

Vedanta and Yoga.

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IN India Life and Philosophy have gone together. Philosophy is not only "the thinking view of things". It is essentially illumination. It has been, therefore, the attempt of Indian philosopher to prescribe a discipline which can help the opening up of the layers of consciousness finally revealing truth. Vedānta approaches the problem from the reflective and intuitive standpoint. It is simultaneously a system and an inspiration.

As a method of reflection it draws a distinction between the relative and the Absolute and establishes the illusoriness of the relative order and its super-imposition upon the Absolute. This is indeed the ultimate conclusion of the Advaita Vedānta and the seeker of truth on the basis of this discipline can never rest satisfied unless he has realized the truth of "Tattvamasi". The best way of realizing this truth has been to develop a clear philosophic sense which can feel the distinction of truth and error, *i. e.*, the truth of permanence and the illusion of change. Vedantic discipline essentially has been metaphysical, which in the long run evolves a kind of consciousness which can see things under the aspect of eternity. The central discipline of Vedānta is "Dṛśya-mārjana", *i. e.*, distillation of the things and appearances. By a process of elimination we can gradually rise to the height of realizing the oneness of being—

the *Sat*—the one existent underlying the whole.

The intellectual discipline of the Vedānta promotes a kind of thought and a habit of mentality which in the long run can spontaneously discern truth from error and can realize the widest commonality of being in its utmost expansion. As a philosophical theory the Vedānta could not synthesize strictly appearances with Reality; for it holds that appearance is thought located in Reality but which does not really obtain there. Vedānta does not accept in the metaphysical sense the reality of the effect in the cause, though the cause has an appearance in the form of the effect.

To the exoteric consciousness this appearance is real, and, therefore, it has explained the world-process in the terms of *Māyā* and *Īśvara*—*Māyā* being the principle of individuation of the ultimate Reality. But this individuation is not true in the sense in which the ultimate reality is true. The Vedānta thinks that, in so far as our intellect is dominated by the philosophic instinct of finding out the cause of appearance, it naturally finds satisfaction in referring them to a background which is the basic existence, but which does not in the least change to produce a world of orders and events. The individuating principle has been conceived in *Māyā*.

Māyā is the limiting and the screening principle—the principle of self-limitation in the ultimate reality which restricts itself in its process of concentration and creation. But this is only seeming, and not true.

With this philosophic background it has been natural to maintain an attitude of denial or transcendence of the appearance in our attitude of *Sādhana*. Vedānta realizes Life in its becoming and life in its silence, and, though it has denied the former, it has accepted its pragmatic value. And in this sense it has opened up new vistas in life and spiritual consciousness, though in the ultimate realization their importance pales into insignificance. The fact is that Vedānta really seeks the release of consciousness from ignorance; but, before complete release can be effected, life grows into fineness and subtlety and this surely is an advance upon the normal experience in life. Vedānta can well distinguish spiritual life into spiritual pragmatism and spiritual transcendence; the former embraces the emergence of finer consciousness, which is, no doubt, an advance upon animal faith and instinctive life. It is divine life inasmuch as the finer movements, which are stranded by Ignorance, are gradually released and life enjoys its transparence, clarity; still the system of reference remains the same, though the evolution proceeds unerringly. It can, no doubt, give us finer evolution in the sense of emergence of finer divine instincts and as such indicates a great ascent in the evolutionary scale; but still the thread of life remains continuous through the different planes of existence and life suffers under the pressure of a divided consciousness

The Vedānta recognizes two paths of realization: (1) the direct, and (2) the indirect. The direct path lies in stressing the philosophic discrimination, to make it a habit, so that even in ordinary life the mind may not deflect from this discriminative attitude and may trace the changeless *Sat* in every mode of existence.

But this attitude of reading the *Sat* in everything can dissolve the reality of the external things and objects and reveal the unmodifiable consciousness underlying everything.

If this process of *Driśyamārjana* can help us in removing the external obstruction in the form of an existence of an alien Nature as an independent reality, the process of vigilant watch upon the *inner psychism* can reveal to us its transience and its cinematographic character. It removes the usual common fallacy that our conscious nature is naturally dynamic.

Vedānta draws a distinction between our psychic nature and our conscious self. The *Psyche* in man reflects the conscious self and appears luminous; but this psychic self is a shadow of the spirit upon the mental stuff.

The Vedānta, here again, by a discriminative process recovers the lost self from the mazes of psychism by attending upon the focal point of consciousness, the timeless present which is always fixed and immediate in the unceasing continuity of the psychic dynamism. This stress upon witnessing the inner psychic mutations widens our vision and gradually discovers the inner scient, which is calm percipience of the play of

the conscious, the super-conscious and the sub-conscious forces of our being. This percipience is the subject, though not the logical subject, but the subject as freedom—the subject which is free from the time-sense and the mutation of psychic life in time.

The subject is not operative or functioning, for that means the concentration of its perspective and determination of its activity in a psychical zone. The subject as freedom is, therefore, to be distinguished from the subject as reflecting, radiating or interpreting or active in any way. Kant could not discern the subject as freedom. Śankara did.

The subject as freedom is the final spiritual and metaphysical realization; for in this realization the common distinction of *Jīva* and *Īśvara*, the psychic and the cosmic selves, are for ever removed. For, strictly speaking, "Tattvamasi" in the Vedānta is not synthesis, but a transcendence in which the question of a distinction or a synthesis cannot arise. And hence the real Vedantic discipline will be essentially to rise to this height of consciousness, wherefrom is dropped the limitation of these ordinary normal states of consciousness.

The Vedantic discipline rests on philosophic understanding of the illusoriness of the manifold, and the illusoriness of the concentrated functioning of consciousness either in *Jīva* or in *Īśvara* and the uniqueness of the transcendent consciousness. This sense of distinction of the relative and the Absolute and the non-permanence and

the illusoriness of the relative is the beginning of wisdom. But this negative attitude should go with the seeking of the transcendent background. It then opens up a consciousness which is neither static nor dynamic in nature and eludes all efforts at conceptual description.

This kind of discipline and realization is possible for only advanced souls, souls who have reared up intensive detachment and opened up the fourth dimension of consciousness.

This opening may presuppose a logical understanding but is essentially a psychological process, for the final conviction comes with immediate awareness. This presupposes sustained reflection upon the Vedantic truth, for this rears up a psychological attitude (*Brahmākāra Vṛtti*) which helps us to surpass the labryrinths of the subconscious and conscious life and opens a new dimension of conscious life, a dimension beyond the reach of space and time. Herein comes the importance of Yoga in the Vedānta.

The word 'Yoga' has many meanings and forms; but in the usually accepted sense it implies the method of opening of the different layers of consciousness. And generally the Yoga is directed towards the redemption of the super-conscious ranges of being, to develop the psychic responsiveness and the radiant vibrations of cosmic life. The soul becomes aspirant after the stretches of the super-conscious life revealing through the graded universes. Yoga catches the thread of the cosmic life and aspires to realize the dynamic identification with the divine.

This path is indirect; for it does not deny at once the foothold of the finite consciousness, but gradually seeks the infusion of the infinite life in the finite, and the saturation of the finite being with infinite force, power and wisdom. In fact, this dynamic identification remains the promised goal to those that follow the path of *Upāsana* and concentration upon the *Apara* (Inferior) *Brahma*.

This Yoga lies essentially in concentrating upon the Absolute in its dynamic aspect and in seeking an identification. This identification takes place in our psychic being, and with this the adept reveals peace and power. But the secret of this lies in our control of the gross physical and the gross vital and the assimilation of the finer vital and the fine psychic being.

When the grossness of our nature is eliminated, the finer currents of the dynamic divine is felt. But the consummation of this path lies in the clear sense of the dynamic identity which is not only occasionally felt, but is a matter of continuous experience. Such souls acquire great powers, wide knowledge; for they are so finely attuned with the dynamic divine that the movements of the divine life are clearly indicated to them and they move in harmony with the cosmic movements.

The dynamical Yoga makes us intensively active for divine ends, and prepares us for the greater consummation, for final liberation.

This Yoga in the Vedānta implies not an identification between the human and the divine in their transcendent

oneness, which is indeed the consummation,—but a dynamical identification between the human and the divine; and this becomes possible because the Vedānta accepts from the standpoint of practical reason the distinction of the human and the divine. And this distinction is not philosophical distinction of the subject and the supersubject. It implies the distinction of the human and the divine Will, and in this respect the Vedānta prescribes union (Yoga) of the human and the divine Will. This aspect in Vedantic discipline is not generally emphasized; the emphasis upon freedom has shadowed this aspect.

The identification of Will really implies the complete surrender of the human will to the divine will; but this surrender is not a sort of passive acquiescence, but it is essentially re-orientation of Will and the movement of Will in cosmic ways. The human will breaks the sense of personal agency and limitation and ultimately feels its divine character. It then transcends the law of *Karma* and the world of fellowship of wills which overcomes the sense of personal freedom and its limitation. The Vedānta accepts the possibility of the human will attaining an impersonal movement and character. This is true freedom of Will, for it reveals its free cosmic and supra-ethical and impersonal character.

This is indeed freedom of Will, for it releases the will from all personal limitation. But this freedom is not to be identified with the Transcendent freedom. The one is the freedom of will, the other is the freedom of being, and the Vedānta accepts the latter as

higher as indicating complete breaking of all concentration.

This dynamic identification supposes a complete change in our being and the removal of concentration from our finitude. Though previous Samskāras and tendencies seek the ego-centric equilibrium, still the dynamic identification gradually releases us from the finite concentration, and infuses the psychic centres with infinite spirit. And with this complete change in our psychic being, there is effected a change in the feeling element of our consciousness. It no longer enjoys its personal or individual character, but comes to feel its impersonal touch.

And it is a false philosophy that associates feeling with complete subjectivity and individuality. This release of feeling from its normal individual character is also a contribution of the Vedānta.

Without this release of feeling there can be no release of Will for the two are associated very intimately. And the two go together. And, therefore, in the freedom from the personal will, the seeker enjoys the cosmic feeling on the realization of the cosmic being and the cosmic will.

But this education of will and feeling can only stimulate the further venture, inasmuch as it gives the taste of freedom, but cannot fully make us free from the dynamic urges. The sense of effort, however, spontaneous implies a limitation and cannot be the true character of being. Hence Vedānta finally aims at transcending these dynamic possibilities and this can be done when gradually we rise through the cosmic nature of feeling to its transcendent nature where it is isolated from

Will and reveals a phase unique in itself—its identification with Being—for it is no longer the delight of fruition or movement, but a delight associated with the plenum of Being.

The one gives us the culture of Will, the other gives us the culture of Transcendent sense; and Will, cannot be completely independent of the texture of space and time, for it requires a medium to express its activities. And hence it cannot reveal the Absolute. Hence Yoga in the true sense in the Vedānta will be ultimately an effort at an opening in the dimension of consciousness quite independent of the space-time-energy universe. And this essentially is the release of the consciousness from its habitual expression through space and time for this indeed is its limitation. The Pure Reason of Kant could indicate the synthetic unity of apperception in transcendence of space and time; but this synthetic unity of apperception adjusts itself in reference to the space-time texture of our experience.

The Vedānta could really discover consciousness in complete transcendence of space-time, and in this really finds out the unique experience of consciousness-in-itself apart from all dynamic functionings and reference to space-time order. Yoga is really an art to penetrate the psychic layers of our being—and the unique discipline of the Vedānta requires the release of consciousness from space-time sense—and this is greatly helped by realizing the self not in its synthetic activity, which implies time-reference, but in its transcendent percipience which implies no time-reference. This freedom of consciousness from time-sense is the secret to the Release. And this forms the corner-stone of the Vedantic Yoga—or *Jñāna-Yoga*.

