

Chapter Two

The Sankhya-Yoga System

Purusha

Purusha is the conscious Being who supports all the action of Nature. There is no fixed place, but as the central being he usually stands above the adhar — he becomes also the mental, vital, physical, psychic being.

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The word being is used with all kinds of significances — it is a very imprecise word and can embrace everything. Purusha has a precise significance. It is the Soul or Spirit side of the being as opposed to the Nature side.

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There is one Purusha — its action is according to the position and need of the consciousness at the time.

It is the nature of the action above the ordinary mind or in the cosmic consciousness which is many-sided.

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The Purusha is one thing and the ordinary mental will and force are another. The latter may be unsuccessful in their action. When you are in the Purusha consciousness, that of itself implies a state of concentration and receptivity.

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By development of the inner will it [*the Purusha*] can become active.

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The Purusha in men is normally passive not active. It is the Prakriti that is active.

Purusha and Prakriti

There is a Purusha or essential being for each plane of the consciousness — just as each has its prakriti (nature, especial force of action and movement), so each has its Purusha, a part of the being which supports and observes and experiences and can also control the movements of Prakriti.

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It is Prakriti (Nature) that sends these impulses [*to act*] — Nature sends all kinds of forces and experiences to each. It is for you as a conscious being (Purusha) to choose whether you shall do or not do — you should reject what you see to be wrong, accept only what is true and right. In Nature there is the higher and the lower, the true and the false. What the Divine wants of you is that you should grow in the Truth and the higher Nature, reject the false and the lower Nature.

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As you have indulged the Prakriti for the last ten thousand lives or so, it has been accustomed to impose its own way on the Purusha. To be separate is only the first step. Also I fancy the Purusha in you is still very mental in its will.

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In order to get the dynamic realisation it is not enough to rescue the Purusha from subjection to Prakriti; we must transfer the allegiance of the Purusha from the lower Prakriti with its play of ignorant Forces to the Supreme Divine Shakti, the Mother.

It is a mistake to identify the Mother with the lower Prakriti and its mechanism of forces. Prakriti here is a mechanism only which has been put forth for the working of the evolutionary Ignorance. As the ignorant mental, vital or physical being is not itself the Divine, although it comes from the Divine — so the mechanism of Prakriti is not the Divine Mother. No doubt something of her is there in and behind this mechanism maintaining it for its evolutionary purpose — but what she is in herself is not

a Shakti of Avidya, but the Divine Consciousness, Power, Light, Para Prakriti to whom we turn for the release and the divine fulfilment.

The realisation of the Purusha Consciousness calm, free, observing the play of forces but not attached or involved in them is a means of liberation. The calm, the detachment, a peaceful strength and joy (*ātmarati*) must be brought down into the vital and physical as well as into the mind. If this is established, one is no longer a prey to the turmoil of the vital forces. But this calm, peace, silent strength and joy is only the first descent of the Power of the Mother into the Adhar. Beyond that is a Knowledge, an executive Power, a dynamic Ananda which is not that of the ordinary Prakriti even at its best and most sattwic, but divine in its nature.

First, however, the calm, the peace, the liberation is needed. To try to bring down the dynamic side too soon is not advisable — for then it would be a descent into a troubled and impure nature unable to assimilate it and serious perturbations might be the consequence.

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There is a constant movement (Prakriti) and a constant silence (Purusha).

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It is the Purusha and Prakriti sides of the nature — one leading to pure conscious existence, static, the other to pure conscious force, dynamic. The past darkness they have come out of is that of ignorance, the future darkness that is felt above is superconscience. But of course the superconscience is really luminous — only its light is not seen. The three forms of consciousness are the three sides of Nature represented by the three gunas — force of subconscious tamas, Inertia, which is the law of Matter, force of half-conscious desire, Kinesis, which is rajas, which is the law of Life, force of sattwic Prakasha, which is the law of Intelligence.

Prakriti

Prakriti is a name given to the Force that works out everything in the person and in the world; it takes the form of mental, vital, psychic, physical and other forces, of all sorts of powers and qualities, movements, forms, thoughts, sensations, feelings, actions — all that is the result of Prakriti. It is as when a machine is moved by forces of electricity or steam or gas — so the world may be regarded as a huge and complicated machine worked by the forces of Prakriti. It is what is called in English “Nature”, and they say everything in the world is the work of Nature.

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It is Prakriti or Nature that acts; the Divine does not compel people to do anything. Nothing can happen without the presence and support of the Divine, for Nature or Prakriti is the Divine Force and it is this that works out things, but it works them out according to the nature and through or with the will of each man which is full of ignorance — that goes on until men turn to the Divine and become conscious of Him and united with Him. Then only can it be said that all begins to be done in them by the direct Will of the Divine.

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The lower Prakriti is the ordinary consciousness of man with its ignorance, desires and bondage. I suppose you know that one has to transcend this ordinary consciousness of the lower Nature and arrive at a higher divine consciousness, if one wants to be free?

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By Prakriti [*in a passage in Bases of Yoga*] is meant universal Prakriti. Universal Prakriti entering into the vital being creates desires which appear by its habitual response as an individual nature; but if the habitual desires she throws in are rejected and exiled, the being remains but the old individual prakriti of vital desire is no longer there, — a new nature is formed responding

to the Truth above and not to the lower Nature.

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Universal Prakriti determined it [*the habit of response to vital movements*] and the soul or Purusha accepted it. In the acceptance lies the responsibility. The Purusha is that which sanctions or refuses. The vital being responds to the ordinary life waves in the animal; man responds to them but has the power of mental control. He has also as the mental Purusha is awake in him the power to choose whether he shall have desire or train his being to surmount it. Finally, there is the possibility of bringing down a higher nature which will not be subject to desire but act on another vital principle.

Prakriti and Shakti or Chit-Shakti

What is meant by Prakriti or Nature is the outer or executive side of the Shakti or Conscious Force which forms and moves the worlds. This outer side appears here to be mechanical, a play of the forces, gunas etc. Behind it is the living Consciousness and Force of the Divine, the divine Shakti. The Prakriti itself is divided into the lower and higher, — the lower is the Prakriti of the Ignorance, the Prakriti of mind, life and matter separated in consciousness from the Divine; the higher is the Divine Prakriti of Sachchidananda with its manifesting power of Supermind, always aware of the Divine and free from Ignorance and its consequences. Man so long as he is in the ignorance is subject to the lower Prakriti, but by spiritual evolution he becomes aware of the higher Nature and seeks to come into contact with it. He can ascend into it and it can descend into him — such an ascent and descent can transform the lower nature of mind, life and matter.

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Prakriti is only the executive or working force — the Power behind Prakriti is Shakti. It is the Chit-Shakti in manifestation: that is the spiritual consciousness.

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All energies derive from the Chit-Shakti; but they differentiate from it as they descend.

This much is true that Life is characteristically Force — the Physical is characteristically substance; but the dynamism of both derives from Chit — mind dynamism also, all dynamism.

Purusha, Prakriti and Action

It is more difficult for the Prakriti [*to separate itself from outer action than for the Purusha*] as its ordinary play is that of the surface being. It has to divide itself into two to separate from that. The Purusha on the contrary is in its nature silent and separate — so it has only to go back to its original nature.

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It [*Prakriti*] divides itself into an inner Force that is free from its action (free from rajas, tamas etc.) and the outer Prakriti which it is using and changing.

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If ego and desire are different things from the gunas, then there can be an action of the gunas without ego and desire and therefore without attachment. That is the nature of the action of the gunas in the unattached liberated Yogi. If it were not possible, then it would be nonsense to talk of the Yogis being unattached, for there would remain still attachment in part of their being. To say that they are unattached in the Purusha, but attached in the Prakriti, therefore they are unattached, is to talk nonsense. Attachment is attachment in whatever part of the being it may be. In order to be unattached one must be unattached everywhere, in the mental, vital, physical action and not only in the silent soul somewhere inside.

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You seem to think that action and Prakriti are the same thing and where there is no action there can be no Prakriti! Purusha and Prakriti are separate powers of the being. It is not that Purusha

= quiescence and Prakriti = action, so that when all is quiescent, there is no Prakriti and when all is active there is no Purusha. When all is active, there is still the Purusha behind the active Nature and when all is quiescent there is still the Prakriti, but the Prakriti at rest.

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The outer being is also detached [*when a Yogi engages in detached action*] — the whole being is without desire or attachment and still action is possible. Action without desire is possible, action without attachment is possible, action without ego is possible.

It is not the inner Purusha only that remains detached then — the inner Purusha is always detached, only one is not conscious of it in the ordinary state. It is the Prakriti also that is not disturbed by the action of the gunas or attached to it — the mind, the vital, the physical (which are Prakriti) begin to get the same quietude, unperturbed peace and detachment as the Purusha, but it is a quietude, not a cessation of all action, it is quietude in action itself. If it were not so, my statement in the *Arya* that there can be a desireless or liberated action on which I found the possibility of a free (*mukta*) action would be false. The whole being, Purusha-Prakriti, becomes detached (having no desire or attachment) even in the action of the gunas.

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Prakriti is the Force that acts. A Force may be in action or in quiescence, but when it rests, it is as much a Force as when it acts. The gunas are an action of the Force, they are in the Force itself. The sea is there and the waves are there, but the waves are not the sea and when there are no waves and the sea is still, it does not stop being the sea.

The Gunas or Qualities of Nature

Prakriti and Nature are the same thing — the gunas are modes or processes of Nature (Prakriti).

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If the gunas are quiescent, then Prakriti ceases to act — unless the gunas are transformed into their divine equivalents, — then Prakriti becomes the higher or divine Nature.

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I don't think it¹ is correct myself. It is supposed that when the three qualities are not in an equalised condition, when there is a diversity and movement of variation, then creation is active — otherwise all becomes quiescent original Prakriti. It is doubtful if it is actually so.

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Transcendence of the three gunas is a state of liberation in which one is not affected by the action of the gunas; but even before that is attained there can be a complete and living faith in the Divine.

Transformation of the Gunas

The three gunas become purified and refined and changed into their divine equivalents: sattwa becomes *jyotiḥ*, the authentic spiritual light; rajas becomes *tapas*, the tranquilly intense divine force; tamas becomes *śama*, the divine quiet, rest, peace.

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You cannot drive out rajas and tamas, you can only convert them and give the predominance to sattwa. Tamas and rajas disappear only when the higher consciousness not only comes down but controls everything down to the cells of the body. They then change into the divine rest and peace and the divine energy or Tapas; finally sattwa also changes into the divine Light. As for remaining quiet when tamas is there, there can also be a tamasic quiet.

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¹ The correspondent asked for an explanation of an aphorism in the Sankhya Sutra (1.61): *sattvarajastamasām sāmyāvasthā prakṛtiḥ*. — Ed.

The Prakriti can be psychicised and spiritualised and the gunas yet remain, but with the sattwa dominant and the rajas and tamas enlightened by the sattwa. As the transformation increases, the gunas change more and more towards their divine equivalents, but it is only when the supramental comes that there is the full change.

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The transformation of the gunas is necessary for the *perfection* of the nature, not for liberation. Liberation comes by loss of ego and desire.

Sattwa and Liberation

When the consciousness as well as the action is free from ego and desire, there is always a fundamental calm. This calm remains whether sattwa predominates or not. Sattwa need not always predominate, because to become sattwic is not the object of sadhana. To need to be always sattwic would be a limitation. Whatever guna predominates in the action, to be free, desireless, calm behind all actions, is the condition of the liberated man.

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The sattwa predominates [*when action is done without desire and ego*], the rajas acts as a kinetic movement under the control of sattwa until the tamas imposes the need of rest. That is the usual thing. But even if the tamas predominates and the action is weak or the rajas predominates and the action is excessive, neither the Purusha nor the Prakriti get disturbed, there is a fundamental calm in the whole being and the action is no more than a ripple or an eddy on the surface.

Transformation of Rajas and Tamās

It is possible that the fatigue or lethargy comes as the wrong condition which has to be replaced by the peace. As rajas, kinetic passion, has to be replaced by *tapas*, the spiritual force, so tamās,

the obscure inertia, has to be replaced by *śama*, the luminous quietude and peace.

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The peace (*śama*) is the pure form, *tamas* is its degraded or perverted form — just as *rajas* is the degraded or perverse form of *Tapas*. When there is the transformation, *tamas* can be got rid of — but till then there is always a possibility of its mixing with the peace or stillness so long as that is not perfect and all-pervading.

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A dynamic descent brings *tapas* not *śama*. It is a greater and greater descent of peace that brings *śama* — the dynamic descent helps it by dispersing the element of rajasic disturbance and changing *rajas* into *tapas*.

Transformation of Tamas into Śama

The *tamas* is part of the general physical Nature and so long as that is not fully changed and illumined, something of it remains; but one has only to go on opening oneself to the Mother's consciousness and in time the *tamas* too will change into the inner divine rest and peace.

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All undesirable things are a mistranslation in the Ignorance of something that on a higher plane is or might be desirable. Inertia, *tamas*, is the mistranslation of the divine *śama*, rest, quietude, peace; pain is a mistranslation of Ananda, lust of love etc. It is only when the lower perversions are got rid of that the higher things in their truth can reign.

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It is the tendency of the physical to substitute its own inertia for the emptiness. The true emptiness is the beginning of what I call in the *Arya śama* — the rest, calm, peace of the eternal Self —

which has finally to replace *tamas*, the physical inertia. *Tamas* is the degradation of *śama*, as *rajas* is the degradation of *Tapas*, the Divine Force. The physical consciousness is always trying to substitute its own inertia for the calm, peace or rest of the true consciousness, just as the vital is always trying to substitute its *rajas* for the true action of the Force.

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It [*sleepiness*] is the physical *tamas* trying to push itself into the place of the calm. Part of the transformation consists in replacing the element of *tamas* in the nature by the *śama* or true calm, peace, rest, of which *tamas* or inertia is the degradation or perversion in the lower nature (for each of the three *gunas* has its divine counterpart in the higher nature). But *tamas* being the settled habit of the inferior nature tries to persist and keep or get back its place. That is the reason why this kind of alternation takes place between the two.

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Inert *śama* is *śama* still mixed with *tamas* — a quietude that has no force of action (*tapas*) in it, no positive principle of happy ease, no positive light of knowledge — but is still calm, repose, release from all disturbance.

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It [*tamas*] has to be transformed into *śama*, the peace and rest of the higher *Prakriti*, and then filled with *tapas* and *jyotiḥ*. But this can only be done completely in the physical when the physical is finally transformed by the supramental Power.

Mahat

Mahat is, I suppose, the essential and original matrix of consciousness (involved, not evolved) in *Prakriti* out of which individuality and formation come.

Tanmatra

Tanmatra is only the basis of matter. In the Sankhya the basis is Pradhana (of Prakriti) out of which come Buddhi and everything else. In the Vedanta it is spiritual substance out of which all comes.