Chapter Four

Sankhya and Yoga

Sankhya

In the spiritual thought of India during the time of the Rishis and even before, the Sankhya and Vedanta elements were always combined. The Sankhya account of the constitution of the being (Purusha, Prakriti, the elements, Indriyas, Buddhi etc.) was universally accepted and Kapila was mentioned with veneration everywhere. In the Gita he is mentioned among the great Vibhutis; Krishna says, “I am Kapila among the sages.”

Patanjali’s Yoga

Divine union [was the aim of Yoga in Patanjali’s day], yes — but for the ascetic schools it was union with the featureless Brahman, the Unknowable beyond existence or, if with the Ishwara, still it was the Ishwara in a supracosmic consciousness. From that point of view Patanjali’s aphorism¹ is sound enough. When he says Yoga, he means the process of Yoga, the object which has to be kept in view in the process — for by the cessation of cittavr̄tti one gets into samādhi and samādhi is the only way of uniting solely and completely with the Brahman beyond existence.

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Stopping the movements of the chitta [is what is meant by cittavr̄ttiṇirodha]. In our Yoga it is more necessary to transform these movements than to stop them altogether, but the power to stop them is necessary — it is usually done by the mind falling into silence and then imposing the same silence on the vital nature.

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¹ Yogaścittavr̄ttiṇirodhaḥ (Yogasūtra 1.2). — Ed.
Chit is the pure consciousness — as in Sat Chit Ananda.

Chitta is the stuff of mixed mental-vital-physical consciousness out of which arise the movements of thought, emotion, sensation, impulse etc. It is these that in Patanjali’s system have to be stilled altogether so that the consciousness may be immobile and go into samadhi.

It [stopping the movements of the chitta] has a different function [in this Yoga]. The movements of the ordinary consciousness have to be quieted and into the quietude there has to be brought down a higher consciousness and its powers which will transform the nature.

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If you suppress [the cittavṛttis], you will have no movements of the chitta at all; all will be immobile until you remove the suppression or will be so immobile that there cannot be anything else than immobility.

If you still, the chitta will be quiet; whatever movements there are will not disturb the quietude.

If you control or master, then the chitta will be immobile when you want, active when you want, and its action will be such that what you wish to get rid of will go, only what you accept as true and useful will come.

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Some people do get disgusted with the body for its uncleanness, but I should say it is very few.

The suggestion of Patanjali² supposes that the mind is everything, so if I get the idea that the body is an unclean thing, all my feelings will harmonise with that idea. But it is not so — there are other parts which do not care for the idea or knowledge in the mind and are not affected by it but are led by their own instincts and desires. It is only those who have already the turn to vairagya who can make use of Patanjali’s suggestion to help

² The suggestion that disgust for one’s body arises from the idea of cleanliness. In his letter the correspondent quoted Patanjali’s aphorism, Saucāt svānga-jugupsā (Yogasūtra 2.40). — Ed.
their already existing vairagya. The medical man for instance holds his knowledge of the composition of the body as a matter of fact of science, he keeps it separate there in the scientific compartment of his mind and it does not in the least affect his other ideas, feelings or activities.

**The Yoga-Vasishtha**

I have not myself read the Yoga-Vasishtha, but from what I have read about it, it must be a book written by somebody with a remarkable occult knowledge.

**Asanas and Pranayama**

No use doing asanas and pranayam. It is not necessary to burn with passion. What is needed is a patient increasing of the power of concentration and steady aspiration so that the silence you speak of may fix in the heart and spread to the other members. Then the physical mind and subconscient can be cleared and quieted.

*The asanas are one means for control of the body, as is Pranayam for the life-forces, but neither is indispensable.*

*Mother thinks that the shirshasan is not safe for your eyes. While some of these asanas are simple and safe, others are not so; they require a training of the body or practice under the eye of an expert. It might not be prudent for you to take them up in an amateur fashion.*

*Pranayam is safe only if one knows how to do it and is on guard against its possible dangers: (1) danger to health by mistakes in the method, (2) rising of the vital forces, especially lust, egoism and wrongly directed strength and force, (3) the awakening of*
concealed sanskaras of the physical nature or latent karma from past lives.

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Tell him it is not safe to do Pranayam without guidance by one who is expert in Rajayoga or Hathayoga. Pranayam is not a part of the sadhana here.

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You can write to him that it is not safe to do Pranayam except under the directions of a guru who is siddha in either Rajayoga or Hathayoga. Gasping is obviously a sign of something wrong — for the breathing in Pranayam must be perfectly unimpeded and regular. It is better either to stop the Pranayam or to find out somebody who is practised in the method and take instructions from him what to do.

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Your experience is correct. The true breathing is not merely the inspiration and expiration from the lungs which is merely the mechanism of it, but a drawing in of the universal energy of Prana into every cell of the body.