

as the immutable consciousness and the constantly changing seen, which is the body, emotions, thoughts and so on. However, in reality they touch as little as do a screen and the images displayed on it. This wrong knowledge, according to which we are body and mind, results in subconscious imprints (*samskaras*) in which we appear to be bound up with external, constantly changing things. These imprints eventually densify to a field that is called conditioning (*vasana*). In this case the imprints born from wrong perception (*viparyaya*) lead to the conditioning of ignorance. From this ignorance sprout all the afflictions, the different forms of suffering.

The concept of ignorance (*avidya*) as the cause of the commingling of consciousness and world developed in later centuries into the elaborate concept of *maya*, the veil of illusion.

तदभावात् संयोगाभावो हानं । तद्दृशेः
कैवल्यम् ॥ २५ ॥

11.25 From the absence of ignorance the commingling of the seer and the seen ceases. This state is called liberation (*kaivalya*), the independence from the seen.

The state of *kaivalya*, which is the goal of yoga, is described here. In the four steps of the medical system, *kaivalya* represents the healthy state. It is therefore also called the natural state. For yoga does not create through exertion some remote aloof paradise for the few: it merely re-establishes us in the truth of who we are, which is the natural state to be in.

Unfortunately the natural state is not normal any more. *Kaivalya* can be translated as independence, freedom, aloneness or 'transcendental aloneness'.²⁷ It can also mean liberation, since it is the opposite of bondage or mental slavery.

It is interesting to look at what the word 'aloneness' means. It is somewhat similar to loneliness but yet entirely different. Loneliness is the state in which one yearns or longs for the company of another but is deprived of it. It is a lack of something that makes it impossible to enjoy the mere absence of company.

27. Leggett uses this term in his *Shankara on the Yoga Sutra*.

The blues singer Janis Joplin said, 'On stage I give love for 50,000 people but at home Mr Loneliness awaits me'. She died soon afterwards from an overdose of drugs. It is interesting that she described loneliness as the absence of love. Also significant is her attempt to fill the gap left by this absence through the intake of an enormous amount of drugs.

Aloneness is the exact opposite of that. It is the drawing together of the words all-one-ness. To be aware of all-one-ness is to see Brahman, which is deep reality or truth. On the deepest level everything is an expression of the one reality, infinite consciousness.

One who has realised this is alone or all-one: all-one because once one has seen the space nature of consciousness one knows that one is forever united with all living things. The very same consciousness contains us all. The very one self is looking out through all creatures' eyes. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'He who sees the supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, ... he sees indeed.'²⁸ All-one-ness means to have recognised that at the deepest level all sentient beings are one consciousness. Such a person is called alone since one has found in one's heart the heart of all beings. No external contact like company is needed to experience happiness. In that state the deep wound called loneliness is healed. In fact company cannot heal loneliness because it cannot be ongoing: one day we, or our friends before us, will die. Then the wound – which has only been covered up – will break open again.

The wound is healed only when one has found in one's heart the self, which is the self of all beings. This self the *Gita* calls the Supreme Lord, the *Upanishads* call Brahman and Buddha calls nirvana. Once this self is found, one does not approach others any more out of need but because one wants to give. Because the mystic does not need others, but can choose freely to be with others, he/she is said to be alone. It is a state of freedom. If one is lonely, one needs to seek others. In truth, however, one is not interested in them but only in their capacity to soothe one's loneliness. There is no choice: one has to go about seeking others to relieve one's pain.

For this reason the mystic is called the true

28. *Bhagavad Gita* 13.27, trans. Sw. Vireswarananda, p. 271.

friend. Since the mystic has realised him/herself as the container that contains the world and all beings, mystics have no further agenda in this world. They have no point to prove. They do not need others for company, entertainment or pain relief, but see in others that reality they have found in themselves. That person is our real friend who truly sees our innermost self, which is free, independent, uncreated, unstained and free of all that changes and becomes.

Because this true meaning of the word 'aloneness' has been lost, the term 'transcendental aloneness' has been introduced to translate *kaivalya*. But why did Patanjali use the word 'aloneness' to describe what is called in most scriptures liberation (*moksha*)?

Bondage is created by the illusory commingling of self and world. Although this togetherness of the eternal separate entities is based on wrong perception, it nevertheless is taken to be true and creates suffering. When, through correct perception, the eternally untouchable, unstainable nature of the self is recognised (which like the mirror can reflect so many objects though they never stick to it), that is called the independence or aloneness of the self.

If we remove an object after the mirror has reflected it, no trace of object-ness is left in the mirror. Similarly, whatever thought, emotion or memory is witnessed by our consciousness cannot leave a stain on it, cannot be bound up with it. Because consciousness/self is forever untouched by the seen, it is said to be alone.

Ignorance makes it appear as if impressions of past identification, pleasure, pain, anger or fear are bound up with the screen on which they appear. Ignorance commingles the phenomena with the awareness to which they arise. When ignorance ceases, awareness is seen as standing alone. Awareness is the only thing that never changes. It simply observes, witnesses, without ever taking on the constantly fluctuating qualities of the observed object, the world.

विवेकख्यातिरविप्लवा हानोपायः ॥ २६ ॥

11.26 The means to liberation is permanent discriminative knowledge.

After having described the forms of suffering, their causes and the healthy state, Patanjali now describes the remedy. This is the permanent ability to discriminate between what is eternal, pure, free and essential on the one hand and transitory, impure, bound and non-essential on the other.

Let us go back to looking at consciousness/self as the screen on which all images are displayed – or, better, the containing space/time matrix in which the phenomena appear. The matrix is more realistic since it is four-dimensional; the screen is easier to understand because we can see it. The pictures on the screen in the course of an evening will constantly change while the screen remains the same. Likewise the self is permanent, and body, mind and all objects superimposed on it are transitory.

Since subconscious imprints, formed through past experience, will be bound up with and stick to body, mind and objects, they are called impure. When we watch a movie we realise that in its course our impression of its characters changes as they are stained or tainted by the action. In a similar way, all produced objects are stained by our subconscious imprints, which are based on ignorance, egoism, desire, pain and fear. The only pure unstained thing at the end of the movie is the screen to which impression attaches. Likewise the self is said to be pure and the phenomena are impure.

During a movie we realise that all the characters act according to previous set conditions. Western psychology attributes this conditioning to early childhood; eastern mysticism attributes it to previous incarnations. Whichever way, the characters on the screen don't act freely but in a conditioned way. They are bound by their past. The only free 'object' is consciousness, which appears beyond space/time; in fact space/time occurs within it. No image or phenomenon can leave a conditioning imprint on consciousness. Body, mind and objects are said to be bound and consciousness is said to be free.

When we spend an evening watching TV we may see the news, advertisements, a comedy, a thriller,