chapter, that an infinite number of points moving with tremendous speed produce the

wonderful world in our mind which we perceive objectively around us as a world of form, colour and exquisite beauty. Obviously, it is absurd to suppose that an infinite number of points in motion could produce or bring into existence such a world by themselves. They can only stimulate the perception of such a world and therefore a much more real world which is independent of these moving points must already exist within us. Similarly, with regard to the illusion created by the succession of states which we call time, there must be a world of Reality existing within the Universe and within us which unfolds, as phenomena in time and space. How can this vast panorama showing intelligence and design everywhere, which we see around us unfolding in space and time, come out of nowhere as the result of a movement of insentient points in different ways and with different speeds? Yet this is the logical absurdity to which scientific materialism is reduced and with which it has to reconcile itself in order to justify its thoughtless pursuit of knowledge and power without giving any thought to the fundamental problems of life and not trying to go deeper into the causes which produce the phenomena of Nature. Scientific materialism will go to any length and assume anything rather than agree to consider the existence of a Reality hidden within the Universe, even as a tentative hypothesis.

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

When we see shadows on the screen in a cinematographic picture, and get interested in the shadows play, it is because we are aware of the fact that these shadows have been produced by

realities corresponding to real men, women and children who produced the picture. We also know that the drama which is being played before us is not just a play produced by mere actors but corresponds to real situations which we find in human life. It is these facts connected with our real life which are responsible for the extraordinary interest we take in a picture, not the mere flitting about of the shadows on the screen.

This gives us a clue to the fact that we take so much interest in the unreal and impermanent world in which we live and move. Our interest in this phenomenal world is derived from the fact that these phenomena are the shadows of realities which are within us, though unseen. It is also this fact which imparts the feeling of reality to these shadows and makes us take them as real until we have discovered that they are mere shadows. The world of illusion is the shadow of a real world and when we embark on the voyage of Self-discovery we are merely trying to leave the shadow in order to grasp the Reality by which these shadows are cast in our consciousness. If we unknowingly run after a shadow and realize suddenly that it is a mere shadow, what is there to be disturbed about? This feeling of void and emptiness, which sometimes overtakes us when discrimination is born is part of the illusion and must pass in course of time. We should be glad to be disturbed in our complacency and also thankful for this opportunity to take our eyes off the shadow and lift them up to see the Reality which is producing the shadow. When a child sees the shadow of an aeroplane moving on the ground he immediately lifts his eyes to the sky to see the real aeroplane which is casting that shadow. So when we see the life around us as a series of phenomena which are unreal, we should try to look within ourselves for the Reality which produces these phenomena. For it is from the centre of our Consciousness that these shadows are projected outside.

Deep reflection on the nature of this Reality as depicted in the scriptures or in the statements of Mystics and Occultists may give us some incentive to go within ourselves and start exploring

the deeper recesses of our minds, but that generally does not give us adequate incentive because most of this work is on the plane of the intellect. What we need really is the development of a powerful attraction towards the Divine Life within us which will draw us towards Itself and provide the necessary motive power which we generally lack. This attraction or drawing force is nothing but love for God or bhakti. So if we want to have a powerful spiritual urge within us, it really means we should first develop love towards That which we want to discover. This love combined with deep thought will also stimulate the intuitive faculty within us; and with the development of Buddhi and its infiltration into our minds not only will all our problems begin to resolve but our inner life will begin to unfold steadily.

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

The question may arise: what happens to love and to its concomitant, bliss, when the full awareness of the integrated consciousness is attained and the fragment has become united with the Whole? Obviously, love can exist only between the separate beings and when union is attained, the relation which exists between them cannot be called love. What, then, is love transformed into? On the one hand, into the pure awareness of

Oneness, and on the other hand, into that state which was reflected in the form of bliss, happiness or pleasure on the lower planes. We call this state *Ānanda* in Samskrit. *Ānanda* is the source and the counterpart of bliss, happiness and pleasure on the plane where there is no separation but Oneness. It is an aspect of the Divine Consciousness in its highest state, corresponding to pleasure, bliss or happiness which may be considered as its degraded forms. There is no word in English which carries the same connotation. The word 'Peace,' is frequently used to indicate this highest state of bliss, but it does not convey the full significance of the word '*Ānanda*.'

Now, the reason why this question of love has been brought up here is to remove the doubts, sometimes present in the minds of some people, with regard to the place of love in spiritual life. Some of them seem to think that it is possible to tread the path to Self-knowledge without love coming into the picture at all. They can quote examples of sages who did not show much emotional love in their lives, although they showed a remarkable degree of serenity and peace. Does this show that love had no part to play in their unfoldment? Not at all. Not emotional love perhaps, but love is not necessarily emotional. Its expression depends upon the medium through which it is expressed. If it finds expression through the astral body, then it assumes the form of strong feeling which we usually associate with love. If it finds expression solely through the pure intellect it may be lacking in emotional feeling, but will take the form of a fierce intellectual inquiry which can pursue the search for Truth and arrive at it by sheer force of penetrating discrimination. That is the path of Jñāna Yoga. Again, if it finds expression through the third aspect of human nature—Will—it will break down all barriers which separate the individual from the Object of his search by sheer force of will and unite them by concentrating and then transcending the mind at different levels. The discerning student will see the same principle of attraction and drawing together in all the three cases, but assuming different forms according to the

medium through which it is working. And it is not necessary that this expression through a particular medium should remain the same for all time in the case of an individual. It can and does change according to the phase of unfoldment through which he is passing, sometimes in the same life, but generally in different lives.

The same kind of change can take place when the level, instead of the medium, changes. Even emotional love changes its character when it is transferred to a deeper level, namely the Buddhic plane. It becomes deeper, subtler and less violent and demonstrative. That is why *Bhaktas* or saints who show violent outbursts of feeling in the earlier stages of *Bhakti* become serene and balanced when their love becomes mature. The intensity of love has not decreased but increased tremendously, but is now flowing in a deeper channel, and so is more controlled and less demonstrative.

The same kind of thing happens again when love is transferred to a still higher level in the integrated consciousness. It then assumes a form which we can hardly imagine, though we denote it by such words as *Ānanda*, Peace, etc. And since in this integrated Consciousness or Reality we have a blending of all aspects of our nature, all forms of love which appear so different on the lower levels assume the same form with perhaps a slight coloring due to the individual uniqueness of the individuality.

So let us not assume that love can express itself only in the form of emotional feeling, though in the earlier stages of development it generally has this form. But whatever form it assumes, it has that essential quality of drawing together irresistibly the seeker and the Sought, and so provides the necessary motive power or spiritual urge which is called *mumukshatva* in Samskrit. We have seen thus the necessity and place of love in this process of Self-discovery. We shall consider its nature and some of the methods of developing it in chapters 20 and 21.

Let us now come to the second kind of difficulty which many aspirants feel when they have acquired the necessary conviction and urge to tread the path of inner unfoldment—the difficulty in

choosing the particular path which is most suited to their temperament and stage of development. This difficulty is really rooted in the belief that for each individual there is only one path which he must tread from beginning to end. He must tread either the path of knowledge, love, or action, or any other which may be recommended by his *Guru*. It is difficult to understand how this misconception is prevalent, when there are very clear statements pointing to the contrary. Take, for instance, these two statements in *Light on the Path*:

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

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

We could not have a more unequivocal statement, and that too from an Adept of Occultism.

But apart from such clear hints on this question, the very nature of man, his origin, method of evolution, his final destiny, preclude the idea of his gaining an all-round perfection by following one particular path. A man has many aspects in his lower and higher nature. How can an all-round perfection be developed by following one particular method of development? Can one imagine a perfect human being without love, or knowledge, or will, or capacity for efficient action developed in a high degree? And can these different aspects of his nature be developed in their perfection without his training along different lines, in different environments and adopting different kinds of methods and techniques at different times? If not, then it is obvious he must adopt different methods from time to time in his course of evolution. It is natural that he should concentrate on one method

at one time because, in the first place, a particular quality can be developed best by intense concentration on it for some time; and secondly, because the environment and circumstances in which an individual is placed are generally such that they are suited to the development of one particular aspect of his nature. It is this necessity of concentrating on one aspect of our nature in one life or one period of a life which makes it appear as if we are temperamentally suited for following one particular path. But our environment may change, or our inner needs may change, and a different method or line of development may become not only desirable but inevitable.

So this concentration on a particular aspect of our nature by following a particular path should be considered rather as a phase of our development and not in the light of our individual uniqueness, and we should be prepared to switch over to another line when the needs of our inner unfoldment make this necessary. Even when we are concentrating on one particular aspect we should not make the mistake of deliberately neglecting the other aspects which have also to be developed. Life cannot be divided into water-tight compartments and it is not possible to develop one aspect to a high degree without collateral development of the other aspects. If we try to do this, we are liable to become unbalanced and lop-sided, and our efficiency will be greatly reduced. Our aim should be an all-round perfection and balanced development even though concentration on the development of one particular aspect may involve extraordinary emphasis on that aspect for a time.

The unfoldment of human consciousness and Divine Perfection in a human being is such an exquisitely delicate individual process that to use the word 'path' for it seems like a sacrilege. Every soul opens from within outwards according to the law of its own being, and no one can predict how it will open and what phase it will pass through in its next stage. To put it in a groove or make it open forcibly in a particular manner is like tearing open the bud of a rose to make it open like a lily. Where is the

path when we see a rose-bud opening and becoming a full-blown flower? Can we say that the rose is following a particular path of unfoldment? In a way it is, because it goes through a series of similar transformations, one after another, under the influences of forces working from within and without. But this path is not a groove in which its activity is confined, but a series of transformations taking place from within outwards. In the case of a rose, the nature and order of such transformations is predetermined to some extent because it has to conform to the archetype. But the case of a human being is different. He does not conform to an archetype and therefore all human beings do not evolve in the same manner and do not follow a predetermined series of transformations. If that were so, there would really be no freedom for man to liberate himself whenever he wanted to do so. Everyone would have to wait for the seventh round as many of us have decided to do. But that is not so. Every soul is unique and has to express its unique perfection which is eternally present in the Monad. How this perfection is expressed in the phenomenal world is not predetermined. It is not necessary to go into this question here, because it has been discussed fully in the commentary on *Sūtra* IV-12 in *The Science of Yoga*.

Coming back to the point, it may be said, therefore, that we have not really to choose any path once for all. Rather we have to follow a particular method for a time according to the needs of our inner unfoldment. How to know what our need is and what method has to be followed is a question which brings us to the third difficulty which is generally experienced by aspirants, namely that of guidance on the path. This question has been discussed in chapter 26.

CHAPTER XIX

THE STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM AND REALIZATION

WE have already studied the total constitution of the Monad. We have seen that he expresses himself on the spiritual planes as the immortal Individuality and on the lowest three planes as the temporary personality. As the personality is merely a temporary expression for gaining experience and unfolding the mental and spiritual faculties of the Individuality and disappears completely at the end of every incarnation after handing over the essence of its life to the Individuality, it cannot be considered to evolve, though it becomes richer and more complex and efficient as evolution proceeds. It can be considered only as a temporary instrument of the Individuality, nothing more. It is the Individuality or *Jivātmā* which endures from life to life and evolves gradually, developing its mental and spiritual faculties and serving as a permanent instrument of the Monad.

We know that the Individuality expresses itself through three principles which are known as *Ātmā-Buddhi-Manas* and these principles find expression predominantly on the *Ātmic, Buddhic* and *Higher Mental* planes respectively. It is the unfoldment of these three principles through their respective vehicles which really constitutes human evolution and with which the aspirant is really concerned. The evolution of the three vehicles of the personality merely subserves the higher evolution. At least, in this task of Self-discovery, we are mainly concerned with the three higher vehicles and principles though we naturally cannot ignore the lower vehicles also.

One important point we should note about the three higher principles and vehicles is that the unfoldment of these principles and evolution of the corresponding vehicles proceeds generally from below upwards i.e. in the order of the Higher Mind, Buddhi

and Ātmā. The ray or fundamental type of the individual is also a factor in this order of evolution but we may say generally that it is the Higher Mind which unfolds first, then Buddhi and lastly Ātmā. The order in which we should try to unfold these principles practically should follow the line indicated above as far as possible.

We should begin with the study of theoretical conceptions regarding the nature of Reality and its manifestation as well as the methods which are adopted in discovering this Reality within ourselves. The effort to grasp and comprehend these philosophical conceptions concerning the hidden realities of life will bring into activity and develop our Higher Mind.

In the next stage we should try to translate the ideals of spiritual life based on these conceptions into action and thus transmute our intellectual knowledge into Wisdom. We should also try to develop devotion or love at the same time and make it an integral part of our character because it is the most powerful method of unfolding the Buddhic faculty and acquiring true Wisdom. The knowledge gained with regard to the ideals of spiritual life, and the effort to translate these spiritual ideals into practical living should enable us to unfold the Buddhic faculty and add Wisdom to knowledge. This is the second and a necessary stage in tackling the problem of Self-discovery systematically and effectively.

There are several reasons why this development of Buddhi through devotion and Self-Culture must be accomplished in an adequate measure before we pass on to the third stage in which the veils of illusion and the covers which hide the Reality are removed, one by one, and the realities of the higher life are realized directly, culminating in the attainment of Self-Realization. The first of these reasons is that we must in the very beginning find that Light which can guide us on the Path unerringly, safely and right up to the end. This Light can come only from our Buddhi. The second is that we must become Self-sufficient and independent of external sources of happiness. It is only love of God or devotion which can give us this Self-sufficiency. The stripping of the personality and the resulting creation of an inner vacuum which

takes place in the flight of the alone to the Alone is not easy to bear unless we have this inner fountain of joy playing within us. Many aspirants turn back and again plunge into the pursuits of the worldly life because they have no inner means of support to sustain them in the intermediate stages. The third reason is that Wisdom alone can give a person all those qualities which are necessary for treading the path safely and steadily, namely correct perspective, maturity of judgment and outlook, and freedom from those lower tendencies which drag a person down and sometimes wreck his life when he enters these new realms of experience, knowledge and power.

Wisdom is therefore a *sine qua non* and must be developed as thoroughly as possible in the second stage. It may be mentioned here that real Wisdom in an adequate degree is not only necessary but its possession means a fairly advanced stage in solving the problem of Self-discovery. Firstly, because it requires a fairly strenuous and prolonged effort to attain it and this is perhaps as far as most aspirants can hope to reach in one life. Secondly, because the fruits of Wisdom are not negligible. Unfortunately, our ideas about Wisdom are not quite correct and are coloured by popular conceptions. We generally think it is merely the maturity of judgments and capacity to order our life properly which comes from long and varied experience. But Wisdom as it is understood in Occultism is something quite different. It is the state of mind which is attained when it is thoroughly irradiated by the light of the spiritual faculty called Buddhi. No one can understand the peace which passeth understanding; the insight which can pierce through the illusions of life, the unerring knowledge which begins to flow into our minds from within; the tender sympathy towards all life, the exquisite feeling of sensing our oneness with other human beings, the fountain of joy which plays within us without rhyme or reason; the security which we feel when we sense that we live, move and have our being in Him; the certainty which comes when we become even vaguely aware that He is sweetly and mightily ordering all

things; the inner harmony in which we live with others even when we may be opposing them outwardly; no one can understand these things until he has experienced the illumination of the mind by the light of Buddhi. And these are not small gains in return for the efforts and sacrifices which we are required to make in order to develop Wisdom. In fact they are of such a satisfying nature that many aspirants would be quite content to remain in this stage without making any effort to advance further. They come quite near to their ideal of an enlightened spiritual life. But this is not the goal but only a stage in our journey, the foundation on which the superstructure of a enlightened spiritual life is to be built, the spiritual life of a Self-Realized and Liberated Being which is the goal of human evolution.

So we have now to pass on to the consideration of the next and the last stage in which Wisdom is transmuted into Self-Realization, when we not only 'sense' Reality through the faculty of Buddhi but *know* Reality directly through our Ātmā by fusing our consciousness with It and thus becoming one with It. Realization may be defined as 'knowing by becoming'. This is the field of real Yoga. We shall deal with one aspect of Yoga in our study of devotion. We shall see that in the highest states of devotion the consciousness of the devotee becomes more and more one with the consciousness of his *Ishta Devatā* or the Object of his devotion and that is why the path of devotion is also called Bhakti Yoga. We shall then consider the technique of real Yoga which is called Rāja Yoga or the Royal Yoga as outlined in the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patanjali. This system of Yoga is based on Will and it is through the use of spiritual Will that the mind is purified, brought under control and then its modifications inhibited completely in *Samādhi*. This enables the consciousness of the Yogi to transcend the different levels of the mind associated with the different vehicles, until the last barrier of the Ātmic plane is crossed and the consciousness emerges out of the realm of the mind and becomes one with the consciousness of the eternal Monad or the *Purusha*. This is looking at the process from below, from the

point of view of the personality. If we look at the problem from above, from the point of view of the Monad, we might say that the Monad extricates himself from the lower levels of the mind, one by one, until his consciousness has freed itself from his Ātmic vehicle and he stands free in his true Divine nature, Self-Realized and yet having all the vehicles on the lower planes at his command. This is *Jivanmukti*, Liberation, *Nirvāna* or whatever word one might like to use for that exalted state of consciousness which a Yogi attains when he has completed his human evolution.

In the third stage in which the technique of Rāja Yoga is utilized to obtain Self-Realization it is the spiritual Will of the *Ātmā* which is used to attain the final goal just as in the second stage it is Love which is used to attain Wisdom. This is the highest principle functioning in the Individuality.

We see thus how all the three principles of man are unfolded one after another in the three stages: Intellect in the first stage, Love in the second stage and Spiritual Will in the third stage. Love added to Intellect develops Wisdom. Spiritual Will guided by Wisdom gives Self-Realization. The relations of the three principles, functions and methods of development may be represented as follows:

PRINCIPLE	INTELLECT	BUDDHI	ĀTMĀ
Vehicle	Causal Body	Buddhic Vehicle	Ātmic Vehicle
Product of Unfoldment	Higher Knowledge	Wisdom	Self-Realization
Method of Unfoldment	Study, deep reflection, meditation	Character-Building Love	Rāja Yoga

Having understood the place of Bhakti Yoga and Rāja Yoga in our spiritual unfoldment we can now proceed to discuss briefly and in a general way these two important systems of Yoga.

CHAPTER XX

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION

THE *Bhakti-Sūtras* of Nārada is a small book containing 84 *Sūtras* or aphorisms dealing with different aspects of *Bhakti* or devotion. Although the subject has not been treated systematically and from the deeper point of view, the book throws light on many aspects of devotion and is generally considered as a standard text-book on Bhakti Yoga. We may consider a few *Sūtras* given in this book dealing with the nature of devotion and the means of developing it in order to gain a general idea about the philosophy and technique of Bhakti Yoga.

(1) *Anīrvachanīyaṃ prema-svarūpam* | (51)

The nature of love towards God cannot be described.

(2) *Mūkāsivādanavat* | (52)

As the taste felt by a dumb person.

These *Sūtras* are generally taken to mean that the nature of the experience which one has when he is in a state of intense love toward God or ecstasy cannot be expressed in words. Of course, that is true but it is the superficial meaning because the nature of any kind of experience we have cannot be described in words to anyone who has not had a similar experience. It is because all of us have had similar experiences in life that we can describe them to one another.

What, then, is the real meaning? Let us see. During the course of our evolution we are brought in touch with different people in different relations again and again, and by such repeated contacts develop different kinds of love such as that of a mother

for her son, that of a daughter towards her father, that of a husband for his wife, that of friend towards friend. As we grow emotionally, the types of love with which we become familiar become greater and greater in number and the intensity of love which we are capable of feeling increases *pari passu*. The spectrum of our love becomes fuller and brighter as we grow. But what is this specturm derived from? From THAT, from which every thing, every faculty, every power is derived. This spectrum of love containing all types of differentiated loves is derived from the white light of Divine Love by a process of differentiation like all other things which are also derived in this manner. This differentiation helps us to develop our emotional nature more easily because it is easier to respond to and develop one limited, particular type of love at a time, just as the differentiation of the mind into five sensations helps us to develop the mind much more easily. But white light is not the same thing as colours, even though the spectrum of colours may be quite complete. An individual who has lived only in the realm of manifestation, in the realm of colours, can have no idea of the white light of Reality, unless and until he transcends manifestation and emerges into the Light of Reality. Similarly, an individual who has experience of all types of loves which we find in human relationships cannot really have an idea of the Divine love from which they all are derived, until he experiences Divine Love itself. So, although we are familiar with love in its different, differentiated forms we do not know Divine Love, and the person who has experience of Divine Love cannot describe or communicate to another person the nature of this love. We can only have a sort of vague qualitative idea of that Love from the most intense and pure forms of love of which we are capable and which we have felt. But to know Divine Love we must experience it by developing it within our own heart.

(3) *Sā tv asmīn parama premarūpā* | (2)

It is of the form of intense love towards Him.

(4) *Śānti-rūpāt paramānanda-rāpāc ca* | (60)

Because it takes the form of the highest Peace and *Ānanda*.

(5) *Amrita-svarūpā ca* | (3)

Its innermost nature is nectar.

The first of these *Sūtras* merely describes the general nature of devotion and states that it is intense love directed towards God. Of course in the beginning it is inevitable that this love should be like any of the different types of love with which we are familiar and which we are capable of feeling. That is why in India a devotee is allowed to adopt any kind of attitude towards God and try to develop the corresponding kind of love to an intense degree. He may regard God as a friend, as a Master, as Father or Mother, or as a Beloved. It does not really matter in the earlier stages what is the nature of the attitude. What matters is the intensity of the love. For everything in this field, or, in fact, in any other field of spiritual endeavour, depends on intensity or potential. The fusion of consciousness which takes place when in an ecstasy—the fusion of the consciousness of the devotee with the Consciousness of his Beloved may be compared to the striking of the earth by a bolt of lightning in a thunderstorm. But this coming together of the positive and negative charges on the cloud and earth depends upon the tremendous difference in voltage which must have developed previously so that the resistance of the air may break down. The difference in voltage is sometimes tremendous and may go up to a million volts. That accounts for the destructive and terrific nature of the phenomenon. Similarly, it is only when the love between the devotee and God reaches an intense degree that partial fusion of consciousness takes place and the devotee realizes what Divine Love is like. Through this realization his love rises to a still higher level and he experiences the bliss corresponding to that higher level. This takes place again and again and he experiences more and more intense forms of love and the finer and subtler levels of bliss corresponding to them.

These ecstasies in which the devotee rises to deeper levels of consciousness and love correspond to the different levels of *Samādhi* in Rāja Yoga. The final stages of these experiences are quite different from the emotional love which is felt in the early stages, however intense this might be. They are generally referred to as *Paramānanda* in the literature of the Bhakti Schools, or as *Peace* or *Shanti* in the terminology of Jñāna Yoga. Though the love is intense and all-embracing, it is flowing in a very deep channel, and so there is perfect peace and serenity and balance, with no turmoil or disturbance as in the earlier stages.

While on this subject I might as well deal with a question which sometimes troubles many aspirants. It was said just now that a devotee can adopt any kind of attitude towards God, and develop his love along that line. This is another way of saying that he can worship God in any form he likes or which appeals to him. Many people worry themselves unnecessarily with regard to the form they should select in developing their devotion. The fact is that the form does not matter, provided it attracts the devotee and provided it is such that it can arouse only pure and holy thoughts and emotions. If there are many doors leading to the inner sanctuary of a temple, what does it matter by which door we enter if our object is not to stop at the door but to enter into the presence of the Deity!

Though I have put it rather simply in this manner, this is a very important point and we should try to go deeper into it and understand the inner significance of the statement that has been made, namely the form to which the devotion is directed does not matter very much.

In order to understand this fact we should try to realize that *love is a state of the mind*, while the form of the Deity or the object of worship is *merely an image in the mind*. Now the real thing which matters in bringing about a fusion of the mind of the devotee and the object of devotion is not the image but the state of the mind, which is quite independent of the image and is not affected by the form of the image. Whether it is the image of Christ or

Krishna or Rāma or Shiva or Durgā or Buddha or a Master does not matter. What matters is the intensity of the devotion, self-surrender and purity of the mind which makes it fit to be united with the object of devotion, and brings down the grace and blessing of the object of devotion upon the devotee.

For, after all, the consciousness of the devotee fuses, not with the image, but with the Consciousness which the image represents. The union is not in the realm of the lower concrete mind of names and forms, but in the realm of consciousness on the plane of Buddhi at the lowest level. The mental image disappears and is transcended in this union. In meditation, or otherwise, it serves merely as a focus for consciousness through which aspiration passes upwards, and grace, blessing or forces flow downwards. It is like a door through which communication takes place but He whom the devotee seeks is on the other side of the door and he must cross this door in order to meet Him. So it will be seen how the form of the image is of secondary importance, and its importance and value depends entirely upon the aspiration and attraction it is able to evoke owing to past impressions of this and previous lives. It is the condition of the mind, its alertness, intensity of love, purity, self-surrender, which are the factors of paramount importance.

It may be pointed out in this connection that this holds true not only in our relation to the object of our devotion but even in our ordinary human relationships. Do you think that when we love anybody or even when we talk to anybody, we are loving or communicating only with the outer physical body or with the mind of the individual? Not at all. It is the Spirit which is communicating with the Spirit through the veils of the body and mind. If you doubt this, try to imagine the person with whom you are communicating on the physical plane without the Monad or the *Ātmā* who is the animating Spirit behind all the bodies. The whole structure or mechanism of communication from the physical to the *Ātmic* will become inoperative if the *Ātmā* leaves it, and it will cease to function, and become meaningless to us. We see

this to some extent when the higher principles leave the physical body at death. The body which was dear to us becomes a mere conglomeration of matter in which we are not at all interested. It is the *Ātmā* or the Spirit behind the set of vehicles which is not only the cognizer but also the object of our love, and also the lover.

This idea has been put very beautifully in one of the Upanishads. Translated freely it means: 'Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear. Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear but for the sake of the Self is the husband dear. Not for the sake of the son is the son dear, but for the sake of the Self is the son dear.' And so the *Mantra* goes on, repeating the statement again and again with regard to other human relationships to impress the idea on the mind of the reader. You can see the underlying significance of the statement. Although we imagine that all our relationships are based at our personal level, they are in reality at the level of the Spirit and the intervening bodies are merely veils which hide the true participants in the actions and reactions which take place.

This fact shows that it is not the image in our mind which is the object of our devotion but the Universal Life and Divine Consciousness which is hidden behind it, and which is the same for all kinds of images. That is why Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gītā that He meets every devotee along any path he comes or through any form in which the devotee worships Him.

But, of course, while we are still living in the realm of names and forms there is no reason why we should not take advantage of the attraction and response which these particular names and forms arouse in us, enabling us to strengthen our devotion. All the same it is not necessary to worry ourselves as some do about the choice of the form to which we should direct our devotion. What naturally attracts us and arouses our devotion is the form for us.

Then we come to *Sūtra* 5 according to which the innermost nature of devotion is *Amrita* or nectar. This is a rather mysterious statement and requires explanation. Now nectar or *Amrita* in

Sanskrit is a symbol of Immortality or Eternal Life, as its very meaning shows, *A-mrita*, 'above death'. So anyone who takes *Amrita* even once is supposed to become immortal, as having passed beyond the domain of death. Obviously, there is no such liquid or Elixir of life, by taking which man can become immortal. *Amrita* clearly symbolizes that state of consciousness which is above manifestation, and by attaining which man becomes liberated from the illusion of birth and death, i.e. a *Jivanmukta*. Once a person has attained that state, he need not come down again in incarnation as a matter of necessity, though he may do so to help his brethren who are still struggling in the realm of birth and death.

The fear of birth and death is rooted in the identification of consciousness with the vehicles and once an individual has risen into the realm of Spirit or pure Consciousness, and realizes that he is pure Consciousness or one with the Divine Consciousness, the illusion which leads to identification with the vehicles is destroyed for ever and there is not only no fear of death and birth but also no necessity to incarnate in the lower worlds compulsorily. This is real Liberation or Immortality.

Now it is this state which is attained when the consciousness of the devotee going into more and more intense forms of ecstasy is ultimately united with the Divine Consciousness, and becomes established in it permanently. Since that Consciousness is Eternal and confers Immortality, the highest state of devotion in which the devotee lives is called *Amrita*. Of course, the same consciousness may be attained along the path of *Jñāna* or *Rāja Yoga*.

This was the method which our wise men or *Rishis* adopted for gaining immortality. But consider some of the methods which we, their 'wiser' progeny adopt to gain immortality these days. In order that the name of our body may endure we desperately try to get it associated with some institution if we are important enough, or if not, a road or even a lane will do. We do not realize that the name of the road may remain for some time, but who will associate it with us when we are gone? Even if we ourselves come down in another incarnation, we will not know that

the institution bears the name of our body in a previous life. We write books; we try to find a place for ourselves in history as political leaders; we do so many things and sometimes very undesirable things, under the cruel illusion and in the vain hope that we will become immortalized. We do not realize that in all such cases it is only a name or form which can endure at most for a few centuries, not we. The tidal wave of time is advancing relentlessly, destroying not only the names of now famous men, but everything in its path, even civilizations and Globes, Solar systems and universes. What an illusion!

(6) *Sā na kāmaya ānā nirodha-rūṣatvāt* | (7)

It is not moved by selfish personal desire because it finds expression in the inhibition of all such desires.

This *Sūtra* obviously refers not to the lower stages of *Bhakti* or devotion, where it is mixed up with personal desire, but to the highest stage where it has become utterly unselfish and the devotee loves God for His sake alone. The *Sūtra* points out that this highest form of devotion is not motivated by personal selfish desire, and the proof of this is that it leads to the elimination of all such desires. What is the motive power in this case, then? Pure Love which draws a fragment of separated consciousness to the Whole from which it has separated, so that the two may become united again.

Now, one of the most remarkable characteristics of love is that it frees us from our ordinary desires and attachments naturally and easily. We see this to some extent even in the lower expressions of love. When, for example, a man falls in love with a woman, for the time being the comfort and happiness of the beloved becomes the sole concern of the lover, and he becomes free from most of his lower desires. Of course, these desires are not eliminated really, but cannot find expression as long as the exalted state of love lasts. The same thing happens in the case of a mother. Her love for her child makes her completely indifferent to her own comfort and interests, and she becomes free from many of the lower desires which may have dominated her mind before.

We may ask what causes this transformation which takes place in the case of a person whose desires are shed, as it were, naturally when he is in love? In order to understand this we have to remember that *Ānanda* or bliss is our innermost essential nature, and we cannot live without it. We must have it somehow. If we cannot have it from within we must try to get it from without, through the satisfaction of ordinary desires. Every time a desire is satisfied, it temporarily makes the mind tranquil for a brief interval, and in this tranquillized and harmonized mind a little of the *Ānanda* filters down from within ourselves. This is the cause of the temporary satisfaction or pleasure or happiness we feel with the fulfilment of desire. But this does not last. The mind loses its equilibrium soon. The desire is again aroused, and makes us seek satisfaction in other things, and so we continue to run after things in the outer world though the source of happiness is within ourselves.

When we are in love we are partially and temporarily in touch with the source of *Ānanda* within ourselves, for, as has been pointed out, love and *Ānanda* are inseparable, like the two sides of the same coin. Being in direct though partial touch with the source of *Ānanda* we are, to a limited extent, independent of external objects which provide us with ordinary pleasure or happiness. We are partially Self-satisfied, Self-sufficient for the time being, even though the object of love is outside ourselves. In the case of ordinary love this exalted state does not last and so we revert to the search for happiness in external objects and pursuits. We lose our self-sufficiency again. But when true Divine Love is born within us and begins to flow through our heart steadily and strongly, we become permanently established in the very Source of Love and *Ānanda* and become Self-sufficient permanently and completely. The fountain of bliss and joy is eternally playing within our heart and we need nothing from the external world and in the external world, although we may be working in it to help our brethren and carry on the work of the Logos which has been entrusted to us. We become like the Logos Himself,

Who is in this world, working through it and yet not dependent upon it. He is the very Ocean of Love and *Ānanda* from which we all derive our *Ānanda*. So we see how Love finds expression in the natural and rapid elimination of all desires, and is the easiest and most pleasant method of making our minds pure, tranquil and Self-sufficient. It helps us in two ways. It increases the attraction of the individual towards the Divine Life and Consciousness at the Centre and at the same time decreases his attraction to the external objects on the periphery.

(7) *Guṇa-rahitam kāmanā-rahitam pratikṣaṇa vardhamānam avicchinnam sūkṣmataram anubhavarūpam* | (54)

Devoid of *Guṇas* (the three fundamental qualities in Nature) free from selfish desire, growing in volume and intensity every moment, and having a ceaseless flow, it is of the form of inner experience.

This *Sūtra* also seeks to describe the devotion which a devotee feels towards God when he has reached an advanced degree of union with Him. *Guṇarahitam* means that it is without *Guṇas*, or transcends *Guṇas*. In a later *Sūtra* which we shall consider (No. 56) the lower stages of *Bhakti* are referred to. We shall see that this lower *Bhakti* is *Rājasic*, *Tāmasic* or *Sāttvic*, and has an ulterior object in view. It does not seek God for His own sake, and so is classed as secondary. The highest kind of *Bhakti* or devotion referred to in this *Sūtra* is above the *Guṇas* or free from the conditioning of consciousness which results from association with the *Guṇas*.

Kāmanārahitam means that it is free from the lower selfish desires and is motivated by pure love—that attraction of the fragments for the Whole to which I have referred already. As I have dealt with this point in the last *Sūtra*, I need not go into it again.

Pratikṣaṇa vardhamānam means that it increases continuously. There is no finality with regard to anything which is connected with the Divine Life and Consciousness. There are depths within depths *ad infinitum*. 'Veil after veil will lift but there must be

veil upon veil behind.' Every time a veil lifts and the devotee attains a deeper union with the Divine Life within him, his love grows. It is a kind of virtuous circle. The more we love God, the more we know Him, and the more we know Him, the more we love Him.

Avichchinnam means ceaseless flow. We should remember that we are dealing with the highest stage of devotion where the consciousness of the devotee remains permanently united with that of the Lord, and the flow of love is therefore uninterrupted. The devotee in the earlier stages attains a glimpse of the Beloved and his love shoots up in an ecstasy. But then he loses contact and this brings utter misery. This misery of separation or *V'raha*, as it is called, by its very intensity brings about union again. So this ebb and flow is a part of the life of a Mystic in the earlier stages, in fact even up to a fairly advanced stage. But there comes a time or stage when he cannot slide back into separation and remains continuously established in the Consciousness of the Beloved. Then the flow of love is naturally continuous.

Sūksmataram means subtler or at a deeper level. As has been pointed out before, in advanced stages of devotion, love flows in a very deep channel and so does not find expression in outer vehement symptoms and loss of balance as in the earlier stages. A shallow river makes much noise and easily overflows its banks, but a river flowing in a very deep channel does not make noise and does not overflow its banks. So we should not judge the love of a person by the outer symptoms or by its demonstrativeness.

Then the last phrase, *Anubhava-rūpam*, means that this love flowing at a deeper level is of the nature of an experience. It is not an emotion, not a thought, not even a perception of the Higher Mind or Buddhi. It is an awareness—awareness of the Divine Life and Consciousness within the Centre of the individual's consciousness. This awareness is the result of the fusion of the two.

But it is a fusion of consciousness with enough duality or sense of separateness still left to enable the devotee to feel the bliss of love. It is obvious that when the two are fused together completely,

in a perfectly integrated state of consciousness, there can exist no love in the ordinary sense, for love is the result of the relation between the lover and the Beloved, and when the lover and Beloved have become fused together into One perfectly integrated state, love must disappear and only Ānanda can remain. That is why the devotees in the Vaishnava schools do not want to become fully united with the Lord. They are constantly praying to their Lord that they may remain separate sufficiently to have the bliss of Divine Love which is their life's aim.

(8) *Gauṇī tridhā guṇa-bhedād ārtād-bhedād va* | (56)

Devotion which is associated with personal selfish desires becomes threefold according as the worshipper falls into one of the three classes—of the suffering (*Ārtā*), the seekers for knowledge (*Jñyāsu*), or those desirous of wealth or any other worldly object (*Ārtādī*).

(9) *Bhaktā ekāntino mukhyā!* | (67)

The primary (real) devotees are those who have only one end in view, or are single-hearted.

These two *Sūtras* draw the distinction between the two classes of devotees. Those belonging to the first class are devoted to the Lord but they have some ulterior end in view and their devotion is contaminated in different degrees with these personal selfish desires. They do not love God for His sake alone, but in order to gain some personal benefit through His grace. The devotees belonging to the second class have absolutely no selfish end in view. They love Him because they cannot help it. He is the Life of their life, Centre of their very consciousness, who draws them irresistibly, unaccountably and exquisitely to Himself, and they cannot but surrender themselves completely to this irresistible pull. There is no ulterior motive, only the joy of loving Him. There is no other desire except the desire to find Him and to become one with Him. Can the mother who loves her first-born son and is prepared to sacrifice everything for his sake say why

she loves him? Can the lover who has fallen madly in love with another, and for the time being is oblivious of his own comforts and desires, say why he loves his beloved? Yet these loves in human relationships, we must remember, are only reflections of reflections. They are based to a great extent on past associations in previous lives, though behind the association is also the spiritual bond which unites one fragment of the Whole with another fragment, and also the affinity between Monads which brings them together in their life in the lower worlds in anticipation and preparation of their loving collaboration in the vast dramas in which they will have to act in the far-distant future. If reflections of reflections can temporarily evoke such a high degree of self-abnegation in ordinary human beings immersed in the illusions and interests of the lower world, can you imagine what must be the nature and intensity of that self-surrender and devotion which the devotee feels when he has risen above the ordinary illusions and limitations of life, to offer himself and his love whole-heartedly at the feet of his Lord? These are the devotees referred to in the second of the above *Sūtras*.

The first of these two *Sūtras*, referring to the devotees of the second class whose motives are not quite unselfish, is of importance, not because it enables us to classify them satisfactorily, but because it draws our attention to the lower stages of devotion. It raises a number of questions with regard to these lower stages of devotion which we must try to understand, so that we may be able to utilize them as stepping stones to rise higher and higher until we transcend those stages and reach the level of devotion referred to in the second *Sūtra*.

Before we deal with these questions, let us first consider the three subdivisions of devotees belonging to the second class. In this *Sūtra* the subdivisions are merely hinted at. To gain a better idea of these subdivisions we may refer to *Shlokas* 16, 17 and 18 in chapter 7 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The devotees are divided in *Shloka* 16 into the following classes: (1) those who are involved in trouble and suffering and turn to God for help in their extremity;

(2) Those who seek Him for knowledge, lower or higher, (3) Those who seek Him for gaining objects of various kinds in this world, for their pleasure or happiness; and (4) those wise ones who seek Him for His own sake and not from any ulterior motive. This classification is based on the Hindu doctrine of the *Guṇas* which we need not discuss here. Any one who wants to go into this question in greater detail can read discourse 14 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Now, what we are concerned with here is not the classification of the devotees but the place of the lower stages of devotion in the life of the devotee. For, practically all of us have to start from the lowest stage and have to work our way up through the different stages into the higher stage referred to in the second *Sūtra*. For a long time we have to remain in the lower stage of *Gauṇī Bhakti*, and should therefore try to understand it and utilize it for increasing the intensity of our devotion, and freeing it from the taint of selfishness. You will notice that in *Shloka* 18 of discourse 7 Shri Krishna does not speak disparagingly of the three classes of devotees in the lower stage. He calls them noble, but naturally he calls the devotees in the fourth class, the wise ones who worship Him for pure love, as dearest to Him. He does not say that He will not respond to the call of those who seek Him for knowledge or those who in their affliction turn to Him for help, or even those who are neither seeking Him for knowledge nor for relief in their suffering, but purely from unadulterated selfish motives. Look at this magnanimity, this large-heartedness, this love which responds not only to suffering of the afflicted, but even to the desire of people to have nice though illusory pleasures of this world. I consider this latter kind of response the highest, and really godlike in its nature. Even we, blinded by illusion and selfishness as we are, can be moved by suffering and misery, and respond in different degree to a call for help, but only God and those who are godlike can respond to every sincere call for help, whatsoever its nature. Nobody can remain outside His vast and loving embrace. Just as a mother cannot refuse when a

toddler wants a toy or a chocolate, so God cannot refuse when a partially developed soul wants things of this world for its satisfaction and growth. So let us beware, and not in self-righteousness look down upon those who are young in soul and need the ordinary pleasures of the world for their growth. Even if we are not able to meet their demands for help we can adopt the correct attitude and not think any the less of them on this account.

Have we any doubts whether God responds to the call of every individual for anything he desires? Do we not know that there is a law operating in the realm of human affairs which brings to everyone whatever he desires sooner or later? It is not possible to have whatever you want immediately, but it is possible to have it ultimately if you continue to desire and make the necessary effort. We are the children of the Most High, and therefore our will even when it is expressed under illusion, in the form of desire, must be respected and therefore fulfilled in the long run. We may desire the wrong things and suffer accordingly, but that does not matter. It is a part of our education and gradually makes us desire the right things, and ultimately not things, but Him. He alone is the real and only Source of all true happiness which we mistakenly seek through things.

But let us come back to the point and ask the question: What is the real significance of these two *Sūtras*, in the light of what Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* about the devotees who turn to Him and love Him even though with an ulterior motive? I think this clearly indicates that we must learn to turn to Him for what we want, even though our desires are selfish in the beginning. For it is by turning our face in His direction that we take the first step towards Him. It does not matter if we ask Him to satisfy our ordinary desires. The mere fact that we ask Him to do so means that we have started trusting Him and depending upon Him. In this attitude of trust and dependence lies the great secret of developing love towards Him. The more we trust Him and depend upon Him the more our love grows, the more our desire for ordinary things is transformed slowly and steadily into the

desire for Him Who supplies our wants. There is a Divine alchemy involved in this process. We shall discuss this question in greater detail when we take up the question of the means of developing devotion. Among these, *Ananyatā* or 'dependence only on Him' referred to in *Sūtra* 10 has a pre-eminent position.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MEANS OF DEVELOPING DEVOTION

As the aphorisms dealing with the means of developing devotion are given in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada in a rather haphazard manner and are scattered in different parts of the text we shall pick out the important aphorisms bearing on a particular aspect of the subject and discuss them together before proceeding to deal with the other aspects.

(10) *Tasmīn anyatā tad virodhiṣu udāsīnatā ca* | (9)

Single-hearted devotion towards Him and indifference to all that conflicts with Him.

(11) *Anyāśrayāṇām tyāgaḥ anyatā* | (10)

Single-hearted devotion toward Him means the giving up of all other supports.

(12) *Loka-vedeṣu tad anukūlā araṇam tad virodhiṣūdāsīnatā* | (11)

Indifference to all that conflicts with Him means righteous conduct in accordance with social, moral and spiritual obligations.

This group of three aphorisms (9, 10, 11) given above throws light on two basic requirements in treading the path of love and we shall start with these. *Sūtra* 10 enumerates these two basic requirements and the following two *Sūtras* indicate the general nature of these requirements. These two requirements are indicated by the Sanskrit phrases *Ananyatā* and *Tad virodhiṣūdāsīnatā*. Let us take *Ananyata* first.

Ananyatā has been translated as single-hearted devotion towards God and explained as the giving up of all other supports. These phrases indicate the general meaning as understood by

ordinary people, but those who want to put these ideas into practice should try to go deeper into the significance of the word '*Ananyatā*'. Taking into consideration the literal meaning of the word as well as the traditions and practices prevalent among Mystics and saints I think the significance of the word is best expressed by the phrase 'complete dependence upon God for everything'. Of course, every aspirant will readily agree with this pious ideal and try to translate it into his life as far as he can. But the crux of the whole problem lies in the two words 'complete' and 'everything'. It is easy to depend upon God whenever it is convenient to do so but it is extremely difficult to develop an attitude and habit of mind of depending upon Him completely and for everything. And here lies the reason why this most potent means of developing devotion remains infructuous in the case of the vast number of devotees who think they are depending upon God and yet do not find any significant change in their lives and mind. If you depend upon God when it is convenient to do so and depend upon yourself or others most of the time, this is not dependence upon Him really. It is merely expedience, using Him as a convenience as you might use anybody else, and this thing does not work.

Of course, it is not possible to develop *Ananyatā* suddenly by just making a resolution. It is a slow process of growth and involves a virtuous circle. The more you trust God and depend upon Him the more readily and completely He responds to your trust and fulfils all your real needs and requirements. And when you find actually that your real needs are being supplied, sometimes almost miraculously, your trust and confidence in his bounty and loving care grows rapidly. And then begins to well up from within your heart that real devotion which pours itself out in sheer joy and adoration without expecting anything in return but the desire to be worthy of such love and tender care which He bestows on you. It has been said already that this is a slow process, how slow or rapid it depends upon us and not upon Him for He is waiting to give everything and even Himself but we are not worthy yet to receive Him. But human nature being what it is, we should

be patient and persevere in this effort, keeping the ideal of complete dependence always in view though we may not succeed every time. We should be prepared to be tested severely to see whether our trust is really sincere and not only a pseudo-dependence which evaporates and even turns into disappointment and resentment when our desires and needs are not fulfilled. For He does what is really good for us and not what we in our ignorance think is good for us.

We are dealing here only with the general principle. How *Ananyatā* is to be developed actually in one's life is a personal problem which each individual must solve for himself. In real spiritual life, as distinguished from ordinary religious life, there cannot be wooden, hard and fast rules which must be followed mechanically and unintelligently to bring about a desired result. We must put our whole heart into this matter, be constantly alert, experiment along different lines, and be prepared for failures. Then only can we succeed in achieving our aim. But if we persevere sincerely, success is bound to come ultimately for we are living in a world of immutable laws which are as dependable as the laws of the physical world, and what is most important, He Whom we are seeking is at the back of our effort and more eager than we are for this union. But sincerity and strong faith are indispensable. It is no use trying to do these things in a half-hearted manner or in a slipshod manner as we are wont to do. Doubt is the great enemy of spiritual progress. It nullifies all efforts and undermines the edifice of our spiritual life in an insidious manner. Doubt is a useful and necessary weapon in the stage of enquiry in the earlier stages. But we must try to consider all these things, ponder them, test them and then arrive at definite conclusions and convictions, at what has been called *Nischaya* in a previous chapter. If our efforts in this direction succeed and if we really want to enter this Path, we must pray and purify our minds for the light of Buddhi, for real faith is nothing but the irradiation of the lower mind with the light of Buddhi which gives certainty and confidence because it partially reflects the realities

of the inner life into our minds. Once we decide to enter the Path we must throw out doubt completely from our mind and not continue to harbour it under a mistaken notion that it is good for us and is a sign of intellectuality. It is not a sign of intellectuality. It is a sign of the fact that our minds is not irradiated by the light of Buddhi and so are always wavering between a multitude of ideas and courses of action and are not able to decide which is the correct and the right one. If we do not believe in this and are convinced that doubt is a necessary part of our progress in spiritual life then I am afraid for the time being we have really no place in this field of Divine endeavour. Our proper place is among the so-called intellectuals of modern times who think that they are in the vanguard of civilization because they do not believe in anything and insist on their right of doubting everything.

See what Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* about the doubting self and the man who has real *Shraddhā*.

‘But the ignorant, faithless, doubting self goeth to destruction; neither this world, nor that beyond, nor even ordinary happiness, is there for the doubting self.’ (IV. 40).

‘The man who is full of faith obtaineth wisdom, and he also who hath mastery over the senses; and having obtained wisdom he goeth swiftly to the Supreme Peace.’ (IV. 39).

I think these statements are quite unequivocal and should set at rest for all time the doubts of all habitual doubters about the wisdom and necessity of doubting things pertaining to the higher life.

Though the doubting habit affects some people particularly in a high degree, all of us suffer to some extent from doubts lurking in our minds of which we are mostly unconscious. It is these doubts which prevent us from following sincerely and wholeheartedly the instructions of our Great Teachers and not giving a fair trial to the methods which have been found to unfold our spiritual nature. We accept these things mentally but not wholeheartedly. We have mental reservations of which we are not

conscious. The very fact that we are not prepared to give serious trial to them shows the presence of the lurking doubts.

How we miss some of the greatest gifts which life has in store for us by not even trying these well-tried methods which others have tried and succeeded! I am reminded in this connection about a story, which I read somewhere, about two Englishmen one of whom was a great believer in the scepticism of people in general and the other was not. They entered into a bet of one hundred guineas. The one who had implicit faith in the tendency to doubt in the ordinary man said, 'I will stand on the Thames Bridge with one hundred real gold sovereigns on a plate for fifteen minutes and try to sell them for one shilling each to any one who is prepared to buy them. If even one sovereign is sold during that time you win. If none is sold you lose.' He stood at the bridge as arranged. People came, felt very much amused but thought they were too clever to be taken in. There must be a snag somewhere they thought. So not one sovereign was bought by any one of the hundreds of people who passed that way and were given that genuine offer.

Most of us are like these people passing over the bridge. The Great Teachers of humanity, the saints and sages who have trodden the Path and reached the goal, offer us the precious truths of the spiritual life in all seriousness but we do not take these offers seriously. They tell us that a stupendous Reality is hidden within our hearts and we can realize It, if we make the necessary effort and are prepared to sacrifice the present illusory pleasures for the Eternal Life which is in store for us. We pay lip homage to Them but we do nothing and even if we do something it is done in a half-hearted manner. Reason? Doubts lurking in our minds somewhere. Of course, the reason in many cases probably is that we are not ready yet for this glorious destiny which is in store for us, but this unpreparedness also expresses itself through doubt. There is nothing which guards a truth effectively and makes it inaccessible to people in general than scepticism. That is why one of the Masters has said that the best safeguard against

the misuse of occult knowledge and powers is the scepticism of the people who could misuse them. That is why They are not keen that everyone in the world should accept these occult truths.

Now, *Ānanyatā* is one of such precious truths which have tremendous potentialities in the development of devotion. But how many people are there who will take it seriously and give it a fair trial.

Let us now pass on to the second requirement which is hinted at in the third *Sūtra*. In the form in which the *Sūtra* is given it appears as if it is applicable only to Hindus who take the Vedas as an authority on questions connected with their religious life. They are considered to be based on revelation and are the scriptures of the orthodox Hindus. They contain in their various parts teachings suited to all stages of human development from the highest to the lowest. There are rituals meant for those who want joys of this world or the Heaven world and also the teaching of the Upanishads for those who have realized the illusory nature of this world as well as the Heaven world and are ready to undertake the arduous task of discovering the eternal Truth of Reality hidden within themselves. Every one is really free to choose the path which appeals to him although orthodoxy seeks to impose restrictions of various kinds. But no one takes these seriously these days.

Now, if you examine the *Sūtra* carefully and strip it of the outer garb of Hindu thought and tradition you find it enjoins nothing more and nothing less than a righteous life, taking the word 'righteous' in its widest and catholic sense. The word 'righteous' is derived from the word 'right' and righteousness is a life lived strictly and scrupulously according to what we know to be right in our heart of hearts and not as seen through the veils of our desires. It is also possible that it has some connection with the mysterious Samskrit word '*Rta*' in Hindu religion and philosophy which denotes the dynamic moral order which underlies the universe and according to which it unfolds in the realm

of space and time. 'Rta' is that hidden Law of Divine unfolding which is rooted in Divine Ideation and Divine Will and which determines the inherent rightness of every action and every movement at any moment in time and space, both in its individual and collective aspects. If a thing is in harmony with this 'Rta' it is right, if it is not, then it is wrong.

We shall not go further into the philosophical aspect of righteousness but consider it in its practical aspect as a necessary qualification for all those who tread the path to Perfection and Liberation.

Even if we decide to regulate our life and conduct according to the dictates of righteousness how are we to determine what is right under a particular set of circumstances? There are no mechanical rules which can guide us in this matter. The only way in which we can find out what is right is through the light of Buddhi which reflects into the mind the spiritual consciousness which is in touch with 'Rta.' This capacity to see the right through the light of Buddhi, as has been pointed out before, can come only from an invariable habit of doing the right scrupulously at all costs whatever may be the inconvenience or loss to us at the moment. Here again we have to deal with a virtuous circle. The more we conform our life to what we see as right, the more correctly and easily we can see what is right and the more we are able to see correctly what is right in the light of Buddhi the easier it is for us to translate that perception into right action. This is the only way in which true righteousness can be acquired and made a part of our nature so that we do the right without struggle, without hesitation and even without effort. Of course, in the beginning we may and have to follow certain well-defined rules, for there are certain courses of conduct which are always right and there are others which are wrong under all circumstances. This kind of discipline purifies our mind and enables the light of Buddhi to irradiate it to some extent, but we cannot always depend upon these rules and have to depend ultimately upon our intuition in the later and higher stages.

Now, the important point to realize here is the indispensability of a righteous life for the aspirant who seriously intends to unfold his spiritual nature whether along the *Bhakti Mārga*, or the path of Rāja Yoga. This importance of a righteous life is due to several facts which will bear repetition and recapitulation. Firstly, it is the only thing which can ensure our safety especially in the higher stages when powers begin to appear naturally as a result of attaining the higher states of consciousness and there is the possibility of the misuse of those powers for our personal ends. Secondly it is the only thing which can ensure the absence of inner conflict which constantly disturbs the mind and makes it impossible to make it calm and harmonized. Thirdly, without righteousness it is not possible to open up the mind to the influence and illumination of the light of Buddhi. And lastly, it is only through a mind based on a perfectly righteous life that Divine Life and Consciousness can function. How can an unrighteous life possibly mingle with the pure and transcendent Life of God and how can He descend into our heart if we have not prepared it for His reception by making it utterly pure by righteousness? We will also find that it is on the rock of unrighteousness that the lives of many budding occultists or mystics are generally wrecked.

(13) *Yah karma-phalam tyajati karmāṇi samnyasyati tato nirdvandvo bhavati* | (48)

Who has no eye to the fruits of his actions, who dedicates all actions to God (or who in everything does the Will of God) and truly becomes free from the influence of the pairs of opposites.

This is another *Sūtra* of fundamental importance which we should try to understand thoroughly. It deals with the problem of action, how to perform actions and yet be not bound by their karmic effects. As Shri Krishna has pointed out in the *Bhagavad-gītā* no one can remain without action even for a moment, taking action in its widest sense which includes not only our physical

activities but also our desires and thoughts. It is equally true that action of any kind binds us by producing Karma, or tendencies or potentiality of the fulfilment of our desires in the future. All these things forge bonds for us continuously. The Karmas have to be worked out, experiences made necessary by our desires have to be gone through, and tendencies developed have to be eradicated and in this process of going through all these experiences we create new Karmas, new tendencies, new desires. So this process appears to be an unending one, a sort of vicious circle which binds us to the wheel of births and deaths and all the illusions and limitations which are part of this wheel. Is there then no way out of this vicious circle? Yes, there is and it is indicated in the *Sūtra* we are discussing. The method prescribed therein not only frees us from the binding effect of our actions, but also develops our devotion and makes us a conscious instrument of the Divine Life. And incidentally it frees us from the influence of the pairs of opposites which cause constant disturbance in our minds. Let us go into these things a little more in detail and try to grasp their inner significance. For, what we are really dealing with in this *Sūtra* is Karma Yoga which is a preparation for and an indispensable basis for all the advanced systems of Yoga. Unless we learn the techniques of performing actions in such a manner that they do not produce Karmas which bind us continuously in a series of causes and effects, what hope can there be of our gaining Liberation? It is only when we have learnt this technique and cease to make any fresh Karmas for the future that the way opens for exhausting our past Karmas in preparation for Liberation. This Karma Yoga has been dealt with at great length in the *Bhagavad-gītā* but let us deal here very briefly with some of its salient features.

The first thing we should realize clearly is the necessity of learning this technique of Nishkāma-karma i.e. action performed in such a way that it does not leave any karmic effects for the future and does not bind us to the lower worlds of illusion and limitations. Kāma as we all know means desires which can be

satisfied only in the lowest three worlds in which the personality functions and *Nishkāma-karma* is therefore action which is not associated with such desires. Obviously, when we perform an action which is motivated by a lower personal desire what is wrong with the action is only its motive. It is this motive which produces the effects which bind us in the future. And it is not the mere fact that there is a motive behind the action but that the motive is such that it is bound to produce Karmas which can be worked out only in the lower worlds that is the cause of its binding effect. Obviously, it is not possible to perform an action without any motive but it is possible to substitute for the lower motive which brings about these undesirable results a higher motive which does not. This can be done, and this is what has to be done in learning the technique of *Nishkāma-karma*. *Nishkāma-karma* is, therefore, not motiveless action, nor even desireless action as many people mistakenly think it to be, but action without the lower desires of the personality which can be satisfied only in the lower worlds. There must necessarily be a motive and a desire at the back of every action but this desire must be spiritual, if I may put it that way. Let us consider what is written in *Light on the Path*. The first six aphorisms are:

1. Kill out ambition.
2. Kill out desire of life.
3. Kill out desire of comfort.
4. Kill out all sense of separateness.
5. Kill out desire for sensation.
6. Kill out the hunger for growth.

And then follows another set of six aphorisms:

1. Desire only that which is within you.
2. Desire only that which is beyond you.
3. Desire only that which is unattainable.
4. Desire power ardently.
5. Desire peace fervently.
6. Desire possessions above all.

The first set of desires are desires of the personality while the second set of desires are those of the spiritual Individuality or the Higher Self. It will be seen, therefore, that it is not all desires which have to be eliminated but only lower desires. You may even desire power and possessions but these must pertain to the pure Soul or the Higher Self.

Coming back to the point we may ask what motive or desire has to be substituted for the lower personal desires which are generally at the back of our actions, to destroy their potentiality for producing undesirable Karmas in the future? The answer in the *Bhagavad-gītā* which is meant for those treading the Path of Devotion is quite clear. Dedicate all actions to God or to put it in other words, do all actions in His service or as an offering to Him. This change of motive eliminates the potentiality in the action for producing lower personal Karma. But this is not all. It introduces another powerful effect which provides positive help to the devotee in his progress toward his goal of union with his Beloved. Consider the effect of offering all your actions at the lotus feet of your Lord. If you offer a flower or a prayer to Him sincerely your heart is immediately lifted up and devotion wells up within your heart in a lesser or greater measure according to your attitude. But offering all your actions all day long can become a continuous state of adoration which must bring down His grace in response and make your devotion grow by leaps and bounds. Many people conceive *Nishkāma-karma*, deprived of its personal motive, as a dry dreary performance of duty and, therefore, they shrink from it. They do not realize that it is a joyful offering of his life at the feet of his Lord for the real devotee. It is a perpetual feast of love if there is real love in our heart. It takes out from our life all the apathy, frustration, dullness from which most people suffer and we can do the dullest and most unpleasant work with a song in our heart if we feel that we are doing it for Him.

And as this process continues and you become perfect in this technique of *Nishkāma-karma* you find a very subtle change coming

about within yourself. You find yourself becoming more and more an instrument of His life and love. You find that through you is going out His power, His love, His help to those among whom and for whom you work, *irrespective of you*. You become a mere channel but through that channel flows His life and love. And then comes another realization at a still higher stage. You find that it is He who is seated within your heart and directing all your actions. He has always been doing this but in your egoism and false consciousness of being the actor, you did not realize it and put all kinds of obstacles in His way and obstructed the flow of His power and love. But now you know and you surrender yourself completely to that direction and flow from within. He rules within you now and you are happy to be His instrument. This is the consummation of Karma Yoga.

(14) *Tat tu viṣaya-tyāgāt saṅga-tyāgāc ca |* (35)

Devotion develops on renouncing objects and attachment to them.

This *Sūtra* points out the necessity of freeing our minds from attachments to all kinds of objects in the world. This condition worries and even alarms many aspirants for it seems to imply that they have to give up the things which they hold and which they consider necessary for their comfort or pleasure. It is no doubt true that a mind which is attached to a thousand and one things by these internal bonds of attachment is hardly in a condition to be used as an instrument in the divine adventure of Self-discovery. They will exercise a constant and strong pull downwards and will keep the mind pinned down to the lower world in spite of our aspiration and desire to free ourselves from its limitations.

But we have to be quite clear in our minds as to what we have to accomplish and should adopt the right means for gaining our end. Does the attachment of the mind to the lower world depend upon the number of things by which the person is surrounded and to which he is attached? Is a person who has a

hundred things necessarily more attached than one who has only ten and is a beggar who has nothing unattached? Obviously not. It follows, therefore, that our attachment to this world does not depend upon the number of things but upon our attitude and the functioning of the discriminating faculty, how far it sees the world and its problems in their correct perspective and without the illusions which desire weaves round our worldly possessions and pursuits. It is the state of the mind which is the most important factor in this problem and not the environment and what it contains. It is true that if discrimination has been adequately developed in us we would not surround ourselves with all kinds of unnecessary things which involve waste of time and energy, first in acquiring them and then in maintaining them. But sometimes Karma puts us in circumstances where these things come our way naturally and sometimes in spite of ourselves. Or our work may require the use of many things which may appear unnecessary to others. To denude ourselves of these things with the idea that merely doing this will make us less attached is a false hope. If there is no love in our heart and our discriminative faculty has not been awakened it will profit us nothing to adopt the life of a fakir. Our desires will, sooner or later, again force us back into the world which we think we have left. I have seen people going and living in caves in the Himalayas for years and coming back as poor and wretched as before. The fact is that these external things are really immaterial. What matters is the love in our heart, the discrimination which sees the illusions of life clearly and the consequent determination to overcome these illusions. When the light of discrimination is shining through our minds and the love of the Divine is filling our hearts, it does not really matter how we live and what we possess in the physical world. We shall consider ourselves merely as a steward of our Lord and be prepared to leave everything whenever circumstances make this necessary or desirable.

So the real problem as far as this matter is concerned is to acquire the right attitude and to develop that all-embracing

inner non-attachment which is based on a keen sense of discrimination and an inner richness of life which does not need anything outside for its fulfilment. I do not say that we should not renounce certain things to disburden ourselves and to develop the correct attitude. We may, if it helps, but we must keep our minds fixed on the inner attitudes and states of mind and not rely on these external changes in our environment and particular modes of life in the external world. We have only to look round ourselves and take lesson from the lives of people who place their faith in these external things and realize when it is too late that these things do not matter at all. In fact, they sometimes engender a false sense of security and even pride and lull us to sleep in the spiritual sense.

It is also necessary to consider in this connection the question of love towards those who are near and dear to us. Such love, if it is not associated with discrimination, can also be a cause of bondage. In fact this kind of love generally exercises a far more powerful attraction and can bind us more firmly to the lower worlds than inanimate things. What are we to do with these loves which we have developed during the course of our evolution owing to repeated association with different souls? Are we to kill them out as many pseudo-Vedantists advocate?

This is a difficult problem: how to preserve and develop the germs of Love in our personal relationships and yet not to allow them to become fetters. It is through these personal loves that our capacity to love has developed and to kill them out will really be a retrograde step making us less sensitive and less fitted to tread the Path which leads to Liberation. And yet this is what many people in India try to do under the inspiration and guidance of their *Gurus*, thereby making themselves hard-hearted and indifferent to the cry of human suffering and claims of human affection.

Obviously, this is an utterly wrong approach to the problem and here again the key lies in the faculty of discrimination. We must love, but we must love wisely. What is wrong with ordinary

human love is not the love itself but the attachment to the personality to such an extent that it affects the freedom of our minds and biases our judgment. So we have to adjust our attitude towards people whom we love in such a manner that we preserve the love intact and yet not allow it to become a fetter. This is difficult as all adjustments which require the use of our intelligence are difficult. It is much easier, in developing non-attachment, to kill out all such loves and make ourselves hard and insensitive. But in doing this we really throw away the baby with the bath-water and run the risk of gradually straying from the Right-hand path.

There is really no effective and permanent solution to this problem except the development of that awareness of our oneness with the Divine Life which enables us to see God in everything and everything in God. For, when as a result of this awareness, the great Love is born in our heart all smaller loves fall into their proper places and are seen and felt against the background of that greater Love. Once a disciple asked the Buddha whether the Tathāgata still loved his son. The Buddha replied in the affirmative, and as the disciple appeared somewhat confused, he said, 'The greater Love contains the lesser love.' There is the secret of loving wisely—the capacity to see all these lesser loves, even personal loves, as reflections of that all-embracing Love which binds together all living creatures. So let us not worry ourselves too much about these personal loves. Let us concentrate all our effort on the development of that greater Love. When we succeed in doing this even to a limited extent, the problem of our personal loves will be solved, automatically and naturally.

There are many aphorisms in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada which give the names of certain mental and moral characteristics which should be developed by an aspirant treading the Path of Devotion. As this question has been discussed already in part II we need not consider it here.



CHAPTER XXII

SAMĀDHI—THE ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUE OF YOGA

THE *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali is a book of 196 *Sūtras* or aphorisms, divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals generally with the nature of Yoga and its technique. *Samādhi* is the essential technique of Yoga and, therefore, even though it is difficult to understand it has been dealt with in the first chapter. The second chapter deals with the problem of human limitations, illusions and consequent miseries and the philosophy of *kīleśas* which formulates the general method of freeing the human soul from these afflictions. It also deals with the preliminary preparation for leading the Yogic life and the first five of the eight parts of the technique into which the system of Patanjali is divided. The whole of this chapter thus deals with the underlying philosophy and the preliminary practices which must be mastered before the *Sādhaka* is in a position to tackle the mind itself seriously and effectively, and is thus the most important chapter for the beginner. The third chapter deals with the purely mental practices which culminate in *Samādhi* and the accomplishments which are possible through the successful practice of *Samādhi*. These latter include not only the psychic powers of Yoga which are called *Siddhis* in Samskrit but the final liberation of consciousness from the limitations and illusions of the mind which leads to *Kaivalya*. The last chapter deals with the philosophy and the psychology of Yoga in a general way and also with the final stages of Yogic technique which lead to Self-Realization or *Kaivalya*. It will be seen, therefore, that the book covers a very wide field and deals with all the problems which are involved in Self-discovery and Self-Realization

by means of Rāja Yoga. As, however, the subject has been dealt with in the form of *Sūtras*, the true knowledge has to be gradually drawn out of one's own mind by careful thought and reflection. But the subject is so fascinating and important to the aspirant that this labour is worthwhile.

We should not forget that the technique of Rāja Yoga deals with the Self-directed last stages of human evolution which find their consummation in Liberation or the transcendence of all human limitations and illusions. So neither the theoretical study of this technique nor its practical application should be expected to be easy. But for those whose spiritual discrimination has been even partially developed, it provides an effective, well-tried means of freeing the individual from his limitations and sufferings, not only for this life but for all time to come. Even if the aspirant cannot put the whole technique to practical use immediately, since it gives him a general idea of the whole field of endeavour in all its aspects and from beginning to end, he should master it thoroughly at least in its theoretical aspects, and try to gradually enlarge the field of its practical application, as his interest in the subject grows and his capacities increase. This is the Royal Road to our true Home and we should know it at least theoretically even though we are inclined to tarry on the way and have still a long way to go.

As our object in this book is only to get a general idea of the subject we shall pick out the most significant *Sūtras* which serve to clarify our ideas on the important aspects of Rāja Yoga and deal with them briefly. *The Science of Yoga* deals with all the *Sūtras* in a systematic manner and those who want to make a thorough study of the subject can consult this commentary or any other book dealing with the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali.

The first *Sūtra* which we may take up for discussion is the well-known *Sūtra* of chapter 2 which defines the technique of Yoga in four words:

Yogaś citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ | (I-2)

Yoga is the inhibition of the modifications of the mind.

In the commentary an effort has been made to explain the meaning of these four words which constitute this *Sūtra* but one cannot really understand the significance of the *Sūtra* by simply knowing the meaning of the words. One has to master the whole book before one can understand what this *Sūtra* means. For, understanding this means really understanding the technique of Yoga as a whole. A beginner should, therefore, be content to understand the general meaning of the *Sūtra* and not worry too much about its deeper significance until he has gone through the whole book.

But we may consider in this connection one scientific illustration which will perhaps give us a clearer idea about the significance of the *Sūtra* than a lengthy commentary can. Suppose you have a glass tank full of clear water. Suspended in the water is a lighted electric bulb of one thousand candle power and in the side invisible to you is a small turbine operated by an electric motor which can churn the water at different speeds. You will see the lighted electric bulb clearly as long as the water is perfectly still and you will not see the water under these conditions. Suppose you start the motor and let the water be churned with a gradually increasing speed. What will happen as a result of this agitation produced in the water? The moment the water begins to get agitated the bulb is not seen as it is actually but rather in a distorted form. The greater the agitation, the more distorted does the bulb appear, and at the same time, the water which was invisible before and did not assimilate any light issuing from the bulb begins to assimilate the light and becomes more and more visible. As you increase the speed of the motor the agitation increases and patterns begin to appear in the water, these patterns forming and dissolving rapidly in succession. These temporary patterns produced in the water are visible and their visibility is due to the fact that they have assimilated some of the light issuing from the bulb. They shine not by their own light but with the light borrowed from the bulb. If the speed of the motor is increased still further and the agitation reaches a certain limit, the

patterns become so numerous and dense that they blot out the bulb completely from view. You do not see the bulb at all. You see only the patterns in the water which are forming and disappearing in rapid succession and which are shining with the light from the bulb which itself is invisible. Now reverse the process and let the speed of the motor decrease gradually and the agitation in the water to subside slowly. The patterns become less dense and gradually as the speed decreases the bulb begins to come into view although it is still visible in a distorted form. As the motor is stopped and the agitation in the water subsides, the bulb becomes more and more clearly visible. When the water is again perfectly still, the bulb is seen without distortion, the patterns disappear and the water becomes invisible again. The whole process has been reversed and we are back again to the original condition.

One can see at once the wonderful similarity of this phenomenon to the process of the obscuration of Reality by the agitations and distortions produced in our mind and can also get a clue to the method whereby these obscurations can be removed and we can again become aware of the Reality within us. But perhaps it is necessary to bring certain points to the notice of the reader to make this quite clear.

The first point we should note is that it is the agitations and distortions and ordinary modifications called *Citta-vrttis* in the mind which obscure the Reality and hide our true divine nature from us. If these are removed by some method and the mind made utterly pure and calm and without any modifications, it becomes transparent, as it were, and we become aware of the Reality which is already shining within the centre of our consciousness. In Yoga, the agitations and modifications of the mind which exist in different degree of subtlety are stopped progressively, step by step, until it becomes like the clear, transparent, still water in the tank. It is present and yet imperceptible. This is the state of Self-Realization. But we must understand that though in principle the process of removing the agitations and obscurations of the mind and becoming aware of the underlying Reality

appears quite simple it is not so in practice, because of the strong tendencies present, the momentum of the past, impressions in the form of Karmas and the slowness of the transformations which have to be brought about in the vehicles. That is why a long period of discipline and practice of Yogic techniques is necessary and the object cannot be gained by over-simplified and easy methods which are sometimes advocated. The results are sure, but we must be prepared to pay the price in the form of effort and sacrifices.

The second point we should note is that the mind shines with the light of Reality and is not self-illuminative. The Reality is like the Sun while the mind is like the moon. It is the absorption of the light of Reality which is hidden within it which imparts to it the feeling of reality we have in living in our individual world of mental images. Our mental world, which is the world in which we really live, would be a dead world if there were not behind it the light and life of Reality illuminating and energizing it.

We should be careful, however, to remember that the consciousness of the Monad is assimilated by and disappears in the modifications of the mind only in the realm of manifestation. On his own plane he remains Self-aware just as the lighted electric bulb remains shining as before even when in the agitated state of water its light partially disappears in the water and the bulb cannot be seen from outside.

Having dealt with the general principle of veiling and unveiling of Reality hidden within our minds, we shall now proceed to discuss the specific technique which is employed in Yoga to unveil this Reality. This technique is called *Samādhi* and is the very heart and essence of Yoga. All other practices or techniques which are employed in Yoga are preliminary and preparatory and subserve the technique of *Samādhi*.

The word 'Samādhi' is used for that highest state of meditation when there is consciousness only of the object of meditation and not of the mind itself. It is the culmination of meditation on an object whose reality has to be realized directly and is preceded by two other stages which are called *Dhāraṇā* and *Dhyāna*. The Yogi

begins with *Dhāraṇā* or concentration. When *Dhāraṇā* has become perfected it changes into *Dhyāna* or contemplation and when contemplation is perfected it changes into *Samādhi* or trance. So the three constitute one continuous process of increasing depth of concentration as defined in *Sūtras* 1, 2 and 3 of Chapter III as given below.

Deśa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā | (III-1)

Concentration is the confining of the mind within a limited mental area [defined by the object of concentration].

Tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam | (III-2)

Uninterrupted flow [of the mind] towards the object [chosen for meditation] is contemplation.

Tad evārthamātra nirbhāsaṃ svarūpa-śunyam iva samādhiḥ |
(III-3)

The same [state of contemplation] when there is consciousness only of the object of meditation and the consciousness of the mind itself has disappeared is *Samādhi*.

The difference between the three progressive states of meditation and how one state leads to the other can be understood by studying the commentary. Here we are concerned only with the essential nature of *Samādhi* and for understanding this it is necessary to start with *Sūtra* 41 of Chapter I given below.

Kṣīṇa-vṛtter abhijātasyeva maṇer grahīty-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu tatsthatadāñjanatā samāpattiḥ | (I-41)

In the case of one whose *Citta-vṛttis* or mental modifications have been almost annihilated, fusion or entire absorption in one another of the cognizer, cognition and cognized is brought about as in the case of a transparent jewel [resting on a coloured surface].

This is a rather enigmatic *Sūtra* but it illustrates the state of *Samādhi* in a very effective manner by taking a simple example.

It was said above that *Samādhi* is the technique of realizing the reality of any object, using the word 'object' in its widest sense as anything which can be perceived or comprehended by the mind. We also know that realization is 'knowing by becoming' i.e. by the mind transforming itself into the very nature of the object of which the reality has to be realized. It is also well known that ordinary perception or comprehension is based on a subjective-objective relationship in which there is present a triplicity of cognizer, cognition and cognized and realization is based on a fusion of the three into one integrated state of consciousness. Now, all these ideas involved in *Samādhi* are illustrated in the example given in the above *Sūtra*. It, therefore, illustrates the essential state of *Samādhi* in a very effective manner and should be pondered over carefully to grasp its real significance.

Let us first try to understand what the illustration given in the *Sūtra* means and then its significance in relation to the state of *Samādhi*. Suppose you have a beautiful painting spread out on a table and you cover up this painting with a slab of opaque glass. The painting will disappear beneath the opaque glass and none of its parts will be visible to an observer looking at it from above. Now imagine that by some scientific process we are able to render any part of the opaque glass perfectly transparent gradually. So we mark out a circle on the top of the glass slab and apply this treatment to the area which is within the circle. Gradually the portion of the opaque glass below the circle becomes less and less opaque and finally becomes quite transparent. What is the result of this? The portion of the painting beneath that transparent part of the glass comes into view and becomes clearly visible, the rest remaining still hidden. The portion of the glass above this part of the painting has become quite transparent and does not cause any obstruction to light as the rest of the opaque slab does. The glass is there but it has now become assimilated with the now visible portion of the painting. You can mark out another circle on the slab and by repeating the process bring another portion of the painting into view. What we have to note is that the

portion of the glass which loses its encumbrance and distortion gets completely assimilated with or disappears in the corresponding portion of the painting and assumes as it were the form of the painting, even though it has not disappeared and is still there. It is the freedom of any portion of the glass from encumbrance and distortion which gives it the capacity to assume the colour, form and beauty of the portion of the painting over which it stands and reveal it by becoming one with it. You will also see that by treating different portions of the slab we bring to light different portions of the painting and thus the process becomes selective. A third point to note is that the 'individuality' of any portion of the opaque glass depends upon the encumbrances which make it opaque. Without this it really ceases to have any separate existence of its own although it still exists. One part of the opaque glass differs from another in having different amount and disposition of the encumbering material. But when it loses its encumbrance it becomes pure transparent glass which will be the same for every portion which is treated in this manner. So we may say metaphorically that this assimilation of the glass with the picture or its becoming one with it depends upon the opaque glass losing its 'individuality' or 'I'ness.

Those who have to some extent studied the technique of *Samādhi* will see how beautifully this example illustrates the process of 'knowing by becoming'. In *Sabīja Samādhi* as distinguished from *Nirbīja Samādhi* the object is not the realization of the Reality itself, but it is a limited one, namely, the realization of the reality which is hidden within a particular object whatever this may be. That is why a particular object is selected for performing *Samyama* and it is the reality behind the object which is revealed in *Sabīja Samādhi*. Now, the reality of all objects in manifestation is present in the Universal Mind or the Divine Mind which has 'ideated' the particular manifested system in its multifarious aspects. And when we select an object for performing *Samyama* in order to discover the reality which lies behind it, we are really marking out on the glass slab the particular area of the

picture which we want to reveal, the particular portion or aspect of the Universal Mind which we want to 'know by becoming'. The Universal Mind containing the realities of all manifested objects corresponds to the complete painting. Our mind corresponds to the opaque slab of glass. The object on which we concentrate in *Sabija Samādhi* corresponds to an area which we have marked out on the slab. And lastly, the process of performing *Sanyama* on the particular object corresponds to the treatment of the opaque glass in that particular area to make it transparent so that it may reveal the corresponding portion of the painting. As the glass of our mind becomes less and less opaque we begin to see the reality behind the particular object on which we are concentrating more and more clearly until the glass in that portion becomes quite clear and the reality of the object which was hidden in that particular area of the Universal Mind is revealed in its fulness. This is the secret of 'knowing by becoming' i.e. by making the mind practically non-existent and one with an object of *Sabija Samādhi*.

This is just like being in a circular hall situated among magnificent mountains with beautiful scenery all around. The hall has small windows all round which are closed. You open one window and a beautiful panorama in front of the window comes into view. You close that window and open another, another panorama comes into view. You can repeat this process and get different glimpses of the surrounding landscape, one by one, by opening one window after another. In *Sabija Samādhi* we open different windows of our mind on the landscape of the Universal Mind and get glimpses of the realities hidden behind different objects which we select for concentration in this manner.

So far we have been dealing with realizations of a limited nature, namely of the realities corresponding to particular objects of whatever nature they might be. But what about the Reality Itself? Our final goal is that and not the discovery of realities hidden behind particular objects in manifestation. How is That revealed within our consciousness? For this we have to go

deeper into our mind. In fact, we have to go beyond the realm of the mind into the realm of Reality Itself.

In *Sabija Samādhi* we make our individual mind one with the Universal Mind and by this unification know what is present in the Universal Mind. But the Universal Mind is not the Reality. It is the product of Divine Ideation. It comes out of the Reality by differentiation into the Self and Not-Self just as a picture comes out of the consciousness of an artist when he imagines it in his mind. It is obvious, therefore, that we have to go beyond the Universal Mind to reach the Reality Itself. We have to go beyond the Divine Ideation and become one with the Ideator or the Subject, in order to know the Subject in His Real nature. This is the technique of *Nirbija Samādhi* which is described not in the first but in the last chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras*. There is one *Sūtra* in that chapter which we shall discuss here because it throws light on the nature of *Nirbija Samādhi* and its distinction from *Sabija Samādhi*. This *Sūtra* is given below:

Gīter apratīśaṅkrāmāyās tad-ākārāpttau sva-buddhi-samvedanam |
(IV-22)

Knowledge of its own nature through self-cognition [is obtained] when consciousness assumes that form in which it does not pass from place to place.

This *Sūtra* is very illuminative but for understanding it we have to use another kind of simile which brings out the inner significance of the *Sūtra* very effectively.

Suppose you have a lighted electric bulb at the centre of a number of concentric globes of glass which are translucent and therefore progressively decrease the light which radiates from the electric bulb. The light becomes dimmer and dimmer as it passes through the successive globes and, therefore, the outermost globe appears almost dark as compared with the brilliant light of the electric bulb because most of the light has been absorbed by the intervening globes. Let us further imagine that not only the globes are translucent but have different kinds of designs and

pictures engraved or painted on them so that the light shining through a particular globe illuminates the particular pictures engraved on it. Now imagine that these globes are removed one by one, beginning with the outermost. As each globe is removed, the light will become stronger and a new globe with its own particular pictorial designs will come into view. Every time a globe is removed the next one coming into view will have a new picture which is better lighted than the last one removed. If you continue this process till the last globe is removed, only the electric bulb shining with its own brilliant light will remain.

What we have to note is that as long as the globes are there the light radiating from the electric bulb illuminates the remaining globes. When all the globes have been removed and there is nothing left, it illuminates the electric bulb itself. The same thing happens in the case of consciousness which is hidden beneath the different levels of the mind, the outermost being our physical brain consciousness. As long as there is a mind to illuminate, it illuminates that, for, as has been pointed out already, the mind functions or perceives through the light of Buddhi and is not Self-illuminative like Reality. When all the levels of the mind have been transcended in the different stages of *Samādhi* and all the vehicles of the Monad have been left behind, what can the light of his consciousness illuminate? There is no mind to illuminate, so it must illuminate Itself, for it is Self-illuminative and does not depend upon anything else for its illumination. This is the process of *Nirbīja Samādhi* referred to in the above *Sūtra* which leads to Self-realization and the consummation of the technique of Yoga.

What the *Sūtra* is meant to describe is the ascension of consciousness through the different planes in the different stages of *Samādhi* which are dealt with in *Sūtra* 17 of chapter I. When it reaches the Ātmic plane, the highest plane in the manifested system, only one barrier or thin veil has been left. Here we reach a peculiar situation. In the intermediate stages there was always a further deeper level of the mind to dive into. But here

we have reached the barrier which separates the subtlest realm of the mind from the realm of Reality. So the result of any further diving deeper into consciousness can mean only diving into Reality, which means Self-Realization.

Then we come to another aspect of *Samādhi* which is the last we can deal with in this brief survey. This is the difference between *Samprajñāta* and *Asamprajñāta Samādhi* which is hinted at in *Sūtras* 17 and 18 of chapter I.

Vitarka-vicārānandāsmīlānugamāt samprajñātaḥ | (I-17)

Samprajñāta Samādhi is that which is accompanied by reasoning, reflection, bliss and sense of pure being.

Virāma-pratyayābhāsa-pūrvah saṃskāraśeṣo 'nyaḥ | (I-18)

The remnant impression left in the mind on the dropping of the *Pratyaya* after previous practice of [*Samprajñāta Samādhi*] is the other [*Asamprajñāta Samādhi*].

These two *Sūtras* have been discussed thoroughly in the commentary and we will not, therefore, go into them here in detail. But we may try to grasp the general idea behind them so that our conception of the state of *Samādhi* may become more clarified.

In *Samādhi* the mind is shut tight against all external and internal distractions or disturbances and the intensity of concentration goes on increasing as it dives deeper and deeper into the object of concentration. The mind contains nothing else but the object on which it is concentrating and of which the reality is sought to be known. It reaches the utmost limit to which it can go and finds it can go no further. All the aspects of the object on which it is meditating have been exhausted. Here it has to remain poised in an extremely concentrated condition. It can neither recede nor go forward. It is at this stage and in this state that the object of concentration or *Pratyaya* is dropped and the mind made to remain in its concentrated condition, poised in a vacuum, as it were. Its retreat has been cut off from all external sources of contact by the intense concentration of *Samprajñāta Samādhi*. So the only way of escape is through its centre into the next higher

plane. It escapes sooner or later through the common centre of all the vehicles into the next higher vehicle and a new world dawns on the horizon of consciousness, and in this new world a deeper aspect of the object of concentration in a higher dimension, is revealed. The process of *Samādhi* till the object or *Pratyaya* occupies the field of consciousness is called *Samprajñāta Samādhi* or *Samādhi* with consciousness and also an object, and the process in which the object or *Pratyaya* is dropped and there is no object in consciousness is called *Asamprajñāta Samādhi* or *Samādhi* with consciousness but no object. This is only one step in the diving process. The process has to be repeated over and over again on different planes until the Ātmic plane is reached. Further diving, as we have seen, leads us into the realm of Reality Itself.

CHAPTER XXIII

PREPARATION FOR YOGA

THE discussion about the nature of *Samādhi* and the subtle mental processes which are involved in it might well give the impression that the technique of Yoga is not meant for the ordinary man and he can at best make only a theoretical study of the subject and must postpone its practical application to his own life for some future incarnation when the conditions are more favourable and his mental and spiritual faculties have developed more fully. This impression, though natural, is based upon a misconception. Those who formulated the philosophy of Yoga and devised its elaborate technique were not ignorant of the weaknesses of human nature and the limitations and illusions under which an ordinary man lives. They could not point out the necessity and urgency of man's freeing himself from these limitations, and then place before him a method of achieving this object which seems to be beyond his capacity. They knew the difficulties which were involved, but they also knew that these difficulties could be overcome by adopting a graduated course of training which is scientific and in accordance with the laws of human growth and evolution. Even in achieving any worthwhile worldly object a person has to proceed systematically and is prepared for a prolonged and strenuous effort. If he wants to become a great mathematician he begins with the four rules of arithmetic and gradually works his way up from one stage to another until he masters the science. He does not start by attending courses of lectures on differential and integral calculus in a University. He is prepared for the long course of training but also knows that his final success is assured if he does not give up the effort. But when it comes to a question of achieving the highest object of human effort which is the

culmination of human evolution, people forget all these things based on ordinary common sense and experience. They begin to worry about the difficulty of practising *Samādhi* and wonder how soon they will be able to rise to the highest states of consciousness which can be brought about by means of *Samādhi*. They imagine that they have merely to make a beginning and all the fruits of the yogic life will be theirs or should be theirs before long. So either they do not make a beginning, or if they do, they become disillusioned and soon give up, thinking either that there is after all nothing much in this much-advertized Science of Yoga or that they are incapable of undertaking such a difficult task. So we go on postponing this effort and finding ourselves practically at the same stage life after life. We do not adopt a common sense attitude towards the problem as we do in the case of similar problems connected with our worldly pursuits.

The Science of Yoga can be mastered like all other sciences by a graduated course of training. We begin with simple things which everyone can do and proceed, step by step, from the simple to the complex problems, from easy practices to the more difficult ones. On account of the different potentialities hidden in different individuals, our progress is regulated not by years of work but by the growth of capacities and changes in our mind and attitudes. Let us deal first with some of these preliminary practices and disciplines which prepare the aspirant for the more advanced practices which constitute higher Yoga.

The following *Sūtra* of chapter II gives in a nutshell the general outline of this preliminary or preparatory training with which every aspirant can start at once and lay a sound foundation of a yogic life systematically and energetically.

Tapah-svādhyāyēśvara-prañidhānān kriyā-yogaḥ ! (II-1)

Austerity, self-study and resignation to *Īśvara* or God constitute preliminary Yoga.

The student will see that the three different types of activity which the *Sūtra* prescribes are meant to develop all the three

fundamental aspects of human nature, will, intellect and love. As we have seen in a previous chapter, intellectual knowledge lays the foundation of yogic life by preparing an adequate theoretical background. The development of love or devotion and the transformation and purification of life which this involves adds wisdom to knowledge. And then by the application of spiritual will in controlling and inhibiting the modifications of the mind, the Yogi passes from the stage of wisdom to that of Realization, the whole training and self-discipline culminating in Self-Realization and Liberation. The significance of the three elements of this preliminary self-discipline has been explained in detail in the commentary and we need not go into their detailed consideration here. But there are a few general points of interest which may be brought to the notice of the aspirant.

The first point to note is that all these three types of activity constitute a real beginning of the Yogic life and it depends upon the aspirant himself how he utilizes them for a quick transition from a preparatory to an advanced stage of progress. If he attacks the problems connected with these activities energetically and earnestly, he can in a short time acquire a grip over his lower nature and that concentration of purpose which will make him fit to take up the more advanced practices of higher Yoga.

Tapas, Svādhyāya and *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* appear to be mysterious practices but there is nothing mysterious about them. *Svādhyāya* is nothing but the intensive study of the deeper problems of life so that we may have an adequate theoretical background and may acquire a correct and all-round idea of all the problems which are involved in the practice of Yoga and the methods which are employed in solving those problems. But this study must be carried on by ourselves in such a manner that we can gradually develop the capacity to draw out all knowledge from within ourselves and become independent of external aids in this matter. It should also be at a deeper level and should not consist merely in gathering second-hand information from books, etc. The main purpose of *Svādhyāya* is to unlock the doors of real

knowledge within us and have the capacity to draw upon that knowledge whenever it is necessary. We are inclined to forget that all knowledge is really within us in the Universal Mind and it is possible to draw upon this knowledge at least to a limited extent by opening up the passage between the lower and the Higher Mind. I am not referring to the knowledge of realities which is acquired through the higher processes of *Samādhi*. I am referring to ordinary intellectual knowledge which is present in the Ego or the Individuality functioning through the Causal body and which can be drawn upon if the lower mind is purified and attuned to the Higher Self. This knowledge is much superior to ordinary second-hand knowledge we acquire from books, observation, etc. because it comes from a higher source and is free from the ordinary errors, uncertainties and distortions which are a feature of indirect knowledge derived by the concrete mind from external sources. So all devices, methods and practices such as reflection, meditation, *Japa*, etc., which have the effect of opening up the channel between the lower and the Higher Mind come under *Svādhyāya* and the beginner should make increasing use of them as his interests and capacities grow.

Tapas is generally translated as austerities but this gives a wrong impression about the real and essential nature of this feature of preparatory Yoga. This word is derived from the Samskrit word '*Tap*' which means heating to a high temperature. If impure gold is heated to a high temperature, all its impurities are gradually burnt out and removed and only the pure unalloyed metal remains. This is the essential idea behind *Tapas* and it broadly means disciplining our lower nature with the object of purifying it, removing all the dross of weaknesses, impurities, so that our body and mind may become pure and obedient to our will and can serve as efficient instruments of the Higher Self. *Tapas* is thus the transmutation of the lower into the higher nature by a process of self-discipline. Austerities of various kinds may be used and should be used if this is absolutely necessary but they are not an essential part of the process. Purification and

control can be brought about by more intelligent and effective methods than by observing rigid vows and subjecting the body to unnecessary discomforts and suffering. Each aspirant must use his own individual methods intelligently.

As regards *Īśvara-praṇidhānā* which is usually translated as self-surrender to God, it is really an aspect of devotion and an effective method of developing devotion. We have studied in another chapter with the problem of developing devotion or love of God and have been able to obtain not only some idea of the goal of the Path of Love and the nature of devotion, but also the methods which are adopted in developing this side of our nature. All this knowledge has only to be put to use seriously and perseveringly to produce results. But it requires practice, sincerity and an indomitable determination to succeed. For, devotion does not appear in us easily. We are tested and tried to the utmost limit, and this may throw us into despair, again and again. But when it does appear, it transforms our life, fills us with joy and exaltation to such an extent that we feel that the sacrifices, efforts and sufferings we have gone through are nothing as compared to the blessing we have received and the grace of God which has descended upon us.

So you will see that this *Sūtra* of five words has a very wide scope and gives a very comprehensive method of preparing ourselves for the higher stages of Yogic life. It practically covers every aspect of our nature and if the methods which are hinted at in its triple discipline are followed sincerely, carefully and enthusiastically, it will not only transform our lower nature and bodies into a fitting instrument of the Higher Self but will also open up new vistas of achievement and unlock hidden energies and potentialities which we hardly suspect within us.

If we start practising these things which we have learnt, life will be transformed immediately for us and we would then cease to wonder whether it is possible to practise *Samādhi* whether we are capable of developing love to the extent that we may be able to achieve some measure of union with the Object of our devotion.

Taking again the example of a student who has the determination to become a great mathematician, it is because he starts doing sums in ordinary arithmetic that he becomes interested in mathematics and ceases to worry about integral and differential calculus which he will learn later on in due course. Although he keeps the final goal in his mind all the time he does not waste his time and energy in thinking about things which do not concern him for the moment. The work which he is engaged in is so absorbing and interesting that it is enough for him for the time being.

It is creative work of any kind which gives joy to life, and the transformation of our nature by methods of preparatory Yoga is creative work of the highest order, more real and more dynamic than painting a picture or making a statue. These artists are dealing with dead things. The man who is making the image of his real Self to emerge from within his lower nature is dealing with a living and real thing. A life problem is being solved. A living picture of what we are to be in the future is being painted. A new statue embodying our future perfection is being chiselled out of the rough marble block of our lower nature. It is this divine creativity in this work which transforms our life into a song in spite of the troubles and tribulations through which we may be passing in the periphery of our consciousness in the external world. It is like the living process of a bud trying to open into a flower with all the natural joy which is always present in such natural unfolding processes. We are trying to bring the future into the present. We are becoming what we are. We do not know what the statue is going to be like but He who is our innermost Self knows and we feel His guiding hand as we take up the chisel in our hand and start shaping the marble block of our crude nature. Those who are artists know the joy of painting a picture or writing a poem. They can judge what the joy of bringing out a living divine image which is potentially hidden within us, would be. A picture is a dead thing, a statue is a dead thing, but this living thing which gradually begins to emerge from within is a Divine being of infinite potentialities who becomes

more and more a vehicle of divine love, knowledge and power. The completed image may be still in the future, unseen and unknown, but it is this creative work which is involved in bringing it into existence which imparts the joy, and enthusiasm to the work in preparatory Yoga.

And in this work age does not matter, circumstances do not matter, even death does not matter. The work can go on continuously even after death if we are set in that direction, for our object or goal is within us and will always remain with us wherever we are. For all these external things belong to the phenomenal world and we have now hitched our wagon to the eternal Star of our Soul who is hidden within us and guiding us to Itself. This is what preparatory Yoga potentially means and can actually mean to anyone who takes up the work in earnest.

The second chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* not only gives an idea about the nature of preparation which is necessary for taking up the advanced practice of Yoga, but also outlines very systematically and logically the philosophy upon which its technique is based. This philosophy of Yoga is supposed to be derived from the philosophy of Sāmkhya, one of the six major systems of Hindu philosophy. There is no doubt that it resembles the Sāmkhyan system of philosophy to a great extent though there are certain fundamental differences which cannot be ignored and which have made many scholars doubt whether there is any real connection between the two. When two systems of philosophy have come down to us from the hoary past and have existed side by side for thousands of years and there is no definite evidence available of their origin it is very difficult to decide such questions which are of interest only to the academic philosopher. To the aspirant such questions are not of much importance. What he is interested in is the practical technique which has withstood the test of time and experiment for thousands of years and can be utilized with confidence for gaining his object. The philosophy of Yoga provides an adequate basis for this technique and that is all that matters.

The theory on which an experimental science is based is necessary and important for correlating and integrating the different techniques which are involved into a coherent whole, but the truth or validity of the theory does not in any way affect the effectiveness of the techniques which are utilized for practical purposes. For a long time the laws of electricity and electrical phenomena were utilized for all kinds of purposes very effectively although the theory which was prevalent for accounting for these phenomena was very incomplete and unsatisfactory. If the whole theory of electricity is found to be quite untenable now on account of any discoveries that might be made in the future, the whole science based on the application of the laws of electricity and its phenomena in scientific developments and industry will remain quite unaffected as a result of this discovery, because these laws and phenomena are based on experimental facts and not speculation or theory of any kind. So is the case with the philosophy of Yoga. Although it is magnificent and a very reasonable philosophy, its validity or otherwise does not affect the technique or the usefulness of Yoga as a science for unveiling the deeper mysteries of Life and discovering the Reality within ourselves.

Let us now try to gain a general and clear idea about the philosophy upon which the Yogic technique of Patanjali is based. This philosophy is outlined in the second chapter, step by step, in 26 *Sūtras*, from the 3rd to the 28th. It is not possible to deal with these *Sūtras* in detail and only a broad outline of the ideas underlying these *Sūtras* and the links in the chain of reasoning upon which the philosophy is based can be given here.

The philosophy starts with the problem of human miseries, limitations and illusions in which all human beings, with very few exceptions are involved. The *Sūtra* which sums up this patent fact of human life is II-15. Freely translated it means 'To the people who have developed discrimination all is misery on account of the pains resulting from change, anxiety and tendencies, as also on account of the conflicts between the natural tendencies which a man finds in his nature, thoughts and desires prevailing

at a particular period of time.' Some people will be inclined to consider this statement as rather sweeping and too pessimistic but we have considered this question very thoroughly in a previous chapter and need not go into it again. All the Great Teachers of the world have started from this basic fact of human life and we may, therefore, assume the correctness of the statement made in the *Sūtra*.

The next question which arises is: Assuming that there is all-pervading misery in human life, is it possible to avoid or get rid of this misery? The answer to this question is quite clear, unequivocal and emphatic. It is given in II-16, 'The misery which is not yet come can and is to be avoided.' That is the kind of answer that a true philosophy of life should give. What is the use of a philosophy which points out the miseries and limitations of life and then offers you no real solution, no hope of release from those miseries. And yet, many of our modern philosophies are like that. They raise questions and leave them unanswered, they offer remedies which are mere palliatives or no remedies at all. But let us proceed.

After asserting that the miseries of life can be avoided or transcended, the philosophy proceeds to analyse the cause of the misery. Here is another proof of its thoroughness and effectiveness. If you are suffering from any disease or malady you can tackle it in two ways. Either you can apply palliatives which will remove the unpleasant symptoms of the disease temporarily and partially or you can adopt the more effective and sensible course of going to the cause of the malady and dealing with it there. In this way alone is it possible to root out the disease completely and for ever. The philosophy of Yoga adopts the latter course. It goes to the root cause of human suffering and limitations and suggests a remedy which removes the cause of the disease and therefore removes the disease completely and finally. The analysis of the cause of human suffering is given in the theory of *Kleshas* which form a chain of causes and effects which has five links. These are called *Avidyā* or Primeval Ignorance, *Asmitā* or

identification of pure consciousness, which is free, and Self-Sufficient and Self-Existent, with the paraphernalia through which it manifests when it gets involved in manifestation. The third and fourth links are *Rāga* and *Dveṣa* which means attractions and repulsions of various kinds that arise as a result of this identification of consciousness with its vehicles and environment. The last link is the final effect of this chain of causes and effects. It is called *Abhiniveśa* and means instinctive clinging to worldly life and bodily enjoyments and the fear that one might be cut off from all of them by death. So you see that the first cause is *Avidyā* or ignorance and the last effect is human life lived in limitations and illusions of various kinds. We shall not go into further details. But there is one point which may be cleared up before we pass on further. *Avidyā* is not the ordinary kind of ignorance or even ignorance as it is considered in its general philosophical sense. It is a technical term which means really the lack of awareness of our real nature. It is because we have lost the awareness of our true real divine nature that we have become involved in manifestation. So *Avidyā* is the instrumental cause of the involution of the Monad in manifestation. Why he gets involved in manifestation or how he gets involved in manifestation are really ultimate questions which are outside the realm of the intellect and we shall perhaps get an answer to these questions only when we regain our awareness of Reality on Liberation. For the time being let us take it as a fact that we are involved and it is necessary and desirable for us to get out of these undesirable conditions and limitations in which we find ourselves.

It is obvious that if lack of awareness of our true nature or Reality is the real cause of our subjective bondage or being involved in manifestation, then the only real permanent remedy will be regaining this awareness of Reality or knowledge of true real nature. This is the next link in the chain of reasoning upon which the philosophy of Yoga is based. It points out that the final effect in the form of miseries of human life is traceable to the primal cause in the form of loss of awareness of Reality and therefore the only means of transcending the miseries of life is to

regain permanently and completely this awareness of Reality. This is expressed in II-26 as follows: 'The uninterrupted practice of awareness of the Real is the means of dispersion of *Avidyā*.' No palliatives, no temporary solutions are offered as is done by most modern philosophies.

The next question naturally is how to practise this awareness of Reality. The answer is given in *Sūtra* II-28 as follows: 'From the practice of the component exercises of Yoga, on the destruction of impurity, arises spiritual illumination which develops into awareness of Reality.' And this is followed by *Sūtra* 29 which gives the well-known eight component exercises or practices of this Yogic technique.

This is, in a nutshell, the philosophy of Yoga. It shows really how the Monad gets involved in manifestation through the loss of awareness of his real nature which leads to his identifying himself with his vehicles and all that is associated with them. This identification leads to his developing all kinds of personal attachments, bonds of attractions and repulsions with people and things in the world. It is these which produce different kinds of experiences which are the source of misery, actual or potential. The philosophy then points out the means, which naturally is the reversal of the whole process of involution and which ends in the Monad regaining the awareness of his real nature. The Science of Yoga is nothing but the technique by which this can be brought about systematically and scientifically.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EIGHT SUB-DIVISIONS OF YOGIC TECHNIQUE

THE system of Yoga dealt with in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patanjali is called *Aṣṭāṅga* which means 'with eight limbs'. The ordinary meaning of the word *Aṅga* is 'limb' or constituent part of a body. In the present context it obviously means the eight sub-divisions into which Yogic technique has been divided. The number of the sub-divisions, as well as the nature of constituent parts is different in the different systems of Yoga.

The eight sub-divisions of Yogic technique are enumerated in chapter 2, *Sūtra* 29 as follows:

*Yama-nīyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-
dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhayo 'ṣṭāvāṅgādi | (II-29)*

Self-restraints, fixed observances for self-discipline, posture, regulation and control of breath, abstraction, concentration, contemplation, and trance are the eight sub-divisions of Yogic technique.

We shall briefly consider each of these practices to obtain a general idea of Yogic technique. For details the student can consult a commentary on the relevant *Sūtras*. One question may be raised and should be answered before proceeding to the consideration of these different practices, one by one. It is whether they are to be considered as progressive stages in the practice of Yoga, or as independent techniques which can be practised separately. From the very nature of the practices it is evident that there is a certain sequential relationship between them. For example, concentration (*Dhāraṇā*) contemplation (*Dhyāna*) and trance (*Samādhi*) must be practised in this order, for they are three progressive stages of the same process. Similarly, self-restraint

(*Yama*), observances (*Niyama*), posture (*Āsana*) regulation, and control of breath (*Prāṇāyāma*), and abstraction (*Pratyāhāra*) also should come in the same order because the successful practice of any one of these techniques depends on at least a partial mastery of the previous techniques. One cannot practise *Prāṇāyāma*, for example, if one has not practised *Yama-Niyama* and acquired a certain degree of control over his emotions and desires. Similarly, concentration (*Dhāraṇā*) contemplation (*Dhyāna*) and trance (*Samādhi*) cannot be practised without complete control of the physical body and the elimination of at least the ordinary desires which exert great pressure on the mind. But for one who does not intend to pass on to the systematic practice of higher Yoga it is possible to practise any one of the techniques independently, though he will find this difficult. He will soon realize that he has to extend the area of his effort and attend to the other related practices as well. Anyway, we shall deal with these different techniques in the order in which they are given in the above *Sūtra*.

We shall therefore begin with *Yama* and *Niyama* which lay the foundation of the Yogic life. They are aimed at building up the right kind of character and producing the right state of the mind, both of which are a *sine qua non* for the serious practice of Yoga. The line of demarcation between *Yama* and *Niyama* is not very well defined because both are really meant to transmute the lower nature into a pure, harmonized, calm and fully-controlled instrument of the Higher Self. They bring about this result in different ways but the object is the same. The two *Sūtras* enumerating the characteristics and states of mind which have to be developed for providing the necessary moral, intellectual and spiritual foundation for Yogic training are given below. In each of these five characteristics or practices are enjoined and the scope of *Yama* and *Niyama* defined to some extent.

Ahimsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahāḥ | (II-30)

Vows of self-restraint called *Yama* comprise abstention from violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence and acquisitiveness.

Śauca-santoṣa-tapah-svādh yāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ (II-32)

Purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and surrender to God constitute *Niyama*, or fixed observances for self-discipline.

For the detailed discussion of the practices enjoined in *Yama* and *Niyama*, the student can consult any commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtras*. Here we can consider only a few points of general interest regarding them.

Although these practices touch different aspects of our nature and develop different characteristics and attitudes, it should not be forgotten that man's life cannot be divided in compartments, and all the aspects of our nature are closely interlinked and cannot really be tackled separately as has been pointed out once before. The problem of our mind and character has to be tackled as a whole, although we may for a time give particular attention to a particular aspect of our nature to remove a particular weakness or tendency. This also means that in dealing with our lower nature we are not to confine our efforts only to those common weaknesses which are mentioned in these two *Sūtras*. For example, we should not suppose that we are free to indulge in anger, jealousy, etc. because these human frailties are not specifically mentioned in the *Sūtras* on *Yama*, *Niyama*. If we do this all the energy which finds expression in certain well-established tendencies will make new channels for itself, and appear in a new crop of undesirable tendencies which we thought did not exist in us. The fact is that the two mental qualities called *Śauca* and *Santoṣa*, or purity and contentment, in *Niyama* cover most of the remaining undesirable tendencies which are not mentioned in *Yama* specifically, and if these two are acquired in an adequate degree we shall be developing our mind and character in an all-round and not in a lop-sided manner.

The second point which should be noted is that no self-introspective awareness is needed in eradicating the undesirable tendencies mentioned above. They are instructions to be carried

out without reasoning or analyzing our motives. For example, if we are tempted to tell a lie we should not debate in our mind whether the particular circumstances justify the telling of a falsehood, or to find out what our motive is in telling the lie, or try to become aware of the condition of our mind at that moment. We should simply brush aside all wavering thoughts and say or do the right thing without question. For this only ordinary awareness of our mental activities and tendencies is necessary, and if we are determined to do the right thing we will be able to do this without any difficulty. It is for this reason that in *Sūtra* II-31 Patanjali has left no loophole for us to escape through. These vows are to be observed under all circumstances and no hesitation or doubt should be allowed to interfere with the doing of the right action or thinking the right thought, or feeling the right emotion. This lower nature of ours is a very cunning entity and will devise all kinds of stratagems to trick us into doing the wrong thing and continuing in our evil ways. It will present before our minds all kinds of justifications for doing wrong, put on cloak of righteousness to hide essentially unrighteous motives and actions, disguise hatred as love, and try to deceive us in innumerable ways if we are in the habit of hesitating, debating, or compromising with evil in various ways. It is this phenomenon within us which has given rise to the myth of the devil tempting us all the time and making us sin. The remedy is definite and very effective. Decide once for all that you will always do that right thing under all circumstances and not compromise with evil or wrong whatever the consequences which accrue; then stick to your decisions for some time and you will see how quickly even the temptation to do the wrong disappears from your life, and the doing of the right thing becomes the easiest and the most natural thing. Doubt, hesitation and debating within our minds not only retards the doing of right action but creates constant inner conflict which bedevils the life of those who allow themselves to compromise with evil now and then. Even in the external world you find a very common psychological phenomenon. Those who

compromise with evil are always tempted by other people to do wrongs of various kinds and degrees, while those who do not are left alone. A corrupt man who is in the habit of taking bribes will always find people who will tempt him to do all kinds of things for the sake of a little money, while nobody will bother a really honest and incorruptible man. There is an underlying moral law regulating life everywhere and in the case of individuals their outer circumstances mostly reflect their inner states of mind and attitudes.

One great advantage of doing right automatically and unhesitatingly is that subtler aspects of our evil tendencies begin to be noticed by us. This is due to the fact that the gradual purification of the mind and emotions allows the light of *Buddhi* to filter through the mind more easily, and enables us to see things more clearly and with a greater sense of discrimination. So the right kind of awareness of our real nature and state of mind comes naturally and in a more effective form, and helps us to eradicate even the subtler forms of our evil tendencies which we did not even notice before.

It will appear from a superficial consideration of the five qualities enumerated under *Yama* that they do not represent a very high code of moral conduct. After all, abstaining from lying and stealing does not represent necessarily a very high standard of morality. But Patanjali has given the crudest forms of the evil tendencies on purpose, so that everyone can see them, and if he is serious, try to remove them. It is by the removal of the crude forms that we become aware of the subtler forms, and can be removed later. There is no other way. That these qualities are meant to be developed to the highest degree, and even the subtlest forms are to be eradicated, is clear from the ten *Sūtras* which are given later to describe the results of developing these ten virtues to the highest state of perfection. In these ten *Sūtras* which match the ten elements of *Yama-Niyama* you see not only the limit to which one can go in the development of these virtues but also the wonderful potentialities which lie hidden in these common things.

It is not necessary to go into this interesting question here, but a careful study of the problem will help the student to realize what potentialities are hidden in righteousness, and what we can achieve through the simple but invariable habit of doing the right thing under all circumstances, whatever it may cost us at the moment. This being established in righteousness or becoming *Dharma-niṣṭa* is a great achievement and it is not only necessary for leading the Yogic life but constitutes the Yogic life to a great extent and makes the practice of higher Yoga extraordinarily easy and safe. It is this righteousness which develops spiritual illumination referred to in *Sūtra* II-28. *Jñāna-dīpti* referred to in this *Sūtra* is another name for Light on the Path.

There are other *Sūtras* bearing on *Yama* and *Niyama*, but it is not necessary to deal with them here. There is however, one *Sūtra* which is of great practical importance, and may therefore be considered before we proceed further. It is *Sūtra* II-33:

Vitarka-bādhane pratīpakṣa-bhāvanam |

When the mind is disturbed by improper thoughts, constant pondering over the opposites [is the remedy].

Anyone who undertakes this task of transmuting his lower nature will not find it easy. The chief difficulty, of course, is that in spite of our idealism, in spite of our determination to root out the undesirable tendencies, they continue to trouble us. What are we to do? What is the best method of dealing with an undesirable tendency? The first thing we have to keep in mind is that all such tendencies are rooted in the mind, even those which are purely physical in expression. Every action must be preceded by thought either present in the conscious mind or in the unconscious. The word 'unconscious' instead of 'subconscious' has been used purposely because the motivating power of good actions comes from the higher regions of the mind. It is obvious, therefore, that in order to eradicate these tendencies we must go to the realm of the mind and try to neutralize them there instead of merely struggling to prevent their outer expression. It is this

neutralization of an undesirable tendency at its mental source that is advised in this *Sūtra*. But what does the constant pondering over the opposites mean? It does not mean merely thinking a thought of an opposite nature but trying to take an opposite point of view into careful consideration. Thus, if you hate anybody, try to think of his good points, of his point of view, in different matters, and of the handicaps under which he might be working. Or, if you are inclined to yield to any kind of indulgence, think of the price in suffering you will have to pay later on. This thinking is not a mere mechanical repetition of a thought, but a really sincere and intelligent analysis of your habits and attitudes. This should be done, not when the tendency is about to find expression but when you are in a calmer state of mind and can ponder the opposite point of view coolly. At that particular time of expression the only effective and safe method to adopt is, as suggested above, to stop the expression without thinking because it is the right thing to do, and you have decided to do the right thing. It is not necessary to discuss this interesting subject further, and we can now pass on to the practice of the next yogic technique, namely *Āsana*.

Perhaps of all the practices which are associated with Yoga, the one with which the largest number of people are familiar is Yogic *Āsana* or posture. In fact, to a large number of people Yoga is nothing more than *Āsanās*, or other associated physical activities which they may adopt for improving their health. Yet few people know the essential role which *Āsana* plays in the life of the yogi. It has no other purpose except to eliminate the disturbances caused by the physical body in the mind. The mind and body of every individual are interlinked and the irregular activities and movements of the body cause constant disturbances in the mind which have to be eliminated before *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* can be practised. So the body is frozen in a posture and kept in this posture for long periods. It is found that as a result of this it becomes insensitive to all external changes in the environment such as heat, cold etc. which are called *Dvandvas*, (pairs of opposite) and then does not produce disturbances in the mind which

have their origin in such variations. This also prepares the body for the next two practices, *Prāṇāyāma* and *Pratyāhāra*.

The next technique of Yoga, *Prāṇāyāma*, is also much misunderstood, especially in the West, where it is equated with breathing exercises done with the object of improving the health of the body. *Prāṇāyāma*, if practised correctly, does improve health on account of the larger intake of oxygen in some of its forms and also on account of its beneficial effect on the nervous system. But that is not its purpose in real Yoga. Its real purpose is to acquire complete and conscious control over the *Prāṇic* currents in the etheric double, and thus to be able to direct them wherever it is necessary. This can be done only through *Kumbhaka* or complete stoppage of the breath by slow degrees. When the *Prāṇic* currents have been mastered, they can be used to arouse *Kuṇḍalini* and bring about the connection of the physical plane consciousness with that of the astral and mental bodies. It is here that the danger of *Prāṇāyāma* comes in, and that is why it should never be practised without the guidance of a competent teacher and proper previous preparation.

Another use of *Prāṇāyāma* is to prepare the mind for the practice of concentration. It is not generally known that *Prāṇa* is the connecting link between a vehicle and the mind functioning through that vehicle. It is through *Prāṇa* that the mind works upon a vehicle and the vehicle can affect the mind. So if we can control *Prāṇa* we can eliminate all kinds of disturbances which can be produced by the vehicle in the mind.

It will be seen, therefore, that desires and all kinds of tendencies hidden in the sub-conscious mind are not the only source of disturbance to the mind. Irregularities in the movements of *Prāṇa* in the etheric double are also a cause of such disturbance. The former are eliminated by *Yama* and *Niyama* while the later are eliminated by *Prāṇāyāma*. The student will now see more clearly why his efforts to concentrate the mind at the time of his daily meditation do not succeed generally. Yogic science deals with the problem in a scientific manner and first removes all these

sources of disturbance before beginning the practice of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi*. For purposes of Yoga the ordinary degree of concentration which suffices for intellectual work will not do. The intensity of concentration has to be increased progressively until it passes into the next stage of contemplation and ends in the last stage of trance or *Samādhi*. For this to be done successfully all the other sources of disturbance except those having their origin in the mind itself have to be eliminated first systematically.

Then we come to *Pratyāhāra*, the fifth constituent of Yogic technique. It is described in *Sūtra* II-54.

*Sva-viśayāsaṃprayoḡe citta-svarūpānukāra
ivendriyānām pratyāhārah |*

Pratyāhāra or abstraction is, as it were, the imitation by the senses of the mind, by withdrawing themselves from their objects.

The meaning of *Pratyāhāra* is not generally understood, and all kinds of interpretations have been suggested. The real significance of *Pratyāhāra* can be understood only if we consider it as a practice to cut off completely all connections of the mind with the external world through the five well-known sense-organs, the *Jñānendriyas* as they are called in Samskrit. We all know how we cognize the external world through these sense-organs. Vibrations or particles of different kinds strike the sense-organs, produce in them certain responses, and these are carried by the nerves to certain centres in the brain. There, by a mysterious process, the nervous impulses are converted into sensations. Science cannot go beyond these, but according to Occult researches, *Prāṇa* and certain centres in the etheric double and astral body also play their part in this process. It is not necessary to go into this question here. All that we have to note is that it is the joining of the mind with the centres in the brain or the subtler vehicles which leads to the formation of the sensuous image in the mind. A continuous stream of sensuous images is pouring into the mind as long as it is in contact with the external world through the

sense-organs. It is true that the mind does not take cognizance of all the vibrations which strike the sense-organs. All kinds of sound vibrations are striking the ear all the time but we do not notice them all. We know that the more the mind is absorbed in some kind of activity, the less it notices these vibrations which are, nevertheless, constantly striking the sense-organs. But this cutting off of the external world from the mind by its concentration on any object is partial and involuntary, and the mind can always be disturbed by a sufficiently strong sensuous impact from outside. The object of *Pratyāhāra* is to cut off the mind completely and voluntarily from the external world, so that whenever the Yogi wants to go inwards into his mind and concentrate on any object or problem, he can cut off the external world voluntarily by shutting, as it were, the doors of the sense-organs. He can then concentrate on the problem in the mind without the possibility of any kind of distraction or disturbance through the activity of his sense-organs. The sense-organs are there, but the senses which work through them have withdrawn inwards into the mind. We should remember that the senses are parts of the mind and are like tentacles which the mind puts forth into the external world to gather sensuous material for its development. It has slowly and laboriously created and perfected the sense-organs as instruments for this work. In *Pratyāhāra* the mind withdraws the senses into itself when it wants to engage in *Dhārāṇa*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* without any kind of disturbance coming through the channels of the sense-organs.

As regards the *modus operandi* of *Pratyāhāra* it will be seen that it will partly depend upon the degree of concentration of the mind. If the mind is sufficiently concentrated it can cut itself off from the external world automatically. But in advanced stages of Yoga where a very high degree of concentration is necessary for prolonged periods, advantage is taken of the fact that the sense-organs function through the meditation of *Prāṇa*. So, by manipulation of *Prāṇic* currents it is possible to stop the functioning of the sense-organs just as by manipulating the electric current it is

possible to stop the functioning of a radio or television set. This is why the practice of *Prāṇāyāma* which gives conscious control over the *Prāṇic* currents in the etheric double, precedes the practice of *Pratyāhāra*. After understanding the significance of this rather enigmatic *Sūtra*, we can now pass on to the last three constituents of Yogic technique which are called *Antaraṅga* or internal to distinguish them from the preceding five which are called *Bahiraṅga* or external.

Dhāraṇā, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi*, which are purely mental processes are the real and the essential technique of Yoga, while the former five practices which have been dealt with already, are subsidiary. These merely ensure that the necessary conditions for practising *Dhāyāraṇā*, *Dhāna* and *Samādhi* are present.

The impression that the practice of *Samādhi* is an extremely difficult or almost impossible achievement is based upon a misconception. We try to concentrate our mind with all the handicaps and unfavourable conditions which are usually present, and consequently fail to attain even a fair degree of concentration of the mind in meditation. From this we naturally conclude that the attainment of the high degree of concentration in *Samādhi* which has been discussed already must be an almost impossible task for the ordinary man. It is an almost impossible task if we attempt it without any previous preparation, as it is an impossible task for a student of mathematics studying in a school to solve problems of differential and integral calculus. But if the foundation has been laid correctly and systematically and he proceeds step by step, he does not find any insuperable difficulty in solving these problems when he reaches the advanced stages. Similarly, the practice of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* is easy after the necessary preparation has been made and the required conditions are present for its practice. The mind is essentially easy to control and manipulate when it has been freed from all the encumbrances, complexes and pressures which distort it and prevent its natural and free movements. The purpose of *Bahiraṅga* or external Yoga is to bring this about scientifically. *Yama-Niyama* eliminates the disturbances from emotions and desires, *Āsana* eliminates the

disturbances caused by the gross physical body, *Prāṇāyāma* removes the disturbances arising in the *Prāṇāmāya-kośa* or etheric double, and lastly, *Pratyāhāra* cuts off the activity of the sense-organs. So now, only the mind is left to be dealt with and this mind has been freed already from encumbrances and pressures referred to above. The Yogi can therefore practice *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* without any extraordinary difficulty and obtain by inhibiting the modifications of the mind realizations which have been referred to already in previous chapters. Just as in other fields of Science, most difficult results are easy to obtain by devising and applying techniques properly, so is it in the case of the Science of Yoga.

It has been pointed out already that *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* are the three progressive steps of the same continuing process, and differ from each other only in the degree of concentration and the presence of certain definite and well defined conditions which distinguish one stage of concentration from another. All these matters have been thoroughly discussed in detail in the commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtras* and it is not necessary to deal with them here. But there are a few facts of a general nature which may be pointed out to remove certain common misconceptions and make it possible for the student to understand the commentary more easily.

The first point which should be noted is that the particular object on which the mind is concentrated in the triple process of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* is not necessarily a tangible object. The word 'object' or *Viśhaya*, as it is called in yogic terminology, may be anything, any principle, any law, or phenomenon, or fact of existence of which the reality has to be known by the processes which has been described as 'knowing by becoming' in a previous chapter. The triple continuing process of concentration culminating in *Samādhi* is called *Sanyama* in yogic terminology, and in the third chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* a very large number of examples are given of the objects upon which *Sanyama* can be performed. A study of this chapter will show how multifarious are the objects which can be taken up for this purpose.

The result of performing *Samyama* successfully, of course, is the knowledge of the reality which is sought to be known. And as each such bit of real knowledge is associated with a corresponding power, *Samyama*, on any such object leads to the development of some specific power associated with that knowledge. These powers are called *Siddhis*, or accomplishments in Yogic terminology, and we also sometimes refer to them as psychic powers. But it is only the inferior powers developed by *Samādhi* like clairvoyance, etc. which can be referred to as psychic powers. The higher powers developed by the processes of higher Yoga are really spiritual in nature and there is a world of difference between them and the psychic powers as we know them. Some of these lower psychic powers can be developed by other methods also, such as the use of certain herbs, *Mantras*, etc. as pointed out in *Sūtra* IV-1. It is not necessary to resort to *Samādhi*, for gaining them. But all the higher powers of Yoga can be developed only by *Samādhi*, and are the result of the evolution of the individuality and the unfolding of higher states of consciousness. They are under the control of the individual and always at his command because he has gained them by virtue of the unfoldment of his spiritual nature.

The development of these special powers or *Siddhis* of great variety is nothing to be surprised at. Even in the realm of the lower mind we know that any kind of knowledge, however trivial, confers a certain kind of power on the individual. The knowledge pertaining to any trade or profession confers on the individual the power to earn money and gain all kinds of comforts and luxuries for himself. The knowledge which scientists have acquired about atomic energy has conferred upon them the power to raise the living standards of humanity, or to destroy it. What is there to be wondered at if the transcendental knowledge which comes to the Yogī as a result of the development of higher states of consciousness by Yogic methods brings to him powers of a very unusual nature? We do not wonder if with a hydrogen bomb it is possible to destroy a city, but we wonder how a Yogī can pass through a wall or read the minds of other people.

CHAPTER XXV

SELF-REALIZATION AND THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

THE last chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras* is the most difficult to understand because it contains some of the subtlest conceptions upon which the philosophy and psychology of Yoga are based. There is not much of technique in this chapter, with the exception of the *Dharma-megha Samādhi*, the highest kind of *Samādhi*, which takes the Yogi completely out of the realm of the mind and establishes him permanently and irreversibly in the realm of Reality.

We have already considered in a previous chapter the philosophy of Yoga in one of its aspects, namely, the involution and evolution of the Monad in manifestation, and his final emergence from manifestation as a Self-realized individual who can remain centred in the realm of Reality, and yet function in the realms of the Relative through the set of vehicles which he has created and perfected for his use during the long course of evolution and the unfoldment of his potential divine nature. The total philosophy of Yoga is, however, of far wider scope and is really a part of the more comprehensive philosophy of the Ancient Wisdom which gives us some idea of the nature of Reality and its manifestation in the phenomenal worlds of the Relative. The whole of the Occult Doctrine revealed or unrevealed is thus the basis of the Yogic philosophy.

The psychology of Yoga is naturally related to this greater philosophy, and though it differs somewhat according to the school to which a particular system of Yoga belongs, in its broad outline and essential character it is practically the same for all schools of Yogic discipline. These differences in the underlying psychology of the different systems may appear marked, but they are not so actually. They are due to the different methods of approach and

points of view, and to those who have intuitive perception of these things they do not appear of a fundamental character.

It has been pointed out already that the philosophy of Yoga appears to be based at least outwardly upon the Sāmkhyan doctrine and so naturally the psychology also is related to and expressed in terms of the Sāmkhyan philosophy. This psychology is not discussed and formulated systematically in the *Yoga-Sūtras*, and one has to piece it together from the various *Sūtras* bearing on different aspects of Yoga. But to the careful student who has studied the subject thoroughly the main outline of this psychology is clearly discernible and can be formulated as a system which is complete and self-sufficient though not at all related to the modern systems of psychology. The Science of Yoga deals with the manifested Universe and the Reality on which it is based, as a whole. Though it takes into account all phenomena of Nature it mainly concerns itself with the invisible realms of the universe. On the other hand, modern psychology is based upon the phenomena of the visible universe which is just the outermost shell covering and very partially expressing the inner realities. It is inevitable that a psychology which has to deal with all the phenomena of the manifested universe, visible and invisible, as well as the Reality which underlies these phenomena, must have a far wider and deeper basis than a psychology which touches only the surface of things, and is even afraid to dive beneath the surface. So one cannot expect anything to be in common between the two psychologies, and must be prepared to consider them separately and as independent for the time being. It is only when modern psychology has gone much deeper into life's phenomena, and accepts at least to some extent the Occult Doctrine that it can be expected to come into any kind of relationship with the psychology of Yoga. For the time being let us agree to differ and not forcibly reconcile them as some people attempt to do.

It is not possible in this short chapter to present even in outline the psychology of Yoga or the greater philosophy of which it is a part. But there is one important question on which some light

has been thrown in the last chapter of the *Yoga-Sūtras*, namely the universal quest for happiness. Since this question is based on our common experience in human life and is of great significance to the aspirant we shall discuss the relevant *Sūtras*.

If we look at human life as a whole, dispassionately, and analyse it for its essential features, what do we find? We find that it is a continuous play of desire and mind in different forms and circumstances. All human beings are driven constantly by desire in search for happiness, and the mind is utilized by desire in various ways to provide means for extracting whatever happiness can be obtained from these innumerable things which are the objects of our pursuits. Patanjali starts from this universal phenomenon of human life and tries to trace it to its source. He has tried to show where both desire and mind originate, and what lies at the basis of this interminable and futile search for happiness by all human beings who are involved in the illusions and limitations of this world.

The two *Sūtras* which provide the clue to this universal phenomenon of human life are given below.

*Sadā jñātās citta-vṛttayas tat-prabhoḥ
puruṣasyāpar-ñāmitvāt* | (IV-18)

The modifications of the mind are always known to its lord on account of the changelessness of the *Purusha*.

*Tad asaṅkhyeya-vāsanābhiḥ citram api parārthaṃ
saṃhatya-kāritvāt* | (IV-24)

Though variegated by innumerable *Vāsanā*, it [the mind] acts for another [*Purusha*] because it always acts in association.

The first *Sūtra* means that all changes and modifications which are taking place constantly in the mind of an individual take place against the background of the Consciousness of the Monad who is called *Purusha* in the *Yoga-sūtras*. Hence everything which happens in the mind at any level is present in his consciousness, or to put it in other words, he is aware of it.

The second *Sūtra* means that the mind always acts as the instrument of desire, but as desires are constantly changing it cannot be really acting for desire. It must be acting for something which is constant and in association with it all the time. And the previous *Sūtra* has shown us that this constant factor is the Monad or *Purusha*. So we see that it is the Monad who must be the motivating force behind all desires, and the witnessing agent of all modifications or changes in the mind.

Let us first consider mind and desire separately and see their significance in human life before we consider their joint action and interplay in the pursuit of happiness.

What is the theory of knowledge according to Yogic psychology? The mind or *citta* as it is called in the *Yoga-Sūtras* works through a form we call the mental body. Its function is to 'know'. But according to Yogic psychology it has no capacity to know because it is insentient. This capacity to know is given to it by *Buddhi* which is the light of consciousness derived from the *Purusha*. The knowledge which springs up in the mind in the presence of an object of perception is derived from the unlimited knowledge or omniscience of *Purusha*. When the mind comes in contact with an object of perception it is affected by both, the consciousness of the *Purus a* functioning through *Buddhi* as well as the object which is sought to be known, and the response of the All-knowing or omniscient *Purus a* to this limited stimulus is the knowledge of the object obtained by the mind. This is so because the *Purusha* is always in the background and omniscient. He is the common factor in all processes of knowing, and also the storehouse of all possible kinds of knowledge appearing in the mind. So from the background of omniscience the object arouses a limited response and it is this limited response which we call knowledge. We can understand this easily if we consider how colour appears in objects in the presence of white light. White light contains all colours in itself. When it falls on different objects it produces all kinds of colours. Each object absorbs some constituents of white light and rejects the others. These rejected

colours which are reflected back produce the specific colour of the object. Similarly, when any object, which need not necessarily be tangible, is presented before the Consciousness of the Monad by the mind, the mind absorbs a portion from the omniscience of the Monad stimulated by the particular object, and the absorbed portion of the unlimited and universal knowledge of the Monad is the limited knowledge of the object present in the mind. The more is absorbed from the unlimited knowledge, the deeper is the knowledge. When the total knowledge pertaining to the object is taken from the universal knowledge of the Monad, it is the perception of the reality of that particular object in *Sabija Samādhi*. The simile of the mind being 'coloured' by an object in *Sūtra* IV-17 will thus be seen to be particularly apt in this context.

So we see as a result of the above reasoning that it is the Monad who is the source of all knowledge and, the objects which produce or stimulate the knowledge in the mind are merely instrumental in bringing out this 'partial' knowledge from the 'whole' knowledge in the Monad. Just as coloured physical objects are not the source of their colours, they are merely instrumental in bringing out colours hidden in white light.

Let us now take desire. As we have seen already, our life is mostly a play of desires. What is this phenomenon of desire? We are always running after objects produced or provided by the mind at the instigation of desire. In fact, this seems to be the main purpose of the mind, namely the fulfilment of desire. What is the cause of desire? Let us find out. In order to find the cause of a universal phenomenon you have to search for the common factor in all the phenomena. One constant factor in this drama, played by mind and desire, is the *Purusha*. He is the invariable factor present in the constant pursuit of variable objects by desire. Is there any other phenomenon associated with this pursuit of different objects by desire? Yes, the pursuit of happiness. This pursuit of objects by desire through the instrumentality of the mind is in search of happiness, conscious

or unconscious. We do not desire anything without this motive of obtaining some measure of happiness from it. So here we have another constant factor present in human life—the search for happiness.

Now, the argument advanced in the *Yoga-Sūtras* is this. We are always desiring objects in search of happiness. The objects change constantly, the desires change constantly. There is only one thing in this drama which does not change and is always present. It is the *Purus'a* in the background. Is it, then, the *Purusha* who is responsible for our constant desiring? To answer the question we have to consider two facts. First, that desire is nothing but will, working under illusion and limitation, and will is derived from *Sat*, one aspect of the triple Divine *Purusha*. The second aspect of the triple Divine *Purusha* is *Ānanda*. His very nature is *Ānanda*, which is reflected in bliss on the lower planes. The third aspect, of course, is *Chit*, which is reflected in the mind. Do we not see now the significance of desire and the constant search for happiness in external objects? The *Purusha* whose very nature is *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* has been put down or involved in manifestation and has lost the awareness of his divine nature as a result of this. What will be the result of this loss of awareness of his true nature? He will seek *Ānanda* in the manifested world, in the objects present in the world, using the word 'object' in its widest sense as anything which fulfils desire. His *Sat* nature which should find expression as pure spiritual Will, will change into desire owing to the association with illusions and limitations of the lower planes.

So this pursuit of happiness through the medium of all kinds of objects in the manifested worlds, visible and invisible, in which we are all engaged, is nothing but the Monad searching for *Ānanda* in the things outside himself owing to the illusion or *Māyā* in which he is involved. And since his third aspect is *Chit*, which finds expression in the image-making faculty and activity of the mind he creates out of the manifold life around him one form after another, one situation after another, to find this *Ānanda*

where it is not present, and so cannot be found. It can be obtained partially in a reflected form as happiness, and the degree of the *Ānanda* aspect of the *Purusha* which the object is able to stimulate in the mind is the measure of happiness which is felt in the object. So the underlying significance of this drama in which we are all engaged is clear as daylight.

Let me recapitulate the whole idea once again. We are triple in our essential divine nature. These three aspects are called *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* in Samskrit, and are reflected as Will, Higher Mind and Bliss on the spiritual planes and as desire, lower mind and happiness on the lower planes. Owing to being involved in manifestation we lose all these divine attributes and can manifest them only partially on the lower planes in the forms of ordinary desire, mind and happiness. The partial expression of our divine nature results in our running after all kinds of objects in the world, in search of happiness, motivated by desire and supplied by the mind with suitable objects for this purpose.

Thus the whole stream of our life runs on and on interminably, slowly rising higher and higher towards its Source. Desire ultimately changes into will, thought changes into direct knowledge, and happiness changes into pure bliss. This is the first stage in our upward journey as a result of partial realization of our true nature, and the consequent lessening of the veils of illusion. When man has reached this high stage of spiritual development everything has been subtilized, and is present in its subtlest form. And it is this extricating oneself by the Monad from the last and thinnest veil of illusion on the Ātmic plane which is described in the technique of *Dharma-megha Samādhi* discussed in the fourth chapter. When the highest kind of discrimination is awakened and he realizes the subtle illusion present even on the Ātmic plane, he decides to take the last plunge into the world of Reality which gives him knowledge of his true Divine nature as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. The drama of his evolution is over.

The search for permanent and real happiness in the realm of manifestation is doomed to end in failure because the Monad

is destined to find his true nature and not to remain always imprisoned in the world of manifestation. This is also the reason why misery is a universal feature of human life. It is merely an expression of the fact that the desire for happiness cannot be satisfied fully in this world and should not be satisfied because a tremendously greater and glorious destiny awaits us in the future in Self-Realization. Why should we be sad that misery is universal? Should we not be thankful that it is so, because this is the best guarantee of our final liberation from the bondage of illusions and limitations of the lower life, and safeguard against our voluntarily remaining exiled in this lower life indefinitely.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE QUESTION OF GUIDANCE

THE real purpose of human evolution as has been shown previously is to develop ultimately an individual who is Self-illuminated, Self-determined and Self-sufficient. Such an individual can, obviously, be evolved in the final stages only through Self-direction. Guidance from without is necessary and is provided in the earlier stages, but the more an individual advances on the path of inner unfoldment the more is this external guidance gradually withdrawn and he is thus forced to turn for guidance within himself and to light his own lamp.

That such guidance should be available for man within himself follows from the very nature of his constitution. The core of his being is a centre in Divine Consciousness. His life is rooted in the Reality which lies at the basis of the manifested universe and is energizing and guiding its evolution. He is a microcosm containing potentially within himself all the powers and faculties which we see in the active form in the Macrocosm. It is these potentialities which unfold from within and gradually become active, one after another, as evolution proceeds.

The great Teachers of the Eternal Wisdom and the books dealing with the problem of Self-Realization have pointed out again and again that the Light which can guide the seeker in his search for Truth can come only from within himself. See what *Light on the Path* says in this connection:

‘For within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed on the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere.’

The *Yoga-Sūtras*, in dealing with the problem of guidance on the path of Yoga, has disposed of the matter in one *Sūtra*:

*Yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād asuddhikṣaye jñānādī ħtir ā
viveka-khyāteḥ | (II-28)*

From the practice of the component exercises of Yoga, on the destruction of impurity, arises spiritual illumination which develops into awareness of Reality.

So it is quite obvious that any one who is seriously engaged in grappling with this problem of Self-Realization should ponder over this question of guidance on the path until no doubt is left in his mind that such guidance can come only from within. Then only will he seriously and in a determined manner try to find within his own heart that Light which can guide him constantly and unerringly.

When should one turn to the Light within for guidance? It hardly needs pointing out that man is incapable of taking advantage of this kind of guidance in the earlier stages of his evolution. For a long time external agencies of education will develop his mind, mould his character and stimulate his budding spiritual faculties. But a time comes in the growth of every soul when these begin to prove inadequate and the need is felt not only for a dynamic and definite spiritual objective but also for a more effective means of attaining that objective. The aspirant turns within himself to discover the Reality which is hidden within his heart and begins to bring about the necessary changes in his mind and heart which will enable him to accomplish this task. He enters seriously the field of Self-Culture. This is the time to begin the search for that source of Light which alone can illuminate his Path.

Every aspirant should be quite clear in his mind about these two things. First, what is the goal which he has placed before himself, and second, who will guide him on the Path leading to this goal. The answer to the first question will naturally depend

upon the individual, his temperament, his *Samskāras* and the environment in which he has been brought up. But though the temporary aims of an aspirant may differ, depending upon the stage of his evolution and the phase through which he is passing, at the moment the ultimate object of all is the same, namely Liberation from the illusions and miseries of life and a life of Enlightenment and Love as a Self-realized individual. This question has been dealt with thoroughly at different places and need not be discussed here.

The answer to the second question is given unequivocally in the *Yoga-Sūtras* in the well-known *Sūtra*

Sa pūrveṣām aḥi guruḥ kālenān vacchedāt † (I-26)

Being unconditioned by time. He [*Īśvara*] is Teacher even of the Ancients.

Īśvara or the presiding Deity of the Solar System is the real and the only Teacher of the different humanities which come and go in the vast drama which is being played on its different stages at different times. He is the *Jagat-Guru* (World Teacher) who teaches the 'Ancients', who then give out parts of this primeval teaching to different races and sub-races according to their needs and circumstances. His is the Light of Wisdom which shines pure and undimmed in the hearts of all true spiritual Teachers of mankind, and also shines, though less brightly, in the hearts of all true aspirants as the '*Light on the Path*'. He is the source of power and inspiration in the case of all true Teachers of Wisdom, and He is also the unseen guide who guides every soul slowly but surely to its goal through the long cycle of its evolution.

It is pointed out again and again in the Hindu scriptures that God and the *Guru* are one and the same and the disciple should under no circumstances imagine that they are different. It should be clear from what has been said above that the statement with regard to the identity of God and *Guru* means simply that the same God who is the objective of our spiritual endeavour is also

our guide in our search, who speaks within our hearts, first as the voice of conscience and later as the Voice of the Silence. This significant truth pertaining to the inner life has been perverted as usual in orthodox interpretations, for obvious reasons, as meaning that even an ordinary *Guru*, with all his human limitations and weaknesses, should be worshipped as God! Or else. . . .

The idea of the Deity in His function as a Teacher has been symbolized in the Hindu scriptures as *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*. The following well-known verse describes beautifully in a graphic form His nature and functions as a *Jagat-Guru*:

Citraṃ vaṭataror mūle vṛddhāḥ śiṣyā gurur yuvā |
Guroḥ tu maunaṃ vyākhyānaṃ śiṣyās tu chinna-
śayā ||

What a wonder! Under the banyan tree (near its root) sits the youthful Teacher among his aged disciples. The Teacher remains silent and still all the doubts of the disciples are dissolved.

This verse is traditionally known to refer to *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*. It contains perhaps some of the most significant and profound ideas pertaining to the *Guru-śiṣya* relationship.

Let us consider first the name and the form in which the divine function of the Teacher is symbolized. The clue to the name is found in the *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Upaniṣad* where it is stated that *Dakṣiṇā* stands for Buddhi, that spiritual faculty in us which enables us to perceive truth directly without the instrumentality of the intellect. So, *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* means 'the Embodiment of Buddhi,' the symbolic representation of that function of Divine Consciousness within us which enables us to realize and become aware of spiritual truths directly within the depths of our own consciousness.

Then coming to the form of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* and the setting in which He is shown, both are highly symbolic and give us a glimpse into some of the mysteries of spiritual experiences and

the initiations which lead to them. The first point we have to note in the symbology of Dakṣiṇāmūrti is that He is shown with the same form as Shiva, the differences being minor and emphasizing His function as the *Jagat-Guru*. This, no doubt means that the Reality which is the source of the creative, preservative and regenerative functions of Īśhvara symbolized in Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahesha is also the source of the knowledge and Wisdom which are needed for the evolution of humanity at different stages and the enlightenment of individuals seeking Liberation.

It is not possible to deal here exhaustively with the symbology of Dakṣiṇāmūrti but a few important features referred to in the stanza given above may be briefly explained.

Why is He shown sitting under and near the root of a banyan tree? A banyan tree is a well-known symbol of human knowledge, its many rooting branches representing the different branches of learning which appear as knowledge grows. But the tree is a symbol of knowledge of the intellect, *Apara-vidyā*, and not of Wisdom or *Para-vidyā* which is knowledge born of direct contact with the Divine Consciousness. The first is expressed through the intellect and is capable of increasing differentiation and elaboration. The second is integral, eternally present as a whole in the Divine Consciousness, is known through the Buddhi but takes the help of the intellect in its partial and imperfect expression on the lower plane of the intellect. That is why Dakṣiṇāmūrti is shown sitting near the root of a banyan tree and yet separate from the tree.

The paradox of the Teacher being young and the disciples old merely symbolizes the fact that the source of Wisdom is eternal and not subject to the laws of birth, growth and decay which apply to all things in the realm of time and space. This Eternal Wisdom has to be passed on to Teachers in the realm of time and space, who though advanced spiritually have to work through the imperfect and impermanent medium of the intellect. They and their teachings both are subject to the laws of growth and decay. It is not only the bodies of the Teachers which become old and die like those of others, Their teachings also become

corrupted through the passage of time and the ignorance and weaknesses of those who transmit them. But the Eternal Wisdom from which these teachings were derived remains ever as fresh, dynamic and pure as youth for it is part of the Divine Consciousness of the Logos.

The other paradox depicted in the verse, of the Teacher remaining silent and yet removing all the doubts of the disciples, is perhaps the most significant feature of the symbology of Dakṣiṇāmūrti. To understand this mystery we have to recall the fact that the knowledge which can be communicated through the medium of language is *Apara-vidyā*, pertaining to the intellect. The highest and most profound secrets of life lie beyond the scope of the intellect and cannot be communicated through the medium of language. They can be communicated only as direct experiences. The consciousness of the receiver is raised to a higher level where he can experience directly the truth sought to be communicated and know the reality by actually becoming aware of it. The intellect is a cumbersome instrument of gaining knowledge, even concerning things of the lower life. In relation to things of the spiritual realms it is utterly inadequate. Knowledge of the relation between the *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā*, the nature of Divine Love, the reason why *Jīvātmā* becomes involved in the World Process, all such questions are not really matters for intellectual comprehension but for direct experience within the depths of our own consciousness on transcending the intellect.

Apart from the necessity of direct perception in gaining knowledge of transcendent realities, even our ordinary doubts and difficulties pertaining to our inner life are best removed through the light of Buddhi which comes from within and which may be considered as a ray of Light emanating from Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Until this Light irradiates our intellect, intellectual knowledge remains mostly sterile and its deeper and real significance remains hidden.

After having considered the nature of the Divine Teacher who is present in the heart of every aspirant waiting to guide

him through the Voice of the Silence, let us deal very briefly with the advantages of establishing our direct contact with Him. One of the greatest problems of spiritual life is to find a reliable guide who can help us in overcoming its difficulties and ordeals, giving us strength when we feel dishcartened and giving us light when we seem lost in the darkness of ignorance and despair. Many earnest aspirants spend their life fruitlessly searching for a suitable *Guru* in the outer world, ignoring the Supreme *Guru*, Who is nearest to them and Whose wisdom, strength and compassion are boundless and ever at their disposal, Who is always aware of even their slightest yearning of aspiration and responds to their feeblest but sincere cry for help. The real difficulty in all such cases is lack of faith and confidence, lack of faith in the fact that the Inner *Guru* is within us ready to guide us, and lack of confidence in our ability to establish our contact with Him and receive help from Him. All such doubts can be resolved by a supreme act of faith, by turning resolutely in His direction and calling upon Him to be our guide. And as we persist in looking towards Him for all the help which we need in our inner life we shall find that more and more help comes until we become independent of all external aids. Of course, we have also to try our utmost to provide the essential conditions for receiving help in this manner. For the light of *Buddhi* can shine only in a mind which is pure, tranquil, harmonized and full of *dé*votion.

There is one more question which may be considered in discussing the function of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* as the Supreme Teacher. Where do true Teachers of men who guide aspirants on the Path of Liberation stand in relation to *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*? For, such Teachers of various grades and Masters of Wisdom, no doubt, exist and help people in different ways in their spiritual unfoldment. Have they no place in the life of the aspirant who recognizes *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* as the Supreme Teacher? In considering this question we have to remember that all *Sat-Gurus* are Liberated Beings who are permanently established in *Sat* or Truth and Their consciousness is, therefore, one with the Consciousness of

Dakṣiṇāmūrti. They are, in a way, outposts of His Consciousness and agents of His will in relation to all aspirants. When an aspirant needs and deserves help it is given to him through Them in the best possible manner under the circumstances. How or by whom it is given, it is not for him to judge. He should leave these things to Those who can carry out the Will of the Supreme Teacher with consummate skill and Wisdom, and should remain alert and watchful, ready to receive help and guidance in whatever way it comes. He may be kept in physical contact of a Teacher, or he may be guided from within; or again, he may be left entirely to his own resources to enable him to develop inner strength and Self-reliance. The nature of help varies according to the prevailing circumstances and the needs of the disciple. Lesser teachers can also act as imperfect instruments of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, according to their mental purity, freedom from egoism and attunement of their mind with His Consciousness.



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