

## **Transcending the Tableauscopy of the Sensorial**

Human knowledge of the outer world is very incomplete due to the limited ability to perceive it through the five senses. One cannot know everything, as certain objects will always remain outside the reach of the senses. There is always an inner dimension to be experienced in the material world. To escape the limitation of the senses and to reach an extra-sensory dimension is impossible without being able to control the entire sensory phenomenon. This supposes, however, transcending the physical and its conventionally perceived images. Whenever this is done, the image of a larger and more beautiful reality becomes apparent.

In general we use one of (or a combination of) the five instruments of sensory knowledge to receive and convey information about the external world towards the so-called objective aspect of consciousness. These five instruments of cognitive perception and internal transmission—the five sensory organs of smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing—are known within Yoga as the *jñañendriyas* (*jñāna* means knowledge and *indriya* has the sense of instrument). Their aim is the collection and transfer of all reflections of perceived objects in the field of objective consciousness. Considering the power of objective human observation, one must note at the outset that an object may be approached at different levels, the lowest being the sensory aspect as perceived in everyday life. This is a vague cognitive state that nonetheless contributes to our general knowledge and our possible willingness to engage in some volitional act, subject to the I-ness or I-principle (*aham*), which will ultimately decide whether to act or not to act.

Human consciousness is roughly divided into two entities: the knower and the doer. The knower (which is the I-ness) is the central portion. In an ordinary sensory state, this I-ness is in constant contact with the objective aspect of consciousness, and is therefore never quite isolated. The doer cognizes and acts, thereby becoming aware of something external to itself, shining forth in the conscious field as an object to be cognized by the I or subject. This is the subject-object relationship, which forms the entire image of our consciousness. The I becomes conscious of something and generates, as an actor, desires and the will to realize them, both of which form images in our consciousness at the sensory field. Any image perceived in this ordinary way is no more than a reflection of reality, a partial, segmented view, jaundiced by the limitations inherent to the sensory faculties. Sensory perception is only the photograph of the image of an object.

The sage Patanjali identifies three major types of limitations to the senses:

- 1) *Suksma* - the size of the object,
- 2) *Vyavahita* - the distance which separates one from the object, and
- 3) *Viprakrishta* - the obstacles between one and the object.

These three conditions define the sensory fields. The senses operate via a cognitive process which allows no more than a limited reception of the sensory world. It is not possible to have a complete picture of an object as long as our cognitive basis rests upon an incomplete pattern in the sensory field. While most people accept this fact and accommodate to it, others do not hesitate to challenge this basic ignorance by engaging a quest.

Being mainly based upon sensory experiences, all thoughts and ways of thinking are conditioned. This applies to any intellectual approach, reasoning,

judgment, observation etc., as all of these processes rest upon experiences that have been acquired in the limited field of the senses. This is where the yogic methods start, with the proposition to gradually transcend sensory limitations and acquire a complete knowledge.

The mastery of the senses through Yoga can allow one to project oneself beyond the scope of the senses, so that the mind can minimize the three aforementioned obstacles and gain a direct, extra-sensorial apprehension of reality. This faculty offers two perspectives:

- 1) receiving an external image without passing through the senses; and
- 2) using the senses' subtler aspects without the help of sense organs.

The ability to acquire direct perception, without passing via the senses, belongs to supra-sensory phenomena. Such phenomena cannot occur even by using the highly sophisticated instruments of modern science. This process will not be understood unless one truly wants to discover the reality of such possibility. This starts at the very moment one decides to rise above the sensory field. That is when everything becomes clear and obvious.