

Yoga of Knowledge

Part 3 of 3

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So far in the two preceding discourses on this subject, we have covered only the preliminary or foreground material. At present, we are in a position to enter upon the basic subject matter itself.

Let us first make a brief review of what actually happens in the path of the yoga of knowledge. We start with man in a state in which he is surrounded by and more or less identified with the object. The journey is, in one sense, a movement from the object to the subject identify—bringing along a personal identification. We now must consider just what is involved here and when this yoga is possible. In the history of the race, so far as we know it, in the early stages there is a form of existence where there is as yet no clear identification of either the subject or object of consciousness, but rather a state of general confusion—a unity of both in a deep confusion. Our ultimate goal will be a state in which there is an integration of both the subject and the object, but in an organized fully conscious form.

A figure might suggest the difference between the initial state and the ultimate state, which superficially seems similar. Let us suppose that we had all of the material components that went into the manufacture of an automobile, that we had them in some container, but in a state of general confusion. To arrive at the construction of a functioning automobile, we would first have to pass through a stage of determining the function of all of the parts, identify them, and list them. This would be an analytic stage. Then we would take the parts and bring them together, putting each in its appropriate place. This would be an integrating or a synthetic stage. When we had finally put all of the parts together, each in its appropriate place, we would have produced an automobile capable of functioning. This would be the higher stage of integration. A confused stage of allness at the bottom of the process, a stage of analytic separation, then a stage of synthetic integration, each part being in its appropriate place, and then we would have arrived at a full integration and have on our hands a real automobile that was capable of functioning.

Somewhat similarly, man begins in the primitive stage in a state which has been called a “mystical participation” in the object, a term which in its French form was supplied by Levy-Bruhl. In this stage, man unconsciously projects into the object and thereby animates it. All objects live for the primitive, as researchers have shown. He attributes this life to the object itself, and it gives to the object a definite power over him. Over a long period of time, he evolves and gradually isolates himself, his own true identity, more or less from the object, in which case the object loses the animation that he has supplied to it. This must be understood as the psychological fact behind primitive religiosity and primitive magic. We reach—now, we come to a process in which man gradually isolates his own identity from the object. This philosophic position, where we

have a development of a psychological understanding of the composition of our consciousness, is what you might call, the first step out of primitivity. It was obviously developed at the time of Shankara in the East. It reached a comparable position in the West only at the time of Descartes; and we might say that before Descartes a yoga of knowledge in the present sense would have been impossible for Western man.

The supreme event in the history of Western philosophy was the moment when Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." Those of you who know the history of philosophy will remember that Descartes had been impressed with the general confusion of the ideas that he inherited from our culture. He had no clear position of assurance as to what was true and false, so he entered upon a disciplinary method for himself in which he doubted everything that he could doubt, hoping to find something that was beyond all doubt. He applied a heuristic rule to govern his conduct during that time, but proceeded to question everything that was handed down to determine whether it had any solid basis of knowledge behind it. And finally he found that he could not question the fact that he was thinking, and hence the statement, "I think, therefore I am."

Now, this statement has been criticized from the standpoint of Eastern wisdom, for the Eastern Yogin says, "*I*, the Self, do not think; it is *Shakti* who thinks, or nature who thinks within me." Here was a point very difficult of discovery. It would appear when we are dealing with difficult directed thinking, such as that which is typical of mathematical research, that I actually am thinking in the process. I will the thinking, and I proceed with very substantial difficulty all the way. There is thus a strong tie between the sense of *I* and the sense of *thinking*. A deeper penetration into the subject reveals, however, that this identification is simply a subtle form of the earlier identification with the sensible object which is so characteristic of the primitive. If Descartes had said instead, "*I* cognize thinking, and therefore I am," the difficulty would have been overcome. In this case he would have not confused the witness with the action. *I* truly cognize, but *I* do not act either in the gross physical sense or in the mental sense. This is a portion of the Eastern wisdom, and I can testify to the fact that this is what one finally discovers. One of the most difficult stages in the yoga is this breaking of the identification with thought, and this is because, as Aurobindo has pointed out, thought is very close to the Self, whereas the sensible object is definitely at a greater distance. It may take a long time in the self-analysis to make this break, to bring about this separation between the true Self and the subtle object or process of thinking. We're right in the heart of the problem peculiar to the yoga of knowledge.

The technique of this yoga does not lie in any bodily practices or postures, nor does it lie in the use of formal meditation, though this latter may prove to be an aid. The essential technique is self-analysis—a very careful analysis for the purpose of isolating what *I* truly am. The usual method is to proceed from the base upward. I mean the outer, apparent physical base. It is very easy to determine that *I* am not the body, for the simple reason that the body is an object before my consciousness. *I* am there the witness of the body, but the body stands before me, as do other external objects. Now, to be sure, I could cut off a portion of the body, yet I would not be cutting off a portion of that which is *I*, the witness of the body. The effect of cutting off a portion of the body would be an experience of suffering; but, then, I would study the suffering and I would discover that to think that *I* suffer, or to say that I suffer, is an error. *I* actually merely witness the state

of suffering, thus am apart from it. *I* am not in any way reduced by the cutting off of a portion of the body. Again, one can say the same thing concerning the life. I see the life that animates this organism; I see it as lying before me, not in the gross way that we see a life of other organisms, because it is the life of this body that is near to me. Nonetheless, it does not take very much of self-analysis to see that the life that animates it is other than *I*. Then we can go through the various facets of our experience. Thus, for instance, I find myself in a state of feeling: I feel sad; I feel melancholy; I feel happy; I feel exhilarated. I'm anxious to go forth into action. But it is very clear with even a moderate self-analysis to see that all of this is external to the real *I*. I feel it, in other words, I witness it, but it is an activity other than my own self-identity. It is easy, thus, to go through everything that belongs to the lower portion of the whole entity.

Here we might refer again to the *Taraka* yoga division of the principles. This, it may be remembered from other lectures, proceeds as follows. First, there is the *Atman*, and below it three *upadhis*. The first *upadhi* is known as *Karanopadhi*, or sometimes called the causal body. It is identical with that which in other systems is called *Buddhi*. Then there is the *Sukshmopadhi*, consisting of higher and lower *manas* and *kama* according to other systems. And finally the *Sthulopadhi*, namely, that which consists of *prana*, or life, and the *linga sharira*, or the vehicle of life which is also the paradigm on which is formed the physical body so that it has a particular type of shape; and finally the gross physical itself. The first analysis, and the simplest portion of it, breaks the identification with the *Sthulopadhi*, the last described above.

Now, we come to a much more difficult step. In the first breaking of false identification, we find a definite cooperation between the intellectual mind and the true Self. The mind has made the analysis, can readily see, that all of this that lies in the lowest or outermost part of the nature, is not the Self. But in the second stage dealing with the intermediate *upadhi*, the mind faces the problem of effecting its own isolation as different from the Self, and this is truly difficult.

Now, at this point there is a peculiar problem that may arise. In the literature it is always indicated that when the pilgrim starts his ascent of the ladder which leads to ultimate Liberation, Enlightenment, or Redemption, he arouses the opposition of forces that would hold him away from these attainments. He is thus symbolically tempted by the Devil, to use the traditional religious imagery. The temptation can come in lower or in higher forms. In the very lowest forms the temptation comes from two inimical powers in the lower nature. The adverse powers are known as *Pisacha* and *Rakshasa*. The *Pisacha* is that which is oriented to the various lusts—the lowest and most obnoxious kind of negativity; the *Rakshasa* to a more—to a violent action of the will such as the conflicts in battle, the glorying in fighting, and so forth. There is a kind of ecstasy in this sort of thing that attracts entities that are not well evolved. These aspects of the evil entity are not apt to attract him or to tempt him who is by birth oriented to the yoga of knowledge, but on the level of the mind, there is another subtler, and in one sense, more dangerous temptation.

You may remember the biblical story of Lucifer, the brightest star of morning, and that the story goes on to say that Lucifer challenged the power of the Supreme with the result that he lost in that challenge and fell and became the satanic power. This tradition corresponds to what may be an actual fact of experience. Lucifer, or

Mephistopheles, represents the intellect when it proceeds on its own, not as a servant of the true royal entity that man is, but as a power which challenges the royal power. It is a great power, the only one in fact that can make a reasonably effective challenge. It is the intellect going on its own seeking power, challenging the power of the root source of being, seeking indeed the enslavement of humanity. At this point, the *sadhaka* may face this conflict in his own consciousness. In the stories of those who have gone before, we know of the conflict between Buddha and Mara, and the successful defeat of Mara; and the temptation of Christ by Satan, and the successful overcoming of that temptation. I, too, have known the confrontation with Mephistopheles, not now to be considered as a cosmic entity, but as an entity within my own consciousness, the dark power within myself—a dark side which exists with all persons, for we are divided into the positive and the negative when we enter into dualistic consciousness. The confrontation was close. The Mephisto, as I saw him, was a very efficient entity, polished to the highest degree, neat, utterly effective in his actions. Now, this entity, if it becomes an independent power, becomes what is called it the Orient an *Asura*—*Asura* representing the host of those who are the testers. The *Asura* is defined by Sri Aurobindo as an entity, a powerful entity that has no soul, but monstrous ego, and can be a difficult entity to face. This negative side exists on many levels from the smaller more sordid levels of the *Pisacha*, on up to entities so advanced that they have even been called the black *Nirmanakayas*, a something like having a Buddha-like level. I faced the issue during an experience during sleep. It was close between that and the archetype, to use Dr. Jung's language, which represented the White Master. Nonetheless, the battle had a successful outcome. The White Master was successful.

Now, in a conflict of this kind the dark side, the *asuric* side, is not destroyed; it rather is domesticated, for the other side in all dualities cannot be destroyed. Ultimately, the two parts of the dualities fuse into one. The dark and evil side and the light and good side merge and both vanish in their normal character and become something which we may call a higher good. This other side, when domesticated, can become a positive power in the yoga and in the functioning of life afterwards. But, nonetheless, this is one of the tests of the way, and there can be at this point real failure.

The struggle to bring about a clear differentiation between the thought or ideational power and the Self may be one that occupies several years to see that thought and *I* are not identical and to see that it is not true that I think, but that nature thinks in me. Beyond this we come to a still more subtle and difficult problem, for one may finally ascend to the point where he is dealing with what we call the ego. Now, the ego has been rather clearly defined by Dr. Carl G. Jung as the center of the relative consciousness, and is to be distinguished from the Self, spelt with a capital S, which is the center of both the relative consciousness and the unconscious. The distinction parallels the distinction that exists in the yogic literature. The true Self in yogic literature is the *Atman*, but one in his analysis may confuse the ego with the true Self. I found that at this stage of analysis I was stuck for some years in trying to place before me the ego as an object and thinking that I had placed before me the Self as an object, until finally it dawned in my mind that this that I place before me and which I call my Self is not *I*, for the very reason that it stands before me and is an object in my consciousness. And if I then place that in myself which witnesses this object in my consciousness itself before me, I simply have another object; and I could go on with this process in a sort of infinite regression and would get nowhere. It dawned then that the true

Self is that which can never be an object before consciousness, but always is a subject to consciousness. Having isolated this in this way, and rejecting the effort to project the Self as an object, but rather in some peculiar sense sinking back into it, at that moment the Door opened. I found myself identical with the *Atman*, and a process was set up which moved autonomously. Then came the great glory of that wondrous experience which has been reported in *Pathways Through to Space* and in the second chapter of the first part of *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*. And here was to be noted a very important inversion in consciousness. In the process of self-analysis the center of consciousness, which we call the Self, had been reduced to a pure center that could not itself be an object of consciousness. You might say, therefore, since it had no properties that were objective, it was a point possessing position but no mass, no dimensions, and was surrounded by the universe of objects. The effect then was of an ascension in consciousness where one passed through a critical point where there was an inversion of consciousness. Of this I have spoken before.¹ At that point of inversion there is a momentary blackout and then a realization of oneself as being very different from what he had been before—no longer a bare point surrounded by a world about, but on the contrary, an illimitable sphere embracing the whole universe. The universe of objects became an existence within me rather than an environment bounding me.

I'm unable to say that this pattern of experience, or perhaps better "imperience," is a pattern universally experienced by all those who tread the path of the yoga of knowledge; for that reason, I spoke in the first person rather than in universalistic terms.² Here is something that would have to be studied objectively by considering the reports of many individuals who have progressed this way, and we might very well find that there is considerable variation in the patterns. This, at any rate, is one pattern of which I can speak because I have experienced it.

Now, there is a sense in which when one makes this crossing that he dies and is born again. He dies to an old sense of what is his own identity and is born into a new sense of that identity. This is indeed something that may account for the fear of the yogic transformation, because something in us senses that we will not be the same as we were, that we will become something different, that we become radically something different, and one who has not already passed over this way does not know what that difference may be. It can lead to a certain dread. At this point we require the confidence that is born in faith, in the faith that that which is behind the universe is a friend and that that which may transpire to us will essentially be good. No one can be sure before he has made the crossing. To make that crossing he must have faith and confidence.

The goal of this yoga is the Realization *I am Atman*. The *Atman* is that which persists from life to life. It also is true that the *Atman* is one and not many. I do not have an individual *Atman*. *I*, the *Atman*, have an instrument through which I function. And in the development within the total meaning of the *Atman*, it appears and is Realized that the

¹ See the audio recording "Sangsara, Nirvana, and Paranirvana," part 2.

² For the definition of 'imperience', see the audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 10 and "On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement." In speaking of introceptual knowledge, Wolff says, "The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous."

apparently individual *Atman* is but a projection or reflection of the universal *Atman*, so that the Realization contains the meaning the *Atman* is identical with the *Paramatman*. It also is in the literature that this state is identical with *Moksha*, or *Nirvana*. And so we have this fact, that one has attained the right to enter finally into the state of *Nirvana*. This is not fully consummated ordinarily until the death of the last gross vehicle. Then there can be a departure, at least for a great age, from the world of action, or the *sangsara*. But this is not the final word of yoga. There is also the possibility that in as much as the individual who has departed from *sangsara* can no longer be a force for good within the universe of action, it is possible to renounce the permanent enjoyment at this time of the state of *Nirvana*, and that will lead then to what I have called a more advanced yoga in the form of the yoga of the renunciation or the yoga of the Great Renunciation.

At this stage of the great Liberation, one has attained not only to a state of inconceivable delight, a delight which is not simply a minor euphoria, but a delight which is a great force of purification, a delight that gives one the feeling that he is resting upon sacred or holy ground. But in addition to that, he finds now the answers to the great metaphysical questions that have worried him perhaps throughout his life. Some of the questions vanish because they no longer have meaning; but take the three that are so famous, namely, the question of God, of freedom, and of immortality. The answers are positive. He first learns that whatever you may call the secret heart of all that is, it is a friend, and that it is most precious indeed. Call it God or call it *Parabrahm*, or call it *Adi-Buddha*. It does not matter at all. It is a friend, indeed the great friend. And furthermore, as to immortality, one now knows that consciousness never ends, and that immortality does not mean the persistence of an instrument of action or the instrument of specific forms of cognition, but a persistence of consciousness. The consciousness may change its form, but consciousness is eternal, and one knows this. And as to freedom, for the first time he knows real freedom, not simply that narrow conception of freedom, namely, as doing as one pleases—for this is not truly freedom, it is a bondage to one's desires, and one becomes the servant or slave of what it pleases him to do—but it is that larger freedom that can lead to a choice on the basis of will, not on the basis of a personal desire. One has the freedom of true command. The answer to these questions, thus, is positive, though in a form that cannot be communicated to others with the certainty it brings to the *sadhaka* himself. So, now having arrived at this place of security and delight and vast assurance, the great goal of this yoga is achieved. Beyond lie other courses and these we will consider in a later discourse.³

³ See the audio recordings “On the High Indifference,” “Abstract of the Philosophy,” part 8 and elsewhere, for a discussion of Wolff’s fifth Realization.