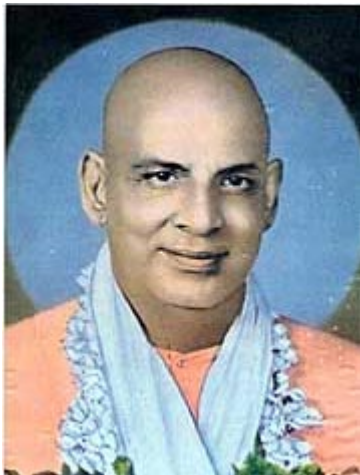


THE PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF YOGA

By

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA



**Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society**



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**

**So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda**



Sri Swami Chidananda

A DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY PUBLICATION

First Edition: 1984
Second Edition: 1991
(3,000 Copies)

World Wide Web (WWW) Edition: 1999
WWW site: <http://www.rsl.ukans.edu/~pkanagar/divine/>

This WWW reprint is for free distribution

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ISBN 81-7052-085-3

Published By
THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY
P.O. SHIVANANDANAGAR—249 192
Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttar Pradesh,
Himalayas, India.

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

Of the many Yoga paths leading to God or the Supreme Reality, four are more commonly known. These are Karma Yoga or the Path of Selfless Service, Bhakti Yoga or the Path of Devotion, Raja Yoga or the Path of Mind Control and Jnana Yoga or the Path of Intellectual Analysis. Even among these, Raja Yoga is popularly known as just “Yoga”; and similarly, Jnana Yoga is known as just “Vedanta”.

Of the four paths, again, Raja Yoga is the one which is the most scientifically organised. It is also known as Ashtanga Yoga or the Yoga of Eight Steps, each step or rung leading in logical progression to the next one. Raja Yoga is the ladder connecting our phenomenal existence with the Great Noumenon and we have to ascend this ladder step by step with great care and circumspection. No step can be ignored or bypassed except at one's own peril. Progress is assured provided the rules of the game are adhered to. And violation of the rules is bound to cause its own peril. Such is Raja Yoga propounded by that ancient sage Patanjali in the form of Sutras or terse aphorisms collectively known as Yoga Darshana.

Yoga Darshana is a difficult text, difficult to understand straightaway even by those with a good knowledge of Sanskrit. So Maharshi Vyasa wrote a commentary on Yoga Darshana, and subsequently, one Vachaspati Mishra wrote a more elaborate Gloss explaining the full meaning of Sage Vyasa's Commentary. All these Sanskrit texts will still be Greek and Latin to the modern man unfamiliar with that ancient language.

So we brought out in 1982 a series of discourses given in English by Swami Krishnanandaji on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras under the title, *Yoga as a Universal Science*. It was very well received by the public thirsting for a knowledge of the deeper implications of the great science of Yoga. We have great pleasure now to bring out this companion volume on the same subject of Ashtanga Yoga by Swami Chidanandaji. The present volume contains the edited version of a series of lectures given by Sri Swamiji to the Third Batch of trainees who underwent the Three Months' Course run by the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of the Divine Life Society. In the hands of Swami Chidanandaji, the Yoga Darshana comes to new life as a vibrant, living guide to spiritual practice. And Swamiji has delved deep into all the most essential aspects of Yoga Sadhana, and in doing so, has beautifully maintained logical sequence. And the whole volume reflects his earnest desire and longing that spiritual seekers should put to use this marvellous science of Yoga for furthering their spiritual advancement.

An earlier publication of ours, *Path to Blessedness* by Swami Chidanandaji, also deals with Raja Yoga, but it is more elementary in scope. It contains the essence of the discourses given by Sri Swamiji nearly thirty-five years ago. The reader who goes through both these volumes cannot fail to notice that the present work is the outcome, not only of the academic knowledge of the author on the subject, but more so of his own intense practice of the teachings of Patanjali.

We acknowledge with thanks the painstaking work put in by Kumari Srilata Bellare who transcribed Swami Chidanandaji's lectures from the tapes and by Sri N. Ananthanarayanan, who edited the manuscript into its present shape. May God's blessings be ever with them.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY.

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A BROAD OUTLINE OF THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY

In the context of the ancient Vedic culture of India, the knowledge that takes one forward and liberates one from the limited experience of body consciousness or the name and form consciousness, the ultimate knowledge that bestows upon one cosmic consciousness, is known as the higher knowledge or the greater knowledge, Para Vidya. This higher knowledge is clearly differentiated from the lower or the lesser knowledge, which pertains only to things that are within the confines of time, space and causation, that are limited by time, space and causation. This latter knowledge of things that are limited within time and space is therefore finite and temporary. It is non-eternal. It is the lesser knowledge, and at best it can help you to have a comfortable life of physical conveniences, sense satisfaction, and temporary, partial desire-fulfilment. It has not the power—limited, finite things have not the power—to liberate you from fear and sorrow, to liberate you from all the limitations and imperfections that pertain to this limited life bound by birth and death, hunger and thirst, joy and sorrow, and the ever-changing experiences of sense contacts. Those who seek a knowledge that is beyond this relative knowledge are, therefore, the aspirants for Para Vidya or the higher knowledge which ultimately bestows upon you freedom from bondage, fear and sorrow. This higher knowledge bestows upon you ultimately the experience of your real identity, your true Self which is beyond the apparent, limited self. It ultimately confers upon you spiritual illumination and perfection, the peace that passeth understanding, freedom from all limitations and absolute bliss.

Practice—The Keynote of the Science of Yoga

Para Vidya is not only for knowing, but also for doing. It is not simply for acquiring information, but more importantly, for putting that information to use by translating it into action, into practice. Because, Para Vidya or the science of Yoga is a practical science that is to be applied in living your life. This vital fact, this important point, in relation to the knowledge of Yoga should not be lost sight of. There should be in you the desire and the determination to start applying the instructions contained in the science of Yoga to your own life and conduct—to your mental actions and verbal actions, as well as to your outer physical actions. That is the very essence of this study that it is acquired with the specific intention and objective of simultaneously translating it into action, of simultaneously applying it to your daily life. Thus, every part of Yoga, right from the very start, is knowledge imparted for conversion into Abhyasa, because it is Abhyasa only that will ultimately bring to you the fruit of your knowledge in the form of rare experience that nothing else in this world can give. Therefore, always remember this term, this word, this concept, of Abhyasa, because Yoga is a practical science of Self-realisation and Abhyasa is the very essence of this science. You learn in order to live, to do.

The Afflictions that Beset the Human Being

The philosophy of Yoga puts forward, in non-technical or non-metaphysical terms, the thesis that you are essentially an all-perfect entity totally free from any imperfection and not subject to any undesirable, imperfect, negative experience whatsoever. What are the undesirable,

imperfect, negative experiences within the range of human knowledge? They are all those things which you are commonly engaged in trying to avoid by so many devious methods. Every day, from the time of your birth, you keep trying to avoid the discomfort and pain that is brought about by hunger. You do not want to remain on an empty stomach even for an hour or two beyond your usual time of breakfast or lunch. If the lunch is missed, you are very, very perturbed, very much disturbed, very much distressed. You become very morose and irritable also. Your whole mood changes. You become a different person. You are no longer a pleasant person. All the days of your life you are engaged in trying to avoid the unpleasant experience of not getting your food. If you do not get your morning breakfast or morning tea, or if you are deprived of your lunch, or if you have to miss your supper, you become a different person. You do not like that experience. So, you try to avoid that circumstance by somehow or the other trying to get something to eat. Have you ever thought about this? This is such a daily and common experience, and such a routine experience, that no one pays any attention to it from the philosophical angle, from the analytical metaphysical angle.

What is it that happens to you if you have to miss your meal just once? Your whole interior changes. You become a different person. You are no longer a pleasant person. You are inclined to give a sharp answer. You are displeased. Your peace is lost. You do not feel happy and you manifest your unhappiness in the form of a sharp answer or an irritated reply or aggravating conduct. This is an affliction that constantly keeps plaguing the human individual. When he wakes up in the morning, he has this affliction of the desire for taking food. One may call it hunger. Many naturopaths have a different opinion on whether this desire for food is really hunger or not. They have their own opinion. But normally, when you wake up in the morning, the desire that arises for taking something is regarded as the sign of hunger. So, this experience that bothers you, which if it is not satisfied distresses you, changes your personality for the time being, and makes you a different person to your own wife and to your brothers and sisters and even to your mother, is an affliction.

The same is the case with thirst, sleep, fatigue and other emotions also. Various sentiments and emotions bother you, disturb you, throw you out of gear and make you restless. They have the power to agitate you, to make you feel distressed. Unfulfilled desire, anger, a little failure on the part of someone to show respect to you, unkindness from someone, some sharp word from someone, or the failure on the part of someone to recognise your presence—all these immediately put you in a turmoil. Thus, physically, you are subject to the afflictions of hunger, thirst and fatigue and heat and cold. And mentally, emotionally and sentimentally, you are always subject to the affliction of varying states of mind. In this way, you are constantly falling a prey to varying states of mind, not all of which are pleasant. Some are pleasant, many are distressing. Yoga philosophy says that this is an unnatural condition, that this is not your natural condition. You are not a creature subject to such afflictions. You are not a being who has any one of these distressing experiences and symptoms. You are above them, you are beyond them, you are really free from them. They do not really form a part of your actual, true nature. This is very fine for Yoga philosophy to say! But this is not your experience. Your experience contradicts the possible validity or truth of this fine philosophy. Your experience is directly the contrary of what Yoga philosophy says about you. Every day you are in a state of distress only. Every day you suffer. The afflictions of hunger, thirst and discomfort, heat and cold, pain and pleasure are your daily experience. If a little attention is not paid to you when you ask something, your mind is thrown into a state of distress, agitation and turmoil; and it brings about physical changes also. Your blood pressure goes up, your face is

flushed, you feel hot and uncomfortable all over, and you want to blurt out something. You want to express your feeling of displeasure and distress and give vent to it so that you can relieve yourself of this inner buildup. You are altogether in an upset condition if someone somehow fails to pay due attention to what you try to bring to his notice, if your request is not regarded, if your presence is not recognised, or if something which you put forward is not properly attended to. So, your experience is an ever-fluctuating, ever-changing experience of constant contraries and constant opposites swinging between hope and despair, joy and sorrow, elation and depression—not only depression, but also a great deal of agitation caused by unfulfilled desires and cravings for things, agitation caused by irritability, annoyance, anger, fear, worry, anxiety and jealousy.

The Real Status of Man

Yoga philosophy says, “No. You are really free from all these things. You have no afflictions. You have no hunger, no thirst, no sleep, no fatigue. You have no pain, no pleasure. You have no distress, no agitation, no worry, no anxiety. You are a being full of perfection, complete in yourself, lacking nothing, full of joy, full of peace, full of bliss”. Then, if that is the fact, how come that your entire life, your entire experience from morning till night, contradicts this fact? What is the explanation? What is the reason for this? Why is this complication there? Whence has this problem arisen?

Yoga philosophy offers the analogy of a perfectly clear crystal which is transparent and pure, but becomes filled as it were with some colour if some coloured object is brought forth near it. The object thus brought forth may be a green-coloured ball or a little red-coloured flower or a blue-coloured cork and the whole crystal becomes green or red or blue. This proximity of something having some characteristic brings about a seeming transference of that characteristic from that something into the pure, transparent, clear crystal. So, it is the proximity to something that is the cause for the apparent change in the otherwise attributeless crystal ball. Now, Yoga philosophy says that you are also in a similar state of proximity to something, you have become involved with something, and therefore, states and conditions that exist in that factor seem as though they have come and taken possession of you.

In the case of the crystal, if you want it to become clear once again, what is the method to bring it about? You have to bring about once again a separation between the crystal and its proximate object. You have to bring about a cessation of the proximity that is there between the crystal and the object by separating the two. If the proximate object is taken away and the crystal is once again isolated from that object which has been superimposing all its qualities upon it, then, once again the crystal is pure, clear and transparent. Once again it stands in its own nature; it regains its own nature. It is no more modified and qualified by the something else which is not part of its essential being. This is the analogy that you have to consider and keep in mind.

Prakriti and Its Play of Superimposition

Now, what is it that has thus become involved in a state of proximity with you that is seemingly transferring its imperfect nature upon you, upon your perfectly pristine native condition, which is sorrowless, painless, without any limitation, without any blemish? Yoga philosophy tells you that it is phenomenal nature. Nature, in all its variations, acts as the factor which limits you into

a certain range of experience which is its own area, which is its own territory; and, by its proximity and by its close association with you, it transfers its varying experience into you as it were, and this cosmic nature with its different variations is termed Prakriti. And in your own physical personality, in your own individual personality, this Prakriti comprises all those factors other than your essential pristine identity, other than your eternal unchanging nature. Your eternal, unchanging nature is an identity independent of this cosmic nature, called Prakriti, and therefore, perfectly free from all the limitations that are part of Prakriti. But your present experience does not seem to reflect that essential identity of pristine awareness, where you are totally independent of any changeable experience whatsoever, where you are ever in a state of unchanging experience of fullness, peace and joy. On the other hand, your present experience seems to be the very contradiction of your pristine experience. Why? It is precisely because of your being associated with Prakriti in all its variegated modes, because of your being involved with it in a state of identification, taking upon yourself and your consciousness factors that do not really pertain to your eternal pristine native state. These factors are foreign to you, but you have taken them upon yourself. Or, they have become somehow like creepers twining into a tree due to close association. This association and this close proximity is the root cause of your being deprived of that experience of fullness and perfection, of peace and joy, which is your native state, and of your being caught in the trammels of a complicated pattern of experience which is the very contradiction of your pristine state. This is the problem. Your experience is not, therefore, your normal and natural experience. It is an unnatural, abnormal experience; and the cause, the main source or cause, the reason for this experience, is your having got into this bad company, having got into this embroilment or entanglement in Prakriti; and your true native state, your true identity in the state of Purusha, of Self, of Real Being, is lost. And as long as this involvement in the ever-changing Prakriti—which is full of contradictory experience, full of complication, full of fluctuation—is going to continue, your problem also is going to continue. As long as this state of association and entanglement with phenomenal nature is going to continue, your problem also is going to continue. The only way of putting an end to this problem, of bringing about a cessation of this hotchpotch of ever-changing experience—pleasant, unpleasant and neutral—is once again to regain your isolation, to go back to your normal and native pristine position, where you are not associated with any other factor, where you are not entangled or embroiled in any other factor, where you are independent. In that independent state, you are by yourself in a state of grand isolation, untouched by anything, beyond anything. In that pristine state, you are yourself as you are, as you eternally are, independent of any other factor, grandly isolated, free from any other association. If you regain that state which is your normal state, native state—now you are in an abnormal state—then all problems vanish. There is no more weeping and wailing, there is no more swinging between contrary experiences. You regain your pristine, ever-stable, unchanging state of fullness, of perfection. So, when this association with Prakriti or cosmic nature has precipitated this unfortunate state of affairs, to put an end to it, there is only one way and that is the right royal way—stop this association, terminate this association with the imperfect Prakriti, and be yourself. Establish yourself in your pristine isolated position. This is the philosophical thesis which is at the basis of the science of Yoga.

The Spiritual Reality of Man and the Psychological Situation in which He is Caught Up

How to bring about this separation so that you once again regain your independent status where you are not caught up in the factor called Prakriti? How to bring about this breaking of your

unfortunate association with Prakriti? That is what the science of Yoga is concerned about. How to give back to you your independence, how to give back to you once again that pristine state in which you are always there—that is the subject-matter of the science of Yoga. The imperfect-experience condition which is distressing, going up and down, has arisen due to your association with Prakriti or Nature that is ever unsteady. This association has to be broken if you are to regain your independent status of everlasting joy. So, the problem and the solution are provided for you by the philosophy of Yoga and the working out of the solution is gradually elaborated in a systematic manner in the practice of Yoga. But, this practice has to recognise the present reality. The present reality is that you are a very-much harassed being subject to a great deal of distress, of limitations. Whatever the truth of your identity may be, you have lost the awareness of your identity. Now you are not in that state of identity. So, we have to start from where you are. We cannot start from the other end, whatever you *might* be. That seems to have no relevance at all, because that experience is lost. It is no longer there. You may be told theoretically about it; you may believe it. But now you find yourself in a totally different position, and so we have to start from the position in which you are, where you are completely involved in thought, in mind, in the mental process, in sentiments, emotions—in short, involved in all the variations of all the physical as well as the psychological factors which make up Prakriti. Prakriti is made up of many things—the five elements, the Prana, the senses, and the mind in its different modes, each mode having its own variations. One single mode of the mind has got so many variations—Vasanas, Samskaras, imaginations, anger, passion, greed, hatred, envy, jealousy, worry, selfishness, attachment. The intellect has its own variations—clear perception, unclear perception and wrong perception. So, it is a complicated maze in which your consciousness is caught at present. And, in any practice that has to bring about the liberation of your Self, you must take count of the actual present position and start from there, and hence the need to get a clear idea of the psychology of Yoga. The practice of Yoga rests upon the present situation of the individual being and the present situation of the individual being is the psychological situation. The spiritual reality of the individual being is totally hidden and overcome by his psychological situation, like the sun or the moon overcome by an eclipse or a big piece of cloud. The practice of Yoga is thus based upon the realistic recognition of the present psychological position of the individual. As such, a clear knowledge of the present psychological situation of the individual is very essential. Herein comes the necessity of knowing about the psychology of Yoga. Based upon the psychology of Yoga, they have formulated a certain set of practices which form the practice of Yoga.

So, you are the Purusha, totally free from all sorts of negative experiences and afflictions. You are self-sufficient, independent, complete, of the nature of absolute peace and joy. But, that stage which the philosophy of Yoga clearly declares to be your authentic and genuine identity seems to be a far cry from where you now find yourself. You are very much dependent, not independent, very much full of experiences which you are always trying to get rid of somehow or the other, which you are always trying to replace by a more satisfying condition. So, it is not a very flattering position to find yourself in. Yoga science tries to explain to you why you are in this condition. Is there a way out of this condition? If so, what is it? Based upon the knowledge supplied by the science of Yoga as to why your present condition has been brought about, the way out of it also has been formulated. And if you seriously start applying this knowledge of the way out in the form of Abhyasa or personal practice, gradually it gives you back your state of independence or fullness—independence from all limitations, from all afflictions.

To sum up: your true identity is a state of absolute independence and freedom from any negative or painful or undesirable experience. You are a perfect being, free from all afflictions, independent. But, your present state does not seem to be anywhere near that pristine state and this is due to your association with another cosmical factor called phenomenal nature which Yoga philosophy calls Prakriti. Your proximity to, and association with, Prakriti has brought about this vitiation of your own Self-experience and replaced it by a very unsatisfactory, contradictory and mixed-up experience. And therefore, this association has to be terminated. Once again separating yourself from Prakriti, you have to establish yourself in your original independent status. And the practical aspect of the science of Yoga tries to give you a certain systematic method by which this can be achieved.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGA

The philosophy of Yoga and the psychology behind its practice—the two are bound up together in such a way that any consideration of the one inevitably has to simultaneously take into account the other, because the practice of Yoga is laid upon the basis of a psycho-philosophical background. The philosophy of Yoga and the psychology of Yoga are present not only as a background to this science of Yoga, but also as the basis for the practice of the Yogic processes. It is upon this basis that the different practices have been formulated and presented and this point should be borne in mind always, not only when we make a study of Yoga, but also when we actually practise the different Angas of Yoga. Only then will the practice become more meaningful to us and only then can the practice itself be done in a right way and in a rational way. If this Yoga practice is to be effective, you must know why you are engaging in this practice, what this practice is supposed to achieve for you, what you are expected to gain out of this practice, and what the effect of this practice is supposed to be upon your own nature, upon your own spiritual state. Otherwise, there would be no terms of reference by which you can ascertain whether the practice is actually proceeding in the right direction or not, whether it is bearing fruits step by step or not. Upon what hypothesis, upon what thesis will you judge whether your Yoga practice is progressive or stagnant, whether it is fruitful or sterile? How can you make out? It is only when you have a certain frame of reference with which you can tally your practice from time to time that you will be in a position to engage in your practice meaningfully, in an effective and satisfactory manner. And that is why it is necessary to bear in mind the psycho-philosophical basis of these Yoga practices even while you are engaged in them.

Warding off Painful Experiences—The Main Motivation Behind All Human Activity

In the last chapter we saw a broad outline of the philosophy behind Patanjali's Yoga Darshana. An analysis of the present condition of the individual shows that he is subject to many afflictions and painful experiences, many limitations and imperfections, upon the physical level and upon the psychological level—hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, elation and depression, what they call Harsha-Soka, Sukha-Duhkha. So, bodily and mentally, the pattern of experience of

the common individual does not seem to be very, very satisfactory, very desirable even, not at all beautiful. Most human beings are constantly engaged in an endless struggle of warding off painful experiences, of keeping at bay experiences that are distressing, that cause great discomfort and inconvenience. If you analyse human activity, you find that it is inextricably interconnected and interwoven with human experiences; and most of the activities are a reaction called up or thrown forth to counter these experiences, to try to change them, to try to overcome them, to try to nullify them, to try to eliminate them. So, we cannot say that human activity is in a large measure anything creative, anything gainful. It is all negative. Nothing comes out of it, except that you try to escape from bad experiences and manage to get rid of something here and something there which you do not want. It is not that you have brought forth something wonderful. So, it is neither constructive nor creative, neither gainful nor really meaningful. But, it is seen to be petty, Alpa. The Upanishad calls it Alpa. Constantly, a vast aggregate of the human race on this earth is engaged in a never-ending process of trying to ward off painful experiences, try to get rid of suffering and pain, that which it does not want. *Duhkham Ma Bhuyat*: Let no sorrow befall. That is the motivation. That is the idea behind most human activity. “I do not wish sorrow; I do not wish pain; I do not wish discomfort; I do not wish to have inconvenience and suffering.” So, it is not a gainful process. It is not a creative or a constructive process. Life goes on like this in this struggle.

When you consider this aspect of human activity and endeavour, you find that it is not so much an original activity, due to human will or human initiative, but something forced upon the human individual. Willy-nilly he is compelled to engage in these activities, not out of his own volition, but due to the force of circumstances or outer conditions. In the light of this situation, the ancient seers tried to find out what was the cause of this. They asked themselves: “Why has this situation arisen? How has this situation come about?”. And as a result of their intuitive discoveries, they came out with this knowledge that these experiences stem from an unfortunate involvement of a being who really is not subject to these experiences, who is in a pristine state, who is in his own independent native state, who is always in a state of perfect bliss, freedom and joy. So, this is an unnatural condition, an abnormal condition, resulting from an involvement in a factor which Yoga Shastras call the phenomenal nature or Prakriti. And, due to involvement in this Prakriti, the Purusha, who is a perfect being, independent, free from all afflictions, weeps and wails. So they said: “We shall try to formulate a method by which there may be brought about once again the isolation of the Purusha from this involvement, by which there may be brought about once again a separation of these two factors—Purusha and Prakriti—the coming together of which has resulted in all sorts of suffering”.

The Nature of Purusha’s Involvement in Prakriti—The Interplay of the Three Gunas

What is the form of this involvement of the Purusha in Prakriti? In what way is Purusha involved in Prakriti? What is Prakriti? In what way is it present? Advaita Vedanta uses the term Maya also with reference to this phenomenal nature and the Gita gives a certain extent of information, a certain hint that this Prakriti is made out of three Gunas—they call it qualities for want of a better term—or three states of being, namely, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. This divine cosmic illusory power called Prakriti comprises three Gunas. And Prakriti herself is present in the form of the gross physical body, the vital power that manifests as the living breath, the senses that are situated in the physical body with their natural urges towards their respective sense-objects, and

the inner man, the inner being, in the form of thinking and feeling, in the form of remembering and recollecting, in the form of reasoning and willing. It is due to your involvement in this Prakriti that you are experiencing this present state of a mixture of joy and sorrow, a constantly fluctuating mixed state, like a person tasting in the mouth an equal mixture of sand and sugar. One moment you feel the sweetness; another moment the teeth grind upon the sand particles and you feel very bad about it. When it is said that the Purusha is involved in Prakriti in its variegated modes as the gross physical body, the senses, the inner Prana, mind, intellect, memory and ego, all these go to make up the sum-totality of your individual human personality. All these represent the Prakriti in its various aspects. And the involvement of the Purusha in these aspects of Prakriti necessarily affects their manifestation or expression. It affects the way in which your mind expresses itself, your feelings express themselves, your thoughts express themselves. It affects the way in which your senses manifest their nature and your body displays its dynamics in its various movements in the form of restlessness, in the form of wanting to be active, in the form of hunger, in the form of various desires to eat, drink and rest, to sleep and to move about. These manifestations constantly keep you in a state of restlessness and agitation, and also drag you out of your innermost centre and forcibly bring you out into contact with the external universe of names and forms, of temporary things. And Prakriti being a composition of the three Gunas, the manifestations and movements of these various aspects of Prakriti—inner and outer, psychological and physical—also tend to fall under one or the other of these Guna categories. All this came in for the study of the ancient seers. They observed the human individual, observed his nature, in just the same way as a modern scientist would observe an ants' colony in a glass case, day after day, keeping the ants some food and observing them by day and by night, how they go after food, what their activities are, what their nature is, what code of conduct they have got, what their laws of behaviour are and so on. In a like manner, the ancient seers, the great scientists of the inner man, observed the human individual, his nature, his behaviour and his experience. And they studied the various manifestations of the different modes of Prakriti in the human individual within the area of framework of his nature. They made a study of how Sattva manifested in man, how Rajas manifested and how Tamas manifested.

An urge to activity, a constant restlessness, a tendency to movement, was the effect of the Rajas in Prakriti. Everything ugly, negative, anti-social and destructive was the result of the manifestation of the Tamas in Prakriti. Everything beautiful, sublime, elevating, refined and subtle was seen to be the effect of the manifestation of the Sattva in Prakriti. When we say "Prakriti", you should not have in your mind the picture of some goddess or some lady creating a lot of trouble. It is not like that. Prakriti is only a word to indicate a cosmic principle which is in the form of a force. It is not so much a power as a force. Power is exercised or wielded, whereas force just manifests itself, carries everything before it. Prakriti is therefore a cosmic force, a cosmic principle which is in the form of a force, manifesting upon different levels. When this force manifests upon one level, it is said to be Tamasic. When this force manifests upon another level, it is said to be Rajasic. And when this force manifests upon yet another level, a third level, it is said to be Sattvic. And, on all these three levels, it keeps on manifesting. How this goes on has been hinted at in the famous Bhagavad Gita which is both a Brahma Vidya and a Yoga Shastra. They have hinted at a cyclic manifestation of this Prakriti wherein sometimes Sattva predominates overriding Rajas and Tamas, sometimes Rajas predominates overriding Sattva and Tamas, and sometimes Tamas predominates overriding Sattva and Rajas.

Svabhava—The Individual’s Pre-acquired Pattern of Samskaras and Vasanas

Quite apart from this aspect of the movement of the three Gunas of Prakriti, there is another even more important aspect of the presence of these three Gunas of Prakriti in human nature, and that more important aspect is also to be grasped only upon the basis of philosophy. Philosophy behind and beyond Yoga has expounded the presence of recurring embodiments for the Purusha as long as the Purusha has not succeeded in dissociating himself from Prakriti and regaining his splendid isolation, his pristine independent condition. As long as that is not achieved, there is ever-recurring embodiment for the Purusha, and in each new embodiment the Purusha comes with a pre-acquired background condition. What is this pre-acquired background condition? When you have completed one page in an accounts book and you have to start upon a fresh page, you bring forward to the beginning of the fresh page the last entry that is at the end of the previous page. That will be the basis of commencement of fresh entries upon the new page. Thus, the fresh page is not a blank page. It already commences with a starting background condition. It is already there. Whether it is a credit or a debit or whatever it is, it is there. In a similar manner, at the time of each embodiment, you come into this world with a certain pre-acquired pattern of Samskaras and Vasanas, of impressions and innate tendencies, latent tendencies, which already have set the pattern of your nature in this fresh embodiment. So, this condition in which you start your life, commence your career, human career, with a certain set pattern, with an intermixture of Rajas, Tamas and Sattva in a certain ratio, is the state of Prakriti in you, is your inborn Prakriti, your built-in Prakriti state. And this is an even more important aspect of the presence of Prakriti in you than the cyclic manifestation of the three Gunas in Prakriti continuing in a sort of an ever-recurring movement within you. This condition in which you come into the world with a certain set pattern of the Prakriti with its three Gunas is indeed a very vital factor, because this decides the exact form in which the cyclic manifestation of the three Gunas will take place in you.

Will Prakriti keep on manifesting in you as the truthfulness of Harischandra or Yudhishtira or George Washington who, as the story goes, cut down an apple tree in the garden and confessed it to his father? Or, will the three Gunas manifest in you as a compromising attitude—an attitude where if it is not too inconvenient, you will stick to truth, but if it is likely to bring suffering to you, you will not mind uttering a falsehood? Or, will Rajas and Tamas manifest in you as a downright lying habit, so much as to say that you are born with a tendency to speak only false, never to utter truth? What decides the nature of manifestation of the three Gunas of Prakriti in you? The deciding factor is the background nature which you have already acquired and brought along with you when you have come into this present embodiment, into this fresh page of your account book. It is your background nature that decides the exact form, the exact Rupa-Rekha, the exact blueprint, of the dynamics of the recurring manifestation of the three Gunas in you—the precise form in which Prakriti will manifest in your particular character, in your particular individuality. And this background nature brought forward from previous births will differ from person to person. In a family there may be seven children, say, two daughters and five sons. In each one, the cyclical manifestation of the three Gunas will be there, the ever-changing pattern of their manifestation will be there. But the exact form in which this changing pattern will express itself in actuality may be completely different in each one of the children, though they are born of the same parents, brought up in the same home and environment, fed with the same food. It will be completely different, because of this other aspect of each one’s involvement in Prakriti, namely, the ratio in which the three Gunas of Prakriti happen to be present in the background nature, in the foundation, in the

pre-acquired built-in born nature. We call this foundation nature by the name “Svabhava”. Svabhava will never change. The foundation will never change. One can go on altering the building, the superstructure, demolishing and remodelling and all that, but the foundation is unalterably there, and upon that foundation only all the remodelling will have to be done. So, the foundational aspect of your involvement in Prakriti is a very important factor.

The Animal in Man—The Problem of the Unregenerate Human Individual

The ancient Rishis, having known both these aspects of Purusha’s involvement in Prakriti, namely, the presence of Prakriti in man and the manifestation of Prakriti in his nature, went on studying the two aspects. For the purpose of this study, they went deep within themselves, directed the attention of their concentrated mind upon each subject, and performed a certain very, very unique spiritual exercise upon that subject to know all the ins and outs about that subject. That spiritual exercise was called Samyama. As you proceed in Raja Yoga, you will come across this Samyama, which is an inner spiritual process made up of concentration and meditation and an intense superconscious state of cognition, of perception. A simultaneous practice of all these three put together, namely, concentration, meditation and Samadhi, directed upon a particular subject, is Samyama. Through such Samyama upon human nature, upon human behaviour, upon the inner man, the Yogis of old discovered various truths. Through such Samyama, through intuitive experiences, through a direct vision of man and things, they studied and learnt about the manifestations of the different aspects of Prakriti in different subjects. In man they discovered that the manifestations of Prakriti were sublime in some cases, neutral in some, and very degenerate and very ugly in others. Upon the very lowest end of the scale, they found that the involvement of Purusha in Prakriti resulted in Tamasic manifestations like cruelty, violence, a tendency to cause suffering, to injure, to hurt, to destroy, a dire propensity of inhuman nature. And they said that this was also a part of human nature. In common terminology, we say, “He is a very devil, he has got the devil in him, he is a devilish person”. So, there is a devil in man. But, in metaphysical terminology, they call it the animal in man, because this propensity to attack, injure, hurt, destroy, cause pain and suffering, this violence is the law of the jungle. It is a common feature of the animal state of existence. So, within the human being, the involvement of Purusha with Prakriti, upon the lowest gross level, resulted in the unfortunate expression of animal propensities.

Also, an animal leads, through the whole of its life, a gross body-bound existence; its life is confined to the satisfaction of hunger, thirst, sex and sleep. That is animal life. Sex is there, because the law of biological evolution requires that the species should not become extinct. Therefore, for the continuity of the species, reproduction is indispensable, and for the process of reproduction, sex activity becomes an inevitable part of the biological, physical animal. It is because of sex that over millions of years different species have continued to exist. They are still there, and in spite of so much in nature that tries to destroy them, they continue to be there, thanks to this in-built sex mechanism, this reproductive process in the biological, evolutionary scheme of things for life on earth ordained by some mysterious superconscious being. So, these characteristics of sex, hunger, thirst and sleep form the root nature of life on earth. The whole life is nothing but a constant effort to satisfy hunger, thirst, sex and sleep and this is present in the animal man. So far, it is all right. Its presence is no dire calamity or disaster. But, if it becomes the more dominant part of your life-style, then it becomes a dangerous predicament, because you have reached a level where the biological evolution has brought you to the peak point, where quite another aspect of evolution is supposed to

commence. From the peak point of the biological evolution, ethical and spiritual evolution is about to start, and as long as you allow the brute nature in you to become the dominant factor in your life-style, this will never commence, this will never be launched—this other evolution at the commencement of which you have arrived, from where you have to ascend higher and higher ultimately to become God. You are, after all, the Purusha, divine, eternal, all-perfect. But, as long as your whole nature is only a manifestation of violence, destruction, sex satisfaction, cunningness and devious dishonesty, the necessary process of ascent will never start. That will never start. So, it becomes a great calamity.

So, what happens? The human personality becomes the unfortunate playground for the qualities of violence, carnal passion, untruth, falsehood, deception, dishonesty, acquisition and an ever-expanding process of sense satisfaction. No satiation. The more you have, the more you want, and in more ways you want to satisfy your senses, in more ways you want to give satisfaction to the animal in you. You want to go on satisfying the senses of sight, taste, sound, touch and smell. There is no end to this ever-progressive, ever-expanding sensuality, to this unsatisfied desire to grab and accumulate and acquire by hook or by crook, to this type of dishonest life-style. So, this is the problem of the unregenerate human individual and the science of Yoga sets about tackling this basic problem of the unregenerate human individual personality dominated by the animal level of his nature. And the first liberation of man from Prakriti has to be from this direct manifestation of Tamo-Guna, the grossest state of Prakriti's threefold nature. And so, Patanjali commences the Yoga discipline by saying that the first and foremost task is to come to grips with the animal in you, to get involved in a tussle with the animal in you and try to overcome it. Refuse to give in to the urge for violence, for injury, for hurting others, the urge for causing destruction either by thought, word or deed, by any movement of your personality. Refuse. Make a strong determination that from you nothing but humanity will manifest, never the animal. Tell yourself: "Now I have awakened to the fact that there is the animal in me. I am no more going to be a stage for the manifestation of the animal in me. I have determined that the stage will be cleared of the animal in me and only the human will manifest". This is the first Yogic determination, the first Yogic vow. You take a vow in order to make a strong determination. You take a Pratijna. In this manner, in Yoga, where philosophy and psychology form the basis of practice, the commencement of practice is to counter man's involvement in Prakriti in its grossest aspect. This is the Abhyasa of Yama, the first Anga of Yoga.

3

THE FIVE GREAT VOWS

In the preceding chapters we saw how all our problems are due to the involvement of the all-perfect, ever-free, blissful Spirit with the imperfect, ever-changeable and dualistic phenomenal nature called Prakriti, and how due to this involvement in Prakriti, many of the imperfections that are inherent in Prakriti are superimposed upon the Purusha who is, in reality, a being totally free from all afflictions. The Purusha has no sorrow, no anxiety, no worry; he has no fear, no pain, no suffering. His experience is always peace and bliss. He is beyond dualities. He is perfect and self-sufficient, and therefore, always free from all afflictions. But yet, due to his proximity to

Prakriti and involvement in Prakriti, many of the experiences that lie is Prakriti become superimposed upon the Purusha. And the Purusha, as it were, seems to be suffering also, undergoing all sorts of negative painful experiences—fear, anxiety, worry, sorrow, hunger, thirst and so on. The aim and objective of Yoga is to once again liberate the Purusha from this involvement and give him a state of being established in his own Self-experience. That is the state of liberation.

And then, we went on to see how the Yoga Shastra or the science of Yoga, in a gradual way, in a graded method, tries to bring about a separation of the Purusha from Prakriti, a freeing of the Purusha from its involvement in Prakriti. In this connection, we dealt with Prakriti briefly and saw how the phenomenal universe is composed of the three Gunas—Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. The grossest and the outermost Guna is Tamas which is inertia, grossness, darkness. Next is uncontrolled dynamism, the desire nature of Rajas. That also is a bondage. Tamas holds you down; Rajas binds you in another framework. But, Sattva is pure, of the nature of light. It ascends, it has got an upward trend, it takes you up, elevates you, uplifts you.

And we saw that Yoga starts with this clear knowledge that out of the individual Prakriti, that which is most objectionable, that which is the grossest, the ugliest, the most impure, that which is the very antithesis of the Spirit, the very contradiction of the all-perfection and all-purity of the Spirit, that has to be eliminated first. This gross aspect of Prakriti in the form of the Tamo-Guna is present as the animalistic, brute nature in man. This brute nature manifests in man in the form of a tendency to injure, to give pain and suffering, to destroy. Tamas also manifests in man as sensual tendencies, as carnal passion. And in the wake of his pursuit after sensual experiences, the human individual takes to deceit. By hook or by crook he must get his sense-objects. So he becomes a worshipper of falsehood, a follower or votary of untruth. In him, dishonesty, chicanery, treachery, deceitfulness, and also, Himsa, Asatya, impurity and a carnal passion nature—all join together. And then, he is endlessly greedy, wants to acquire more and more and more, and in this process, throws to the wind all considerations of ethics. “Does it belong to me? Have I a claim or right over it that I wish to take?” This is his line of thinking. He does not say, “It is something that belongs to someone else; it does not belong to me. I have no claim over it, I have no right over it. I have no moral justification in taking it”. No, he does not say that. Dishonestly, without considerations of ethics, he reserves things, becomes a dacoit, robs, steals. He takes what does not belong to him. He covets things to which he has no right. Thus, the life of a brute man is full of violence, brutality, cruelty, hardness, harshness, sensuality, grossness, deceit, dishonesty, untruth, greed.

Eliminating the Brute in Man—The Role of Vows

So, Patanjali first starts by dealing with this aspect of Prakriti prevalent in the individual nature and pervading individual activity in life. Man must be liberated first from these things. This Tamas must be eliminated from his nature and so the science of Yoga lays down that one who aspires for liberation and the perfect supreme experience of bliss must eliminate the brute in him, must eliminate that aspect of his nature which is the result of the presence of Tamo-Guna. And therefore Patanjali lays down the rule that aspiring Yogis, those who want to acquire the higher abilities and attain illumination, must take up certain vows. This is like the Christian Church laying down the three fundamental vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the man who wishes to take to the path of renunciation and become a religious monk and enter a monastery to take to a life of

contemplation. This triple vow is a prerequisite, is absolutely indispensable, if you want to enter into any monastic order in the Christian set-up—poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poverty means not wishing, not desiring to possess anything. It means, in other words, an absence of greed, of cupidity, of covetousness. Chastity is Brahmacharya, moral purity in all its implications, in thought, word and action. And Brahmacharya implies abstinence, not from sex only, but from every type of impure and sensual indulgence. And sensual indulgence means indulgence by any of the five senses. Next, obedience. It means obedience to the entire spiritual hierarchy. That is the one and only way by which the rebellious ego, the self-asserting nature, the nature that is the basis of arrogance, pride, assertiveness, dominance and self-importance can be removed. Otherwise it is very difficult to remove pride. It is only through continuous and constant obedience that this sense of superiority and pride can go. Obedience, then, is the contrary of self-expression. The ego always wants to express itself and if the ego is denied expression, terrible things can happen to the psychic being of man. The person can become psychotic; he can become off the rails mentally. He can even have a sudden crack-down in his head; he can start raving. In short, man can become an abnormal personality if self-expression is denied to his ego. The Western psychologists are very much aware of this and one of the basic concepts underlying the science of psychology formulated and expounded by Sigmund Freud takes account of this fact and pays great attention to the ego and self-expression. Nevertheless, perfect obedience to the Guru or the spiritual director and to the laws of the spiritual organisation are called for. For example, in Buddhism, the one who takes the vow and enters into the monastic order says, “Buddham Saranam Gachchami; Dammam Saranam Gachchami; Sangham Saranam Gachchami”. It means: “I take refuge in the Enlightened One, the Buddha; I take refuge in the Law that he has laid down in his teachings; I take refuge in the Sangha, in the organisation”. So, the new entrant says, “Now I am subservient to the organisation. Whatever the rules and regulations of the organisation be, I must put myself under them, I must obey them, I should not allow my ego to assert itself”.

Obedience—A Means to Free Oneself from the Tyranny of the Ego

There seems to be a strange inconsistency or sort of incompatibility between this state of affairs prevailing in the spiritual and monastic world and the rule of the Western psychological field. But then, there is a difference. You will see that the seeming incompatibility is not so much as it appears on the surface when you recognise that the taking of the vow of obedience is on the part of the would-be monastic in a spiritual set-up. He is not one hundred per cent in the act of a suppressing of self-expression, precisely because he is taking the vow willingly and voluntarily out of his own desire to do so, and he submits to it with the full awareness of what it means to his freedom as an individual. But he says that there is another dimension to his inner life—a knowledge little known to Western psychology—and that his submission and denial of the ego is the greatest good for him. His knowledge of the inner spiritual aspect of man’s life has suddenly made him realise that the so-called normal state of always expressing one’s ego is a state of slavery. We are being tyrannised by our ego principle all the time. We are being dominated by it. It is playing with us like the cat playing with the mouse and we are really in a very pitiable condition. We have not much say in the matter either. We are simply impelled and propelled and pulled and pushed by this ego and its whims, fancies and desires. So, the spiritual seeker, the student of Yoga, tells himself: “I am always ridden by this thing called the ego and therefore I wish to put a stop to this very undesirable state. Due to my higher knowledge of the spiritual dimension of my life, I have come to know that I am something other than this ego. I am something more, I am something quite distinct.

This ego is not I. This expression of my ego is not really my self-expression. It is some other thing that is ruling the roost, shoving me aside. Therefore, I must regain my real place, role and status in my own sphere, within the sphere of my own inner personality. At the moment I am nowhere, I am suppressed, I am denied my rightful place; and someone else is occupying it and is playing the game. I am tyrannised, dominated, enslaved. I will not allow this to continue any more. I am going to assert myself. This ego has to be chastised, it has to be shown its right place; and this would do the greatest good for me”.

This is the commencement of the process of liberation. This vision, this perceptive analysis of the matter, is unknown to the Western psychologist. The Western psychologist does not know that there is a principle which is distinct and different from the individual ego of the human personality, and that that principle is the real identity of the person, and the ego is only a temporary imposter. He does not know that the ego is masquerading as someone, that it is in fact, a spurious identity, not the real identity. But the student of Yoga knows. And out of this knowledge, the desire arises in him: “No, no, I must now manifest my Self. I must give expression to my Self. No more should this state of affairs continue where some spurious factor is having a field day within my own personality. This has to stop now”. This idea is at the basis of submitting the ego to a higher law or a higher factor, or a higher being or a higher personality. And so, the danger of any abnormality arising out of suppression or oppression or denial of self-expression, which has its validity within its own limited sphere, that danger does not operate here, that danger does not exist here, because this is a new set-up, a new framework altogether. On the contrary, when you make up your mind to deny the ego and submit it to the law or the Sangha or the organisation, or the rules of the system, or the Guru, you do it voluntarily and willingly, and in this act, the true You, your spiritual Self, is asserting itself, is expressing what it wants. Thus, it is actually an act of self-expression, in the sense that it is the desire of your spiritual self to bring about a cessation of the unsatisfactory state of affairs and thereby a distinct change. The anatomy of this entire process, the mechanics of such obedience, such subservience, such surrender, is clear if you have the right perception and right vision of what you are doing. Then, by submitting the ego, you feel a sense of freedom, a sense of lightness. Up till now you were under the crushing burden of your ego-dominance, and when it is told to keep its place and behave itself and be silent, you begin to experience a sense of liberation.

So, just as these vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are the fundamental requirements of entering into a new life for monastic aspirants in Christianity—and each religion and each organisation has its own vows—Patanjali has laid down a set of five vows to be taken at the point of your entry into the life of practical Yoga. And these five vows have a direct relevance and connection to what we saw earlier as the grossest expression of Prakriti or phenomenal nature in which man is involved and which is the outcome of the Tamo-Guna in Prakriti. And the five vows of Patanjali constitute the foundation of the various stages of Yoga.

Now, in the light of what has been explained about the background philosophy and the nearer psychology—the philosophy is a remoter background and the psychology behind it is the immediate background—you will be able to understand why this first fundamental stage of Yoga has given these five vows, which taken together, have the common name of Yama.

Ahimsa Seen against the Background of the World Spectacle Today

The first of the Yamas is the vow to abstain from injuring any living being, any creature. This is known as Ahimsa. The person who takes this vow declares: “From me there shall come no injury, no pain, no suffering or destruction to life in any form”. This means that either through your thinking or through your words or through your actions you will not injure anyone. You will not bring pain or suffering to anyone—not only to fellow human beings, but to all forms of life. This is a sublime expression of your higher nature. The tendency to assert your lower nature, your ego, your false identity, leads to all sorts of harshness, cruelty, hardness, insult, abuse, even to raising your hand and coming to blows, fighting and quarrelling. All this comes out of the expression of the false ‘I’, and hence the first vow—the entry-point of Yoga. The spiritual aspirant says: “I shall not cause any pain or suffering to anyone. I shall not cause any unnecessary sorrow to any person, and therefore, my speech will be soft and peace-giving. My actions will be such as will be conducive to the good of others, to the benefit and happiness of others, and not the contrary. And my mind also will always think well of others. It will be thoughts full of goodwill, peace, affection, love, friendliness, brotherhood, oneness, unity, sympathy, kindness”. Why? Only if the thoughts are of this nature, it is possible to make your words and actions also of the same nature. Otherwise it is not possible, because the fountain-source of our actions are the thoughts, first and foremost. As are the thoughts, so are the actions. If a different kind of thoughts are allowed to gain entry into the mind, they will lead to a different kind of words and a different kind of actions. Thoughts are the root, the seed, the source of all activity. Actions are only the outer expression of the thoughts dominating the mind and impelling the individual. Action is thought translated outwardly. So, the necessity of Ahimsa thoughts, compassion thoughts, forgiveness thoughts, kindness thoughts, sympathy thoughts, friendliness thoughts, brotherly-unity thoughts and cosmic-love thoughts. They are the most important part of Yoga. For, then alone your speech also will be of the same quality, of the same nature. Then you will understand, with a little reflection, that for the first time you are engaged in the process of real self-expression, of true self-expression. Far from effecting any suppression or denial of self-expression, you are now commencing to give expression to your real self, to your true identity, in which you are divine, in which you are the Atman, the Satchidananda Atman, the Divine Spirit, a centre of love, a centre of all that is auspicious and good, a centre of peace, a centre of sweetness and kindness.

Here commences the true process of your expressing yourself in the fundamental sense of the term ‘Ahimsa’, in the real sense of the term Ahimsa. The greatness of Ahimsa is so much that if it is not there, a human being is a human being only in form. He may be a vertical vertebral creature with two legs, a biped on vertical vertebrae, but if he does not have Ahimsa in him, only in form and name is he a human being, but actually he is a brute. He is a brute only if he ill-treats his wife at home and shouts at his children and is harsh to his servants and subordinates and rides roughshod over the feelings of others and does not care a hoot whether he has hurt anyone or not. If he is a rude person, harsh person, cruel person, hard-hearted person, he is really an inhuman being, because harshness and cruelty dehumanise a human being and leave him human only in his outer appearance, but not in his actual nature. And here comes Yoga science to make you divine and godly, to make you regain your status as the Supreme Purusha, the Divine Being. Therefore, that which is the greatest obstacle to the Yoga process, that which is something that does not leave you even as a human being but dehumanises you and brutalises your nature, that should be got rid of. Therefore, take this vow of Ahimsa and say, “Even at the point of death, I will not hurt anyone, I

will not injure anyone, I will not give pain or suffering to anyone, I will not harm anyone, I will not cause destruction or injury to anyone”. This is the vow. The first part of Yoga is not merely a spiritual practice or Sadhana, but a vow which you must take and adhere to like a hero, making yourself an embodiment of kindness, compassion, universal love, softness, sweetness and forgiveness.

Diametrically opposed to this concept of Ahimsa is the world spectacle today which fills one with great distress and great pity. In nations all over the world, due to a completely warped concept of human life and its ultimate goal, organised human society has come to accept the concept and the phenomenon of systematically giving training in arms to a large number of citizens, spending a great deal of money upon it, training which totally brutalizes them and prepares them to kill, to destroy. The armouries of nations are full of machines of incredible cruelty and destruction that completely brutalize human nature, that completely dehumanise human society. And all this is done in a carefully organised way. Great scientific books, technical books, are written upon this subject, and there are great institutions where people go and study these books to get a full knowledge of it all. So, when we know from the vision of Yoga that man is divine and the ultimate divine destiny of the human being is to become a godly personality, radiating joy and peace everywhere, when we know this and we see the sorry spectacle of an arms race in the world, we feel, “Ah! What a great pity!” We see how vast sections of human beings are deprived of their great blessedness due to the mistaken view of human society and due to the wrong approach to social relationship and social life within the global community. We find how unfortunate they are. We do not know how it is that they are deprived of this great heritage which is their birthright from the vision of the science of Yoga. We look at this thing that is happening and gasp how countless thousands and millions of people are trained only to kill, destroy, harm and injure in diabolical ways, and in more and more terrible ways—poison-gas warfare, bacterial germ warfare and so on. If you go into the intricacies of war, you will not get sleep. Your heart will be wrenched. It will be wrung in horror and agony, and yet, this is what is going on upon a vast scale all over the world, even in the land of Buddha, even in the land of Lord Krishna, in the land of Patanjali and Yoga Shastra. And it is done upon the plea that we have no other alternative, that though we do not want these things, though we would very much like to give up these things and have universal brotherhood, peace, unity, one world and all that, when our neighbours are of a different nature, we have no other alternative left. For our own safety, for our own self-defence, we have to be strong; and these things are meant to be used not in offence, but in retaliation, to protect ourselves, to defend ourselves. In this way, the human mentality tries to rationalise the things that are totally wrong, unrighteous and against the great moral order of this world. It tries to justify these things. But they are very dehumanising, very brutalizing. Man becomes a brute, goes back once again into a brutal state, even while he is in human society as a human being. If he throws a bomb and ten people are killed, he is given a medal. And sometimes, if he has got a conscience still, he starts feeling very bad afterwards. He becomes, may be, mentally shocked, deranged, and his whole personality undergoes a change. When he comes back from the war, he cannot fit into normal society. Some people turn into criminals, some into dacoits and highway robbers, some commit suicide. All sorts of disease spread due to people engaging in such activities as are totally against their divine nature.

So, Patanjali starts with the greatest danger that is present in the way of higher evolution, in the way of spiritual unfoldment, namely, violence; and to counter that danger, advocates the vow of Ahimsa.

Satyam or Truthfulness—Its Implications and Connotations

The second great vow for the Yoga student to take is the vow of truthfulness, because God is truth, and anything that contradicts truth contradicts God, denies God. Hence the vow of truthfulness. There are sayings in Sanskrit which praise these two vows of Satyam and Ahimsa, of truth and non-violence, as among the highest principles of Dharma or righteousness. "*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*" is one saying. It means, "Non-injury is the highest form of righteousness, the highest expression of righteousness". There is another saying: "*Satyam Nasti Pararno Dharmah*". It means, "Higher than truth there is no other Dharma".

How to practise these vows, adhere to these vows, in our daily life is the next question. In what all ways can a person be cruel or violent? You can be cruel or violent without raising your hand or hitting anyone. You can be cruel through your speech. You can be cruel through your expression in which you frighten a little child by getting angry at it and widening your eyes; the child's soul may tremble. You can just terrify in that way someone lesser than you by your expression. Likewise, in what way can you be truthful? Speaking falsehood is not the only way of being untruthful. Concealing a thing is also a falsehood. Trying to exaggerate a thing is also a falsehood. Trying to reveal something partially and keeping something back is also a sort of dishonesty. And there are ever so many other ways of being untruthful. You must reflect over all possible ways in which one can contradict truth in one's dealings with others every day. It is a very intricate subject. Thinking something inside and appearing to be something else outside—that also is a contradiction of truth. But on occasion, being something inside and appearing to be something else outside could be an act of kindness also, could be an act of compassion also. In order to uphold Ahimsa, temporarily you may have to have a slight deviation from truthfulness. Supposing you see a loathsome beggar or a leper. You are revolted inside, but for fear that you might hurt his feelings if you turn away in disgust, you put on a calm appearance as though it is quite a normal thing; you ask him what he wants and quickly dispose of him, quickly get rid of him. Thus you avoid hurting his feelings by not manifesting your revulsion in your exterior. You had something inside, but you appeared something different outside. Strictly it is not an expression of truth, but it becomes justifiable, because by this you have managed to uphold the still higher Dharma of compassion, of Ahimsa. You have not hurt the other person's feelings. You have spared him. Therefore, the detailed implications of these vows, and clarifications relating thereto, are very subtle and intricate. You must reflect over various possibilities. Gradually you will know the vows in greater and greater clarity and detail.

Brahmacharya and How It Is to be Practised in Different Levels of Life

After Ahimsa and Satyam comes the vow of Brahmacharya. On the practice of Brahmacharya you will get valuable light if you read the book of Mahatma Gandhi, "Self-restraint versus Self-indulgence". Formerly it used to be in two volumes. Now, the Navjivan Trust of Ahmedabad has brought it out in a single volume. In that book Gandhiji says that Brahmacharya is a broad term which means conducting yourself in such a manner as will ultimately gain for you the

vision of Brahman. According to him, the concept of Brahmacharya is to be understood in a pervasive way. Brahmacharya or chastity is a way of conducting yourself which gives you, grants you ultimately, Brahma-Jnana or the experience of the Supreme Reality. But, very specifically, Brahmacharya means control over your sex urge. Very specifically, it means control over your carnal passion, over your animal passion. But in a general way, it means self-control or control over all the senses—control over the sense of sight, control over the sense of hearing, control over the sense of touch, over the sense of taste and over the sense of smell. Ultimately, it means control over the wrong type of thoughts even.

Brahmacharya means different things in different levels of life. In the bachelor stage and in the student stage, it means total abstinence from sex. In the Sannyasin state also, it means a total abstinence from sex. And in a married householder, in a family man's condition, it means moderation in sex activities, in sex life. Because, in the family sphere of a householder's life, sex has been given a legitimate place and a legitimate role for the perpetuation of the species, and therefore, with that specific purpose, man and woman are brought together in the sacred relationship of man and wife. And therefore, in that sphere of man's life, Brahmacharya has the implication of moderation, of controlled and regulated martial life. And in a Yogi, in a student, in a youth, and in a Sannyasin, it means total abstinence. In a third area, when the first two stages of student life and married householder's life are over, and one retires, Brahmacharya means total abstinence in its physical expression and moderation in its expression upon its sentimental and emotional levels. Because, in the third stage or Vanaprastha stage, both man and wife live together. They live a retired life, taking more and more interest in spiritual activities, going upon pilgrimages, going into spiritual retreats, studying the scriptures, being partners in worship and meditation, and generally living a life of spiritual quest. There they live together, they give affection to each other, and they serve each other. There they are still husband and wife, but so far as the physical relationship which used to be there in the family set-up in the second stage is concerned, that is completely stopped; at the same time, there is emotional and sentimental interchange in their relationship upon a higher level. That also is moderation. They still do continue to remain man and wife, but yet, they remain more as partners in a higher life, partners in an ethical and spiritual life, in a life of Yoga. And so, in the different stages of life, the vow of Brahmacharya has different but specific implications or connotations.

Aparigraha and Asteya—Non-covetousness and Non-stealing

Brahmacharya, thus, is the third vow to be taken by the person who wishes to enter into the path of Yoga and gradually ascend and attain to a state of meditation, to a state of super-consciousness. There are two more vows in the first Anga called Yama in Patanjali's Yoga Darshana. They are the vows of not coveting anything that does not belong to you. In the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, it is said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife". Here, "neighbour's wife" means all things that belong to the neighbour, because the wife is the highest possession of the neighbour and all other possessions like house, property, goat, sheep and cattle come after it. So, when you say, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife", it means, "Thou shalt not covet anything belonging to thy neighbour", because, the wife represents the highest possession or belonging of the neighbour, and all else come under it. To give another example. There is a very picturesque expression in Sanskrit which says, "In the footprint of an elephant, all footprints are already there". In the footprint of an elephant, the footprint of a horse or a buffalo, a cow or a dog or

THE FIVE GREAT VOWS

a donkey, everything is there, because the elephant's footprint is so big that one may consider it to hold the footprints of all other animals in the world. In a similar fashion, the highest possession of a man, namely, the wife, may be taken to include all his other possessions. So, you should not only not covet your neighbour's wife, but you should not covet anything belonging to your neighbours. This vow of not desiring to possess anything that does not belong to you is called Aparigraha. Aparigraha means also a life of simplicity, not being too luxurious and too extravagant, because the more luxurious and extravagant you are, the more things you want. Wants are multiplied. Your desires become endless. Then you always begin casting eyes on things that other people have and you do not have, and you want that and you want this. Enmity comes, jealousy comes, the desire to possess comes; you fall into a restless state. You lose your peace of mind. It makes you a jealous creature, a very envious type of person. Therefore there is this taking of the vow, "I will live my life upon a plain level of utter simplicity. I will accept from the life around me just that which is necessary to live a normal simple life. I will refuse to receive from the life around me that which is not necessary for me, that which is an unnecessary extravagance". Like that is the vow of Aparigraha, non-acceptance.

The last vow is Asteya. It is abstinence from theft. 'Steeya' means theft. 'Asteya' means non-thieving, the vow of non-thieving, non-theft.

So, Ahimsa, Satyam, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha and Asteya—these are the five great vows which are meant to liberate the aspiring Yogi from the bondage of the grossest aspect of phenomenal nature or Prakriti as manifest through her Tamo-Guna. The Yogi has to take these five vows and adhere to them—the vow of non-injury, the vow of truthfulness, the vow of chastity or the vow of controlling the gross carnal nature, the vow of non-acceptance and the vow of non-theft. By a strict adherence to these vows, your life becomes raised to a higher level and grossness recedes from you. You begin to live a refined life, because you bind yourself down by these vows. And Patanjali, when he gave these vows, gave them in the form of little, little aphorisms or very brief short sayings, and to bring out the full meaning of those aphorisms, later sages have commented upon Patanjali's aphorisms or Sutras. They have tried to explain the meaning behind the terse sayings. One of the commentators says in his commentary that these vows have to be strictly adhered to. There can be no exception. Patanjali also has a Sutra about this, that these vows have no exceptions. If you take these vows, you must adhere to them at all times, in all places, under all conditions, in all circumstances. You cannot be given any French leave from any of these vows. You cannot plead exception saying, "This vow is all right here, but it is very difficult to adhere to it elsewhere". The Rishis say, "No. You cannot plead that". There can be no exception, no excuse for non-adherence. There can be no exception of time, place, circumstance and all that. Thus is this first fundamental step in the science of Yoga known as Yama which means the taking of the five vows and strictly adhering to them under every time, place and circumstance.

4

FROM THE YAMAS TO THE NIYAMAS

Man's life on earth is marked by many painful, unpleasant and undesirable experiences. It is characterised by birth, death, old age and disease—Janma, Mrityu, Jara, Vyadhi. There is another classification. Man suffers the Tapa-Traya or the threefold misery Adhi-Daivic, Adhi-Bhautic and Adhyatmic. Firstly, man suffers due to painful experiences caused by circumstances beyond his control in this world—floods, earthquakes, famine, epidemics, tidal waves, drought, wars, pestilence. These miseries are called Adhi-Daivic. Then man suffers due to painful experiences brought about by other forms of life, tiny bacterial forms of life, other insects, other big creatures, other Bhutas. "Bhutas" means other forms of life and these difficulties are termed Adhi-Bhautic. Lastly, man suffers afflictions created by his own interior due to unbridled passion, due to jealousy, anger, hatred, envy, ill-will, inner restlessness, due to too much of desire, unfulfilled desire, frustration, disappointment. Hunger and thirst also trouble him every day. In this way, from within he is tormented. These are called Adhyatmic miseries. And man is constantly trying to ward off these threefold painful experiences.

Now, the philosophy behind Yoga says that all these miseries are avoidable, that all these things are unnecessary and do not form your real condition, your real native state. It affirms that your native state is all-perfect, that it is a pristine state of peace and joy, absolutely untouched by any of these experiences which form the sum-totality of the mixed experiences of this earth plane, of this terrestrial life. Yoga philosophy declares that you are really a being completely transcending these miserable experiences, untouched by them and unaffected by them. And they have no power to affect you or to alter your pristine state of peace, joy, perfection and fullness. That is what the Yoga philosophy says and then it explains further why you seem to be constantly a partaker of these miserable earthly experiences which contradict your true state of joy, peace, contentment and fullness. It is because you have somehow come into a state of proximity, contact and involvement with the factor known as Prakriti or phenomenal nature. And if you want to regain your pristine state transcending these imperfections, you have to bring about once again a liberation of yourself, a separation of yourself from phenomenal nature. Thus, the objective of Yoga is to separate and isolate the Purusha from Prakriti.

All Yoga a Preparation for Meditation

Prakriti is the sum-totality of phenomenal nature. Purusha is the all-perfect spiritual being. Purusha's involvement with Prakriti has to be resolved once again and the Purusha has to be made independent of Prakriti, enabling him to regain his pristine, isolated state of glorious self-experience. Yoga tries to do just that. And the ultimate process to bring about this separation is the process of deep, intense inward dwelling upon the Purusha, the process of meditating upon the Purusha, by gathering your entire interior, unifying it and fixing it upon the Purusha in a state of intense one-pointed meditation to the exclusion of all other thoughts, to the exclusion of all other ideas. This is the ultimate supreme process of Yoga; this is the objective of Yoga and whatever there is in Yoga. All other training and all other processes of Yoga are nothing but a very scientific practical preparation to ultimately prepare and condition your mind to be able to dwell in this

intense, one-pointed way upon the Purusha. Then, what you meditate upon with absolute concentration, that you become. Tadat-maya, they say. This has been proved to be the experience of the previous meditators. We become that which we meditate upon intensely. So they say. If you meditate upon the all-perfect Purusha, who is independent and free from all afflictions, who is independent from Prakriti, you will become that Purusha Himself. That is what Raja Yoga wants you to do. But, the practical sage and master Patanjali knew that if you wanted to go to the roof of the house, you could not take a running jump. By trying that, you would only break your legs. You have to climb a ladder or a stairway. In the same way, if you want to reach the state of absolute merger with Purusha in your meditation upon the Purusha, if you want to completely enter into that state of Purushahood, you have to go step by step. So, Patanjali formulated and expounded a graded series of practices aimed at ultimately taking you to meditation, at ultimately leading you to superconsciousness, where you can realise your supreme Purushahood, independent of Prakriti, and in a splendid state of spiritual isolation. And these graded steps form the Angas of Yoga, the various limbs of Yoga, commencing from the first until the seventh, which leads on to the eighth and the last, namely, Samadhi.

Why did Patanjali formulate these various steps? Upon what basis did he formulate these steps? That will be studied in the chapters to follow. It has already been seen how Prakriti is made up of the three Gunas—Tamas, Rajas and Sattva—and how the grossest of these is Tamas. It would be proper to deal with this grossest quality Tamas first, because we are living in the gross world of physical matter.

Our Present State—A Total Involvement in Tamas

Our consciousness is involved in Prakriti in the three levels of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. And, upon the grossest level, it is totally involved in the body. We know ourselves only as physical beings, with all the hunger and thirst and the other physical symptoms of our involvement in gross Prakriti. Sleep, carnal passion, and gross animalistic propensities, like the propensity to be violent, cruel and harsh, the propensity to fight, quarrel and cause injury to others, to bring pain and suffering to others, to destroy—all this is part of human nature. Whenever the lid is off, restraint is given up and we see that man is a brute. If two people start quarrelling and they have a difference of opinion and tempers rise, they immediately start hitting each other. One man lifts a stone, the other lifts a stick and they come to blows. There is a police case. Immediately the affair is taken to the police for breach of peace. This happens almost every day in educated human society, in the urban society of educated people holding university degrees. They come to fisticuffs, they come to blows, they abuse each other and they are taken to the police station. So, they generate a rich income for the police department, for lawyers and law courts; and the government gets revenue through judicial stamps and all that. This sort of quarrel and fighting also erupts upon a mass scale. If tempers are aroused, communities clash; there are riots, there is killing, there is pillaging, there is burning, looting. This happens every now and then. So, in spite of man having supposedly advanced and progressed and become cultured and civilised, these things have never stopped. People running amuck, people becoming wild, people behaving like animals in the jungle—these things have never stopped. Take the newspapers of any country, of any nation. What is the pattern of behaviour that human society projects, especially in cities? See? This is the thing. It is a very, very sorry commentary upon civilisation, upon culture, progress, education and advancement. We see that human society is forced and compelled to the necessity of keeping ready a highly sophisticated

section of people in order to keep this violent element in man suppressed. And that is the police force in each country. There is no country, no government, without a police force, heavily armed and ready to use violence upon its own population. Every city, every town has got its own police force that is called out immediately when people get out of hand; and so many times during the year they get out of hand. The police have to rush to the trouble spots in order to put down violence by legalised authorised violence; and upon the international scene also, this is the same thing prevailing. Great nations, though they are human, arm themselves to their teeth more than any other jungle animal created by God is armed. The jungle animals have got claws and hands, have got two weapons, of defence and of offence. But civilised man has got two hundred. How many kinds of guns, machine-guns, rifles, revolvers, grenades, bombs and artillery! O God!! How many devices, what a variety of ways in which man has fashioned weapons of assault and destruction and complete taking of life! It has no end. Every day, highly-paid scientists are working in the laboratories to devise newer and newer ways of killing brother human beings, of destroying, of injuring. How can we reconcile this cult, this civilisation, this education with progress and advancement? We do not know. But Patanjali knew that the grossest aspect of Prakriti's manifestation in human nature was in the form of these crude propensities—propensities that we normally attribute only to the animals in the jungle. But these propensities are present in the human individual a hundred times more than in the wild animal. As long as there is some sort of a restraint or opposition to the violent propensity in man by way of environment or circumstance or the social atmosphere, or due to other curatives, or due to fear of punishment or retaliation, the propensity lies inside. But, suddenly, if a man is aroused in temper, he goes out of control and he commits murder, does anything, shoots, kills and loots. So we find that this violent nature is an ever-present part of the human make-up. And Patanjali said that as long as this was allowed to prevail, realising your perfect spiritual nature would be a far, far cry.

How the Five Vows Free Man from Tamasic Bondage

So, start in the bottom-most part, the basic part, where your involvement in Prakriti is an involvement in the grossest aspect of Prakriti, namely, the brute aspect. It is for this purpose that Patanjali has laid down the five vows, the five Mahavrata, the five Pratijnas. And the taking of the five vows constitutes the first Anga of Yoga, called Yama, where your first liberation is worked out, which is a liberation from the grossest aspect of Prakriti. You liberate yourself from the propensity to cruelty, injury and destruction by sticking to the vow of Ahimsa. You liberate yourself from the gross carnal instinct, the brute passion, lust, by adhering to the vow of Brahmacharya. You liberate yourself from the human tendency to conceal things by untruth and dishonesty, by sticking to Satyam or truth. Even if one of these things is practised, the other virtues will automatically gather around you. If you know that a certain line of conduct is wrong and if you have found yourself indulging in a wrong line of conduct and realise that you have to pay the consequences, that some punishment or some chastisement may come upon you, then you want to conceal your wrong doing. You tell yourself that should someone question you and you have to say something in answer, you will tell a lie to hide your wrong action. But, if you bind yourself to truth, to the vow that whatever happens a false word will not issue forth from your tongue, if you resolve and determine that no matter what may come, you will stick to truth and say only that which is the truth, then, automatically you will be compelled or obliged to give up all lines of conduct which you know are not right, because should you indulge in such wrong conduct and should someone question you, you cannot conceal it, you will have to confess and reveal it, because of your having taken the vow

of truthfulness. “If I do something which is very bad and wrong, ignoble and unworthy, I have to say it. I dare not say it. Therefore I cannot afford to engage in any act which I do not wish to confess or admit.” That will be your line of argument. Therefore, sticking to truth automatically helps you to free yourself from all kinds of unworthy actions or activities. That is one power of truth.

So, Gurudev Sivananda used to say that if you adopt even one out of the three Yamas of Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya, the other virtues will automatically follow. Because, if you stick to one, you cannot break the others. Automatically you have to stick to the others also. If you stick to truth, Brahmacharya and Ahimsa will automatically follow. If you stick to Brahmacharya, Ahimsa and truth will automatically follow. If you stick to Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya will automatically become part of you. So, any one of them includes the other two. That is how Gurudev used to say.

And so, the first Anga of Yoga is aimed at liberating you, who are the Purusha, but at the moment involved in Prakriti, from the grossest aspect of Prakriti, as expressed and manifest through the Tamo-Guna. This is achieved through the adopting of the five great universal vows, universal because these vows are global in their applicability and common to all human culture, and these vows are therefore to be adhered to by all human beings. They are not meant for any particular section of humanity only. And these vows are absolute. That is to say, they are not dependent upon any particular circumstance or place or time or condition. You are supposed to adhere to them—they apply to your conduct—no matter where you may be, at what time and place, and in what condition or circumstance. There is no justification for being excused from these vows under the plea of some exceptional situation or exceptional condition or exceptional juncture of time or place. These vows are supposed to be adhered to and fulfilled at all times, in all places, under all conditions, in all circumstances. This is made clear by the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali that there is no exception to these vows. There are no special circumstances where you could afford to go slow on them or by easy. They are absolute. They must be adhered to under all circumstances.

Now, inasmuch as these vows have the effect of preventing you from a certain pattern of unworthy conduct, objectionable conduct, conduct which will work against the welfare of your fellow-beings, bring about harm to others, destroy the welfare of others, and in that process, also bring untold harm to yourself spiritually and ethically, this Anga of Yoga seems to be largely negative in its objective as well as effect. It only has the effect of holding you back, or preventing you, from indulging in a pattern of conduct that is harmful to you as well as to others. It only prevents you from going down to a very gross, low level of living and acting, but it does not add something on to you.

Therefore, in the next Anga of Yoga, Maharshi Patanjali wants you to actually progress in a specific self-chosen direction, namely, in the direction of attaining to a consciousness of your all-perfect Purushahood. It is not enough to stop from going in the downward direction. You have now to get busy and start positively moving in the upward direction, in the opposite direction. To this end, the great sage formulated the second Anga and expounded it as the five great Niyamas or obligatory observances. And just as Patanjali chose Ahimsa as the first of the five Yamas for a very, very rational and logical reason, namely, to counter the Tamo-Guna manifest in human nature as the animal propensity to harm others, he chose Saucha or purity as the first of the Niyamas for a very, very important reason. And that reason is to counter the Rajo-Guna manifest in human nature.

Saucha—A Step in the Positive, Upward Direction

The Rajoguna is in the entire human nature from the level of the mind, Prana and the senses. The salient feature of Rajas is desire, passionate desire, Kamana. And desires always are hitched up to one or the other senses. So, desires are sensual so far as they are still involved in the physical body and the body nature. You are a sense-bound creature and the normal tendency of the senses, the propensity of the senses, is towards indulgence, because the senses are unrestrained. They call this propensity towards indulgence Vishaya-Bhoga, the Pravritti towards Bhoga. Each sense wants to indulge in its respective sense-object. The tongue always runs after tasty things, the nose always runs after nice smells, the ear always wants to listen to things which are pleasing to it. The eye always wants to satisfy itself by looking at sights which satisfy the inner desires, and the sense of feeling always craves for sensuous feeling, sensuous touch. This is a great problem of the human being, no matter how educated and no matter how refined. Man is bound by the senses which constantly move towards sense-indulgence in the respective sense-objects and it is very difficult to restrain this movement of the senses unless you take up with a vengeance the practice of the specific Abhyasa of cleanliness, both inner and outer. You must boldly say, “I will never allow anything that is unclean to be part of me, within and without”. By the development of the habit of cleanliness, you not only begin to abhor anything that is unclean outwardly, but you also gradually begin to develop repugnance towards anything unclean that may be in your mind or may try to gain entry into your mind. And, together with the development of this habit of not wanting anything that is unclean, at the physical body level as well as at the level of the mind, you begin to develop certain distinct standards of what is clean and what is unclean. That comes about as the result of your Satsanga with your Guru, as the result of sitting and listening to discourses regarding what is good and what is bad, what is clean and what is unclean. It also comes about as the result of a study of the scriptures. Thus you develop certain distinct ideas as to what is clean and what is unclean through a process of spiritual education.

Happily, once upon a time in India, this spiritual education was imparted to the individual right at the very foundational stage of one's life. In those times, when the boy was about eight or ten years old, he was taken to the ideal atmosphere of a Gurukula and left there with the teacher and the teacher's family, away from all the impure atmosphere of towns and cities, of drinking and gambling and profligacy and all the multifarious things of sensual life. The young boys were taken away from the corrupt city atmosphere, and in the serene atmosphere of solitude, of sylvan jungle surroundings, completely dedicated to one pattern of living—the boys never saw any contradictory pattern of living there—and nurtured in the ideal surroundings, they began to formulate their own norms of conduct and behaviour, they began to form their own ideas and standards of what was pure and what was impure, what was clean and what was unclean, what was worthy and what was unworthy, what was noble and what was ignoble, what was to be accepted and what was to be turned down with contempt. Thus the boys of the Gurukula grew up. And based upon the norms and standards developed thus, the Gurukula boys began to practise Saucha, inner and external cleanliness. You can very well imagine what it would have done to the psyche of the growing young individual when brought up thus in the atmosphere and background of an idealistic outlook impinging all the time on his own thoughts, feelings, behaviour, conduct and character. So, the boy grew up into a person of Sadachar. He became a person grounded in lofty virtues, grounded in a sublime standard of thinking and feeling and expressing oneself. This was the basis of Yoga. Yoga thus directed the normal life-style of the individual, the behaviour of the individual, towards an

ideal; Yoga gave an ascending trend, an upward trend to the daily behaviour and conduct of the individual. This was the first step. In his conduct, the student became a Sadachari. He became a person of lofty moral and ethical conduct, noble character, shining with virtue. He was so much filled with this factor of an urge towards idealism that there came into the face of this young student a glow and a lustre. And, referring to those students, the scriptures coined a unique term—Agni-Manavaka. ‘Agni-Manavaka’ means fiery youngsters. ‘Manavaka’ means a student, a young student, ‘Agni’ means a thing that has a glow, a thing that has a lustre and a halo. So much of lustre was created in the student by his lofty standard of conduct and high thinking, noble thinking, that the student shone. This was an indication or hint to the state he was ultimately to attain, when having reached his Purushahood, he would shine with Brahmic aura, Brahma-Tejas. Later on in his Yogic career, the young man became Tejasvi and Ojasvi, but even in the beginning itself, the student’s ideal conduct and character brought about in his appearance a certain lustre, a certain radiance. This was the result of Saucha or purity.

So, Saucha is both external and internal. The ultimate aim is to shine with divinity by attaining once again one’s independent Purushahood. That is the philosophical ultimate. The psychological preparation for this ultimate achievement, the psychological groundwork for this ultimate achievement, is Saucha. In Saucha the young Yogi roots himself so that ultimately it leads him to that supreme experience where he realises himself to be the Nitya-Suddha, Nirmala Atma-Tattva.

5

THE NIYAMAS—EFFECTIVE WEAPONS TO DESTROY THE CITADEL OF THE SENSES

The sage Patanjali Maharshi has tried to put at our disposal the knowledge of how to transcend our present state of body-bound consciousness, caught up and involved in a psychological framework which is characterised by many shortcomings, for it swings between the pairs of opposites—Harsha and Soka, Sukha and Duhkha, and knowledge and ignorance—and is subject to Bhranti. By making us thus transcend the state of body-bound consciousness entangled with mental and intellectual processes, Patanjali restores to the consciousness its pristine state which is a state of superconsciousness, which is a state that takes us far above and beyond the planes of thinking, feeling, remembering, imagining, constantly circling round and round within the framework of time, space and causation—past, present and future, here and there, I and mine. Patanjali takes us beyond these levels and establishes our consciousness in its pristine state, in its unlimited or unqualified state. In that state, our consciousness is unhampered, not bothered by the above-mentioned categories or factors.

The Specific Roles of Yama and Niyama—Stopping the Downward Plunge and Helping the Upward Ascent

When your consciousness is established in its own pure pristine state, you know yourself as you truly are, and not feel yourself to be something you think yourself to be. Patanjali has given us

the science of Yoga to enable us to go beyond our present state of limited consciousness. Our present state of consciousness is bound up with the temporary, changing, perishable, physical body, bound up with the ever-changing, restless mind, characterised by many impurities. These impurities stem from the bad aspect of our being which is the result of the Tamo-Guna factor in our Prakriti. As we saw in the original primary thesis of Yoga philosophy, our present state is due to our involvement in Prakriti. Prakriti comprises the three Gunas and the grossest among them is Tamas. This Tamas has its own characteristics, and arising out of these characteristics, we have the grossest aspect of our present personality by which we are identified; and that grossest aspect of our present personality contains many things that are not at all a compliment to our human nature. For, the Tamasic aspect of our personality is brutal, bestial, animal, gross and ugly. It carries with it the propensity to cruelty, the propensity to violence, hatred, anger. It carries with it the desire to hurt, to harm and destroy. It is all “Pasu”, it is all animal, it does not really belong to the human. It does not belong to culture, it does not belong to education, it does not belong to refinement, it does not belong to civilisation. It is something that is uncivilised, uncultured, uneducated, very gross, not refined. But yet, it is there even amongst the so-called civilised and educated people—this brutality, this ill-treatment to torment others, to be brutal to others. It may be in a physical way, it may be in a more subtle mental way. It happens within the four walls of a home in which a family is living. The father can be cruel to the children; the wife can be cruel to her husband; the husband can be brutal and cruel to his wife. The children may be absolutely callous, indifferent. For every loving family that there is, there may be two where the home life is a perpetual sorrow, a perpetual agony, pain. Why? Because of the unregenerate nature of the individual in human society. This nature is the direct outcome of the Tamo-Guna in Prakriti. And this is contrary to normal human nature. And it is this which is declared to be the impurity in the human individual. Vedanta calls it Mala.

The elimination and eradication of this Mala is one of the first objectives of the science of Yoga, and therefore, to stem this or to stop this headlong plunge in the direction of these impure patterns of thinking, feeling, speaking and behaving, the five Yamas or vows have been prescribed by Patanjali. These vows have to be strictly adhered to and there is no question of any excuse for non-adherence due to time, place and circumstance. No. These vows are universal. They have to be adhered to at all times, in all places, under all circumstances. They are to be absolutely adhered to. No exception is to be made. Then alone can man’s impure type of conduct which contradicts human nature and which has been there over years and generations and births be overcome. Only then can man’s age-old impure habits and instincts be overcome. They are so deep-rooted. Impurity, sensuality, gross carnal lustfulness, the propensity to grab and get and keep with unlimited avidity, cupidity, avarice, greed and covetousness—all this Himsatmak Prakriti is deep-rooted. Patanjali said, “No. As long as these propensities are there, evolution is a far cry. You cannot go up. You have to make a determined stand against them and try to remove them, eradicate them”. And therefore he gave the very stern practice of taking the five foremost vows and sticking to them, adhering to them at any cost. And this sticking to the vows has the effect of arresting the headlong downward movement in your life and reversing it in the opposite direction. Yoga wants to make you divine. Yoga wants to make you godly, because the philosophy of Yoga says that you are the all-perfect Divine Being completely independent of Prakriti, liberated from all afflictions, and in a state of bliss and joy and perfection. The philosophy of Yoga says that you are the Purusha; and to restore to you your Purushahood is the objective of Yoga. And so, to commence with, it asks you to stop going in the downward direction, before thinking of going in the desired direction. And if properly practised, Yama succeeds in arresting the progress of the Jiva or the individual soul in an ungodly,

undivine, unspiritual direction. In the absence of these vows of Yama, day by day, man gets grosser and grosser, becoming more and more enslaved and bound up and imprisoned in the devilish lifestyle, in the hellish pattern of living, which is the root cause of all problems in human society, of all suffering, all conflict, clash, disharmony, discord, violence, sorrow, pain and cruelty. This must stop. So, to arrest this trend, a totally strict adherence to Yama is prescribed.

But, Yama alone is not enough. It is no doubt necessary and indispensable to stop your downward plunge, but at the same time, you must also make an effort to move in a positive direction. For example, if you are a very extravagant spendthrift, a waster of money, asking you to stop spending in all the wrong directions is no doubt important. But, at the same time, side by side, you must also be gradually educated to conserve something, to save and put by something for a rainy day. Merely stopping your extravagance and waste will not be sufficient. Because, even if you do not waste, even if you stop being extravagant and stop getting into debt, you may still spend all that you earn. Then, you will be always living a hand-to-mouth existence. You will not know what you will eat tomorrow. You will live like a cooly, earning something today and spending the whole amount today. Tomorrow, once again, you will have to do back-breaking work for eight hours, because there is nothing put by. So, while it is good and desirable that you stop being extravagant and getting into debt, you must also be educated to conserve something so that you can always fall back upon your savings. Otherwise, if you fall ill and you are not in a position to do any work for some days, you will starve. So, extravagant waste, criminal waste, has to be stopped; and at the same time, something earned must be put by. Both the aspects are important. The negative tendency must be ended, and side by side, a positive tendency must be nurtured and developed.

And that is precisely why the wise sage Patanjali lifts us up into a second dimension of Yoga which goes beyond the negative process of stopping your headlong plunge into animality and brutality, impurity and bestiality, and puts you up into a human plane. He says that now it is also necessary to make positive progress. He says that now your life should take a positive, upward, ascending pattern, take a positive direction that will gradually start making you move towards godliness, divinity and spirituality. So, this positive process is the next step and it works upon various levels in various ways. The practices prescribed by Patanjali are positive in the psychological sense and positive also in the metaphysical sense. They aim at achieving for you actual spiritual gain.

Transforming Human Nature into Divine Nature—The Role of Saucha or Purity

In the last chapter it was stated that it was necessary to grow in the likeness of whatever Tattva or principle in which you wished to become established. “*Devo Bhutva Devamaradhayet*” is a time-honoured adage. If you want to become divine, if you want to worship God, you must become godly. If you want to worship Divinity, meditate upon Divinity—meditation is the highest worship—and grow in divinity. That is the one and only way. There are no other ways. You cannot make an arithmetical addition by adding 30 British Pounds sterling, 53 American Dollars and 77 Indian Rupees and striking a total. You cannot do it that way. To make a total of the three different currencies, you must convert all into Pounds Sterling or you must convert all into Dollars or you must convert all into Rupees. Then you must add them up. In the same way, if you want to become godly, you must convert your human nature into something spiritual, into something that is in the

likeness of that. So, the commencement of that process of conversion is initiated and carried out in the first of the five Niyamas which is Saucha. Saucha includes both outer cleanliness and inner purity. It is Bahyantara Saucha. The way in which you feel, the way in which you think, your imaginations, your thoughts, your feelings, your motivations—all these should be Suddha, Nirmala. The outward action in the form of speech, action, behaviour—Charitra and Varta—must be Pavitra, Nirmala. And there is always an inescapable give and take between man and his environment—always. We are creatures who are all the time being affected by what is around us and we always keep affecting what is around us by what we are. This is an interchange, a two-way interchange, between a being and everything surrounding the being. Therefore Patanjali asks you to launch upon a course of keeping everything around you clean. Keep your body clean, keep your clothes clean, keep your environment clean. What you are affects your environment and what environment there is around you affects you too. Therefore, the taking up deliberately of the practice of purity in food, purity in dress and keeping everything around you clean—that is one of the Angas of this Yoga.

In terms of cleanliness, food means Sattvic food. Read what the Gita has to say about food. Food must be fresh, not stale and rotten, not that which is very extremely pungent and sour. Things which are not Sattvic in nature should not be eaten, because the finest part of food affects the mind.

You should not move indiscriminately with each and everyone, all and sundry, but you should keep the company of only those people who are pure, who have got good tendencies, who are moral in their character, who are ethical in their character. You should not mix with people given to lustfulness and carnality, sensuality and indulgence and immorality, because if you keep company with them, you are bound to be affected by their proximity and their thoughts. Company is a powerful factor. Keeping company with people who always talk about vulgar things, who always talk about sexual matters, about drinking and gambling, will pollute your mind. Such people may sometimes be very good friends, very sociable, very popular and very talented in other ways, but basically their character is gross and sensual. They are Vishayavilasa Bhogis. To a spiritual aspirant they will do no good, though to one who is not a spiritual aspirant, their company may prove beneficial socially and in other ways. But, that is a different dimension altogether. No matter how much beneficial their company might be—socially, economically and in other ways—you will lose spiritually. So much so, one Saint says in one of his Bhajans. “In whose heart there is no devotion to the Lord, shun the company of that person as though he were not one enemy, not a hundred enemies, not a thousand enemies, but as though he were more than a million enemies”. Think of him to be more than a million enemies to you, even though he is your best chum, best friend, living in your neighbourhood or your hostel, or even in your own room as your room-mate. “*Jake Priya Na Ram Vaidehi, Tyajiye Tako Sangh Koti Vairi Sam Jadyepi Param Sanehi.*” For whom the Lord is not dear, shun his company as though he were akin to ten million enemies, even if he is your own relative, your own brother-in-law, your own next-door neighbour, your own friend, class mate or school-fellow. Such strong words have been used by this saint. So, this indicates to what extent you must keep yourself uncontaminated, unpolluted, by any factor that is likely to make you anything other than the Being whom you are trying to attain; and that Being whom you are trying to attain is the Nitya-Suddha Atma, the Parama-Pavitra, Nirmala, Amala, Vimala, Nitya-Suddha, Niranjana Atma-Tattva.

The Rationale Behind the Extreme Rigidity of Orthodox Rules and Regulations

The various rules and regulations devised by our ancestors is only to make a person conscious that he must keep himself pure if he wants to attain the pure Atman. Of course, it could be taken to extremes. That is a different thing. It may become a vice also. But, that is a great virtue if it is not taken beyond limits, if it is not taken to extremes. Our ancients made so many devices and gave us an orthodox pattern of behaving where we would always try to keep ourselves pure. If you take bath, it has to be three times—morning, midday and afternoon. And after you take bath, you should not touch anything impure or unclean. If you touch, you have to take bath again, for you become polluted by touching that impure something. Thus you become acutely conscious that you are in a state of sanctity, purity, holiness. And in that state of purity, you cannot even touch your own mouth or tongue, because then you have to wash your hand. The hand becomes impure by touching the mouth or the tongue. It becomes polluted, because all sorts of things are said by the tongue—good things and bad things, auspicious and inauspicious things, kind and loving things and harsh things, truthful things and untruthful things. But if you are established in absolute truth, in absolute compassion, in absolute love and kindness and purity, then your hand will not get polluted by touching your tongue. If you have reached such a state of purity that your talk has become perfect, then people desire to eat your Uchhishta. They think that they will become sanctified by partaking of the remains of the food that you have eaten. People believe that by taking the Uchhishta of a saint or a Mahapurusha their own impurity will go away. But, in the case of a normal man, who speaks truth and untruth, who speaks kind words and harsh words, who indulges in pure talk and in impure talk, vulgar talk, they say that if he touches his tongue, he must wash his hands, because by touching his tongue his hands become polluted. Thus our ancients gave various norms, standards of behaviour. For example, if you have boiled rice or cooked rice, you cannot touch that cooked rice and then afterwards go and do something which is sacred, because that cooked rice is impure and by touching it you have become polluted. So you have to wash yourself again.

The ancients carried this concept of purity to such fineness that, following in their footsteps, you grew into a state of awareness of yourself as an exceptional being, as an exceptionally pure, sanctified, holy being, and that awareness kept your consciousness raised upon a level where nothing that was drab or profane or impure was allowed to reach and pollute it and make it impure. In the same way, the company that you keep, the food that you eat, the environment that you live in, the thoughts that you harbour, the type of things that you read—when the regulations concerning these are taken to a very extreme state, it raises various problems. For example, there are certain people in certain states who are supposed to become polluted when some death has occurred in the family of a relative or when a child has been born in the family of a relative. Then, for ten days those people are not supposed to be pure; rather, they are supposed to be in a state of untouchability. Now, supposing you are doing some Anushtan, and after the day's Anushtan you are sitting for your meal; and if you *hear* the voice of someone who is in a state of such untouchability, in a state of such impurity, then you have to leave your meal midway! You cannot eat your meal afterwards! By developing the concept of purity to such a state of fineness, your entire psychology is raised to such an extreme level of refinement that even the least contrary factor entering into it brings about a change in its quality or degree of purity and therefore you have to go and take a bath. Such extreme orthodoxy has its virtue. They say that drastic diseases require the administration of drastic remedies. So, when you are involved in a state of absolute impurity, it is only by bringing into being

a drastic state of the opposite condition, that you are able to release yourself once and for all from your state of extreme impurity. So, inner and outer purity was laid as an important Sadhana in the second Anga of Patanjali's Yoga Shastra so that you were once and for all completely freed and raised up into a different level of living, behaving and moving. The result was that your entire exterior as well as interior shone with a certain condition of absolute purity, absolute cleanliness.

Santosh or Contentment—A Weapon to Destroy the Domination of the Senses and the Sense-appetite

Now you always identify yourself with your body, this sense or that sense, identify yourself with the Cheshta of every Indriya, identify yourself with the condition, the behaviour and the demands of one or the other of the senses, instead of breaking the identification and standing aloof and saying, "No, I will not listen to the urge of the senses. I will not give in to the sense-appetite, because this sense-appetite is not the expression or manifestation of my real nature, because I am different from these senses". Instead of saying that, if a sense-appetite vehemently demands its satisfaction, you think yourself one with that state and immediately set about doing things that are necessary to satisfy that sense-appetite. Why? Because, you do not know of yourself as other than that sense-appetite, as distinct from that sense-appetite. You are immediately prepared to think of that demand of that sense-appetite as your own want, as your own desire, as your own need, as your own demand; so you set about initiating a line of activity in order to immediately appease that sense, immediately satisfy that demand of that sense-appetite, because you and that sense are in a state of oneness, are in a state of unified consciousness, are in a state of identification. That thing is your Samsara. That thing is the root cause of your suffering. That thing is your state of bondage and Patanjali seeks to liberate you from that state of bondage, and as long as that state of identification continues, the senses will be constantly harassing you. They will be constantly tormenting you, because they are always on the rampage; they are always actively wanting to manifest themselves. So, one poet writes how creatures belonging to different species come to grief by the activity of but one sense. The moth becomes destroyed by its sense of sight. The elephant gets into captivity by giving in to the sense of touch. The fish gets hooked by succumbing to the sense of taste. The bee is entrapped in the lotus by the sense of smell. And the deer gets caught by yielding to the sense of hearing. And here is the human individual, an animal in which all the five senses are centralised! His fate can well be imagined! He has all the five senses turbulent, all the five sense-appetites active and demanding fulfilment. So, that keeps him always in a state of turmoil, always in a state of discontentment, always in a state of dissatisfaction. As long as he identifies himself with the senses and the sense-appetites, he is always in a state of agitation, because these senses are always making demands upon him, always agitating, always clamouring for satisfaction. So, Patanjali says: "No, you must end this state of things. You must break this connection between you and the senses and you must determinedly start saying 'No' to the senses. You must deny the senses". That is possible only if you develop the awareness that you are different from the senses. You must boldly declare: "I am sufficient as I am. I do not need to be fed by the senses with their sense-satisfactions, because they are different and I am different. I do not need their support and their supply of sense-satisfaction. I am sufficient as I am. So I shall seat myself upon the supreme seat of contentment. I do not require anything more. I am full as I am, complete as I am; I am sufficient as I am. I am not the senses, I am apart from the senses. I am enough". That is how you have to develop Santosh, supported by Sakshi Bhav.

The psychological state of Santosh is supported by the metaphysical awareness of being a Sakshi of the senses, of not being one with the senses. Being a Sakshi means standing apart, being unaffected. You do not give in to the demands of the sense-appetite, because you are not the senses. You are the Purusha. The senses belong to Prakriti. And therefore, you as the Purusha who is apart from Prakriti, assert your independence of Prakriti and its manifestations. In this manner, upon this metaphysical basis, you refuse to give in to the clamour of the sense-appetite, and say, “No. As I am, I am quite content, quite happy”. So, Santosh is a state of the psyche, is a state of the inner man, where the inner man is no longer prepared to give in to the clamour of the sense-appetite. You refuse to give in to the sense cravings. That is the psychological part of it. And you do this upon the metaphysical basis or the philosophical basis of affirming your reality and rejecting your false personality. You say: “This false personality is untrue, is Asat, is only an appearance. My reality is my divine Purushahood in which I am Paripurna, in which I do not require the petty satisfaction of sense indulgence, in which I do not require the Vishaya Bhoga for my happiness and joy. My happiness is complete by itself, without the need of any addition through the avenues of the senses”. Now, that is the full implication of the Sadhana of Santosha. You should not think that it is merely an ordinary qualification or a quality. It has much deeper roots and ramifications, much deeper roots and implications. Santosha is a psychological discipline and also a metaphysical discipline. Santosha is both. It not only helps to liberate you from the present condition, but also helps you to become more established in your permanent condition, in your permanent state.

But, Santosha is not easy. The senses that have been pampered for ages will not immediately listen to your new vision and your new approach and attitude. They will not give in. They will rebel and revolt, because they have become crystallized into instinct in your Svabhava. The constant and continuous repetition of a certain pattern of activity, where you always gave in to the senses, always satisfied their appetite, has crystallized that pattern of appeasement of senses as part of your Svabhava. So, it is not easy to liberate yourself in a trite, even though you may be much enlightened. You may know of yourself in a new light through the study of the philosophy of Yoga and you may be aware of the necessity of applying a new technique, a psychological technique, to raise your consciousness. Yet, in spite of this, because of their age old instinct, the senses insist upon asserting themselves. So, there is need for a more fiery, more determined and stronger technique, stronger Sadhana, to counter the instinctive nature of the sensuality in you, because the roots of action lie in the spring-source which is the great accumulation of Samskaras and Vasanas lying in the Chitta. They go on continuously rising to the surface of the Manas. These are the Vrittis that goad you to specific patterns of activity. And your Vrittis and Vasanas are Sattvic as well as Tamasic, Daivic as well as Asuric, and they keep on coming to the surface, due to Prarabdha Karma. Therefore, in order to go to the very root of your human problem, of your earthly problem of Samsaric Bandhana, Patanjali declared the very process of Yoga to be Vritti-Nirodhana. Vritti is nothing but the manifest expression of Vasana and Samskara. So, Vritti-Nirodhana is the central process of Yoga. But to make this Vritti-Nirodhana easier, why not try to bring about a change in the very nature of the Vasanas and Samskaras? Why not try to bring about a transformation of your psyche—upon your psychological level? Why not try to have a psychological rebirth? If you can do that, it will be a Sahayogi Prakriya; it will be a helpful complementary process. Therefore it is that the Yamas and the Niyamas have been instituted by Patanjali in his overall scheme of Raja Yoga.

Tapasya—A Direct Confrontation with Sense Behaviour

So, first and foremost, to counter this instinctive sense-urge that has come as the inherited impulse of ages, oppose it with will power. Do exactly the contrary. Engage yourself in Sadhana which comprises the exact contrary of the insatiable urge of the general sensual nature of your being. What is engaging in that Sadhana which is the absolute contradiction of the sensual nature? It is denial of the senses and doing the opposite of what the senses want. If the sense-urge says, “Satisfy my palate”, you say, “I will fast”. If the sense-urge says, “I will go into deep Tamas by sleeping, sleeping, sleeping like a pig or a hog”, you say, “I will not sleep, I will have periods of absolute wakefulness, not by playing the radio loudly or by taking some strong tea or coffee, but by exercising my will power”. These days it is common to see people doing night-long Sankirtan, but to do that, they take the help of stimulating things. That is no good. It should be through the will power, through assertion of the Atma-Bal. Your will power should counter the Tamas by keeping vigil. And when you want comfort, say, the comfort of nice warm clothing in cold weather, stand in the Ganges, in midwinter, at night, with the chill wind blowing upon you. And if you want the comfort of ice-cold drinks and air-conditioned coolness in midsummer, sit in the sun, and as though it is not enough, sit bare headed. If that too is not enough, put more heat, put a little cow-dung fire in front, put a little cow-dung fire on the right, on the left and at the back. Sit like that in summer.

Patanjali gave a Sanket. You have to be fiery, you have to be determined, you have to make up your mind to assert your will and break the sensual nature which craves for comfort, which craves for indulgence, which craves for satisfaction, by doing the very opposite of all that it craves for. By experiencing heat in summer, by experiencing more cold in winter, by experiencing fasting and hunger when you feel like eating, by experiencing wakefulness by vigil, you curb the senses and develop more will power. Go without umbrella and shoes for twelve months as a Sadhana, as a Tapasya. This is curbing of the senses. When you want to eat sweets, discipline the tongue by eating bitter Neem leaves for forty days. If the body wants a very soft pillow and nicely covered soft bed, sleep on the concrete floor; habituate yourself to sleep on the concrete floor or on a piece of wooden plank where bone meets concrete or bone meets wood. In this way if you practise, it is called Tapasya. Tapasya is a determined counter-attack against the habitual propensity of the senses to achieve satisfaction, to taste satisfaction. That is Tapasya. Tapasya is controlling the senses through the fire of will power, through the fire of determination, through the fire of strong resolve. That is the essence of the third Anga of Patanjali’s Niyama which gives a swing to your entire life-stream in an upward, higher direction, in a subtler direction, in the direction of Satya, in the direction of Atma, in the spiritual direction. Whereas Yama puts a stop to your flow in the downward gross direction, in the animal direction, Niyama has the effect of diverting the flow in the opposite higher direction towards the Spirit. That is the rationale behind Niyama.

6

CREATING A NEW MIND THROUGH SATSANGA, SRAVANA AND SVADHYAYA

In the first Anga of the science of Yoga, namely, Yama, the main objective is the arresting of the downward movement of the Jiva into greater darkness, into greater bondage, into greater grossness, as a result of its total identification with the body, the senses, the sense-objects and the sense-appetite. This is because the science of Raja Yoga is primarily concerned with the liberation of your true self from its involvement in bondage and Prakriti. And for this process of liberation, there is firstly the need to counter and put an end to the contrary process in the opposite direction, which is the downward plunge into greater grossness, greater animality, great brutality, greater physical identification. The main objective of voluntarily binding oneself with self-imposed vows to adhere to certain principles is to achieve ultimately the effect of putting a stop to this downward course.

Firstly, the vow of non-injury. You affirm: “I shall never hurt, I shall never harm, I shall never injure, I shall never cause pain and suffering in any form, in any way, through anything that I may think or do or feel or say”. This is taking up the vow of non-injury.

Then, the vow of Satyam or strictly adhering to truth. This has various implications, the most obvious being, “I shall not conceal anything. I shall not utter falsehood. My thoughts and feelings, my words and actions—they will be the same, they will not be at variance”. If you bind yourself to this vow of Satyam, practically you cannot do anything that is culpable, because if you did anything that was culpable, that deserved punishment, that was blameworthy, naturally you would have an instinctive impulse to conceal it, to hide it, not to reveal it. And to hide it, you would have to utter untruth, falsehood. And that would go against your vow of Satyam. And so, naturally, your whole being will be alert against doing anything that would need to be concealed, that would need to be covered or hidden. And, therefore, the taking up of the vow of truth automatically secures you from doing anything that is wrong or impure or unworthy or ignoble, anything that is immoral or unethical, anything that is against your principles or against what the society expects of you as a citizen, as a Sannyasin, as a spiritual aspirant or as a Sadhak. As a Sadhak you are supposed to adhere to a certain norm or standard of conduct, a certain pattern of behaviour. The society expects this of you. And if you do anything that is at variance with this expectation of society, then you will have to conceal it. And you cannot conceal it, because you have taken the vow of truth. So, the vow of truth secures you against any type of degradation, any type of coming down from a certain standard and level of conduct. Truth has got that great power. It is such a great protecting force if you absolutely adhere to truth that you will become blameless, your character will always be noble, you cannot do anything that is wrong, immoral, unworthy, unethical or bad. Purity of conduct, self-control, Brahmacharya, chastity—these also get safeguarded if you take the vow of truthfulness. Gurudev used to say that if even one of these virtues was absolutely adhered to, the other things would automatically become fulfilled. They would follow as a matter of course.

Now, preventing and putting a stop to the movement of your life into greater grossness, greater physicality, greater animality, greater impurity and Tamas, greater bondage is, we may say,

negative Sadhana. Yama is negative Sadhana. When the downward movement is arrested, the next obvious and logical step would be to give a new direction to your life, an upward direction towards spiritual nature, towards divinity, towards godliness. That is achieved through Niyama. The Niyama of Saucha or cleanliness, external and internal, achieves this movement in the upward direction. Santosh, contentment—that also is a movement in the upward direction, in the spiritual direction.

Necessity for Common Sense in the Performance of Tapas

Then there is Tapas. The turbulent senses wanting to assert themselves in sensual indulgence, in the satisfaction of sensual appetites—that is countered by a certain degree of fiery resolve not to yield, not to give way. Such a resolve compels the senses to get purified in the fire of austerity and penance. Some of the acts of penance and austerity are a direct assault upon the different senses in their nature of wanting to be always in a state of pampered satisfaction. Now, this assault against the senses can go to the other extreme. If the sense of touch says, “Let me be nicely cool in summer”, you expose yourself to heat; and if the skin says, “Let me be warm in winter”, you go and stand in the freezing waters of the Ganges. Such was the Tapasya that people undertook and underwent once upon a time. They undertook Panchagni Tapas, they observed Chandrayana Vrata, Kricchra Vrata, Jagarana. All this is not completely old mythology. Even now, there are people who do this Panchagni Tapasya and other severe forms of Tapas, though due to the degeneration in the physical capacities of the modern man, modern teachers sometimes caution students against going to extremes in undertaking such austerities. They warn you against a possible risk of total physical breakdown. They say that if in your over-enthusiasm you subject your body to an austerity which is beyond its capacity to bear, it may break down, and in the event of such a breakdown, you may lose your health, and what little you could achieve in the form of Sadhana through a healthy body, that also would then become impossible. So, ultimately, the result of your Tapasya, your austerity and penance, should not be a loss in terms of spiritual life and Sadhana, but should be a gain. So, the ancients urged you to use your common sense, to have a proper, sane appraisal of your bodily capacity to withstand strain and austerity, and within the limits of that capacity, to practise austerity, to do penance. A certain modicum of austerity and penance is indispensable. It is necessary, it is good, but, be wise, use your common sense and try to make a proper appraisal of your capacity to withstand strain. To what extent can you impose upon your body austerity and penance? Find that out and do not go beyond it. Do not go to extremes. That is the caution given by many. The masters are never against penance or austerity even today. But they say, “Only, be wise. Use your common sense and do not go beyond your limits”. Austerity is necessary, but it should be within rational limits. That is the whole point about austerity. That is the rationale about austerity. The object of austerity is to counter the plunge of the senses and their innate, instinctive desire to be pampered and to be satisfied. If the senses are pampered, then you cannot free yourself from identification with the senses.

Antahkarana—The Root of Bondage

Now comes a fourth Niyama, a Niyama which is deeply significant and has very, very important overtones in terms of both the philosophy of Yoga as well as the psychology behind Yoga. The philosophy of Vedanta as well as Yoga says that the entire problem of bondage and liberation lies in the inner man in the mysterious factor called the Antahkarana or the

mind-instrument. The Rishis explain it in this way. They say, “Look here, this physical body is an inert thing. It is made out of the five elements. It is made out of bones, flesh, muscles, skin, tendons, nerves and all kinds of gross matter. Therefore, the body is non-intelligence. It has no consciousness of its own. It is an inert thing. It is a Jada Vastu. It is like a log of wood. Because the Pranas are functioning in it, the body seems to be moving about like a pantomime, like a puppet, appearing to do various activities, though not having the capacity to do any activity. It is the Prana which makes the body sit and chant, move, talk, act and eat. The moment the Pranas get withdrawn into some other inner centre, the body goes into sleep, becomes like a log of wood. In a state of sleep and in a state of swoon, the body is incapable of doing anything at all. So, the body by itself is a factor devoid of consciousness. And being inert or Jada, it cannot bring about the bondage of the Jiva. It has nothing in it, no power in it of its own, to voluntarily try to put you into a state of bondage. So, the body is not the cause of Samsara, it is not the root of your bondage. You have to look for the cause of your bondage elsewhere. Why? For the simple reason that the body is an inert, non-intelligent thing. It has not in it the power, it has not in it the capacity, to cause any experience to you in the form of this phenomenal bondage. Then, shall we seek for the root of bondage in the Self? In the Atman? In your real nature? Here also, the answer is ”No”. Because, the ultimate transcendental experience of those who have reached superconsciousness or realisation is that the Atman is self-luminous. That is to say, the Atman is of the very nature of wisdom-consciousness and is in an ever-liberated state. There is no darkness in it, there is no ignorance in it. Therefore, it is not bound. So, they call it Jnana-Svarupa. Your Self, your real innermost spiritual identity is Jnana-Svarupa. It is Nitya-Suddha, Nitya-Mukta, Paripurna. That is the Vedantic declaration. There is no doubt about it. They clearly state this upon the authority of their own personal experience, transcendental experience. So, in the Atman, in your own Self, in your true identity, there is no problem. This problem of bondage and liberation, of joy and sorrow, suffering and all that, is not to be found in the Atman. And it is also not to be found in the body. The body is incapable of causing this mischief, causing this bondage, because of its being inert. And the Atman is beyond it. So, this problem of bondage and liberation, of joy and sorrow, is neither in the body—it is not caused by the body—nor in the Atman—it is not located in the Atman. It is somewhere in between.

In between this gross physical body and the pure, ever-free, all-full Self or Atman is your Antahkarana, your inner nature. Christian theology calls it the soul. In Christian theology, soul indicates your inner nature, mind, intellect and so on. But, by the term “soul” we Hindus mean the spirit. It is in the inner man, in the psychological being, in the interim area between body and soul, in the interim plane which we call the Antahkarana, that the whole problem of bondage and liberation lies. It is in the Antahkarana that the whole problem of ignorance and illumination, of sorrow and joy, lies. You have to find the cause of bondage there. And Vedanta says that you have to seek your solution also there. Where the bondage is, there you have to seek the solution also to the problem of bondage. Out of this has arisen the well-known saying, “*Mana Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoh*”, which means that the mind itself is the cause of the bondage as well as the liberation of the human being. Think you are free, you will become free. Think you are bound, you will become bound. Think you are body, you will only be a body, a physical creature. Think you are the spirit, you will rise into a spiritual consciousness and a spiritual experience.

The Vedantic Approach to the Problem of Bondage and Release

Therefore, the Vedantic approach to this problem took its unique form of constantly asserting and affirming the truth of the reality of your being and constantly rejecting and denying the other false factor that has now gripped your consciousness. So, they call it, “*Atma ki Srishtikaran*” or “*Anatma ki Nirakaran*”—affirming and asserting the spirit or the spiritual reality of your being, and rejecting and denying everything that is non-Self or that which is not your spiritual reality. They call this in Hindi, “*Sat ki Pushtikaran*” or “*Asat ki Nirakaran*”—that is, affirming and asserting the Truth or the Reality, and denying and rejecting that which is unreal. And Vedanta, of course, has made a distinction, a very fine, definite, clear-cut distinction between what is Self and what is non-Self, between what is real and what is unreal. And the whole process of Viveka or discrimination in the Vedantic approach or Vedantic Sadhana is to make vivid and clear to the seeker what is Self and what is non-Self. And the great Guru, Sankaracharya, has devoted an entire work to try to describe to the seeking aspirant the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, Atman and Anatman. His work, known as “Viveka-chudamani” or “The Crest-jewel of Discrimination” is entirely devoted to this topic only.

Now, this whole process of constant discrimination between the Self and the non-Self, of constant discrimination between the Reality and that which is unreal, is based upon this truth about your interior, namely, “As you think, so you become”. Whatever you constantly hold in your thought, constantly affirm and assert, ultimately that becomes realised as fact, ultimately that becomes manifest as actuality. Constantly think of yourself as the body, as a perishable human being, as the senses, and you will always be in a body-mind-bound state of consciousness only. But, think of yourself as something completely distinct and different from them, as something completely transcending them, above them, unconnected with them, unchanging and only witness-consciousness, unaffected by the changing conditions of the body and unaffected by the changing states of the mind. Then, if you constantly think of yourself as a being completely untouched and unaffected by the body and the mind and beyond the changing conditions and states of the body and the mind, then, gradually, in your consciousness there will arise the dawn of the higher experience of your own unchanging, eternal, spiritual reality. Until then, as long as you keep your mind in a state of constant identification or at-one-ness with the body and its changing conditions, with the senses and their appetites, with the various states of the mind, its imagination, its memories, its desires, its cravings, its longings, then you will always be bound up in this state only. What you think, so you become. What you constantly hold in your mind, that is going to be your ultimate experience also. And over many births and over long ages, the mind has always been holding on to wrong thoughts. The mind is always holding on to a pattern of thinking and feeling characterised by ignorance, characterised by the opposite of Self-knowledge, characterised by a total non-awareness of your real identity and an awareness of only your false changeable human identity. You have to bring about a total change in this state of affairs prevailing in your Antahkarana, prevailing in your mind and intellect. How will you bring about this change? How will you bring about a complete revolution in your thinking, in your identity, in your consciousness?

The Transforming Power and Influence of Holy Company

There are several ways. One of the methods is: try as much as possible to be in the company, to be in the association, of persons who have lifted their consciousness from this body-mind-bound condition into a higher level, into a higher plane, and whose consciousness is always established in that level or plane. Try to associate yourself with persons who have effectively managed to establish their consciousness upon a higher level and not upon an earthly level. Because such persons are in a state of spiritual consciousness, because they have refused to identify themselves with body and mind, when you are in their proximity, there is some power in them, some unknown quality in them, which induces your mind also to go upward into the state in which they are. What it is, there is no scientific instrument to measure. What it is, you cannot say. It is not any known factor. It is some unknown factor. You go into their presence and you also feel a spiritual awareness of yourself. It happens automatically. So, be more and more nearer. On the other hand, if you are in the company of worldly-minded people, your consciousness also naturally comes down. If you are in the company of eaters, drinkers, merry-makers, people whose consciousness is gross, who have fully equated themselves with the body and the senses and the things of the senses, then your consciousness also comes down. But if you always get into the company and association of those who have created within themselves a new consciousness, who have become a centre of the powerful vibration of that new consciousness, if you remain in their company as much as possible, gradually, that itself becomes a liberating influence and your consciousness also becomes heightened.

This is why in former days, the aspirants were in the habit of going and living with a spiritual Guru. In those days, in India, there was a different pattern of life altogether. For several years, in the most impressionable period of an individual's life, the individual was taken by their father and mother and placed in the company of a Rishi. The Rishi was always a highly learned being. He was not always a God-realised soul, but at least he was not in ignorance. Theoretically at least, on the intellectual level at least, he knew that he was not the body and the mind, but that he was the Atman. And the student stayed with the Rishi and learnt, got education in the company of the Rishi—student and teacher lived as members of a big family which was called the Rishikula or the Gurukula. And for ten years, twelve years or fourteen years, from the eighth or the tenth year till the twenty-fifth year, the student lived in that Gurukula atmosphere. That itself was a transforming process. Those who lived in the Gurukula in this manner were not necessarily spiritual aspirants. They were Jijnasus, seekers of knowledge. They wanted to learn things, they wanted to acquire knowledge. For acquiring knowledge, they went and lived with the Guru. Apart from the Jijnasus, the spiritual seekers who wanted to know their own real nature, who wanted to realise the transcendental reality called Atman or Brahman or Aisvarya or Bhagavan—they also sought to be in such environment. So, that is one way to get spiritually transformed. That way is to be in the constant company of the holy ones. That is called Satsangh.

The Sadhana of Sravana—A Process of Deprogramming

There is a second way of transformation. Now, the state of your mind always tends to be in accordance with the ideas that are constantly fed into it. Whatever ideas come into your mind constantly, the mind takes in those ideas, and gradually becomes like those ideas. Therefore, if you want to start a new consciousness, a new awareness, in the mind, take in new ideas which always

talk to you about your spiritual reality. Go and sit before people whose only business is to expound the truth, whose only business is to talk to you about the reality, to tell you who you are, to try to deprogramme your ancient brainwashed mind.

‘Deprogramming’ is a new term currently being used in the West. Supposing a person has been told something constantly and he has become conditioned and you want to take him out of that conditioned outlook or mental state. You hand him over to a deprogrammer. A certain type of programming has already been put into the brain and the man has been brainwashed and he is caught in that condition. Now, the deprogrammer tries to start a counter-process to relieve the patient and liberate him from his brainwashed condition. Likewise, Vedanta says: “Birth after birth, God knows since how long, you have always been thinking, ‘I am this. I am Mr. So-and-so. I am such and such. I am a male. I am a female. I am a Brahmin. I am a Kshatriya. I am a Brahmachari. I am a householder. I am a Sannyasin. I am this, I am that’. You have been thinking everything about yourself except what you are. Your mind has constantly been in the habitual practice of thinking about yourself as everything else except the pure truth. In truth, you are the pure, ever liberated Spirit, neither male nor female, neither human nor beast nor god. In truth, you are eternal and unconditioned, Nitya and Nirupadhika. You have no Upadhis. You are not conditioned by anything, you are not limited by anything. You have no name, no form. You are the eternal Satchidananda, ever free, ever perfect”. But you never think of yourself in this manner. This wisdom never comes to you. Except this wisdom, everything else has been put into your mind. So, now, to deprogramme you from this age-old wrong conditioning characterised by limitations, sex, age, height, weight, caste, religion, creed, name, form and family, throw a bomb into this citadel of conditioned thinking, of limited thinking, by thinking of the Self, by thinking of the Reality. From now on think, “I am the eternal Atman, unborn, without beginning, without end, without birth, without death, without change, without name, without form, without any limitation”. Assert, “I am the untrammelled Spirit”. Listen to the expositions by realised souls, by illumined beings. Listen to the expositions of the truth, of the reality. Constantly go before the illumined souls and take in these thrilling, illuminating, elevating, awakening, new ideas of reality, of truth, of the Vedantic experience. This is the second process of raising your consciousness into a new spiritual awareness. And this process is called the Sadhana of Sravana, of spiritual listening.

But then, there is a practical problem. You cannot always get scope for leaving your own environment and going and sitting in the company of the illumined persons and exposing yourself to Satsangh. With great difficulty, you may have to take leave and go to Rishikesh or Hardwar, Ayodhya or Kashi or Brindavan, Uttarkashi or Badrinath, to get the Satsangh of Mahatmas. By and large, a great portion of your time is spent in the midst of people who are in a state of ignorance, who are in a state of grossness, in a state of body-consciousness. Sometimes you can manage to get a little bit of Satsangh. But, the mind soon gets covered over with the opposite worldly currents. Also, if you live in Rishikesh or Hardwar, you may get a chance to sit and listen to Vedantic discourses on Reality. But, if you are in Paris or London or Brussels, Bombay or Calcutta, Madras or Delhi, you have a problem. You do not get such a chance. There is not much scope for exposing yourself to Vedantic listening. So, what to do? Because, if there is to be a complete transformation of your mental condition, a complete overhauling of the contents of your mind, you have to keep on exposing your mind constantly to the new awakening and enlightening ideas. You have to keep on pouring these new ideas into your mind. And it cannot be done in a day or two. You must keep it up in a continuous unbroken process, constantly, just as you put nourishment into the body every day.

Morning breakfast, midday lunch, evening supper—with all that only the body is nourished. So, if the transformation has to be effected in the mind, this deprogramming process has to be continuous. It has to be regular and continuous, day after day.

Svadyaya and Its Many Advantages

As against this necessity, both the Satsangh method and the listening method have their limitations. You have your limitations in gaining access to these sources which can bring about the required transformation in you. So, Patanjali has suggested a process which is, independent of time and circumstances and easily accessible to you wherever you may happen to be, whether Satsangh is available or not, whether opportunity to listen is available or not. Patanjali said, “This is a process which will be available to you constantly, available to you always, wherever you are”. What is that? A regular daily intake of the mind-transforming, illumining and awakening new ideas through constant daily study of books that expound your reality. Constant daily study of the right type of literature. What is the right type of literature? The scriptures, the eternal sources of transcendental divine wisdom. The scriptures constitute permanent sources of transcendental divine wisdom. All the greatest divine experiences are there within the confines of these great books. These scriptures hold within themselves life-transforming, illuminating, spiritual ideas, powerful spiritual ideas. These you can partake of—these illuminating and transforming ideas—any day, at any time, in your own home, in your own room, in your bedroom if you like, at any time; and if your life is a very, very busy life, from morning to evening, even then you can do the study at night or do the study in the early morning. Get up early in the morning and bring in a flood of light into your mind through this study or finish all your work and sit up in the night, even at midnight, and bring in a flood of light into your interior. So, ignorance is dispelled, knowledge is brought in. By this constant intake of spiritual ideas through daily study, gradually there comes about a process of mind-transformation. The old mind is gradually eliminated and a new mind is created within you, a new mind which always thinks spiritually, which always is in a state of awareness. That old state of ignorance, that state of wrong thoughts, that state of non-awareness is pushed out gradually; and in its place there grows the new mind characterised by illumination, characterised by a higher awareness, characterised by spiritual light and wisdom. This creation of a new mind, a new view, new ways of thinking, new ways of being aware of yourself, an awakened higher awareness, a higher spiritual identity—that is the metaphysical as well as the psychological objective of the fourth Niyama, namely, Svadyaya. And it is significant therefore that this process, this Sadhana of Svadyaya, which constitutes the fourth of the Niyamas, constitutes also the commencement of the flow of your consciousness, the flow of your entire life in a positive spiritual direction, in an upward ascending dimension.

To fully understand the importance of Svadyaya, you must go deeper into its metaphysical and psychological implications. By Svadyaya you gradually transform your interior, wherein lies the problem of bondage as well as its solution of liberation. In that area of your being you bring about an awakening, you bring about a transformation. You bring about a total renewal. The old mind is cast out and a new mind is created by Svadyaya, by daily, regular, unflinching intake of luminous life-transforming, positive, creative spiritual ideas of Truth-consciousness, Reality-awareness, of the consciousness of your eternal identity as opposed to your present consciousness of a temporary, false identity with the body-mind complex. The false identity is all propped up by Upadhis or limiting adjuncts, whereas the real identity is based upon Tattva. The

basis or support for the real identity is Tattva. Whereas the basis or support for your false identity, your human identity, your Nama-Rupa identity, your name and form identity, is the Upadhis or limiting adjuncts that are ever-changeable, that are temporary, that do not constitute your essential nature, that belong to Prakriti, as distinct from your true Self or Reality which is Purusha. So, that is the value of Svadhyaya. It creates a new mind. It puts an end to the wrong thought, the wrong knowledge or the Viparita Jnana that your mind has, namely, “I am So-and-so, I am such and such, I am this and that”, and in its place, brings about real Jnana. Svadhyaya of Jnana Granthas, the regular study of wisdom scriptures which are a source of light and enlightenment, brings about right knowledge as opposed to erroneous knowledge. Erroneous knowledge is the result of a lack of proper enquiry and a lack of proper discrimination. Viparita Jnana is due to Avichara and Aviveka. In the place of Avichara and Aviveka, you bring about Vichara and Viveka through Svadhyaya. Svadhyaya gives rise to Vichara and Viveka.

The human individual suffers from a loss of self-awareness, suffers from a wrong identification with Prakriti in the form of body, senses and mind due to a basic nescience which we call Ajnana or spiritual ignorance. One of the metaphysical objectives of Svadhyaya is to remove the covering of this Ajnana from your consciousness and bring in a new awareness, a new knowledge about yourself. There is also a second important metaphysical objective of Svadhyaya. Within the psyche of the human being, the bondage to body consciousness and sensual propensities lies in the form of various subtle impressions and latent tendencies called Samskaras and Vasanas. They have to be completely reshuffled. They have to be completely taken out. And a new mind has to be created. The old Vasanas and Samskaras which are characterised by ignorance, Avidya, Ajnana, body consciousness and grossness have to be eliminated, and in their place, new Samskaras of a different variety, divine and spiritual, have to be created. And Svadhyaya serves a very valuable purpose towards this end. It is a great exercise, and gradually, day after day, it brings about a transformation of the mental contents, the inner contents of your mind. Svadhyaya replaces the old worldly Samskaras and Vasanas by new spiritual Samskaras and new spiritual Vasanas such as would be helpful and supplementary to your effort at attaining Self-awareness. Svadhyaya is a great exercise in this way.

Psychologically, Svadhyaya helps you by creating a permanent background of thought, so much so, when you are free, when you are not occupied, when you are disengaged from outer occupation, you do not fall a prey to all types of chaotic, miscellaneous thoughts crowding in your mind and trying to sweep you away in one worldly direction or the other. Rather, by Svadhyaya, you gain or acquire a certain stable basis on which to stay. Your mind no longer gets swept away by the onrush of miscellaneous thoughts when you are disengaged from work, or when you try to sleep, or even before waking up or during dream. This is because Svadhyaya creates in you a permanent type of background of thought of the right quality, of the spiritual quality.

Normally, whenever you are occupied with some work, your mind creates no problem for you, because its attention is caught in the work outside. It is when you are not occupied that all your inner Samskaras and Vasanas start showing their hideous face, that your mind becomes a devil's workshop. It is then that your mind runs riot, goes into all sorts of sensual grooves, into various disturbing thoughts. So, to secure yourself against this mental mischief, the spiritual masters have advocated or suggested the creation of a certain permanent background of thought in your mind. If such a background of thought is created in your mind, then, the problem of mental mischief ceases.

When you are occupied, everything is okay. And when you are not occupied, then also you are okay, because you have already created in your mind a certain background of thought which is spiritual, which is positive and good, uplifting and elevating. By providing the right material, Svadhyaya helps you in creating such a permanent background of higher thought, ennobling spiritual thought. This is one psychological gain of Svadhyaya.

Yet another important psychological advantage of Svadhyaya is that it gives you, creates in you new material for contemplation, for reflection, for meditation. It is very necessary for you to have clear-cut, vivid and well-defined concepts and ideas about the Ultimate Reality, about the ultimate object of meditation, upon which your mind will have to get focussed later on in the practice of Yoga. If there is only a vague type of understanding about these things, effective meditation is not possible. For successful meditation, it is necessary to have very clear-cut ideas about the Ultimate Reality. And Svadhyaya provides the right type of psychological exercise which clarifies things in the mind, removes many doubts, answers many questions, provides inspiration and deeper insight, and more than anything else, gives you clear, well-defined, vivid material upon which to reflect, upon which to cogitate, upon which to contemplate and meditate.

If your mind is having only vague ideas, nebulous ideas of what Brahman is, what Reality is, you can only discuss a little; you can only talk a little. But, since you have not caught very clear-cut and well-defined ideas about the ultimate object of meditation, about the ultimate reality and goal of your life, your mind cannot take hold upon it, your mind cannot get focussed upon it in a steady way. Svadhyaya provides for this problem also. Through constant concentrated study, with all your attention fixed upon the subject of your study, what happens is that gradually within your mind there comes a very clear-cut and very clearly defined idea of what it is that you have to achieve. There comes into your mind a very vivid and clearly defined idea of what really is your goal, what really is your object of meditation. Then, Brahman becomes to you not merely a world, not just something vague and nebulous and ill-defined, but very clear-cut and very well-defined. Thus, Svadhyaya provides for you material for effective meditation, for effective inner reflection and contemplation, by creating within you a clear-cut, definite idea of your object of meditation. Only when you have a clear-cut idea of the object of meditation can you truly meditate. And meditation is the ultimate process which the whole science of Yoga is trying to bring about, trying to make possible. Because, Raja Yoga is nothing but the science of meditation. Its ultimate process is meditation. It is in order to train your entire interior to be able to do effective meditation that all these various preliminaries, various steps, have been expounded by Patanjali. For the process of meditation, the Niyama of Svadhyaya becomes a very, very invaluable and priceless preparation. So, psychologically, Svadhyaya has this to recommend it that not only does it safeguard you by creating a background of ennobling spiritual thought in the mind, but also provides for you clear-cut, well-defined material which becomes the support of your inner reflection and meditation, Manana and Nididhyasana. This is the psychological rationale of Svadhyaya.

The whole problem of human bondage is neither in the Self nor in the body. It is in the interim area of your mind and intellect, your inner being, inner nature, which is called Antahkarana Prakriti. It is there that you have to find a solution, because the problem is there and the solution is also to be found there; and the solution is obtained by bringing about a transformation of your mind, by creating a totally new mind with new mental contents. Of the three, namely, Satsangha, Sravana and Svadhyaya, Svadhyaya is the most reliable, because it is always available and it can be

practised daily. Whereas, Satsangha and Sravana are not so continuously available. Therefore it is that Patanjali has made Svadhyaya an important part of his second Anga or Niyama. Lastly, there is one thing more to know about this important spiritual exercise of daily Svadhyaya. It is that Svadhyaya is not merely reading; it is study. It is not Patha or Parayana, but it is Adhyayana; it is Svadhyaya.

7

ISVARAPRANIDHANA OR SELF-SURRENDER

Now we come to the fifth of the Niyamas. It is called Isvarapranidhana. Mostly, in non-technical language, Isvarapranidhana is translated as “surrender to the Divine”. It is Saranagati—offering ourselves unto the Divine. I am now in one position, and in surrender, I change my position and put myself into another position. I centre myself in the Divine. I give myself up and place myself in the Divine for the Divine to do what It wishes with me. So, it is called self-offering or offering of oneself. It is called self-surrender.

Now, self-surrender, rightly practised, is a great help in achieving the ultimate aim of Yoga, namely, superconsciousness. Superconsciousness is a state in which one is able to go beyond the present state of bondage resulting from an erroneous idea about oneself. In superconsciousness, one transcends error and moves into truth, into right perception; thus moving, one attains illumination, one regains one’s true status of Purushahood. That is the value of superconsciousness; that is the significance of attaining superconsciousness. Superconsciousness corrects the whole error of the human being and puts him back where he belongs.

When dealing with this state of superconsciousness, which is the ultimate aim, objective or goal of Raja Yoga, in one place the great Maharshi says that that state can be brought about or attained through various means. And in cataloguing them, the sage mentions Isvarapranidhana also as one of the means. It is possible to attain superconsciousness through perfect Isvarapranidhana. If it is whole-souled and hundred per cent, complete and perfect, then, Isvarapranidhana has in it the power to grant you the experience of superconsciousness, which means that this fifth of the five Niyamas is of tremendous help in the actual Yoga process. It means that.

Bahiranga Yoga and Antaranga Yoga—A Question of Classification

And what is the actual Yoga process? Concentration, meditation and Samadhi—these three, taken together, constitute the actual Yoga process, the real Yoga. And meditation is impossible with a scattered mind, with a mind in which the outgoing tendency has not been reversed, has not been corrected and eliminated. In such a mind, the outgoing tendency is still very strong and real, and effective meditation is not possible. Therefore, inasmuch as the interiorising of the mind, the withdrawing of the mind from the externals, is an indispensable condition, is a prerequisite, to this real process of Yoga constituted by concentration, meditation and Samadhi, this withdrawal of the mind—what is called Pratyahara—also has been included as an inseparable part, as an integral part, of the actual Yoga process or the inner Yoga. Therefore, these last four Angas—withdrawal,

concentration, meditation and Samadhi—are regarded and referred to as the Antaranga aspect of Patanjali’s Yoga, whereas the first four Angas Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama—are generally referred to as the Bahiranga aspect of Yoga or as the outer Yoga.

There are, however, some people who include Pratyahara also under Bahiranga Yoga and say that the first five limbs constitute Bahiranga Yoga and the last three limbs constitute Antaranga Yoga. I am more inclined to agree with the people who take the first four Angas to constitute Bahiranga Yoga and the last four Angas constitute Antaranga Yoga or the inner Yoga. To me, this seems to be a more logical classification, because “withdrawal” is more related to concentration and meditation, though the practice of this fifth factor, namely, “withdrawal” is something that has to be practised during Vyavahara. So, those who include it in Bahiranga Sadhana have a certain basis, a certain reason, for it, because this withdrawal is not something which you do when you go to your meditation room and close the door and sit on your seat and start doing your meditation. It is something that has to be practised even when you are moving about, even when you are active, dealing with various matters of daily life, though as a specific technique, even after sitting on your seat, a certain practice of withdrawal is involved. But the actual practice of the fifth Anga, withdrawal of the mind, is something that has to be gradually perfected during your active Vyavahara. Here, suffice it to say that whatever be the classification of Pratyahara, this fifth Niyama of Isvarapranidhana is evidently so important and is of such tremendous help and significance even to one’s Antaranga Sadhana that Patanjali has gone to the extent of saying that attainment of superconsciousness is possible also through Isvarapranidhana. It shows its importance. So, we must be in a position to understand very clearly what this surrender means. Now, in what way does Patanjali Maharshi visualise or envisage this practice of surrender? What is his idea about it and in what way does he conceive of it? What has he to tell us about this “surrender”?

Meaning of Self-surrender

Self-surrender is a surrender of those factors which stand in the way of our attaining superconsciousness, which as long as we cling to them, will not allow us to move forward and ascend upward. So, in the most general sense of the term, it is a surrender of those metaphysical factors that stand in the way of our attaining the object of Yoga, the ultimate goal of Yoga. Patanjali says that that which holds us bound to Samsara is our present wrong consciousness which has come about due to our involvement in cosmic nature, in phenomenal nature or Prakriti. This present wrong state of consciousness is one where we are identified with passing non-eternal aspects of our personality such as body, mind, name, form, our opinions, our desires, our cravings, our self-importance, our egoistical ideas and our egoistical wishes regarding things. These create problems for us. We want things in a particular way, in such and such a way only. Not in any other way. And if anyone is helpful in fulfilling our desires for things to be in such and such a way, he is our friend. We are well inclined towards him. If someone comes in the way of our having things in the manner we want, if someone comes in the way and upsets our apple cart, then he is to us our enemy. We have ill will towards him. We have negative feelings towards that person, a negative relationship. So, Raga-Dvesha, like and dislike, attraction and repulsion, arise out of our clinging to certain personal desires, to certain personal wishes.

“Not mine, O Lord, Thy Will be done, not mine”—this is the other end of the pole. It is at the North Pole and the common human consciousness is at the South Pole. Unconsciously, the human individual is always engaged in trying to make things just as he wants them and in no other way. And if some obstacles crop up in the way, he will try to remove those obstacles and somehow or the other see that things are as he wants them to be. And, in this clinging to one’s selfish desires lies the seeds of all like and dislike, all quarrel, all disharmony, all discord, all conflict, all clash, all hatred, all vengefulness, all desire to retaliate, all sorrow. By clinging to our own desires, we lose our peace of mind. This is Samsara, this is life. This is why no human being is always happy, no human being is at peace with himself. Man is always in a state of agitation, because by the very nature of things, all things do not go the way he wants them to. The world has a will of its own. It also wants things in its own way. And there is always a variance between the way in which we want things for ourselves and the way in which the world is prepared to give things to us, and this perpetual tension is life. And, therefore, the human individual is not satisfied, not content, not at peace. He is not happy. Our worshipful Master gave the dictum: “Adapt, adjust, accommodate”. He gave it within the framework of the social milieu: he gave it within the framework of human affairs, of human relationships. But, within the framework of our interior life, of our spiritual life, where we are related to God, it is not merely a question of adapting, adjusting and accommodating with God. It is bowing to the Will of God. It is surrendering to the Will of God. It is a question of saying: “Thy Will be done, not mine”. It is a question of giving up “I” and “Mine” and saying to God, “Nothing belongs to me; all belongs to You” and then behaving and living like that, reacting like that. Surrender means to tell God: “You will be the one to lay down the rule, not I. You will be the one to pilot the ship, not I”. It means surrendering to the Lord the conduct of our life and to be content to make our life in the way He wants it to be made, surrendering our self-wishes regarding things and conditions and remaining happy in whatever condition He may keep us.

Marjara Nyaya—The Illustration of the Cat and the Kittens

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa explained this spiritual state of surrender by citing the analogy of the cat and the kittens. The cat lays little ones and then the life of the kittens is completely in the hands of the cat. Wherever she keeps the kittens, the latter are satisfied. And then, taking the kittens one by one by the scruff of the neck with her mouth, the cat shifts the location of the kittens. In this way, the cat shifts her kittens a number of times from one place to another; and wherever the mother cat places the kittens, the latter are satisfied. They say that the cat sometimes shifts the kittens seven or eight times within the course of a month or two. It has got some instinct. It does not want the little ones to be in the same place; maybe it thinks that some enemy will come to know of it and then the little ones will be in danger. So the cat keeps shifting her little ones from one place to another and all that shifting the kittens take up quietly. The little kitten just curls itself up and allows itself to be picked up by the scruff of the neck and taken wherever the mother cat deems fit. Sri Ramakrishna says that this is the nature and condition of the devotee who has surrendered himself to the Lord. Such a devotee does not want to have any say in any matter. He allows the Lord to do what He wants with his life. This is one aspect of Isvarapranidhana—the surrender of one’s self-will or individual will, the surrender of one’s personal desires, especially those in the Tamasic and the Rajasic aspects.

Normally, we have a demanding nature, an insisting nature, an obstinate nature. And we say, “I want things only in this way”. Here it must be noticed that there is a difference between

tenacity and obstinacy. Tenacity is a Sattvic virtue; obstinacy is a Tamasic vice. You will have to know where you are being obstinate and where you are being tenacious. And where you can truly and properly say, “Yes, this is only tenacity”, you can allow it to remain. But if you think it is obstinacy, then you must give it up, you must surrender it. This is one aspect of surrendering the ego principle to the Will of the Lord.

Metaphysical Implication of Self-surrender

Secondly, we have been trying to consider right from the very beginning that philosophically speaking, our present state of consciousness is a vitiated state of consciousness. It is not a normal state of consciousness, because the normal state of consciousness is its absolute state. Whereas, our present consciousness is in an abnormal state where it is characterised by error and ignorance, where the truth is completely overshadowed by the cloud of ignorance. Just as the moon hides away the sun completely during a solar eclipse, this metaphysical aberration eclipses our pristine, glorious, natural, eternal state and leaves us in a vitiated state of consciousness, which is a wrong state of consciousness, which is a state of darkness.

Now, what is the metaphysical anatomy of our state of consciousness? How can we study it? If we want to know the state of our bones after an accident, we take an X-ray picture and hold it against the light and we are able to see the exact condition of the injured or cracked bones inside. The state of the inside anatomy is projected before us in a clear manner so that we understand what exactly to do to bring about a correction, a readjustment, to set the bones straight. In the same way, if we could know the inner structure of the wrong state of consciousness in which we are said to be, if we could see its metaphysical anatomy, how exactly it is, this abnormal vitiated state of consciousness, then we can know how to liberate ourselves from it, how to transcend it and go beyond it and regain the right state of consciousness. Our present state of personality consciousness is a state of consciousness characterised by an awareness of ourselves in relation to the outside world. We are aware of ourselves in relation to other people here in this world, in relation to certain places in this world, in relation to certain conditions in this world, in relation to a certain environment, and in relation to certain things. We know of ourselves only in such connection, in such context. So, our entire awareness of ourselves is in the context of the external universe, is in the context of the external conditions prevailing around us. And here lies the fundamental blunder. Here lies the fundamental mistake. Why is it a blunder? Because of the simple fact which no one can deny that this context is not the correct context. Again, why? Because, this context is only a temporary context. It is a passing context, it is not our real permanent context. The context itself is ever changing and it is also in time. It is thus a purely transitory, impermanent context.

How can you base your knowledge or awareness of yourself upon such a transitory and impermanent context? That knowledge itself is bound to be wrong, is bound to be erroneous, because, the moment this impermanent context changes or comes to an end, the knowledge based upon that also will fall to the ground. It will prove to be invalid. It will prove to be an error. This is the fundamental blunder that underlies your present knowledge of yourself, your present awareness of yourself. You are making it dependent upon a factor which itself is a two days' affair, a temporary factor, a passing factor. If you base your awareness upon a temporary factor, then, when that factor itself vanishes, the ground under your feet will be cut down. And down you will go. Your present awareness of yourself is completely related to a context which is itself passing and

temporary; and even when it is there, it is not stable but changeful. Therefore, your present awareness is not the correct awareness. You must give it up in favour of the correct awareness. You must detach your awareness from the passing, changeful world outside and attach it, relate it, to the imperishable, everlasting Atman within. This giving up of your present wrong awareness is the second aspect of Isvarapranidhana or self-surrender.

You know of yourself now in relation to a changeful and impermanent time-space context and you know that this context did not exist before you were born in this world and this context will cease to exist the moment you discard your body. Then where are you, what are you? What truck do you have with this environment and with this framework? This you have to think about. And as long as this state is allowed to prevail, how can you expect superconsciousness to come? How can you realise your Purushahood? That is knowing of yourself in terms of eternity and infinity and a state beyond all these outer factors. In Purushahood you go beyond phenomenal nature, whereas this entire thing which you see in which you are involved is part of phenomenal nature. And your whole consciousness of yourself seems to depend upon this Prakriti only. You know of yourself only in relation to this Prakriti. Whereas, superconsciousness is a state where you have to transcend this, go beyond this, know yourself in essence as you are, and not as you seem to be in the situation in which you are now placed. Now, what are you going to do about it?

The second Anga, namely, Niyama, was propounded by Patanjali specially with the object of giving a new turn to your consciousness, a new direction upward, a Godward direction to your life, a truthward direction to your life and life-style. The Niyamas take you through a series of processes in bringing about this new turn and the most important step in this direction is Isvarapranidhana. In Isvarapranidhana you are required to completely get rid of your present wrong consciousness based upon the outer context of the temporary phenomenal environment and to develop within you a consciousness where you know of yourself in relation to the Eternal. "What am I? I am the eternal part of God. I live in Him, I dwell in Him, I live and move and have my being in Him. He is my be-all and end-all. He is my source and origin. He is my present support and sustenance. He is my ultimate resting ground. He is my ultimate goal. My entire life is in Him from beginning to end." This sort of consciousness should be evoked by you from within. You have to remove or uproot your consciousness from its present basis, from its present context in Prakriti and plant it in a new element, in a totally new principle, namely, God, the Cosmic Being, the Satchidananda. "I shall no longer continue to think of myself in terms of this outer world. No! Henceforward I will be aware of myself only as a being rooted in God, as a being dwelling in God, as a being related to the Divine. And I will know of myself only in terms of God, in terms of Eternal Reality, in terms of the Divine Being, in terms of the Universal Soul and certainly not in terms of this passing environmental context." Such should be your resolve. Such is the essence of Isvarapranidhana so that by the act of Isvarapranidhana you evoke within yourself a new consciousness or a new awareness about yourself which replaces the old awareness which is the very basis of all your suffering, of all your problems. And trying to grow in this new state of consciousness is not a single act. It is a continuous struggle, a continuous attempt, a ceaseless continuing attempt. You must go on being based in that new state of consciousness, again and yet again, because no matter how many times you try to take that position, you will come back into this phenomenal world once again. Again and again you must continue to go back to that new state of consciousness which you are determined will be your real ground, your real atmosphere. So, Isvarapranidhana is a continuous Abhyasa and the Abhyasa should be kept up continuously.

8

**THE WIDER ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS OF
ISVARAPRANIDHANA**

There is a saying by the great sage Vyasa in the Mahabharata which carries the meaning that two terms or two words constitute bondage and two words constitute liberation. The words “I” and “Mine” constitute the bondage of the individual’s soul. As long as one is caught in this “I” and “Mine” business, his state will be a sorry state. There will be now laughing, now weeping; now up, now down; now very loving, now very hating—all conflict and clash. As long as he is caught in the vice-like grip of the two words “I” and “Mine”, this will be his fate. And what are the twin terms that constitute liberation? “Not I, Not Mine” these two terms constitute liberation, constitute freedom. These two terms give ultimate peace and joy and all problems come to an end. The tribulations of the soul, of the spirit, of the individual being, are over.

This truth is vividly brought out as a sort of a little symbol in the divine drama of the life of Jesus Christ, when at a certain moment, there came into his heart a wish of his own. He began to think: “Could things turn out in a different way than they seem to be heading towards? Maybe, if the matter could turn out the way I want...” Now, Jesus Christ wanted things to turn out in a particular way. And then, due to this one thought, due to this one desire of his, he had to go through the utmost agony, he had to suffer terrible agony for an entire night so much so he went through hell. The suffering, the torture, the torment he underwent is something that cannot be understood, that cannot be explained, that cannot be described. It is said that when a person is in the grip of intense emotion, perspiration comes. But it is said that out of the body of Jesus, in place of perspiration, blood oozed out. Out of the pores of his skin, blood oozed out; so much was the agony. He perspired not sweat, but blood. You can understand what the intensity of that agony, the extent of that suffering, must have been. But at last he said, “No, no, no. Not I. Let it go. I do not want things in my way. Let it be just as You want it”. The moment he said, “Not my desire, not my wish, but let Your wish triumph”, immediately peace came. The moment he gave up “I” and “Mine”, peace came. All the agony came to an end. The torment subsided. And Jesus Christ gave a deep sigh and got up. His ordeal was over the moment the two things “I” and “Mine” were given up. He rose, freed from the clutches of his terrible ordeal, freed from the torture, from the experience of agony, and he regained his composure, found his peace. This is just a very brief summary of a very, very deep philosophical and metaphysical fact, a mystical truth; and this is precisely the situation which confronts the human individual. And this is precisely the situation which in the past confronted great sages who wanted to help the human individual. This is the situation that confronted the science of Yoga. The science of Yoga was faced with this problem to solve, just as the medical science is faced with the challenge of certain physiological, anatomical problems. So, the Yoga Shastra, the science of Yoga, was faced with this problem of the individual in earthly bondage being caught in the vice-like grip of “I” and “Mine” which are spurious and non-eternal products of the Purusha getting involved in Prakriti.

If an individual gets selected by some talent hunters to play a part in a dramatic performance or a film, what happens to him? The moment he is taken into the whole set-up, a certain part gets imposed upon him as a result of his getting involved in the dramatic performance, the dramatic

situation or the film situation. As a result of this involvement he is obliged to get into a certain role, and he then takes upon himself a new “I” and “Mine” according to the part that has been assigned to him in the story. And so, until he gets out of this situation, he is that being. Day and night he has to think of ways and means of being that being—in his way of thinking, in his expression, in his acting, in his talk, in everything. So, this role gets imposed upon him and it continues as long as his involvement in the entire set-up continues. When the whole thing is finished, when the contract is over, if the man gets disengaged from it and does not foolishly sign into another commitment due to greed for big money, then once again he is what he is. He does not have to get involved in the drama, where maybe he loses his son or his wife or gets stabbed or gets murdered. In the same way, getting involved in Prakriti and all the manifestations and other expressions of Prakriti, what happens is that the individual soul gets caught in a certain plot and a certain part, and the whole life becomes nothing but the playing of that part; and this will continue unless and until he manages somehow or the other to get disengaged from this involvement in Prakriti. So, this was the situation that faced the science of Yoga in trying to come to the aid of the individual soul caught in Samsara, in trying to show him a way out of the false “I” and the false “Mine” that comes out of the false “I”. It is because of all this that the great sage Vyasa gave out the very, very significant saying that two words verily constituted bondage and two words verily constituted liberation. “I” and “Mine” constitute bondage; “Not I” and “Not Mine” constitute liberation.

And in the light of this discovery, in the light of this knowledge, you can understand the special significance of Isvarapranidhana as the fifth of the five Niyamas that constitute the second Anga of Yoga, at a time when the individual tries by various means and in different aspects, to make his entire life-stream ascend and move Godward. But, the most crucial thing is within the area of his personality consciousness. In the outer areas of cleanliness and holiness and sanctity, all right, you start with Saucha. And in the area of going above desires or getting over desires and gaining a mood of contentment—well, Santosh is there. And then, to try to assert the superiority of the spirit over the flesh, the subtle over the gross, the higher aspects of your personality over the pure sensual personality, Tapas is there. Tapas is countering the urge of the sense appetites, countering the drive of the senses towards sense indulgence and object experience. And now, we go into the realm of the content of the person, his thinking, his feeling, his entire approach to life, his view of life, to bring about a transformation in his view of himself as well as in his view of the entire universe.

False Life in the Context of the Outer Universe

Svadyaya is this powerful method of bringing about a transformation in his Samskaras and Vasanas by creating a background of thought, by giving material for focussing the mind. And this interior process goes into a greater depth when we approach Isvarapranidhana, for the self-awareness in the human being in a state of ignorance and bondage is always an awareness of himself in relation to the context of the outer world, which as we have seen is an invalid context, due to its being only a momentary context. The very basis is something that is erroneous, is something that has a fundamental defect in it, the defect of being temporary and changeful. So, always the Jiva is in a state of flux, in a state of agitation, of disturbance, in a state of greater and greater involvement. If you are a government official, you work in one place for three years, create some friends and all that, and afterwards you are transferred to some other place and there you create some new friends and acquaintances. You now feel your separation from your old acquaintances, start writing letters to them, start sending birthday greetings and presents to them, and this process

goes on. It means more and more involvement in Prakriti. As these ramifications of acquaintances, friendships and relationships develop, the Jiva's consciousness gets scattered more and more. There is no longer that unified consciousness towards the centre of one's being where the Purushahood abides. In this way, the whole life-pattern of the normal human being as it exists militates against the attainment of Yoga, against the attainment of union with the Supreme Reality. The existing life-pattern militates against it. It is the very contradiction of Yoga. If Yoga is the North Pole, the existing life-pattern of the normal individual is the South Pole. So, this is the fate of the Jiva. And this fate arises out of the most crucial and fundamental error that one's central awareness of oneself is only in the context of the ever-changing outer universe and the people in it, the things in it, the environment in it, the occurrences and incidents in it. We identify ourselves with occurrences, with events, with people, with things, with situations and with the environment in the outer universe. All these factors go to make up the world for each individual and thus each individual has a world of his own. This is the great problem of consciousness. Unless there is a decisive change in this pattern, a decisive alteration in this pattern, the problem will always continue. So, the wise sage Patanjali has given to us this very important Abhyasa or practice to replace our present ego-consciousness which has arisen in terms of the outer context by a new innermost awareness, a centremost gut feeling, as they say, of ourselves in terms of the Reality. This way you begin to become aware of yourself as a being in terms of something that is beyond the world, in terms of something that transcends time and space, in terms of something that is the very opposite of this ever-changing, temporary appearance that is here present. That something is not a temporary appearance, a changeful appearance, but a permanent Reality. And you begin to feel: "That is the ocean; I am the wave. That is the resplendent Sun of suns, Light of lights; I am a ray of It. This is the Supreme Being, father, mother, parent of all; I am Its eternal child". In this way you create, within the deepest centre of your being, consciousness of a relationship in terms of a principle that is beyond all phenomenal appearance, in terms of a principle that is unchanging, eternal and real.

The Real Spirit of Isvarapranidhana—Surrendering the Egoistic Will to God's Will

From that time onwards, Yoga takes on a real meaning and significance to you. Until then, it is only a sort of play. It is only a sort of game. It is like going into a club to play carrom or billiards; it is toying with Yoga. There is no depth. There is only an intellectual interest or an urge of the sentiment, but there is no real need being felt for Yoga. "Without Yoga I cannot live. I need Yoga. Yoga is my very life; I cannot exist without Yoga" that sort of feeling is not there. But that sort of feeling starts from the moment you have begun to know what Isvarapranidhana is. When you begin to understand the full implications of Isvarapranidhana and Isvarapranidhana has started to work within your consciousness, then Yoga becomes to you something very, very indispensable, something very, very serious, like food for a hungry man, like breath for a man who is drowned in water. That is the crucial turning point in your relationship to this science of Yoga, in your relationship to Sadhana. From then onwards you cannot live without Sadhana. Sadhana becomes to you your indispensable daily nourishment without which you cannot exist, without which you cannot live and grow. Until then, Yoga remains only an interest of the intellect, a feeling or a sentiment. But, Yoga becomes a spiritual urge within you, a spiritual hunger within you, a spiritual need for you, when you begin to dwell in the spirit of Isvarapranidhana. Then only you can say, "I cannot live without God". Then Yoga becomes to you like water to a thirsty animal wandering in

the desert for days on end with a parched tongue and a body burning with heat. Isvarapranidhana, thus, is the turning point in your attitude, in your feeling, about Yoga. And what this Isvarapranidhana implies is told by Vyasa in the Mahabharata where he says that the two terms “I” and “Mine” constitute bondage and the two terms “Not I” and “Not Mine” constitute liberation. How this pronouncement of Vyasa was exemplified in a significant episode in the life of the holy Master Jesus was also mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Now, to give another illustration. It is common knowledge that children who have never been disciplined by their parents pose a problem to themselves and to others. Such children have never known rules of conduct. They have never been told by their parents: “This is the rule for everybody; this is the way you must be”. They have never been instructed how long they can be out of the house, within what time they must be back in the evening, how they should behave, how they should mind their studies, how they should keep their bedroom, when they can see T.V., when they should not see T.V., what their table manners should be and so on. If all these rules had been laid down, the very same children would have been altogether of a different type. Children who have been properly trained, when they go to school, pose no problem to their teachers, because they have already been brought up well along a certain pattern. They are well behaved. They know that a certain thing is done and that a certain thing is not done. But, in the case of children who are completely undisciplined, they have a run of the home, they have their own way, they do what they like; and their parents are helpless, they do not take any interest in their children. When these children are sent to school, they always turn out to be the headache of their class teacher. They are a botheration and a disturbance to their class-fellows too. On the whole, wherever they go, in whichever environment they may be placed, they turn out to be problems. Wherever they go, they always go as agitations, as disturbances.

Now, in the realm of Yoga, in the realm of Niyama, in the realm of Isvarapranidhana also, the same situation prevails; the same truth holds good. You have to say, “O Lord, I place myself entirely in You. Let it not be as I wish, but let it be as Thou wishest. My whole life is in Your hands. I place myself—body, mind and soul—in Your hands”. In this way, the Yogi, the Sadhaka, must learn to abide by the Will of God, must try to find out the Will of God. He must learn to place himself at the feet of God in obedience. He must surrender the inveterate urges of the ego principle and the demanding desire nature of the mind and the turbulent urges of the sense appetites at the feet of God. He should place all of these things under the governance of the Will of the Divine. He should put himself under Divine control, Divine supervision, Divine direction. He has thus to liberate himself.

How to Know the Will of God?

Here a problem arises. Theoretically you may say, “O God, I put myself into Your hands”. But, God does not seem to have any direct communication with you. Who is this God under whom you are putting yourself? He does not seem to be a close acquaintance of yours. You do not know Him; you have not seen Him. He does not appear to you and say, “Okay. I am very pleased that you have put yourself under My control. Now, from henceforward, do this, do that”. He does not say that. He is still a concept to you. He is still a remote factor, a concept. So, how are you to successfully and effectively practise Isvarapranidhana? How to? This is a real-life situation. God is remote, God is unknown, God is strange. You do not know Him. You have only a feeling about

God. God is only in your inside sentiment, and that sentiment too, is not a very clear, well-defined or vivid sentiment, but just a vague sentiment, an idea. We use the word “God”, but we do not have a tangible sense of the reality of God. When you stand before a temple, you may have, for a moment, a feeling that is an apparently tangible reality; but otherwise, the moment you leave the place, then it is all once again something abstract and abstruse. So, to this abstruse principle, to this abstract being, how can you make surrender? How can you place yourself at its disposal? If you want to place yourself into the keeping of someone, you must know something fairly clear and accurate and concrete and tangible and definite about that person. That is not the case with yourself and God. And yet, you have to practise Isvarapranidhana.

In this connection, it is necessary to know the various aspects in which a Sadhaka is expected to practise Isvarapranidhana. Our scriptures abound in directions in this regard. The Vedas are regarded as the word of God, the breath of God, and we firmly believe that they contain the manifestation or the expression of the Will of God or what God wants us to do. How God wants us to live our life, how He wants us to know, think, feel and act—again and again this is repeatedly expressed in the scriptures. Therefore, in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, it is clearly said that if you wish to attain your highest welfare, you must fulfil the dictum of the scriptures. Live your life in accordance with the directions that are given in the scriptures. If you simply say, “I do not care, the scriptures are superstitions”, then, no good will come out of it. Because, knowing the scriptural teachings is the only viable method for us to know the Will of God, because in bygone times, God had come and expressed His Will before great sages and He had made plain what He wished man to do, how He wished man should live his life. So they say that you should try to know the gist of the scriptures and try to make that your guide. That means you surrender your self-will, your egoistical inclinations and urges and desires, to the Srutis, to the Sruti Vakyas. Our life should not be Ashastriya. It should be Shastriya.

Progressive Training in Effacing the Ego-consciousness

Again, in our culture, at different stages of our individual life, we were shown personalities under whom we were to put ourselves in obedience and whose bidding we were to do. It is all a question of habituating yourself to a certain pattern, a question of growing into a certain pattern. If the whole pattern at the back is one of indiscipline at home, the same pattern is going to manifest later on in school. But, if the basic background, the foundational pattern, is one of discipline, order and obedience, that is going to manifest later on when you change your field of life. It is necessary, therefore, for a Yogi, for a Sadhaka, to grow up in a certain mould and that training becomes invaluable when he enters the field of Yoga. Therefore, to achieve this end, the Srutis declare: “*Matri Devo Bhava, Pitri Devo Bhava*”. Because, the earliest part of the individual’s life is lived under the care of one’s parents, one’s father and mother at home. The scriptures say, “Look upon them as your God. Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God. Obey them, carry out their words, carry out their instructions. Do not defy them. Put your ego in subordination to your parents”. It must be noted, however, that this scriptural injunction is with reference to ideal conditions. It is with reference to ideal parents, wise parents. It is certainly not with reference to, it cannot be with reference to, drunken and fighting parents who have as their main profession dishonesty, treachery, cupidity, stealing and robbery. No. The scriptural injunction is valid in normal circumstances. So, under normal ideal conditions, “*Matri Devo Bhava, Pitri Devo Bhava*” is the training, the preliminary training for effecting total surrender to God later on. Thus,

Isvarapranidhana starts in the individual right as a child at home, and then, when the area of its activities slightly shifts from the home environment to the school environment, the scriptures say, “*Acharya Devo Bhava*. Let your God be the being who now awakens your understanding, who brings to you knowledge, who teaches you, who initiates you into the fascinating adventure of knowing the world around you”.

In a higher dimension of spiritual life, if you take a spiritual teacher, if you learn spiritual things from him, then, bow down to him, place your ego at his feet, humbly question and try to seek knowledge. “*Tadviddhi Pranipatena Pariprasnena Sevaya*”—this is what the scriptures say. Say, “I do not know, you know. Please teach me”. Accept your ignorance in humility. And do not think that you are all-knowing. Do not doubt: “Oh, what can he teach me?”. For then, the knowledge is closed to you. You can say, “I know, but what I know is little. O Lord, forgive my ignorance. Bear with me for what I do not know. I know so much; I do not know so much. So, for that, I have to approach someone who knows more and serve him”. And all these mean subservience, putting back your ego, putting back the Rajasic self-asserting “I” and accepting your lack of knowledge or lack of adequate knowledge and accepting your position as a learner and the Guru’s position as a teacher. Bowing down to the Guru and serving the Guru is Dasatva. These are all indicative of the wise plan of our ancients. They gave the training right from childhood and into adolescence. The individual was thus given the preliminary training to later on make him fit for the process or the practice of Isvarapranidhana. So, what happens? The very pattern of life which the genius of the Indian culture provided for the individual was so designed as to make the individual gradually trained and equipped for going into Yoga later on and having an effective practice of Isvarapranidhana. So, putting oneself under the obedient tutelage of the scriptures, putting oneself under the obedient tutelage of the parents in the beginning, the teachers in the school later on, and the Guru ultimately, the individual learnt to keep his ego, to keep his “I” and “Mine”, at a safe distance, at a harmless distance.

The Guru Represents God—His Will is God’s Will

The Guru, at least, is a tangible being. He is in front of you. He is in concrete shape. Whereas, God is something abstract, intangible, remote; you have no direct dealing with Him. So, you see the Guru as the representative of God and think that God manifests himself as the Guru and think that His Will comes to you through the will of the Guru. And as a true disciple you say, “So far as I am concerned, I have put myself in discipleship at the lotus feet of this Guru and whatever he says is, to me, equal to God’s telling me the same. Therefore I put myself into a state of surrender, into a state of obedience, into a state of devout following of whatever comes from my Guru’s mouth”. So, thus making the Guru the representative of God and putting yourself in a state of total obedience to him, you become well established in the Sadhana of Isvarapranidhana whose main objective is to try to get man freed from the vice-like grip of “I” and “Mine”. That is the whole objective in Isvarapranidhana. Then only real Yoga can start for you. So, the fifth of the Niyamas has this very important and very, very indispensable aim and end in view, namely, that of liberating the struggling Yogi from the grip of the Prakriti which is in his innermost being in the form of this “I” and “Mine” idea, in the form of this false temporary personality consciousness. Over this personality consciousness only all the other things are built up. First the “I” and “Mine”, and then, all the other ramifications, just as the creeper, springing out of its root, spreads all over the ground in all the ten directions, into a big network. In the same way, this “I” and “Mine” form the root thought,

form the root concept, form the root aspect of your present personality consciousness, which is your bondage, which is your Prapancha. And that root should be destroyed, if the binding network of Prapancha is to go.

All this is a glimpse into the wider aspects of the process of Isvarapranidhana and the ways in which one can train oneself in the practice of Isvarapranidhana by practising a similar discipline in other areas of one's life, where one is concerned with one's parents, elders, saints and sages, one's own Guru, one's own scriptures. That is why sometimes Gurudev used to say that an ideal soldier, if he has had ten or twelve years' training in the army, is more fit for Yoga than an undisciplined person who has never had army training. This is because in army training, the soldier learns to surrender his ego to his superiors; he learns obedience. In the army, what you say is nowhere; it does not count. You have to implicitly obey, implicitly carry out orders. Gurudev Sivananda used to say that military discipline is very good Yogic discipline, where you swallow your pride, your ego, your own desire, your own fancy. And whatever the order, you have to obey, whether you like it or not, whether you want it or not, whether you wish it or not. There is no question of anything other than implicit obedience. So, Gurudev used to say that the trained soldier was better fitted for Yoga than others who had not undergone such self-effacing discipline. Just as Vivekananda once said that a dacoit might be able to realise God better than a coward or a timid person. A dacoit is daring, fearless. And such fearlessness, such daring, is necessary in order to walk the spiritual path and live the spiritual life. Yoga is not meant for the timid and the fearful. The daring dacoit has no body consciousness. At least, he has less body consciousness than a timid person who is always full of body consciousness. So, Vivekananda said that there was a greater chance for a daring dacoit realising the Atman than a timid person always rooted in the thought of the body. In the same way, Gurudev Sivananda used to say that a soldier who was well disciplined and had training in the army was better fitted for Yoga Sadhana than an undisciplined, wavering type of person.

9

ASANA AND PRANAYAMA

In Patanjali's Yoga, Asana does not mean a specific posture, but means sitting. It means, mainly, sitting for meditation. Asana means a meditative seat. The way in which you sit for meditation should be such that the body is motionless and steady, and also, it should not cause any discomfort to the body; otherwise, it cannot be maintained for a long time. It is only when the posture is comfortable that you can maintain it for a long life. Maintaining the Asana for a long time is of paramount importance to facilitate proper meditation. The whole science of Yoga is only to prepare the person for meditation physically, vitally and mentally. So, a comfortable posture is a very important thing. The factor of comfort is very important. This is emphasised by the very terse definition of "Asana" in Patanjali's Yoga, namely, "*Sthira Sukham Asanam*". Therefore, Asana in Raja Yoga does not imply the different postures of the science of Hatha Yoga. They say that there are 84 lakhs of different postures. Researchers have dug up many of them. Each Yoga teacher likes to think that he has discovered many of these forgotten postures and so there are Yoga teachers who have produced books containing 200 postures, 250 postures and so on. This process is going on.

However, our Master, beloved and worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, has made it clear that out of these 84 lakhs 84 are most important. So, in his basic Yogasana book which was brought out nearly fifty years ago in Madras, titled “Yogasanas Illustrated”, he has mentioned this fact and outlined the 84 important Asanas. They belong to Hatha Yoga and are mentioned in Siva Samhita, Gheranda Samhita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika and such other Hatha Yogic texts. People belonging to the Nath sect also have got some of these Asanas. In the case of Pranayama also, the Pranayama of Raja Yoga lays emphasis mainly upon Kumbhak or retention of the breath, and not upon the different types of Pranayama which are a part of the science of Hatha Yoga. In Raja Yoga, steadiness and comfort are the most essential factors of Asana; and the ability to restrain the breath, the ability to hold the breath or retain the breath, is the most important feature about Pranayama. By thus maintaining a steady unshaken posture for a long time, several things accrue to the Raja Yogi. One is that the mind gradually begins to get into a state of steadiness. This is not however due to the steadiness of the body, because in this Yogic framework, the body and the mind are not directly connected.

The Body and the Mind in Western Psychology and in Yoga

In the Western medical and psychological framework, the body and the mind are directly connected—and here by ‘mind’ is indicated only the lower mind, the emotional mind, mind as thought and emotion, as imagination and emotion. Mind reacts upon the body, creates various conditions in the body. Contrariwise, body conditions do affect the mental moods. If you have got a nagging pain somewhere in the body, you are depressed, you cannot keep cheerful. If you have got a toothache or a stomachache, or if you suffer from general indisposition or fever, then you become irritable, you become morose, you become cheerless. Certain types of diseases, especially those where pain is involved, affect the mind. The other way round, the mind being in a state of anxiety, the mind being in a state of stress, the mind being in a state of depression or deep conflict, it also creates tensions in various parts of the body leading to different kinds of conditions. It may lead to over-secretion of certain hormones and juices or it may inhibit the secretion of certain essential juices and bring about spasms of the muscles, causing constipation, causing various conditions. The field of study which deals with the interaction between the body and the lower mind is called by the Westerners “Psychosomatics”. “Somas” is body; “Psycho” is mind. And Psychosomatics deals with the connection between mind and body, deals with the effect of the mind upon the body. Psychosomatics is now being very much studied within the framework of medical science in the West.

Whereas, in the Yogic framework, the body is not directly connected with the mind. But then, it is indirectly connected, the interim factor that brings about the connection between the body and the mind being Prana. If the body is kept perfectly still and steady, what happens is that gradually the Prana is brought into a state of harmony, the Prana is brought into a state of stability. And when the Prana is thus established in a state of stability and harmony, the mind also is gradually brought into a state of stability and harmony, because of the link or the communication that subsists between Prana and the mind. The condition of the Prana thus influences the condition of the mind. Prana is the vital key to the control of the mind, to the control of all thoughts. Thus, by stilling the body and keeping it steady for longer and longer periods in a progressive way through daily Sadhana, daily Abhyasa, what happens is that ultimately the Prana assumes a state of stability and steadiness. This steadiness is communicated to the mind and this has the salutary effect of

gradually quietening the mind. At least during the time when you are seated in the Asana, the mind also tries to become quiet. The mind also becomes a little steady. This is the benefit.

An Experiment with Asana

And then, by cultivating the practice of sitting continuously in one steady posture, the practitioner develops Titiksha, the power of endurance. And frequently, there is an urge within the mind to move, but in spite of that, you do not move. You overcome that impulse, which means, your will power is developed by habituating yourself, by compelling yourself, to sit steady and unshaken for a long time in a single posture. Thus, Atma-Bal, Mano-Bal, is developed in the practitioner. And gradually, when you are well established in the Asana, the effect of heat and cold do not have the power to affect and disturb the body as much as is generally the case. You may be perspiring, it may be very hot; but once you have got the habit of sitting steadily, you will not care. You will not want to fan yourself. You become impervious to heat and cold, even cold. I have experimented on this personally in my early days. Sometimes we used to go the Ganges bank in mid-December and January, when it is coldest in Rishikesh. In those early years of development of the Sivananda Ashram, there was no Ghat, no steps, no cement, nothing. The Ganges bank was a wild terrain of just rock and shrubs sloping down to the river. One had to step carefully. We would go at night around 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. fully dressed in sweater, flannel shirt, blanket and all that and sit upon a bare rock. We would sit on our favourite Yogic posture or Asana, and then divest ourselves of all clothes one by one, till only the Kaupin was left, and we would just put a folded towel on the rock and sit. As we removed the clothes one by one, we would feel a little chill because of the intense cold outside. But once we sat in the Asana, there was no sensation of cold at all. There was no sensation of cold and soon the body reaction set into motion and the outer skin became sensationless. It became rough like sandpaper. All the pores of the skin stood up like thorns, and in that condition, we sat for half an hour, one hour, till midnight and there was no sensation. We would be feeling hot in the armpits and perspiration would be dripping down, but the outer body would be completely ice-cold. All the same, we would have no sensation. But if we moved or started moving, then we would begin to feel the cold. As long as we sat motionless, the connection between the mind and the body got broken and the mind was away from the body. And until the time of our unlocking the Asana and getting out, there would be absolutely no sensation of cold. I have not experimented this with heat. But with cold it has been proved by personal experimentation that if one goes and sits in a certain steady Asana, especially if it is Padmasana or Siddhasana, there is no sensation outside. And sometimes during this experiment, wind would blow, biting cold wind would come from the Laxmanjhula side, but then the body would not feel it, would not mind it. It would be aware of the cold, but it would not relate itself to the cold; which is why the Yoga Darshana says that one goes beyond heat and cold if one is established in the Asana.

And I have seen this fact proved in extreme cases also. There used to be a Paramahansa Yogi called Paramanand, a Punjabi Sadhu, in Badrinath. In Badrinath, even in the midsummer month of June, you cannot sit in the shade, because the altitude is about 10,500 feet and the place is surrounded by perennially snow-capped mountains. But, if you move into the sun, then it is bearable. After taking bath in the hot-water spring, you can go about in a banian or with a single towel thrown across your shoulder. This, only if there is bright sunshine and a blue sky, but even then, if you came under a tree, immediately you would start feeling cold. That is the atmosphere in Badrinath. And all the twelve months this Paramanand used to live barebodied. He had only a

Kaupin and long hair. He kept no vessel with himself; so he could not take a bath dipping the vessel and pouring the water over his head. But there are two or three little waterfalls, little streams—they call it Dhara—coming down from the mountainsides. This Yogi's method of bathing was to go and sit near the stream, hold the water in the cup of his palms, and then put it over his body. His skin used to be dark black and rough like a buffalo's hide. I have heard of an even greater Titikshu, though I have not seen him. He was called Sri Krishnashram. He used to live in icy Gangotri. So, these are all advanced stages of Titiksha, but even while practising Asana as the third Anga of Raja Yoga, a stage comes when you are able to sit for a long enough time in a single posture without motion. You forget the body. The body becomes impervious to heat and cold and thus you develop the power of endurance as well as the will power of the mind.

Theory of Health and Disease in Ayurveda and Yoga

And then, by sitting in a meditative pose, you obtain a great deal of internal health benefits. Even though Asana is not a physical exercise—it is not any movement of the body—the meditative pose is such a balanced pose that by sitting in it, the Prana becomes equally distributed to all parts of the body.

According to Ayurveda, any disease, any discomfort, or anything wrong in any part of the body, is due to an upsetting of the balance between the three humours. In Ayurveda, they believe in the theory of the Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta and Kapha—wind, bile and phlegm. These three are common constituents of the human body, and if they are in a certain proportion and balance, the body is in normal health. But if this balance, this ratio, is disturbed due to any reason, then there comes about an abnormal condition of the body. It may manifest in different ways with different symptoms. And each set of symptoms is given a label and is called by the name of a particular disease. But they say that disease is due to the imbalance of the Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta and Kapha. And most of the approach of the Ayurvedic physicians is to give some medication which will restore the balance between the Tridoshas. When this balance is restored, the person is back to normal. Whereas, in the Yogic interpretation of health and disease, they say that disease is due to the upsetting of the balance in the distribution of Prana. If the Prana becomes unevenly distributed, if it does not go to a particular place, a diseased condition can manifest in that place. Or, if the Prana accumulates too much in some place, then also a certain abnormal condition can arise. Equal distribution of Prana all over the body, throughout the body, in a balanced way, diffused—that is the condition desired. And this equal distribution means the presence of as much Prana as is required in each part. Equal distribution does not mean that Prana should be equally distributed all over the body. No. Prana is required in different proportions, in different degrees, in different parts of your body. And, if it is present in that natural state, then it is called equal distribution of the Prana. Little variations do occur in this distribution during the course of the day. When you eat food, the Prana is more concentrated over the region of the stomach. When you do intellectual work, the Prana is more active in the area of the brain. And Yogasanas bring about equal distribution of the Prana throughout the body in the desired proportion for the normal state. It is interesting to note that the Yogic interpretation of disease and the Ayurvedic theory of disease do not contradict each other. It is only one statement from two angles of vision, from two approaches. When the three humours are thrown into an imbalance, the predominance of any one of them in a particular place may draw Prana there in an abnormal quantity or may inhibit Prana from entering that particular place. From the Ayurvedic point of view, it is imbalance of the Tridoshas; and from the Yogic point of view, this

imbalance of the Tridoshas brings about a disharmony in the distribution of the Prana. So, the two viewpoints are not contradictory. They are expressions of a condition from two different angles.

Take the case of a husband and a wife with one child. The husband has a certain income and he is able to look after the family with that income. As years go by, a second child comes, and the mother becomes widowed too. She now comes to live with her son and so the family grows and now they are in great financial difficulty. They are not able to look after the family. Now, why has this condition come about, this difficulty, this economic problem? We may say that it is because of the growth of the family beyond its capacity to look after itself. Or, we may say that the income is not enough, that it is not proportioned to the expenditure. From the point of view of monetary resources, the problem has arisen because the income is not sufficient. From the point of view of the family, the problem has cropped up because the members have become too many, the number of people have become too many. It is stating the same problem from two different angles. Likewise, in the case of health and ill health. When you are healthy, the Tridoshas are in balance; or you may say that the Prana is equally distributed. And when you are ill, the balance of the Tridoshas is upset; or you may say that the Prana's even distribution is upset. So, inner health ensues out of the practice of the Asana. Due to the practice of the Asana for a long time, the Prana tends to become equally distributed throughout the body, and gradually, the normal health condition is restored to the body. This is important. And here, it is the inner health which is more vital, more important. Asana brings about inner health. It makes you impervious to heat and cold. Power of endurance is increased. Will power of the mind becomes increased. These are the benefits of the practice of Asana. And, indirectly, through the medium of the Prana, the steadiness of the body gradually brings about a certain stability of the mind, a certain steadiness of the mental activity, a certain harmony of the mental activity.

Then we come to the fourth Anga of Raja Yoga, namely, Pranayama. Pranayama is a way of controlling the Sukshma Prana within to which you have no direct access. Prana is a subtle invisible force. It is the life-force that pervades the body. It is the factor that connects the body and the mind, because it is connected on one side with the body and on the other side with the mind. It is the connecting link between the body and the mind. The body and the mind have no direct connection. They are connected through Prana only and this Prana is different from the breathing you have in your physical body. Prana is not Svasa. The respiratory breath that moves within your nostrils is not Prana. It is called Svasa Vayu. Svasa-Prasvasa, inhalation and exhalation, is of air. But then, why is the regulation of the inner breath and the outer breath of the nostrils given the name of Pranayama, when they do not constitute Prana, when they constitute only Svasa Vayu? The process of regulation of breath is given the name Pranayama, because this is the way to ultimately gain control over the subtle life-force that is present within as Prana.

How Pranayama Controls Prana

Having no direct access to Prana, the ancient Rishis evolved this method, because the outer manifestation of the inner Prana is present in the human system in the form of breath. Breath is the outcome of the movement of Prana. Breath is the outcome of the most vital and important movement of Prana. It is the Prana that moves the lungs and makes the lungs expand and contract, expand and contract, expand and contract, from the moment you are born until the moment you give up your body in death. It is Prana, the great life-principle, which keeps on this movement. It is that

which pumps the heart. It does various other functions as well, pervading the whole body and being present in different ways. In performing different functions, the same Prana assumes distinct names—Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, Samana. Besides these, there are five Upa-Pranas or subsidiary Pranas also. In this way, this life-principle is working all the time; and whether you are awake or asleep, whether you are conscious or unconscious, automatically this Prana keeps up all the indispensable essential life-movements within you. If these life-movements are not kept going, life will not last. You will not be able to live; the body will not be kept alive. So, the Prana functions involuntarily. You do not exert to make the lungs move. It is not you who are keeping up the pumping motion of the heart. It is not you who are keeping up the bellow-like contracting and expanding movement of the lungs. You are not even aware of the movement of the lungs, not even conscious of it. It is only when something happens to you that you are aware; otherwise, you are not even conscious of it. It is this Prana, this great manifestation of Divinity, this great manifestation of the Cosmic Energy, that keeps going all these essential, vital movements in your body. The expansion and contraction of the lungs manifests in the body as the ingoing and outcoming breath. And the ingoing and outcoming breath is the symptom of the movement of the Prana, which keeps the lungs in a constant state of indispensable vital activity. So, this breath in the nostrils is due to the movement of the subtle Prana within your body, just as the movement of the second-hand, the minute-hand and the hour-hand are due to the hidden or undiscerned inner movement of the hairspring within the mechanism of the timepiece or the watch. It is because there is the constant unbroken movement of the hairspring inside that on the surface of the visible dial, the hour-hand and the minute-hand are able to move round and do their work. Now, if you want to bring about a slowing down or a cessation of the movement of the hairspring within the timepiece, you have no means of doing it, because you have no access to it. It is somewhere inside covered over by the structure of the watch or the timepiece. You cannot get at it. The only way of trying to get at it is through its outer symptom or outer manifestation. So, if you place your finger on the second-hand of the timepiece moving round in one little corner of the dial and stop it, if you arrest the second hand, gradually the movement of the hairspring also becomes arrested. Similarly, if you stop the minute-hand of the timepiece, then also, the movement of the minute-hand being the ultimate result and outcome of the movement of the inner hairspring, the movement of the hairspring gradually slows down and then comes to a stop. It is in this reverse fashion, this remote and indirect fashion, that the regulation and stoppage of the outer breath of the nostrils achieves the ultimate result of controlling and even bringing to a stop certain aspects of the movement of the subtle Prana, because the Prana is connected with the outer breath. The outer breath is connected with the subtle Prana as the latter's ultimate outer effect. Thus, Pranayama takes you within.

Kumbhak and Its Benefits

Pranayama in Raja Yoga is retention of the inhaled breath. Later on, it assumes the form of the retention of breath—retention of the inhaled breath as well as retention of the exhaled breath or outer breath. The latter is called Bahya Kumbhak. You stop breathing when the breath is out, when the lungs are empty. This is Bahya Kumbhak. And as you advance in the practice of Kumbhak, you go into the stage of Dhyana. When you are practising Pranayama, all the emphasis is upon the practice of Pranayama. When, after having successfully practised that stage, you start taking up Pratyahara and Dharana, what happens? The stress or emphasis upon this Abhyasa, namely, your practice of Pranayama, becomes lessened, and more emphasis begins to be laid upon Dharana. Then Pranayama is done automatically and it becomes a secondary or an auxiliary process in

relation to Dharana. And in this condition, the Kumbhak comes about spontaneously. It is called spontaneous Kumbhak or Kevala Kumbhak. You are not bothered, you are not considering whether it is breath in the state of exhalation or breath in the state of inhalation; you are not thinking about it at all. When the mind is in a state of good concentration, you take hold of the opportunity—you make hay while the sun shines and immediately stop the breath, because the moment you stop the breath, immediately the mind becomes steady. Whenever a steady condition of the mind is perceived, immediately you stop the breath, no matter in what condition the breath is in. It is called the Kevala Kumbhak or spontaneous Kumbhak. Spontaneous Kumbhak is a very valuable aid to Dharana. And sometimes, when there is a great deal of Vikshepa, when you are not able to carry on your Dharana properly, when the mind is very, very unsteady and jumping, then also Kumbhak helps. But then, it is Kumbhak done in a deliberate way. Spontaneous Kumbhak, on the other hand, comes about when there is good concentration. When concentration is being successfully carried on, spontaneous Kumbhak becomes invaluable as a secondary aid in that state.

And the benefits of Pranayama are various. Internal health benefits also accrue due to the practice of Pranayama. It imparts a certain strength to the body, and due to the doing of Pranayama, the body is able to ward off fatigue. Even if you sit and do Abhyasa for many hours, fatigue does not approach the body. The body is able to undergo exertion for a long time without fatigue. And successful, sustained practice of Pranayama increases the energy of the body. You become energetic, mentally as well as physically. There is always a freshness in the mind. And Pranayama is a great destroyer of Tamas as well as Rajas. And it is a positive help in increasing Sattva within your nature, within your body and mind. Thus it has a dual effect, namely, one of destroying Tamas and Rajas, and the other of increasing Sattva. And when freshness increases in the mind, the object of meditation becomes very vivid and clear-cut. When there is vagueness of the focal point of concentration or Dhyana Lakshya, proper Dharana does not manifest; but, due to Pranayama, there is a great deal of clarity brought about into the mind and the focal point becomes vivid and clear. Then, to such a mind, it becomes easy to concentrate. So, Pranayama brings about the unique benefit of clarifying the mind, making the Dhyana Lakshya vivid, and thus precipitating Dharana. This much about Pranayama.

How Asana and Pranayama Help to Combat Rajo-Guna

Now, to recapitulate the rationale behind the third and the fourth Angas—Asana and Pranayama—in Patanjali’s system of Raja Yoga. In Raja Yoga, Asana does not mean a posture; it means a seat. You should be seated. And how? Steadily. Patanjali Maharshi adds one interesting further adjective. He says that the Asana should be comfortable. It should give the Sadhaka a feeling of comfort. When you are comfortable, you are happy; when you are uncomfortable, you are unhappy. So, Patanjali uses the word “Sukha”. His definition of Asana is “*Sthira Sukham Asanam*”. You should be seated steadily in a comfortable posture. This is the broad definition of Asana in the Yoga Darshana of Patanjali Maharshi. The body is seated steadily and is in comfort. Why should it be in comfort? Because, if it is not comfortable, you will not be able to maintain the position continuously for a long period. Because, if it is not comfortable, it will give you discomfort and pains and after a little time, you will want to change it. But when it is comfortable, well, then you do not mind keeping it for a long time; and the longer you keep the position the longer your body is steady. The longer you keep the position steady, the longer you are able to curb the Rajo-Guna, the longer you are able to overcome Rajo-Guna. Therefore, the comfortable nature of

the Asana is indispensable; it is imperative. The essence of Asana according to Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga is therefore steadiness combined with comfort, unshaken postural comfort. And Patanjali says that you must go on increasing the time period of your sitting upon one Asana. So, you do your Pranayama sitting on one Asana; you do your Japa sitting on the same Asana; you do your Svadhyaya sitting on the same Asana. What happens then? The mind is diverted and taken out from the body when it is thus absorbed in study, absorbed in Japa, absorbed in Puja... and you are not even aware that you are sitting in one Asana. By thus keeping yourself occupied in various aspects of actual spiritual practice, the Asana becomes prolonged. And as a sort of guide or standard, Patanjali suggests that you should be able to sit steadily in one Asana for a period of at least three hours continuously; during the period you may engage yourself in different spiritual practices and divert your mind away from the body so as to go on sitting in one absolute steady pose for the duration of those three hours. Thus becoming established in Asana, you get into a state of conflict with the Rajo-Guna in the body. And this automatically helps the next Anga of the Ashtanga Yoga, namely, Pranayama.

Now, how does Asana help to proceed with Pranayama? Because, just as Chitta or the mind-stuff and Prana are very closely interconnected, just as mental activity and Prana are interlinked, even so, on the other side, the body and the Prana also are interconnected. This is because Prana pervades the whole body; Prana is almost co-existing with the Annamaya Kosha. And therefore, if the Annamaya Kosha is agitated, then naturally, the Prana also gets into a state of agitation. But, if you have managed to gradually discipline the body and practise sitting steadily for a long period of time, then the Prana also automatically assumes a relative state of steadiness, a comparative state of steadiness. It gets less agitated then before. So, with your success and progress in Asana practice, the Prana also assumes a corresponding state of steadiness. Thus, success in Asana practice becomes very conducive to the practice of Pranayama or the disciplining of the Prana, the regularising of the Prana. And just as steadiness is the very essence of Asana in Ashtanga Yoga, even so, Kumbhaka is the very essence of Pranayama in Ashtanga Yoga. The most important object of the entire Pranayama process in Raja Yoga is to arrest the Prana, is to restrain the breath; because, right at the very beginning of Patanjali's Yoga Darshana, we have a Sutra which gives the definition of Yoga: "*Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodhah*". Yoga is curbing the constant thought-activity of the mind-lake, the Vrittis of the mind-lake. And Prana is always in a state of agitation, in a state of Vritti. The mind also is always agitated by Vritti. And if you want to have Nirodha of the activity of the mind, you must make Nirodha of the activity of the Prana. Nirodha of the activity of the Prana means restraint of the breath. It is Kumbhak. So, the various other Pranayama practices that you find in Hatha Yoga—Bhastrika, Suryabedha, Kapalabhati, Ujjayi, Brahmari, Murcha—have no relevance here. In Raja Yoga, Pranayama means inhale-restrain-exhale, inhale-restrain-exhale, inhale-restrain-exhale, inhale-restrain-exhale. It means that and only that. In this way, the crest of the Pranayama, the main essence of the Pranayama, lies in the restraining of the breath. By the restraining of the breath, the activity of your mind, of your mental plane, is restrained. Thus, Asana helps Pranayama, and Pranayama helps ultimately the actual Antaranga Yoga process of slowing down the activity of the mind, the motion of the mind, until it is brought to a state of complete cessation—cessation of all Vrittis. This is the rationale behind the third and the fourth Angas—Asana and Pranayama—in our effort to completely overcome the Rajo-Guna mode of the Trigunatmika Prakriti. Prakriti is Trigunatmika, and to overpower the Rajo-Guna mode, Asana helps Pranayama. And Pranayama helps to restrain the mental activity. In this way, it acts as a

Sahayogi Prakriya—a helpful process—in the fifth and the sixth Angas of Raja Yoga, namely, Pratyahara and Dharana, withdrawal of the mind and concentration.

10

CONQUEST OF TAMO-GUNA PRAKRITI

Due to his involvement in Prakriti, the Purusha has become a human individual, but his real status is ever free, ever blissful, free from all afflictions, beyond the reach of the mind and its impurities, beyond the limitations of Prakriti. But just now, the consciousness of his Purushahood is not there in the Jiva. The Jiva thinks himself to be a little, puny human being due to his encasement in the body-mind complex, full of distress, full of anxieties, full of impurities, worry and sorrow. So, to dissolve this, the great sages have shown us the way and Patanjali Maharshi has given us his unique Ashtanga Yoga or Raja Yoga, a most scientific and progressive system of mind-control where you go on ascending the ladder of Yogic practice step by step, stage by stage.

Conquest of Tamo-Guna through Yama and Niyama

Now, in the first two stages of Patanjali's Raja Yoga, the animal in man is the target of the Yoga Sadhana. The animal nature, the brute nature, is sought to be countered by taking certain strong vows, to be adhered to at all costs, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances. Such a vow is something that has no exception. All the time you must adhere to these vows. You have the vow of not hurting, not injuring, not engaging in violence, either mental or verbal; you have the vow of truthfulness, of absolute truthfulness, the Satyavrata; you take the vow of control of the senses; you take the vow of humility in thought, word and deed; you take the vow of Brahmacharya, which means not only abstinence from the sex function and control of the sex urge, but means the overall dominance of the higher over the lower, the subtle over the gross, the thinking, seeing, discriminating human nature—the Suddha Buddhi, the Vivekatmak Buddhi, the Vichara-Yukta Buddhi—over each Indriya, over all the five senses.

Mahatma Gandhi has said a great deal about this subject of Brahmacharya in his letters, in his articles in "The Harijan", and in his answers to the queries of seekers. He has thrown valuable light, based upon his own personal experience, on this subject of self-restraint. And all these thinkings have been gathered together and brought out in a book called "Self-Restraint versus Self-Indulgence". In this book Gandhiji throws a lot of light on this concept of Brahmacharya. He stresses the fact that it is impossible to abstain only from one specific urge, namely, the sex urge, if you give free play to all the other Indriyas to do what they like—if you let the eyes wander wherever they like, if you let the ears hear anything and everything, and so on. If you do that, it is impossible to practise Brahmacharya. So says Gandhiji. It is only if you have mastery and control over all these various other senses, namely, the sense of sight, the sense of taste, the sense of smell and the sense of sound, only then can you even remotely hope to become established in some sort of mastery over your inner urges. And so Gandhiji says that Brahmacharya means complete self-control, that Brahmacharya means changing your entire life, orienting your entire life in such a way that your overall life-pattern will be helpful and conducive to such control. You should try to restrain all the

five senses. If you keep all sorts of exciting pictures all around you in your room and hear filmy music and exciting type of music, self-control and Brahmacharya are not possible. You must change your entire life-pattern—the company which you keep, the literature which you read, the surroundings in which you keep yourself, the food that you eat, and so on. These things should be of such a nature as not to excite you. On the other hand, they should be of such a kind as to elevate you, inspire you. They should be Sattvic. So it means a complete spiritual reorientation of your life-style on the outer side where Sangati, Sahitya, Ahara, environment—all these things come in.

It goes without saying that to these methods you have to add positive thinking, Japa, prayer to the Lord, sitting in the company of prayerful people, of Satpurushas, worship, taking the mind towards higher things, taking inspiration from the lives of saints, keeping some ideal before you. In this way, there should be a total effort on the part of the individual who wishes to be established in a lofty plane of conduct, a high standard of conduct and character. It should be a total all out effort and there should be great enthusiasm for this task. It is only if you have got a burning love for purity, for character, for nobility, only if you have got a great love, a great hunger, a great desire for it, then only will you become successful. Because, human nature goes objectward for enjoyment, for indulgence; that is the very Dharma, Svadharma, of the Manas and the Sarira. The Indriyas ever go towards the objects. The mind moves through the Indriyas to the external world of objects and to the enjoyment of those objects, because Brahma has created the mind with this externalised tendency, with this outgoing tendency.

In the Kathopanishad, Yama tries to explain this to Nachiketas. He says that the very tendency of the mind has been made external. It always goes out to the objects, through the senses, and so Yoga means trying to reverse the entire normal human nature. It is a superhuman task, like trying to make the Ganges in Uttarkashi go upwards towards Gangotri. So, it requires great liking to advance spiritually. You must yourself have a very great interest in bringing about this transformation; then only you can succeed. And we saw earlier how, to bring about this transformation, purity of conduct, simplicity of life, giving up of too much greed and covetousness, Aparigraha and contentment, never wanting anything that God has not given to you, never wanting anything that belongs to someone else—all these are necessary. And Asteya. Refusing to cast your eye, refusing to cast even a thought, upon something that is not rightfully yours, never coveting or wanting anything that does not belong to you—that is called Asteya.

Now, in these various ways, the gross animal in you is completely checked and controlled and overcome; and then the whole trend of your life is given a Godward direction through the Niyamas. Now there is a transformation of your being through the proper practice of Yama and Niyama. You become a holy person. You are no more the old person. You have a rebirth as it were. Therefore, it is purification of being which has to be achieved first by Yama. And then there should be a spiritualisation of one's life and activities which is a cleansing process to the spirit and that is achieved through Niyama. When Yama and Niyama are perfected, everything moves in the direction of God, Godward. So, this rebirth, which is a spiritual rebirth, is brought about by Yama and Niyama. This rebirth is a purification of one's whole nature, Svabhava, conduct and character; and this is brought about through the spiritualisation of one's life and activities. This is the rebirth into the Holy Water and the Spirit that is indicated or hinted at by the Divine Master Jesus. It means purification and spiritualisation—purification of one's nature, conduct and character and

spiritualisation of one's daily life and activities. And when this is achieved, one is expected to be completely free from all the grossness of the Tamo-Guna and the lower hurdles.

The Inertia or Alasya Aspect of Tamo-Guna

And then comes the next phase of Yoga Sadhana which is to deal with the Prakriti in its mode as the Rajo-Guna. The predominant characteristic of Rajas is restlessness, agitation, activity. The uncontrolled activity of Rajas is a great distractor; it will not allow a person to settle in any one place, in any one occupation. It creates restlessness, creates agitation, creates impatience of the mind. The restlessness of the body and the incessant urge for going about here and there are the result of the activity of Rajas. This Rajas is a great obstacle to the higher process of inner Yoga, but nevertheless, it has its virtues in the beginning, for we must clearly know that Rajas is superior to Tamas. Rajas is subtler than Tamas, and the great relieving feature of Rajas, an important virtue in Rajas, is that it is through Rajas and Rajas only that you can overcome Tamas. Tamas is meant to be overcome through Rajas. Tamas cannot be overcome through Sattva. Tamas and Sattva have no direct dealing with each other; they have no direct communication between each other. And therefore, it is through channelising your activity in the right direction, in an optimistic, idealistic, ethical and spiritual direction that you can overcome the Tamo-Guna. Up till now we had considered Tamo-Guna in its various active phases, in the active manifestation of its brute nature in the form of violence and hatred. But, Tamo Guna is also present in the form of deep inertia, dullness of mind, lethargy of body, laziness of habits. Tamas is the great enemy of man in all walks of life, and therefore, a great enemy of the Sadhak also. Alasya is a great enemy of man—that is what the philosophers say. They say that Alasya is a great enemy of man residing within man's own knowledge. And when you worship Sarasvati who is pure Sattva, pray to Her to eradicate, eliminate and root out all the laziness and lethargy in you without any trace. There should not be any trace left. Completely root out all Tamas. In the famous hymn to Sarasvati, "*Ya Kundendu Tushara Hara Dhavala...*", we offer our homage to Sarasvati, because through her Sattvic power, she completely frees us from lethargy and laziness without leaving any trace of it. Therefore, Sarasvati is to be worshipped.

There is a point to note here. You may see this quality of inertia in the highest state of Sattva also. For instance, in the Avadhuta, who does not make any effort to go here or there, even for Bhiksha. *Pade Rahna*, they say. The Avadhuta remains where he is, taking whatever chance may bring. You must not think, "Let me also be like that, so I will be in the highest state of Sattva". No. Sattva should manifest of its own accord. It should be born of realisation. So, if you try to realise and then remain an Avadhuta, it is all right. But if you try to imitate the Avadhuta, all your progress will come to a stop. If you say, "The Avadhuta is like that; I will also lie like him naked and still", it will not do. Then you will find yourself in a very unenviable situation. The Avadhuta is in a high state of consciousness, like the Ashtavakra-Gita consciousness. You are nowhere near that state. So, keep your discrimination and enquiry always in a very alert state.

Connection Between Nutrition Intake and Mental Moods

It is now clear that this great aspect of Tamas, inertia, has to be overcome by Sattvic activities. Sattvic activity is the only thing to counter Tamasic laziness, lethargy and indulgence. Therefore, do Nishkama Karma Yoga, serve your Guru, serve the saints, serve the elders, serve

your parents, serve the sick people. Then there will set in the biggest purification. Sattvic activity will kill all idleness, inertia. Long ago, Vivekananda said that the real malady of this nation was due to this Tamo-Guna; all the masters were deeply sunk in Tamas. So, a wave of vigorous Rajas had to be made to sweep through the entire country; then alone it would become fit for higher things, it would become fit for Sattvic awakening and all that. Tamas is due to ignorance, poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition and a low state of health where the mind also becomes too weak to make any effort, because the body condition affects the mind. Nowadays in the West, they have made a valuable discovery that nutrition has got a direct connection with the mental state, with the mind and its moods. If the diet is not balanced and essential ingredients like vitamins and minerals are not there, then the mind of the person gets into various states of abnormality and subnormality. That person is no more normal and he thinks that he has perhaps become a mental case, a psychotic; but no, it is purely biological. The whole basis of this mood-change is biological. For, when the body is set right, is brought to its proper level by balanced diet—sometimes they give even therapeutic doses of the lacking vitamins and lacking nutrients—immediately the person becomes a changed personality. His whole thinking changes, his mentality changes. So, there is also a great deal of connection between nourishment and the mental condition.

India is very backward in this type of research. Now they have tried to borrow this knowledge from the West and tried to build upon this new knowledge. Though a lot of light seems to have been thrown upon this subject in ancient Ayurveda, in the Ayurvedic approach to human health, we lost all that when those old things were discarded as superstition and useless and unscientific and no good. What the ancients had given to us, that we lost through contempt for our own literature. We became ashamed of it, we thought that it was some indulgence in superstition and foolishness. And whatever new knowledge there came from the West, that did not reach the masses who were steeped in illiteracy. When the British withdrew, illiteracy was about 82% in this land; 82% of the people did not know how to read and write. Only the remaining 18% were literate and they too were given the literacy so that they could serve as office staff, serve in the government machinery as clerks and typists and assistants. So, the whole thing was an unfortunate phase when we were neither there nor here. We lost our ancient heritage and gained nothing from the new knowledge from the West and so backwardness set in. It is only now, some thirty-five years after Independence, that there is more of give and take between the West and the East. A great deal of scientific knowledge that they have acquired in the West they are willing to share with the backward countries and India is benefited along with others. But yet, we have a long way to go.

So, a great deal of study has been made in the West on the connection between nourishment and the mind. Much has to be known, much has to be gained through the Western research and investigations and advancement in these fields of knowledge. So, inertia can come through improper diet, imbalanced diet. But then, inertia can come through illness also; inertia can come through various other factors also. Therefore have the great ones said: “*Dharma Artha Kama Mokshanam Arogyam Mulam Uttamam*”. For any attainment—Dharma, Artha, Kama or Moksha—the main basis is health; health is of paramount importance.

Nishkama Karma Yoga as a Purificatory Process

Thus, in order to counter the inertia aspect of the Tamo-Guna, side by side with the practice of Yama and Niyama, one has to engage oneself in vigorous, dynamic, selfless Seva. And that is the only hope. That is the redeeming feature of Rajas—Rajas, when it is properly directed, when it is governed by Sattva, not bound by selfishness. But if the whole activity is governed by Tamas and Rajas, governed by sensuality and selfish desire, bound by the desire to accumulate, the desire to enjoy, that does not relieve us from Tamas. It only makes us go further and further away from God and our goal, whereas, in Nishkama Karma Yoga Seva, though the activity is of a Rajasic nature, it is activity of the spiritualised kind, where we think that by serving man we worship God indwelling man. Therefore our activity is directed towards God, through the human being whom we serve, and therefore, that activity, that Rajas, becomes completely infilled with Sattva. So, it is Sattva-based Rajas that is the power, that is the driving force behind the Nishkama Karma Yoga, where it completely overcomes the Tamas. The Karma Yogi has no desire for sensual indulgence. Karma Yoga establishes self-restraint and self-control in the individual. And thus established in self-control, establishing in the higher Self, established in love for the Supreme, established in selflessness, the Karma Yogi has no desire for accumulation, no desire for personal gain, no desire for any sensual enjoyment. Then, such selfless dynamism, such Sattva-grounded Rajas, becomes the force to liberate the person from the inertia aspect, the lethargy or laziness aspect, of Tamo-Guna. Thus, Yama and Niyama and Nishkama Karma Yoga of an idealistic type or noble type help to destroy Tamas.

Then, when we go on to the Rajasic aspect, it must be noted that Rajas works in man by way of a desire to be always active, to be always occupied, to be always doing something. Why? In the normal man this urge actually becomes turned in a selfish direction, in the direction of sense-indulgence. Whereas, the Sadhaka tries to restrain these urges. So, the Rajas in the Sadhak gets bottled up as he controls his senses and tries to have self-restraint and live a very strict, disciplined life. And this bottled-up Rajas creates a great deal of agitation. And the Sadhak is always prompted to engage in some sort of activity, miscellaneous wandering may be—wanting to go to Kurukshetra or Rameswaram or Badrinath or Kedarnath. Otherwise he wastes his time going here and there, gossiping and chit-chatting. Something he has to do. When the Sadhak is trying to go above and beyond Tamas in all its aspects, these urges can become serious obstacles. It is in this context that Nishkama Karma Yoga becomes all-important. In Nishkama Karma Yoga, the bottled-up Rajas finds a positive and purposeful outlet. In Nishkama Karma Yoga, Rajas is coloured by Sattva. Nishkama Karma Yoga purifies. The proportion between Nishkama Karma Yoga and Antaranga Sadhana will go on varying, go on shifting, as one progresses in his Sadhana. At one point in your journey on the spiritual path, your Nishkama Karma Yoga may be 75% and your Sadhana may be 25%. Then it may become 70% and 30%, then it may become 65% and 35%, and further on, the emphasis may gradually shift to more spiritual practice and lesser Karma Yoga; but all this shift and change will be over a period of time. You cannot hurry, and gradually, when you advance highly in Sadhana, Karma Yoga might come down to 50% and other Sadhana may be 50%. Still later, Antaranga Sadhana may go up to 60% and Karma Yoga come down to 40%. This process goes on until the Sadhak becomes well advanced in his Antaranga Sadhana and Karma Yoga gets reduced to a minor role in his total Sadhana. So, it is an evolutionary type of progress, and not a drastic evolution at that.

And Rajas—well, it has to be with you all the time as you go on in the spiritual life. Yet, a time comes when you have to face Rajas as an adversary and try to have the Sadhana to overcome it. In the body, Rajas is in the form of restlessness, a desire to be moving always; and in the mind, it is in the form of Vikshepa, of Chanchalata. Why? Because, there is this Rajo-Guna in the Prana, in the Pranamaya Kosha. And because of this ceaseless agitation of Rajo-Guna in the Prana, the Prana is not in a state of harmony, but is in a state of uncontrolled activity. And mental activity and Pranic activity, the Chitta and the Prana, are interlinked and inseparably interconnected. So, when Prana moves, it puts the Chitta or the mind-stuff into movement too. Therefore, Vikshepa can never be overcome, the oscillation of the mind can never be overcome, unless you have first brought about a degree of discipline in your Prana, a degree of regularity in your Prana. Therefore, the great sage Maharshi Patanjali, the great Yogacharya, has given us the last two phases of Bahiranga Yoga as Asana and Pranayama. Out of these two, he has given us Asana to bring about a state of steadiness in the body so that the body becomes absolutely motionless, thus overcoming all the urge to restlessness and miscellaneous movement. At this point, it may be necessary for us to reiterate the fact that the science of Hatha Yoga as expounded in the *Siva Samhita* and the *Gheranda Samhita* does not constitute the Asana of Patanjali Maharshi, the Asana of the Raja Yoga type. The Asanas of *Siva Samhita* and *Gheranda Samhita* belong to a different category altogether. Their objective is different, their entire purpose is different. They constitute an elaborate science having a different aim and objective which has a direct connection with the upward movement of the hidden Shakti, the subtle body of the Sattva, the Shakti which we call Kundalini, the individualised aspect of the Cosmic Power which resides at the base of the spinal column. So, the Hatha Yoga Asanas, Pranayamas, Kriyas, Mudras and Bandhas have something to do directly with the Kundalini Shakti in man. These Hatha Yogic Asanas and Kriyas are so designed as to bring about the ultimate uniting of the Prana and the Apana and the rousing of the inactive sleeping Kundalini into a state of awakening and activity. So, that is a different science altogether, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Asana which is the third Anga of the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali; and neither do the various Pranayamas of Hatha Yoga have anything directly to do with the Pranayama which is the fourth Anga of Patanjali's Yoga Darshana, the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali. This you must grasp.

11

PRATYAHARA—CRUX OF RAJA YOGA SADHANA

The fifth Anga in Raja Yoga is Pratyahara. We have already seen that Pratyahara is differently classified by some as belonging to Bahiranga Yoga or external Yoga; by others it is grouped with Antaranga Yoga or the inner Yoga or the Yoga proper. Both the classifications are valid and they hold good. Classifying Pratyahara with Antaranga Yoga is valid, because this process of Pratyahara has something directly to do with the mind, which is the Antahkarana, the control of which is part of the Antaranga Yoga. But, the other classification is also valid, because Pratyahara is involved in sense perception, in perception of the outer world and its objects. Therefore, from that angle, it is something that has to do with the outer world and it can be classified under Bahiranga Yoga. So, inasmuch as it is sitting on the fence, Pratyahara straddles both the outer and the inner worlds, the outer world of sense-objects and the inner world of the mind and its

thinking process. It allows itself of being bracketed with either category—Bahiranga Yoga or Antaranga Yoga.

As I had mentioned in an earlier chapter, I am inclined to include Pratyahara in the Antaranga Yoga, though Pratyahara is connected with the outer world. I am so inclined because from Pratyahara onwards it is the mind that is more involved in the practices of Yoga rather than the body or the Prana, which are the grosser lower aspects of the human personality. Therefore, Pratyahara is better classified under Antaranga Yoga, though there is no harm if you include it under Bahiranga Yoga and keep Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi as the Antaranga Yoga.

Unlike Asana and Pranayama, Pratyahara is not something which you practise sitting in a particular place only, though that is one aspect of it. That aspect we shall consider first.

Light on Different Aspects of Pratyahara

When you sit upon your Asana for doing your daily Dhyana, then it is that the mind begins to roam all over the place; then it is that the mind begins to go into various directions and think of numerous objects. And there you have to be firm. As and when the mind goes out towards external thoughts, you have to bring it back again and direct it towards the focal point of concentration, towards the object of meditation. This tug of war process—some-times swinging that way, sometimes swinging this way—will go on for some time and this process is part of the Abhyasa of Pratyahara. You try to bring the mind back, withdraw it from where it wants to go and taste. The mind usually goes to various objects which it wants to taste. And you say ‘No’ and bring it back. So, this Abhyasa of Pratyahara may be practised as you are sitting in the meditation pose and trying to concentrate and the mind begins to wander. Actually, what happens? You are inside the room, inside closed doors, closed windows, with only the blank wall before you, and your eyes too are closed. You do not even see anything. Still, why should various thoughts come, of objects that are outside, which are not before you, which are out of sight? One would expect that the objects out of sight would be out of the mind also, but they are not. They are very much in the mind, they come up from within. Why? Because you have been constantly taking the impressions of those objects into your mind. You have been putting in Samskaras. So they are there. You have been creating impressions of the objective world within the mind. They have sunk to the bottom of the mind-lake. And when you sit for meditation, they rise up. They may be remote impressions from memory or they may be the most recent impressions from the day’s Vyavahara or activity. For instance, if you sit for meditation in the evening, what all had been there before you that day till evening time can come up and bother you during your evening meditation. Or if you sit for morning meditation, you may start thinking about all the objects that are likely to be encountered during the day. “I have to do this, I have to do that, I have to meet this man, I have to go to that place”—all such thoughts may start coming. Why? Because you have taken impressions of them. And how can you avoid taking these impressions? The moment you step out into the world, you are always surrounded by things, by sense-objects. They come to you through all the five Indriyas—sight, sound, taste, smell and touch—and they go inside. The moment you come out of your room, you are right in the midst of Nama-Rupa, right in the midst of variegated names and forms. It is precisely because of this that you must know how to practise Pratyahara even during Vyavahara, how to practise withdrawal even when you are right in the midst of lots of things and people and activities. That is to say, you must learn the art of being detached inwardly, the art of inner detachment even in the midst of

activity. And you must learn the art how not to allow the external objects to go right deep into your consciousness even if they pass before your eyes like in a kaleidoscope or like on a cinema screen. The objects may present themselves to the eyes, and through the eyes they may be taken to the brain-centre inside. You cannot help seeing them. You may not deliberately want to look at them, but when they are before the eyes, you cannot help seeing them. You may not deliberately want to listen to something, but you cannot help hearing things anyway, because the ear catches sound, just as the eye catches sight. In this situation, what should you do? Detach the mind from the seeing centre, the hearing centre, the touching, smelling and tasting centres. Detach the mind; let it have some other background. Let it have some other focal point, even in the midst of Vyavahar. That is why it is said that the Yogi should carry on unbroken God-thought. There must be a current of unbroken God-remembrance within himself, always, always...in the mind. If there is unbroken God-thought in the mind, that God-thought would form the permanent background for the mind. And the mind would recede into that background whenever it is detached from the external world. So, you must cultivate the habit of staying inward partially, even amidst your Vyavahara, not giving hundred per cent of the mind to external things and being completely overcome by sights and sounds, etc. You should learn to give only a part of the mind to external Vyavahara, only that much of the mind as is absolutely essential and necessary, keeping the rest in God-thought. Instead of blending the mind completely with sense-objects and becoming one with them, you must learn to give to the external things only as much of the mind as is necessary, keeping the rest of it inwardly detached. That is Pratyahara, as it should be practised even while you are in the midst of Vyavahara. Do not take in the impressions of the various perceptions too deeply into your mind. At the most, let the impressions touch the instruments of perception—ear, nose, eye, etc.—and from there let them be conveyed to the brain-centres of perception. Thus perceive them, but do not react to them. Let not the mind be too much concerned. Bring about a detachment of the mind from the perceiving centres in the brain. This is one aspect of Pratyahara.

There is another aspect to Pratyahara. Supposing, before you know, the impression has already entered the mind. The mind has started to think about this impression. All right. Detach the ego from the mind. Detach your doer-ship. Say, “I am not seeing, I am not hearing. I am not interested in it. The mind has grasped it, true, but I am not the mind. I will step back and be a dispassionate, unaffected, unattached witness-consciousness. I have not taken the impression. My mind has taken it, my mind is thinking about it, but I will not identify myself with this line of thought”. Thus asserting, you can bring about a withdrawal of the conscious “I” from the mind and its thoughts. So, disconnect *your* link with the mind. Do not say, “I am seeing, I am doing, I am thinking, I am feeling, I am hearing”. No. Say, “I am neither thinker nor hearer nor seer. I am the witness-consciousness. These processes that go on, I only witness them. They will not affect me. I will not allow myself to be affected by them”. In this way, bring about a severance of the connection between your ego-consciousness and your mind. That is also part of the Abhyasa of Pratyahara in the midst of Vyavahara.

Some Yogis bring about a snapping of the link between them and the outer world, between them and the objects; they go away to Gangotri or they go away to some place where no one comes to them. They keep alone by themselves. That is one method of withdrawal—withdrawing oneself from the external objects. But that is not possible for all. You have to live and move among external objects. So, if you cannot break the link between the objective world of names and forms and yourself, at least snap the connection between the mind and the Indriyas or the perceiving centres in

the brain. That is one successful step of withdrawal. Going deeper still, break the link between your ego-consciousness and whatever is put before the mind. Then, even if the mind has taken in some impressions or some thought-currents, you will stand apart from them, you will refuse to identify yourself with them. You will try to be Kevala Sakshi-Matra. This is the practice of actual Pratyahara or withdrawal. Even during the moments of actual activity and Vyavahara, in the midst of things, if this Abhyasa goes on, then the problem which arises when you actually sit upon the seat of meditation and try to withdraw the mind, that problem will be much lessened. The problem will be a great deal lighter, because you are already not allowing this problem to take root in the mind.

Perception is automatic and spontaneous. It cannot be prevented. If you go out, naturally the eye will see, the ear will hear, every sense will function in its natural condition as it is meant to function. But, if you cut off the link between the mind and the inner sense-centre, the outer sense may perceive the object and the inner sense may register it, but the mind will refuse to pay attention to it. And if somehow the mind gets involved in the perception unconsciously, then detach your ego from the mind and assert that you are only a witness, that the perception will not touch you, that it has nothing to do with you. The sense perceives and the mind is involved in it, but you will remain only a detached, unaffected, witness-consciousness. It can then have no impact upon you. It can then bring about no change in your consciousness. Your consciousness is established in its own essential nature which is non-duality, which is peace, which never changes. So, detach the real ego—not the false ego which is a part and parcel of the mind—from the mind and remain as the witness-consciousness. Now, it is the higher discriminating intellect that has succeeded in awakening the higher awareness, an awareness of the Reality, an awareness of your essential Self. That higher discriminating intellect counters the effect of the involvement of the mind. Mind is the emotive mind; mind is the desire nature. Mind is nothing but the spontaneous nature of emotion and desire. That may get involved due to being interested in the sense perception, but the discriminating intellect now ranges itself on the side of your essential nature and counters the involvement of the mind and says: “No, I refuse to get dragged into this. I refuse to associate myself with this present condition of the mind. I stand apart from it. I am only a witness of it”. Thus saying, the intellect identifies itself with the pure consciousness which is unchanging and refuses to associate itself and identify itself with the mind and its present condition.

Practice of Pratyahara—An Exercise as well as a Process

Pratyahara, it may be noted, is both an Abhyasa as well as a Prakriya. Abhyasa means a practice that you do at a given time, in a given place, in a particular Asana; and it is in the form of an exercise. And in the form of an exercise, it becomes a valuable precursor to starting your meditation, because when you sit for meditation, your senses begin going outside. And in their wake, the mind begins thinking of objects. So, you have to withdraw the mind away from the senses. In that sense, Pratyahara is an Abhyasa. But in a more vital sense, it is a process. Pratyahara is not only a practice or an exercise, but it is also a process—a process that has to be constantly kept going throughout your wakeful hours of Vyavahara. Because, if you are trying to centre yourself in the inner Reality, in the Dhyana Lakshya or object of meditation, that effort is confined only to your hours of actual practice. And the rest of the time you allow the mind and the senses to go in the opposite direction towards the external things, towards the many things or the Aneka, towards the perception and enjoyment of sense-objects. So, what happens? Your Yoga practice will never

succeed. Your inner Yoga practice can never succeed. It can succeed only if it has the full cooperation and support of the remaining part of your life, that is, your life outside the meditating hours, because your Yoga Abhyasa has to be done within the broad framework of your normal life. Your normal life you cannot ignore. You cannot make it disappear. There is no magic wand to do that. Your normal life is there, very much there. Day after day, the Yogi has got to cope with a certain pattern of external life.

Here we are talking of the vast majority of Yogis in the workaday world. We are not talking of the microscopic minority, the few who may have succeeded in completely isolating themselves from the rest of the world and who may be staying in a cave in Gomukh or Gangotri. Such Yogis are only a microscopic minority and their pattern of living has no relevance to reality, has no relevance to the rest of the people who are all striving upon the same path. Leaving aside this minority, the vast majority of Yogis and practitioners have got a certain pattern of external life to deal with. They have got to cope up with it, and at the same time, they are authentic Yogis. They are as much genuine Yogis as the Yogis isolated in some remote seclusion, because their aspiration is as much real. Their desire for God and liberation is genuine. While the cave Yogi is trying to pursue his Sadhana in an extreme fashion, the generality of Yogis pursue their Sadhana as best as they can. Nevertheless, people belonging to either category are hundred per cent genuine, authentic Yogis.

Now, in the context of the majority type of Yogis, Pratyahara cannot be an unhampered and undisturbed process of Abhyasa, completely cut off from the objective universe and all its distractions. In the case of the Yogi in isolation, there is not much of the objective universe there except his own body and the mountain and the rocks and Gangaji and the sky. But the majority of the Yogis striving to lead a life of Yoga may be in a city-surrounding or a town-surrounding or in any normal surrounding with their own families to look after, business to attend to, or service to be done. In their case, the special Abhyasa or exercise will be a small part of Pratyahara. They have to do their Yogabhyasa in the context of their social life, in the context of their professional activities, their home and family surroundings and environment. Each one of them has his preoccupations with his family, with his children, with his wife, with his profession, business or service, with his social engagements. For Yogis of this group, then, Pratyahara will be very important in its aspect as a continuing process throughout their waking hours, throughout their active hours, rather than in its aspect as a special exercise in the meditation chamber. For them, Pratyahara has to become a way of life. They have to live a life of Pratyahara. They have to practise Pratyahara in the midst of their daily activities at home, in society, in their specific field of professional life, in their specific field of service or business. In the Udyogic Kshetra, in the Samajik Kshetra, in the Parivarik Kshetra, in the Griha Kshetra—in all these places they have to practise Pratyahara.

And this is precisely one of the salient features of the Gita Yoga. “To be in the world and yet not to be in it”. And, long, long ago, when in his early days Mahatma Gandhi made a Gujarati translation of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, he gave that translation the name “Anasakti Yoga”. “Asakti” means attachment. “Anasakti” means detachment. Gandhiji called his Gita translation “Anasakti Yoga” or “The Yoga of Detachment”; and he said that this was the message of the Gita. In the midst of the world, be detached from the world, like the lotus in the lake, unaffected and uncontaminated by water. The lotus is in the water, but it does not become wet. Likewise, one should be in the world, but be unaffected by the world. In this way one should live. And this is the process of living a life established in Pratyahara. You have to practise this type of Pratyahara in the midst of activity so that

outer perceptions do not have an ultimate impact upon you. You are in a crowd and yet you are alone. You are involved and occupied in various activities. Why? Because it is your duty. It is your Kartavya Karma; it happens to be part of your Dharma. May be, you have to involve yourself in many things on account of your children, on account of your wife, on account of the marriage of your daughter, on account of trying to fix up your son in some job, on account of some litigation which has been forced upon you by your relatives or neighbours. There is no going out of all this. Yet, in the midst of it all, you know that you have nothing to do with it all. It is not because of your personal desire that you are involved in these things, it is not that all this Vyavahara has got some fascination or some attraction for you, but because they happen to be the immediate duties brought before you. You have no desire in the matter, but it happens to be your Kartavya Karma, it happens to be your Dharma as the head of the family. Wherever you may be placed, you have a certain duty to fulfil, a certain Dharma to discharge. In a particular location, in a particular context, you have a certain Dharma to fulfil. This is precisely what Krishna was trying to make Arjuna aware of on the battle field of Kurukshetra.

“Yogastha Kuru Karmani”—Essence of the Gita Teaching

Sri Krishna said: “Look here, Arjuna, whatever your personal sentiments may be, you are a prince of the Kshatriya race, of the warrior clan, whose Dharma is to defend the country and look after the welfare of the subjects and maintain law and order and Dharma. Here is absolute chaos. These unrighteous people have got the upper hand and they are bringing their unrighteous tyranny upon the people. The people are unhappy. Dharma is being completely destroyed. At the helm of affairs there is a complete absence of Dharma. So this is a Dharma-Yuddha, a righteous war. So, as a Kshatriya, as a prince, it is your duty to fight. And, moreover, on this first day of the War, you have taken over the task of leading your army as the Commander-in-Chief. So you must fight. It is your Dharma”. So, Arjuna had this duty to do; it was facing him as his immediate duty also. Moreover, he had assumed his duty, agreed to perform it, and come right upon the battle field, with the opposing army facing him there. In that particular context of his position as Commander-in-Chief of one of the two armies on the battle field, as prince of the Pandava race, this man’s hundred per cent duty was to fulfil his particular role, to fulfil the Kartavya Karma which was facing him. It was his Dharma in that particular context to lead the army and try to see that the unrighteous Kauravas were overcome and defeated.

So, when Krishna told Arjuna that he must fight, what He meant was that Arjuna must do his duty—the duty which then faced him. The general notion of people that the Gita is a gospel of violence, a gospel of war, is a mistaken notion. It is a misconception. It betrays a complete failure to understand the central message of the Gita. Because the Gita happened to be delivered in a particular context, in the context of the battle field, the dramatic effect of it was heightened. Arjuna was told that even in the midst of the war, he was to be completely detached. He was to be established in God. He was to be rooted in God-remembrance. The Lord gave him this Sandesh: “*Mamanusmara Yudhyacha*. Remember Me constantly and fulfil your duty”. When the Gitacharya, Lord Krishna, addressed these words to Arjuna by the word “Yudhyacha” He meant only, “Do your duty”. And it just so happened that at that particular hour Arjuna’s duty was to fight as a warrior in a righteous war. Be it noted that Krishna’s emphasis was not so much on the word “Yudhyacha” as upon the word “Mamanusmara”. If the Gita had been preached to a Brahmin in a forest hermitage, this word “Yuddha” would never have got into the Gita. It would have taken a

different terminology altogether. What the Lord meant to say was that even in the midst of the most intense and dynamically active field of human life, one should be in a state of Yoga inside—“*Yogastha Kuru Karmani*”. The entire emphasis in the Gita is: “Wherever you may be, and whatever you may be doing you must be in a state of Yoga. You must be closely linked up with the Universal Soul. You must be closely linked up with the Divine, and thus linked up, you must perform your activities”.

So, it means that when this message, this teaching, this Yoga, that you must be linked up with the Divine and perform activities, that you must be grounded in God-remembrance and God-thought even while performing your activities, could be prescribed even in the tense circumstances of a battle field, then it goes without saying that it applies to all other fields of human activity. The most difficult field of human activity is naturally the field of battle, where the people clash and kill under the most violent, most dynamic and most complicated circumstances. And if Yoga can be practised there, then no one can give an excuse that he cannot practise Yoga because he is a business man or he is a somebody else. If Lord Krishna had given His message in some other context, then the soldier of the battle field might have protested that the Upadesh or teaching could apply to anyone else, but not to him because he was in a very, very complicated and difficult field, namely, the life-and-death battle field. Evidently, the Lord deliberately chose the most difficult, the most complicated, the most active and most violent, and the most externalised field of activity that is ever possible for a human being to practise the Gita Yoga of inward living. If the Gita Yoga is possible in the midst of the clash and clang of weapons in a field of battle, then it is possible anywhere and everywhere. Then, no one can ever come forward and say, “No, it is not possible in my particular context, in my particular circumstance”. So, once and for all, the possibility of anyone putting forward an excuse for not practising the Gita Yoga was effectively removed by the Lord when He chose the battle field to give His Upadesh to Arjuna.

It is in the above context that we must understand Pratyahara also. You must learn to be detached in the midst of activities. You must learn to be grounded in the inner background in the midst of outward activity or outer dynamism. And this process of Pratyahara is an indispensable necessity if you want to practise Yoga in daily life. If you want to practise Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi in the context of a normal life lived in the world, the support of the process of Pratyahara in the midst of your normal activity becomes most significant and most important. Nay, it is indispensable. So, Pratyahara as a process has a greater importance to the Yogi in the normal context of worldly life than Pratyahara as a practice at a particular time just before meditation.

The Indispensability of Vichara and Viveka for Successful Pratyahara Practice

Now, the moment you move towards the external scene, you are surrounded by external objects, and each external object has got its own fascination for you. Each external object has got its own attraction for your mind due to long association. And naturally, the moment you are amidst those objects, this attraction starts pulling you out, because the mind is constituted that way. Every object is found to be desirable for some purpose or the other. The fascination of Nama-Rupa to the Chitta is part of the function of Prakriti, because the whole of Prakriti is nothing but Maya, and Maya is full of this power of tremendous attraction to delude the Jiva. Therefore, if you have to keep up the process of Pratyahara during the hours of normal daily activity, you have to have the process

of philosophical enquiry and discrimination constantly active. You must constantly exercise your faculty of discrimination to distinguish between what is real and what is unreal. This is what is known as Nitya-Anitya-Vastu-Viveka or Sat-Asat-Vastu-Viveka or Atma-Anatma-Vastu-Viveka. You must also reason thus: “This object is attracting me; my mind is being pulled towards it. The senses are bounding towards it. Is it going to bring me any good? Out of this, can I achieve my welfare? Is it going to be conducive to my peace of mind? Will I get real happiness out of it? What is it going to give me?” This is Vichara. This is enquiry. You must tell your mind: “This object will give me only more confusion, more Trishna, more restlessness and agitation. Where there is desire, there is agitation, restlessness of the mind. The more I give in to it, the more the desire will intensify and multiply. This is the Law. A desire that is around in the mind never subsides with the satisfaction of the same. On the contrary, satisfying the desire only makes the desire-fire to blaze up with renewed vigour, with redoubled vigour. Desire is like a fire being fed with oblation—Ghee or oil. It will not receive the oblation and subside; on the contrary, it will blaze forth with redoubled vigour. Fulfilling the desire, surely, is not the way to overcome it. So I must renounce the desire, give up the desire. Rushing towards sense-objects will bring only ruin upon me. It will bring about greater restlessness, greater intensification of desire, more agitation. No, I will not allow my mind to be dragged away by the senses towards these sense-objects”. Such Vichara should be there, active Vichara or philosophical enquiry.

Upon the basis of what you have learnt from the scriptures, upon the basis of what your Guru has told you, upon the basis of what saints and sages have taught you as a result of their own experience of this world, this world is hollow, this world is only a Mriga-Marichika, a mirage in the desert. You will run towards it and you will perish. Nothing will come; there is no water there. Therefore, do not be deluded by the sense-objects. Move away from them; be a Master. In the light of your own life in this world, you yourself know what bitter experiences you have by rushing towards objects. “Once bitten, twice shy” they say. Once you have known the real nature of fire, will you again go towards fire? Like that, upon the basis of your vivid recollection of your own previous experiences, upon the basis of whatever knowledge you have gleaned from your study of the scriptures, upon the basis of what your Guru has told you, upon the basis of the teachings of the saints and sages, you must be ever alert and vigilant and keep your discrimination constantly active.

You must always do Vyavahara as a Viveki; then only you will be able to have Pratyahara in the midst of Vyavahara. If you want withdrawal and a state of detachment in the midst of active involvement in the objective universe, then this withdrawal is possible only if you constantly have this active philosophical enquiry into the illusory nature and the defective nature and the painful nature of sense-enjoyment. Where there is Vichara and Viveka, where there is such enquiry and such discrimination, then Pratyahara becomes progressive and successful. You can maintain Pratyahara in the midst of your activity. Then what happens? You come into contact with sense-objects, but they are never able to have their impact upon your inner consciousness. In your inner consciousness, you are always detached. The sense-objects may go only as far as the senses, they may go even as far as the inner centres of sense perception, but they will not be able to affect the mind, they will not be able to put the mind in a turmoil. They will not disturb your mind, much less your inner consciousness. Thus do you effectively succeed in preventing the external perceptions from making any impact upon your consciousness.

What does that mean again? It means that you no longer create any new Samskaras. You no longer create any new Vasanas for yourself. Otherwise, the whole life is nothing but the almost continuous loading of your Chitta with more Samskaras and more Vasanas. If you go and involve yourself completely with external activities and objects, due to desires, due to attractions which make you succumb because of a lack of enquiry and discrimination, every sense perception, every experience, every sense contact that you engage in creates a new Samskara and a new Vasana. This is an unending process and you will never be able to liberate yourself. Already, a load of previous Samskaras and Vasanas are playing enough havoc by raising Chitta Vrittis within the mind, and the moment you sit for meditation these buried Samskaras and Vasanas are constantly coming to the surface and creating Vrittis and various ideas in the mind. That is enough. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Why should you make a bad situation worse by acquiring new Samskaras and Vasanas? You may ask: “How can I prevent doing it?” Because, the moment you go into the external world, new Samskaras and Vasanas are created. The way of preventing new Samskaras and Vasanas is to see that no ultimate impact is made upon the consciousness even though hundreds of perceptions and sense contacts take place. Pratyahara effects this. Pratyahara succeeds in checking the sense perceptions from affecting the mind and touching the consciousness. The mind just refuses to take them in. They come to the outer sense organ or sense instrument; they come to the sense centre in the brain; but when they try to get to the mind, the mind says, “No. I do not want these. I shall not take these things”.

The Rare Pratyahara of the Byzantine Monks

Pratyahara, as we have seen already, has a number of specific phases. One is withdrawing the senses from the sense-objects. But it is possible only for a person isolated in seclusion—an Ekantavasi in complete seclusion. It is not possible for the vast majority of people. Bringing about a disconnection of the senses from the sense-objects, going away from all sense-objects, going into absolute seclusion or Ekantavas is certainly not for the vast majority. But, for the few who manage it, there are no sense-objects, there is no sense world, there is no cinema, no radio, no T.V. There is no Gulab Jamun, Jhangri and Pakodi; there is no silk and gabardine and velvet. Nothing. They have only the jungle and the rock and the river. Some monks isolate themselves even today in the Christian monastic set-up, where, the moment they enter into a monastery and are ordained as monks, they become dead to the external world. Inside the monastery, there is no contact with the outside world at all. They cannot receive any mail, they cannot read any newspaper, they cannot read any book. They are absolutely dead to the world. Their monastic routine completely absorbs their entire attention day after day, month after month, year after year, until they die and are buried. And when they are buried, no identification mark is put upon their graves. Only a cross is put; we do not know whose body is lying underneath. No name, no date of birth or death. So, these monks, even when they are alive, are dead to the world, completely isolated. They do not know what goes on in the outside world.

Even today there are a certain set of monks living in a certain part of Greece who are still living in a state of time that existed more than a thousand years ago. They follow a certain time-schedule which is called the Byzantine Time, because they went into this area and settled down as monks in the time of the Byzantine Empire, and that Byzantine Time is about six to six and a half hours in advance of our time. When it is six or seven in the morning here, it is already noon or midday for them. So, their sunrise and day start at about 1-30 a.m. when their clock will show 6-30

a.m. So, they still live only according to their time. When it is 7-00 a.m. in our timepiece, it is already midday, past midday, for them. So, they live according to that time even today. They belong to the Eastern Church, not the Western Church which has its allegiance to Rome, to the Vatican, to the Pope. They do not have any Pope. They are called the Eastern Church and they also call themselves the Orthodox Church. There are two groups—one belonging to Russia (the Russian Orthodox Church) and one belonging to Greece (the Greek Orthodox Church)—and they still maintain that old tradition. Generally, putting the two Orthodox Churches together, they call it the Eastern Church, as distinguished from the Western Church which is founded under the Pope in the Vatican. So, the Byzantine monks live a life totally oblivious of what goes on in the outside world. Many of the Byzantine monks in Greece, when I went there, did not know that two wars had taken place in 1914 and in 1948. They did not know who Hitler was and who Mussolini was; they did not know that World War II took place; they did not know that the atom bomb was dropped. They knew nothing. It was all news to them. They said, “We do not know what is going on in the outside world”. And they do not know. They live there and they die there and very few of those people are left now, because new candidates and novitiates are not freely forthcoming now as in olden days to enter into that order of monastic life. And many of the big monasteries there are vacant. The place is called Mount Ethos. So, the Pratyahara life of those monks is something totally different. They have nothing to do with the external world.

The Different Phases in the Process of Pratyahara

But, for the vast majority of people who are in the outer context, Pratyahara becomes an indispensable requisite for entering into still deeper realms of the Yogic process, namely, concentration and meditation. In the lives of those who have isolated themselves, the question of further impact does not come, because they have no sense-objects around them. But, for those who have sense-objects around them, the first disengagement, namely, the withdrawal of the senses from the sense-objects is not possible. In their case, the senses are very much involved in the sense-objects and the withdrawal of the senses from the sense-objects is possible only at the time of their meditation. They go into their meditation room and close the door and then there are no sense-objects around them except the picture of their Ishta Devata, the picture of their Guru and their Japa Mala and Svadhyaya book. But, for the rest of the time, they are very much involved in the sense-objects and the first withdrawal is not possible.

The second withdrawal is the withdrawal of the sense centre or the perceiving centre in the brain from the actual sense. Let the eye look, let the eye see, but you do not involve yourself in this process of seeing. It is with reference to this withdrawal that both in the Upanishads and in the Gospel of Christ it is said that the ultimate realisation is possible only for that seeker who, even though having ears, does not hear, who even though having eyes, does not see. Such a seeker is blind even though having eyes. He is deaf even though having ears. That is the nature of the person who, even though he lives in the world, yet makes himself dead to the world, by refusing to allow his inner perception centres to cooperate with the outer organs of the senses. He succeeds in detaching the inner perceiving centres from the outer sense organs. But then, if this is not possible, or if somehow or the other an impression is made on the inner perceiving centre, then even as you are perceiving the object, let your mind say, “Yes, I see this, but I have nothing to do with it”. This last withdrawal involves detachment of the mind; it involves the severing of the mind’s link with the process of perception, with the act of perception. In the beginning stages of Sadhana, the

moment perception takes place, the mind becomes involved, because the mind is still in a state of desire and craving, in a state of Asha-Trishna. In that case, the “I” of the Sadhak which identifies itself with the awakened intellect, the Suddha Buddhi or the Jagrat Buddhi—which is now his best friend because it is Vichara-Yukta and Vivekatmaka—comes to his rescue. His Buddhi is now combined with active enquiry, combined with Viveka or discrimination. So, the ego-consciousness identifies itself with the awakened, discriminating and enquiring intellect and says, “I refuse to involve myself even in the mind. I refuse to identify myself with this state of the mind, with this condition of the mind, when it is perceiving this sense-object, when it is involved in this sense-object. I refuse to associate myself with this condition of the mind”. So, the Sadhak who is endowed with this discriminating intellect now steps back and becomes only the detached witnessing consciousness. This is the withdrawal of the ego or the “I”, the awakened “I”, the discriminating “I”, from the mental involvement in perception. So, one or the other of these phases of Pratyahara should always be present in your Antahkarana. The first one is not possible for the people who are involved in the world. The second, third and fourth phases should be actively exercised; they should be dynamically present in your Antahkarana at any time. Thus, Pratyahara is a continuous process. And for this withdrawal, constant exercise of enquiry and discrimination are indispensable. They are also part of it.

The Significance of Pratyahara from the Scientific and the Metaphysical Angles

And this process of Pratyahara has a very important significance in the overall practice of Raja Yoga and its special significance is twofold. One is the purely scientific significance—the significance of Pratyahara as an integral part or process of Raja Yoga as an exact science, a science of mind-discipline, a science of concentrating the scattered mind, a science of focussing the concentrated mind upon a single object, a science of practising this focussing in a continuous and unbroken manner. So, Pratyahara is a purely scientific process. So, from this scientific angle, Pratyahara becomes important and significant in the sense that unless you first of all withdraw the mind from being externalised, concentration is impossible. The question of concentration can never arise unless first of all the externalised mind is withdrawn. Only if you first succeed in withdrawing or internalising the externalised mind, only then can you try to bring about a centralisation of it inwardly. When the mind is not even inward, how can you centralise it? When the nature of the mind is completely extrovert and the mind is externalised, where comes the question of your trying to centralise it? First of all, bring it in. Then, within the context or framework of your interior, when the mind is still thinking of other objects, try to gather it together. Try to subdue its restless objectward motion or thought and try to bring it together. So, from the scientific point of view, Pratyahara becomes the indispensable qualification or prerequisite in order to be able to think of Dharana or concentration. No Pratyahara, no concentration. Unless you withdraw yourself, unless you withdraw your mind from the external things, you cannot have concentration. So, inner Yoga is impossible without first becoming well established in Pratyahara. Antaranga Yoga depends entirely upon successful practice of Pratyahara.

Now, leaving aside the scientific angle, from the metaphysical or philosophical angle also, you will find that Pratyahara becomes very, very significant. It becomes very, very significant in the context of the basic thesis, the prime thesis of Yoga. What is the prime thesis of Yoga? That all our woes, all our complications and all our problems have arisen due to the Purusha becoming involved

in Prakriti. And the whole science of Yoga has been formulated in order to enable the Purusha to successfully disentangle himself from Prakriti and remain in his own pristine independent condition or native state. And in the context of this prime thesis of the philosophy and metaphysics behind Yoga, you find now that Pratyahara plays a very significant part or forms a very significant phase in the Yogi's attempt to disengage and disentangle himself from his involvement in Prakriti. Now, what is the anatomy of your involvement in Prakriti? Through the channel of the senses the mind has been pulled out and embroiled or entangled in the objective universe. Why? Because the senses are turbulent, because the senses are outward-going, because the senses tend objectward, because the very nature of the senses is Vishayonmukha. And through the senses the mind is dragged out, and through the mind the Purusha gets completely involved in Prakriti, because the Purusha is in a state of total identification with the mind, which is one of its important Upadhis or limiting adjuncts. So, the Purusha weeps and wails, says, "Hai, hai", and is hopelessly imprisoned and entangled. And in this process of liberating the Purusha from Prakriti, Pratyahara takes on an added significance.

In the context of this philosophical background of the basic thesis of Raja Yoga, Pratyahara becomes an important phase of the Purusha—the Yogi—disentangling himself from involvement in outer nature or Prakriti, the world of names and forms, of Nama-Rupa, the world of Vishaya-Vastu, the world of Maya. In short, Pratyahara is the process of withdrawing yourself from Prakriti in the form of the external world of sense-objects. And so it has a very, very significant role, a specially meaningful role, in the overall process of the Purusha trying to disentangle himself from Prakriti once for all. So, that is the special place that Pratyahara occupies in the context of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi both in a scientific sense and also in relation to the ultimate liberation of the Purusha from Prakriti from the angle of the metaphysics and philosophy behind Raja Yoga.

12

INDISPENSABLE AIDS TO THE PRACTICE OF PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is roughly translated as "withdrawal". Withdrawal, it has already been seen, is an indispensable prerequisite to concentration. If you want to centralise the mind, first of all, it has to be interiorised. Because, if the mind is completely externalised and scattered over many things in this outer world of names and forms and human affairs, how can the question of concentration arise in such a mind? It is totally unequipped for centralising or focussing. It is not even inside. It is scattered over the seen world which is hundred per cent Prakriti or Maya as long as we perceive it through the senses. But the same outer world is seen by the illumined Brahma Jnani as Parabrahman through his Sakshatkara Anubhava, and so he says, "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma; Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat*". For him, there is no Prakriti at all; there is Parabrahman only. The whole of the external universe is nothing but Parabrahman for him. "*Sarvam Sivamayam*" he says, "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*". And the scriptures go on to say that there is nothing else besides Brahma—*Neha Nanasti Kinchana*. But that is a question of Sakshatkara. Whereas, our approach to this whole human situation of bondage and suffering is from the point of view of the Mumukshu, a Jijnasu who is in Ajnana.

A Word of Caution

The Mumukshu is not a liberated soul or a Jivanmukta Purusha. He is only a struggling soul, caught in the net of the bondage of Raga-Dvesha, of Asha-Trishna. So, we cannot apply the Sakshatkara principle to the actual situation of the Jivatma. And we cannot say that there is no Prakriti. We have to very much accept Prakriti. One little sight, one little sound upsets us, makes us completely forget our Self our real Svarupa, our Purushahood and makes us completely enslaved by passion, anger, greed, hatred, anxiety, fear, depression and dejection. We are subject to so many mental modifications, Chitta-Vrittis. So, in this situation, we cannot ride the high horse of Brahma-Jnana or Jivanmuktahood. We cannot truthfully say, "I am transcendental Purusha or Atman". We may practise saying it for the purpose of ultimate realisation. Such practice is called Brahma-Abhyasa Brahma-Chintana. We may practise affirming our real nature and asserting it. But on the practical side, we have to behave with caution and commonsense. We cannot foolishly run into situations which will make us turn a somersault and have a terrible fall and weep. We have to be very, very careful in going about in our Vyavahara, because we are still very much in the grip of the original self-forgetfulness or non-awareness. We are very much in the grip of delusion, of Maya. So, Gurudev used to say, "It is all right to say that Brahman is beyond time, space and causation. There is no world for the Brahma-Jnanis. It is all right for them to say, 'I am Brahman; I am Jnana-Svarupa'. But, so far as you are concerned, if someone calls you a fool, you are immediately thrown into a violent temper, you are ready to quarrel with him, you are ready to fight, even to raise your fist. Let alone that, supposing you go and stand before some person and he is occupied with some other work, and does not pay attention to you, you feel very humiliated. You feel insulted. You will begin to think, 'Oh! This man is treating me like this'. So, let alone someone doing some harm to you, if someone fails to do something which you are expecting him to do, you feel very insulted. You salute someone and he does not return it, because he did not notice it perhaps, but you feel very bothered. Your whole mental mood changes. It is all fine for you to say that there is no world in the three periods of time, but if you find that someone has forgotten to put salt in your Dal, immediately you cannot eat your food; you become upset. You say, 'What is this? You have not put salt'. Supposing someone gives you tea without sugar, your Brahmanhood is nowhere. You immediately become upset in the absence of sugar in your tea. You do not drink it as it is. You will demand sugar and ask for it and complain, 'No sugar has been put in my tea, no salt has been put in my Dal'. So, do not imagine things. Try to know where you are and start your Sadhana from that place". Gurudev used to say all this. You are surrounded by Prakriti; you are surrounded by various manifestations of Prakriti. And so the mind is externalised and scattered amongst the various names and forms and objects, and human situations and affairs, which constitute Prakriti. It is thus in a state of involvement with external Prakriti in all its various forms. And this situation is the very antithesis of the ultimate Yogic state that you are trying to reach.

Pratyahara—Start of the Return Journey to the Absolute

The metaphysical thesis and the philosophical background of Patanjali's Yoga Darshana says that you have to separate yourself completely from Prakriti and once again regain your splendid isolation as the independent Purusha, untouched by Prakriti and beyond all afflictions, supreme and in a state of perfection. Now you are involved in Prakriti; your mind is externalised, scattered amidst the various objects and experiences and affairs that constitute Prakriti. And there is the other experience awaiting you towards which you have to work, slowly and diligently,

perseveringly. Your present situation and the situation you are aiming at are two extremes and therefore the need for Pratyahara. There is the need to practise Pratyahara. If you want to change your present situation which is the very opposite or contradiction of the ultimate state you are trying to reach through Samadhi and superconsciousness, you have to make a start somewhere. And so, the very commencement of the metaphysical transformation you are aiming to bring about is Pratyahara. In the Kathopanishad, this deplorable state of man is clearly mentioned when Yama tries to make Nachiketas understand that Brahma, the Creator, made the mind outgoing at the very time of creation. So, by its very innate tendencies, the mind is outgoing, because Rajo-Guna is present in it in considerable measure. Therefore, the Jivatma beholds only the outer universe and not the inner Self; and beholding only the outer universe, the Jivatma is subject to change, decay, modification and destruction. The Jivatma finds no happiness; he weeps. And once a person recognises the situation, the cause of one's suffering, the cause of one's weeping, the cause of one's disappointment and frustration in trying to get happiness out of the external universe, the cause of one's disillusionment, once a person realises the situation he is in, if he has got real stuff in him, he makes up his mind about it all. "No, no" he says, "Happiness does not lie outside. I have made a great mistake, I have committed a great blunder. I shall reverse this state of affairs". Thus making a firm Sankalpa and determination, that exceptional being, that exceptional person, tries to reverse this process by making the mind go inward, by closing the doors of the senses, because he aspires to find true happiness, and he has understood now through Sruti-Vakya, Apta-Vakya and his own experience that real happiness and satisfaction is found in the Atman and not in the outer world of change and modification and decay. So he turns the gaze away from the outside and directs the vision inside. This is Pratyahara—turning the gaze away from the external and directing it towards the inner Self.

Some rare exceptional person, with stuff, with determination, with courage of conviction, with firm faith in the scriptures, in the words of the Guru, in the words of the elders, he it is that turns his gaze within. He turns his gaze within. Why? Because he desires to attain the indwelling Self. The rest of the masses, the majority of people that is, the great flock, they see only the external universe, they do nothing to change the situation; they do nothing to reverse the natural tendency of the mind. They allow it to flow through the senses towards the objective universe because they think that the objective universe is the only reality that exists. There is no other Reality. For them, seeing is believing. What they perceive through the five senses, that is all there is. There is nothing else beyond. They cannot conceive of anything else beyond. So, foolishly thinking in this irrational short-sighted way, like children lacking proper vision and higher understanding, they make their life an entire affair of allowing their mind to flow through the senses and perceive only the external objects, and thus allowing, they get caught in the widespread net of Maya. And they come again and again into this world. There is no end to their wheel of birth and death. "*Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam Punarapi Jananee Jatare Sayanam*". There is no end to this wheel. Again and again they go and come back, and weep and wail and laugh, and again go and come back. This ever-recurring wheel of death and rebirth, and death and rebirth, goes on for those small-minded ones, lacking understanding, thinking like children. Instead of thinking and acting like mature wise people, they think like children. So they come again and again into this world. Whereas, the Mumukshu is a Dheera, the Jijnasu is a Dheera, like Markandeya, like Nachiketas, like Dhruva, like Prahlada, Satyakama and Svetaketu. They are Dheeras; they are people with the exceptional stuff. They have got inner strength, courage to follow their beliefs, and faith, and so they make all the effort that is necessary and turn the gaze away. They reverse the process of the natural tendency of

the mind and try to take it inward towards the Eka or the One, instead of towards the Aneka or the many that lie outside. They try to take the mind towards the Sattva instead of towards the Nama-Rupa. They try to take the mind towards the Nitya instead of towards the Anitya. That is Pratyahara. And, from the purely psychological point of view, the purely scientific point of view, as a technique, you cannot do Dharana unless you have got Pratyahara. Pratyahara is an Abhyasa or a technique or a process that is indispensable if you have to carry out Dharana. If you must concentrate the mind, first of all the mind must be brought in, the mind must be made to come together; it must be turned inward. And this needs also sense-control. Unless you have got sense-control, you cannot do Pratyahara. If the senses are turbulent and always bounding towards the Vishaya-Vastu or the worldly objects, you cannot do Pratyahara. So, it requires Brahmacharya to do Pratyahara successfully.

Brahmacharya and Pratyahara

Brahmacharya means that pattern of conduct, that lifestyle, which leads to ultimate Brahma-Jnana. So, Brahmacharya is a comprehensive term. That is why Patanjali has laid it down in his Niyama. Brahmacharya means self-control. Tapasya includes self-control. Therefore arises the necessity of Tapasya in relation to Pratyahara, of Brahmacharya in relation to Pratyahara. Unless you have self-control, self-restraint, you cannot have Pratyahara. The mind will continue to be bothered by the uncontrolled and turbulent senses. The senses have to be kept in check. The senses have to be disciplined. The senses have to be trained, have to be subdued; and therefore, Yama and Niyama are to be practised throughout the entire course of your Yogic ascent right up to the point of Samadhi. Otherwise, if you do not keep up Yama and Niyama always with you, even after attaining the state of Dhyana, you can have a downfall. Even a Yogi can have a great downfall. So, you can never underestimate the importance of Yama and Niyama. You can never understate the need to keep them along with you right up till the last stages of the Yogic ascent.

Vairagya and Pratyahara

Secondly, if Pratyahara is to be successful, you must have Vairagya. What is it that drives the mind outside seeking sense satisfaction and sensual enjoyment? What is it that drives the mind outside? It is desire. It is Asha and Trishna. It is the thirst for sense enjoyment. It is Raga. Unless you develop dispassion towards the external world, towards objective enjoyment and objective possessions, unless you say, “No, I do not want anything”, you cannot engage in successful Pratyahara. And unless you practise Pratyahara, you cannot get established in Vairagya or dispassion. So they are both interdependent. Pratyahara helps in becoming more and more well grounded in Vairagya. Vairagya helps in succeeding in the process of Pratyahara. Without Vairagya you cannot have Pratyahara and Pratyahara is necessary to become well established in Vairagya.

Now, ask yourself a question. Why is it that the Jivatma has so many desires, so many cravings? “I must enjoy this. I must possess this. I must come into contact with this.” Why all this craving? Vedanta tells you that it is due to a basic Avichara, a basic lack of proper philosophical enquiry. You do not keep up this enquiry continuously—this enquiry into the real nature of things, this enquiry into the real nature of the so-called sensual enjoyment. If you make a right enquiry, philosophy will tell you that this is not enjoyment, but this is suffering. What you think to be

happiness is actually suffering. It is the cause of further suffering. Because, you go towards enjoyment and you become enslaved by it. You become addicted to it. If you do not find it you suffer. So, what you think to be enjoyment is actually suffering. These enjoyments that come due to the contact between the senses and the respective sense-objects—they are a source of sorrow, a source of suffering. Now a little bit of enjoyment, but afterwards suffering. “*Ye Hi Samsparsaja Bhoga Duhkha Yonaya Eva Te*” Who says this? Lord Krishna Himself. So, there is no real happiness here. Misery is mistaken for happiness, pain is mistaken for pleasure, because this happiness increases your craving. It makes it all the more. By satisfying your desire, you intensify your desire, and when you intensify your desire, it becomes a source of great agitation and mental restlessness. The more the desire, the more the restlessness. And where there is such restlessness in the mind, there cannot be happiness. When there is Ashanti in the Manas, in the Chitta, how can there be happiness? *Ashantasya Kutah Sukham?* There cannot be real happiness where there is constant agitation, constant restlessness in the mind due to countless desires and cravings. They are all together and you do not realise it, because you do not carry on Vichara. Where there is proper Vichara and Viveka, Vairagya is possible. Where there is no Vichara and Viveka, Vairagya is not sustained, Vairagya is not Pucca, it is not ripe, it is Kachcha. Sometimes it will help you, and at other times, at the time of need, it will abandon you. Vairagya will vanish, and you will be foolish, and to use an English expression, you will find yourself in a soup. You will get into hot waters. Why? Because of temporary abandonment of Vairagya. And you will commit some very foolish thing. Then, afterwards, Vairagya will come again. Afterwards, you will remember Vairagya. So they say that it is better to avoid getting into a wrong situation rather than get into a wrong situation, repent, open one’s eyes, and afterwards try to correct oneself. Be wise. Arise, awake. Be wise. Understand that discrimination and enquiry are very, very important in order to become established in Vairagya, by which alone successful and effective Pratyahara is possible.

Svadyaya and Pratyahara

Also understand the relevance of Svadyaya to Pratyahara, because it is through Svadyaya that the Yogi is able to keep his Vichara and Viveka fresh and alive or active. With daily Svadyaya, you begin to get a deeper and deeper understanding into the real nature of the world and things. Svadyaya brings you wisdom. Svadyaya brings you awakening. Svadyaya keeps your Vichara and Viveka keen and sharp. That is the value of Svadyaya and that is the connection between Svadyaya and Pratyahara. And thus, with the help of Brahmacharya, with the help of Tapascharya, with the help of Svadyaya, if you have your senses under control, and if you keep your Viveka and Vichara keen and active, then gradually, becoming an Avruta-Chakshu Jijnasu, becoming endowed with an internalised gaze, with the mind turned away from the external outside, you are able to gradually prepare yourself for the higher stage of Dharana or concentration. This withdrawal of Pratyahara should be supported by Brahmacharya, supported by Tapasya, supported by Svadyaya, and supported by the Vichara and Viveka developed through Svadyaya, and it should be always bolstered by Vairagya. Vairagya is very, very important if you must successfully practise Pratyahara. And in this process of Pratyahara, gradually you begin to progress and advance in keeping your mind always internalised, not moving towards the senses but moving towards the Self, the inner focal point within. And as you progress in this practice of Pratyahara, a stage comes when the senses gradually begin to change their nature, begin to give up their Vishayonmukha Svabhava, their innate tendency of always going towards the external objects, of always going towards their respective sense-objects. That nature they gradually begin to give up, having

understood through Viveka, through Vichara, through Svadhyaya, through Satsanga, the foolishness of moving towards the external objects, having understood that the external world is an empty chimera, that there is no pleasure there, that there is no happiness there, that there is only pain there. By going towards fire, you will only get burnt. A child is attracted towards the brightness, the brilliance, of fire. And if it touches the fire, it will get burnt. In the same way, the moth goes towards its destruction by plunging towards a bright flame. The Sadhaka begins to understand that, likewise, in the glittering external world, there lies only harm or injury, unhappiness, sorrow, lamentation.

Once this idea is firmly implanted in the mind, the senses come under the influence of this new knowledge. Formerly there was a situation when the mind was constantly being influenced by the senses, powered by the senses, dragged by the senses. And now, a certain change has come over the mind. The whole situation is now reversed. Now, the senses, instead of influencing the mind, become influenced by the mind, because the mind has become established in Vichara and Viveka and Vairagya, and has become well-grounded in its new attitude to the external world. So it says, “No, my welfare does not lie there. My happiness lies inside”. The mind becomes well established in this conviction and determines not to go outside but to go inside. What happens then? This new determination of the mind has its impact upon the senses, and in this new situation the mind begins to influence the senses. And the senses now decide: “No, we will not drag the leader. We will follow the leader. The mind is our leader. We will do as he says”. So the senses stay put; they no longer bound towards the sense-objects, but they acquire a state of repose. They consent to stay where they are and they give up their old habitual, innate tendency of going outward. So, the senses attain a state of Dama. The senses become subdued, they become docile, and they decide to follow the mind. So, they also become internalised. They stay in their centres. They do not bother the Yogi any more. They no longer present themselves as factors which distract the mind and agitate the mind. So, the problem gets overcome. Instead of the mind being dragged out by the senses, the senses now consent to be brought inside by the mind. They follow the new tendencies of the awakened mind dominated by Vichara and Viveka, dominated by Vairagya, dominated by a higher discrimination. Such a situation becomes most suitable and helpful for the Yoga practitioner to take up the actual process of concentration or Dharana.

13

MORE ABOUT PRATYAHARA

We tried to bring out in the last chapter how the fifth Anga of Raja Yoga, namely, Pratyahara, is not possible unless it is supported by Vairagya, Viveka and Vichara. We tried to bring out the connection between Svadhyaya and Vichara and Viveka. Vichara and Viveka are supported by Satsanga, Svadhyaya and Sravana. Just as Svadhyaya provides material for contemplation and concentration, material for a permanent spiritual background of thought, even so, it provides right inspiration and right guidance for the Sadhak’s Vichara and Viveka. It provides an insight into the real nature of this world and exposes the hollowness of sensual objects and sensual enjoyments. When the Sadhaka’s eyes are opened thus by Svadhyaya, by his recognising the hollowness of things, the Raga or worldly attachment which he had formerly changes into Vairagya. The false notion or Viparita Jnana which he had, that objects are desirable, that objective enjoyments are

pleasurable, now yields place to the recognition, to the realisation, that objects are sources of pain. They are, on the contrary, the source of restlessness in the mind which destroys one's happiness. The more the desires, the greater the restlessness in the mind. The more you satisfy the desires, the more do they intensify and the greater the agitation in the Chitta. Where the Chitta is thus always agitated and full of Ashanti, there cannot be any Sukha.

The Role of Svadhyaya in Arousing Viveka

How does this recognition come? How does the Sadhaka come to be aware of this aspect of the world, of this real nature of the sense-objects, the sense contacts, and the sense enjoyments born out of the sense contacts? Through Svadhyaya, through Sravana, through Satsanga. Thus, Svadhyaya plays its further role of helping Viveka and Vichara and inducing Vairagya, all of which are indispensable for effective and successful Pratyahara. Otherwise, you may draw the mind away from the objective universe a hundred times or even a thousand times, and yet, it will go back again to the Vishayas like a street dog always strolling in the lanes and bylanes after castaway food, no matter how impure, how Uchhishta or Jhuta it may be. Even if the dog is kicked out or stoned or shooed away, even then it will come again. It will return to the same place; it is never tired. It is only when the conviction is laid deep in the mind as a result of repeated intake of the right type of instruction and knowledge that the Sadhak's way of thinking gradually changes. It is only then that the Sadhak's ways of looking at things and appraising them changes. What he once thought desirable, he now knows to be undesirable. What he once thought was the surest way of getting happiness, he now knows is all folly. That way lies misery; that way lies entanglement. In this manner, the Sadhak's approach, his view of things, changes. His evaluation of experiences takes on a new quality and he begins to see things with the eye of discrimination. He comes to realise the truth of the saying, "*Sarvam Duhkham Vivekinah*". To a Viveki, to one in whom discrimination has been aroused, everything is pain only. The Viveki sees no pleasure. He sees only pain. And this gradually growing conviction in the mind fortifies and supports his Pratyahara.

However, right from the very start, we have to see how Pratyahara is not just some technique only, but rather more a way of moving about in the world. Pratyahara is a continuing state of our mind even in the midst of varied occupations in the outer world in different fields of human activity—a state of mind in which discrimination is always active, in which philosophical enquiry is always present, in which the mind is always awake and alert, in which it does not want to go out, jump towards objects, but wishes to remain within always. Pratyahara is a state of mind in which there is awareness—psychological, moral and metaphysical awareness. There is psychological awareness; the Sadhak is aware of the state in which his mind is, whether it is hankering after outer things or whether it is staying put. There is moral and ethical awareness—the Sadhak is aware that he has taken the vows of Ahimsa, Satyam, Brahmacharya, Asteya and Aparigraha and that he is to abide by these vows as a Sadhaka, as a Raja Yogi. So he is aware that he must not budge from these vows, that he must strictly adhere to these vows, and therefore he cannot allow his mind to behave as the mind of an ordinary person in this world whose entire approach in this world is enjoyment-oriented, sense-oriented, indulgence-oriented. The Sadhak tells himself, "No, I am in the very opposite. I am risen into a very different plane of living and behaving". This moral and ethical awareness is there in the mind. It helps Pratyahara. And metaphysical and philosophical awareness also is there. The Sadhak feels: "My real identity is that of the Purusha, divine, independent, ever-free, liberated from the clutches of Prakriti, liberated from all afflictions. And the

environment in which I am moving, this outer surrounding, is Prakriti and my great mission is to see that I maintain my Purushahood. I should not get caught or entangled in Prakriti. Therefore I should move through these objects as an Anasakta Purusha, as a Nirlipta Anasakta Purusha, as an unattached spiritual being, as a spiritual entity. My mission is to free myself and liberate myself from Prakriti which is the outer universe with its various names and forms. So, while I am in the midst of these names and forms, I should not be of them. I must be detached. I must live in this world like the lotus lives in the pond untouched by water”. This constant awareness in the Sadhak is part of the picture of successful Pratyahara, is part of the picture of effective Pratyahara. So, if Pratyahara is to be practised successfully, the inner contents of your mind should be characterised by this threefold awareness.

Keeping a Metaphysical Awareness of the One in the Midst of the Many

We have further supportive material in the scriptures in the matter of this ongoing process of a life characterised by Pratyahara. Pratyahara is to direct the vision towards the One, even while being compelled to move in the midst of the many; and the scriptures suggest to the Yogi a certain Sadhana by which even while in the midst of the many, he may be centred in the One and that Sadhana is called Brahmabhyasa in Vedanta. Of course, that Sadhana becomes possible after serious discipleship and earnest and diligent study of Vedanta. The Mumukshu, sitting at the feet of the Guru, listens repeatedly to the exposition of the Great Truth. He is told again and again the Great Truth in diverse ways, through many illustrations. For instance, they say that no matter how variegated may be the items of pottery you may be beholding at a moment in the house of a potter, you are beholding only one element and that is clay. So many different shapes and sizes and varieties of pottery may be there that may be attracting your eye by their artistic quality, craftsmanship and delicacy; yet you are aware that you are beholding only clay. In a shop dealing in textile goods, innumerable varieties of cloth, different in colour, texture and style, may be there. You may behold a bed-sheet, a table-cloth, a handkerchief, a towel, a shirt, a Pyjama, a gown, a pillowcase, a curtain; yet, you are looking only at cotton; you are seeing nothing but cotton, whether it is coloured red, white, blue, green, purple or yellow. Similarly, in a goldsmith’s shop, varieties of jewellery may be there—all different in their size, in their purpose, all meant for different parts of the body. The bracelets, rings and necklaces may reveal wonderful craftsmanship and intricate design. But ultimately, a man of discrimination knows that he is looking only at one thing and not at many things; he knows that he is looking only at gold, though that gold is beaten into different forms and given different names. The substance is one only and that is gold. There is only cotton in a textile shop. There is only clay in a potter’s shop. In the same way, there is only one Brahman in the universe, though sporting in diverse names and forms.

Sings Tukaram: “*Vyapuni Jagata Tuhi Ananta, Bahavidha Rupa Ghesi Ghesi, Pari Anti Brahma Ekale, Pari Anti Brahma Ekale.*” What is the meaning? “*Vyapuni Jagata Tuhi Ananta*”—Pervading the entire universe, Thou art the Infinite One. “*Bahavidha Rupa Ghesi Ghesi*”—Thou taketh numerous varieties of form. “*Pari Anti Brahma Ekale*”—But when you look at it ultimately, there is nothing except one Brahman, that One Supreme Eternal Essence called Brahman, Satya. This is a Bhakta’s realisation of Vedanta. The Vedantin, of course, says, “*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*”. And if the Yogi on the path of Yoga gradually tries to imbibe this vision

gradually, then it becomes to him a tremendous help while he is at the practice of Pratyahara. No matter upon what object his senses may alight, no matter towards what object his eye may set or his ear may be directed, he feels that there is but one Tattva only. There is Brahman within and there is Brahman without. There is only one thing. So he tries to successfully overcome the distracting influences of the outer environment by trying to be rooted in his vision of oneness, thus keeping his Pratyahara supported by the lofty revelations of the scriptures, so that whether he is in Abhyasa or whether he is in Vyavahara, his mind is not distracted, his mind is not scattered and dispersed in the many. For, amidst the many, he trains himself to become aware of the One. He says that the many is only an outward appearance and that, in truth, it conceals the One. *“Eko Deva Sarvabhuteshu Gudah”* The inner consciousness, as the witness of all modifications, physical and mental, attributeless, untouched by the five sheaths, untouched by the three bodies, ever the same and unaffected in all the three periods of consciousness—that is Brahman, the Supreme, the One. That innermost Reality is one and it is present in all things, hidden in all things, like butter in milk, like oil in oilseeds. It is hidden, but it is there.

Thus, with the support of such great truths expounded in the scriptures, founded upon revelations, founded upon the experiences of the great ones, the Yogi tries to be in a state of inwardness even while moving and acting in the outer plane of many objects. Thus, the Yogi's Pratyahara is supported by all these different levels of awareness in the mind—psychological awareness, moral awareness of having taken certain great vows never to deviate from them, metaphysical or philosophical awareness of one's own Purushahood and of the ultimate truth that there is only One in the midst of the many. The result is that no matter where the senses may take the Yogi's mind, it cannot be away from the presence of the great Reality; and a stage comes in the practice of Pratyahara of the Yogi that even in the midst of the many, even in the midst of the most distracting situations, he is not distracted because his inner gaze is fixed upon the One that is present in the midst of the many.

Some Practical Exercises in Pratyahara

Then, as a discipline and as a practice, various exercises are suggested in the light of the practical experience of the Yogis. For instance, try to sit in your study, take up a book and start reading. At the same time, keep a timepiece, a few feet away to your right. Close your book and concentrate upon the ticking sound of the clock for some minutes until you are fully aware of the continuous ticking of the clock. Then, say to yourself: “I shall not be disturbed by it; I am going to take my mind away from it. I shall give my mind entirely to the study”. Then open your book, start reading and strongly order the mind that it shall no longer pay any attention to the ticking of the clock; withdraw your attention from there and fix it upon the reading. Practise this till you become totally oblivious to the ticking of the timepiece. Then, proceed even further into a still more difficult aspect of the same exercise. Close the book, close your eyes, sit straight and try to concentrate upon an inner focal point; it may even be an idea from the book itself. Try to fix your mind upon it; it may be a Sloka or it may be an inner object. Try to fix your mind upon that and tell your mind, “You are now no longer aware of that clock; your mind is now going to be fixed upon this”. And try practising Dharana or concentration, completely ignoring the previous sound. Go on doing it until you succeed. You are not aware of the sound. The sound is there, but you are not aware of it. You are completely successful in fixing your mind within.

Here is another exercise. Put a soft piece of candy in your mouth, a soft piece of candy like a piece of chocolate or a toffee. Do you know what will happen? Immediately the teeth will want to chew upon it; immediately the tongue will want to start tasting it. And normally, the very fact of your having put the piece of tasty candy inside your mouth instantaneously makes the entire mouth start working, and within half a minute, the whole thing is finished. The candy is not there. But you put the candy in your mouth as a Yogi and say, “I am not going to touch it, I am not going to interfere with it. I am not going to chew upon it. I am not going to pass my tongue over it. Let it dissolve by itself if it wants”. So, sit with your candy and start repeating your Bhagavad Gita mentally or start repeating your Japa mentally or start recollecting some passage from some scripture mentally and do not allow the mind to pay attention to the candy in your mouth. Take the mind away from your Rasana, from your sense of taste, and try to engage in some process other than tasting. This is Pratyahara. This is a practice in Pratyahara.

A third exercise. As you move along the road, because of the inveterate habit of the mind, the gaze will not be fixed in one place; it will always be roving about. And simultaneously with this, it has also the tendency to go searching after pleasant sights, sights that please or tempt or stimulate the sense of seeing. The Pratyahara exercise is that you must withdraw this gaze. Gurudev used to say that the Yogi, when he walks along the bazaar, will have his gaze fixed on the ground, just two or two and a half yards ahead of him. He will not be looking hither and thither like a monkey. He will walk in a dignified way, with his gaze fixed upon the ground only. He will have his head straight. You will have to practise this. You do not have to assume the pose of a bride sitting in a Mantapam, but your head and face should be straight. And your gaze should be on the ground, two yards in front of you. Like that you should walk in the most crowded and attractive bazaar.

These are practices in Pratyahara. You can devise similar Sadhanas for yourself according to your facility, your need, your nature. Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha—they are the factors that take the mind out and make it scattered and get caught in the outside universe. Counter them. Make devices of your own and practise Pratyahara in a variety of ways. And never forget that the greatest support that your practice of Pratyahara can receive is ultimately through the great declarations of the scriptures which enable you to be centred in the Self even in the midst of the multifarious objects of the universe. And thus, diligently practise the central truths of Vedanta, the central truths of Bhakti Yoga.

“He who sees Me in all things and he who sees all things in Me, between us there is no separation. I shall not lose hold of him and he will not move away from Me.” So says the Lord in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. It is a suggestion to adopt a certain way of living even in earthly, worldly surroundings. The Lord Sri Krishna indicates how even in the midst of the world you may still be centred in the Divine; you may still be rooted in the one Reality. All scriptures mention the same truth in different ways. The Upanishads, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam—they all say the same thing. Srimad Bhagavatam cites the great example of Prahlada. The Isopanishad starts with this declaration at the very outset. The Bhagavad Gita reiterates the same truth again and again in all the chapters. The intelligent Yogi therefore tries to utilise these great revelations as the constant support for his Yogabhyasa and he raises his mind to a state of perpetual awareness of the presence of the Divine at all times, in all circumstances and surroundings, and amidst all activities.

Effective Pratyahara Stops the Creation of New Samskaras and New Vasanas

When Pratyahara is practised in such a comprehensive way, then gradually the outer world starts to lose its hold upon the mind of the Yogi. Outer objects and their names and form appearances lose their power to influence and change the mind of the Yogi. The Yogi retains his spiritual consciousness and awareness in the midst of the objects and in spite of the objects. That is effective Pratyahara. That is success in Pratyahara. It results now in a great game when, thus established in proper Pratyahara, the Yogi reaches a stage where new Samskaras and new Vasanas are no longer created. Otherwise, the creation of new Samskaras and new Vasanas is a perpetual process. There is no end to it. Normally, as you move in the outer world, you go on creating newer and newer Samskaras and Vasanas. It poses a serious problem to the Yogi. He has difficulty enough in trying to deal with the Vasanas and Samskaras already brought over from his previous birth. And he cannot afford to add on to it a further difficulty of having to deal with fresh Samskaras and Vasanas. The point to note is that unless you live like a Yogi, it is impossible for you to avoid creating more and more, newer and newer, Samskaras and Vasanas. The Yogi is able to put a stop to this process of the creation of additional new Samskaras and Vasanas, precisely by the practice of successful and effective Pratyahara. In his case, the perceived objects do not impinge upon the consciousness any more. They pass off like shadows. They do not take root. They do not go and lodge themselves in his Chitta. Pratyahara thus wards off the creation of new Vasanas and Samskaras, and through the help of Viveka, Vichara and Vairagya, turns the mind away, and the mind becomes gradually transformed into a Yogic mind, an indrawn mind, an Antarmukha Manas. The inveterate tendency of the previous mind to habitually always be running about hither and thither, that innate previous tendency gives place to this newly created nature and quality of remaining inward, of moving towards its own inner centre. That is a great achievement. That is a vast stride, much ground cover and it is this indrawn mind that is the hallmark of the Yogi. It is a specific quality of the Yogic mind to be at repose within and the ground is now prepared for taking advantage of this state of the mind and making use of this indrawn mind to concentrate and focus on the great Lakshya, the Dhyana Lakshya, the object of meditation, the object of Yoga. What is Yoga ultimately? Yoga is nothing but meditation and it is the indrawn mind that becomes the fit instrument for such meditation.

One who has succeeded in practising Pratyahara becomes a person with Samahita Chitta, a person with his mind brought under control, a person with a subdued mind. And this subdued mind is a prerequisite for meditation. Where there is Asamahita Chitta, there cannot be any real Dhyana. This is what all the scriptures say.

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THE MENTAL MENAGERIE OR THE WORLD OF THE INNER PRAKRITI

After having gained success in Pranayama, and after diligently trying to do your exercise of Pratyahara, you come to a stage when you feel that you can try to concentrate your mind. You tell yourself: “I have done Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara. Okay. Now my mind must have reached a condition of fitness from all sides. I have turned away from the external objects of the senses, the outer world of names and forms that constitutes Prakriti. I have completely cut off that which is Prakriti. I have broken the link, the connection, between myself and Prakriti. So, now I must be able to go into Samadhi. I must be able to go into deep meditation, intense peaceful meditation”. And then comes the disillusionment and the realisation that something has gone wrong. For, the moment you try to sit and close your eyes and concentrate, you are faced with lots of difficulties and troubles; and concentration does not come. What is the reason? The whole thing seems rather unreasonable. It seems rather unkind that, having fulfilled all the preliminary, preparatory steps of the Yoga science, you are yet stumped as they say. You find yourself in an unenviable position, in a difficult position. What is the reason? Is it due to some mistake in all the previous practices?

You must understand where you are and why things are as they are. It is here that the necessity arises to understand the actual nature of the mind and the laws that govern its behaviour. This necessity arises, because concentration is a mental discipline. Concentration is a process of trying to control the mind to reduce its activities, to curb its wanderings, and purposefully direct it in a certain desired direction which you have chosen for yourself, and move it in that direction, and keep on moving it in that direction continuously till it gets focussed and fixed in the object of concentration. It is just like catching a wild horse, or any other animal—sheep, goat, cow or buffalo—that is wandering about here and there, eating all sorts of things—grass, leaves, flower plants, garbage, sometimes even paper and cloth. You catch hold of the animal, tie a rope to its neck, drag it to the place where you want it to be and tie it to a peg so that it cannot go anywhere and eat anything. Now, whatever you give, only that it can eat. It cannot eat all sorts of things. Likewise, concentration is tying the mind to a single time-space context, a single place, so that its area of wandering becomes specific, restricted and preplanned. It is no more able to wander wildly according to its own whim and fancy. So, concentration is tying the mind, binding the mind, to some one place, one area, that is your Lakshya, that is the object of your concentration or meditation. So, it is a mental discipline. Unless you understand the nature of the mind and the laws and rules that govern the behaviour of the mind, you will not be able to deal with it properly. Because, the whole concentration process relates to the mind. Concentration is nothing but mind control, mind discipline, mind subdual. So, you must understand the nature of the mind.

The Submerged Mental Contents in the Chitta

Now, the very disturbing discovery regarding yourself that in spite of your having done all the preliminaries, the mind does not seem to come under control has a very valid, rational reason. When you sit for concentration, you no doubt disconnect yourself from the outer Prakriti. But then,

within you there is a complete world, a duplicate world, the world of inner Prakriti in the form of countless submerged Vasanas, countless submerged Samskaras and countless memories in the Chitta. It is all there. Every day when you go to bed at night, every day when you go to sleep, you are completely cut off from the outer Prakriti; and yet, do you not see, in dream, that the inner Prakriti duplicates a complete world inside where you eat and drink and fight and quarrel and weep and do all sorts of things? You enjoy and suffer. You are in this city, you are in that city, you are with this person, you are with that person, you are in this activity and in that activity. Everything is vivid; everything is perfect in all detail. You are also duplicated there. Where does it all come from when you have completely disassociated yourself from the outer Prakriti? There is no time, no space, no objects other than you, for you have gone into sleep. The world vanishes, all people vanish, and yet, how come that there once again rises from within you a complete world? It is the very same source that now begins to become the problem of the meditator, the Yogi who is trying to do concentration. That same world which projects your dream experiences is now active. It has nothing to prevent it. And so, when you sit, close your eyes and try to concentrate the mind, disconnecting your mind from the whole outer world, the inner world projects itself before your mind's eye and Vrittis start rising up in the mind. That is why, at the very outset, right at the very beginning of the expounding of the science of Yoga through his Sutras, Patanjali Maharshi says: "*Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodhah*". Thoughts start coming up in the mind, various miscellaneous thoughts, not thoughts that you think afresh at the time, but thoughts arising by themselves spontaneously. And once they arise, you attach yourself to them and your concentration is left behind and you go along the current of thought that has arisen. You start thinking of those thoughts. And thus you are taken away from your concentration. Your body is sitting steady and the people who see you thus seated think, "Oh, he is meditating!". But, in truth, you are not. You are not in your body at all... you may be in Bombay or in Bangalore; you may be in some restaurant; God knows where you are! Some thought has arisen in you, you have become associated with that thought and the thought-current has started to flow and with the thought-current you have also been swept away.

So, this inner world of the inner Prakriti or the subtle Prakriti is there lying in the form of the submerged mental contents, in the form of Vasanas, Samskaras and memories, in the form of thoughts of anger and passion, of revenge, love and hate, of craving and desire. All these things are there. They serve as fuel to the process of thought combustion. The six enemies of man indicated by the ancient spiritual science—Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya—are all there. Hinting at them in his Vairagya Dindima, Adi Sankaracharya says: *Kama Krodascha Lobhascha Dehe Thishtanthi Taskarah Jnana Ratno-paharaya Tasmad Jagrata Jagrata*. Desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride, jealousy—these dacoits are residing within your own body. They are not outside. They are residing as fifth column enemies within you. And, why are they there? To loot you of the Jnana-Ratna, to rob you of the precious gem of spiritual wisdom or Atma-Jnana, to loot you and deprive you of the precious gem of Self-awareness and make you forget your Self and weep and wail and be in ignorance. In order to deprive you of this jewel of Atma-Jnana, they are there. Therefore, oh man, oh Sadhak, Jagrata, Jagrata. Beware, beware. In this way, from the submerged level of the Chitta or the deep within, various Samskaras and Vasanas are brought into activity.

An Idle Mind is the Devil's Workshop

Here you may ask a question: "Why is it that only when I sit and try to close my eyes and concentrate, these submerged thoughts seem to be more vigorously acting? I am more or less in a

good mood when I am studying or when I am doing other things, Puja or Japa or Karma Yoga, Kirtan or gardening, and at that time these thoughts do not bother, but why only when I am sitting for concentration, they arise?”. The answer is self-evident, because when you are engaged in something else in the outer plane or engaged in some process that requires attention, your mind is drawn out and fixed to that process. The attention of your mind gets engaged. And due to the fact that your mind is thus engaged, the inner process of Vasanas and Samskaras taking the form of Vrittis, the inner process of memories popping up on the surface of the mind, has no scope or has very restricted scope. Even if they pop up, your mind is otherwise engaged. So, it does not pay too much attention to them. It is not too much bothered, because it is already fixed. Whereas, now when you are sitting for Abhyasa on your Asana, all the other things which were engaging the attention of the mind and keeping it diverted, they are all at an end now. They are no longer operating and so you are thrown back upon yourself. The mind is without occupation and its attention is not fixed anywhere else. So, in that state, an emptiness or a vacuum is created in the mind by the cessation of all other involvements and engagements and that vacuum invites the inner Samskaras and Vasanas, and into that vacuum Vrittis rush in. All manner of un-thought-of Vrittis, miscellaneous thoughts, begin to rush in from all sides and occupy the mind. This is one of the reasons why there seems to be a greater difficulty, a greater disturbance, of miscellaneous thoughts precisely when you are trying to practise concentration and meditation than in your normal hours when you are engaged otherwise. This you must clearly understand. Because, when you start the practice of inner concentration, you are faced with the necessity to deal with the situation of numerous Vrittis arising not from without, but from within, from your own inner depths, where lie Samskaras, Vasanas, memories and seeds of unfulfilled desires.

And there is also a very powerful aspect of the mind function, Sankalpa-Vikalpa, which is uncontrollable. That aspect is called Kalpana. In English, we call it imagination. Mind plays a great deal of havoc through the power of imagination. And so, before you know, in the twinkling of an eye, some thought comes up and immediately expands into a whole story before you. It becomes an entire picture as a result of imagination. And even as you concentrate, you may suddenly become transported to America and you may find yourself delivering a speech, or going and stopping war in some country, or going to the United Nations and addressing the U.N. Assembly, or being a great Yogi, immersed in Samadhi with the world coming and paying homage to you. Imagination has no limitation; the mind can imagine anything. Imagination projects into the future also. Thus, imagination plays havoc and poses a great vexing problem to the person who is trying to concentrate.

Three Inveterate Tendencies of the Mind-principle or Manas Tattva

Why do all these things happen? They happen due to the Vasanas, Samskaras and hidden memories. And these are stimulated by Raga-Dvesha and unfulfilled desires. And the rising of these Samskaras and Vasanas can be triggered off by anything. While you are concentrating, if you hear some slight sound from outside and that sound is a specific sound, a meaningful sound, immediately the mind runs away behind it and creates an entire world or a picture behind that one sound. Here it is necessary to note the basic nature of the mind—not the mind belonging to any particular person, not the individualised mind, but the mind-principle as such. It is called Manas. The individualised mind or the mind of each person has its own special peculiarities also. No person’s mind is hundred per cent normal. There is some little abnormality, some little peculiarity,

in the mind of everyone. It is only the degree of a normality and the type of abnormality that vary, that are different. Here, however, we are not referring to the individualised mind, but to the mind-principle. According to Vedantic cosmology, according to the theory of evolution of the universe in the context of Indian philosophy, among the various categories or principles that manifested themselves and then went on to form this outer world, one is this mind-principle or Manas. So, there is this mind-principle created by the cosmic energy of the Divine, out of which all the countless billions of individual minds have formed since creation. So, this mind-principle or mind-stuff as such is, by its very inherent nature, qualified by certain special tendencies. One such tendency is that the mind-stuff, by its very nature, is outgoing. Secondly, the mind is, by its very nature, of the nature of objectification. That is to say, all the mental processes willy-nilly have to be centred around some name and form, around some object. The mind cannot think without grasping an object. It abhors, it cannot tolerate, anything abstract or abstruse. Even when compelled to think of something abstract, the mind tries to do so with the support of some analogy; it tries to get the support of some parallel existing in the objective world. The mind cannot think of pure abstract essence. Para Brahman is pure abstract essence having no name, no form, no shape, no colour. And space or Akasa, we know, has no particular dimension or form. So the mind tries to understand the ununderstandable or incomprehensible or ungraspable fact of Reality by trying to bring it closer through the support of some analogy, in this case, Akasa. So, the mind depends very heavily upon objectification. It can operate or function only in terms of some name, form, place, object. This is the second tendency of the mind-stuff as such. The mind was created in this way only by the Lord. And the third inveterate tendency of the mind is multifariousness. The mind may think of something for a little while, but for a little while only. After some time, it has to change the object of thought. The mind goes on frisking, frisking, frisking, jumping, jumping, always moving, always moving. So, it is unstable. It is fickle, Chanchala. The mind is always fickle, so much so, the Yogis have likened the mind to mercury or quicksilver. If you put some mercury in your palm and try to hold it there, it will roll off. At the slightest disturbance, one blob of mercury will scatter into many blobs. And then, if you are careless and drop it, it will scatter in a hundred directions and you cannot pick it up, unless, you get a pair of magnetic tongs or something.

So, three characteristics qualify the mind-stuff. Firstly, the mind is outgoing. Secondly, it is objectifying in its nature; it functions through objectification. And thirdly, it has the nature of being always fickle, always in motion, always agitated, always restless. So, these three qualities characterise the Mano Tattva, which is your Antahkarana. And in the practice of Pratyahara, the fifth Anga of Yoga, you have tried to curb and overcome one of these characteristics, namely, the outgoing tendency of the mind. Through Pratyahara you have tried to curb and control and overcome the outgoing nature of the mind and make it ingoing or Antarmukha. But, then, what about the other two characteristics of the mind? They now constitute your problem in the process of Dharana or concentration. So, when you sit and try to concentrate, the mind begins to think of objects, some object or the other—it may be an egg or an omelette, it may be a Rasogolla, it may be an aeroplane or a scooter, it may be your money, it may be your friend, anything—and also it gives you no rest but goes on changing the object, changing the thought. Whereas, concentration is the process of binding the mind to one place, of making the mind think continuously in one particular direction, along one particular pattern, and simultaneously trying to see that no other contrary disturbing or distracting ideas come into the field of your consciousness, into the field of your mental awareness. And here, it is the third nature of the mind-stuff, namely, fickleness, that poses your great obstacle.

The Working of the Law of Association

As we saw earlier, the mind is governed by what is known as the Law of Association. If you try to sit and concentrate, and your mother or wife or someone is preparing coffee in the kitchen, and the aroma of coffee comes and enters through your nose, the idea of coffee gets into your brain. The moment the smell of coffee comes, you may suddenly remember some excellent cup of coffee you had sometime previously in Calcutta or in the India Coffee House in Delhi. From the India Coffee House in Delhi, your mind immediately jumps to the All India Coffee Board, and from the Coffee Board you may suddenly be taken to your class-room in your school days when you were taught geography. And you may recollect that Brazil is one of the important coffee-growing areas in the world. So, without ticket, without aeroplane, you enter Brazil. From Brazil you may think of nearby Cuba; you may think of Fidel Castro. In this way, by the action of the Law of Association of ideas, within half a minute, you are taken somewhere. From geography you can go to history, from history to the Mahabharata, and from the Mahabharata you can go to God-knows-where, within no time. The working of the Law of Association of ideas breaks down the barriers of time and distance. Time and distance are nullified. Thus the Law of Association of ideas takes you away from the object of your concentration, takes you far, far away. It is not only when you sit for concentration or meditation that this happens to the mind. It happens every day, all the time of your waking consciousness. For instance, you may be sitting in your office; you may be an officer in Government. And suddenly you may look outside when you are waiting for the next file to be brought by your peon. The moment you look outside, you may be in another world. You may see something outside; maybe, some procession is going in the street below. From the office window you may look at it, and at once you are flown away, and when the peon comes with the file, you are not there. Your body is there, but you are not there. Your mind is not there. This is how the Law of Association of ideas works. Thus, in the sixth Anga of Yoga, namely, Dharana or concentration, your problem is completely inside. Concentration is an inner problem, where the outer Prakriti has been completely shut off and the outgoing tendency of the mind has been overcome. In concentration, you are to deal with the world of the inner Prakriti, the Prakriti within. In concentration you have to deal with the objectifying tendency of the mind-principle as well as the fickleness or multifariousness of the mind-principle. The mind does not stop on one thing; it always wants to jump about. It is necessary therefore to adopt suitable methods to counter these various traits of the mind.

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FOCUSSING THE MIND IN ANTARANGA YOGA

The sixth Anga, the sixth stage of Raja Yoga, is called Dharana and it is loosely stated or expressed by the English term “Concentration”. Dharana means holding the mind fixed at one point, at one place, and keeping it held for a sufficient length of time. So, a certain length of time and a specific focal point—these two are included or implied in the term Dharana. Before we go into the consideration of the specific exercise, process or technique of Dharana, it is very important to know something about the mind, because it is this factor that you have to deal with in Dharana. In concentration, you have to deal with your mind, and you have to know therefore the nature of the

mind, the innate inherent tendency of the mind, and its habitual behaviour pattern, and also the laws that govern the activity of the mind.

Nature of the Mind-stuff or Mano-Tattva

We saw that the mind has an innate outgoing tendency or Bahirmukhatva. Secondly, it has an innate objectifying tendency; in other words, it is Vishayakara. Thirdly, the mind has an innate tendency to keep changing its centre constantly. It never stays put on one thing or one object, but goes on jumping, always fickle, always moving, always restless. So, this is the third tendency of the mind, characterised by Nanatva or the many. The mind is not content to rest on any single point; it is not content to repose on the one. But, it is always scattered in the many. So, the three qualities, namely, externalisation, objectification and diversification—these constitute the inveterate, innate nature of the mind-stuff or the Mano Tattva. In Sanskrit, these three characteristics are known as Bahirmukhatva, Vishayakara and Nanatva. These constitute the innate tendency or the Svabhavika Dharma of the Manas-Tattva. So, this is the mind as Brahma created it, way back when the universe became manifest during the course of the evolution of different principles according to Hindu cosmology. And Pratyahara, we have seen, deals with only one of the three characteristics of Manas, namely, the externalising tendency. Pratyahara reverses this tendency of the mind and internalises it. But, what about the mind's objectification? What about the mind's Chanchalatva, the restless hopping from one to another? How are you to deal with these two factors of the mind-nature?

We have already seen how these two problems are created from deep within the mind. How are you to deal with the Samskaras and the Vasanas? How are you to deal with the suppressed unfulfilled desires? They will constantly come up on the mental surface when you try to close the mind from all the outer world, when you try to close all the sense avenues and sit in one place and close your eyes, maybe, plug your ears also. You go completely inward. Then the mind is unoccupied, and in the empty mind, all sorts of thoughts start bubbling up from the Chitta through the activation of the Vasanas and the Samskaras, and through the operation of the process of memory or recollection. We have seen how association of ideas operates in the mind. One little idea can take you a hundred miles, a thousand miles, a million miles away through association of ideas. One leads to another, another to another, and before you know what is happening, you are already far off. Though the body is in the meditation seat, you are far off. There is yet another thing we have to understand about the mind. This is something very, very subtle; this is a metaphysical factor. Therefore, the Western psychologists do not know about it at all. They do not know about it. They have understood very little about the mind. Though they have understood a great deal, yet in truth, it is very little.

Our ancients discovered one important metaphysical fact about the mind. And they have given it to us. It is very difficult to understand; you cannot grasp it. They say that there is really no such thing as the mind apart from thought-activity. The mind is nothing but a vast bundle of thoughts, a vast bundle of impressions. The mind is present only when thought is present. When thought is present, the mind is present. When thought-activity is not there, there is no mind. So, the ancients say that thought itself is the mind. Thought-activity is itself the mind. Mind and thought are inseparable. Mind is coexistent with thought. The mind is a bundle of Vrittis and Vasanas. This is very difficult to understand. We always think that mind is something from which thoughts emanate.

But, the Vedantins and the Yogis say that there is no such thing as mind separate from thoughts, separate from the thought-process. Mind itself is thought; thought itself is mind. Mind is nothing but thought-activity. When thought-activity is not there, there is no mind. So, the ancients talk about a state of no-mind, Amanaskata. They say that there is an Avastha called Amanas-ka-Avastha. It is impossible to understand this very subtle distinction that they make between a mind independent by itself and a mind coexistent with the thought-process. They say that there is no mind independent by itself. Mind and the thought-process are identical. What we know as mind is nothing but the thought-process, because through the thought-process only we come to the conclusion that inside us there is something other than the body. Through our thought-process only we recognise the existence of the mind. If there is no thought-process, we will not even know that there is a mind. The ancient Rishis discovered this and they have stated that this is the actual situation inside. When thought ceases, mind ceases. If you can completely eliminate thought, you have succeeded in eradicating the mind. Mind does not persist apart from thought.

Now, this is very difficult to understand. It is a very subtle metaphysical experience, a very subtle metaphysical fact. And even though we are not able to grasp it, we are able to experience it in a rather unpleasant and bitter way when we try to practise concentration. By some peculiar misconception if you think that concentration or meditation is trying to keep the mind blank, keep the mind empty, and that is the real way to meditate, it is totally wrong. This idea that meditation means to keep the mind empty is a generally prevalent idea, a very popular notion, and this notion has brought many people to grief. Yoga does not say anywhere that emptiness of mind is meditation. Most certainly, classical or traditional Yoga does not say that blankness is a state to be desired. On the contrary, it says that blankness is an undesirable state and that it should not be encouraged. It says that you must try to overcome the state of blankness and eradicate it. And Yoga definitely says that concentration or meditation is actual focussing upon a specific point, upon a specific objective. And yoga says this for a very, very valid reason. What is this reason? This reason you will know if you try to practise thoughtlessness. Because, what happens then? After a great deal of effort and a great deal of waste of time and energy, you ultimately come to the conclusion, come to the experience, that only two tasks are possible for the mind. Either it must think or it must sleep. Either it must think of something, of many things or one thing, but it must think, or it will promptly go to sleep. The mind is either active or it is sleepy. If you try to keep the mind blank, the next thing you know is that you feel drowsy. The mind is about to sleep. There cannot be a third state for the mind. It must either think or it must go to sleep. This is at the level of the mind.

It is a different matter altogether for the Yogi who goes beyond the mind into a state of Turiya consciousness. In that state, mind has come to a standstill, and therefore, it is a state of sleep so far as the mind is concerned, because in sleep, the mind is at a standstill. So far as the mind is concerned, it is in a state of sleep; so far as the individual is concerned, he is aware of this state. The Jivatma is aware of this state. The Jivatma in Turiya consciousness knows: "I am in a state of absolute thoughtlessness. Shanti...Shanti...Shanti...". That is Prashant Avastha. And that is the difference between superconsciousness and deep sleep, between Turiya and Sushupti. Therefore it is that the state of superconsciousness is called the sleepless sleep. They do not deny that it is sleep. They do accept that it is sleep. At the same time, it is not sleep also, because in sleep there is no awareness, whereas in that state, there is full awareness, because, transcending the mind, the Jiva has gone into a level of pure consciousness, of pure awareness. So, this does not contradict the experience that at the level of the mind, so far as the mind is concerned, the mind has to be either

active or asleep. Therefore, in order to prevent this undesirable and unfortunate state, a state of negativity and waste of time, we are asked to hold on to some focal point and continuously hold on to that point for some time; we are told to practise this again and again, again and again. This is concentration. This is Dharana.

What is Samadhi? Meditation? Concentration?

Now, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi—concentration, meditation and trance—constitute the last three Angas of Patanjali Maharshi’s Ashtanga Yoga. Trance is not super-consciousness; it is wrong to translate Samadhi as super-consciousness. Samadhi is only trance, and if you go on practising that trance again and again, daily, many times a day, over a long period of time, then this constant diligent practice of Samadhi or practice of trance may ultimately take you into a state completely transcending the individual consciousness, transcending the body, mind and intellectual consciousness, going completely beyond, where you completely cross beyond this circle of the threefold recurring states of Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti—wakefulness, dream and deep sleep. So, you go beyond the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep and hit the substratum, that which is the basis for all these three states, upon which these three states keep on, just as upon a screen a movie reel unrolls and goes on. On the movie screen, some scenes come out in black and white, some are coloured, and yet others are technicoloured. A moonlight scene may be only blue, while some other scene may be in technicolour—each flower and each dress having its own colour. But upon what substratum do these changing pictures appear? Upon the substratum of the unchanging permanent screen which is behind. If the permanent screen were not there, neither the ordinary black and white scene could be projected, nor the coloured scene, nor the multicoloured or technicoloured scene. All three would be impossible. Because the screen is there, these things are made possible. Even so, because the pure consciousness or awareness is there, these three ever-changing states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep find it possible to manifest. So, the support and substratum of the ever-recurring and ever-changeable threefold state or Avastha-Traya is the Turiya Avastha, the fourth state, the permanent, existence-consciousness principle which is the Purusha. Existence-consciousness or Sat-Chit which is unchanging, which is permanent, supports all the three states. Existence-consciousness is super-consciousness.

So, Samadhi is trance. Samadhi is still one process or one Anga of Yogabhyasa, of Yogic practice. Samadhi is not the ultimate goal. Various types of Samadhi have to be practised until your Samadhi becomes longer and longer in duration, deeper and deeper in intensity, until you become well established in the practice of Samadhi. This is Raja Yoga. So, the meaning in which different terms are used should be clear to your mind. By continuous, diligent practice of Samadhi, it becomes longer in duration, deeper in intensity, and then you become well established in that state. Gradually you pass through different states of Samadhi and you ultimately reach a state of Samadhi where there is absolutely no movement of the mind at all. The mind comes to a total standstill and there is not even metaphysical movement. There is not even the consideration of the Absolute, that it is Sat, that it is Chit, that it is Ananda, that it is beyond time, space and causation, that it is beginningless and endless. Even these considerations are not present any longer. In that process of holding on to the awareness of the Supreme, there is only Absolute Awareness. That is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi and it is when the Yogi is able to practise Nirvikalpa Samadhi for a long time that he goes beyond even Samadhi and attains to the state of Turiyatita Avastha where he obtains Kaivalya, supreme liberation, supreme independence. This, therefore, is the process. The last three

Angas ultimately lead to the supreme state of superconsciousness. Dharana is concentration; Dhyana is meditation; and Samadhi is trance.

Now, Patanjali is quite matter-of-fact and specific when he gives us an idea of what these last three practices constitute. If you are able to sit, withdraw the mind and fix it upon a focal point within—it may be gross, subtle or anything—and if you are able to keep the mind fixed like that for a period of twelve Matras—a Matra is approximately a moment, a second—it is counted as one concentration. The Yogic time-calculation is usually stated in Matras and a Matra may be taken roughly as a second. If you can keep the mind steady without moving, without any contrary thoughts coming in, and without moving away from the object of concentration, for a period of twelve Matras, it is regarded as one Dharana or one concentration. Thus, Dharana is actually calculated upon the basis of a steady fixation of the mind or a steady focussing of the mind upon one point. And it should be your endeavour to keep the mind steady like that for twelve seconds at least. Then it is one Dharana. Go on practising this Dharana for days and weeks and months so that it becomes longer and longer. How long? By continuous practice, if you are able to keep the mind focussed upon one single point without moving here or there, for 144 seconds or a period of twelve Dharanas, then this continuous unbroken concentration of the mind for 144 seconds is termed a Dhyana. So, if you have concentrated for 144 seconds without break, you are already a Dhyani or a Dhyana Yogi. You have reached the stage of Dhyana. And in this way, if you are able to sit, concentrate and enter into Dhyana and keep on meditating, without disturbance, without distraction, keep on meditating, for a minimum of almost half an hour, but not quite, if you are able to sit for that duration absolutely absorbed in your meditation, then that is Samadhi. Actually, in Patanjali's system, 12 continuous, unbroken concentrations make one meditation, and 12 continuous, unbroken meditations make one Samadhi. Now, meditation means continuous concentration of the mind upon one idea to the exclusion of all other ideas. There should be only one idea. There should be only one thought. There should be only one Vritti—Ekakara Vritti. No second Vritti should be there. And if you are able to be in that state of one Vritti continuously for nearly half an hour, then it is Samadhi. It is one Samadhi. Now, you can understand whether Yoga is easy or not so easy. You can try to understand. This is Yoga. Samadhi is 27 minutes of absolutely unbroken, undisturbed concentration. That is to say, it constitutes a continuous process of 12 meditations, each meditation being of 144 seconds' duration. And when the Yogi has been able to attain to a state of successful practice of Samadhi, then he has no other Yoga, no other Abhyasa, except to go on practising Samadhi. That is why the Yogis seclude themselves. They keep alone, they do not court disturbance, they do not see anyone but go on practising Samadhi. They go on practising Samadhi so that the Samadhi becomes longer and longer. The Samadhi becomes more in number. One Samadhi, two Samadhis, three Samadhis—they go on practising until the Samadhi itself becomes deeper and deeper, and more and more intense, and the body is not felt. That is Yogabhyasa.

Such a state of concentration is possible only for a mind that has become very refined, a mind that has been rendered subtle, rendered fine. If there are gross sensual thoughts, then the mind is not refined; it is still gross. If there are thoughts of love and hate and anger and jealousy and envy and vengefulness, the mind is gross. If there is always concentration upon eating and drinking and enjoying and cinema and radio, then the mind is gross. If the mind always thinks of objects, always thinks about worldly things—gossip, scandal and newspaper—then the mind is gross; the mind is not subtle. Two things are necessary for successful concentration, and it goes without saying, for

meditation and Samadhi. The mind must be subtle and the mind must be pure. In Yogic terminology, when we say that the mind must be pure, we mean that the mind must be Sattvic. Sattva and purity are synonymous. The mind must not be Rajasic and Tamasic; it should be Sattvic. Only the Sattvic Bhava should come. Sattvic thoughts, Sattvic feelings, Sattvic ideas must be there in the mind. It should not have any Tamasic and Rajasic ideas and feelings. All should be Sattvic. And therefore, at this stage, it is wise for the Yogi to see that everything in his life is Sattvic. His company, his food, his environment, whatever he moves with, should be Sattvic. He should carefully avoid anything that is Rajasic and Tamasic. Because, it will affect the mind, and such a mind which is Rajasic or Tamasic, or is influenced by Rajas and Tamas, ceases to be a fit instrument for meditation. Purity, self-control, Sattvic food, Sattvic environment, Sattvic thoughts, Sattvic reading, Sattvic company—these are very important for the practice of inner Yoga, for the practice of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Coaxing the Mind into Concentration

Now we know that one inveterate tendency of the mind is objectification. So, very wisely, Patanjali Maharshi says that if you try straightaway to think of the formless, attributeless, abstract, Nirakara, Nirguna Brahman, you will get nowhere. In the Twelfth Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna, the Yogesvara, very clearly says, “For an embodied being, to think about the Unmanifest, to try to meditate upon the Unmanifest, and to try to worship and attain the Unmanifest, and to try to worship and attain the Unmanifest, is very grievous”. The Lord says that it is not possible, because you cannot think about the abstract. Why? Because of the tendency of the mind for objectification. Objectification is the mind’s inveterate tendency. You manage to overcome the mind’s tendency of externalisation with great difficulty through the practice of Pratyahara, but the mind’s tendency of objectification is now proving to be your great stumbling block, your great hurdle. What are you going to do? Patanjali very wisely says, “All right, give the mind some object. Give it some internal object”. So, he prescribes and advocates the commencement of meditation with a gross object as the focal point. For, in the beginning, too subtle an object will not be possible for the mind to grasp. So, give the mind a gross object to meditate upon. Let it meditate upon a flower, let it meditate upon a beautiful scene, let it meditate upon the moon, the cooling moon, let it meditate upon the feet of your Guru and the face of your Guru, let it meditate upon the symbol OM, let it meditate upon some gross thing, something which is very like the objects which you are always accustomed to place the mind upon. The only difference here is that your meditation is now upon an internal object. Patanjali Maharshi makes a further concession. He says that in the beginning you can try to practise concentration even upon some external object, keeping something outside, keeping your eyes open to concentrate upon the object. Discipline the mind to be completely steady. Focus it upon the object. Do not keep any other thought. Push away all other thoughts. Think only about the object you have placed before yourself. This is also a valuable exercise to start with. Side by side, you can try to practise meditation upon a gross inner object. So, Patanjali says that you cannot simply dismiss this very, very real factor, this tendency of the mind to objectify. So, give it objects. Let this tendency of the mind manifest. No harm. But only, try to take advantage of it. Let the mind grasp one object and stay put upon that one object; let it not move from that object. Thus, the very objectifying tendency of the mind is made use of, is utilised, in order to enter into a state of Dharana.

Lastly, we come to the mind's tendency for Nanatva or the many, the mind's characteristic of fickleness. The mind always changes. What to do about it? "All right" says Patanjali, "Does not matter. Let it change, but carefully discipline the mind. Carefully draw up a system by which even when it is changing, let all the different changeable ideas be only ideas connected or related to the central object of concentration. Keep on to it". For example, when you think of Lord Vishnu, you may also think of His Shankha, His Chakra, His Kirita, His Kundala, His Srivatsa mark and Kaustubha, His Mala, His Pitambara, His Gadha, His Padma, His lotus feet. In this, the mind is changing. True, Nanatva is there. But, in spite of Nanatva, there is also Ekatva, because all these different ideas pertain to the one central object of meditation, namely, Lord Vishnu. In the same way, when you think of the Atman, think of the various Upanishadic ideas connected with the Atman, namely, infinity, eternity, limitlessness, boundlessness, imperishability and so on. Similarly, suppose you want to meditate on the Ganga. Let the mind first of all think of the Himalayas, the Himalayan glaciers, the great snows, and the origin of the Ganga in Gomukh. Then think of Gangotri, then think of Ganges flowing, flowing, flowing down. Then she comes and flows near Devaprayag, where she joins the Alakananda, then comes down to Rishikesh, then on to Hardwar; she goes to Hari-ki-Paudi, Brahma-Kund, and goes on, flowing onwards to Varanasi and Calcutta, and ultimately, to Ganga Sagar where she merges in the Bay of Bengal. Think of the various cities on the bank of the Ganges. You may even think of Bhagirath whose efforts brought the Ganges to earth and then proceed to think of the Himalayas, Gomukh, Gangotri, Uttarkashi, Tehri, Devaprayag, Rishikesh, Hardwar, Varanasi and so on. This way, the mind is allowed to change its thought without losing its focus on the object of meditation. You may thus allow the mind to indulge in the habit of Nanatva, but it should be always centred on the object of meditation. In the same way, think of your Ishta, Sri Ramachandra or Lord Krishna, and think of the various Lilas, the various episodes connected with your Ishta, how He did Uddhara of this Bhakta, how He did Samhara of that Rakshasa, how He did such and such a miracle here, and such and such a miracle there. Like that, you go on thinking. Bhaktas think in this way. They go over the Adbhut Lilas of the Avatar Purusha and thus their mind is kept moving, but yet not moving. In this way, the mind is allowed to move among the many, but yet is kept upon the one only. Because, all the different ideas are centred upon one object only. All the different ideas inhere in one object of meditation only. The Nanatva of Manas is overcome in this way. You give the mind an object, until by this exercise the area of the mind's wandering is confined to one object.

First of all, the mind is made unitary; it is unified. It wanders in an area all of which is concerned with only one subject, and then gradually, the area is narrowed down, and maybe, ultimately it is unified in such a way that all the different ideas go away. Maybe you give the mind a support, maybe you start doing Japa, you start repeating the Name of your Ishta, and the mind inheres in the Nam, in the Mantra, and gradually becomes completely quiescent. So, in this way, both these other obstacles, objectification and multifariousness, are dealt with by making use of them in the beginning stages for the very purpose of concentration and meditation, until your concentration and meditation acquire such depth and intensity that the help of these factors becomes unnecessary and dispensable. Thus the mind gradually gets free through continuous discipline and manages to give up its inveterate tendency of objectification and multifariousness—Vishayakara and Nanatva. And when the mind reaches this stage, it becomes a perfect instrument and you practise Dharana with that mind, practise Dhyana, and also practise Samadhi and guard against falling into sleep by making it engaged in thought-process of a unified nature, in thought-process of a completely unitary nature. And because the thought-process goes

on, sleep is warded off. All the same, if sometimes a little bit of Tandra comes, hold your breath and do Kumbhak; sleep will be overcome. These are the diverse ways in which the problems of Manorajya, building castles in the air, and falling into a drowsy state, have to be counteracted by taking keen interest in the concentration that you are doing and taking the help of the innate tendencies of the mind. These tendencies of the mind are actually obstacles in concentration, but by utilising these very tendencies, you make the mind gradually go into a state of deeper concentration and ultimate meditation. Then the mind overcomes these tendencies. In this way, the mind becomes totally unified. The mind becomes freed from its threefold innate tendency of externalisation, objectification and multifariousness and acquires a state of complete interiorisation, inwardness, Antarmukhatva; and gradually the mind also overcomes all external objectifications of an undesirable type by practising internal objectification of a unitary type and a desirable type, voluntarily self-chosen by the Yogi so that it becomes the means of overcoming the mind's objectification in other directions, in other forms, that are inimical to Yoga, that are unfavourable to Yoga. Ultimately the mind is made to hold on to variegated ideas, all centred upon one subject. The tendency for multifariousness also is made use of in the beginning to attain to a state of concentration, and once having reached this stage of concentration and meditation, the Yogi has nothing more to do but to practise it again and again, again and again, day after day, with keen interest, paying great attention to it and keeping the practice unbroken over a very long period of time. These are the instructions of Patanjali Maharshi through his Sutras with regard to the inner, processes of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi—concentration, meditation and trance.

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MORE ABOUT ANTARANGA YOGA SADHANA

The word “Samadhi” is used to mean trance as a practice, as a technique, being one of the eight Angas of the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali. It is a Sadhana; it is something that is practised. But, quite often, the same word “Samadhi” is also used in the sense of the culmination of Yoga or the ultimate objective or goal of Yoga; then it denotes a state of superconsciousness, a state transcending all mind-activity. Therefore, it will not be wrong to say that in the Yoga Shastra the term as such is used to mean both a practice as well as a state of superconsciousness. As a practice or a technique, it is referred to by various names as Asmita Samadhi, Savitarka Samadhi, Savichara Samadhi and so on. In English sometimes, writers have been in the practice of alluding to these as the lower Samadhis. When the Arurukshu Yogi—a Yogi who has already climbed sufficiently well up on the ladder of Yoga and has reached a very high state—goes on practising Samadhi, diligently and with great exertion, without giving up, without tiring, with sustained zeal, with Vairagya and great regularity, with great tenacity of purpose, for months and years, then he ascends into higher and higher states of Samadhi. The Samadhi in such a high state is referred to as Nirbija Samadhi or Nirvikalpa Samadhi or Asamprajnata Samadhi. When the word “Samadhi” is used in this way to refer to the Nirbija Samadhi or Asamprajnata Samadhi, then it means the superconscious state. They even go so far as to say that it is a state of non-dual consciousness. That is a matter of opinion. When the term “Samadhi” is used to indicate the Savitarka Samadhi or the Savikalpa Samadhi or other lower Samadhis, then it means trance which is a technique and a practice. When one reaches the level of the Asamprajnata Samadhi or the Nirvikalpa or Nirbija Samadhi, sometimes the Yogi

goes on practising such a state until he becomes so much established in that state of consciousness that even when he comes back into the waking state, down from the deep inward state, where he is not aware of the body or the time or the surroundings, even when he comes back into the normal state, his awareness continues to be qualified by the same state of non-duality. In other words, he is so much established in that state of spiritual consciousness or awareness that even while he is moving and acting, he still remains in that state of inner awareness, and they call this the state of Sahaja Samadhi. Sahaja means natural. So, in Sahaja Samadhi, the state of non-dual consciousness becomes to the Yogi his natural state, and not a state which he tries hard to reach and then reaches only to come back to the waking state after a while. Rather, the state of non-dual consciousness becomes normal to him. The Yogi thus gets established in Sahaja Avastha. But, the Sahaja Avastha is a rare phenomenon and is itself the fruit of intense practice of the other stages and gradations of Samadhi. It is only after intense practice of Savitarka Samadhi, Savichara Samadhi and Asmita Samadhi and the continued practice of being in a state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi that the Nirvikalpa Samadhi becomes natural to the Yogi, that it becomes continued and unbroken in all the three states, namely, waking, dream and deep sleep. Thus, in the Sahaja Avastha, even in the waking state, even in the midst of activity, the Yogi rests in non-dual consciousness.

Dual Consciousness of the Yogi in Sahaja Avastha

Now, this supreme state of Asamprajnata Samadhi entitles the Yogi to be called a Yogarudha or one who has scaled the peaks of Yoga and becomes established in the highest pinnacle of Yoga. Such a Yogi is called a Yogarudha Siddha Purusha. He is also called a Jivanmukta. He is established in the consciousness of his Purushahood. Therefore he is no longer bound; he is no longer within the bondage of Prakriti or Maya or Avidya or delusion or ignorance. In that state, the body continues to be as it was before, and the Indriyas have their Cheshta as before. The eyes see and the ears hear and the hands touch; the nose smells and the tongue tastes. The Yogi is able to differentiate between salt and sugar; he is able to differentiate between hot and cold, between ice-cream and hot coffee. He knows: "This is a child, that is an old man; this is a woman, that is a man; this is a beast, that is a human being". He is able to see all that. The Cheshta of the Indriyas continues, and yet, the Yogi being in Sahaja Avastha, is not in the least deluded by the same. He has no Moha, no attachment, no desire. In that state of Sahaja Avastha, he is not bound by desire, attachment or delusion. His consciousness is not qualified by identification with the various limiting adjuncts or Upadhis such as the senses, the Pranas, the sense-organs, the body, the mind and the intellect. He is therefore established in the full consciousness of his supreme isolated Purushahood, apart from Prakriti, distinct from Prakriti, independent of Prakriti. As such, he is unaffected and unafflicted by the modes of Prakriti. In short, he has regained his pristine status and has established himself in his own Svarupa. That is the fruit of Svarupa Avastha. In the Yogi who is thus established in Svarupa Avastha, Yoga has fulfilled its purpose. In the midst of Maya, the Yogi is established in a consciousness freed from Maya. He looks upon the world, sees everything going on in it, but knows them to be vanishing shadows having no ultimate reality. He experiences his body and the various states of his mind and intellect, but knows himself as supremely apart from them. He is a mere witness of the changing conditions and states of the Upadhis and remains unaffected and unattached and apart from those Upadhis. And he knows that as long as the least Prarabdha Karma remains to be enjoyed by him, he will have to continue in the state of embodied condition. In this state of Sahaja Avastha, the Yogi enjoys dual consciousness. He has the consciousness of the external names and forms. He also has the consciousness of the Svarupa which

is beyond all names and forms. And this consciousness of his inner Svarupa prevents him from falling into the delusion of the outer phenomena. In the midst of the waters of Prakriti, he swims on the surface, not drowning, not going in, not being engulfed by the water, but remaining on the surface. On a summer day, when it is blazing hot, a person approaches a beautiful lake of cool crystal waters. He enters the lake in order to cool his body, stands in waist-deep water and plunges into the water two or three times. Having plunged into the water, the person raises his head above the water and stands in the lake, waist-deep in water. In this position, the sun above is shining and the hot rays of the sun are falling upon his body. So, he is able to feel the heat of the sun on his limbs, on his right hand, on his left hand, on his shoulders, head, face, chest and back. He experiences the heat of the sun. But at the same time, simultaneously, below his waist, he experiences the beautiful cool sensation of the waters of the lake. Now, we cannot say whether his experience is one of coolness or one of heat. He is experiencing simultaneously both the outer heat of the sun and the inner coolness of the water. He has a twofold experience coexisting at the same time. In like fashion, the Yogi who is established in Sahaja Samadhi moves about in the world in a state of dual consciousness—consciousness of the Svarupa within and awareness of the multifariousness of the phenomenal Prakriti without. And at the end of the allotted span of life of his physical body, when the Prarabdha Karma is spent up and there is no more experience to be undergone, the Yogi gives up his body. Such a Yogi does not return to an embodied condition once again. This is the highest fruit of Yoga. And this is called Kaivalya, a state of liberation from the need to take rebirth once again, from the need to become embodied once again. This ultimate fruit of Yoga comes as the result of a diligent practice of concentration, meditation and Samadhi.

The Yogic Technique of Samyama

So, again and again, one has to practise Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi; and when one attains proficiency in this practice of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, one is able to bring to bear one's entire mind in a powerful beam, as it were upon any chosen object, one is able to focus one's mind with great intensity upon any chosen object. When one has become an adept in Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi and one utilises the threefold technique to direct his mind toward any particular object, what happens? The deepest truths about that object become revealed to the Yogi's consciousness. The object, in all its secret detail, becomes fully cognised and known by the Yogi. That means you can unravel the secrets of nature, the secrets of time, the secrets of space, the secrets of unseen objects, the secret of the remote past, the secret of something hidden from your outer gaze or vision, of anything. No secret is hidden to you. Everything becomes unravelled. The application of this technique of the threefold practice of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi in order to get to the very root and secret of all things, this application, is called the practice of Samyama. You must make a careful distinction here. There is a Hindi word called "Samyam" which is also spelt more or less in the same way as the Samyama mentioned above. Samyam means restraint, control. It means self-control, sense-restraint. But, in the area of the inner Yoga, the Antaranga Yoga, when you use the term "Samyama", it means specifically the application of the combined force of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi upon any particular object about which you want to know everything with a hundred per cent fullness and clarity. That is called Samyama in Raja Yoga. You can make Samyama on a distant star and know everything about it. You can make Samyama on fire and know everything about fire. You can make Samyama on water and know everything about water. And they say that if you thus make Samyama on any object and know everything about it, then you become independent of it; that object cannot affect you. That object can no longer affect you. You

become impervious to it. They say that if the Yogi does Samyama on fire, he knows everything about fire, from its origin onwards. And fire cannot burn that Yogi. He attains total control over that element called fire. The same is the case with earth, air, water and ether. Samyama is a technique of combining Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi in order to get to the very depth and bottom of any subject matter which you wish to know fully about. And this leads to certain rare states of perfection and of conquest of nature. All this we find mentioned in the science of Yoga as expounded by Patanjali. But, as already mentioned, this power can be acquired only through a very diligent practice of concentration, meditation and trance, which means struggling against various obstacles including sleep.

Obstacles to Meditation—Sleep, Memory, Imagination

When you sit for concentration, sleep will come; because, the moment you try to stop all the activity of the mind, and the mind becomes inactive, it cannot remain awake for ever. Knowing this difficulty, Patanjali Maharshi has very wisely prescribed that you should have some object as your focal point of concentration in the beginning stages of your practice. Give something for the mind to concentrate upon. And gradually make the area of concentration smaller and smaller till the mind is left with only a single Vritti, to the exclusion of all other Vrittis. Then, ultimately, when you reach the stage of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, even this single Vritti will subside. It will sink away and disappear and consciousness alone will remain. Until then, that single Vritti becomes your greatest help, your greatest Avalambana, your greatest support—the greatest support for your mind. But for it, you will lapse into sleep. Therefore, that single Vritti becomes your invaluable help and support. So, you must know the value of Vritti in order to ultimately reach the state of Nivritti or the Vritti Shunya Avastha.

Another great obstacle in concentration, in addition to sleep, is memory. Because, memory is not under your control. When you want to remember something, you may not remember. And when you do not want to remember past things, all of them will come up! They will keep troubling you; they will keep disturbing you when you do not want them. And the most suitable and convenient time for them to come up is when the mind is not engaged. You sit in your meditation pose, disengage your mind from all outer preoccupations, and so the mind has nothing to do. In that state of empty mind, all these Vrittis and memories start coming and imagination starts working havoc. Sleep, memory, imagination—you must know how to make suitable devices to overcome these obstacles which come up when you try to meditate.

Hidden Desires and Unconscious Ambitions

Another subtle disturbance which arises from within when you try to sit alone in a jungle and meditate is the onslaught of hidden desires—desires which you never thought were there, and worse still, unconscious ambitions within the mind. “I must become a Siddha Maha Purusha like Satya Sai Baba. I must have all the miracle-making powers. Thousands of people must throng to me. I must be able to fly. One day I will go to Palam airport in Delhi. I will tell them: ‘I want to go in the plane without ticket.’ Naturally they will say, ‘No, you cannot; you must have a ticket’. Then, what will I do? I will come out and fly. And all will say, ‘Ah!’ . Then I will go to America and thrill the whole world and I will raise myself from the ground against gravitation. I will show all the miracles and my picture will be in all the papers. When I get Yoga Siddhi, I will go back to that man

who insulted me when I was in that Government Department. I will go back to that erstwhile boss who insulted me when I was a clerk. I will appear before him and humiliate him, show him where he belongs; I will give him a lesson”. Like that, your ambitions can take endless shape. Your ambition may have some relevance to the present context or it may have some connection with the past. “Yogi Jalandhar Nath was like that; Matsyendra Nath was like that. That other man did like that. So, I must also do miracles like Jnaneswar or Matsyendra Nath. I must also work wonders like the past Yogis.” So, in this way, ambition disturbs meditation. Again and again it comes. The only way to deal with such ambition is to spit upon it and say, “I disdain to look at you. You are filth, you are dirt, worse than excreta. You are not even human excreta. Human excreta, at least, is used in the fields for manure; it has some value. You are like the excreta of a pig, like the excreta of a crow, useless. I spit upon you. I have nothing to do with you”. In that way, you must take an extreme attitude of absolute contempt, absolute repugnance, absolute disdain. And sometimes you must say, “You are the greatest danger; you are more dangerous than poison”. Like that, reject all ambition outright and this is possible if you have got extreme Vairagya. What is that state of real Vairagya? Real Vairagya is a state that gives up everything in this universe from a blade of grass up to the highest state of the throne of Brahma—as excreta. Real Vairagya does not give value to anything. It considers everything from a blade of grass to the status of Brahma, the Creator, as totally useless. It regards everything as dust. Regarding everything, from the smallest to the greatest, from the lowest to the highest, as something to be dismissed with contempt—that, then, is Vairagya. If a Yogi has that fierce Vairagya, then the disturbance of ambition can be properly dealt with when it rears its head during meditation. Imagination can also be cut to pieces and thrown away in like fashion.

Other Minor Obstacles

Says Patanjali: “*Sa tu deerghakala-nairantarya sat-kaaraasevitodridhabhoomih*” Diligent, unremitting effort is required. The effort must be undertaken with great earnestness and there should be unbroken continuity of effort spread over a long period of time. If you go on practising Yoga with keen interest and enthusiasm, and your Abhyasa is always supported by Vairagya, then you become established in the state of meditation, in the state of trance. Thus, with unremitting effort, and at the same time with steady abidance in Vairagya, if one goes on practising Yoga, one will be able to overcome the obstacles of sleep, memory, imagination and ambition. Such is the inner struggle of the Yogi who tries to practise concentration, meditation and trance. Minor obstacles come many times. Sometimes the Yogi thinks, “Oh, who knows? Years and years, why, my whole life I may have to struggle, and yet I may not reach anywhere. All my effort may be wasted. If I had continued in my career, by this time I might have become an Office Superintendent or a Director or something. Maybe, I made a very foolish choice in taking to the spiritual path”. He gets dejected. He begins to doubt whether all that he is doing is something really worthwhile or something that is foolish. That doubt comes. Sometimes, dejection comes. Sometimes, an unwillingness to make further effort—that also comes. Sometimes, a little bit of serenity, a little bit of peace, a little bit of happiness, some nice experience, some horripilation in the body. The Yogi experiences these and he thinks, “Ah, yes. This is Ananda; this is Brahmananda. I have attained that ultimate state”. And this idea makes the person gradually relax his efforts, makes the person feel that he has already reached the goal. Since he feels that he has reached the goal, where is the need for him to go on struggling? The Yogi then wants to become a Guru. Now he thinks, “I am a Siddha”. The mind deludes the student of Yoga through such false ideas. The Yogi must beware. He must always beware.

And Gurudev Sivananda sometimes takes a very practical attitude towards these small things. He says that sometimes if you are dejected, depressed, you have no wish to sit, you have no spirit to sit for practice one day, you must be wise and use your common sense. Maybe, because the weather is cloudy, you have become dejected. Or, some previous Samskaras in the mind might have been aroused suddenly and might have caused dejection. Or you might have eaten too much at the Bhandara with resulting constipation or indigestion. If there is constipation or indigestion in the body, the mental mood also becomes affected. So, you must try to find out the cause of your depression before attempting to tackle it. If the cloudy weather is the cause of your depression, you may perhaps like to take a hot bath or a hot drink to cheer up the mind. If there is constipation, you may resort to some aid to relieve yourself of the load inside; then the mind will become clear. Once again your mood will be all right. So, try to use common sense. God has given you common sense. Be practical. Try to see what is the cause of the negative mood which is hampering your meditation and try to do the needful to counteract it and remove it. And thus, using common sense, using introspection, the power of self-analysis, finding out the cause of the various obstacles and praying to the Lord, praying to the Guru, keep on practising. Never leave the practice. Be at it always. Never come down from Vairagya. Let not the Vairagya be relaxed. Let it not be allowed to relax. It is of the utmost importance. Vairagya is of the utmost importance for success in Yoga Sadhana and Yogabhyasa. Abhyasa and Vairagya go together. You cannot separate them. One is supported by the other. It is a very important combination—Abhyasa and Vairagya.

From Meditation to Trance

Thus is the Antaranga Yoga. It starts with concentration. Again and again you try to concentrate; the mind moves away. You bring the mind back again and try to concentrate and again the mind moves away. Bring it back and again try to concentrate; and then, gradually, it progresses into a state of meditation or Dhyanaavastha. And you diligently practise this Dhyanaavastha so that you make it longer and longer. Prolong the period of meditation, and as you go on progressing in the period of meditation, you reach the Samadhi Avastha. And then, after that, you only have to go on practising Samadhi, go on practising Samadhi with Vairagya, Viveka and Vichara, unrelaxed, with great system and regularity. Always at the same time, you must come back to the seat of meditation. Every day you must set up a sort of inner rhythm, a psychical rhythm within, so that automatically when that time comes, your mind becomes Antarmukha, your entire mind becomes meditation-oriented. Because, our Svabhava, our constitutional system also, our nature also, is subject to discipline. So, setting a rhythm means that every day when your meditation time comes, morning or evening, automatically you are in a meditative mood. And you must take advantage of that mood. Always sit at the same place and time and make use of this meditative mood that comes due to the establishment of the rhythm in the inner psyche. Be very, very regular. If you do this, you can have rich benefits. And after having practised concentration and meditation, diligently and sincerely, with great earnestness and perseverance, one day you will get trance conditions. Then the great Masters say, “Do not miss this opportunity. When you come down from that trance condition, just take a notebook and observe and note down what all were the conditions that day, what food you ate, what time you sat for meditation, what was your mood, how you commenced the meditation, what Slokas you repeated, what Asana did you sit upon, and what thought-pattern you had just before sitting down for meditation. Think and note down all those factors that were present in that day’s meditation which ultimately took you on to a state of deep concentration and Samadhi. And try once again to create the same set of conditions that brought all this wonderful experience to

you, and try to go into Samadhi once again. Try it again and again. Try to bring about all those conditions that prevailed at that time when you suddenly got deep concentration and deep meditation. In this way, using common sense and using observation, try to recreate the same favourable conditions for going into a state of unbroken meditation and merging it into a state of trance”.

These are all the various hints given by the Masters to help the aspirant to progress in this area of Antaranga Yoga, a Yoga that comprises the three practices of concentration, meditation and trance, which ultimately take you to superconsciousness. And superconsciousness is the ultimate aim of Yoga.

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ALL YOGA IS ONE

The study of Yoga is the study of the higher Self within you. It is the study of that science which has something to tell you about your unchanging real identity. The human individual has an apparent outer identity which is seen by, and known to, the rest of the human beings, the rest of the world. It is what they see in a person, what they know about a person. That is the apparent identity of the human being. This apparent identity is limited in time; it has a beginning and an end. This apparent identity is not stable and unchanging; it keeps ever changing. And this apparent identity is subject to inevitable stages of being—birth, growth, old age, decay and death. This is inevitable, this pattern through which every born body has to pass through. This is what Buddha discovered when he first went out of his secluded, carefree, guarded and protected palace environs and it was an eye-opener to him. And this is what set him thinking. Buddha began to ponder: “What is man? What is life? Why do these things happen to men? It may happen to me also”. What happened to man seemed to be painful too, because Buddha saw an old man, a sick man, a dead person. All those sights were accompanied by sorrow, grief, distress. They were not joy-giving and happy. So Buddha came to the conclusion that there was a great deal of suffering and distress in individual human life. He set on a quest to find out an answer to human suffering, to find a way out of the predicament of man in Samsara.

So, the apparent outer personality of man, which is the only personality that the world knows, that the world sees, that the rest of the human beings see, is something limited, is something subject to change, subject to ultimate destruction. It has an end and men of wisdom discovered that the outer personality is only a mask that man has taken upon himself and not his true being. The real being is hidden inside. And what is this hidden identity about which those men of wisdom had a faint inkling, but did not know in full? They launched upon an inner quest to try to probe and find out what was this real identity of man. And it is their discoveries about the inner being that form the theme of the Upanishads that are the contents of the great Vedantic scriptures. The Upanishads deal with the reality of man, with the inner man, with the higher Self in man, with man’s true identity. They call it the Nija-Svarupa, one’s own real nature. And the Rishis found out that this true identity of man is completely free from all the defects and limitations that characterise his false identity. Man’s false identity is subject to change, subject to decay, subject to ultimate extinction. It is

limited. It is subject to various types of afflictions and so it is always in a state of turmoil and suffering. But man's true identity, according to the Rishis, is absolutely free from all these characteristics. The very entity in it is all-full, subject to no change, indestructible, imperishable, of the nature of peace and joy. It was after this discovery that those wise men declared that that inner Self must be known. Knowing the Self, therefore, is the greatest achievement and attainment. Knowledge of the Self is really the supreme goal and purpose of life. And to enable man to attain that supreme experience and once and for all liberate him from all the painful experiences of the embodied existence on earth, to enable him to obtain that state of infinite joy, eternal bliss, peace, perfection and liberation, the ancient seers formulated the different paths. That also they did not formulate out of their thought by sitting out and trying. They did not try to arrive at a conclusion by deep thinking. No. They themselves tried various methods to attain the Self. They went into a dedicated, whole-souled practice. Then they discovered the Self. God revealed Himself to them. Thus they were able to prove the Self. Thus their practices ultimately led to the tangible experience of the Self, the discovery of the Self. And they put down their experiences, formulating them in the form of a graded series of techniques. These constitute the various Yogas.

Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga

If the attempt to discover the Self is done through feeling, through spiritual emotions and divine sentiments, and the love of the heart is directed towards the Divine, then it takes the form of a distinct Yoga. If the attempt to realise the Self is done through pure reasoning, through an analytical exercise of the intellect, through investigation into that which is beyond name and form, that which is beyond appearance, that which is the imperishable in the midst of the perishable, that which is the infinite in the midst of the finite, that which is the eternal in the midst of the non-eternal, then it is another distinct Yoga. In this Yoga, through analysis and sifting, through rejecting certain things and through affirming certain other things, through vigorous and intense exercise of a very sharp intellect and rationality, through inner research, one ultimately begins to get a glimpse of the higher realities. So, this approach is through questioning, through enquiry, through analysis, through deep investigation. This is the Yoga of the intellect, whereas, Bhakti Yoga is through the heart, through feeling, through love, devotion, prayer, divine sentiments and longing for God. Then there is a third Yoga, the Yoga of mental discipline. The Rishis found out that mind had a power. If the mind is scattered, it is weak; but if it is gathered, it is strong. If intensely brought together, if intensely gathered together, the mind's rays can pierce through the appearance and go beyond to the very substratum or the root, the very ground of appearance. It is just as with the sun's rays. The sun's rays may be warm or even hot in summer; yet, they do not have the power to do extraordinary things, though they help crops to grow on land. But, if you hold a magnifying glass against the sun, and that convex lens gathers the very same sun's rays which are now falling outside, the rays emerge on the other side in the form of a unified ray. And that unified ray is brilliant; you cannot look at it. It is dazzling light and if any combustible object—be it paper, cotton or wood—is brought against that ray, the object starts smoking and burning. The sun's rays are the same. In a scattered form, their powers are normal; but in an intensely gathered form, their powers are supernormal.

Consider another example. A vast volume of water is collected when you suddenly stop the flow of a river by a dam. You build the dam across the course of the river and then the flow of the waters is halted and water becomes piled up inside the dam. And if this vast volume of water is made to emerge through a small opening, ah, it emerges with such terrible power that it is able to

make metal turbines weighing tons spin like tops. What a miracle! Turbines which cannot be moved even by twenty or fifty men whirl at a terrific speed merely through the sheer force of concentrated water. When all the water is concentrated in a small opening and made to gush through, it has terrific impact and power which make the giant generators whirl like toys and generate electricity. So, coming together of any force increases the power of that force tenfold, hundredfold, thousandfold. That is the principle. It is this principle that is invoked by the science of Raja Yoga formulated by Patanjali.

The Power of Concentration—Its Application in Matters Mundane and Spiritual

The essence of Raja Yoga is Dharana or the focussing or bringing together of the entire force of the mind so that it becomes very powerful. That is the key technique of Yoga. The main thing is concentration, bringing the mind together. That is the key technique. That is the very heart of the science of Yoga. And, the uniqueness, the distinguishing special feature, of Raja Yoga is the object to which this concentrated mind is applied, the purpose for which this concentrated mind is utilised. It is utilised to meditate upon your real identity and realise your real identity. It is utilised to enter into a state of unbroken, deep, intense meditation upon your real identity so that you realise your real identity and become liberated. Whereas, the same type of concentration is generated and applied in other fields of activity for other purposes. It is applied by the scientists in doing their research work, by the surgeons in doing very delicate operations, by the Swiss watchmaker in making and assembling very minute and intricate parts of watches. Concentration is there in all these instances. Even a musician concentrates upon his music. But, the Raja Yogic concentration is concentration *par excellence*. It is concentration taken to its ultimate logical conclusion, so that the mind becomes nothing but one concentrated power. The mind loses all its normal characteristics and becomes one powerful, concentrated ray. And that is directed towards the transcendental Reality, towards that which is beyond phenomena. That is the uniqueness of Yoga, whereas, in all other fields of human endeavour, concentration is there, but only a part of it. And that too is applied only in the phenomenal field of the outer world.

These applications of concentration in the outer field of phenomenal existence produce extraordinary results, no doubt, but of short duration only or of short relevance to man. This is because man, the discoverer of these applications, is himself only a passing traveller. He has no ultimate connection with anything or anybody here on earth. He has no permanent relevance or individuality. So, his discovery too has no permanent significance or relevance to any human individual. Thus, Nitya-Prayojana is conspicuous by its absence in such applications of concentration in any outer field. And then, man himself is a field for constant conflicts, constant tug of war, constant tension between opposing forces of good and evil, of light and darkness, of that which is sublime and that which is degraded or ignoble. Every moment man is waging an inner battle. So, what happens? More often than not, the power gained by man through intense concentration—the power of the intellect, the power of the disciplined mind—gets misdirected and misapplied. The attainments and achievements that evolve out of this misapplication do not come as blessings to mankind, do not come as results that are conducive to human happiness, human welfare and human progress, but come as curses destroying in one moment what man has painfully built up over centuries in terms of human welfare and human good. Some of the scientists and politicians who have thus developed their power of concentration are giant intellects, no doubt. But

then, their intense concentration, their attention, their rationality and their reasoning powers are unfortunately accompanied by egoism, greed, selfishness, hatred, avarice, carnal passion, ambition and a desire to dominate. What happens? Because their nature is qualified by such negative traits and tendencies, the entire motivation for their investigations and research becomes vitiated and the result is human sorrow.

The Danger of Psychic Powers

Power is a very dangerous thing. In the course of Yogic disciplines, the Yogic practitioner may also get various types of powers, lesser and greater. And if he gets them, he becomes elated; he becomes very happy, he becomes fascinated, he becomes curious, he is very very thrilled. Yoga teachers very seriously warn their students to beware, beware, beware. They tell their students: “These powers are terrible dangers on the path. They are obstacles to your progress. Not only are they obstacles, but they are real enemies to your success in this field. They will destroy all prospects of your attaining anything. They will bring about your hopeless downfall. Therefore, beware of them. Shun them ruthlessly, shun them, kick them aside, do not have anything to do with them. Do not pay attention to them”. In this way the great Masters and teachers have never hesitated to seriously warn the students of Yoga to beware in the course of their Yogic process and progress about the powers that may come. Because, they are supranormal powers, and when power comes to the hands of man, you know how it corrupts, how it vitiates, how it makes man a beast. It can be seen all around, every day. Even with a little power in his hands, a person will oppress those who are subordinate to him, over whom he has got a sort of hold. That happens everywhere, in gross and subtle ways. So, a clear warning is given by Yogic teachers in this connection.

So, this is the uniqueness of Yoga. Unlike in other fields of human activity, the concentration of mind, which is powerful and effective anywhere, is applied in Yoga, not for phenomenal purposes, but for the attainment of the Eternal Reality, for Self-discovery, for going beyond all limitations and imperfections in order to attain a state of absolute freedom and liberation and total divine perfection. Therein lies the uniqueness of Yoga. Yoga is an approach through mental discipline. Its key place is concentration. And what follows afterwards is the sublime right application of the power of this concentrated mind. And what precedes concentration, what goes before it, is all a preparation for enabling you to get to a state of concentration. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara—all are preparatory processes, preparatory techniques very wisely arranged in order that in case psychic powers come to the Yogi, they may not bring about his downfall. In order that the Yogi may not succumb to the temptation of the supranormal powers, in order that he may not fall a prey to them, our wise Maharshis first of all laid the foundations of absolute selflessness, absolute purity of conduct and character, humility, Tyaga, desirelessness, total renunciation, and aspiration to know one and one thing only. In this way they anticipated the danger ahead, the danger of the Yogi being tempted by psychic powers, and provided for it at the very beginning of Yoga, at the very threshold of Yoga, at the very point of entry into the portals of Yoga.

The Importance of a Complementary Relationship Between the Outer Life and the Inner Life

It is in the above context that you must understand the invaluable importance of Yama and Niyama and take them with you right up to the very end. Now, very few, if any, will be able to practise Yoga twenty-four hours a day, all the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. Few are in a position to cut off all connections with the entire world—with family, friends, surroundings, property and so on—and go away into a deep dense interior forest, where no other human being is there. Very few can afford such absolute isolation to lead a hermetical life. By and large, nine hundred and ninety nine out of a thousand have to blend this Yoga somehow or the other with their normal life. Somehow or the other they have to make a sort of blend of both their outer life and their inner life, their secular life and their spiritual life. There is no other alternative open to them. For them, it has to be in this way only. That being the case, when you have to be in Yoga, and at the same time, carry on your allotted occupations and fulfil your obligations to home and society, there arises an indispensable necessity to carefully ensure that nothing in the outer aspect of your life, in the worldly dimension of your life, either in your domestic set-up or in your professional set-up or in your social activities, assumes a quality or a form that is anti-Yoga, that is unspiritual, that contradicts Divinity and that goes against your entire orientation Godward. Because, if that comes about, then there will be an altogether undesirable tension between two aspects of your life. It is readily admitted that it is not possible to reject or completely waive the outer aspect of your life—individual, collective, domestic as well as professional and social. At the same time, wisdom dictates that as far as possible you must make all sincere attempts, all earnest attempts, to see that the outer does not contradict the inner, that your earthly life in all its different parts and aspects does not become an obstacle, does not become a serious hindrance to your progress upon your inner path, to your ascent towards Reality, towards light, towards liberation. So, very wisely you have to find out ways and means of how your life of activity, your life of association with other individuals, could be so wisely organised, could be so carefully made, that it does not become a hindrance and an obstacle to your spiritual progress, that it does not range itself in direct opposition to your inner life. Not only that, if you are wise and if it is possible, it is in your interest to see whether you can order your life in such a way that it supplements your inner spiritual life and offers further help in your striving. It is the necessity and importance of this complementary relationship between the outer life and the inner life in your spiritual journey that gave rise to the important science of spiritualising one's entire life, of trying to make even your normal activities into processes of bringing you nearer to God and not taking you further away from God. This means transforming your normal activities into Yogic activities, because anything that brings you nearer to God is directly or indirectly a part of the Yoga process. Yoga is nothing but moving towards God. Yoga is trying to approach God; Yoga is trying to bring about a connection, a relationship, a link with the Infinite, with the Divine, with the Cosmic Spirit. So, if you so wisely try to organise your life in such a way that it also becomes a process helpful to Yoga, then your life itself becomes a part of Yoga. All your activities are converted into Yogic activities. All your work is transformed into spiritual work. Your whole life becomes spiritualised by this wise way of living and acting and engaging in work. Your work itself becomes a spiritual process; your activity becomes something that takes you nearer to God and ceases to be something that opposes and contradicts your Sadhana or your Yogabhyasa. This technique, this wise process, has assumed the distinct nature of a separate Yoga; it is called the Yoga of spiritualised activity or Karma Yoga, for short.

And this Karma Yoga occupies a unique place in the seeker's life, because it is something that is necessary as a basis for the seeker, no matter what Yoga he is employing as his specific technique of approach to God. This is because the area of outer life is the same in the case of all seekers, no matter what technique they may be adopting—Bhakti Yoga or Vedanta or Raja Yoga—as their individual method of approach to God. All seekers have to deal with the outer life; somehow or the other they have to come to terms with it and wisely make it a complementary process in their Sadhana. Because of this necessity, the importance of Karma Yoga extends to all seekers and is not confined to pure Karma Yogins only. So, Karma Yoga has its importance also for the Vedantin, the Bhakta and the Raja Yogi. Karma Yoga has a distinct place in the life of seekers of all categories. Because, as long as they have to engage themselves in one field of activity or the other, as long as they have to live and move in the outer world, they must know how to make that activity their friend and not their enemy, how to make that activity their asset and not their problem.

Adherence to Virtue—The Common Basis of Every Type of Yoga

The Bhagavad Gita throws a lot of light upon this important dimension of your life. All the different Yogas, though apparently different in their structure, in their composition, in their outer form, are fundamentally one in the ultimate analysis. How? Because, all these Yogas ultimately raise the Jiva or the individual being who has fallen into a very gross state into the net of desires, selfishness, bondage and ignorance. Basically, all the Yogas have this common motive or intention to take the individual out of his present predicament and gradually help him to ascend higher into a different state of experience and consciousness. They all have this identical objective or motivation or aim. Therefore, in order to achieve this, you have to first shake off the present state of consciousness in order to free yourself, somehow or the other, from the prison-house of your present state of being, where you are completely enslaved by your ego, by selfishness, greed, anger, passion, envy, jealousy, hatred, pettiness and meanness. The normal human individual has so many defects in him that all Yogas lay down the taking up of firm vows to adhere to certain principles of higher life. That takes the life immediately from a lower plane to a higher plane. That helps the person to get established in a higher level of living. It is righteous living, noble living, virtuous living, not unrighteous living, not hating and yelling, not violence and dishonesty, not impurity and evil. So, irrespective of whether you are a student of Vedanta or Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga, first of all you have to rise up from your present state. No matter what Yoga you may be practising or you may want to practise, the common basis is Dharma or righteousness of life; the common basis is the adoption of certain noble, ethical principles to live by; the common basis is adherence to virtue. So, character building, Sadachara, right conduct, good conduct, becoming established in a noble pattern of moral and ethical life, righteousness in life—this has to be the firm basis, whether you are a Vedantin or a Bhakta or a Raja Yogi or a Hatha Yogi or a Japa Yogi or a Sankirtan Yogi, whether you are practising Zen or whether you are practising Christian Yoga or Sufi Yoga, no matter what particular background you come from, whether you are Jew, Christian, Muslim or Parsi. Higher life demands that you lay the firm foundation of a blameless, ethical and moral life bidding goodbye once and for all to the ugliness of the ego and its manifestations of selfishness, crookedness, cunningness, falsehood, dishonesty, deceit and all other types of lower impurities. You can have no truck with these undivine factors any longer if you really mean business, if you are really earnest and sincere. That is the plain truth. So, in this matter of an ethical foundation, all Yogas are one, fundamentally one.

Fundamental Unity of the Different Yoga Systems

And then, when you take up serious effort in Yoga Sadhana, no matter what Yoga you may adopt, you must have dedication and intensity. Even if you do a little Sadhana, it should be unbroken, it should be continuous, it should never be given up, it should be daily, daily, daily. It should be daily, daily, daily; it should be unfailingly regular. Regularity is the key to success—unfailing regularity, unbroken continuity. Daily practice is absolutely indispensable. If you are able to do Sadhana for six hours daily, wonderful. If you are able to do it for one hour only, wonderful. If you are able to do it for half an hour only, still wonderful. If you are able to do it for fifteen minutes only, even then, wonderful. But, do not give it up. Even if you are able to do Sadhana for five minutes only daily, it should be as regular as your eating, drinking and sleeping, as regular as your breathing. And if you are really earnest, if you are really sincere, your effort would be where your heart is, where your love and longing is. There the mind must go. That is the truth. And so, if you have real love for the ultimate goal, for the ultimate attainment, you must engage in unbroken continuous effort. Your Sadhana must be a regular, unfailing, daily affair. And while you are engaged in this manner, you should never allow yourself to slide back, you should never allow yourself to slip into the old sensual ruts and grooves, because then all that you might have achieved will become lost. You must hedge yourself against this possibility and you must see that you never go back. Once you have turned in the spiritual direction, once you have put your hand to the plough, there is no turning back. Be very strict with yourself, be very firm with yourself. Never allow the senses to run riot once again. Never allow the mind to once again fall a prey to desire and craving. That which has been spat out should not be picked up from the earth and put into the mouth once again. No decent person with any sense of respectability will do it. Spat out means spat out. That is the attitude the Sadhaka must take, the Yogi must take. That is called Vairagya. The continuous practice of Vairagya and the keeping up of an unbroken continuity in your Sadhana—what is known as Abhyasa—must be there side by side until you come face to face with your Beloved God or attain Vedantic illumination or Asamprajnata Raja Yoga Samadhi. Until then, Abhyasa and Vairagya should go hand in hand relentlessly.

In this respect, all Yoga is one. The foundation for all types of Yoga is identical. There is no difference in the basis. The outer form of each Yoga may be different, but the inner anatomy of the progress of the Yogi is the same. It is a fiery determination to keep the effort unbroken and continuous, unfailing and regular and determined. It is a fiery determination never to slip back, never to allow the mind and the senses to fall into old grooves. It is becoming firmly and continuously established in Vairagya. This is the inner form of Yoga Sadhana.

Ultimately, the fruit of Yoga is also identical, whether you come face to face with your beloved Lord through Bhakti or whether you attain Vedantic Aparoksha Anubhuti or Cosmic Consciousness where you feel that everything is the Lord, where you feel, “*Vasudeva Sarvam Iti*”, “*Siya Ram Maya Saba Jaga Jani*”, “*Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat*”. The fruit of Yoga is the same to a Raja Yogi who practises meditation and attain Nirvikalpa Samadhi as to a Karma Yogin who practises Nishkama Karma Yoga with Isvara Drishti or Narayana Bhava in all Nama-Rupa, who sees the manifestation of the Lord in all creatures and serves them and attains cosmic vision, Darshan of Narayan, Darshan of Atma. Once you attain the supreme experience be it through Karma yoga or Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga—there is cessation of all sorrow, pain and suffering. That is the attainment of supreme bliss and blessedness—bliss, bliss, bliss, indescribable infinite

bliss, limitless bliss—Paramananda, divine bliss, divine joy. In that state there is no desire, there is no wish, one wants nothing, one has no desire left, all desires are fulfilled and finished. In that condition one is in a state of absolute bliss, one is in a state of total eternal satisfaction. Whatever he has wanted he has got, and therefore, whatever he had to do to get it is all done. There is no more doing, no more striving, no more need for any effort or activity. This outcome is identical, no matter which way you have got on to the roof, whether you took the inside staircase or whether you took the outside staircase, or whether you put the ladder and climbed the ladder, or whether you asked someone to put a rope down and you went up the rope, or whether you asked someone to take you on a helicopter and drop you there. No matter in what way you landed on the roof, you are on the roof all the same. You are in a condition identical with those others who too have reached the roof-top by one means or the other. The attainment is identical. Even so, all the different Yogas ultimately take the seeker to the same supreme summit of blessedness and bliss where there is Sarva Duhkha Nivritti, cessation of all sorrow, where there is Paramananda Prapti, attainment of supreme bliss, where there is Nitya Tripti, eternal satisfaction, where there is that state of fullness, Paripurnata, where man says, “I want nothing” and becomes Apta-Kama, where he becomes Krita-Kritya or one who has done all that there is to be done. That supreme attainment is the fruit of Yoga, call it Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga, call it Karma Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Kirtan Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hatha Yoga or whatever.

So, though there is apparent difference of form in the outer structure of the various Yogas differently named, the basis and the attainment are both identical in all cases. Two factors are indispensable and necessary as the very basis to carry you from start to finish, from A to Z, and they are Abhyasa and Vairagya—Akhandā Abhyasa and perfect Vairagya. Without these two, no Yoga can proceed. And the ultimate fruit of attainment is also identical. All forms of Yoga, no matter how completely different they may look on the surface, how clashing and contrary to one another they may seem to be in outer detail, are the same in the ultimate achievement, in the ultimate reckoning. If you take a deeper and inner glimpse, you find that all this clash and conflict is only between the Ganas of Siva and the Vanaras of Rama. The Ganas of Siva and the Vanaras of Rama may clash, but Rama and Siva have no difference. Rama worships Siva and takes His Name and Siva worships Rama and takes His Name. They have no difference. They have got identical Bhava. In the same way, the outer structure and details of the Yogic ascent may be different; the details of practice may be different—they have to be—and they may even look contradictory. And the followers of the different Yogas may even quarrel with one another and say that each one is wrong. But it is all futile and vain. It is all a puerile attitude and approach to Yoga, a limited vision lacking in depth. Those who have inner vision see all Yoga as fundamentally one, as identical from start to finish, based upon Sadachara and self-control and purity of conduct and character and righteous living, and progressing through unremitting, unbroken effort and perfect dispassion, and ultimately culminating in the cessation of all sorrow, in the attainment of supreme bliss—absolute fullness and eternal satisfaction. In that supreme state, in that great experience, all Yoga becomes unified and you find that all the erstwhile differences merge and disappear and you begin to wonder why it was like that in the beginning.

THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF BRAHMACHARYA

The Four Great Purusharthas

Four great values have been given by our ancients as the objectives to attain which every human individual must strive. These four great values are called the Purushartha Chatushtaya. 'Purushartha' means right exertion or effort. So they have given the same word for the object of effort also. Now, what are these four great values? They gave the foremost importance, they gave the primary place, to the value called ethics or morality. It is called Dharma. Whatever you engage in doing should be that which ought to be done, should be that which is proper to be done, should be that which is right, which is pure, which is moral and ethical. You should not do anything that contradicts the law of ethics and morality. Why? Because, in morality only lies your highest good. In that only lies your highest welfare. If your thoughts, words and actions are moral and righteous, there will be happiness. They will secure for you your welfare and good. Otherwise, you will reap the harvest of bitterness because of a law that pervades this universe, a law that is called the Law of Cause and Effect. This law states: "As a man thinketh so he becometh". This law is also stated in another way, namely: "As you sow, so shall you reap". This Law of Cause and Effect is also called the Law of Karma or Karmaphala. Therefore, if you engage in righteous action, the result of it is auspiciousness and blessedness; the result of it is your own highest good and your own welfare, your own happiness. If you ignore or neglect this law, discard this law, and your actions are not proper, not right, what happens? You invite upon yourself a reaction that is bitter, a reaction that is not conducive to your own good, to your own welfare, because you have to steadily progress towards divine perfection and here you put and create obstacles. You slow down your progress towards that great goal. You create your own miseries. Therefore, having in mind the highest welfare and good of the human individual, our ancients put ethics as the foremost value, because more than anything else, they wanted to secure the greatest benefit and good of the individual soul or Jivatma. And they said: "This is the way".

So, adhere to the moral and ethical values in life. Never deviate from the ethical standard. Then you will be happy. You may have troubles. People may trouble you and you may have some difficulties; yet you will have happiness. Inside you will have happiness and peace. I say, "Inside", because physical troubles and mental difficulties and torments there will always be. Those you have to suffer according to your Prarabdha. But, if at the present you engage in righteous activity, it will give you immense strength. Take the example of the Pandavas. What all difficulties, trials, tribulations and sufferings they did not undergo! Yet they had that inner satisfaction and contentment that they had not deviated from what was right and therefore it gave them inner strength. They never broke down. They never collapsed. Nothing was able to shake them. They were always firm in their abidance in virtue. Therefore the five Pandavas who abided in and adhered to virtue were able to overcome the hundred Kauravas who lacked the inner strength, because in the latter there was not the strength of virtue, there was not the strength of Dharma. So, Dharma upholds those who uphold Dharma. And those who do not uphold Dharma, they fall. Therefore, the first and foremost value in the Purushartha Chatushtaya is the ethical value or the moral standard in all our activities. This is called Dharma.

Now we come to the second value. You have got the body, you have got hunger and thirst, you feel heat and cold. So you want food, you want shelter, you want clothing. And you want other necessities of life. So, for all this, you want money; and therefore, you must have a job or ply a trade or profession. This aspect of life the ancients did not ignore. They said, “Yes, this is also an inevitable value arising out of the fact that you are living in this world”. They called this value Artha. Artha is money, the economic value. Money is inevitable; it is necessary. For that also you must strive. But you must strive for it on the basis of Dharma, on the basis of righteousness. Your efforts to earn your livelihood should not be immoral, unethical or unrighteous. Dharma should be the basis even of your professional activities or business activities. Anything you do to make a living should be based upon Dharma. Dharma should be the basis.

And then, the third value. Any animal—be it a dog, donkey, cow or buffalo is satisfied if it has food and a place to rest. But man is not like that; he has got many longings, many desires, many ambitions. Man is a vital being with a vital psychological personality within. He has got many longings, many desires, many ambitions and plans and schemes. So, this vital value also was given a place among the Purusharthas; a place was provided also for this vital value arising out of the desire nature of man. The other animals have no desire. They have only the instinct to go by. They want only food and drink and shelter and rest, and therefore, they are content if these are provided to them. But man is not content. He has the desire nature in him. They call it Kama.

The Twofold Importance of Dharma

Kama means desire of any kind. But, here also, any desire that goes contrary to morality and ethics should be shunned. It should not be kept, it should not be given any place in your life, because it will stop your evolutionary process, your progress upwards towards God-consciousness. Such desires only are to be harboured in your mind, such desires only are to be fulfilled, as are in accordance with the law of righteousness, with the law of Dharma. So, Dharma is the overall and continuous foundation and basis for all human striving. Even in your professional activities, in your various social and other activities, Dharma must always accompany you. Dharma must always infill your thoughts, words and actions. Thus, the economic value and the vital value pertaining to your Prapancha or your outer worldly life also should be animated by Dharma, pervaded by Dharma. Then it will lead you to Sukha. If Dharma is abandoned, then it will lead you to Duhkha. This is the simple truth.

And another important reason why all these activities and strivings upon the outer plane should be continuously characterised and qualified by Dharma is that only then your life will move in the direction of the highest and supreme value. What is that highest and supreme value? It is the spiritual value which is God-realisation, Atma-Jnana, liberation, divine perfection, highest spiritual consciousness and illumination. That is the supreme value. For that only we have taken birth. That only makes life worth living. No matter how desperate life may be, if you have this one goal that you must attain Divine Consciousness, you will get the strength to overcome and bear all the vicissitudes of life. “I am divine. Temporarily I have forgotten it. And until and unless I attain Divine Consciousness, my life will not be full and I will not remain content.”—If that one goal is there with you, no matter what happens to you, all that will look secondary and less important. Whereas, your supreme goal will look the most important of all things; it will dominate your life and it will be enough to take you above all the vicissitudes of life. It will give you strength and

definite direction in life, a specific aim in life. And from then on, your life will move in a self-chosen direction. That life cannot be assailed by misfortune. It will not be shaken. Having acquired great strength and power, it will ride triumphant over all the ups and downs of life and move towards the self-chosen goal in a very determined manner. So, the highest spiritual goal it is that makes your life worth living, that gives deep meaning to life. Otherwise, what is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of just eating, drinking, sleeping and one day dying? Doing little petty silly things and one day dying? Death puts an end to all. But what is that which makes life meaningful? Through this life of birth, change, growth, old age, disease, decay and death, you are to attain immortality and deathlessness by making use of this life. You are to attain Divine Consciousness. You must resolve: "I shall become deathless. I shall realise my deathless nature. I shall realise that I am Immortal Soul, Spirit Divine". And you must exert to the utmost to attain that goal. That supreme value is the most important value which gives life real depth, true meaning and a purposefulness. It makes life significant, important, sacred, purposeful. Therefore it is the most important value in life. If that value is there, you get the strength to overcome all difficulties, all the stresses and strains of life, and it is in relation to that supreme value that Dharma acquires an even greater importance, an even deeper significance.

Dharma is important for two reasons. Firstly, if it is there in your secular life of Artha and Kama, in your secular life of the economic and the vital values, it leads to happiness. If it is not there, then it leads to sorrow and misery. Therefore you must have Dharma. This is the lesser significance and use of Dharma. The higher purpose and significance of Dharma is that if it infills your life, then it leads your life to Moksha or the attainment of the highest spiritual value in life. It liberates you once and for all from the wheel of life and death. Then there is no more want, no more sorrow, no more weeping, no more wailing, no more difficulties and problems. You transcend all the Tapatrayas. You become established in a state of absolute peace, absolute contentment, absolute joy. You attain supreme satisfaction, become fearless and free. That supreme experience which is the highest Purushartha or Parama Purushartha, that attainment of Moksha and Divine Consciousness, is made possible only if your entire life is infilled by Dharma. So, Dharma has a direct connection with Moksha. Therefore they put it as the basis of your entire life. And in the framework of this Dharmic life, upon the foundation of Dharmic life, spiritual Sadhana becomes rapidly fruitful. Whatever Japa you do, whatever prayer you say, whatever spiritual study you do, whatever meditation you do, all become like striking a dry match stick on a dry match box...immediately there is fire. Where there is Dharma animating and pervading your entire life, there spiritual Sadhana becomes dynamic, rapidly fruitful and progressive. This is the great ideal of Bharatavarsha. It is inevitable to strive for the economic value and the vital value, because of your earthly nature. But it is only the spiritual value which makes life successful, which liberates you for ever from all the sorrow and bondage. And it is the ethical value which is the most important of all, because both for Prapancha as well as Paramartha, both for the life here and the life hereafter; it is that which guarantees that your life will lead to happiness and blessedness and not to sorrow and wretchedness.

Conservation of Energy in the Context of a Spiritual Life

And in the context of the Purushartha Chatushtaya or the fourfold value to be attained, we require strength. We require energy. Any effort, any exertion, requires strength and energy. And energy can be gathered together only if it is conserved, only if it is preserved. But, if it is frittered

away, you are always in debt. Just as, if you want to build a house or start a business, slowly you put by money and go on saving, saving, saving and then put it in a fixed deposit in some bank, and then, after five years or ten years, you would have enough to start a business or build a house. But, if every month you spend more than you get, if every month your expenditure is more than your income, how can you ever dream of having a house or starting a business? Always you will be in debt. You will be very owing. Your plight will be miserable. Similarly, energy is to be conserved. Conservation of one's energy in order to put it to higher use is the central principle of Brahmacharya. What they call Brahmacharya is a wise direction of our ancients to make the individual's efforts successful. Towards this end, they said: "You must conserve your energy". Because, if energy is sufficiently conserved, you can put it to any use that you want, you can attain anything that you wish to attain. But if you are bankrupt in energy, all attainment becomes difficulty. It becomes a long-drawn struggle. So, preservation of energy is the essence of Brahmacharya. Energy is frittered away in a dozen different directions. Too much talking, too much worry, too much wanting, getting fits of temper, anger, fighting and quarrelling, the arguing habit, overeating—all these things drain away energy. All excesses, all immoderate habits, all wastage of nervous and emotional energy through negative thoughts of hatred, envy and jealousy and all health-killing habits like smoking and drinking—they also drain away energy. Thus, Samyama or sense-control becomes an inevitable part of Brahmacharya.

The functioning of any sense wastes away nervous energy. That should be controlled, that should be wisely checked. And one of the most refined of energies, most concentrated of energies, is the sex energy. The sex energy is what we may call the quintessence of energies. It is the energy-potential in its 24 carat form. It is the quintessence of all that we eat and assimilate and preserve in the system, in the same way as honey is the very quintessence of flowers, and butter is the very quintessence of milk. Thousands of bees go and bring nectar from millions of flowers and work upon it in a huge beehive, and out of that by some miracle of biochemistry, comes honey. Out of litres of milk or gallons of milk comes butter. In the same way, the sex energy is the most rarified and perfectly pure form of human physical energy. If that sex energy is wisely conserved, it becomes available to you for being converted into any other form of energy. For example, if you want to study hard and become a brilliant scholar with a wonderful memory, sex energy comes to your aid. If you want to become a brilliant surgeon, sex energy comes to your aid. If you want to become a great master musician, the preserved sex energy comes to your aid. This is because, sex energy, when preserved, gradually becomes transformed into subtler energy. Of course, there are Yogic processes—Asanas, Pranayama, Surya-Namaskar, high emotions, noble emotions, spiritual sentiments and such other things which help this work of transformation. So, the work of transformation goes on, goes on, goes on, and the rarified energy becomes available for higher intellectual pursuits, research and invention, meditation and so on. And, therefore, the wise conservation of this vital energy has always been given an important place in all religions in the context of a spiritual life.

Sex Energy—A Manifestation of Para Shakti

What is this sex energy? This energy, this sex energy, is a manifestation of God. It is Brahman in dynamic expression. It is Shakti, Para Shakti. We all know that this phenomenal universe is the activity of the cosmic power which is illimitable, indescribable and infinite. We call this cosmic power Para Shakti, Maha Shakti, Maha Maya or Prakriti. Countless billions of

universes come and go through the activity of this great cosmic energy. It is this cosmic energy, this Para Shakti, that manifests as the incredible energy of the sun, the energy of the planets, and the incredible speed at which they whirl in their own orbits. It is this cosmic energy which manifests as the power of gravity, as the power of the sun's radiance, as the power of all these great planets and heavenly bodies, as the power of the wind and other elements. If sometimes the wind is furious, it will even blow up houses. It is the cosmic energy which manifests as the power of fire, as the power of the volcano, as the power of floods, as the power of earthquakes, as the power of the Bhumi to bear mountains, rivers and seas. So, earth, air, water, ether—all are nothing but the manifestations of this great power. It is the same power inside the seed that makes the seed grow into a huge tree. It is the power behind lightning and thunder. Any power that you see in this universe is the power of this great cosmic force and it is this same power that animates all living beings, trees, plants, insects, birds, bees, reptiles, fish and animals. It is the power of the lion, it is the power of the elephant and it is the power of the brilliant intellect or genius of a Faraday, a Raman or an Einstein. This selfsame power abides in us and animates our entire body mechanism. It is the power that digests our food, that makes our heart pump blood, that makes our lungs breathe, that makes our muscles and joints work, that makes our tongue talk and ear hear. It is this very power that is also present as the sex energy in us. So, sex energy is part of the one indivisible great cosmic power present in the human individual. In its gross biological aspect, it is called the sex energy. In its subtler aspect, it is the energy of discrimination, the power of the intellect to analyse and enquire and ratiocinate. In a still subtler aspect, in its psychic aspect, it is the power of the Kundalini. And in its supreme aspect, it is nothing but Atma Shakti. Because, Brahman and Shakti are not two. They are the static and the dynamic aspects of one and the same principle. Therefore, the sex energy is nothing but the presence of the Divine Mother in all human beings. It is something divine, it is something sacred, and its supreme function in the scheme of things of the Creator is to keep going the universal process. It is the function of reproduction which is present in all nature, in all life. Without this subtle power of duplication or reproduction, all species will become extinct. So, the utilisation of the sex energy for the purpose of reproduction is actually a sacred process for cooperating with Brahma, the Creator. And any other aspect of the sex energy is a secondary, lesser aspect. And if this energy or power is wisely utilised in a moderate and restrained way, even after such utilisation, a sufficient amount of it will be available for higher spiritual development. And if this gross biological energy is converted through Yogabhyasa into a subtler form, it becomes available for deep contemplation, reflection and meditation. Manana, Nididhyasana and Samadhi are enabled through the power of this conserved and converted energy. That is Brahmacharya. So, all practices to successfully conserve and convert the sex energy into a higher form and utilise it for a higher spiritual purpose are included in the broad meaning of the term Brahmacharya. Therefore, Brahmacharya is not only a single act of restraint; it is a whole way of life. It is that way of living and moving and acting which will take us towards Brahma-Jnana. That is Brahmacharya. And therefore it involves moderation in all our activities and a wise restraint of all our senses.

In the context of Indian culture, of Bharatiya Samskriti, total restraint of the sex energy was laid down upon three Ashramas, namely, the Brahmacharya Ashrama, the Vanaprastha Ashrama and the Sannyasa Ashrama—the student-stage of youth, the retired stage of the elderly person and the monastic stage of the last part of your life. And, even in the Grihasthashrama, legal or legitimate utilisation of this power for the purpose of perpetuating the species was laid down. The result was that in the Grihasthashrama, Brahmacharya meant moderation, a wise rational, restrained use of the sex energy for the purpose of procreation. Moderation, and chastity or fidelity to one's married

partner, were laid down. It was enjoined upon the married person not to cast any impure look upon any person other than one's lawfully wedded wife or lawfully wedded husband. So, out of this lofty concept of Brahmacharya there arose two great ideals, the Pativrata Dharma and the Eka-Patni-Vrata of the Grihastha. For the married man there was only one woman in the whole universe, his lawfully wedded wife; the other women were like mothers to him. He cast no lustful, passionate, carnal eye upon any other woman. And for the chaste wife there was only one man in the whole universe and that man was her Lord and husband, whom she regarded with reverence and worshipfulness. All other men were like children to her. Towards others she had the Bhav of mother, of cosmic mother. It was only towards one person that she entertained the feeling: "I am a woman. I am wife"; and that person was her lawfully wedded husband. This is the great ideal that has arisen out of the supreme principle of Brahmacharya, the supreme concept of Brahmacharya. Thus, in so far as the pure classical attitude of Bharatiya Samskriti towards the sex energy was concerned, it was one of reverence. The ancient Masters never thought of the sex energy as either ugly or bad or wicked or evil or immoral. Such wrong notions about the sex energy are all the result of a failure to understand the sublimity of this particular force. It is due to superstition and lack of understanding that in normal society, deprived of right instruction and right knowledge, people begin to look upon it as something ugly, as something evil. One reason for the development or evolution of such an attitude is that because of all-too-common human weakness for sex, they had to place some sort of a moral taboo on sex. Otherwise, human weakness is such that it always takes the line of least resistance and, therefore, they said, "No. No. This should not be done. It should not be done in such and such a stage, because Shastras say so". They gave it this sort of colour.

The Human Body Compared to a Mansion

One little point needs to be stressed here. The body is like a mansion. No matter how wonderful a mansion may be, even if it be made of marble and set with jewels, no one will be able to live in that mansion unless it has a kitchen and a bathroom and a toilet. Because, whatever man takes in, part of it goes to form his mind, part of it goes to form his body, and the remaining waste has to be eliminated. And waste is always foul-smelling. The impurities of the body are always foul-smelling. In the outer mansion they have to have a toilet, they have to have a kitchen. If there be no kitchen, no one can live there. You may construct any type of palace, but if there is no food, no lunch, no breakfast, no afternoon tea—even for a day—no one will live there. But then, when a kitchen is there, you have to provide drainage also. Kitchen means garbage, left-over food, vegetable cuttings, fruit peels and all that. If all this is kept, it will begin to rot and so you have to have a garbage disposal arrangement. You have to have drainage and sewerage. In the absence of all these arrangements, it will not be possible to live in that mansion. Likewise, in the human body, in this mansion of nine gates, in this Navadvara Kuti, where you have an entrance way and windows for light and air and knowledge, for the sake of drainage and garbage disposal, God has provided two holes. Their real importance is that of drainage. They are only drains. This is the only right understanding of the matter. No doubt, the occasional function of reproduction is there, but to over-exaggerate that aspect is foolish. It betrays a lack of knowledge. Because, from birth until death, day after day, thirty days in a month, and three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, the constant function that these exit gates have to fulfil is drainage. And the occasional function that they have to fulfil is in cooperating with Brahma, but that is only some rare occasional function, and that also, only in a very short period of one's life. In the first Ashrama of Brahmacharya, it has no place; in the third Ashrama of Vanaprastha, it has no place; and in the fourth Ashrama of Sannyasa,

it has no place. Out of the whole life, it is only in one Ashrama that that particular function of it is exercised. Otherwise, the main function of these outlets is only drainage of impurities. If you change your Drishtikona and understand the body in the right perspective, then a great deal of your problem will be solved. It is taking a wrong view and giving a wrong emphasis which makes one to get into all sorts of difficulties. Secondly, take a look at it from the Vedantic point of view. The Adesha or Sandesha of Vedanta, the primary declaration of Vedanta, is that you are not this body, but that you are the Ajara Amara Avinashi Atma. Then, if you are not to identify yourself with your entire body, how can you identify yourself with one aspect of it? So, if your faith in Vedanta is Pucca, is firm and genuine, if you are true to your Vedanta, then, you have your solution in your own hand.

How to Rise Above Sex

There is another important angle to this matter of Brahmacharya. And that pertains to your aim and ambition in life. What is it that you want out of life? What great desire dominates your life? Is there something that is a consuming hunger in you? Do you want to become the highest musical genius in this world? Or do you want to become the fastest Olympic runner or weightlifter in this world? No matter what your ambition is, if there is some one overwhelming or all-consuming hunger in you, then all other problems recede into the background. They do not present a great difficulty. But, if you do not have such an overwhelming ambition in one direction, then everything becomes a problem and sex also becomes a problem. Therefore, the right way of solving this problem of sex is to rise above it so that it becomes something not important. You have to rise above sex—not wrestle with it, but rise above it. Because, if you do not have an overall concentrated urge or ambition in life, then the clamour of these little senses becomes a great din in your life. Your life will always be under that clamour. But, if you have got an overwhelming urge for something else, then this clamour does not reach you at all, because you are too busy engaging your entire attention in some other direction. So, the right way of solving this situation of sex is to rise above it, by developing great love for God, great love for an ideal, developing passion for a pure life, a moral life, an ethical life, an ideal life and nurturing Tivra Mumukshutva for attaining liberation. If intense Mumukshutva is there, then all other things recede into the background. They become less important. So, if you want to attain victory over the clamour of the senses, you must arouse within yourself a great fire of higher aspiration. Then, what happens? In order to attain that upon which your heart is set, you give yourself so totally to it that you have no time for other things. Even great scientists do not have this problem, because they are all the time completely absorbed in their scientific research. They do not pay much importance to food or clothing or bathing or anything. Why? Because they are all absorbed in, and interested in, something else. That is the way of becoming established in Brahmacharya, in successful Brahmacharya, in effective Brahmacharya.

Voluntary Self-restraint Is No Suppression

There is a Western idea that sex is a natural urge and so free expression should be given to it. And if free expression is not given to it, the sex urge will become suppressed, will become repressed. And if it is thus suppressed and repressed, it will create all sorts of abnormalities within you and you will develop neurosis and various types of complex and you will become an abnormal person. There is partial truth in it. There is truth in it to the extent that if this suppression and repression is forced upon you by circumstances beyond your control, by social environment, by

other taboos and deep-seated inhibitions within you, due to your father's advice or mother's dominance or family and all, then it can give rise to some undesirable inner abnormality. But this situation never applies if realising the greatness of a higher goal and realising the necessity of this important Sadhana of self-control in order to attain that goal, you make up your mind fully, willingly and voluntarily. Then there is no question of suppression. If with a full willing heart you enter into this course of self-discipline and self-restraint, then there is no question of suppression. No one is asking you to do it. You want to do it. You are yourself desirous of it. So, done with full willingness, done with great enthusiasm, it becomes a voluntary thing. Then, psychological situations will not arise. On the contrary, every time you succeed in controlling the sense-urge, you get a sense of elation, you get a sense of achievement, you get a sense of inner satisfaction that you have succeeded. So, it something that goes on giving you endless satisfaction and a sense of triumph, a sense of overcoming. Therefore it is entirely a positive process, a very creative and positive process, not a negative and suppressive process. So, regarding Brahmacharya, if you take the right approach and attitude towards it, then it is simple. It is a question of conserving energy, of preserving energy, so that it may be utilised for higher things which you wish to attain.

The energy in you is a part of the great cosmic energy. Cosmic energy, when individualised in the human being, manifests in many aspects. And one very important aspect is the physical biological aspect. That is the sex energy. A higher aspect is the mental and occult aspect. The mental and occult energy is called Medhas. Then there is in the individual the psychic aspect of the cosmic energy. This is the Kundalini Shakti. And above everything else, in its highest aspect, the cosmic energy shines in the human beings as Atma Bal, as Alma Shakti, as the radiance of the Atman. So, think over all this. All this is food for thought. These are seeds of certain concepts for your further reflection.

19

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q. 1. In practice, during concentration, the mind plays havoc in spite of repeatedly bringing it to the focal point. Would you please suggest how to get more steady.

A. Only two suggestions. In spite of the mind playing havoc and in spite of its going away repeatedly from the centre, do not give up your practice. Go on—continue, continue, continue. Do not struggle with it, do not lose your temper, do not become upset, do not become angry or irritated. Patiently, without losing your balance, bring it back again and keep it on the focal point. That is the only way. And ultimately it will succeed. That is what they say.

Secondly, try to analyse your mind-wanderings—where does the mind fly, where does it jump. Then you will be able to know what is the cause behind its behaviour. There must be some working desire, working ambition; or may be, you are having in your daily life certain practices which help in constantly making the mind bring out those ideas. Supposing you read political news daily. Indira Gandhi will come there, Afghanistan will come and some other thing will come, because you are providing material to the mind for this jumping about, this Vikshepa. You may be

listening to the radio; you may be reading novels; or you may be going in the company of people who always gossip and talk all sorts of things. Naturally, these manifold ideas keep troubling you in your mind. You are giving Samagri every day. Then, how will Vikshepa stop? You have to withdraw the fuel. You must try to find out what factors exist in your life-style, in your outer activities and environment, that may possibly be a likely source for these things. You must find out the causes contributing to these things. You must make a frank appraisal and analysis of your own daily life and activity, and if you find that there are certain factors that are likely to contribute towards this sort of restlessness and wandering, you have to eliminate those factors if you want to concentrate successfully.

So, these two things you have to do. Do not give up the effort. Keep up the effort with all patience, and persistence, with a “bulldog tenacity”. Gurudev was fond of using this expression. It is a popular belief that there is a breed of English dogs called bulldogs. They say that the bulldog is not very, very aggressive, but if it bites some person, afterwards it will not let go. It is very difficult to make it let go. Once it bites, it will not let go. No matter how much you may struggle, it will not let go. The owner may have to come and use some special method to make the bulldog open its mouth. Otherwise, it will not let go. So, this expression “bulldog tenacity” has come into vogue. And Gurudev was very fond of this expression. So, find out the causative factors of your mental distractions and try to remove those factors from your life and do not give up the effort. Be patient and carry on.

Q. 2. Control of senses, rather than withdrawal, while living in the midst of activities in the world, is not easy. Does it mean that one has to be in awareness of the Inner Reality at every moment and one has to be watchful of one’s thoughts, words and actions every moment?

A. I have given a detailed answer to this question in the chapters dealing with Pratyahara. So, there is not much to say in addition. Let the eye see something, but you do not look. Let the ear hear something, but you do not listen. Do not pay attention to that process which the sense is engaging in. Try to withdraw yourself from the inevitable activity of the senses. You cannot completely change the nature of the senses. The eyes will see, the ears will hear, the skin will touch, the nose will smell and tongue will taste, whether you want it or not. That is their Dharma. They will go on with their perceptions. But you try not to associate yourself too much with them in a personal way; try to stand apart from them. Control of senses does imply withdrawal. Withdrawal and control of senses cannot be treated as separate. They go together and constant awareness of your inner Self helps you in this process of withdrawal of the mind and control of the senses. That is the truth. Watchfulness should be there. You have to be vigilant, you have to be watchful. All these are complementary processes.

Q. 3. Kindly let us know why Maharshi Patanjali made no mention of Kundalini in his Raja Yoga. We read in many books regarding Kundalini. Is it that this topic has come up subsequent to Patanjali? Is it possible for those whose Kundalini has not awakened to see steady light during meditation?

A. Patanjali has not completely ignored Kundalini. He has touched upon certain aspects of Kundalini Yoga in describing different types of concentration. Concentration upon the inner Chakras has also be casually hinted at in Raja Yoga. But, the reason why Patanjali does not make

mention of Kundalini is because Raja Yoga is essentially a Yoga of mental discipline. Raja Yoga is the inner Yoga of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi; and it is concerned mainly in training the mind, in disciplining the mind, to become a powerful instrument to pierce beyond the veil of creativity and duality and go into the realm of non-dual consciousness, of absolute consciousness. This is the whole attempt of Raja Yoga. And Patanjali is not try to do it through the power of the Kundalini; he is trying to do it through the power of a purified and concentrated mind. As such, he has no need to make a mention about Kundalini. And so he does not mention Kundalini. Patanjali's instrument is not Shakti. His instrument is the concentrated mind. That is the reason. Kundalini Yoga is Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga is Kundalini Yoga. The name "Hatha Yoga" does not imply merely Asanas and Pranayamas. Hatha Yoga, properly interpreted, is actually Kundalini Yoga. Hatha Yoga is the process or technique of controlling the solar and the lunar Pranic currents, the right and left Pranic currents, and uniting them through various Bandhas, and taking the unified Pranic current towards the Muladhara Chakra at the base of the spine, and through various Bandhas and various Pranayamas, trying to make this united Prana that is now directed powerfully towards the base of the spine to somehow or the other activate the sleeping power of Kundalini; and, as a further step, even trying to gradually force the Kundalini through the central channel of the Sushumna Nadi. So, Hatha Yoga is a very, very scientific and exact process. It is a different technique altogether. It is treated in *Siva Samhita*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and such other texts. To some extent, Jnanesvar also, in his commentary on the Sixth Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, brings in these techniques. But, Patanjali, in his Raja Yoga, does not mention about Kundalini, because Raja Yoga has no concern with Kundalini. Its main approach, main technique, is to bring about the higher superconscious state through meditation, through the power of the concentrated mind, and not through the force of the occult sleeping power.

Q. 4. What is the comparative difference between Raja Yoga and Siddha Yoga which was practised and preached by Paramahansa Muktananda at Ganeshpuri? Is it possible for a common meditator to get his Kundalini power awakened without practising Asanas and Pranayamas?

A. It is not possible for a common meditator to get his Kundalini awakened without practising Asanas and Pranayamas if his path is Hatha Yoga. But if his path is Raja Yoga or Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga, it is possible for a common meditator to awaken the Kundalini Power without any Asana and without any Pranayama. Kundalini can be awakened even through the power of the previous Samskaras and Vasanas. There can be spontaneous awakening of Kundalini, there can be a spontaneous trance, though that is a rare phenomenon, though that is an exception. But for a normal Yogi, if he is following the path of Hatha Yoga, Asanas and Pranayamas are indispensable; otherwise he cannot awaken the Kundalini. But, if he is not practising the path of Hatha Yoga, and if he is practising the Sadhana of Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga or Jnana Yoga, Kundalini becomes automatically awakened when he attains a certain state of purity and concentration. The awakening of the Kundalini is the outcome or the result of attaining a state of very high purity in one's life and in one's concentration of mind. If these two things are there, whether it is achieved through Vedanta or Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga, Kundalini awakening follows as a matter of course. The difference between Siddha Yoga and Raja Yoga is that in Raja Yoga the seeker develops his powers by self-effort, while in Siddha Yoga this power is imparted by his Guru through a traditional process which they call Shakti Paat. They call it the transmission of power by the Guru to the Sishya.

Q. 5. When I will be leaving the Sivananda Ashram, it will be to return to society and worldly life. But in doing that, I do not want to lose, forget, disregard, displace what I have got from the Divine Life Society. I really want to preserve and carry on with what I feel I have started with here in the Ashram. What is the trick?

A. The trick is to have a couple of periods every day, morning and evening—very early in the morning and late in the evening—when, mentally and through feeling, you transport yourself from wherever you are to Rishikesh. Re-create Rishikesh in your mind, re-create this environment, re-create Ganga, re-create this beautiful surrounding, and plunge in it, remain in it for half an hour with vividness and intensity. Begin the day by coming to Rishikesh, remaining for half an hour in Rishikesh and then getting up and going into your city surroundings. And while you are in the social milieu, try to keep a little golden thread as a subtle, unseen undercurrent of the Rishikesh Bhava, the Yoga Bhava, and carry with you this golden thread of undercurrent, of Bhava, right up to the end of your day. And when, at the end of the day, all is over, shed the dross of the world just as a duck shakes its back and sheds all the water. And then, once again go into silence, go into serenity, go into an absolute state of profound inner meditation and there transport yourself to Rishikesh. Drop the feeling of the worldly environment and get into the surrounding of a powerful spiritual feeling. Remain in that current for half an hour. So, that is one thing. And whatever spiritual principles and Yogic rules you have obtained here in the Ashram, try to see that you keep on applying those principles, day after day, in all fields of activity, in the context of all human relationships, in the context of the social milieu in which you may live and work. If you do these two things, the trick will work. And after a year, come back for a brief visit again, may be for a month or two.

Q. 6. How to do cent per cent Karma Yoga?

A. Have intense love for Karma Yoga. That is the first essential. Have intense love for Karma Yoga and have a burning desire to serve all creatures. And then, have a desire to please God or worship the Divine through your service. Regard your Karma Yoga service also a medium or as a means of pleasing God, of worshipping God. And when you do Karma Yoga, keep your ego aside. Do you think that you are a very fine idealistic person doing Karma Yoga. Do not feel satisfaction with yourself and pat yourself on the back, “Ah, very good. Well done”. Do not have that attitude. On the contrary, feel that you are greatly privileged to have the opportunity of elevating yourself spiritually through Karma Yoga. Thank God for that opportunity. And go on thanking God for every such opportunity. Do not feel elated or proud. Have humility; have the right perspective and approach to Karma Yoga. Have egolessness. Feel: “I am not doing anything; God is using me as an instrument to help His own creatures. He is the Father, Mother. He wants to help them all. So, He is only taking hold of me, and through me, He is helping them. I am only an instrument, I am nothing. This Karma Yoga is not mine”. That is how you should feel all the time. So, do not take upon yourself any credit for what you do. Whatever credit is there belongs to God.

Also—and this is very important—during the course of Karma Yoga, beware that you do not get attached to those whom you serve. Otherwise, you will have a downfall. Do not develop attachment by too much personal contact. Because, some forms of Karma Yoga may bring you into too much personal contact, into close personal contact, with the people whom you may be serving, and that will create entanglement afterwards. You must be careful. If the person whom you serve is of the right type, it does not matter. If you serve a great saint, and if you get attached to him, then it is

all right; that attachment will liberate you. But, if yours is the ordinary field of service of Karma Yoga, social service, then it is a great danger. Too much close familiarity with the people whom you serve may bring about sentimental ties of affection and emotion. That may land you in problems afterwards. So, you have to beware. A Karma Yogi should always have inner Nirliptata. He must always have Anasakti. Karma Yoga is Anasakti Yoga. If you are not able to keep yourself detached, you are heading for disaster. Therefore, be alert and vigilant. Be kind and compassionate, but see that there is no Mamata or mine-ness. See that there is no Maya coming in. Daya is all right, but not Maya.

And then, if you are engaged in Karma Yoga, be careful to see if in the mind there is any lurking desire for recognition, for approval, for name and fame. See if there is any desire to make use of Karma Yoga for obtaining some personal gains or benefits. This is a common failure of all Karma Yogins. It is because of this danger that some people in the Swaminarayan Sect, when they go to serve in the villages, are very strict with themselves. They go to the villages in the morning, serve till evening, and then get back to their own place. They carry their own rations, they carry their own water. They will not accept anything from the villagers whom they serve, not even food. No. They carry their own rations and they will eat that and serve. Even when they need to rest, they will rest either in the village temple or the verandah of the village school or the village Panchayat house. They will not approach any householder and ask, “May I rest in your house?”. No. The temple is a common place. So is the village school and the village Panchayat building. There they will rest. They will keep very, very careful not to get involved with anyone in terms of sentimental attachment.

In cent per cent Karma Yoga, there should be no Kartritva Abhimana, there should be no Ahambhava, there should be no desire or Asha. Then it will be Nishkamyā Karma Yoga. And, last but not the least, it should be remembered that tempers should be kept. In the heat of activity, one loses one’s temper. This is a common failing in all activities. All Vyavahara is characterised by blemish if you lose your temper. And if someone helps you in your Karma Yoga activity, you are pleased with that person and you get attached to that person. If someone hinders your Karma Yoga activity by coming in the way, he becomes your enemy. You develop hard feelings, ill feelings, towards that person. This should be avoided. There should be no Raga-Dvesha in Karma Yoga. Your Karma Yoga should be Raga-Dvesha Rahita. It should be Abhimana-Shunya. It should be Nissvartha. Nishkama. And you should have the spiritual vision in doing Karma Yoga and you should actually worship the Eternal Divine enshrined in all the creatures whom you may be serving—why, in all the creatures in the universe. You should have this higher vision and this higher Bhava.

Q. 7. Can we not get Self-realisation without attaining Samadhi?

A. Do not bother about it. Try to attain Self-realisation. Do not bother about Samadhi. If you keenly long for Self-realisation and do all the needful Sadhana, you will get it, with Samadhi or without Samadhi. So, do not bother about Samadhi. In the same way, you can ask: “I am hungry. Someone is giving me meals. Can I fill my stomach without swallowing?” Swallowing is a way to send the food in. So, if you put the food in your mouth and nicely chew it, without your knowledge it will get swallowed. You do not have to bother about it. You do not have to make a special effort to do it. Samadhi is like that. Aspire for Self-realisation and do all the Sadhanas and do not worry

about whether you will get Self-realisation with or without Samadhi. You do not have to practise Samadhi. It will come.

Q. 8. What is the necessity at all of doing good to others?

A. The necessity is that by doing good to others your mind is taken away from your petty self. Otherwise, man is self-centred. Otherwise, man is always selfish, man is Svarthi. He always thinks only of himself; he lives only in terms of himself. So, all his activities are self-centred activities and this is a great bondage. It is this which is the centre of all friction and disharmony and discord and delusion. So, in order to take your mind away from yourself, away from your little self, you have to think of others and try to do good to others. Secondly, when you try to do good to others, you gradually begin to feel oneness. You begin to feel: "Oh! That being and I are the same". Thirdly, doing good to others in a selfless way purifies your heart and mind, increases Sattva, removes Rajas and Tamas. It thins out selfishness and the ego. Doing good to others is the most important means of attaining purity, is the most important means of ridding yourself of selfishness.

Q. 9. How to make a self-examination about the unselfishness of one's actions?

A. In the evening, after having done the day's work, sit aside for fifteen or twenty minutes and recollect what all actions you had engaged in from morning till evening. Recollect what all you did, how you did it, why you did it. Ask the question, "Why?". What was your ultimate object in doing every action? Was it only to help someone else? Was it only to fulfil your duty, only to discharge your obligations, only to obey orders? Or, was there some other thing also? What was your inner feeling when you engaged in each action? This kind of recollection and self-analysis is known as introspection. Daily introspection is very necessary for the spiritual seeker. For this purpose, set apart a certain time in the evening, sit and review the whole day's activity and try to go into its inner contents.

Q. 10. In meditation, when you concentrate on an object, do you try to see the object in your mind, or do you think of it and eventually you see it?

A. You do both. You have to do both. You have to think of the object in your mind and try to see it also simultaneously while thinking of it. And then, this dual process ultimately enables your concentrated object to appear before you.

Q. 11. Are there any books the study of which will be helpful in keeping up unbroken Brahmacharya?

A. Yes, there is a special book called "Practice of Brahmacharya" by Swami Sivananda. Try to study it and practise the teachings contained therein scrupulously. You will succeed.

Q. 12. How to give up sense longings?

A. By trying. By developing intense longing for God or Self-realisation and also through Satsangh and Vichara. When you long for things, bring those objects before the keen scrutiny of

Vichara and Viveka. When you do Vichara and exercise Viveka, then you will suddenly understand, “Oh, this longing is foolish; this thing is of no use. It is only a passing problem”. When you say that, then your whole attitude changes; your longing goes away. But, if you begin to think that the sense-objects are desirable, that they are very nice, that they will bring you happiness, then you develop longing. So, you have to keep up Vichara and Viveka throughout. And Vichara and Viveka develop and gather strength by constant Svadhyaya and Satsangha. And all these induce an intense longing for God which displaces all worldly longings. So, that is the way. Hari Om Tat Sat.