CHAPTER THREE

The Forms of Yoga

HAVING discussed the yoga system in general as expounded by Patanjali, we will now proceed to study the various forms of yoga that arose subsequently. Beginning with the traditional, we are told of four distinct types: (1) Mantra Yoga, (2) Hatha Yoga, (3) Laya Yoga and (4) Raja Yoga. Most of these draw heavily on Patanjali and present reformulations of his basic teachings, each specializing in one or another of its aspects. As such, some degree of repetition is unavoidable; yet we must risk it, if only to have a clearer view of the vast subject of yoga.

I. MANTRA YOGA OR THE YOGA OF UTTERANCE

They even forget, that all deities reside in the human breast.

WILLIAM BLAKE

Mantra Yoga is concerned, in the main, with the acquisition of one or the other material or mental power or powers through the constant repetition of a particular *mantra* or oral formula in order to attract the presiding power or deity to which the mantra relates, and then to press that power into service, good or bad, according to the will and pleasure of the practitioner. One who uses these powers for effecting evil and doing harm to others often runs the risk of self-immolation and usually falls a prey to the wrath of the deity concerned. Those who employ such powers for selfish motives with the object of material gains to themselves at the cost of

others, very soon lose their power, and in the end ruin themselves. These powers may, however, be profitably used for the good of others and there is not much harm in that, though it may mean loss of some vital energy after each such act. All types of miracles of the lowest order, like thought-reading, thought-transference, faith-healing, particularly in cases of nervous and mental diseases, fall under this category. It is therefore much better to avoid such things and to conserve whatsoever psychic powers one may acquire, and use them for gaining at least the lower spiritual planes and regions which form the seat of the deities concerned, in a spirit of selfless devotion. Then all the psychic powers will of themselves function without incurring any loss by one's own acquisition of them. It should however be borne in mind that repetition of the mantras per se does not bear any fruit unless it is done with full attention fixed on the specific mantras, and with intense devotion such as may set up particular vibrations connected therewith. But Mantra Yoga by itself is not of any value in self-realization, and more often than not those who practice this form of yoga remain ever entangled in useless pursuits of one kind or another as described above, with no great benefit to themselves in the upliftment of the self or soul.

As regards the exercise of *mantra siddhis* or supernatural powers acquired through the efficacy of meditation on mantras, Patanjali, in his *Yog Sutras,* sounds a definite note of warning:

> *They are obstacles to samadhi, powers but in worldly state.*

Technique in Mantra Yoga

Mantra Yoga is the yoga of rhythmic repetition of hermetically sealed formulas—sacred and secret—prepared by

the ancient *mantrakaras* (adepts in phonetics and in the power of sounds, including supersonics or sounds beyond the human ken), each designed separately for winning over the particular god or goddess representing one or the other powers of Nature. It may be practised with or without the aid of a rosary of *Rudrakhsha,* as the Shaivites do, or of Tulsi beads, as used by the Vaishnavites.

The mantras represent vibrations. The most sacred of the Vedic mantras is that of the *Gayatri.* It is the *mool mantra* of the Vedas and hence is considered to be of the first importance. Its virtue is said to be great and its japa or repetition has been enjoined on all Hindus from a very early age. The easiest and the most efficacious is the sacred syllable AUM, symbolizing the creative life-principle itself, and hence most of the mantras themselves begin with this sacred syllable. The Advaitists, who see the power of God immanent in all forms and as all-pervading, believe in the mantra of identification of atman with Parmatman: *Aham Braham Asmi* (I am Brahman), and *Ayam Athma Brahman* (I am Thou); and these are often shortened into *Soham* or *Sohang* and *Hansa* or *Aham-sah,* meaning respectively "I am He" and "He is I." The Vedantists repeat *Om Tat Sat* (Aum is the Truth and the Reality) and the Buddhists *Om Mani Padme Hum.* Next in the scale are mantras dedicated or addressed to this or that deity in adoration, praise, propitiation or entreaty for boons.

The efficacy of a mantra depends on its right pronunciation, right appreciation of its significance, which is often very profound, the right attitude of the person engaged in Mantra Yoga, and on the competence of the preceptor or Guru, who has mastered not only the technique but has successfully manifested for himself the seed-power lying hidden in the core of the mantra, and can offer it as a *prasad* or a gift of grace to his disciple.

Some of the mantras bring forth quick results, some fructify in their own good time and some bear fruit according to the merit of the individual concerned. Some are, however, of a forbidden type and hence inimical in nature, and more often than not they prove harmful.

Again, the effect of a mantra also depends on how the japa is performed. The japa done in whispers is considered as more meritorious than the one uttered loudly, and japa done in low murmurs is still better, while *mansic japa* done with the tongue of thought is the most meritorious.

The japas too are of different kinds according to the occasion, the season and intention of the doer. The *nitya japas* are, for example, to be performed every day as a matter of routine. The *namittika* are for certain ceremonial occasions. The *prayashchitta* are those done as a penance, atoning for lapses from the path of rectitude. Then there are *chala* and *achala* japas, that can be performed at any time, at any place, and under any circumstances, in any state or position. The others require a specific asana, place, time and direction, etc., coupled with a regular and elaborate ritual, e.g., offerings of flowers, scent, incense, light-waving and bell-tinkling, *havan* and *tarpan* (rituals of fire and water), with various purificatory acts.

For success in Mantra Yoga it is necessary that the sadhak should observe purity within and without, having a full-hearted devotion, exemplary character and conduct, before he can have any degree of concentration and contemplation.

We observe similar practices among the Muslim faqirs, who practice *vird* or repetition of sacred words like *Hu, Haq, Anal-haq,* and use a *tasbih* (rosary) for the purpose. The Christian monks also tell their beads and chant hymns and psalms.

II. Hatha Yoga

This form of yoga deals with the control of the body and the bodily activities as the means of stilling the mind. Its aim

is to make the human body strong and capable enough to stand and endure the hardest and the toughest conditions, and to make it immune, as far as possible, from physical diseases and ailments. But beyond a robust physique and possible longevity through the practice of pranayam or *habs-i-dam,* as it is called by the Muslims (control and regulation of breath), it is not of much help in self-realization by itself, though it may to a certain extent prepare the ground for a higher type of spiritual discipline leading thereto. It is in a sense a "ladder to Raja Yoga." It cannot even give the mind any great degree of control, as it is commonly supposed to do. By practicing Hatha Yoga, one may come to gain some siddhis or psychic powers through the exercise of certain asanas, mudras and bandhas, or physical positions and postures, and the practice of pranayam. The system includes observance of a number of penances and ascetic austerities like fasts and vigils, *maun* or a vow of silence for months and years, *panch agni tapas* (sitting with lighted fires on four sides and the burning sun overhead), standing on one leg, suspending oneself with head downward, etc. Some of the Christian saints went to great extremes like the wearing of nail-studded tunics, horsehair shirts, scourging of the body, self-flogging, all in imitation of the sufferings of Christ. Even among the Muslim *shias,* we see the traces of self-torture, when during the *Muharram* days, they beat their breasts and backs with knives fastened to iron chains in commemoration of the terrible sufferings that Hassan and Hussain, the grandsons of the Prophet, had to undergo along with a handful of their faithful followers, at the hands of their co-religionists under Yazid, on the burning plains of Karbla in defense of their faith. But all these terrible self-chastisements, however heroic in themselves, hardly grant any spiritual benefit. Of what good is it to torture and torment the body, when the serpent of the mind lies safely hid far beneath the surface and continues to thrive unscathed?

Leaving aside such forms of self-torture, the Hatha Yoga proper aims at perfecting the body as an instrument for higher types of yogas, and as such may have some value, to enable the body to stand the stress and strain involved in them. But even the routine of *Hatha Yoga Kriyas* is too difficult to perform, and often leads to inner complications which at times prove serious and incurable and endanger life.

These kriyas are meant for purification of the arteries and other channels in the body of all kinds of accumulated mineral deposits like chalk, lime and salt, etc., which clog the system and are the root-cause of decay and disease. This process of deintoxication and rejuvenation is done by means of purificatory acts called *Shat Karma* (meaning six acts), which are:

(i) *Neti Karma* (cleaning of the nose): A piece of thin muslin about three-fourths yard long is twisted into a string-like form and covered with a coating of wax. It is passed through each of the nostrils in turn and taken out of the mouth after a little rubbing so as to clean them of phlegm, etc. It is helpful in curing diseases of the nose and throat. It keeps the head cool, and improves the sight. Those suffering from nose and eye disorders or acidity may substitute for it *jala neti,* or douching the nasal channels with pure water.

(ii) *Dhoti Karma* (washing the stomach): A long piece of cloth three inches in width and measuring about seven yards in length is soaked in tepid water and then slightly wrenched. It is gradually swallowed down the throat into the stomach with the help of warm water, keeping about two feet of the other end in hand. After retaining it for a few minutes and shaking the abdomen, it is taken out very, very slowly. It cleanses the alimentary canal of impurities like mucus, bile and phlegm and cures an enlarged spleen and a cough, etc. This practice requires extreme care and attention so that the cloth may not get entangled in the intestines and result in serious complications, which might even prove fatal. It should not be

practiced when suffering from inflammation of the throat and bronchial disorders, irritation of the stomach or during coughing, etc.

(iii) *Basti Karma* (washing the bowels): It is a kind of enema whereby water is drawn in through the rectum into the lower intestines. After retaining it for some time, it is churned sideways and thrown out. It removes constipation and ejects inner, hardened refuse matter, which generally keeps sticking to the inside. An addition of a little glycerine to the tepid water makes it more beneficial. It is used for ailments connected with the male organ and the anus and it cures gaseous disorders of bile or lymph, and diseases of the spleen and liver. A daily resort to Basti weakens the tender intestines and may inflame the inner surface, and hence the need for careful guidance in such matters. It may be substituted by air cleansing if necessary, by drawing in and letting out air instead of water.

(iv) *Gaja Karni* or *Kunj Karma*: It is also known as *Shankha Pashala.* The practice consists in taking a bellyful of water and then swilling it within by muscular activity and throwing it out from the mouth as a gaja or elephant does with his trunk. In this way two or three quarts of warm water are taken and vomited out after washing the inner system by a circulatory motion of the muscles within. It is particularly useful for those who suffer from biliousness or acidity.

(v) *Niyoli Karma* (shaking the belly): It is done by sitting erect in Siddha or Padma Asana with hands settled on the knees. The upper part of the body along with the intestines is then to be churned or shaken rapidly from right to left so as to remove all inner impurities adhering to the inner walls. This practice is useful in ridding one of abdominal ailments of gastric and gaseous nature by releasing the digestive secretions. It helps in muscular contractions which in turn aid yogic breathing or pranayam.

(vi) *Tratak Karma* (gaze fixing): It is a *dristi sadhna* and consists in fixing the gaze, first on external centers, and then gradually on inner centers as explained at some length in the foregoing pages dealing with Yog Vidya and Yog Sadhna, in the section on "pranayam." By it, the gazing faculty becomes steady and when turned inward, one begins to see the wonders of the inner world of Trikuti, the highest heaven of such yogins.*

Besides the above, there are two other practices:

(i) *Kalpal Dhoti* (rapid breathing in and out) for purification of the lungs. It can conveniently take the place of Neti, but should be avoided in the rainy season and in ill-health. The breathing should be quick but not too fast, so that it may not affect the lungs and the respiratory system.

(ii) *Shankh Pashali* : It consists in taking water by mouth and immediately evacuating it through the rectum after a little shaking of the abdomen. It cleanses the entire digestive system by washing it clean of all impurities.

* Baba Garib Das tells us that the yogins regard Til as *Kshar*, Sahansdal Kamal or Sahasrar as *Akshar* and Trikuti as *Neh-Akshar*. The yogishwars go a step further and starting from Sahasrar, they go into Daswan Duar while the saints' nomenclature in this respect is Trikuti for Kshar, Daswan Duar for Akshar and Bhanwar Gupha for Neh-Akshar, and then the beyond, i.e., Sat Lok.

In the scriptures, Akshar stands for the creative life-principle and it is said that one who knows and realizes its essence qualifies for the path Godward. The *Akshar Purush* with the help of *Anhad* or unending Sound Principle is responsible for the creation of the astral and physical planes below Trikuti. These are subject to dissolution, and are known as Kshar as opposed to Akshar, the indestructible *Kutastha* and *Avyakt* (above decay and dissolution). Beyond Kshar and Akshar is the *Purshottam* or *Paramatma* (the Oversoul God). Cf. Bhagavad Gita 12:3-4 and 15:16-17.

The spiritual regions beyond Trikuti are upheld by *Sat-Shabda* (*Sphota* or the Word-essence) and the lord of these divisions is Neh Akshar but he too cannot outlive the grand dissolution. The Sat Lok or Muqam-i-Haq is the first Grand Division that lies beyond the border line of the dissolution and it is eternally the same (*Neh-Akshar-Para*) and this in fact is the abode of the saints, it being their native homeland.

All these processes, if not done under the direction, guidance and control of an adept in the yogic sadhnas, more often than not do more harm than good. It must be admitted that there is something artificial and unnatural about them, and cases have been reported wherein even adepts have suffered from their performance. It is therefore better to take recourse to natural ways of simple, wholesome and fresh vegetarian diet in its natural state, some cow's milk and ghee, fresh water, regular but untiring exercises, deep breathing, etc., all of which are free from any of the dangers attending the Hatha Yoga practices.

Thus we see that in Hatha Yoga one has, in the first instance, to set the physical house in order, and that this is done by the practice of Shat Karmas, or the six preliminary practices as described above. After this, for successfully working out this type of yoga and acquiring proficiency therein, recourse is to be had to the following disciplines:

(a) Scrupulous cultivation of yamas and niyamas.

(b) Observance of *sanjam,* or moderation and discipline, in all phases of life, and particularly in thoughts, words and deeds.

(c) Physical postures of asanas, mudras and bandhas.

(d) Pranayam or the control and regulation of the respiratory system, all of which have been explained elsewhere in Ashtang Yoga.

We may now consider what some writers have said regarding the place of Hatha Yoga in the spiritual path. Shri Yogindra, in his Introduction to his *Hatha Yoga (Simplified)*, speaks of Hatha Yoga as follows:

> The necessity of this system of yoga must have been felt in the ancient past when the discipline and education of the physical became an essential form of discipline and control of the mental, the moral and the psychic. In this

context, Hatha Yoga should be, and is, regarded as the methodical approach to the attainment of the highest in yoga. Because it deals primarily with the physical, the human body, in relation to the mental, it has been appropriately identified as the physiological yoga or *Ghatasya Yoga.*

The author Alain Danielou in his book, *Yoga: The Method of Reintegration,* describes the method of Hatha Yoga as reintegration through strength, because "self is not within the reach of the weak," and dealing with its object and method, says:

Hatha Yoga is the name given to the technical practices and disciplines by which the body and the vital energies can be brought under control. Although one of the means of yoga, it is the first preparation toward the way of reintegration, essential for further realization.

All treatises on yoga insist that the sole purpose of the physical practices of Hatha Yoga is to surmount physical obstacles on the spiritual or royal path of reintegration—Raja Yoga.

"Hatha" literally means "will-power," or indomitable will to do a thing or to achieve an object howsoever out of the common run it may appear to be. The meaning of the word "Hatha" Danielou goes on to explain from the *Goraksha Samhita,* as:

The syllable "Ha" represents the sun, and the syllable "tha" represents the moon and the conjunction (yoga) of the sun and moon is therefore Hatha Yoga.

The cosmic principles which manifest themselves in the planetary world as the sun and the moon, are found in every aspect of existence. In man, they appear mainly under two forms, one in the subtle body, the other in the gross body. In the subtle body they appear as two chan-

nels along which our perceptions travel between the subtle center at the base of the spinal chord and the center at the summit of the head. These two are called ida and pingala; one corresponding to the cold aspect of the moon and the other to the warm aspect of the sun.

In the gross body, the lunar and solar principles correspond to the respiratory, cool, and the digestive, warm, vital energies, and are called prana and apana. It is by coordinating these two most powerful vital impulses that the yogin achieves his aim. In relation to breath, the cold air breathed in is spoken of as prana vayu and the warm air breathed out as apana vayu.

Hatha Yoga has certain undeniable advantages, many of which have already been described in the previous chapter when discussing asanas, pranayam or pratyahara. It lays the foundation of a healthy life capable of withstanding many physical strains through the elimination of toxic and impure matter within the bodily system. To a yogin, death comes not as the tortured end of a long process of decay, but like the autumn leaf or the ripe fruit, it is the severance that is naturally wrought by inner maturity. Gain of control over various physical functions naturally brings with it some degree of mental control as well, for any rigorous discipline of the body is impossible without a discipline of the will, and the development of the one stimulates the other.

Nevertheless, the physical and psychic powers that Hatha Yoga ensures to the successful sadhak are not without their snares and dangers. Instead of being kept strictly private for further spiritual progress or used only for the most humanitarian purposes, they are often employed for winning public applause and wealth. It is not for nothing that the common man associates this yoga with men who walk on burning charcoals, swallow glass-pieces or metal blades, eat snakeheads and rodents, hold back running cars, or allow themselves to be run

over by trucks or elephants. The serious-minded student of yoga, observing this abuse, must use these practices strictly as stepping-stones to Raja Yoga or else discard them altogether as yet another distraction from the goal, another means for pampering the ego which they set out to master. Huston Smith, in *The Religions of Man,* has put the matter roundly:

> Some persons are chiefly interested in coordinating their bodies. Needless to say, they have their Indian counterparts — men who take mastery of the body as their basic interest. . . . Whereas the West has sought strength and beauty, India has been interested in precision and control, ideally complete control over the body's every function . . . Julian Huxley has ventured cautiously that India appears to have discovered some things about what the body can be brought to do of which the West has no inkling. This extensive body of instruction comprises an authentic yoga, Hatha Yoga. Originally it was practiced as a preliminary to spiritual yoga, but as it has largely lost this connection, it need not concern us here. A judgement of the Hindu sages on this matter can be ours as well: incredible things can be done with the body if this is what interests you and you are willing to give your life to it. But these things have little to do with enlightenment. In fact, they grow out of a desire to show off, their mastery makes for pride and so is inimical to spiritual progress.

III. Laya Yoga

This is the yoga of absorption or mergence. *Laya* literally means to lose oneself in some overpowering idea or a ruling passion. By a deep and continued absorption through concentration, one is gradually led to a state of forgetfulness of everything else, including the bodily self, and to having only one thought uppermost in one's mind, which is the objective before him for realization. This obsession may be for anything,

worldly gain, power and pelf, name and fame; even for acquiring riddhis and siddhis or supernatural powers or, above all, for attaining the Ultimate Reality we call God. Thus there are various forms and stages of Laya Yoga, the highest of course being absorption in the contemplation of God—the conception of the yogins in this behalf being the astral light and the means thereto lying through the practice of mudras or locked postures, many of which have already been described in the foregoing chapter; for Laya Yoga corresponds closely to Patanjali's views on dhyan. The highest type of contemplation in Laya Yoga takes one above body-consciousness, leading to the Divine Ground of the human soul—Sahasrar or the headquarters of the subtle regions, with a thousand-petaled lotus full of lights in a pyramidical formation. Forgetfulness of everything but the subject of continued meditation is the key to success in this form of yoga. It is the natural result of pratyahara and dharna leading to dhyan, which combined together constitute the foundation of Laya Yoga.

The yogins believe in the twin principles of Purush and Prakriti, the positive male and the negative female principles, both in Man and in Nature. In Man this Nature-energy lies coiled up at the basal root-center in the body, and the process consists in awakening it into activity by the performance of asanas and the practice of yogic breathing, and in carrying it up through the central nadi—sukhman—until it reaches and merges in the highest center—the Purush in Sahasrar—and hence the term yoga of mergence. For success in Laya Yoga, one has to rely on the lights of the various elements that predominate at the chakras, or centers, in the pind or physical body. As this journey of mergence of the mind into chid-akash is not free from risks, it is necessary to work it out under the strict guidance of an adept in the line.

Laya Yoga differs vitally from other forms of yoga, which in the main have a positive approach by concentration or con-

templation on some fixed object. In Laya Yoga, the approach is of a negative type. Instead of controlling the mind as yoga systems generally do, it concentrates on controlling the Kundalini, the vital energy, which lies hidden and latent, and it is perhaps because it deals with a latency that it is termed as Laya Yoga.

IV. Raja Yoga

As the name indicates and implies, it means "the royal road to reintegration;" the reintegration of soul which is now in a state of disintegration, having lost its cohesion through the diversifying influence of the mind running into so many outgoing channels. This path offers a scientific approach Godward and is best suited to persons gifted with a scientific mind and a scientific outlook, both within and without, and given to experimentation. It is based on the assumption that the true self in man is quite different from, and more wonderful than, what it is commonly supposed and appears to be in the work-a-day life where it is subject to limitations that crowd in and press upon it from all sides, making it look for all practical purposes a finite element and not the limitless reality it really is.

Again, the experiments involved in Raja Yoga are to be performed on one's own self, unlike those in other sciences, in which the whole process involved is one of experiment on outside nature. A Raja yogin is not expected to take things for granted or to blindly accept an authority, scriptural or otherwise. His is essentially a path of self-experiment in the laboratory of the mind, and he proceeds slowly but steadily, step by step, and never stops until the goal is reached.

Man, according to Raja Yoga, is a "layered entity" and is clothed in so many folds, one within the other, e.g., body, bodily habits, mode of life, inherited and acquired, senses and addictions, vital airs, restless mind with innumerable mental

vibrations, ever-active will and egocentricity, etc., all of which form koshas or veils covering the atman. Within these lies the crest-jewel of Being itself, the ever-abiding Self underneath the phenomenal personality. Thus complete liberation (*mukti*), consists in complete release from the countless finitizing processes enveloping the Infinite Ocean of the Creative Life Principle, so as to have all power, all life, all wisdom, all joy, all bliss and everything else in its fullness. In other words, it means depersonalization of the soul by literally tearing down the personality or the mask which an actor dons when he comes on to the stage to play his role. The job of a Raja yogin then, is to unmask the reality within him by removing the numberless masks or false identifications, and thereby to separate the great Self from the enshrouding sheaths by which it is encumbered.

Ashtang Yoga or the eightfold path of Patanjali leads to what is commonly known as Raja Yoga. It is the ladder whereby one achieves *Nirbij Samadhi, Unmani, Sehaj-awastha* or the *Turiya pad,* which is the crown of all the yoga systems and the efflorescence of the yogic art. It deals with the training of the mind and its psychic powers to an extent which may lead to Enlightenment, whereby true perception is attained and one gains an equipoise, a state of waking trance. His soul is unshakably fixed inwardly at its center, *sam,* even though he may apparently be engaged in worldly pursuits like the rest of mankind. This state is the pinnacle of all yogic endeavors and practices, and once attained, the yogin, while living in the world, is yet no longer of the world. This is how Raj Rishi Janak and Lord Krishna, the prince of the yogins, lived in the world, ever engaged in worldly pursuits and activities, carrying the wheel of the world in their hands in perpetual motion, yet with a still center fixed in the Divine Plane. All of their actions were characterized by activity in inactivity. Such is the apex in the yoga system, a state in which the

senses, the mind and the intellect come to a standstill. In the Katha Upanishad, we have:

> *When all the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not — that, say the wise, is the highest state — the Kaivalaya Pad (the state of supreme realization).*

It aims at samadhi (the final step in Patanjali's yoga system), whereby the individual is deindividualized and perceives within him the totality, unbounded and unembodied, limitless and free, all-pervading like the ether. It is seeing all things in the aspect of eternity.

A few words about the state of samadhi may not be amiss here. Samadhi may be conscious or super-conscious. In the one, the mind remains conscious of the object, while in the other, there is an inner calm in which one sees and gets a real insight, as if in a flash, of the object as it really is. It is seeing with the soul (or the inner spiritual eye), when our bodily eyes are shut. This is immediate and direct perceptual knowledge as distinct from mediate knowledge, i.e., through the medium of the smoke-colored glasses of the senses, the mind and the intellect. It is a state of "still silence," far removed from the maddening world outside. It is a mystical state in which chit, manas, budhi and ahankar all lose their respective functions and the disentangled and deindividualized Self alone shines in its own luminosity. It is about this state that Vyasa tells us: "Yoga can best be known only through yoga, for yoga becomes manifest through yoga." (Yoga Bhasya iii:6).

The most sacred syllable with the Raja yogins is *Aum*. In Mandukya Upanishad, we have a detailed account of this word. It is the same as the holy Word in the Gospel of St. John. It is the *Kalma* or *Bang-i-Qadim* of the Muslims, the *Akash Bani* or *Vak Devi* of the ancient Rishis, the *Udgit* or *Naad* of the Upanishads, the *Sraosha* of Zoroaster, and the

Naam or *Shabd* of the Masters. The world and the Vedas all originated from this syllable Aum. In Gita it is said, "The Brahmin, who reciting and thinking upon Aum, goes forth, abandoning the body, goes on to the highest path." Lord Krishna speaking of himself says, "I am *Omkar,* I am *Pranva* in all the Vedas, in speech I am *Ek-Akshra* (The One Syllable)." In the Upanishads it is stated, "Aum is the bow, the mind the arrow; Brahman is the target. Know ye the Brahman with concentration, hit the target with singleness of vision (*Ekagrat*), and then like an arrow becoming one with the target, the individual soul will become identified with the Brahman."

A single vibration in Brahman (*Eko Aham Bahusiam*) caused all the lokas, and with it brought into being all planes, spiritual, causal, astral and physical, with their countless divisions and subdivisions. The physical vibrations in man correspond to the one, original vibration that led to the projection of *Srishti* or the Universe, with all its trinities, like *Brahma, Vishnu* and *Siva; Satva, Rajas and Tamas; Jagrat, Swapan* and *Sushupti,* all of which are contained in Aum, the lord of the three worlds.

Lord Yama, the God of Death, exhorting Nachiketa said, "The goal uniformly extolled by all the Vedas, and for which man strives with all his tapas, is, in brief, Aum."

Similarly, the term *pranva* means something ever new and fresh, unchanging and eternal (*kutastha nitya*), like the relation between Shabda and its meaning, as opposed to *parinama nitya,* which is eternally changing.

From the above, it follows that each of the four classical forms of yoga is but an integral part of the yoga system as a whole as given by Patanjali, with a special emphasis on one or the other aspect of the system, and that these forms constitute a progressive development from Mantra Siddhi to Raja

Yoga, each step paving the way for the next higher stage on the yogic path.

To make yoga more practicable, distinctions were made in later times, for different types of people, based on individual temperaments and vocational pursuits. While the persons who were highly intellectual and reasoned out everything very often took to Jnana Yoga or "the Yoga of Knowledge," those with an emotional temperament were offered Bhakti Yoga or "the Yoga of Devotion," consisting of devotional exercises like singing and chanting of hymns and psalms (as did princess Mira and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu). Again, those who were primarily engaged in the outer activities of the world, were considered as best fitted for Karma Yoga or "the Yoga of Action," consisting of austerities like fasts and vigils, performance of *yajnas* and other charitable acts, meritorious deeds like pilgrimages to holy places and reading of scriptures, etc., and above all the path of selfless duty. In this way there arose the three types of "popular yogas," namely those of head, heart and hand, signifying Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga. These yogas find their first clear and unequivocal exposition in the Bhagavad Gita, and Lord Krishna stands in the same relationship to them as does Patanjali to the four traditional types.

But it must be noticed that these three types cannot be classified into water-tight compartments. Each of them can hardly be practiced by itself to the total exclusion of the others. They simply indicate the predominant and inherent traits in the nature of the aspirants. A mere theoretical knowledge of yoga, without devotion and action, is just like a tree bereft of foliage and fruit, fit only for the woodcutter's axe. Again, devotion per se is meaningless, unless one has an intellectual grasp and a factual experience of the thing and actively strives for it. Actions by themselves, whether good or bad, without devotion and knowledge, keep one in per-

petual bondage, like fetters of gold or of steel as the case may be, for both sorts have an equally binding force and efficacy. This world is a *Karma Kshetra,* or field of action, and all acts performed on the plane of the senses without discriminating knowledge and loving devotion bear fruit, which the doer has of necessity to gather up, whether he wills it or not. It is only action performed without attachment and desire for the fruit thereof that can bring freedom. One has therefore to become *Neh Karma* in this *Karma Bhoomi,* to escape from the wheel of Karmic bondage. The Law of Karma is stern and inexorable, and one should not unnecessarily go on doing Karmas endlessly and remain in eternal bondage.

He alone is free from the binding effect of Karmas,
who communes with the holy Word.

GURU AMAR DAS

The yoga system, thus, is in essence one integrated whole and cannot be split into any artifical classifications. In Bhagavad Gita or the Song Celestial, which pre-eminently is a Yoga Sutra, the prince of yogins, Lord Krishna, gives a clear exposition of the various types of yogas to the Kshatriya prince Arjuna, so as to bring home to him the importance of *Swadharm* or the Path of Duty, as defined from various angles, for work is nothing but worship, in the true sense of the word, if one realizes it as such and does it without attachment to the fruit thereof.

V. Jnana Yoga or the Yoga of Knowledge (Right Discrimination)

The path of Jnana is for those who are gifted with strong intellect or mental grasp and have a keen insight, capable of penetrating into the why and wherefore of things, so as to reach the core of reality. It means right discrimination and knowledge, the very first essential in the eightfold path of

righteousness as enunciated by Buddha. It is from right understanding of the true values of life that everything else proceeds in the right direction, for without right and correct knowledge of Truth, all endeavors, with the best of intentions, are likely to go awry and land us sooner or later into difficulties.

The importance of true knowledge is felt in fact in all aspects of yogic life whether Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga. In Karma Yoga, one needs to know and realize that one has a right to action or work and not to the fruit thereof. As one cannot but do work, the work is therefore to be performed in the true spirit of one's duty, a dedication unto the Lord, with the mind fixed on Him. The renunciation of attachment to the fruits brings evenness of temper, and in the calm of self-surrender lies true yoga of contemplation, a perfect peace born of total surrender of one's life to God.

In Bhakti Yoga also, a bhakta or a devotee has, as a preliminary step, to understand the true significance of bhakti or devotion to the Lord and then to develop in himself a correct perspective, which may enable him to see the light of his *Isht-Deva* not only in human beings but in every form of life.

In short, the path of Jnana Yoga lays emphasis on the true knowledge of the inmost Reality that is, or the true nature of atman. "Self-contemplation," the keynote of a true jnani, tries with the exercise of proper discrimination, to separate the apparently giant little self (the outer man) from the little great Self within (the inner man), for the self is the foe of Self, and self when properly trained becomes the friend of Self. The aim of this yoga is to chase away the darkness of ignorance with the torch of knowledge. It is a highly analytical path and for its successful working, one has to adhere diligently to three things:

(i) *Shravan* or hearing: hearing the scriptures, the philosophic discourses, and above all, the living teachers of spirituality with first-hand experience of the Reality, who can trans-

mit their own life impulse to those coming into contact with them, for it is in the company of the truly awakened soul that one awakens from one's long slumber.

(ii) *Manan* or thinking: It consists in intense and thoughtful contemplation of what one has heard and understood so as to concretize the abstract, and make intellectual concepts the pulse of moment-to-moment living through a careful exercise of discrimination that distinguishes at every step the true from the false. It amounts to freeing the soul from the noose of egoism by all possible means at one's command. It is like churning butter out of the buttermilk.

(iii) *Nidhyasan* or practice: It consists in shifting the center of gravity from the ephemeral and changing self to the abiding and eternal Self, from the circumference to the center of one's being. This gradually brings about detachment from the pairs of opposites—riches and poverty, health and disease, fame and ignominy, pleasure and pain, etc.—into which one and all tend to drift in the normal course of existence.

The path of Jnana is a short-cut to yoga but it is frightfully steep, and very few can take to it. It requires a rare combination of razor-sharp intellect and intense spiritual longing, which only a few like Buddha and Shankara possess.

The path, however, would become smooth if one, by a mighty good fortune, were to meet a Master-soul. A Sant Satguru can, by his long and strong arm, draw an aspirant right out of the bottomless vortex of the life of the senses, without his having to do overmuch sadhna.

VI. Bhakti Yoga or the Yoga of Loving Devotion

He who with unwavering devotion (Bhakti Yoga), does God service, has crossed beyond the strands, and is fit for salvation.

BHAGAVAD GITA

It is a yoga of worship with a loving and living faith, abso-

lute and steadfast, in one's Isht-deva or the object of one's reverent adoration. It is a very popular path, most suited to those who are endowed with an emotional bent of mind. Selfless devotion is the keynote to success on this path. A bhakta or a devotee delights in rapturous strains, and is ever engaged in singing hymns in praise of his Lord and never gets weary of them. He tends to differ from a jnani both in his outlook on life and approach to God, for instead of seeking the true Self, which is also the Brahman, he sets up a dualism between himself and his God, whom he adores as a separate and superior being. But this dualism is not necessarily ultimate; the bhakta knows the secret that one becomes that which one adores.

The cult of bhakti occupies an important integral place in all the yogic sadhnas. In a jnani, it provides substantial support in the form of devotion to the cause of self-knowledge. In a Karma yogin, it manifests itself in the form of an effect, and finds its efflorescence in acts of loving devotion for the common weal of all creatures, for they are the creation of God.

The path of bhakti is characterized by three salient features: *japa, prem* and the symbolic representation of the object of veneration.

(i) *Japa*: It connotes the constant remembrance and repetition of God's name; in the beginning, orally, by means of the tongue, and then mentally. All the devotees engage in this practice irrespective of their religious orders. The practice of telling beads is widespread in the world. The Hindus name it *mala,* the Christians "rosary" and the Muslims *tasbih.* Unless it is performed with devotion and concentration, it defeats its purpose, for it runs the risk of becoming mechanical. Thus in some countries the whole practice has resolved itself into a mere rotating of a wheel on which are inscribed various prayers, only the hand being kept busy, while the mind instead

of being fixed on God is left free to wander in worldly thoughts.

(ii) *Prem Bhava* or love-attitude assumes multitudinous forms with a bhakta. Sometimes, he assumes the role of a child, and clings to God as one does to his father or mother, and at other times altogether reverses the process and sports with Him as one does with his child. At times, he adopts an attitude of a friend and a companion (*sakha-bhava*), of a lover pining for his beloved spouse, of a devoted slave for his Master, or a tippler for the Saqi, as we find in the quatrains of Omar Khayyam. It all depends on one's varying moods and predilections. Christ always spoke of God as the "Father;" Paramhansa Ramakrishna adored Him as the "Mother;" Arjuna, the warrior prince, and Meera, the Rajput princess, always regarded Him as a *Sakha* or a friend and companion, while the Gopis sang songs of poignancy and grief as any love-smitten maiden would do for her lover.

(iii) Next comes the chosen symbol of the Lord. Everyone has his own conception of incarnations and God's manifestations. As the Nameless assumes many names, so does the Formless appear in many forms according to the desires of His devotees. One may find Him in a stone as Sadna did, another in an idol, for He is immanent in all forms and answers to the prayers of all His sincere bhaktas and never lets them down. One can, of course, serve the Lord when He appears as a Godman, a teacher of humanity like Buddha, Christ, Kabir, Guru Nanak, who by their very presence illumine the world.

The process of bhakti gradually widens the outlook of a bhakta until he sees the light of his chosen idol pervading everywhere in and around him, and he begins to feel himself expanding with love, till he embraces the entire creation of God. This is the climax to which love brings him. The process was powerfully illustrated in our own time by the life of Sri Ramakrishna. At first he worshiped the Divine Mother as the

idol in the Dakshineswar temple, then as the principle that manifested itself in all things good and holy, and finally, as the spirit that pervaded everything, the evil no less than the good, considering even the courtesan as its manifestation. The stages of the progress of a true bhakta from dualism to monism, from a limited individuality to universality, are traditionally termed as under:

(a) *Salokya*: The stage where the devotee desires to dwell in the same region as his Beloved.

(b) *Sampriya*: The stage where he not only wishes to dwell in the same region but also in close proximity to his Beloved.

(c) *Sarup*: The stage where the devotee wishes for himself the same form as that of his Beloved.

(d) *Sayuja*: The final stage when the devotee is content with nothing less than becoming one with the deity.

When a bhakta has reached the end of his journey, he no longer sees any duality, but beholds the one Deity pervading everything and everywhere. He may continue to speak of It in the manner in which he used to do, as a Father or a Mother, but he no longer knows any difference between that Being and himself, and so we read of Christ saying: "I and my Father are One."

VII. Karma Yoga or the Yoga of Action

Karma is the essence of existence, whether of man or of God, the Lord of Karma. Karmas rightly performed, in a spirit of service to the Divine, can lead to spiritual emancipation.

Karmas or actions are of two kinds: good and bad. Good deeds are those which tend to take us nearer to our spiritual goal while the bad deeds are those that take us farther away from it. There is no pleasure higher and more abiding than the one that comes from rediscovering one's true Self, which is really finding one's identity with the world around.

Life in all its forms is characterized by activity; and change is the law of life. No man can do without action, even for a fraction of a second. Wordsworth has described this state of perpetual activity thus:

The eye cannot choose but see,
We cannot bid the ear be still,
Our bodies feel where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

This being the case, what one has to do is to sublimate the course of one's actions, from end to end, so that they are purged of the dross of low and mean desires and sensual relationships. The selfless service of mankind is the highest virtue "Service before self" should then be the guiding principle in one's life. Since all life springs from God, the fountain of life and light, life must be made a perpetual dedication unto Him, without any desire for the fruit thereof. *Brahmsthiti* or establishment in Brahman comes not by renunciation of work (*saivyas*), but by giving up the desire for the fruits thereof (*tyaga*). It is not work, but the motive power behind the work, that binds us and pampers the ego.

Karma, to be the means of *moksha* or liberation from mind and matter, must satisfy three conditions:

(i) True knowledge of the higher values of life: Life itself being a continuous principle immanent in all forms of creation and is, therefore, worthy of respect and adoration. This is the realistic aspect of Karma.

(ii) Sincere and loving feelings toward all living creatures from the so-called lowest to the highest. This is the emotional aspect of Karma.

(iii) Karma must be performed with an active will, without fear of punishment or hope of reward. It should, in other words, be spontaneous, flowing automatically from one's spe-

cific nature (*swadharma*), i.e., from a sense of duty—work for work's sake and not under any restraint or compulsion. Man is not merely a creature of circumstances, but has a will whereby he can modify his environment and direct his own destiny. This is the volitional aspect of Karma.

A man who lives completely for others does not live for himself, nor would he allow his ego to get inflated by thoughts of possessiveness. With his spirit fully detached, a Karma yogin lives in complete dissociation from his ordinary self.

He who does the task
Dictated by duty,
Caring nothing
for the fruit of the action,
He is a yogi.

BHAGAVAD GITA

In brief, "selfless devotion to duty" is the keynote to success on the path of action. In the performance of duty, one must rise above the sense-objects, the senses, the mind and the intelligent will, so that whatever is done from the fullness of one's being will be a spontaneous act in the light of the atman, and a righteous action; enabling one to see action in inaction and inaction in action, and to be a still point in the ever-moving wheel of life, which is at once in action and in inaction. In this way, both the "action rightly performed" and "action rightly renounced" lead to the same goal, for it is the right understanding of the nature of action that brings the yogic state.

These then are the three main types of yoga designed and fashioned according to human nature. Each one receives the mystic call, as one may be inclined temperamentally. To the reflective philosopher gifted with a logical mind, it comes as —"Leave all else and know me." The spiritual aspirant endowed with an emotional mind gets it as—"Leave all else

and lose thyself in my love;" while a highly practical and active mind gets the call as—"Leave all else and serve me."

As has already been said, these three approaches tend to overlap and cannot be wholly separated. Something of the bhakta and the Karma yogin is present in the true jnani; something of the jnani and Karma yogin in the true bhakta; and something of the jnani and the bhakta in the true Karma yogin. The matter is not one of exclusiveness but of dominant tendency.

VIII. Other Yogas Mentioned in the Gita

Besides these well-known and popular forms, Lord Krishna gives us a few more types as well, with varying shades of distinction between them.

Yoga of Meditation

It is yoga of one-pointed attention, like the "light of a lamp in a windless place." It is for the self-controlled who can struggle hard. With the mind ever fixed on the atman, a person with the aid of an intelligent will gradually withdraws himself from the distractions of the mind, and finds himself a living and self-luminous soul and ever after moves toward perfection. For this, one has to divest himself of all aspirations, desires, hopes and possessions, and retire to a solitary place to practice control over mind and body.

Yoga of Spiritual Experience

This experience one gains by breaking through the three dimensional egg of gunas: *satva, rajas* and *tamas,* and by transcending the physical and mental states. It comes with the understanding of the true nature of things, i.e., *vivek* or discrimination. Its merit is greater than that of the performance of rites and rituals, sacrifices and ceremonials, scriptural

studies and chantings of psalms, practice of austerities, and the giving of alms and doing of other charitable deeds, all of which are perforce done on and concerned with the plane of the senses, and cannot take one beyond.

Yoga of Mysticism

It is a refuge in the Lord by total self-surrender unto Him. It comes from knowledge of God's true nature and from direct vision. In this way, one frees himself from the good and evil effects of his actions, all of which he performs as an offering at the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

The Bhagavad Gita is truly a compendium of the yoga systems prevailing at the time of its exposition, and in fact mentions as many as eighteen: *Vikhad Yoga* (Ch. I), *Sankhya Yoga* (Ch. II), *Karma Yoga* (Ch. III), *Gyan-Karma-Sanyas Yoga* (Ch. IV), *Karma-Sanyas Yoga* (Ch. V), *Atam Sanjam Yoga* or *Dhyan Yoga* (Ch. VI), *Gyan-Vigyan Yoga* (Ch. VII), *Akshara-Brahma Yoga* (Ch. VIII), *Raja Vidya Raj Guhya Yoga* (Ch. IX), *Vibhuti Yoga* (Ch. X), *Vishva-Rup Darshan* (Ch. XI), *Bhakti Yoga* (Ch. XII), *Kshetra Kehetragya Vibhag Yoga* (Ch. XIII), *Gun Trai Vibhag Yoga* (Ch. XIV), *Purshottam Yoga* (Ch. XV), *Devasura Sampad Vibhag Yoga* (Ch. XVI), *Shradha Trai Vibhag Yoga* (Ch. XVII), and *Mokshar Sanyas Yoga* (Ch. XVIII).

From the above analysis, it is clear that the distinctions drawn between the various aspects of the yoga system are illustrative rather of the human mind's habit of looking at the same thing in different ways, then of any inherent difference between one type and another. They are just different facets of the same subject, and they often overlap and interpenetrate each other. If one studies the Gita closely enough, one will begin to see that while Lord Krishna speaks of different yogas to harmonize with varying human approaches to the Divine,

the practical esoteric discipline that accompanies them is the same. When he initiated Arjuna into the mystic science, he opened his *Divya Chakshu* or third eye, and it was only subsequently that the prince could behold him in his Universal Form or *Vishva Roopa* (Ch. XI). Finally, as Guru, the great royal yogi told him to leave all else and surrender himself completely to him; *Sarva Dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja* (Ch. XVIII). Further hints of the inner path are not lacking in the Gita; thus in Chapter I, we are told that at the very outset the Lord sounded the five-melodied conch. But in the absence of a teacher who has himself practically mastered the science, we tend to treat it either on the level of intellectual discussion or that of ritual chanting, thus missing its inner import.

It may be noted that the dualistic assumption characterizes the first stages not only of Bhakti Yoga, but of all the other types of yoga as well. They begin by distinguishing the jiva from the Brahman; one imperfect, finite and limited, and the other Perfect, Infinite and Limitless. Creation itself is the product of two principles, the positive and the negative: *Sat* and *Sato* in the purely spiritual world, *Purush* and *Prakriti* at the higher reaches of Brahmand, *Brahma* and *Shakti* in mid-Brahmand, *Kal* and *Maya* still lower and *Jyoti* and *Niranjan* at the bottom of the Brahmand. It is the union of these, whatever the stage, that brings the various forms into manifestation, from the minutest atom to the largest Universe. The term *Brahman* itself comes from two roots: *vireh* which denotes growth or expansion, and *manan* which connotes cognition. The process of creation is one in which the Unity projects itself into dualistic and pluralistic forms, and the way back is through the reverse process from duality and plurality to Unity. But so long as a person remains in the body, he cannot, according to the yogins, be always in a state of samadhi or union with the Adi Purush, the Primal Being. The yoga sys-

tem therefore believes in *vedeh mukti,* or final liberation only after death. Again, the highest heaven of the yogins is Sahasrar, the region of the thousand-petaled lights, and that of the Yogishwars is Trikuti, the headquarters of the Brahmand, the origin or the egg of Brahman itself. Most of the Prophets of the world descend from this region, which is a half-way house between the physical and the purely spiritual realms, and at times refer to the beyond as Par Brahm only. The path of the Saints and the Masters, however, goes beyond these, for they speak definitely of Sat Lok, the abode of the True One, the realm of pure spirit, and of regions even beyond thereto: Alakh, Agam and Anami.

IX. Yoga in the Zoroastrian Scriptures

It will be of interest to know that we have, in the Gathas of Zoroaster, a five-fold system of the Beatific Union with Ahura Mazda, which corresponds closely to the yogic systems like Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, Raja Yoga, etc., that we have been examining. We quote in extenso from *Practical Metaphysics of Zoroastrians* by Mr. Minochehr Hormusji Toot, a leading Zoroastrian scholar.

(i) *Gatha Ahura Vaiti* — The Path of Divine Knowledge:

> Look within with the penetrating enlightened mind and search out the truth for your personal self so as to overpower the base self and gross physical selfish egoism, *akeen,* by the evolution of the better and higher self, *vahyo,* and ultimately to realize the best, Absolute Being (*Vahisht Ahura*), and the highest self, of Ahura Mazda or the Ultimate Reality of the Universe, *Asha Vahishta.*

The polarity of the "Better and the Base," the primordial, spiritual subtlety and the grossest inertia, is created by the twin spirit forces: the unfolding (*spento*) and the straightening (*angoo*), produced by Mazda. Both the Life and the

Matter produced by the harmonious coalescence of these twin spirit forces, evolve toward perfection by their related activity.

The above is the metaphysical path of spiritual knowledge, as given by the Gatha Ahura Vaiti (Refer Jnana Yoga).

(ii) *Gatha Ushta Vaiti* — the Path of Love and Devotion:

The Path of *Armaiti,* Divine Love and Devotion, acquired by steadfast attachment to the Truthful Beloved Master Ratu Zarathustra. Considering the Beloved Master, connected with the All-pervading, Infinite Reality, as all in all, the alpha and the omega, the devotee remains detached from and unentangled with worldly attachments, and procures the divine love, which seeks and cherishes the Beatific Union with the All-pervading Reality after Creator Ahura Mazda.

Thus proclaims Ratu Zarathustra in this Gatha:

Thus I reveal the Word, which the most Unfolded One has taught me,
The Word which is the Best for the mortals to listen;
Whosoever shall render obedience and steadfast attention unto me, will attain for one's own self, the All embracing Whole Being and Immortality;
And through the service of the Holy Divine Spirit will realize Mazda Ahura.

(Ha. 45-8 — Refer Bhakti Yoga)

(iii) *Gatha Spenta Mainyu* — the Path of Selfless Service:

Selfless service is rendered for the furtherance, growth and benevolence of the entire Universe and all living beings therein:
The Unitive Knowledge is best for men since their birth,
Let the selfless service be rendered for the Universe,
This Universe must prosper for our sublimation.

(Ha. 8:5)

We must sacrifice the finite self, ego or individuality at the altar of benevolent, philanthropic service of the entire Universe, in order to acquire the Infinite vision of the Unity of Life and the immanence of the All-pervading Reality through the worship of Ahura Mazda, the Creator, Source, and Ultimate Goal of all.

The Gatha ends with the soul-strirring axiom of life:

The Most-Sublimating, Ennobling Will or Volition is that of righteous service.
Which the Creator of the individualized human existence culminates with the Enlightened Super Mind.

(Refer Karma Yoga)

(iv) *Gatha Vahu — Khshetra* or the Path of Self-Mastery:

By controlling the base mental propensities and mean tendencies of physical nature, through the sublimation of the volition power, aspiring to the Divine Kingdom of the communion of the All-loving and All-pervading Ahura Mazda, the self-mastery is attained with calm and composed mind.

The Holy Self-mastery is the most sustaining absolute sovereignty.
By introspecting worshipful service, it is procured inwardly through the All-pervading Reality,
O Mazda! Let us achieve that best now.

(Ha. 51:1—Refer Raja Yoga)

(v) Next we have the Gatha of *Vahishto Ishtish,* which deals with the Path of self-sublimation. It consists in physical, mental and spiritual culture by cultivation of higher and nobler qualities of head and heart, in trying to realize one's true self in relation to the Highest Self of Ahura Mazda, and

in dedicating the finite self and relative being to Ahura Mazda.

The life on earth is a great sacrifice, *Yajna* (yagna)—the voluntary sacrifice of self for the well-being of one's fellow beings.

It is in self-sublimation that all human endeavors ultimately end, and in fact, it is the objective to which all the paths as described above lead. Without true knowledge of the twin spirit forces, the better and the base, loving devotion of the aspirant to the great cause, and selfless service, one cannot master the self-assertive self within him so as to rise above body-consciousness, and thus prepare himself for the spiritual path that lies ahead.

In Zoroastrian philosophy, the twin principles, or the "Better and Base spirit forces," is the fundamental law of the relative existence manifested in the Universe. This polarity is essential for the evolution of life, from the grossest base to the better and higher stages of spirituality, right up to realizing the infinite goodness and supreme benevolence of the Absolute Being beyond them. Without this polarity of the Better and the Base, the best of the Absolute Beyond can never be realized and the Impersonal Supreme Being cannot be comprehended:

Indeed unto one's self as the best of all,
The Self-Radiant person shall impart Self-Enlightenment,
So that, O Omniscient Mazda, thou shalt reveal Thyself,
Through Thy Most Benevolent spirit, and shall grant
The Blissful Wisdom of the Divine Mind,
Through the All-pervading Reality.

GATHA USHTAVAITI

In the Venidad, the Supreme Ahura Mazda assures us, thus:

Indeed I shall not allow the Twin opposite spirit forms to stand in contest against the superman who is advancing toward the Best Absolute Being.
The stars, moon and sun, O Zarathustra, praise such a person;
I praise him, I the Creator Ahura Mazda,
Hail of Beatitude unto thee,
O Superman! Thou who hast come from the perishable place to the Imperishable.

VENIDAD

X. Yoga and the Outer Sciences

Having discussed in some detail the various methods of yoga, we may in conclusion, remind ourselves of the true warning sounded by Shankara:

The three-fold path; the path of the world, the path of desires, and the path of scriptures, far from giving the knowledge of Reality, keeps one perpetually bound in the prison-house of the Universe. Deliverance comes only when one frees himself from this iron chain.

Liberation cannot be achieved except by the perception of the identity of the individual spirit with the Universal spirit. It can be achieved neither by yoga, nor by Sankhya, nor by the practice of religious ceremonies, nor by mere learning.

SHANKARACHARYA

To bring up to date Shankara's message that True Knowledge is a matter of direct perception and not mere ceremony, ritual or inference, we may add that it cannot come through the outer sciences either. The discoveries of the modern physical sciences have indeed been spectacular, and have confirmed

many of the views about the nature of the cosmos and of existence voiced by the yogic systems. They have established, beyond doubt, that everything in the universe is relative, and that all forms are fundamentally brought into existence by the interplay of positive and negative energies. These discoveries have led some to presume that physical sciences can and will lead us to the same knowledge that yogins in the past sought through yoga; that science will replace yoga and make it irrelevant.

A blind man, though he may not be able to see the sun, may yet feel its heat and warmth. His awareness of some phenomenon which he cannot directly perceive, may lead him to devise and perform a series of experiments in order to know its nature. These experiments may yield him a lot of valuable data. He may be able to chart more accurately, perhaps, than the normal man, the course of the sun, its seasonal changes and the varying intensity of its radiation. But can all this knowledge that he has gathered be a substitute for a single moment's opportunity to view the sun directly for himself?

As with the blind man and the man of normal vision, so too with the scientist and the yogin. The physical sciences may yield us a lot of valuable, indirect knowledge of the Universe and its nature, but this knowledge can never take the place of direct perception, for just as the blind man's inferential knowledge cannot get at the sun's chief attribute which is light, so too the scientist in his laboratory cannot get at the cosmic energy's chief attribute, which is Consciousness. He may know a great deal about the universe, but his knowledge can never add up to universal consciousness. This consciousness can only be attained through the inner science, the science of yoga, which by opening our inner eye, brings us face to face with the Cosmic Reality. He whose inner eye has been opened, no longer needs to rely on spiritual hearsay, the assertions of his teacher, or mere philosophic or scientific inference.

He sees God for himself and that exceeds all proof. He can say with Christ, "Behold the Lord!" or with Guru Nanak, "The Lord of Nanak is visible everywhere," or with Sri Ramakrishna, "I see Him just as I see you—only very much more intensely" (when replying to Naren—as Vivekananda was then known—on his very first visit, in answer to his question: "Master, have you seen God?").

CHAPTER FOUR

Advaitism

YOGA is as timeless as Brahman Itself. As with every fresh cycle man comes to an awareness of the All-pervading, he tries to discover the means for realizing It. It was Hiranyagarbha, we are told, who first taught yoga or the Divine Way, but it was his successors, Gaudapada and Patanjali, who developed it into a regular system. As we have already seen in the foregoing chapter, all true yoga begins with a dualistic assumption but ends in a non-dualistic one. It is not surprising, therefore, that many students of the inner science should have been confounded by this paradox. As time passed, confusion led to controversy, and a half-truth was often mistaken for the full truth. It was at such a time that Shankara, the prodigy from South India, arose to preach the true philosophy of Advaitism.

He was gifted with amazing powers of reasoning, logic and insight and few have attained to the depth, sublety and consistency of vision that are to be found in Shankara's writings. Taking up all the great scriptures as they came down from the past, he unequivocally interpreted their meaning and established their identity of substance. He showed that the Reality was One and, in its ultimate analysis, could not tolerate any pluralism or dualism. An individual jiva might begin as distinct from the Brahman, but by the time he had attained full realization, he would have realized his oneness with the Absolute, the All-pervading. Armed with clairvoyant intellectual power, he swept Indian thought clean of all the

seeming contradictions that were clogging its free development.

We may now examine some of the basic concepts that he taught.

Self — the basis of conscious life

Shankara regarded the empirical life of the individual consciousness as nothing but a waking dream, and as any other dream, an unreal substance. Its unreality comes to light when one travels from limited to cosmic consciousness, or contemplates the relative nature of physical consciousness as it varies from waking (*jagrat*), to dream (*swapan*), and from dream to dreamlessness (*sushupti*). If empirical experience is relative in character, wherein lies its reality? The answer provided by Shankara is that it is to be sought in the Thinking Mind, which in turn only reflects the light of the Atman, the Eternal Self, the unchanging, the absolute, the real witness (*sakshi*).

The principle of causality is just a condition of knowledge. The objects appear to be real so long as we work within the limits of cause and effect. The moment we rise above these limitations, all objects vanish into airy nothings. In the true nature of reality, there is no place for causation, because causal explanations are always incomplete and ultimately lead nowhere. The objects momentarily appear as bubbles or ripples on the surface of the water and disappear the next moment into the water and are no more. Water alone remains the real substratum of the whole phenomenon. In just the same way, the Real contains and transcends the phenomenal, and is free from all relationships of time, space and cause. The entire world lives in the mind of man, and it is the movement of the conscious mind that produces the distinctions of perception, the perceiver and the perceived, a differentiation where in fact there is none, as everything is part of the vast ocean of unity. This state does not recognize the distinc-

tions of knower, known and knowledge, all of which are but relative terms with no finality about them. Similarly, the three states of the human experience (waking, dreaming and the dreamless) are unreal, for none of them lasts long enough, and each gives place to the other in turn, as the mind passes from state to state. Each of them has a beginning and an end and exists only in the absence of the others. The term "relativity" in itself implies its antithesis, the "Reality," and beyond the three states specified above lies the atman, as the basis of them all. It alone is and constantly remains, behind the ever changing panorama of life, the ever unborn, eternally awake, the dreamless and self-illumined, by its very nature a pure cognition distinct from the non-cognition of the sleep state.

The nature of creation

Creation as such does not exist per se. The actual and the real is ever the same and is not subject to change. The unconditioned cannot be conditioned as infinity cannot be finitized. All that is, is Brahman, and there can be nothing apart from the Absolute Unity. It projects Itself into varying forms, which are an expression of Its power; but if we perceive them in terms of plurality or duality and of limitation, it is not that such qualities inhere in the Absolute, but that our own perception is limited by the narrow, everyday, human consciousness. He who has passed from *avidya* to *vidya,* from ignorance to knowledge, knows the world of the relative to be only *maya* or illusion, and sees the Absolute in everything, just as he who knows the true nature of ice sees it only as another form of water. The power of the Absolute, popularly known as Ishwar and called the Creator, is the root-cause of all consciousness. The world of plurality or duality is mere *maya* (an instrument for measuring things on the level of the intellect), while the real One is non-dual and hence is at once measureless and immeasurable. To use the well-known simile—"The variety

subsists in the atman, as does a snake in the rope or a ghost in the stump of a tree." As an empirical experience is neither identical with the atman, nor exists apart from or independent of the atman, so the world is neither one with the atman nor separate from it.

Atman is one and universal, unconditioned and limitless like space, but when conditioned by mind and matter, it looks like *Ghat-Akash* or space enclosed in a pitcher, yet becomes one with the universal space when the pitcher breaks apart. All the differences, then, are but in name, capacity and form. The jiva and the atman are one and of the same essence. Kabir, speaking of it, says that the spirit is part and parcel of Ram, or the All-pervading Power of God. The Muslim divines also describe it (*rooh*) as *Amar-i-Rabbi,* or the fiat of God. While the jiva is conditioned and limited by the limiting adjuncts, physical, mental and causal, the atman or the disembodied jiva, freed from these finitizing adjuncts, is limitless and unconditioned.

The Self or Atman

The basis of truth lies in Self-certainty. The Self precedes everything else in the world. It comes even before the stream of consciousness and all concepts of truth and untruth, reality and unreality, and before all considerations, physical, moral and metaphysical. Consciousness, knowledge, wisdom and understanding presuppose some kind of energy known as "Self" to which all these are subservient; and in fact, they flow from it. All physical and mental faculties, even the vital airs and empirical experiences, appear in the light of the shining Self, the self-illuminated atman. They all have a purpose and an end that lie far deeper than themselves and which form the springboard for all kinds of activity, whether physical, mental and supramental. All these, however, fail to grasp the real nature of the Self, being themselves in a state of continuous

flux. Self being the basis of all proof and existing before proof, cannot be proved. How can the Knower be known, and by whom? Self is in fact, the essential nature of everyone, even that of the atheist. This Self then, is eternal, immutable and complete, and in its essence, is ever the same at all times, under all conditions and in all states.

The nature of Self

Though we know that the Self exists, yet we do not know what it is, for knowledge itself follows the Self and is due to and because of the Self. The true nature of the Self may however be comprehended by the Self, if It could be stripped of all the enshrouding sheaths of senses, mind, understanding and will, in which it is clothed and covered. What is then left is variously described as "Undifferentiated Consciousness," "Eternal Knowledge" or "Pure Awareness," and is characterized by the Light of the Great Void. It is the supreme principle whose essential nature is self-effulgence. It is infinite, transcendental and the essence of absolute knowledge. It has three attributes of *Sat, Chit* and *Anand,* i.e., pure existence, pure knowledge and pure bliss. As the Self is complete in Itself, and by Itself, It has no activity of Its own, nor has any need for it, nor requires any outside agency. All-pervading and self-existent, It knows no limits and no motives.

Individual knowledge and consciousness

Though the ultimate reality is the non-dual spirit, yet determinate knowledge and empirical experience presuppose the existence of: (i) The knower, or the subject that knows apart from the internal organ behind the senses and the object known. The knowing mind is but a reflecting mirror that reflects the luminosity of the atman, in which knowledge grows. (ii) The process of knowledge as determined by modifications in the internal organ: *vritis* or undulations creating

ripples and bubbles in the stream of consciousness. These vritis are of four kinds: the Indeterminate (*manas* or the mindstuff), the Determinate (*budhi* or intelligent will), Self-sense (*ahankar* or the self-assertive ego), and the Subconscious (*chit* or the deep and hidden potencies). (iii) The object known through the light of the atman as reflected by the internal organ (*antahkaran*).

Knowledge and its sources

Knowledge is of two kinds; ultimate and final, or empirical and relative. Knowledge in its ultimate reality is a state of being and never grows. It is already there and is revealed by the light of the atman, which transcends at once both the subject apprehending and the object apprehended, beyond which there is nothing.

True knowledge is purely an action of the soul and is perfect in itself and independent of the senses and the sense organs. "An all-knowing mind," says Professor J. M. Murray, "embraces the totality of being under the aspect of eternity. As we gain our entrance into the world of being, a total vision is ours." According to Shankara, "highest knowledge is the immediate witness of reality itself," for then, the knower and the known become one reality. But the real Self which is pure awareness cannot be the object of knowledge.

The empirical knowledge of the external world is just like animal knowledge. It is based on and derived from the sense organs, and as such has forms and modes all of which are conspicuous by their absence from true knowledge. But nothing becomes real till it is experienced. Even a proverb is no proverb until it is illustrated in actual life and practice.

All empirical knowledge is revealed either by perception or by scriptural testimony. The human perception has never been considered true, perfect and accurate. One may see a snake in a rope, or a ghost in the stump of a tree. Generally, things

are not what they seem to be. The colors of things we see are those that are not absorbed by them, but are rejected and thrown out. The redness of the rose is not part of the rose but something alien to it. Again, inference and scriptural testimony are not altogether infallible. The source of inference is previous experience, which is itself fallible and even if it were not, situations in the present may not wholly fit in with the knowledge gained in the past. This is the case even with intuition, which is the sum-total of all experience in the subconscious. A cloud of smoke on the top of a distant hill may be indicative of fire or it may be a sheet of fog. Similarly, scriptural testimony, though admitted as an infallible and certain source of knowledge, cannot always be treated as such. The Vedas, which constitute the Divine knowledge, appear and disappear with the rise and dissolution of each cycle of time. They are supposed to be an inexhaustible mine of universal and ideal knowledge. But the term "knowledge" implies a record of spiritual experiences gained at the supersensory planes. The moment the experiences thus gained are translated into human language and reduced to writing, they acquire form and method, and the moment they acquire form and method, they lose their freshness and life, their quality of limitless being. That which cannot be limited or defined, begins to be treated as something defined and limited, and instead of the scriptures giving vital knowledge, they tend to distract men from it by offering only abstractions. At best they can only point toward the Truth, but they can never give it. The concepts of the Universal as contained therein, remain as mere concepts, for they can neither be received, inferred nor correctly communicated; they begin to have meaning only when one learns to rise above the empirical plane and experiences Truth for himself.

From the above, one comes to the irresistible conclusion that "seeing," or direct and immediate perception, is above all

proof and testimony. It is seeing in the pure light of the atman, which is free from even the least shadow of correlativity. It is nothing but a direct, integral experience of the soul. *Sruti,* or revealed scripture, without first-hand inner experience, is sound without sense. All flights of thought, imagination or fancy, and all empirical knowledge, are inadequate and cannot do justice to Truth or the Ultimate Reality. *Anubhava* is verily the real and absolute knowledge, and is knowledge of the Absolute. It is the self-certifying experience of the soul, which bears testimony to the recorded spiritual experience of the sages as given in the srutis.

The nature of Brahman

The very idea of finitude implies the existence of the Infinite, as does the word "unreal" of something real, the basis of all intelligence and imagination. Again, we have the overwhelming testimony of scriptural texts, which speak of religious experiences of all seers at all times and in all places.

The nature of Brahman cannot be expressed in words. It is the foundation of all that exists. It spreads everywhere, and at the same time is nowhere in relation to anything particular. It is a paradox at once of being and non-being. There are two ways of looking at the problem: the negative way and the positive way. There is God, the Incomprehensible Absolute, and God Who actually creates, works, and is the First Cause, and is known variously as the *Logos* or the Holy Spirit, the *Kalma* or the *Bang-i-Qadim,* the *Naad* or the *Udgit,* the *Naam* or the *Shabd.* The latter terms indicate the life-principle, the Word or the Power of God that is immanent and vibrates everywhere from the highest to the lowest in the Universe. It is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. It is the principle of Truth and the spirit of God (God-in-action—*Ekankar*). Of this Power of God, the Gospels tell us that, "The Light shineth in darkness and the dark-

ness comprehendeth it not." This power of Brahman (Ishvara) or Godhead is the medium between Brahman and the Universe and partakes of the nature of both. But His oneness is not affected by self-expression into many—*Eko aham bahusiam.* The two exist as reality and appearance, and the difference arises because of the limited insight in man.

To sum up, the Supreme Reality is the basis of the world as we know it, speak of it and see it. The plurality, or diversity in unity, is the result of erroneous judgment. The world is unreal but not a subjective illusion. The Absolute is in the world but the world is not the Absolute, for a shadow cannot take the place of the substance. A thing based on the real cannot be the "real" itself. The world is but the phenomenal truth and not the essential truth of the Reality, or the centripetal force at the core of it.

The individual self is a complexity of likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, purposes and projects, memories and associations. The conditioned jiva is essentially the unconditioned atman. This empirical self or the individual understanding is, through ignorance of its own real nature, the active doer, the enjoyer and the sufferer in the pure light of the atman, of which it has no knowledge nor any experience. Enclosed in the physical body, composed of five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth), is the subtle body consisting of seventeen elements (five organs of perception: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin; five of action: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch; the five vital airs, and manas and budhi), and also the causal or seed body. The self follows the inexorable law of karma as it migrates from one body to another on the giant Wheel of Life. These limiting adjuncts (the physical, mental and causal), reduce the atman to the level of a jiva (individual consciousness), and determine its fate, taking it into endless gyres. In the core of the jiva is the

Witnessing Self, that merely looks on and sheds luster on the entire stage and, while illumining the ego, mind, senses and the sense objects, continues to shine in Its own light, even when the stage is cleared. It is against this illumined silver screen that the whole show takes place.

The attainment of the state where the atman knows itself for what it is and realizes that it is naught but Brahman, is the goal of Advaitism. This state is one of direct experience and, as Shankara has made abundantly clear, it cannot be attained merely by ratiocination, the reading of scriptures or the performance of rituals. It can come only through the pursuit of yoga, and the essential thing to be remembered is that Advaitism by itself is not a yoga but, strictly speaking, represents the philosophy of yoga at its subtlest and profoundest. Shankara, as he himself clarified, was not speaking of something new. He was engaged in the task of reformulating what had already been expressed in the Upanishads and the Gita. Endowed with an extraordinary intellect and an amazing flair for logic, he set about restating in a coherent and systematic form the insight embedded in the srutis, which in subsequent times had been confused and had led to much needless controversy. He demonstrated once and for all that any approach to Brahman which did not preach the non-pluralistic and non-dualistic reality was in its very nature illogical, and that Advaitism was in fact the logical conclusion of yogic thought. Implicit in this approach was the view that of all states of samadhi, the one in which the individual atman lost its identity in the Brahman (called *Nirvikalp Samadhi*), was the highest. This state was to be attained here and now, and one could be free in this life (*jivan mukta*). He who had plumbed beneath the phenomenal to the Absolute, would never again be taken in by appearances. He was a liberated spirit, living in the light of True Knowledge. Past actions might carry him onward

through physical existence, but once these were exhausted, he was absorbed wholly into the Brahman, the pure cognition.

Shankara was indeed a remarkable man of learning and insight and his contribution to Indian thought is permanent. In carrying it to its logical conclusion, he gave it the brilliance of consistent clarity. But just as ritual and scripture cannot be a substitute for direct inner experience, likewise merely knowing that the Self and the Brahman are One cannot take the place of an actual experience of this union. The philosophy of yoga is not the same thing as yoga. At best, it can only clear our thinking of its present confusion and point out the final goal to be attained, but the rest must remain a matter of practical and personal realization through yoga.