

Man — Slave or Free?

THE EXCLUSIVE pursuit of Yoga by men who seclude themselves either physically or mentally from the contact of the world has led to an erroneous view of this science as something mystic, far-off and unreal. The secrecy which has been observed with regard to Yogic practices, — a necessary secrecy in the former stages of human evolution, — has stereotyped this error. Practices followed by men who form secret circles and confine the instruction in the mysteries strictly to those who have a certain preparatory fitness, inevitably bear the stamp to the outside world of occultism. In reality there is nothing intrinsically hidden, occult or mystic about Yoga. Yoga is based upon certain laws of human psychology, a certain knowledge about the power of the mind over the body and the inner spirit over the mind which are not generally realised and have hitherto been considered by those in the secret too momentous in their consequences for disclosure until men should be trained to use them aright. Just as a set of men who had discovered and tested the uttermost possibilities of mesmerism and hypnotism might hesitate to divulge them freely to the world lest the hypnotic power should be misused by ignorance or perversity or abused in the interests of selfishness and crime, so the Yogins have usually preserved the knowledge of these much greater forces within us in a secrecy broken only when they were sure of the previous ethical and spiritual training of the neophyte and his physical and moral fitness for the Yogic practices. It became therefore an established rule for the learner to observe strict reserve as to the inner experiences of Yoga and for the developed Yogin as far as possible to conceal himself. This has not prevented treatises and manuals from being published dealing with the physical or with the moral and intellectual sides of Yoga. Nor has it prevented great spirits who have gained their Yoga not

by the ordinary careful and scientific methods but by their own strength and the special grace of God, from revealing themselves and their spiritual knowledge to mankind and in their intense love for humanity imparting something of their power to the world. Such were Buddha, Christ, Mahomed, Chaitanya, such have been Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. It is still the orthodox view that the experiences of Yoga must not be revealed to the uninitiated. But a new era dawns upon us in which the old laws must be modified. Already the West is beginning to discover the secrets of Yoga. Some of its laws have revealed themselves however dimly and imperfectly to the scientists of Europe while others through Spiritualism, Christian Science, clairvoyance, telepathy and other modern forms of occultism are being almost discovered by accident as if by men groping in the dark and stumbling over truths they cannot understand. The time has almost come when India can no longer keep her light to herself but must pour it out upon the world. Yoga must be revealed to mankind because without it mankind cannot take the next step in the human evolution.

The psychology of the human race has not yet been discovered by Science. All creation is essentially the same and proceeds by similar though not identical laws. If therefore we see in the outside material world that all phenomena proceed from and can be reduced to a single causal substance from which they were born, in which they move and to which they return, the same truth is likely to hold good in the psychical world. The unity of the material universe has now been acknowledged by the scientific intellect of Europe and the high priests of atheism and materialism in Germany have declared the *ekam evādvitīyam* in matter with no uncertain voice. In so doing they have merely reaffirmed the discovery made by Indian masters of the Yogic science thousands of years ago. But the European scientists have not discovered any sure and certain methods, such as they have in dealing with gross matter, for investigating psychical phenomena. They can only observe the most external manifestations of mind in action. But in these manifestations the mind is so much enveloped in the action of the outer objects and seems so

dependent on them that it is very difficult for the observer to find out the springs of its action or any regularity in its workings. The European scientists have therefore come to the conclusion that it is the stimulations of outside objects which are the cause of psychical phenomena, and that even when the mind seems to act of itself and on its own material it is only associating, grouping together and manipulating the recorded experiences from outside objects. The very nature of mind is, according to them, a creation of past material experience transmitted by heredity with such persistence that we have grown steadily from the savage with his rudimentary mind to the civilised man of the twentieth century. As a natural result of these materialistic theories, science has found it difficult to discover any true psychical centre for the multifarious phenomena of mind and has therefore fixed upon the brain, the material organ of thought, as the only real centre. From this materialistic philosophy have resulted certain theories very dangerous to the moral future of mankind. First, man is a creation and slave of matter. He can only master matter by obeying it. Secondly, the mind itself is a form of gross matter and not independent of and master of the senses. Thirdly, there is no real free will, because all our action is determined by two great forces, heredity and environment. We are the slaves of our nature, and where we seem to be free from its mastery, it is because we are yet worse slaves of our environment, worked on by the forces that surround and manipulate us.

It is from these false and dangerous doctrines of materialism which tend to subvert man's future and hamper his evolution, that Yoga gives us a means of escape. It asserts on the contrary man's freedom from matter and gives him a means of asserting that freedom. The first great fundamental discovery of the Yogins was a means of analysing the experiences of the mind and the heart. By Yoga one can isolate mind, watch its workings as under a microscope, separate every minute function of the various parts of the *antahkarana*, the inner organ, every mental and moral faculty, test its isolated workings as well as its relations to other functions and faculties and trace backwards the operations of mind to subtler and ever subtler sources until just as material

analysis arrives at a primal entity from which all proceeds, so Yoga analysis arrives at a primal spiritual entity from which all proceeds. It is also able to locate and distinguish the psychical centre to which all psychical phenomena gather and so to fix the roots of personality. In this analysis its first discovery is that mind can entirely isolate itself from external objects and work in itself and of itself. This does not, it is true, carry us very far because it may be that it is merely using the material already stored up by its past experiences. But the next discovery is that the farther it removes itself from objects, the more powerfully, surely, rapidly can the mind work with a swifter clarity, with a victorious and sovereign detachment. This is an experience which tends to contradict the scientific theory, that mind can withdraw the senses into itself and bring them to bear on a mass of phenomena of which it is quite unaware when it is occupied with external phenomena. Science will naturally challenge these as hallucinations. The answer is that these phenomena are related to each other by regular, simple and intelligible laws and form a world of their own independent of thought acting on the material world. Here too Science has this possible answer that this supposed world is merely an imaginative reflex in the brain of the material world and to any arguments drawn from the definiteness and unexpectedness of these subtle phenomena and their independence of our own will and imagination it can always oppose its theory of unconscious cerebration and, we suppose, unconscious imagination. The fourth discovery is that mind is not only independent of external matter, but its master; it can not only reject and control external stimuli, but can defy such apparently universal material laws as that of gravitation and ignore, put aside and make nought of what are called laws of nature and are really only the laws of material nature, inferior and subject to the psychical laws because matter is a product of mind and not mind a product of matter. This is the decisive discovery of Yoga, its final contradiction of materialism. It is followed by the crowning realisation that there is within us a source of immeasurable force, immeasurable intelligence, immeasurable joy far above the possibility of weakness, above the

possibility of ignorance, above the possibility of grief which we can bring into touch with ourselves and, under arduous but not impossible conditions, habitually utilise or enjoy. This is what the Upanishads call the Brahman and the primal entity from which all things were born, in which they live and to which they return. This is God and communion with Him is the highest aim of Yoga — a communion which works for knowledge, for work, for delight.