

Psychodynamics of Pranava – highlights

In all disciplines there are prerequisites. They can be of a positive or negative kind. To be instructed by a master the aspirant should have the need for instruction. This is a negative prerequisite. A positive prerequisite is that the aspirant is very eager to be benefitted by the wisdom of a master. There is no need to presume that everyone is eager to know the higher secrets of life. Those who already know have no need for further instruction. Those who don't care to know don't have to bother. Only the uninstructed person who is eager to know is here considered competent to seek in the wisdom context. (6)

Any person who wants to relate the lower self to the higher Self has to derive their promptings from understanding rather than from urges that come from prior conditioning. The key to this liberating relationship is described here as “those who have transcended the cyclic birth and death by knowing the secret of *pranava*.” Thus it is also made clear that *pranava* is a secret language. When written it is only a formal symbol, *Aum*. When it is spoken it is only a nominal symbol. But within the symbol a great world of epistemological import is lying hidden. What is obvious is phenomenal; what is hidden is noumenal. Making a breakthrough from the phenomenal to the noumenal is what is indicated here as the secret of *pranava*. In the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, it is said that one attains the state of final absorption in the changeless state of the noumenon by contemplating on the true nature of *pranava*. It is paradoxical that the veil that is to be removed is the veil that comes from empirical knowledge and immediate perception, which brings such a conviction that we are certain of what we are experiencing. This certitude is the toughest obstacle in knowing the real, the noumenon. (8)

The non-dualistic totality is called *advaita* or “not-two.” However, the reference to two is imperative. Explicitly there are two aspects

and implicitly the two are counterparts of a single reality. Between the counterparts there should be an essential bipolarity which unifies the two into one. Such is the scheme of the Absolute. When the counterparts are established in absolute bipolarity, the union will leave no separation between the two and will be free of any duality. The process of bipolarity indicates an enjoyable attitude. When there is nothing but the highest value of joy remaining, the union is complete. Then there is nothing to be accomplished and no agency for accomplishing anything. (8-9)

The fourfold actualization of a purposive life is said to be the envisioning of one's intrinsic nature (*dharma*), meaningfully giving expression to that nature (*artha*), desiring to actualize the unfoldment of one's truest form (*kama*), and ultimately transcending all relativistic modes of achievement (*moksha*). The *pranava* is such that it covers all four aspects. Thus it is at once the macrocosm that encompasses the universe and the microcosm that is being epitomized in the syllable *Aum* which a person can meditate on. (13)

Aum is the plenum. It is the unexpended. By taking away the plenum from the plenum it never becomes less. By the sun evaporating the water of the oceans into clouds the oceans do not dry up. With the showering of rain from one cloud the sky doesn't become exhausted of clouds. Similarly, *Aum* continues to give without being expended. So it can give consent to all and for everything. A truly rich person is one who never feels any loss because something has been given away to someone. One who meditates on *Aum* also becomes generous and never a loser of anything. In Christian and Islamic prayers, consent is given by saying "Amen" or "Amin," which are not different from *Aum*. (14)

There is no better description of the Absolute than referring to it as all, *sarvam*. When we say, "this all," the specificity of "this" is cancelled out by the generality of "all". (15)

It's a paradox to relate the specific "this" to the universal "all". When such opposites are brought together in the mind, the paradox becomes inconceivable. Only when specific conditional cogitation is allowed does conceptualization occur. The inconceivable rids the mind of modifications. (15)

Jesus said, "I am the goal, the path and the light." The goal he marks is the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, the Kingdom of God is discovered in the seeker's heart. Thus the ultimate is in the primeval. When a person sits to contemplate on *Aum* they are surrounded by silence. The silence that is felt in the heart can be seen spread out in all directions without any frontier. In that silence there is an unfathomable depth, as well as a sublime height that can never fully be reached. It is with the awe-inspiring wonder of that silence that one slowly opens the mouth to articulate. With the syllable A, the sound becomes full-throated and the mouth is open to its widest possibility. Then, like the tapering of a funnel, the syllable A transforms into the syllable U until the lips come together in M. The tapering articulation vanishes into an ultimate silence, which coincides with the primeval silence with which the contemplation of *Aum* was begun. What was and what is, is only an infinite range of silence. The articulated sound is like the rise and fall of a sound wave, an inundation with a peak and a valley. The silence continues in the heart of the intonated sound where that unbroken ground of all is suggestive of the imperishable. (16)

Where there is science or mysticism, one has to clear one's ground before settling down to the serious business of penetrating to the depth of the real that is shrouded in the enchanting veil of the phenomenal. (17)

There is no past sitting anywhere apart from the immediate awareness of the present. Similarly, there is no future kept in

storage somewhere except in the anticipation and imagination of an individuated mind. (18)

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Yajnavalkya instructs his wife-disciple Maitreyi to listen, ponder over, and identify with the revelation that comes from one's deep contemplative reflection. In fact, this is the most difficult exercise in Vedanta. Correlating the ever-pulsating center of one's being to the never-changing reality of the Absolute is to be achieved first by evolving a *schema moteur* in which the cyclically moving wakeful and dream and deep sleep states are all brought to a topological measuring system by which the transcendent can be made as transparent as possible in the mirage-like phenomenality of the arrangement, in which the causal becomes ideational and idea impels the concretizing of the individual. (19-20)

Both Shankara and Narayana Guru hold the same view of *bhakti* as the continuous contemplative injection into one's own being, by which time transforms into pure duration and space abolishes itself into *sunyata*, the transcendental void. (20)

However enormous the external world is, man, who is a finite being with an assigned placement in the world, is privileged to act in unison with it and be its interpreter and commentator. In that assignment he shares his responsibility with every one of his kind, not only of the present but through all millennia. What we do in the present will be continued by posterity. It is as if there is an eternal person transcending time and space who has been living in everyone who has come to this world in the garb of a human body and will continue to do so ever after. The program of this cosmic person is to enjoy. The cosmic person's head is far above the clouds where he can share the dreams of the luminaries. His feet are planted firmly on earth. He is like a vertical parameter touching the earth and the heavens. Between the earthly alpha and the heavenly omega, he has many worlds to enjoy. (21)

The mystical language of the Aitareya Upanishad presents a creation myth which is worthy of being contemplated upon with veneration. When the two slits beneath the eyebrows of the newly born baby open, the sun is generated in the cosmic sky and light enters the child's visual system. They are initiated into the wonder of seeing all illuminated objects. Similarly the soul of the baby frees itself to go in all directions through the crevices of the ears. It is filled with the choir of the spheres that is sung to greet the music-loving soul, which becomes so infused with the symphony of the universe that the child becomes an equipoised being dancing to the rhythm of the mysterious waltz that it hears from within. All beings are singing to the child in continuous orchestration. It is as if the physical world has been in eternal prayer for its lover to sprout as a connoisseur of all the beauty it can present. (21)

The triple tiers of consciousness which Freud postulated (the unconscious, preconscious and conscious) stand in comparison with the Indian concepts of causal consciousness, dream or subjective consciousness, and wakeful or transactional consciousness. The causal consciousness, derived from incipient memories, both physically and genetically, can be roughly related to the unconscious spoken of by both Freud and Jung. The unfoldment of causal consciousness into a dream matrix is comparable to the preconscious spoken of by Freud and the concept of the subconscious in Jungian literature. It is after a seepage of the dreams through the pragmatic validity of a memory with social acceptance that actualization is promoted with a subject-object elaboration that allows a part of the dream to manifest in the world of physical actuality. (25)

Is it consciousness which is throbbing within? The rishi says no. Is it an elaboration of consciousness which is seen as all this? Again the answer is no. Now putting this all together we naturally have to dismiss everything that is thought, felt and experienced within, and

all that is registered by the senses and mind as existing outside. One may suspect that the reality under discussion could be a subtle condensation of possibilities that can some day elaborate itself into time and space with variegated forms and names. That way it could be a potential consciousness through and through. But we have a conditioned mind. Whenever we hear terms like “knowing,” “becoming aware of,” or “conscious of,” we create a playground and put on one side of the field a mysterious entity experiencing a state of awareness and on the other side the drama that is unfolded to it. Such kinds of conditional states have no relevancy here.

As we do not know any alternative other than inertial matter, which is not having any sensation or awareness, we may come to the conclusion that it is incapable of knowing. That surmise is dismissed. It is a matter of deconditioning and unlearning whatever one has gained in this manifested world, such as seeing, transacting, grasping, taking note of hallmarks, anticipating, and so on. What is referred to is not any of this. Rather one gets to it by transcending all this. By going beyond sound, touch, form, taste and smell, one comes to a peace with which one was never acquainted before. It is the numinous toward which everything moves. It is other than the wakeful, the dream, and the deep sleep. What is it? Well, it is the fourth. Call it *atma*, if you may. This is to be known. (40-1)

Three major driving forces that can easily be exaggerated into pathological energy expenditures are the erotic passion to possess and dominate one’s love object, the insatiable greed to possess the means to dominate others, and the hankering goaded by anxiety regarding one’s future security paired with the hoarding of exchange value tokens such as money. To transcend the physically impressive needs of the body and mind, one should have a clear envisioning of the spiritual worthwhileness of seeking union with the Absolute and of realizing the supreme nature of one’s Self. If the first type of demand is like driving down a hill, the second type—one’s spiritual pursuit—is of an ascending order. A lot of

stamina has to be put into the disciplining of one's body and mind even to bring it to a stabilized position from which to commence one's ultimate search. (52) (Also in Patanjali)

What is potentially not present in the cause cannot manifest in the effect. Conversely, anything manifested as an effect is indicative of a latent cause, a hidden seed. Here the limitation arises from a pulsation within manifestation, expanding from a cause to an enlarged field of effect, and, in the same manner, centripetally turning inward to epitomize the entire effect into a causal factor. This process, which is going on interminably, is happening in the unknown and in the unconscious. Therefore the entire perspective of it is not available either to perceptual observation or to conceptual comprehension. Here also, a limitation is set which has for its frame of reference the time-space continuum and the intrinsic laws that govern the origin, expansion, reduction and dissolution of mass. Omniscience in this case is when the process in the unconscious has been maximally interpreted to the conscious mind. When one cannot go farther into the niche of the unconscious, the omniscience of causal consciousness reaches its insurmountable frontier. (57)

The phenomenality of creation is a cyclic process, very much like the spurting of water in a fountain, which remains visible in the process of rising and falling, and then becomes one with the water of the reservoir, only to be thrown up again in the next moment. Life on earth is also cyclic. The process of obtaining a body, the use of it for carrying out whatever action is appropriate, and finally disintegrating, to be transformed again into the instrument of another living being, is just like the water circulating through a fountain or a smith casting the same metal again and again into new forms.

In such processes, the water or metal and so on are not enriched by the specific transformation they have undergone. But life is not like that. Each embodiment enriches it with the registry of various experiences. The cumulative effect of undergoing such experiences becomes embedded in the genetic stream, the selective mold through which evolution is sustaining the biologic principle of earth, which thus has in it a record of ceaseless learning. (59)

A sound heard by the ear or articulated by the tongue, or a vague image seen by the eye, can burst into meaning in consciousness (*sphota*). When it bursts into meaning a mental picture is created. If a person sees a fruit tree such as a mango or apple tree on the wayside or in another's garden, the impression it causes in the mind is only of a tree. But when one has a tree in one's own garden which one has planted, tended, manured and watered, the future benefit of the tree is considered a significant factor. A person looks upon their own tree as a promise of the future and will be quite concerned about any harm that might befall it. In the same way, a mantra is planted one's mind by the guru or instructor. Like a gardener, the instructor is always watching how the energy of the mantra is released over time and how that energy is reciprocated by the aspirant. (62)

The initiation into a mantra is given ritualistically. When a person plants a sapling they first build a fence around it so that a straying animal may not bite off its leaves or careless people may not tread on it. Similarly, a person who is entering into the discipline of *mantra japa* chooses a convenient place where they will not be distracted by others. When a tree has grown into its mature size, it does not need any fence. Similarly, when a person is established in the full significance of the mantra with which they are disciplined, all rituals drop away.

Japa is continuous repetition of the mantra, which in the present case is *Aum*. *Japa* is intended to include *tapas*, *svadhyaya*,

bhavana and *abhyasa*. *Tapas* is the burning away of the dross of the mind. *Svadhya* is becoming intimate with the true nature of oneself. *Bhavana* is mentally suggesting the general direction in which the revelation of the Absolute can be expected. *Abhyasa* is establishing coordination between the conscious mind and the unconscious, from where an archetypal revelation is believed to be arising. (63)

Bhavana is taking aid from imagination. When the teacher reveals the nature of the Self, he is likely to use the dialectical approach of defining its characteristics from both a positive (*svarupalaksana*) and negative (*tatastalaksana*) angle. However, because of one's social and cultural exposure, there is always the danger of the mind being led astray to anthropomorphic versions of the Absolute. One may think of the Absolute as a blue-bodied person with curly hair decorated with a peacock feather or as the grotesque figure of a man hanging on a cross. This kind of imagination only brings distraction. Even so, there has to be some direction in the mind to symbolically suggest what one is looking for. Thus *bhavana* is both helpful and not helpful. Obsessive imagination can only bring a caricature-like notion of the Absolute to the mind. One's imagination needs to be supported by the substantiality of a perennial truth. Having the right *bhavana* or imagination is essential in the experiencing of *pranava*. (64)

The body and mind can both get in each other's way. The mind is willing to go but the body sits there like a heavy load, or the body is ready to move yet the mind is apprehensive about allowing the body to function. The result is like the driver of a car who puts his feet firmly on the accelerator and the brake at the same time—a lot of commotion goes on inside but nothing happens. Such a person is aware of the dreadful waste of his time, and that itself causes a drain of energy. Consequently, his energy cannot be channelized in any direction. One of the greatest tragedies in human life is that

many hours are wasted each day because of this kind of inability to take a decision. This is called *samsaya*, doubt. (66)

Even when one is fortunate to be placed in a situation where nobody is being offensive, one is often not induced to be friendly with that situation. Most people become lazy when there is no challenge in life, and start losing interest in everyone and everything around them. We are actually surrounded by fellow human beings, animals, birds, plants, and a changing panorama. When these are all obscured by our self-indulgence, human beings look like mere shadows to us. Even family members and co-workers are looked upon as people of no consequence. Thus our attitude becomes unfriendly, devoid of any enthusiasm in our caring and sharing. Most people miss a great opportunity to discover in the person sitting next to them or working with them one of the finest friends they can make. It is to avoid such a tremendous loss that we are asked to cultivate positive friendship with whoever we are exposed to or are relating with. (69-70)

The person who is bracketed with you in social life may seem uncouth or overbearing. If you cultivate your identity with them, then it becomes your duty to transform them into a very likeable person. You can accomplish this not by aggressively intruding into their life but by helping them understand themselves and making common programs with them, so that they need not feel alone in the world without a comrade to assist them.

Even if her child pulls away and becomes hysterical when she tries to give it a bath or some such care, a mother does not become hostile to the child. Her only concern is what is good for the child. When you adopt such an attitude of active interest in sharing all your good moments of friendliness with the other person, they gain a more sympathetic understanding. You are not only making a friend but helping them to be more adorable. In the practice of any discipline, consistency and continuity are absolutely necessary. So

your friendship should not be a short-term experiment. It should be motivated by an ardent desire. Your sincerity has to prove itself by its continuous prevalence between you and the other person. When you share your happiness with another in the same situation and the same cause, your happiness is multiplied. No joy is a true joy unless you can share it with another. (70)