

Na Kinchidapi Chintayet

The cessation of thought is the one thing which the believer in intellect as the highest term of our evolution cannot contemplate with equanimity. To master the fleeting randomness of thought by regulating the intellectual powers and thinking consecutively and clearly is an ideal he can understand. But to still this higher development of thought seems to him the negation of human activity, a reversion to the condition of the stone. Yet it is certain that it is only by the stilling of the lower that the higher gets full play. So long as the body and the vital desires are active the mind is necessarily distracted and it is only when the body is forgotten and the vital part consents to quietude that a man can concentrate himself in thought and follow undisturbed the consecutive development whether of a train of reasoning or a train of inspiration. Not only is this so, but the higher faculties of the mind can only work at their best when the lower are quieted. If the accumulations in the chitta, the recording part of the mind, are continually active, full as it is of preconceived ideas, prejudices, predilections, the great mass of previous *sanskaras*, the reflective mind which is ordinarily called the reason is obstructed in its work and comes to false conclusions. It is essential for the faculties of the reason to be freed as far as may be from this ever increasing accumulation of thought-sensations good and bad, false and true which we call mind — *manas*. It is this freedom which is called the scientific spirit. To form no conclusions which are not justified by observation and reasoning, to doubt everything until it is proved but to deny nothing until it is disproved, to be always ready to reconsider old conclusions in the light of new facts, to give a candid consideration to every new idea or old idea revived if it deserves a hearing, no matter how contradictory it may be of previously ascertained experience or previously formed conclusion, is the sceptical temper, the temper

of the inquirer, the true scientist, the untrammelled thinker. The interference of prejudice and predilection means bondage and until the higher mind has shaken off these fetters, it is not free; it works in chains, it sees in blinkers. This is as true of the materialist refusing to consider spiritualism and occultism as it is of the religionist refusing to consider Science. Freedom is the first requisite of full working power, the freedom of the higher from the lower. The mind must be free from the body if it is to be purified from the grossness which clogs its motions, the heart must be free from the obsessions of the body if love and high aspiration are to increase, the reason must be free from the heart and the lower mind if it is to reflect perfectly, — for the heart can inspire, it cannot think, it is a vehicle of direct knowledge coloured by emotion, not of ratiocination. By [a] similar process if there is anything higher than the reason it can only be set free to work by the stillness of the whole mind not excluding the reflective faculties. This is a conclusion from analogy, indeed, and not entirely binding until confirmed by experience and observation. But we have given reason in past articles for supposing that there is a higher force than the logical reason — and the experience and observation of Yoga confirm the inference from analogy that the stillness of the mind is the first requisite for discovering, distinguishing and perfecting the action of this higher element in the psychology of man.

The stillness of the mind is prepared by the process of concentration. In the science of Rajayoga after the heart has been stilled and the mind prepared, the next step is to subjugate the body by means of *asan* or the fixed and motionless seat. The aim of this fixity is twofold, first the stillness of the body and secondly the forgetfulness of the body. When one can sit still and utterly forget the body for a long period of time, then the *asan* is said to have been mastered. In ordinary concentration when the body is only comparatively still it is not noticed, but there is an undercurrent of physical consciousness which may surge up at any moment into the upper current of thought and disturb it. The Yogin seeks to make the forgetfulness perfect. In the higher processes of concentration this forgetfulness reaches such a point

that the bodily consciousness is annulled and in the acme of the *samadhi* a man can be cut or burned without being aware of the physical suffering. Even before the concentration is begun the forgetfulness acquired is sufficient to prevent any intrusion upon the mind except under a more than ordinarily powerful physical stimulus. After this point has been reached the Yoga proceeds to the processes of pranayam by which the whole system is cleared of impurities and the *pranasakti*, the great cosmic energy which lies behind all processes of Nature, fills the body and the brain and becomes sufficient for any work of which man is actually or potentially capable. This is followed by concentration. The first process is to withdraw the senses into the mind. This is partly done in the ordinary process of absorption of which every thinking man is capable. To concentrate upon the work in hand whether it be a manual process, a train of thought, a scientific experiment or a train of inspiration, is the first condition of complete capacity and it is the process by which mankind has been preparing itself for Yoga. To concentrate means to be absorbed; but absorption may be more or less complete. When it is so complete that for all practical purposes the knowledge of outward things ceases, then the first step has been taken towards Yogic absorption. We need not go into the stages of that absorption rising from pratyahar to samadhi and from the lower samadhi to the higher. The principle is to intensify absorption. It is intensified in quality by the entire cessation of outward knowledge, the senses are withdrawn into the mind, the mind into the buddhi or supermind, the supermind into Knowledge, Vijnana, Mahat, out of which all things proceed and in which all things exist. It is intensified in quantity or content; instead of absorption in a set of thoughts or a train of intuitions, the Yogin concentrates his absorption on a single thought, a single image, a single piece of knowledge, and it is his experience that whatever he thus concentrates on, he masters, — he becomes its lord and does with it what he wills. By knowledge he attains to mastery of the world. The final goal of Rajayoga is the annulment of separate consciousness and complete communion with that which alone is whether we call Him Parabrahman or Parameshwara,

Existence in the Highest or Will in the Highest, the Ultimate or God.

In the Gita we have a process which is not the process of Raja-Yoga. It seeks a short cut to the common aim and goes straight to the stillness of the mind. After putting away desire and fear the Yogin sits down and performs upon his thoughts a process of reining in by which they get accustomed to an inward motion. Instead of allowing the mind to flow outward, he compels it to rise and fall within, and if he sees, hears, feels or smells outward objects he pays no attention to them and draws the mind always inward. This process he pursues until the mind ceases to send up thoughts connected with outward things. The result is that fresh thoughts do not accumulate in the chitta at the time of meditation, but only the old ones rise. If the process be farther pursued by rejecting these thoughts as they rise in the mind, in other words by dissociating the thinker from the mind, the operator from the machine and refusing to sanction the continuance of the machine's activity, the result is perfect stillness. This can be done if the thinker whose interest is necessary to the mind, refuses to be interested and becomes passive. The mind goes on for a while by its own impetus just as a locomotive does when the steam is shut off, but a time must come when it will slow down and stop altogether. This is the moment towards which the process moves. *Na kinchid api chintayet*: — the Yogin should not think of anything at all. Blank cessation of mental activity is aimed at leaving only the *sakshi*, the witness watching for results. If at this moment the Yogin entrusts himself to the guidance of the universal Teacher within himself, Yoga will fulfil itself without any farther effort on his part. The passivity will be confirmed, the higher faculties will awake and the cosmic Force passing down from the *vijnana* through the supermind will take charge of the whole machine and direct its workings as the Infinite Lord of All may choose.

Whichever of the two methods be chosen, the result is the same. The mind is stilled, the higher faculties awakened. This stillness of the mind is not altogether a new idea or peculiar to India. The old Highland poets had the secret. When they wished

to compose poetry, they first stilled the mind, became entirely passive and waited for the inspiration to flow into them. This habit of yogic passivity, a relic doubtless of the discipline of the Druids, was the source of those faculties of second sight and other psychic powers which are so much more common in this Celtic race than in the other peoples of Europe. The phenomena of inspiration are directly connected with these higher faculties of which we find rudiments or sporadic traces in the past history of human experience.