

## **CHAPTER 6, INNER REALITY**

**WHAT AM I? and THE SHORT PATH (These sections are called “Practical Help in Yoga” in the new US edition.)**

1. What is meditation?
2. What misconceptions do people have about meditation?
3. What are the best times to practice meditation?
4. Are you the physical body?
5. Are you your feelings?
6. Are you your thoughts?
7. How should one deal with the tendency of thought to wander?
8. What is the use of breath-control practices?
9. What is a glimpse of the Overself?
10. Discuss the meaning of the long and short paths.

### **COMMENTARY BY PB:**

Most people who start the short path have usually had a glimpse of the Overself, because otherwise they find it too difficult to understand what the short path is about. The long path, through its studies and practices, is the period of preparation for the advanced quest. It is called the long path because there is much work to be done on it and much development of character and emotions to go through. After some measure of this preparation, the aspirants enter the short path to complete this work. This takes a comparatively much shorter time and, as it has the possibility of yielding the full self-enlightenment at any moment, it ends suddenly.

What they are trying to do on the long path continues by itself once they have entered fully on the short path. On the long path they are concerned with the personal ego and as a result give negative thoughts their attention. On the short path they refuse to accept these negatives and instead look to the Overself. Thus the struggles will disappear. This change of attitude is called “voiding” them. The moment such negative ideas and feelings appear, then instead of using the long-path method of concentrating on the opposite kind of thought, such as calmness instead of anger, the short-path way simply drops the negative idea into the Void, the Nothingness, and forgets it.

Now such a change can only be brought about by doing it fastly and firmly and turning to the Overself. Constant remembrance of the Overself has to be done all the way through the short path. The long path works on the ego, but the short path uses the result of that work, which prepared them to come into communion with the Overself, and become receptive to its presence, which includes its grace.

#### **MODIFICATIONS TO THE PUBLISHED TEXT SUGGESTED BY PB:**

1. In the chapter in the US edition (2016) "Practical Help in Yoga," in the 3rd section, right after the para mentioning PB's book *The Secret Path* (page 84, after the 2nd paragraph), PB wanted to add an excerpt from the beginning of chapter 5 of *The Secret Path* where the first steps of the "Who Am I?" exercise are described in detail. We think these are the paras he wanted to add:

Seated comfortably in your chair or squatting tailor-fashion on a rug, breathing quietly and evenly, close your eyes and let your thoughts run over the question of what you really are.

You are about to begin your great adventure of self-inquiry.

One key to success in your practice is to think very slowly. The wheel of mind is to be slowed down, and consequently it will be unable to rush around from one thing to another, as it did formerly. Think slowly. Next formulate your words mentally with great care and precision. Choose and select each word accurately. Doing this will clarify your thought, for you cannot find a clear and definite phrase to fit it until you have done so.

First watch your own intellect in its working. Note how thoughts follow one another in endless sequence. Then try to realize that there is someone who thinks. Now ask: "Who is this Thinker?"

Who is this "I" that sleeps and wakes up; that thinks and feels; that works and speaks? What is it in us that we call the "I"?

Those who believe that matter is the only thing existing will tell you that it is the body; and that the sense of "I Am" arises within the brain at birth and disappears at the death or disintegration of the body.

Now in order to understand the real nature of this mysterious "I" and to find out its true relation to the functions of the body and brain we must make a penetrating analysis of personality, the apparent self.

This kind of self-knowledge does not mean merely sifting and cataloguing one's virtues, vices and qualities. It really means searching into one's essential spirit. To evoke the real man within

you is to evoke your spiritual intelligence. When you can understand what lies behind the eyes which look at you every morning from the mirror, you will understand the mystery of life itself.

If you will but steadfastly regard the mystery that is in you, the divine mystery in man, it will eventually yield and display its secret. When a man begins to ask himself what he is, he has taken the first step upon a path which will end only when he has found an answer. For there is a permanent revelation in his heart, but he heeds it not. When a man begins to face his sub-mental mind and tries to strip the veil which covers it, persistent effort will provide its own reward.

2. PB wanted to end the chapter "Practical Help in Yoga" on page 88, after the para beginning, "What are you to do next?" The following para, beginning, "At this stage, you must ask..." was to be the first para in a new chapter entitled "The Short Path."

3. "The Short Path" chapter was to have 3 parts:

a. the material from the last para on p. 88 through the end of the chapter on p. 93;

b. an excerpt (or two) from *The Spiritual Crisis of Man*, possibly the one beginning "The Overself is the soul of man..." or the one beginning "The soul, this mysterious entity..."

c. a text which PB wrote as a conclusion to "The Short Path" chapter.

The following two paragraphs are from p. 214 of the 1970 US edition of *The Spiritual Crisis of Man*:

The soul, this mysterious entity who is wholly non-existent to many people and whose quest is a chimera to most people, will eventually prove to be the only one who remains when all others pass away. If a man's thought is always directed towards the objects of his experience and never diverted towards the consciousness which makes that experience possible, then it is inevitable that those objects shall assume a significance and reality in and for themselves alone. That is to say, he will become a materialist. Yet the Overself is that out of which his own consciousness has come. Ought he not to give himself the daily spiritual chance to come in contact with it, with his most intimate self?

He may travel the entire length and breadth of the five continents to commune with their cleverest scientists, but if he does not also travel within and commune with his own divine self, then the secret of life will still elude him. He misses what is most important if he misses going into the invisible temple of his own heart. There the soul abides, there the ray of God strikes the individual and there alone the satisfying discovery of what he really is may be made. This is the fundamental task—to become aware of the divine that is in him. All others are secondary and tertiary. He must establish himself in the consciousness of the Overself by and for himself.

No other man can do it for him. And the Quest's labour in purification and meditation is indispensable for this purpose.

PB wrote the following text to conclude the "The Short Path" chapter:

In order to understand the short path, it might be helpful to compare it to the long path, which consists of a series of exercises and efforts which gradually develops concentration and character and knowledge. But the long path does not lead to the goal. On the long path you often measure your own progress. It is an endless path, because there will always be new circumstances which bring new temptations or trials and confront the aspirant with new challenges. No matter how spiritual the ego becomes, it does not enter the whitest light, but remains in the greyish light. On the long path you must deal with the urges of interference arising from the lower self and the negativity which enters from the surrounding environment. But the efforts on the long path will at last invoke grace, which opens the perspective of the short path.

The short path is not an exercise but an inner standpoint to invoke, a state of consciousness where one comes closer to or finds peace in the Overself. There are, however, two exercises which can be of help to lead to the short path, but they have quite a different character than the exercises on the long path. The short path takes less time because the aspirant turns around and faces the goal directly. The short path means that you begin to try to remember to live in the rarefied atmosphere of the Overself instead of worrying about the ego and measuring its spiritual development. You learn to trust more and more in the Higher Power. On the short path you ignore negativity and turn around 180 degrees, from the ego to the Overself. The visitations of the Overself are heralded through devotional feeling, but also through intuitive thought and action. The short path establishes you more and more in peace.

Often the two paths can be treaded simultaneously but not necessarily equally. Often the aspirant is not ready to start these two exercises until after one or several glimpses of the Overself.

The "Remembrance exercise" consists of trying to recall the glimpse of the Overself, not only [during our meditation periods but also – these words are not totally clear in the original] in each moment during the whole working span of the day – in the same way as a mother who has lost her child cannot let go of the thought of it no matter what she is doing outwardly – or as a lover who constantly holds the vivid image of the beloved in the back of his mind. In a similar way you keep the memory of the Overself alive during this exercise and let it shine in the background while you go about your daily work. But don't forget that the remembrance must be a warm and living feeling if the spirit of the exercise is not to be lost. It must not be mechanical and cold. The time may come later when the remembrance will cease as a

consciously and deliberately willed exercise and pass by itself into a state which will be maintained without the help of the ego's will.

The remembrance is a necessary preparation for the second exercise where you try to obtain an immediate identification with the Overself just as an actor identifies with the role he plays on the stage. You act, think, and live during the daily life "as if" you were the Overself. This exercise is not merely intellectual but also includes feeling and intuitive action. It is an act of creative imagination where, by turning directly to playing the part of the Overself, you make it possible for its grace to come more and more into your life.

And finally, this selection is from *The Spiritual Crisis of Man* (on p. 222, 1967 printing):

The Overself is the soul of man, his connection with the Absolute Power. One part of him lives, suffers, and enjoys in time and space. Another part, mysterious, almost unknown, transcends it utterly and dwells serenely free from its mutations. Every man in the depths of his essential being is an emanation of the World-Mind. Therefore he is diviner than he knows, holier than he seems, and wiser than he thinks. His self-effort does not bring the transcendental consciousness into being, does not create it. Eternal and undying, it was always there in the deepest layer of his mind. What he does is to penetrate to it, and realize it. His finite ego is not so completely sundered from the infinite World-Mind that there is not even the most indirect relation between them. There exists this holy link of the Overself through which and in which the ego may enter the divine presence. It is the higher individuality, the permanent self in him.