

# Beyond Body, Mind and Intellect

by  
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As long as we are alive, we come in contact with the things and the beings in the world outside, in their different set-ups called circumstances. Even if you or I were alone on a solitary island, in order to continue living, we must be able to face our circumstances efficiently and intelligently without giving room to hasty panic and despair. Nobody in the world can, even for a moment, live without coming in contact with the objects of the world.

**"Spiritual unfoldment  
cannot take place merely  
because of an  
intellectual appreciation of  
the theory of perfection."**



Thus, not by choice, but by the compelling law of life, everyone must meet his or her world of happenings at every moment of life. If we are efficient in meeting our world with ready dexterity, with quick decisions, with a firm will, with a balanced equanimity, and with a right understanding, no situation in life can break us and enslave us. But unfortunately the individual too often succumbs to the challenges in life or surrenders himself to its temptations. Such a one will meet only with failure.

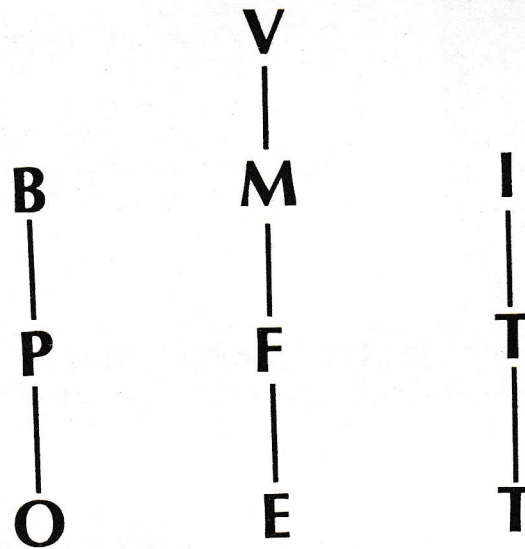
We live in the outer world from our own "within": our character and personality determine the experiences we gain in the world. Unless we learn to master our inner life, the outer scheme of life, however efficient and perfect in its set-up, cannot but bring sorrow and unhappiness for us.

## Self-Mastery

The technique of self-mastery expounded in all the great books of true living advises us not to escape from life but to maintain an intelligent way of living according to our circumstances and to use diligently and profitably all the inner and outer situations in life. In every walk of life, at all moments, we must make use of the ever-changing pattern of challenges, and while consciously meeting them, learn to tame ourselves and the outer world. This diligent method of living consciously -- ever struggling to better ourselves in our bodily strength, in our mental make-up, and in our intellectual abilities -- is true religion.

The attempt of religion is to bring about an inner transformation in us, so that we can master ourselves, come to feel an unshakable tranquility, and learn to live a life of inspired joy irrespective of the outer circumstances. How all of us can come to gain this mastery in ourselves and thus become true masters of our own lives is the theme of all the scriptures of the world.

With this objective in view, the Upaniṣadic rishis examined life. They understood that life is a series of experiences and that any definition of life should necessarily accept our moment-to-moment experiences as the units of life. The rishis further understood that an experience is not possible without three fundamental factors -- the experiencer, the object of experience, and the relationship between the two, the experiencing. The experiencer is the subject who gains experiences of the world through the instruments of experience, namely, the body, mind and intellect. Everyone gains experiences of three different worlds through these three different equipments: through the body, the world of objects; through the mind, the world of feelings; and through the intellect, the world of ideas.



Through  
the BODY (B), MIND (M), INTELLECT (I),  
the PERCEIVER (P), FEELER (F), THINKER (T)  
becomes enmeshed in the world of  
OBJECTS (O), EMOTIONS (E), and THOUGHTS (T).  
But when he transcends the  
VĀSANĀS (V),  
he realizes his true Self,  
OM,  
the Absolute.



If a person experiences the world of objects through his body, then he should be different from his body. If he experiences the world of feelings through his mind, then he, the experiencer, cannot be the mind. Again, if he gains experiences of the world of ideas through the intellect, he cannot be the intellect. He seems to be a different factor altogether from these three instruments of experience, though, of course, he has a very intimate relationship with them.

When the subject is identified with the intellect, he becomes the "thinker", experiencing the world of ideas; when identified with the mind, he becomes the "feeler", experiencing the world of emotions; and when identified with the body, he becomes the "perceiver", experiencing the world of objects. But he, the subject, is neither the field of experiences nor the instruments of experience. He must be totally different from them both.

That principle by whose mere presence the intellect thinks, the mind feels, and the body perceives, is the Subject, the substratum for all the experiences of the body, mind and intellect. This principle that lends its light to every being is the divine Principle Om, or *Atman* (the Self), according to Vedanta. The Principle by which I gain my experiences, you gain your experiences, and he gains his experiences is one and the same, just as the electrical energy running through various electrical equipments and expressing differently in them is one and the same everywhere, at all times. The heater, the bulb, the radio are all different equipments, but they express themselves because of one vitality alone, electricity.

The divine Principle holds the varied objects of this universe together as a string holds flowers of different shapes and colors to form one beautiful garland. The plant, the animal, the man -- all these are enlivened by that one Principle, enabling all of them to gain their own experiences.

Heat and cold are the perceptions of the body, happiness and sorrow are the feelings of the mind, right and wrong are the conceptual judgements of the intellect. But when I am one with the Subject that lends light to all these equipments, I am not tainted by any of the experiences gained by them. Rooted in the Subject, I come to experience the divinity which is present everywhere and at all times, one-without-a-second.

We find that the world of objects remains, functions, and plays out its follies according to a law over which we have little control. But we do have control over our reactions to our experiences in that world. Objects must come in contact with our minds in order to produce a reaction in them, which alone is the seed of our experience. If we can control and train our minds so

that they react positively to any object under any circumstance, all our reactions will be positive. Happiness and peace are his who has trained his mind to react

**"Happiness and peace  
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to the world outside."**



positively to the world outside. Once we have mental equipment which keeps a steady poise and balance under all circumstances, even if the outer world remains full of imperfections and sorrows, we shall have an unbroken experience of full contentment.

The world outside is recognized and experienced by the individual never as it is, but only as it is interpreted by his own mind and intellect. To a scientist, the world is an expression of science; to a romantic, the world is full of music and poetry, to one who is groveling in tragedy and misfortune, that same world is a burial ground. Though the objects remain the same, the experiences differ from person to person since each experiencer is a unique entity. As the mind, so the world. The wearer of a pair of goggles sees the world according to the color of the goggles, and similarly, we experience the world according to the constitution of our minds.

### Vāsanās

We are what we are because of the caliber of the mental and intellectual equipment in us, and the texture and quality of the mind-intellect equipment in us depends upon our innate tendencies or inclinations called *vāsanās*.

When we perceive an object or try to evaluate a situation, first the sense organs bring in their reports to the mind, which then compiles them and presents them to the intellect for final judgment. The very ability of the intellect to rationalize and judge is conditioned by a factor in us which the rishis called *vāsanās*, or the unmanifest. These innate tendencies, gathered from the past, march out into their expression first as desires in the intellect, then as thought agitations in the mind, and lastly as actions at the physical level.\* Each one of us is thus a helpless expression of our past -- recorded in us as our *vāsanās*.

Desires and thoughts spring forth from one's *vāsanās* just as sound emanates from grooves on a phonograph record. But the human being, the sovereign of creation, possesses a singular capacity -- the ability to stand apart from surging desires and feelings and exercise self-effort in choosing right action. When this great faculty is consistently applied in the direction indicated by the scriptures, an individual can successfully transcend his *vāsanās* to emerge as a being of divine stature.

*Vāsanās* can be broadly classified under three categories: physical urges (*deha-vāsanās*), social urges (*loka-vāsanās*) and intellectual urges (*śāstra-vāsanās*). Each of us lives in the world from within three inner realms, the physical, the social/psychological, and the intellectual. The physical aspect in us wants to enjoy the experiences of the world through the sense organs, seeking bodily needs as food, clothing, and shelter. The psychological entity in us demands some amount

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\*In this paradigm, "mind" refers to the emotional process of thought and "intellect" refers to the judging process of thought.



of satisfaction from the world through its emotional contacts. We want to be loved and we also want to love; we have likes and dislikes, and we want to court what we like and avoid what we dislike. Yet, even when the physical and emotional entities in us are satisfied, the intellectual aspect in us rises up to demand its own gratification. We have ideals and we want to live up to them. We also have the hunger to know, to understand, and to master ourselves and the world. These three types of *vāsanās* bind us to birth and death, just as strong iron chains bind a prisoner to the prison house.

*Vāsanās* are generated by our egocentric contacts with the world of objects, emotions, and thoughts. When the personality runs out in extroverted seeking after the joys of the world, the *vāsanās*, gain in strength in our personality composition. The stronger the *vāsanās*, the more we are subject to our subconscious urges, and the more we are controlled by our urges, the greater are the devastating agitations of the mind. Even when the desires are gratified, we find no permanent satisfaction, for the *vāsanās* only kindle more desires.

These three conditionings of the body, mind, and intellect must be transcended in order for us to regain our original nature. We cannot do it by merely suppressing the equipments, since the cause which produces them, namely, the *vāsanās*, can never be annihilated by destroying the effects. As long as the *vāsanās*, our habitual thought patterns and values, are powerful, the equipments will assert themselves time and again even if we succeed in suppressing them for a while. The only method, then, for regaining one's true nature is to vigilantly and ceaselessly divert one's mind and intellect away from preoccupation with objects, emotions, and thoughts to an awareness of the Self, thus transcending the gripping *vāsanās*.

#### Rising Above False Identifications

We must learn to lift ourselves by ourselves out of our lower impulses. When we identify ourselves with the higher in us, the lower is automatically controlled. This is a natural law of life. That which is superior controls, regulates, governs, and orders the lower. Thus, the intellect with its desires governs the moods of the mind, which in its turn controls the sense organs; and the sense organs regulate the play of the sense objects around the individual.

That which lies higher than the intellect is the Self, Consciousness. By awakening to that greater plane of Consciousness and remaining in that state of perfection by restraining the self by the Self, the desires and passions can be completely controlled and eliminated.

When a person succeeds in identifying himself with the Spirit in him, all his intellectual restlessness, emotional cravings, and physical appetites wither and fall away like petals from the flower upon emergence of the fruit. The subtlety of his awareness and feeling increases, and he comes to recognize the oneness of life in its different manifestations.



### Nonapprehension of The Self

*Vāsanās* veil the divinity in man, and therefore they are known as "ignorance" or *Avīdyā*. The divine Self is our true nature, but due to our *vāsanās* and the consequent agitations of the mind and intellect, we become ignorant of our true nature and identify ourselves with our personalities and their limitations.

All misapprehensions such as "I am the body", "I am the mind", and "I am the intellect" arise from our nonapprehension (ignorance) of Reality. Ignorance of our true nature makes us feel a sense of imperfection in ourselves. The suggestions that the intellect makes to remove this sense of imperfection are called "desires". The intellectual desires breed agitations in the mind, which express as egocentric, agitated actions at the body level. All these, namely, ignorance, desire and desire-prompted action, limit us, curtail our freedom, and shackle us to a life of sorrow and pain.

A Self-realized person is one who has destroyed ignorance by his direct, personal experience of the Self. To reach that realized state we have to eliminate our ignorance of the true nature as the supreme Self. By this, it is not to be implied that we must make the Self shine -- just as we need not make the sun shine by any means whatsoever. The sun is ever bright, illuminating itself and the world throughout the four seasons. Only the passing clouds hide the vision and the glory of this life-giving luminary, the sun. As the clouds pass away, the sun behind them is revealed. Similarly, the Self is ever present everywhere. It illumines every object and experience, and makes its presence known by its life-giving powers. Once the veil of ignorance is removed, the real nature of the Self is revealed in its ever-resplendent glory.

### Purification of The Mind

An individual is the Self *as though* contaminated by ignorance. Spiritual ignorance gives rise to the desires of the intellect and the blabberings of the mind. The mind-intellect equipment "reflects" the light of Consciousness, and the Self thus conditioned in the mind and intellect is the "individuality" (*jīva*), the one who suffers the limitations of matter. The *jīva* can be compared to the reflection we see in a mirror: if the reflecting surface is imperfect, we may look distorted, yet we know that that distortion is not our true identity.

The ugliness of our reflection in a mirror can end only when the reflecting surface is either cleaned or straightened. Similarly, the perversions of the individual can be ended only when the mind and intellect have become steady and clean. An absolutely cleaned and steadied mind is no more a mind, since a mind is nothing but a flow of thoughts. Where the mind has ended, the ego-center perceived for so long as the individuality rebounds back to its original nature, the Self.

We clearly see, then, that to achieve spiritual realization the mind has to be purified of its desires and agitations. With great effort and intelligent self-control alone purification of the mind can be achieved. Those who have a



burning desire for liberation should make at first a total effort to cleanse the mind of its impurities. Once this is done, liberation is not at all far away.

To the extent that the mind becomes introvert, to that extent extrovertedness ends. As the mind becomes established in the Self, the Self being the source of all joys, the extrovert *vānanās* for the objects of the world get reduced. Lesser the *vāsanās*, lesser are the agitations of the mind; lesser the agitations of the mind, more contemplative is the intellect; greater the contemplation of the intellect upon the Self, less great becomes the power of the *vāsanās*; and when the *vāsanās* are completely transcended, the Self manifests of its own accord.

Spiritual unfoldment cannot take place merely because of an intellectual appreciation of the theory of perfection. Evolution takes place only when a corresponding change in the very subjective life is accomplished. Therefore, an active, intelligent, and enthusiastic participation of the seeker in controlling, directing, and reeducating his thought life will alone lead to success in the spiritual goal of achieving ultimate happiness and harmony.

## HINDUISM

Hinduism is a modern word. Vedanta is the best among the numerous names given to the religious faith of the Hindus.

All culture in India has been rooted in Vedanta. Whatever courage, heroism, self-sacrifice or greatness is to be found in our history or seen in the lives of our people has sprung from Vedanta which is our blood and tradition. For Vedanta is undoubtedly a living philosophy of life in India, a part of the mental structure of our people. The people of India get it, not from a study of books but from tradition. It is in the air, so to say, of India and Asia. The foreigner has to get it from books and he necessarily sees so much subtlety in it that he may well swear that it is impossible that such a doctrine could ever be the actual cultural basis or living spiritual principle of the daily life of any people of modern times. Yet this is the fact in India.

However much foreign civilisation and new aspirations might have affected the people of India, this spiritual nutriment has not dried up or decayed or changed.

—C. RAJAGOPALACHARI