The Psychology of Yoga

As the Indian mind, emerging from its narrow mediaeval entrenchments, advances westward towards inevitable conquest, it must inevitably carry with it Yoga & Vedanta for its banners wherever it goes. Brahmajnana, Yoga & Dharma are the three essentialities of Hinduism; wherever it travels & find harbourage & resting place, these three must spread. All else may help or hinder. Shankara's philosophy may compel the homage of the intellectual, Sankhya attract the admiration of the analytical mind, Buddha capture the rationalist in search of a less material synthesis than the modern scientist's continual Annam Brahma Pranam Brahma, but these are only grandiose intellectualities. The world at large does not live by the pure intellect, concrete itself it stands by things concrete or practical, although, immaterial in its origin, it bases practicality upon abstractions. A goal of life, a practice of perfection and a rational, yet binding law of conduct, — these are man's continual quest, and in none of these demands is modern Science able to satisfy humanity. In reply to all such wants Science can only cry, Society and again Society and always Society. But the nature of man knows that Society is not the whole of life. With the eye of the soul it sees that Society is only a means, not an end, a passing & changing outward phenomenon, not that fixed, clear & eternal inward standard & goal which we seek. Of Society as of all things Yajnavalkya's universal dictum stands; a man loves & serves Society for the sake of the Self & not for the sake of Society. That is his nature & whatever Rationalism may teach, to his nature he must always return. What Science could not provide India offers, Brahman for the eternal goal, Yoga for the means of perfection, dharma (swabhavaniyatam karma) for the rational yet binding law of conduct. Therefore, because it has something by which humanity can be satisfied & on
which it can found itself, the victory of the Indian mind is assured.

But in order that the victory may not be slow & stumbling in its progress and imperfect in its fulfilment, it is necessary that whatever India has to offer should be stated to the West in language that the West can understand and through a principle of knowledge which it has made its own. Europe will accept nothing which is not scientific, nothing, that is to say which does not take up its stand on an assured, well-ordered and verifiable knowledge. Undoubtedly, for practical purposes the West is right; since only by establishing ourselves on such an assured foundation can we work with the utmost effectiveness and make the most of what we know. For shastra is the true basis of all perfect action & shastra means the full and careful teaching of the principles, relations and processes of every branch of knowledge, action or conduct with which the mind concerns itself. Indian knowledge possesses such a scientific basis, but, in these greater matters, unexpressed or expressed only in broad principles, compact aphorisms, implied logical connections not minutely treated in detail, fully, with a patient logical order & development in the way to which the occidental intellect is now accustomed and which it has become its second nature to demand. The aphoristic method has great advantages. It prevents the mind from getting encrusted in details and fossilising there; it leaves a wide room & great latitude for originality & the delicate play of individuality in the details. It allows a science to remain elastic and full of ever new potentialities for the discoverer. No doubt, it has disadvantages. It leaves much room for inaccuracy, for individual error, for the violences of the ill-trained & the freaks of the inefficient. For this, among other more important reasons, the Indian mind has thought it wise to give a firm & absolute authority to the guru & to insist that the disciple shall by precept & practice make his own all that the master has to teach him & so form & train his mind before it is allowed to play freely with his subject. In Europe the manual replaces the guru; the mind of the learner is not less rigidly bound & dominated but it is by the written rule
& detail not by the more adaptable & flexible word of the
guru.

Still, the age has its own demands, and it is becoming im-
peratively necessary that Indian knowledge should reveal in the
Western way its scientific foundations. For if we do not do it
ourselves, the Europeans will do it for us and do it badly, dis-
crediting the knowledge in the process. The phenomenon of the
Theosophical Society is a warning to us of a pressing urgency.
It will never do to allow the science of Indian knowledge to
be represented to the West through this strange & distorting
medium. For this society of European & European-led inquirers
arose from an impulse on which the Time-Spirit itself insists;
their object, vaguely grasped at by them, was at bottom the
systematic coordination, explanation & practice of Oriental re-
ligion & Oriental mental & spiritual discipline. Unfortunately,
as always happens to a great effort in unfit hands, it stumbled at
the outset & went into strange bypaths. It fell into the mediaeval
snare of Gnostic mysticism, Masonic secrecy & Rosicrucian jargon.
The little science it attempted has been rightly stigmatised
as pseudo-science. A vain attempt to thrust in modern physical
science into the explanation of psychical movements, — to ex-
plain for instance pranayam in the terms of oxygen & hydrogen!
— to accept uncritically every experience & every random idea
about an experience as it occurred to the mind & set it up as a
revealed truth & almost a semi-divine communication, to make
a hopeless amalgam & jumble of science, religion & philosophy
all expressed in the terms of the imagination — this has been
the scientific method of Theosophy. The result is that it lays its
hands on truth & muddles it so badly that it comes out to the
world as an untruth. And there now abound other misstatements
of Indian truth, less elaborate but almost as wild & wide as
Theosophy’s. From this growing confusion we must deliver the
future of humanity.