

10. The Yogis

There are three steps in the progression of philosophic inquiry (or Vedantic thought) in India. They are the Adwaithic and Visishtadwaithic and the Dwaithic. It is not possible to advance beyond these three steps by any human endeavour. Adwaithic thought is beyond reach of the common man. It is not so easily comprehensible. To conceive it with the intellect is itself hard. To experience it, a powerful faculty of penetration is needed. Therefore, it is best to start with the dualist or Dwaithic step, and experience it as the reality behind things. Then, the second stage of Visishtadwaitha is rendered easier to reach.

The individual must progress as fast or as steadily as the community. We pass through boyhood, childhood, adolescence, youth, middle age and old age. It is an imperceptible but inevitable progress. We experience each

only when we are passing through it. So too, with these three stages of philosophic discovery. Each of these views is latent in the rest and each proceeds out of the experience of the previous stage. It is not possible to be aware of all three at the same time. Based on our sadhana and the experiences gained therefrom, each of these viewpoints comes into the consciousness and forms the spring of action and thought.

Those who assert that the Universe is real, but declare at the same time that the existence of God is but a dream, are only proving themselves foolish. For when the effect, namely, the Cosmos is real, it must have a Cause, for how can there be an effect with no cause? God can be denied only when the Universe is denied. God can disappear, only when the Cosmos disappears. What now appears as the Cosmos is really God. This is the vision that the true Sadhaka will get when he succeeds in his endeavour. As a matter of fact, the Universe we experience is the dream. When we awake from the dream, the Truth of its being God will shine in the consciousness. From the beginning of time, the God whom we posit outside ourselves has been the reality inside us also. This Truth too will become steady in the faith of man.

Of course, there is no philosophy existent that can be satisfying to all types and levels of mental equipment. Each has a distinct value. The stages of intellectual development, or the powers of reasoning are different from each other.

So, the three schools of philosophical interpretation mentioned above (the Dwaithic, the Visishtadwaithic and the Adwaithic) attain acceptance among different temperaments and different groups of people. Therefore, no one school has the right to claim superiority and impute inferiority. Only those who are unwise will resort to such tactics.

When people approach us with fanatic views, we must meet them with a smile, eager and yearning, filled with devotion to God. One can get intoxicated, of course; but only as a result of quaffing the wine of *Prema* (love). When someone who is fanatic for work approaches us we must share with him our skill and strength and join with him in work. By this means, it is possible to bring harmony between followers of various faiths and philosophic thoughts. It will bring together schools of thought and belief. If only this principle of harmony and harmonious co-operation had become a permanent asset of each man, how excellent it would be? How happy the world would have been if everyone had this knowledge that his viewpoint can at best be only partial and that it requires the harmonious commingling of many other facets to posit Truth?

Yoga means “coming together.” In India, where yoga is flowing in the veins of everyone since ages, it is possible to have the harmonious coexistence of many faiths and beliefs, which is the ideal type of Universal Religion. Those who can heroically put their faith into daily living can

accomplish this “togetherness” in the human community. Togetherness or Union can be established between one’s outer behaviour and inner nature. The Sadhaka (aspirant for spiritual progress), intent on the path of *Prema*, can strive for Union between himself and the embodiment of *Prema*, namely, God. The Vedantin can achieve the Union of all that IS in the one concept of God. The path of Yoga is designated differently in Sanskrit under different contexts, but those who are able to conceive and execute the Union are revered as Yogis.

Those who strive through activities and achievements to establish the Union are the Karma yogis. Those who follow the *Prema* path, are the Bhakthi yogis. Those who strive to manifest their latent powers and canalise them are the Raja yogis. Those who stick to logical analysis and rational interpretations and attain intuitive perception are the Jnana Yogis. In the Bharathiya spiritual history, these four types recur again and again.

First, the Karma yogi. He adopts the path of establishing union with Godhead by elevating and sublimating acts. We meet in the world many who seem to have been born, just to accomplish one particular mission or project. Their intellect is not satisfied with mere imagination or planning. Their minds will be full of actual concrete achievements which they yearn to realise. For such people, a guidebook or Sastra is needed to direct them along beneficial paths. Everyone in the world is seen engaged in some activity or

other, all the time. Yet, very few know the significance and worthwhileness of Karma; or, how best to realise the best results out of this inescapable trait. Hence, life is being made banal and barren. Karma Yoga teaches man the awareness of this significance and guides him along to achieve the maximum benefit out of the activity. Where, when and how Karma has to be done, how spiritual urges can reinforce strength of mind in the performance of Karma, and how Karma is to be taken up so that spiritual development can result—these are taught us by the Karma Yoga.

There is one great objection raised by some people about this and we have to pay some attention to it. The objection is that Karma Yoga involves too much physical strain. But basically, it is the company that one keeps that decides the strain and the stress that the mind and the body of man are subjected to. “I like very much to engage myself in only this task.” “I sought only to do good to him, but he ignored my desire and tried to injure me,” these are the usual causes for the strain and stress mentioned above. Such disappointment makes one lose interest in activity. It wants to do good and It seeks to do good to someone in some way, hoping to derive joy therefrom and distribute joy. When such joy does not arise, despair sets in.

But without getting attached, without being aware as to whom the Karma helps or how, the lesson that Karma Yoga teaches is—do the Karma, as Karma, for the sake of the Karma. Why does the Karma yogi fill his hands with

work? That is his real nature. He feels that he is happy, while doing work. That is all. He does not bargain for results. He is not urged by any calculation. He gives, but never receives. He knows no grief, no disappointment; for he has not hoped for any benefit.

The second Path: Bhakthi Yoga. This is congenial for those who are emotionally-oriented. It is the path for those capable of filling their hearts with Love. The urge is to have God as the Beloved. His activities will be different, for they relate to incense-burning, gathering flowers for worship, building shrines and temples where he could install and adore symbols of Beauty, Wisdom and Power.

Are you inclined to remark that this is not the right means of achieving union with Divinity? Remember that saints and sages, great spiritual leaders and guides throughout the world have emerged just from this devotional and dedicatory stage of spiritual endeavour. Some faiths tried to imagine God as formless, and described worship of God through such various acts as blasphemy, tried to suppress the Bhakthi cults and in the process, they slighted the Reality and Its Power and Majesty. The belief that God cannot be symbolised in a Form is evidence of blindness. The charge that such worship is barren is a hollow charge. The history of the world is the witness to the efficacy of Bhakthi. It is not proper to ridicule these activities, ceremonials and rituals and the descriptions of the lives of sadhakas who adhered to them in order to earn Union with

Divinity. Let those who yearn after the joy of worshipping the Form do so. Certainly, it will be a sin to shatter their faith and treat it as infructuous.

The glory of the great heroes of the spirit, those who have scaled the highest peaks of Realisation, and those who attain spiritual fulfilment is exercising immense influence on the mind of mankind. It is as a result of a long line of such seers that the spiritual message of India has attracted the attention of all nations. If India has been able to earn the reverence of the world, the reason has to be sought in the precious treasure that they have earned and preserved. Here, love of God and fear of sin have been the chief pillars of life and the everlasting guides for living. Bharath has won a name for being a holy land, a land steeped in renunciation and in spiritual sadhanas aimed at union with the Absolute, renowned for *tyaga* (renunciation, detachment) and yoga. The urges that this culture encouraged were all directed to the conquest of the vagaries of the mind.

Can the explanations offered by this culture on the nature and characteristics of Reality be palatable to those afflicted by agitated feelings and passion? To the great builders of this culture, God was tangible Truth, the one and Only Real Fact, the Goal of their entire Love. So the inheritors and followers of this culture treat the nihilist arguments based on the inescapably limited “reason” as the fool is treated in the story. The fool saw an idol, and eager to discover the God he broke it to pieces with a hammer!

The Bhakthi Yoga will teach such people the path of Love. It will tell them not to love with a view to gain profit. Love all, love all as you love yourselves. No harm can come to you then. It will only spread joy and happiness to all. God is present in all beings as love. So the Love is directed to and accepted by, not the individual but by God who is resident there. The seeker of God who relies on the path of devotion and dedication soon becomes aware of this fact.

Some love God as the Mother, some others as the Father, and some love God as “dearest and closest Friend.” There are others who regard God as the Beloved, the only desired Goal. They all endeavour to merge their Love with the Ocean of Love that God is. Wherever Love is evident, take it that it is God’s own Love. God is the greatest Lover of mankind. Therefore, when anyone decides to serve man whom He loves, God showers Grace in plenty. When the human heart melts at the suffering of others and expands as a result of that sympathy, believe that God is present there. That is the sign of the validity of the path of devotion, the Bhakthi Yoga.

Now, about *Raja Yoga*: Raja Yoga means the process of establishing mastery over the mind. One need not surrender one’s intellect or follow the guidelines of religious leaders. There is no chance of being misled or mistaken. At every step, one has to rely on one’s own intellect and experience, as tested by oneself.

Every being has three varieties of instruments for acquiring knowledge, and through that knowledge, wisdom. The first is “instinctive”; this is very strong, active and advanced in animals. This is the earliest, the lowest and therefore, the least beneficial of the three. The second is the “rational,” the instrument that seeks the cause and the effect thereof. This is most evident in man. The instinct can operate only in the limited field of senses and sensory experiences. In man the instinctive knowledge is largely subordinated by the rational instruments. The limits of the rational are very thin; reason can range over vastly wider fields. In spite of this, reason too is capable of very poor performance only. Its reach is restricted. It can proceed only a certain distance. It cannot venture further. The road that logic takes is not straight. It is more circular, returning again and again, to the place from which it started.

Take for example, our knowledge of the objective world, of the elements and energies that compose it. That which urges and prompts the objective world and its components does not stop with just this much. It absorbs also that which is immanent outside the objective world. And so, the extent that reason can spread over and explain is as the “consciousness” that is imprisoned in the tiny molecule, as compared with the vastness and grandeur of the transcendent fullness.

For us to go across the boundaries of reason into this full, free realm of intuition, certain spiritual exercises and

disciplines are essential. They can be grouped under the name, God-propelled Jnana (the highest wisdom). For, we have only three stages of Jnana—*Sahajajnana* (Native, derived from the senses of action and perception). *Yukti-yuktajnana* (Knowledge derived by the process of discrimination and evaluation), and *Easwaraprerithajnana* (God-induced knowledge gained through Grace by inner vision or intuition). The first of these is the knowledge possessed by animals. The second is the characteristic of man, and the third is the special treasure of high-souled individuals. It is possible for everyone to foster, cultivate and develop the seedlings of this third Jnana. For, the capacity is latent in all.

Another fact also has to be borne in mind. The three are stages of growth and so not three mutually exclusive types of knowledge. The *Easwarapreritha-jnana* will not contradict the *yukti-yuktajnana*. It will only bring to light what is unmanifest in the *yukti-yuktajnana*. The later stage only confirms and elaborates the previous ones. Afflicted by the vagaries of the mind and its fancies, some take their distorted attitudes as God given or Grace-induced. And they may even call upon others to heed their counsel. They lead men astray by their barren guidance. These morons announce that their absurd prattle is God-propelled.

True teaching can never be counter to the *yukti-yuktajnana*, the conclusion arrived at by discrimination and evaluation. The Yogas mentioned above are all established

in consonance with this view. Raja Yoga has to be practised mostly by the mind and its resolution. This is a vast subject and so, we shall consider here only its central theme. It is something that is the only refuge for the lowest of the low and the highest of the Yogis—namely, single-pointed meditation. For the person engaged in research in a laboratory, for one walking along a road, or for a scholar reading a book, or an individual writing a letter, or driving a car, the concentration of all their attention on the articles before them and the activity they are engaged in is very important. He understand the nature and peculiarities of the object he is handling. The more intense your concentration, the more successful will be your activity. When the mental abilities are focused on one effort, knowledge can be acquired quicker and from a wider field. And that is the only way by which knowledge can be earned.

Concentration will enable one, whoever he is, whatever the activity he is engaged in, to finish it much better than otherwise. Whether in material assignments, or in ordinary day-to-day work or in spiritual sadhana, concentration of mental energies is a must if success is to be achieved. It is the key that can open the treasure chest of Jnana. This is the most important aspect of Raja Yoga. It can even be said that it is the only important aspect of that Yoga. Millions of unwelcome, unwanted, unnecessary and even harmful thoughts enter our minds and confound their activities. These have to be kept out. The mind has to be guarded and controlled and kept under our rigorous supervision. Raja

Yoga is the one refuge for persons endeavouring to win this victory.

Jnana Yoga is mostly devoted to the study of principles, basic principles. This Universe or Cosmos that we cognise as outside ourselves can be explained by means of various theories of knowledge, but no one of them can be convincing to the uninitiated. The Jnana Yogi weaves many such theories and hypotheses. He is not convinced of the reality of any material object in the Universe, or of any activity or even of anyone else who propounds any other explanation. He believes that he should transcend the daily chores of life and not be bound by social or other obligations. In the vast Ocean of ISNESS, or *Sath* (Truth, reality), all objects are but drops, in his view. They are all struggling to move from the circumference to the Centre, from which they manifested through Maya. The Jnana Yogi too yearns to merge in the Centre, the Core of Reality, away from the tangle of apparent diversity. He exerts himself to *become* the Truth, not only to become aware of It. Of course, as soon as he is aware of It, he becomes IT. He cannot tolerate the thought that he and Truth are separate and distinct.

The Divine is his only kith and kin. He knows none other. He does not entertain any other urge, any other attachment, any other desire. God is all in all. He cannot be affected by grief or joy, failure or success. He sees and experiences only one unbroken, unchallenged stream of bliss-consciousness. For the person who is firmly established in

this state, the world and its ups and downs appear trivial and illusory. In order to stay in that Consciousness, he has to counter the pulls of the senses and face the fascinations of the world without any agitation of mind.

The Jnana Yogi is vigilant against the temptations held before him by his senses, and turning them aside, he approaches the Divine and seeks strength and solace there. He realises that the power and energy that vitalise the tiniest of the tiny and the vastest of the vast is the same Divine Principle. His actions, thoughts, and words reveal this vision he has experienced. This is the *Paramartha Drishti*, the Supravision. It sees all elements—the earth, fire, water, wind and sky—as the Divine itself and all beings—man, beast, bird, and worm—as emanations from God and therefore fully Divine.

One fact has to be noted here. If a person has this knowledge of the immanence of the Divine, and even of its transcendence, he cannot be honoured as a *Jnani* (wise, liberated person). For, the knowledge has to be digested through actual experience. This is the crucial test. It is not enough if the intellect nods approval and is able to prove that Godhead is all. The belief must penetrate and prompt every moment of living and every act of the believer. Jnana should not be merely a bundle of thoughts or a packet of neatly constructed principles. The faith must enliven and enthuse every thought, word and deed. The self must be soaked in the nectar of the Jnana.

The intellect is a poor instrument. For, what the intellect approves as correct today is tomorrow rejected by the same intellect on second thoughts! Intellect cannot judge things finally and for all time. Therefore, seek for the experience. Once that is won, the Atman can be understood “as all this.” That is the Jnana Yoga. According to the Bharathiya way of thought, the Vedas are taken as the Voice of God. Thus, the Vedas are the primary source of all knowledge for Bharathiyas. Everything is tested on the basis of Vedas. The ancient sages have laid down that what agrees with the Vedas is agreeable to man; what does not thus agree cannot agree with him. The Vedas were not spoken by humans, or composed by men and women. They were heard and recorded by sages, and transmitted by the guru to the pupil for generations by word of mouth. The guru recited, the pupil listened and recited just as the guru did, with the same care and correctitude. Thus the Vedas have been handed down for centuries. No one can determine the exact date when the Vedas were first heard or recited. Therefore, they are taken as *Sanathana* or Eternal.

At this point, we have to keep in mind another very important truth. All other religions prevalent in the world hold as authoritative communications made to some holy person by God Himself in His Corporate Form, or through some Superhuman personalities or embodiments of parts or portions of Divinity. Bharathiyas do not follow this line. They declare that the Vedas are based on no human authority. They do not depend on any man for their validity.

They are emanations direct from God. They are primeval. They are their own authority and validity. They were not written down or composed, constructed or put together.

The Cosmos or Creation is limitless, eternal and it has neither beginning nor end. So too, the Voice of God, namely the Vedas have no limit, they are eternal, they have no beginning nor end. “*Vid*,” the root from which the word Veda is derived, means, “to know.” When Knowledge began the Vedas too manifested. The Rishis visualised and announced them. They are the “seers of *manthras*”—the *manthra-drishtas*.

The Vedas have two major sections: the Karma Kanda and the Jnana Kanda. First comes the Karma Kanda and it is followed by the Jnana Kanda. In the Karma Kanda, a number of different “*krathus*” or sacrifices in which oblations are offered in the sanctified fire are mentioned. Most of them have been given up by Bharathiyas in recent times, since it has become difficult to perform them with the exactitude the Vedic rules prescribe. Some still continue in a very attenuated form. In the Karma Kanda, the moral codes are insisted upon very much. The moral rules and restrictions regulating life and conduct refer to the *Brahmachari* (the student) stage, the *Grihastha* (householder) stage, the *Vanaprastha* (recluse) stage and the *Sanyasa* (monastic) stage. Also, the Karma Kanda declares what is right and wrong for people following various professions and occupying different statuses. These are

being followed here and there, in some thin form, by people in India.

The Jnana Kanda is called Vedantha or the end of the Vedas, the Goal, the Finale. The Jnana Kanda is enshrined in the Upanishads. The adherents of the Dwaitha, Visishtadwaitha and Adwaitha schools of philosophical thought, the worshippers of Shiva, Vishnu, Sakthi, Surya and Ganapathi—all accept the supreme authority of the Vedas. They may interpret the Upanishads and other texts according to their own predilections and intellectual calibre, but no one dare question the authority of the Veda or the Vedantha. So, it is possible to use the words Hindu, Bharathiya or Vedantin, to the same person. The various schools of philosophical thought current at the present time may appear difficult to comprehend or as derived from unripe understanding; but when the matter is thought over in quiet, or the texts are studied in silence, or investigated without prejudice it will become clear that they have all relied on the points raised and the conclusions arrived at in the Upanishads. The Upanishads are being symbolised and worshipped in image form in temples and in private shrines, as a tribute to this universal appeal. They have entwined themselves, inseparably, in our lives.

The Vedas are “endless”: *Anantho vai vedaah*. But they were reduced into four collations and their essence was preserved in those forms. For promoting peace and prosperity in the world, the four were then taught and

propagated. They are the *Rig, Sama, Yajur* and *Atharvana Vedas*. They uphold Dharma (Righteousness), proclaim the Reality, and promote peace and harmony by developing among men the attitudes of worship, music, and adoration and also by the cultivation of skill in weaponry and war. They present the ideal before mankind, and exhort them to follow.

Whether the Bharathiya is aware of it or not, invariably, every right act of his, will have some Vedic injunction or prohibition behind it as the regulator or the illuminator. From marriage rites until funeral rites and even the rites for the propitiation of the *manes* (ancestors), the Vedas are the guides. A true Bharathiya should never forget the Vedas or be ungrateful to them. The dualists, the special-monists, the monists—all direct their lives according to lines laid down in the past by the sages. But they do not now know the origin and the purpose of these guidelines. If only they do, the fruit will be much more plentiful and permanent.

