

Philosophy: A Means to Liberation

For most people, the very concept of “life” can refer to nothing more grandiose than the life currently being lived. Frequently, one’s life becomes intimately associated with sensory phenomena, to the extent that one’s mind may fail to establish any links to vistas beyond the sensorial. This is the type of life which most individuals experience—striving only for shelter food, work and rest. Perhaps one may experience a somewhat broader scope of life, including family activities and involvement at the community (or even national) level. One may experience plenty of reasoning, connections, inferences and intellectuality, and yet still be completely in lack of a philosophical dimension.

In the absence of the philosophical, intellectual expression is limited at aiming to fully enjoy the material and the sensorial. (Here, intellectuality means a sound reasoning-power based on thought and sensory perception and a perceptual knowledge built on what is received through the senses. This also means the acceptance of outer things from the environment, i.e. those things which are not within ourselves but are received from outside.) However, such an approach cannot last indefinitely. Sooner or later, one will lose the power to enjoy, often with ensuing negative feelings such as frustration or despair. This calls for a deeper reflection, which one does both intellectually and spiritually: why does one seek to enjoy external things and sensory objects, granted that the pleasure that such things confer is ultimately exhausting and futile? Such reflection requires a deeper analysis of the body, senses and mind.

Though the body itself should actually be regarded as part of the inside field, it does also serve as the boundary-line between the inside and the outside. Thus, the body is in constant contact with the atmosphere beyond its boundaries, perceiving air temperature and touch-sensation, when one is in contact with objects from one’s external environment. Additionally, there are the sensations of external sounds, sights, tastes and smells. All sensory information which is collected ultimately passes through the nervous system to the brain, and from there to the mind—though the physiologists generally do not acknowledge the mind as the end-point, which they declare to be in the cerebral cortex.

Out of the constant flow of all kinds of sensations, certain images are received in the mind, but not all sensations continue on to the mind. In spite of the continuous operation of the five senses, only a limited number of the most predominant sensations are allowed to reach the mind. This is because there is a checking-point, called *manas*. This entity collects all the sensations and then selects and synthesizes them to be further conveyed to the objective aspect of the mind, where they shine forth and make the mind aware. When the connection is established, the “I” becomes aware of what has been perceived by the senses. Before that, there is only perception without awareness.

It is only the raw material from faculties of smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing that is

received as a sensation. Seeing, for instance, a red rose, the I becomes aware of that particular red rose and nothing else. So there are two kinds of calculation going on simultaneously: one as to the distinction, and the other as to the particular, which means that (by recalling previously gained experiences and by way of comparison) the I is aware of what it is not (yellow, white etc.). The raw material of sensation thus becomes a conception in the mind, intellectuality starting at that point.

There are also important differences in the functioning of sensory acquisition based upon particular circumstances, such as the experience of heat when a flame is obviously burning one's finger versus an experience of heat where one cannot directly see the source of the heat. If certain effects are experienced, but the cause is unknown, one attempts via inference to try to find out what the cause really is. One can infer that there must be a cause, even if it is unknown as such.

Inference is based upon reasoning. One endowed with a sound reasoning-power will be more likely to make a correct inference. One endowed with a poorly developed reasoning-power will make only an approximate inference. Inference must be utilized at most of life's important moments. One must apply reasoning power on the raw-material of the sensations and perceptions, even searching for linkages with previously-held conceptions, so as to enable correct and reasonable interpretations as often as possible. This is how intellectuality actually works.

From the raw material perceived, the mind tries to know, judge and connect the whole phenomenon with its possibilities, modes of application, and so on. When this becomes a predominating factor, it represents one's intellectual life with all its sublevels. At the top, one will reach a type of thoughts, which are called philosophical, thoughts that illustrate the mind's intellect working at a high level.

Patanjali mentioned five forms of *vrittis*: *Pramana*, *viparya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra*, and *smriti*. The third, *vikalpa*, is a form of *vritti* that cannot be verified in the sensory field. This means that, while a pattern of thoughts has its sensory background (where all sensory patterns are to be found), these are accessed and linked together in various ways. Sensory patterns are then connected to that faculty of the mind, that is able to establish a different pattern of links, connections, interpretations, or meanings, instead of regarding the sensory patterns as the ultimate reality. By analysis in a different way, the mind thus comes to the conclusion that the sensory is but a transitory phase of one's existence. Is it not wiser to look for something more worthwhile, more refined, by directing the I outside the sensory?

If so, the process of thinking will surely produce a more refined reasoning, which in turn will positively affect the sensory, that will then be transformed into something quite different, a philosophical thinking. When the ordinary intellectual thoughts and the bondage linked to the search for pleasure are replaced by this kind of philosophical thoughts, it will mean a release from all bondage, for these represent the path of Liberation.