Chapter XXVIII

Rajayoga

A S THE body and the Prana are the key of all the closed doors of the Yoga for the Hathayogin, so is the mind the key in Rajayoga. But since in both the dependence of the mind on the body and the Prana is admitted, in the Hathayoga totally, in the established system of Rajayoga partially, therefore in both systems the practice of Asana and Pranayama is included; but in the one they occupy the whole field, in the other each is limited only to one simple process and in their unison they are intended to serve only a limited and intermediate office. We can easily see how largely man, even though in his being an embodied soul, is in his earthly nature the physical and vital being and how, at first sight at least, his mental activities seem to depend almost entirely on his body and his nervous system. Modern Science and psychology have even held, for a time, this dependence to be in fact an identity; they have tried to establish that there is no such separate entity as mind or soul and that all mental operations are in reality physical functionings. Even otherwise, apart from this untenable hypothesis, the dependence is so exaggerated that it has been supposed to be an altogether binding condition, and any such thing as the control of the vital and bodily functionings by the mind or its power to detach itself from them has long been treated as an error, a morbid state of the mind or a hallucination. Therefore the dependence has remained absolute, and Science neither finds nor seeks for the real key of the dependence and therefore can discover for us no secret of release and mastery.

The psycho-physical science of Yoga does not make this mistake. It seeks for the key, finds it and is able to effect the release; for it takes account of the psychical or mental body behind of which the physical is a sort of reproduction in gross form, and is able to discover thereby secrets of the physical body
which do not appear to a purely physical enquiry. This mental
or psychical body, which the soul keeps even after death, has
also a subtle pranic force in it corresponding to its own subtle
nature and substance,—for wherever there is life of any kind,
there must be the pranic energy and a substance in which it can
work,—and this force is directed through a system of numerous
channels, called nāḍī,—the subtle nervous organisation of the
psychic body,—which are gathered up into six (or really seven)
centres called technically lotuses or circles, cakra, and which rise
in an ascending scale to the summit where there is the thousand-
petalled lotus from which all the mental and vital energy flows.
Each of these lotuses is the centre and the storing-house of its
own particular system of psychological powers, energies and
operations,—each system corresponding to a plane of our psy-
chological existence,—and these flow out and return in the
stream of the pranic energies as they course through the nāḍīs.

This arrangement of the psychic body is reproduced in the
physical with the spinal column as a rod and the ganglionic
centres as the chakras which rise up from the bottom of the
column, where the lowest is attached, to the brain and find their
summit in the brahmārandhra at the top of the skull. These
chakras or lotuses, however, are in physical man closed or only
partly open, with the consequence that only such powers and
only so much of them are active in him as are sufficient for his
ordinary physical life, and so much mind and soul only is at
play as will accord with its need. This is the real reason, looked
at from the mechanical point of view, why the embodied soul
seems so dependent on the bodily and nervous life,—though
the dependence is neither so complete nor so real as it seems.
The whole energy of the soul is not at play in the physical body
and life, the secret powers of mind are not awake in it, the
bodily and nervous energies predominate. But all the while the
supreme energy is there, asleep; it is said to be coiled up and
slumbering like a snake,—therefore it is called the kundalini śakti,—in the lowest of the chakras, in the mūlādhāra. When
by Pranayama the division between the upper and lower prana
currents in the body is dissolved, this Kundalini is struck and
awakened, it uncoils itself and begins to rise upward like a fiery serpent breaking open each lotus as it ascends until the Shakti meets the Purusha in the brahmarandhra in a deep samadhi of union.

Put less symbolically, in more philosophical though perhaps less profound language, this means that the real energy of our being is lying asleep and inconscient in the depths of our vital system, and is awakened by the practice of Pranayama. In its expansion it opens up all the centres of our psychological being in which reside the powers and the consciousness of what would now be called perhaps our subliminal self; therefore as each centre of power and consciousness is opened up, we get access to successive psychological planes and are able to put ourselves in communication with the worlds or cosmic states of being which correspond to them; all the psychic powers abnormal to physical man, but natural to the soul develop in us. Finally, at the summit of the ascension, this arising and expanding energy meets with the superconscient self which sits concealed behind and above our physical and mental existence; this meeting leads to a profound samadhi of union in which our waking consciousness loses itself in the superconscient. Thus by the thorough and unremitting practice of Pranayama the Hathayogin attains in his own way the psychic and spiritual results which are pursued through more directly psychical and spiritual methods in other Yogas. The one mental aid which he conjoins with it, is the use of the mantra, sacred syllable, name or mystic formula which is of so much importance in the Indian systems of Yoga and common to them all. This secret of the power of the mantra, the six chakras and the Kundalini Shakti is one of the central truths of all that complex psycho-physical science and practice of which the Tantric philosophy claims to give us a rationale and the most complete compendium of methods. All religions and disciplines in India which use largely the psycho-physical method, depend more or less upon it for their practices.

Rajayoga also uses the Pranayama and for the same principal psychic purposes as the Hathayoga, but being in its whole principle a psychical system, it employs it only as one stage
in the series of its practices and to a very limited extent, for
three or four large utilities. It does not start with Asana and
Pranayama, but insists first on a moral purification of the men-
tality. This preliminary is of supreme importance; without it the
course of the rest of the Rajayoga is likely to be troubled, marred
and full of unexpected mental, moral and physical perils.\(^1\) This
moral purification is divided in the established system under
two heads, five \textit{yamas} and five \textit{niyamas}. The first are rules of
moral self-control in conduct such as truth-speaking, abstinence
from injury or killing, from theft etc.; but in reality these must
be regarded as merely certain main indications of the general
need of moral self-control and purity. \textit{Yama} is, more largely,
any self-discipline by which the rajasic egoism and its passions
and desires in the human being are conquered and quieted into
perfect cessation. The object is to create a moral calm, a void
of the passions, and so prepare for the death of egoism in the
rajasic human being. The \textit{niyamas} are equally a discipline of the
mind by regular practices of which the highest is meditation on
the divine Being, and their object is to create a sattwic calm,
purity and preparation for concentration upon which the secure
pursuance of the rest of the Yoga can be founded.

It is here, when this foundation has been secured, that
the practice of Asana and Pranayama come in and can then
bear their perfect fruits. By itself the control of the mind and
moral being only puts our normal consciousness into the right
preliminary condition; it cannot bring about that evolution or
manifestation of the higher psychic being which is necessary for
the greater aims of Yoga. In order to bring about this manifes-
tation the present nodus of the vital and physical body with the
mental being has to be loosened and the way made clear for
the ascent through the greater psychic being to the union with
the superconscious Purusha. This can be done by Pranayama.

\(^1\) In modern India people attracted to Yoga, but picking up its processes from books
or from persons only slightly acquainted with the matter, often plunge straight into
Pranayama of Rajayoga, frequently with disastrous results. Only the very strong in
spirit can afford to make mistakes in this path.
Asana is used by the Rajayoga only in its easiest and most natural position, that naturally taken by the body when seated and gathered together, but with the back and head strictly erect and in a straight line, so that there may be no deflection of the spinal cord. The object of the latter rule is obviously connected with the theory of the six chakras and the circulation of the vital energy between the *mūlādhāra* and the *brahmāndhāra*. The Rajayogic Pranayama purifies and clears the nervous system; it enables us to circulate the vital energy equally through the body and direct it also where we will according to need, and thus maintain a perfect health and soundness of the body and the vital being; it gives us control of all the five habitual operations of the vital energy in the system and at the same time breaks down the habitual divisions by which only the ordinary mechanical processes of the vitality are possible to the normal life. It opens entirely the six centres of the psycho-physical system and brings into the waking consciousness the power of the awakened Shakti and the light of the unveiled Purusha on each of the ascending planes. Coupled with the use of the mantra it brings the divine energy into the body and prepares for and facilitates that concentration in Samadhi which is the crown of the Rajayogic method.

Rajayogic concentration is divided into four stages; it commences with the drawing both of the mind and senses from outward things, proceeds to the holding of the one object of concentration to the exclusion of all other ideas and mental activities, then to the prolonged absorption of the mind in this object, finally, to the complete ingoing of the consciousness by which it is lost to all outward mental activity in the oneness of Samadhi. The real object of this mental discipline is to draw away the mind from the outward and the mental world into union with the divine Being. Therefore in the first three stages use has to be made of some mental means or support by which the mind, accustomed to run about from object to object, shall fix on one alone, and that one must be something which represents the idea of the Divine. It is usually a name or a form or a mantra by which the thought can be fixed in the sole knowledge or adoration of the Lord. By this concentration on the idea the
mind enters from the idea into its reality, into which it sinks silent, absorbed, unified. This is the traditional method. There are, however, others which are equally of a Rajayogic character, since they use the mental and psychical being as key. Some of them are directed rather to the quiescence of the mind than to its immediate absorption, as the discipline by which the mind is simply watched and allowed to exhaust its habit of vagrant thought in a purposeless running from which it feels all sanction, purpose and interest withdrawn, and that, more strenuous and rapidly effective, by which all outward-going thought is excluded and the mind forced to sink into itself where in its absolute quietude it can only reflect the pure Being or pass away into its superconscient existence. The method differs, the object and the result are the same.

Here, it might be supposed, the whole action and aim of Rajayoga must end. For its action is the stilling of the waves of consciousness, its manifold activities, cittavr.tti, first, through a habitual replacing of the turbid rajasric activities by the quiet and luminous sattvic, then, by the stilling of all activities; and its object is to enter into silent communion of soul and unity with the Divine. As a matter of fact we find that the system of Rajayoga includes other objects, — such as the practice and use of occult powers, — some of which seem to be unconnected with and even inconsistent with its main purpose. These powers or siddhis are indeed frequently condemned as dangers and distractions which draw away the Yogin from his sole legitimate aim of divine union. On the way, therefore, it would naturally seem as if they ought to be avoided; and once the goal is reached, it would seem that they are then frivolous and superfluous. But Rajayoga is a psychic science and it includes the attainment of all the higher states of consciousness and their powers by which the mental being rises towards the superconscient as well as its ultimate and supreme possibility of union with the Highest. Moreover, the Yogin, while in the body, is not always mentally inactive and sunk in Samadhi, and an account of the powers and states which are possible to him on the higher planes of his being is necessary to the completeness of the science.
These powers and experiences belong, first, to the vital and mental planes above this physical in which we live, and are natural to the soul in the subtle body; as the dependence on the physical body decreases, these abnormal activities become possible and even manifest themselves without being sought for. They can be acquired and fixed by processes which the science gives, and their use then becomes subject to the will; or they can be allowed to develop of themselves and used only when they come, or when the Divine within moves us to use them; or else, even though thus naturally developing and acting, they may be rejected in a single-minded devotion to the one supreme goal of the Yoga. Secondly, there are fuller, greater powers belonging to the supramental planes which are the very powers of the Divine in his spiritual and supramentially ideative being. These cannot be acquired at all securely or integrally by personal effort, but can only come from above, or else can become natural to the man if and when he ascends beyond mind and lives in the spiritual being, power, consciousness and ideation. They then become, not abnormal and laboriously acquired siddhis, but simply the very nature and method of his action, if he still continues to be active in the world-existence.

On the whole, for an integral Yoga the special methods of Rajayoga and Hathayoga may be useful at times in certain stages of the progress, but are not indispensable. It is true that their principal aims must be included in the integrality of the Yoga; but they can be brought about by other means. For the methods of the integral Yoga must be mainly spiritual, and dependence on physical methods or fixed psychic or psycho-physical processes on a large scale would be the substitution of a lower for a higher action. We shall have occasion to touch upon this question later when we come to the final principle of synthesis in method to which our examination of the different Yogas is intended to lead.