

YOGADRISHTI SERIES

Mind, Mind Management & Raja Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

**Mind, Mind Management
& Raja Yoga**

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Mind, Mind Management & Raja Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses from the Yogadrishti (Yogavision) series
of satsangs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger,
from 25th to 28th April & 24th to 26th May 2010*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Mind, Mind Management & Raja
Yoga

“The highest sadhana in life is mind management, not meditation. The highest awareness is how the mind responds to different situations. Sadhana is not an abstract idea; it is a practicable, step by step method. This is the approach that the yogis and seers have adopted in order to harness the potential of the mind.”

The Yogadrishti (Yogavision) series of satsangs consists of discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati in Munger as part of the new phase of sannyasa life that he has embarked upon since 2009.

Mind, mind management and raja yoga were the theme of the satsangs Swamiji gave in April and May 2010 at Ganga Darshan. In these illuminating discourses, Swamiji puts the vast experience of the mind into easily comprehensible capsules. He approaches the subject from the classical, psychological as well as practical points of view, providing guidelines on managing the various expressions and experiences of the mind. These satsangs are a fine example of the depth and range of Swamiji’s vision and understanding.

Many sannyasins have selflessly contributed to the compiling, editing and publishing of this text. To one and all, yoga aspirants extend their gratitude for bringing this information to them.

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The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training and learning should be done under the guidance of an experienced, competent teacher, not from the book alone.

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Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our spiritual journey.*

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Mind and Mind Management

Characteristics of the Mind

25 April 2010

*Asato maa sad gamaya
Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya
Mrityor maa amritam gamaya
Sarveshaam swastir bhavatu
Sarveshaam shantir bhavatu
Sarveshaam poornam bhavatu
Sarveshaam mangalam bhavatu
Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu
Aum Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.*

The Shanti Path represents the sankalpa of an aspirant who seeks to improve the quality of life. Each verse in this Shanti Path is a sankalpa, an aspiration, an affirmation and an aim to attain in life. *Asato maa sad gamaya* – lead me from the unreal to the real. *Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya* – lead me from darkness to light. *Mrityor maa amritam gamaya* – lead me from mortality to immortality. *Sarveshaam swastir bhavatu* – let wellness prevail. *Sarveshaam shantir bhavatu* – let peace prevail. *Sarveshaam poornam bhavatu* – let wholeness prevail. *Sarveshaam mangalam bhavatu* – let auspiciousness prevail. *Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu* – may the whole world and its people be content and happy.

What is the purpose of these affirmations or sankalpas? Just to create a mood to feel more relaxed, contented and happy? Just for the intellectual satisfaction of calling the verses beautiful when one understands their meaning? No, that is not the purpose. The purpose of a sankalpa is to change the quality and expression of the mind. If an affirmation cannot change the quality and behaviour of the mind, then it is not a sankalpa. It is only a thought or wish which one is unable to fulfil in life.

Sankalpas are focused and concentrated energies of the mind. This mental power, force or energy has to be harnessed and channelled, and that is difficult to achieve, as life is an expression of the mind. It is the mind which guides every action and reaction, idea and thought, desire and expectation in life. The mind is both the motivating factor and the discouraging factor. *Mana hi devata, mana hi ishwara, mana se baraa na koye* – “Mind is god. Mind is *ishwara*, the undecaying principle. There is nothing greater than mind.”

From ancient times, people have contemplated the nature of the mind, trying to know and understand it. Many conclusions have been drawn, but they are based on individual subjective experiences. Every conclusion does bring a new thought, but does not provide a full picture of the real nature and behaviour of the mind.

Source of the mind

In order to know the mind, know its source. The source of the mind is consciousness in the trans-sensorial dimension. In the transcendental and cosmic dimension, two powers or faculties coexist: consciousness and energy. They are in perfect equilibrium and harmony with each other. They are merged as one entity, one experience, one manifestation in the cosmic dimension. However, they have two possibilities; that one experience, one entity, one perception contains consciousness and energy, the two principles that bring about mental understanding and sensorial experience of the world.

The entire creation and life is an expression or interplay of consciousness and energy. Energy manifests in life as prana, and consciousness as mind. Consciousness is absolutely pure, spotless and untainted, in perfect equilibrium and harmony. When an interaction takes place in the cosmic dimension between consciousness and energy, life emerges. Each life is thus governed and guided by prana and mind.



A bacterium has prana and also a mind. Not brain, but mind. An insect has prana and also a mind. An animal has prana and also a mind. A tree has prana and also a mind. The human body is governed and directed by prana and also by the mind. Therefore, cosmic cognition or cosmic awareness is known as consciousness and

individual awareness or contained awareness is known as the mind.

Mind: a derivative of consciousness

What you experience in your life is the mind. This can be understood from the example of a tree. The tree has a trunk, which is its body, its support. From the trunk emerge different branches and they are also part of the trunk. They are made from the same substance as the trunk, but their functions are different. In the same manner, the mind is composed of the same stuff as consciousness, but it is not consciousness; it is a derivative of consciousness. It is an offshoot, an expression of consciousness, guided by the channels of sensory currents.

In its theory of creation, the Samkhya school of thought considers the mind as an integral part of creation. Samkhyans state that the first entity in eternal existence is Brahman. This entity or identity of Brahman incorporates within itself the faculties and powers of energy and consciousness. In the spiritual tradition of India, Brahman is always identified as the Cosmic Spirit.

Once upon a time there was a war between gods and demons. The gods were victorious, and during the celebratory feast each god began to boast of his powers and abilities and how he had vanquished the hordes of demonical forces. While this self-image boosting was underway, the Supreme Spirit manifested before them in the form of a yaksha. The word *yaksha* means a spirit. This was the ethereal embodied form of Brahman.

The gods were curious to know who this ethereal entity was. They asked Agni, the fire god, "Go and find out who this spirit is." The pride-filled Agni went to the yaksha and questioned, "Who are you?" The spirit answered, "I am a yaksha. Who are you?" Agni said, "I am the all-powerful Jataveda, the all-powerful fire element." The spirit said, "What can you do?" Agni said, "I can burn everything in this world." The spirit said, "Burn this straw", and placed a few straws before Agni. The fire god huffed and puffed, but could not burn the straw. He realized that all his powers were of no avail before this spirit and went back dejected to the assembly of gods.

The king of gods, Indra, sent Varuna, the water god, to the spirit. The same interaction took place between the two. The water god said, "I am all-powerful, I can sweep everything from my path. Nothing can withstand my force." The spirit said, "Take away this straw." The water god huffed and puffed, but could not move the straw. He came back dejected to the assembly of gods. Now the wind god, Vayu, was sent. He was also unable to blow the straw away and came back dejected. Indra, the king of gods and also the mind, decided that he himself would go to discover the identity of the spirit.

When Indra went before the spirit, the spirit disappeared and in its place Goddess Uma appeared. Indra was bewildered. He asked the goddess, "Who was the spirit that disappeared as soon as it saw me?" Uma then revealed the secret to Indra, saying, "That spirit is Brahman, the Cosmic Spirit, the Supreme Reality. Each god and each particle of dust in creation is an emanation of His power and luminosity."

In the state of Brahman, energy and consciousness are in absolute harmony and

integrity. However, when life emerges due to an incognizable pulsation in the dimension of energy and consciousness, it takes the powers of these two catalysts to create and stabilize itself. Body becomes matter, which is governed by prana, the manifest Shakti component. Everything that is visible as a form, matter or body is governed, directed and controlled by Shakti in the form of prana. Beyond the material body or matter is the subtle force responsible for evolution and experiencing the truth of human nature and spirit, and its unity with the cosmos. That subtle power, that subtle force is consciousness, which is experienced in this life as the mind.

Sunlight spreads uniformly everywhere, but when it enters through a window and illumines one spot, it is perceived as a ray. The ray is also part of the all-pervading sunlight, but when it enters a room through a window, you do not say that the sun has entered the room. You say that a ray of sunlight has entered the room. Consciousness and mind have to be understood in the same way. The mind is the manifest aspect of consciousness. The cosmic consciousness is indivisible, infinite, omniscient. That is its essential form. However, when it manifests in a body in the course of evolution, the law of nature comes into play and it is experienced as the mind just like the sunray. That which was called consciousness in the cosmic and universal dimension is called the mind in this life and body.

The Upanishads describe Brahman as the nave of a wheel, while Shakti or Prakriti forms the spokes that extend from and rest on the nave. The spokes are surrounded by a solid sphere which holds them together, which is the mind. This mind is mahat, the cosmic mind.

Four functions of mahat

Mahat means the great mind or the higher mind. It is also called *antahkarana*, which literally means inner or subtle instrument. There are four functions of this higher mind: *ahamkara*, ego, the 'I' identity; *chitta*, impressions, memories and *samskaras*; *buddhi*, intelligence; and *manas*, the finite sequential mind. These four functions help one evolve, progress and grow in life, in fact, to experience life.

In yoga, using the word 'mind' is like using the word 'body'. When one uses the word body, one is not referring to any particular part, organ or system of the body, but the total body comprised of many different systems, organs and functions. All these various components are identified in the word body. In the same manner, the word mind refers to the total mind, which consists of four identifiable functions.

Ahamkara: The first evolute, function or product of mahat is the ego, ahamkara. This ego or self-identity is an awareness of 'me' existing as an independent unit, an independent person. Ahamkara is the realization that 'I exist'. You exist, you identify with yourself because you exist. You identify with the body because you exist in the body. You identify with the mind because you can experience the mind. The knowledge that 'I live', 'I exist', 'I am', 'This is my body', 'This is my mind', 'This is my life' is ahamkara, self-identity or self-awareness. *Aham* means 'I', *akara* means form, 'the form of the I'. What is the form of the 'I'? It is the individual self in totality.

Chitta: The second function of mahat is chitta, the dimension where karmas and

samskaras are stored in the deep unconscious. Chitta is also the centre for memory; memories that are ingrained in the mind in the form of impressions, images and experiences. These memories and samskaras are accumulated over a period of time by the mind. They relate not only to this life but to the past as well, and are sown in the subconscious and unconscious states.



A samskara which you express today reflects what you gained in the past and are living in the present. The samskaras which you cultivate today will be lived by you in the future. Right now you are cultivating them; they are not part and parcel of your nature as yet. Samskaras that you create in the present will influence your future and the samskaras that you have created in the past are influencing your present. This is the role of chitta.

Buddhi: The third function of mahat is buddhi, rationality and logic. Due to the connection of the mind with the world of sense objects through the sensory media, it is in buddhi that *vasanas*, desires, are born. It is through buddhi that you decide upon expectations. Buddhi connects you with the world. Buddhi connects the mind with sense objects and sense pleasures. If there was no buddhi, no intelligence, then there would be no recognition or interaction of the individual with sense objects. There would be no indication that your association with a given object or sensory experience will provide happiness or pain. Buddhi is the active factor of the mind connecting the individual with the world, the environment and sense objects. It is buddhi which gives you the cognition and recognition of different things that exist around so you are able to look at them, analyze them, reflect on them, rationalize them and take an appropriate decision.

Manas: The fourth function of mahat is manas. It is also translated as mind due to which there is often confusion about which mind one is talking about, the lower mind or the higher mind? Manas is not mind, its function is *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*, clarity and confusion, focus and distraction.

The total cosmos is Brahman, containing the possibilities of multiverses, and not just the known universe. From Brahman emerges Prakriti, the manifest nature, and from

Prakriti comes mahat. In the progression of mahat, the subtlest function is ahamkara, followed by chitta and buddhi, and the grossest is manas. You live in the dimension of manas much of the time, with some association with buddhi, some association with chitta and some connection with ahamkara. Your field of performance, action and living is predominantly the dimension of manas. Buddhi and chitta are secondary and ahamkara is the underlying principle.

Governing tattwas of mahat

The four functions of mahat, the greater mind, are emanations of the different *tattwas*, elements. Ahamkara, the I-identity, emanates from *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element. Chitta emanates from *jala tattwa*, the water element, buddhi from *agni tattwa*, the fire element, and manas from *vayu tattwa*, the air element.

Earth and ego: The earth element is stable, firm, unchanging. Ego is firm, stable and unchanging. The difficulty that aspirants face in their spiritual journey is confrontation with their own ego. The other aspects of the mind can be dealt with, but it is difficult to deal with the ego. Only a guru can manage the disciple's ego. You cannot transcend the ego without the guru's intervention. That is sure and certain. Ego is something that no individual can manage. It can be managed by the guru through the performance of egodectomy, and that is a painful process. Some people run away from the operation table, saying, "Sorry, I don't want this operation."

Ego represents the earth element, the fixation in your own identity, form and nature. According to kundalini yoga, mooladhara chakra represents prithvi tattwa, prithvi tanmatra, and the ego is also contained in mooladhara.

Water and chitta: Chitta emanates from the water tanmatra, the water element. Chitta is memory, neither active nor dormant; it is a storehouse. It is a storehouse of life, where everything you have lived as an individual, all the experiences and impressions, whether good or bad, have been stored for later use. Chitta becomes active from time to time to facilitate the journey in life – by providing a glimpse of the memories that are relevant to your present situation. Chitta will bring to the surface of your awareness aspects that have their foundation in your present life. You cannot know what you were in your previous incarnation, but the samskaras of that previous incarnation continue to guide you in this life. You cannot hold water in your hands, it will flow out of the fingers. Memories and samskaras are like water, it is difficult to hold them. You can never know which samskara is manifesting or which memory is directing your actions at a given phase of your life.

The water element is associated with swadhisthana chakra, which also represents the deep unconscious, the unknown mind. Chitta is that unknown mind, the deep unconscious that you can speculate about, but never know what it contains.

Fire and buddhi: Fire is the cause of buddhi. It represents vasanas or desires, the passions, ideas and thoughts which fuel life and mind. Desire is such a strong force that logic, guidance and instructions fail before it. Most people are so caught up in their desires that attaining them becomes their entire focus in life. Desires are aimed at fulfilling a need, whether pertaining to happiness, money or acquisitions. Everything

that you do with the idea of fulfilling and satisfying yourself represents the expression of a vasana, even if for peace and bliss. Vasanas are inherent desires that fuel life.

In order to discover your progress in spiritual life, observe how many of your vasanas, desires and expectations, have reduced. It is the reduction in vasanas which will indicate the balance in your mind and nature, and an increase in vasanas and desires will indicate an unbalanced state of your nature. Obsessive compulsive behaviour will manifest in a desire which is self-oriented and self-motivated, intended for personal pleasure and gain. When that personal idea leaves the desire, then it does not have any force, like a flame that does not have any warmth. It emits light and luminosity, but it does not burn one. That is buddhi.

Air and manas: The manas component comes from the air element, the air tanmatra. The nature of the mind is as fickle as air. You cannot contain or control air, and this applies to manas too. This was a question posed by Arjuna to Sri Krishna. He asks, "How can one deal with the mind? It is possible to contain air in a closed environment, but it is not possible to contain the mind."

Our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, says, "Meditation has no meaning if it does not bring harmony to your mind. Harmony and balance of mind are more important in life than spiritual realization. If your mind is harmonious and balanced, you will always find peace and contentment wherever you are. If the mind is disturbed, agitated, dissipated and fickle, then even in the quietest corner of the globe or a remote cave in the Himalayas you will not find peace and solace. Therefore, deal with the mind."

From time immemorial, yogis have said that in order to improve, progress and evolve in life, learn how to manage the mind. Sage Patanjali made this the subject of his dissertation on yoga. He chose raja yoga for his dissertation, not kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga or any other yoga. In raja yoga the process of dealing with and managing the mind is explored in a systematic manner.

Where does the mind exist?

An article published in a scientific journal some time ago had stated that mental functions are expressions of the electronic impulses in the brain. Modern science believes that matter, which is visible and tangible, is primary. Everything originates from matter. However, spiritual and yogic schools say that the brain and the mind are two different things. You can be brain-dead, but the mind will continue to exist.

The mind is not just the conscious faculty with which you become aware of your environment, but a power which is responsible for your life and living, despite organic failures of the body. The brain can die, other systems can stop functioning, but you can still continue to live because the mind exists in you as energy. That is the role of consciousness. In the absence of prana, consciousness can still exist; in the absence of consciousness, prana can still exist. However, in order to create a homogeneous and integrated experience of life, both have to function together.



Sankalpa and vikalpa: Normally, the term *manas* refers to the lower mind, not the higher mind, not to *mahat*. *Manas* is the mind which is clear or confused, whose two expressions are *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*. *Sankalpa* is clarity of thought, intention, motivation and aim. The mantras that we chanted during the Shanti Path are *sankalpas* because they have clarity and an aim; they give a clear direction and purpose for the mind to evolve.

The other function of *manas* is *vikalpa*, confusion. It is a state of dumbness where one does not know what to do. Somebody has to constantly say, “Do it like this.” However, it is the whims and fancies which makes people either follow what they are told or not. The mind can become obedient or disobedient; it may appreciate or not appreciate something.

The question is: where is the mind in this life? You can locate a place for each and every function and organ in the system, but where is the location of the mind? Scientists say the mind is located in the brain. Philosophers say the mind is located in the heart. However, the fact with which all schools of thought agree does not concern its location, but its quality and nature.

Atomic and expansive mind

The quality and nature of the mind is *anu* and *vibhu*. *Anu* means atomic, contained and defined, and *vibhu* means connected, expansive and broad.

Anu mind: The mind in the *anu* form is contained within the body; it does not have any specific location in the body. If a mosquito bites your little toe, it is the body of matter which has been bitten by a mosquito, but the knowledge and pain of the mosquito bite is felt by the body as well as the mind. Therefore, you can even say that the mind is in the little toe of your body. Where is the light in this room? It pervades the entire room, the whole room is lit up. The bulbs placed at different locations light up the whole room homogeneously.

In the same manner, in the *anu* aspect, the contained and atomic aspect, the mind is

within the body and is part of every sense organ and sense experience. It is contained in vision – the moment you look at something, the mind becomes active. It is contained in hearing – the moment a noise comes to your ears, the mind becomes active. It is contained in taste – the moment you taste something, the mind becomes active. It is an inherent part of touch – the moment you touch something, the mind becomes active. Every sense organ, *indriya*, is connected with the mind; each and every part of the body is connected with the mind. The mind is the subtle force or energy responsible for giving birth to an experience through the agency of the senses: recognizing them, realizing them, cultivating them, developing them and transforming them.

Science agrees that the whole body is inseparable from the mind. That is the yogic theory too. Yoga speaks of *koshas*, sheaths in the body. The *sthoola*, gross, annamaya kosha contains the pranamaya and manomaya koshas. Matter contains prana and mind. There is no separation. Quantum physics says that matter has energy and consciousness. Pick up a stone, an inert object, from a mountain. Bring it home and carve it into a beautiful image. Suddenly, the life force in the stone will become active. Initially, it was inert, but when the stone took form, you identified with the form and offered it respect. The energy transmitted by you to the image awakened the power of life in it. This is a theory from quantum physics.

The subtle power of the mind is contained in everything in the form of anu, contained energy. Research has shown that when music is played to plants, they grow at a faster rate and are much healthier than other plants. When you play music to a plant, the vibration and frequency influences the subtle power contained in the plant – whether it exists in the form of energy or mind is open to speculation. Something happens, the vibration influences the subtle energy within the plant, allowing it to grow and develop in a better and different way. This is the concept of the anu or contained mind.

Vibhu mind: The second aspect of the mind is *vibhu*, interconnected. The sages and rishis have maintained that the higher quality of the mind is vibhu. All minds are interconnected, although you are not aware of this. When you are able to transcend the restrictions and limitations of the anu mind, then you connect with the vibhu mind. The expression of the vibhu mind is seen in the lives of yogis and realized beings.

I will give two examples of the interconnected mind. Sai Baba was a great siddha of India who lived a very simple and humble life. One day at his ashram, he was sitting before the *dhuni*, the sacred fire, in the evening, having satsang. Suddenly, Sai Baba put his hand right into the fire and then pulled it out. The hand was burnt.

People could not understand why he did this. The reason was discovered after one week when a family from a distant village came for Sai Baba's darshan and related an incident at their home a week ago. They said a miracle had taken place in their house. The evening meal was being prepared and a charcoal fire was burning. A small boy playing nearby tripped and fell into the burning embers. Catching sight of this, the mother cried out to Sai Baba, "Save my son!" When she looked again, the son was standing safe and sound, and not a part of his body was burnt. That was when people realized why Sai Baba had put his hand into the fire on that particular day. He had

saved the child. This is an expression of the vibhu mind, the interconnected mind. This kind of expansive mind is acquired by yogis.

Another example is an incident from the life of our own guru, Swami Satyananda. While he was performing the panchagni sadhana, one day he came out of the vedi, called the sannyasins and Swami Satsangi and said, “In a nearby village a house has burnt down. The man of the house has died in the flames, the woman has been widowed, she has lost everything and she has three children. Locate that family and organize their shelter, food and clothes.” This was a time when for nine years Sri Swamiji had not been seeing anybody. He was totally isolated and immersed in his own sadhana; nobody would come to give any information or news. How did he, while performing his sadhana, suddenly become aware of the tragedy, the pain and suffering that this lady was undergoing?



That is a classic example of the vibhu mind, the interconnected mind. Yogis have maintained that all minds are interconnected. Your mind and my mind are connected, but you are not aware of it. If I can become aware of that connection, then I can know what is happening in your mind. If you can become aware of your connection, then you will know what is happening in my mind. It is fine-tuning the mind, just as you fine-tune a radio to hear a station without any garbled sound. Such fine-tuning is achieved through sadhana.

From atomic mind to expansive mind

In normal life, the anu or contained mind is lived. In spiritual life, the vibhu mind is lived; one connects one's mind with the universe. In the life of a spiritual aspirant, the anu mind has to be transformed into a vibhu mind. The anu mind relates to your own life and gives birth to your own desires and needs. Its nature is selfish. However, when the mind becomes vibhu its nature becomes expansive. It connects not just with oneself but with others, for the essence of the mind is energy and energy tends to join with energy. When the vibhu mind or interconnected mind is attained, efforts can be made to improve the quality of human life.

That is the beginning of the guru-disciple relationship as well. Gurus do not exist to approve the whims of disciples or sanction their likes and dislikes. If you approach a guru with that purpose, your entire association and concept is incorrect. When Sri Swamiji left Munger, he gave clear instructions: "Don't come to me, don't talk to me, don't see me, I'm not your guru any more!" He had to resort to hard tactics for people to take charge of their own lives and actions, and not be dependent on the guru to fulfil all their whims and fantasies and sanction their desires and expectations.

There has to come a time when teachers and gurus must live the life of teachers and gurus and not friends and companions. Just as you cannot be a child all your life, the relationship with the guru changes according to the destiny of the guru. The relationship we had with Sri Swamiji changed because of his destiny and the path he was destined to walk.

Determined and negotiable mind

Swami Sivananda says the mind is also experienced in two forms: the determined mind and the negotiable mind.

Nishchayatmika buddhi is the determined and clear mind, which has clarity of concepts and intellect. A person with such a mind will know exactly what they want to buy when they go to a supermarket. The *nishchayatmika* mind pre-ascertains everything and acts accordingly.

The other form of the mind is *vyavasayatmika*, negotiable. "I want this; I can't do it", and so on. The mind which is continuously trying to adjust, modify, change and alter is *vyavasayatmika*, negotiable. If I tell somebody that they should meditate for one hour, they will suggest, "Swamiji, if I sit for one hour I will fall asleep. Can I practise for half an hour instead? I think I can manage half an hour." If you have already decided on it, why ask me, and if I am saying practise for one hour, don't change it. *Nishchayatmika buddhi* is decided and determined, and *vyavasayatmika buddhi* is negotiable.

Mind and matter: subject and object of Brahman

Mind and matter are respectively known as the subject and object of Brahman, the evolving spirit. The body is matter; therefore, it is an object in which the spirit resides, it is the object of the spirit. The mind is the subject of the spirit, as it is through the mind that one can realize the nature and quality of the spirit and the world.

Mahat, the higher mind in the form of ahamkara, buddhi, chitta and manas, governs the life process. In everyday interactions, you use the lower mind, comprised of manas and ahamkara. You don't apply your buddhi or chitta in your everyday life; you only apply your ahamkara and manas.

Sometimes there is a situation in the departments of the ashram. Somebody has been responsible for a duty and I send someone else to do the same duty. The first person becomes agitated, jealous, fearful and insecure. They feel, "My duty is being taken away by this person." This is a classical example of manas and ahamkara interacting together, not buddhi and chitta. If buddhi acted, your response would be different. You would be thankful that somebody had come to help you in your work and you could be free to do something else. However, that doesn't happen. Every individual in this world limits their behaviour to manas and ahamkara, thought and ego, nothing more than that. That is known as living in the lower mind.

As you advance on the path of evolution, you learn to use all the faculties of the mind in every situation. This results in greater awareness and a broader vision, bringing about a different response to all circumstances of life. This is known as living in the higher mind.

The lower and the higher mind are both subjects of Brahman, but the state of evolution of the spirit determines what the individual is occupied with.



Management of the Fourfold Mind

26 April 2010

Every living being in the world has a mind. You need a mind to experience life as much as you need a body and the senses. Your whole life is merely an experience of the mind and the senses, nothing more. Therefore, life has been called a play of the senses and the mind, a play that everyone is involved in.

Since ancient times, the traditions, philosophies, the learned and the wise have been saying that if you can manage your mind, you will not experience any disturbance or pain in life. All these experiences manifest in the mind and the moment you change your mind, your mode of thinking, they disappear. The question is: what is this mind which is the medium and cause of existence?

To understand the mind it is necessary to understand consciousness, for the mind is a manifestation of consciousness. It is the manifest and dense form of the eternal, expansive consciousness that exists in the unmanifest state in the universe. The scriptures say that at the cosmic level, Brahman, the Supreme Self, exists. It is accompanied by its power or *shakti*. In this state, its shakti remains absorbed in it. The two forces are known as Purusha and Prakriti, Shiva and Shakti, or Brahman and Maya. At the time of creation, the first evolute of *chetana*, consciousness, and *shakti*, energy, is in the form of mahat, the greater mind. Mahat represents the principle of consciousness in the manifest world, but it comes into being through the agency of shakti.

Mahat is comprised of four functions: ahamkara, chitta, buddhi and manas. The term 'mind' in everyday speech does not refer to the greater mind, but to one faculty of the mind: manas. Manas is a faculty which people have labelled as 'mind'. The English language does not differentiate between the lower mind and the higher mind, only the words 'lower' and 'higher' indicate that they are two distinct experiences. However, in the Samkhya and yogic traditions the higher mind is called mahat. It is also referred to as *antahkarana*, which means the subtle instrument, medium or agent that allows the experience and expression of life.

When the cosmic consciousness manifests, it takes the form of mahat. When Shakti manifests, it takes the form of prana, which controls, activates and provides motion and activity to the senses and the material body. Shakti looks after the physical body, the

senses and the activities of the body, whereas consciousness is contained and integrated with the total mind, including ahamkara, chitta, buddhi and manas. It has been said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (15:7):

*Mamaivaansho jeevaloke jeevabhootah sanaatanah;
Manah shashthaani indriyaani prakritisthaani karshati.*

An eternal portion of Myself, having become a living soul in the world of life, draws to (itself) the five senses with the mind for the sixth, abiding in Nature (Prakriti).

The mind has been called the sixth sense organ here. When the six sense organs, including the mind, assume a form due to their attraction towards Prakriti, the manifest world, then that which was unlimited becomes contained in a body. Due to this containment, the power and expression of expansiveness are no longer there. That principle becomes established in a container. Consciousness assumes the form of mahat, and energy assumes the form of prana.

Each of the four components of mahat is born out of one specific tanmatra, representing the essence of a *tattwa* or element. Ahamkara is born from the earth tanmatra, chitta from the water tanmatra, buddhi from the fire tanmatra and manas from the air tanmatra. Each function of the mind contains within itself the essence and quality of its respective tattwa.



When the greater mind is connected with its own nature, it becomes a medium for realizing the higher Self. When it connects with the lower realms of nature and

manifestation, the contact with the source diminishes while contact with the lower realms increases, and then it becomes the lower mind.

Ego, the 'I' principle

The subtle principle of the greater mind is ahamkara, the ego. Not the ego expressed as arrogance, but the ego which is inherent and gives everyone a self-identity, self-awareness and knowledge of being 'myself', of 'I am'.

There are four ego expressions. The ego is connected to and subject to the meanderings of avidya, abhinivesha, maya and asmita. *Avidya* means ignorance and one of the actions of the ego is to suppress knowledge. With knowledge suppressed, jnana does not manifest; rather, ajnana, avidya or absence of knowledge becomes the state of life. If you observe people who are arrogant and egoistic, you will find that the doors of their learning have closed. They are not willing to open these doors to understand or appreciate any other reality beyond their conditioned perception. Avidya influences the ego behaviour and ego perception. There is no light or luminosity in the state of avidya, everything is obscured.

The ego is also guided by *maya*, illusion, and identifies with maya. It is maya which makes it see itself as big and others as small.

The ego is influenced by *abhinivesha*, insecurity and fear of losing one's hold on oneself, the fear of letting go, of dying.

The ego is guided by and is responsible for *asmita*, the knowledge that 'I exist', 'I am'. It is to guard this knowledge of 'I am' that the ego manifests. If someone utters a few nasty words to you, your sense of identity is hurt. All the conflicts that take place, whether in the context of family, society or the world, are credited to asmita.

The expressions of ego exist as inherent parts of the ego principle. They have no hold or power when you are connected with the source, but become a powerful force when you connect with the world, with the sense objects, with Prakriti.

Egodectomy

The yogis say that managing the ego is a difficult aspect of spiritual life. How can you become aware of your own ego? You cannot see your own face; you need a mirror or another person to tell you what your face looks like. If somebody tells you bluntly what your face looks like, you don't like it. One who says that you are arrogant becomes your enemy. You react strongly to that person, as you don't like to recognize or see yourself.

The yogis say that the final hurdle to cross in the process of self-realization is the ego. Therefore, in the final stage of spiritual life one needs the guidance and inspiration of a guru. Practices can be performed at any time or place. You don't need a guru to learn practices, but a guru becomes necessary to help overcome this last obstacle, the ego. The guru channels the ego, changes its direction. This process is called egodectomy. Not all can go through egodectomy. Therefore, gurus don't have many disciples. They may have thousands of initiates, but they have only one or two disciples on whom egodectomy can be performed successfully. Ramakrishna

Paramahansa had many followers, but he performed egodectomy on only one. Swami Sivananda had many initiates, but he performed egodectomy on only a few. Swami Satyananda had many initiates, but he performed egodectomy on only a few.

If you agree that egodectomy needs to be performed, then you have to know what it means. It means that you have to die to be born again. The old self has to die. The shell has to be broken for the seed to sprout. As long as the shell remains, the seed will never sprout. The shell has to be broken, and that is egodectomy.

Ego management through sanyam

A simple way to acknowledge the ego principle is meditation, and the way to manage the limiting expression of ego is *sanyam*, restraint. With sanyam in your life, nothing can disturb you. In its absence, even a few words will disturb you and create a distorted and altered state of mind. If somebody abuses you, your peace of mind is disturbed because the ego reacts. If there is sanyam, no matter who abuses you or how, you will not react, you will not jump to your feet ready to hit that person.

Sanyam is acquired by only a few, although many try to achieve it. Those who achieve it help others to acquire sanyam. They motivate, inspire and encourage others to tread a more harmonious path in life.

Thus, for the management of ego, first recognize it through meditation and then control it through restraint. The example of praise and abuse is apt. Usually, abuse will hurt you deeply and praise will elate you easily. Praise and abuse are like the swing of a pendulum, always moving from one extreme to the other. You face praise and abuse every day within your family and society, you react to them and try to justify your actions and prove that you are good. Irrespective of what you project, you are always affected by praise and abuse. This effect is experienced not in the realms of manas, buddhi or chitta, but by the ego.

If someone calls you a dog, you take it in and begin to look at yourself in that form. The word 'dog' plays on in your head and becomes a cause of anxiety. Which part of mahat is becoming affected here? Not manas and not buddhi. If buddhi was used, it would be able to know that you do not become a dog if somebody calls you a dog. You would be able to say to yourself, "That person does not know me. Whatever thought prompted him to say it is his problem, I know that I am not a dog." Buddhi will restore your balance. Clarity of thought will immediately free you from negative situations. However, the intellect and reason do not usually come into play, it is the ego which reacts on itself and develops a condition of hurt, aversion, hatred, depression and destructiveness.



The counterforce for ego is sanyam. The first understanding of sanyam is remaining uninfluenced by all changes. If you attain sanyam of the senses, sanyam of mind, sanyam of speech, interaction and behaviour, you will become capable of confronting the onslaught of the ego. However, restraining the senses, mind and speech are practical methods of training to acquire sanyam, but the real meaning of sanyam is the ability to remain unaffected. If you can remain unaffected in all circumstances, you will live in sanyam. You will be joyous, contented and peaceful.

Play of chitta

The second function of mahat is chitta, the memory field, the deep unconscious, the ground where seeds of samskara are planted and nurtured. The chitta activity takes place in relation to memories and experiences gained in life which have become part of your understanding, nature or *swabhava*.

When you look at an object, chitta becomes active and searches through its memory files to see where you have seen the object before. It brings up and out the folder which has stored the experience that you had many years ago. You recall that past event now, the experience, the people involved in it, and the object is identified. Thereafter, the folder is again put away.

Chitta decides what is desired by you and what is not. Your past memories allow you to understand an association better. If you see an instrument which you have never seen before, it has no meaning or use for you, but if you have used it in the past, you will remember how to use it. A knife can be used to cut vegetables, stab someone or conduct an operation to save a life. However, if you do not have any memory of these three functions, you will not be able to use the knife. If you have used a knife only to cut vegetables and have never heard it can be used to kill someone, you will not have that memory imprint in your chitta. Therefore, connection with the world, the senses and sense objects, recognition of the environment, your choices, likes and dislikes take place through chitta as it pulls on past impressions and memories.

Chitta also contains the expressions of pleasure and pain. The experience of pleasure and pain is not a buddhi or manas activity, it is a chitta activity. A childhood memory can be pleasant or unpleasant and whenever that memory surfaces, the corresponding emotion will also surface. A memory which is pleasant will bring happiness; a memory which is unpleasant will bring suffering. Pain and pleasure thus arise from chitta. When someone asks you, “How do you feel?” and you reply, “I feel happy”, it is not manas, buddhi or ego speaking, it is a chitta analysis. Chitta prompts you to say, “I feel happy”, for it has analyzed the moment as good or bad through its past experiences. Chitta appreciates and negates; it defines one thing as good and another as bad; it associates with one thing and disassociates with another.

Chitta management through meditation

Many psychological problems stem from chitta; they do not stem from the realms of buddhi, manas or ego. Most psychosomatic problems have their roots in chitta. An incident about an Australian doctor who came to the ashram in the seventies will illustrate this point.

The person was suffering from asthma and his condition had started at a very young age. Medical science did not have any proven systems for asthma management at that time. Therefore, the available medication did not help the little boy. As he grew up, he decided to become a doctor and completed his MBBS, and tried to manage his respiratory condition, but to no avail. In fact, his asthma worsened with age.

In 1976, he met Swami Satyananda and came to Munger. Sri Swamiji said to him, “Till now you have tried every medication and nothing has helped you. Is that true?” The doctor said, “Yes, that is true, nothing has helped me manage my asthma.” Sri Swamiji said, “Practise meditation from today.” The doctor began to practise meditation along with asana and pranayama and live a yogic life in the ashram.

One day he has a flash, a vision, during his meditation. A memory comes to the surface of his mind where he sees himself as a young boy at home with a babysitter. The babysitter is forcing some food into his mouth, which the child does not want to eat. The babysitter threatens him, “If you don’t eat your food, I’m going to tell your parents and they will punish you.” As a child he cannot analyze what the babysitter is saying or what it means, but he hears the words ‘punishment’, ‘complaint’ and ‘parents’, and his insides curl up, and an emotional block forms.

That was the cause of his respiratory disorder. After he glimpsed this memory in meditation, he found himself relieved of the constraints of his asthmatic symptoms. He is Dr Swami Shankardevanananda, author of the book *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes*. When he returned to Australia, he had himself medically investigated through the Ventolin Challenge Test. The result was clear; the test proved that he was free from the effects of asthma.

What does this incident indicate? A memory in chitta becomes the cause of a problem later on in life. When that memory is recognized, the cause of the problem is recognized and removed. A conscious acceptance takes place of an event that transpired many years ago and one finds peace within oneself. That is the play of chitta.

Likes and dislikes are also chitta manifestations. Whenever you say, “I like this, I like that, I don’t like this, I don’t like that, I am attracted by this, I am repulsed by that”, you are expressing chitta. The memories allow you to appreciate, like, accept and desire, and the memories also tell you to reject, neglect, dislike and not desire. When you go to a restaurant and look at the menu, you select items which you have tasted and appreciated previously. If it is something new, you will be hesitant. There will be doubt, “Perhaps I won’t like it.” As long as you don’t have the memory, there is doubt. Once something becomes part of your memory, the decision is clear.

To manage chitta manifestations and expressions, meditation is the method. When Sri Swamiji instructed the doctor to practise meditation, the veils of his mind dropped one by one and he was able to see the childhood memory and realize the cause of his asthma. A condition which could not be cured through medication was overcome through meditation. Sri Swamiji knew that the imbalance in his body was not physical or mental, but stemmed from chitta, from an impression, a memory. Yogic scriptures say that one needs to practise meditation regularly to manage chitta and the perceptions of likes and dislikes that arise from it.

Determined and negotiable buddhi

The third aspect of mahat is buddhi. Buddhi is of two types: firm and negotiable. The firm buddhi denotes firmness of nature, idea, thought and knowledge. You are not oscillating, vacillating and fluctuating in your thoughts, ideas or perceptions. That firmness and clarity is the decided intelligence, *nishchayatmika buddhi*, the stable buddhi. The fluctuating nature is *vyavasayatmika buddhi*.

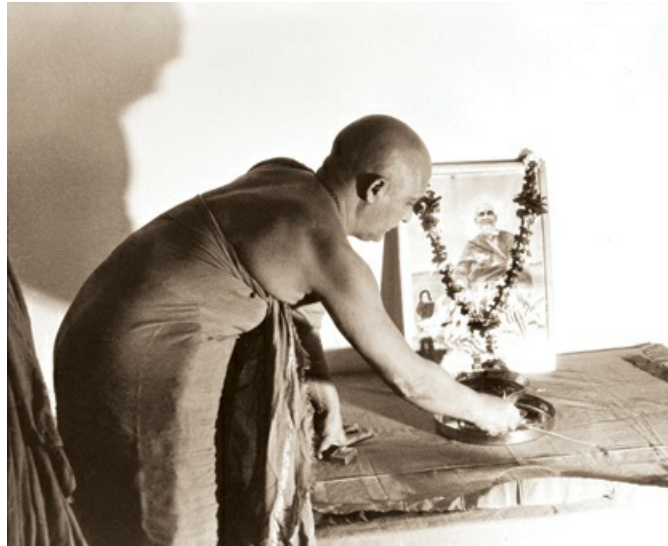
Most of the time, it is the *vyavasayatmika buddhi*, the negotiable buddhi, that is active in you. There are people who come to me and discuss a problem. The next moment they will discuss the same problem with somebody else, seeking their advice and guidance. Then they will go to a third person and say, “I have this problem. Swamiji told me this and the other person told me that. What is your opinion on the subject?” In such cases, the person can never connect with anybody because they are only moving from one person to another. There is no faith, trust or understanding. If there was a little bit of understanding, they would appreciate the answers and solutions that were given. In the absence of understanding, buddhi becomes the cause of greater confusion.

Vyavasayatmika buddhi is like the bee which goes to every flower to gather pollen. Some people may say that it is collecting the best from everything. If you collect the best from everything or everyone, which ‘best’ are you going to use? That will be the cause of confusion. The negotiable buddhi has a bargaining quality; it is looking for the best buy at the lowest cost. The determined buddhi has a resolute quality; its aim is clear.

Buddhi management through viveka and vairagya

Buddhi has to be managed through discrimination and detachment. The force to transform buddhi is *viveka*, the discriminative ability. There is a saying that the royal

swan has the ability to separate milk from water. Perhaps it is only an idea or perhaps it is a reality, but it indicates the application of viveka buddhi, the discriminative ability. Know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Allow that to be the function of buddhi.



When buddhi is not used properly, it becomes clouded and confused. When it is used properly, it becomes sharp. Buddhi is also the source of all vasanas, passions and desires. When vasanas become strong, then the colour of buddhi changes completely. It is similar to ink being mixed into water. If black ink is mixed into a glass of clear water, the entire colour of the water will change. If attachment comes up because of a desire, that will colour buddhi. If aggression comes up because of some unfulfilled vasana, it will colour buddhi.

The story of Tulsidas is an example. He was married to a wonderful wife, but the problem was that he was totally obsessed with her. Initially the wife accepted the attention, but eventually she became fed up and one day decided that she needed her own space. She sent Tulsidas to the market and while he was away, left for her parents' home in another village across the river. When Tulsidas returned and found his wife gone, he became very agitated and asked the neighbours for her whereabouts. They told him. Tulsidas thought, "How can I live alone in this house without her? I don't know for how long she has gone and I am desperate. I need to be with her. I will go to her village."

Dusk had descended and it was the time of monsoon. The rain was pouring down, the river was in spate and all the ferrymen had locked up their boats and gone home. In the semi-darkness Tulsidas saw a log floating in the river. He jumped in, grabbed the log, paddled and reached the other shore. He walked to his in-laws' house in pitch darkness at a late hour when everyone was asleep. His wife's room was on the first floor. How to get there?

As he felt around the house, he discovered a rope hanging from the balcony of his wife's room. He grabbed the rope, thinking, "My wife is very considerate. She would have realized that I would not be able to sleep in her absence, so she has left the rope hanging for me to come up without disturbing her parents." He climbed up to the balcony and knocked on the door. The wife woke up, opened the door and saw Tulsi standing there! When Tulsi said to her that he had come to be with her, she said, "In this monsoon, with the river in full spate, how did you cross the river, how did you climb up to this balcony?" Tulsi told her how. The wife hadn't left any rope hanging, so when they went to check with a lantern they found that what Tulsi took to be a rope was a huge snake. When they went to see the log, they discovered that it was a bloated human corpse. The wife said, "If you had even one percent of love for God as you do for me, you would be different." Those words hit Tulsi like a ton of bricks. He said, "Yes, you are right!" and from there he left in search of God.

This story indicates that passions and desires take birth from buddhi. Vasanas take birth from buddhi. When desire and passion rage, what is appropriate and what is inappropriate is forgotten, what should be done and what should not be done is forgotten. There is a saying, *Kamaturanam na bhayam na lajja* – "A person who is obsessed and passionate does not know fear or shame." A person who is full of vasanas goes after their fulfilment blindly, and they become the cause of attachment. In order to manage buddhi, you have to detach from those attachments.

Chitta and the pleasure of chitta will attract you, but buddhi will attach you. When you see a beautiful car on the road, chitta says, "That's a good car. You have seen the previous models, compare this one with those." That is attraction, *raga*. There is attraction for the pleasurable. If a salesman comes to your house to sell you something and you have a better model, you will say, "No, I don't like it." There is *dwesha*, repulsion, as you remember that you already possess something better.

Raga becomes *asakti*, attachment, when you hook yourself to it. When you buy the car that you appreciated on the road, when it is in your possession and you know that it belongs to you, you become *asakta*, attached. Ownership comes in, and attachment is an offshoot of the belief in ownership. This belief is triggered by buddhi. It is buddhi which takes a decision regarding objects, regarding you and your wellbeing. It is buddhi which decides what you want and what you do not want. These decisions manifest in the form of desires in life, and create attachments. The extreme passions, the obsessive nature which manifests at the level of buddhi creates attachment, a link or association with objects.

Every individual suffers due to attachment. You will form an attachment for such small things that you may not even be aware of it. Your grandfather may have given you a pen forty years ago and you will hold on to it even though it is totally unusable. You cannot let go of such small things due to your attachment.

The method to break away from attachments is cultivating *drashta bhava*, the attitude of an observer, and making room for *anasakta bhava*, a non-attached attitude, in life. Thus, the way to manage buddhi is cultivating viveka and vairagya. With vairagya, you can know and be the witness of the cause of your attachment, infatuation, desire, need

and dependency. With viveka you can mould the behaviour of buddhi and redirect it in a different and positive direction. Viveka helps to mould the behaviour of buddhi, it does not alter buddhi. Buddhi still continues to function in the normal manner; the same desires still manifest, but they are moulded. You are able to discriminate between what is your requirement and what is your infatuation. At present you don't have that ability. You don't know what your infatuation is; you don't know what you desire. Viveka gives you the strength and awareness to know and vairagya helps to disconnect from the asaktis, the obsessive attachments, so that buddhi becomes free from one of the grips of maya and is able to think of some other realities.

Function of manas

The function of manas, which everybody calls the mind, is *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*, will and doubt. The manifestation of manas is perceived through thoughts. The thoughts that come to you are created by your own manas. Whenever you think, you are using your manas, just as when you write, you use your hand, a pen and paper. When these three things come together, then writing can be created. In the same manner, thoughts are created continuously in manas.



Manas is actively connected with the senses. Ego, chitta and buddhi are not actively connected with the senses, but manas is. Everything that you see will create a thought. Everything that you touch will be known by manas. Everything that you feel – heat, cold, heaviness or lightness – is perceived by manas.

Manas is integrated with the senses and each sense creates a thought, which can be clear or confused. When the thought is clear it is called a *sankalpa*. At that point, manas has direction and clarity, and is convinced of the appropriateness and correctness of the thought. The same thought, if it is not clear, will create doubt and questions. This

indicates that the goal and focus are absent. Thus, it is said that sankalpa and vikalpa are the functions of manas. Thought is the basis, but will and doubt, clarity and confusion, criticism and comparison are the functions of manas.

You have heard the story of the archery contest in the epic *Mahabharata*. Guru Dronacharya was teaching archery to the Kauravas and Pandavas. One day he decided to test them. He placed a clay bird on a high tree branch and told his students that they would have to hit the bird's eye. He called them one by one, told them to string the bow and then asked, "What do you see?" Some said, "I see the tree." Some said, "I see the tree, the sky, the leaves, my brothers, the forest." To each of these contestants, Dronacharya said, "Put down your bow and arrow." When it was Arjuna's turn, he replied, "I see the bird's eye." Hearing this, Dronacharya said, "Shoot the arrow," and the arrow hit the bird's eye.

The story indicates the states of sankalpa and vikalpa in the mind. The guru asked them to shoot at the bird's eye, which indicated that the students had to become alert, bring their mind to a point and focus the gaze at the bird's eye. Those who were bright could understand this. Arjuna was bright, and he said to himself, "The guru's instruction is 'bird's eye', nothing else." Others thought, "Oh, it's just a competition and all we need to do is shoot the arrow." This is vikalpa, confusion, doubt, whereas Arjuna's state of mind was that of sankalpa. He saw the goal and connected himself with it. He did not see left or right, ahead or behind, his gaze was fixed at the goal.

Can you make your mind as still and focused as that? Can you bring your thoughts under control? Your experience till now will tell you that you can't. If you try to meditate, your mind travels to the beach. You try to pull it back, but after some time it has again run away to family or food. You again pull it back. The states of sankalpa and vikalpa are a constant reality of life.

Manas management through pratyahara and dharana

The methods to manage sankalpa and vikalpa are pratyahara and dharana. These are the two techniques from raja yoga to manage manas. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Arjuna asks Sri Krishna, "How can one control the mind?" Sri Krishna replies, "By withdrawing the mind just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs within its shell." The example of the tortoise is very apt, for the tortoise withdraws six limbs, including the four legs, the tail and the head. You also need to withdraw six attributes: the five senses and the mind. You need to withdraw the senses that are at present connected with objects, which creates identification with the objective world. Disconnect the senses from objects and draw them in. This is pratyahara.

The teaching of pratyahara appears in both the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras*. The same thought is stated in both scriptures: one needs to withdraw the mind from the sense objects which make the mind restless. You do not negate the sense objects; rather, you free yourself from them so that the mind becomes still and quiet. You should not negate the sense objects or your desires and passions. Become their observer and reroute them, redirect them. The method of rerouting is pratyahara.

Ahamkara, buddhi, chitta and manas have been defined separately as four different

functions of the mind, but at one point they are also interconnected. Therefore, don't think that manas is totally isolated from ahamkara, buddhi or chitta, or that they don't mix and merge. The compartments are being created to facilitate understanding of a state of existence, life and experience, but there is no clear division. The division can be identified only because of the functions of a particular quality of the greater mind.

Vrittis, whirlpools of the mind

Another aspect of the mind that must be clearly understood is vritti. Every mental behaviour is perceived by the individual in the form of a *vritti*, a condition, a modification. Vritti comes from the word *vritta*, which means a circle. Therefore, *vritti* means a circle or vortex in which one becomes involved and cannot be freed from. One cannot extract oneself from that influence.

The human mind is very weak. People are easily influenced by anything and everything. Positive experiences create a vritti in the mind and negative experiences also create a vritti in the mind. Worry is a vritti of the mind, tension and stress are vrittis, how you perceive life is a vritti, pessimism and optimism are vrittis, negativity and positivity are vrittis. Vritti means a condition, and there are millions of conditions which are not even recognized because the understanding is not deep or evolved enough.

A vritti arises when any one of the four functions of the mind – manas, buddhi, ahamkara or chitta – becomes prominent. An altered mental state or outlook is experienced at this time, whether positive or negative. Just as a drop of ink can colour a jar of water, a drop of ahamkara, chitta, buddhi or manas colours the clarity of mind. This change in the natural state of mind is called a vritti.

Sage Patanjali says that the mind is experienced through vrittis, which are painful as well as pleasurable. He has identified five vrittis which he considered important to achieve the state of dhyana and bring the mind under control. The yoga of Patanjali stops at the level of dhyana, it does not go beyond. Samadhi is an experience, but the effort, the practice, the instruction is up to dhyana and not beyond. For Patanjali, management of the mind was of prime importance, as it would lead to the stage of dhyana. For this reason, he identified the vrittis which are obstructions in acquiring the state of dhyana, the meditative state, and did not identify all vrittis.

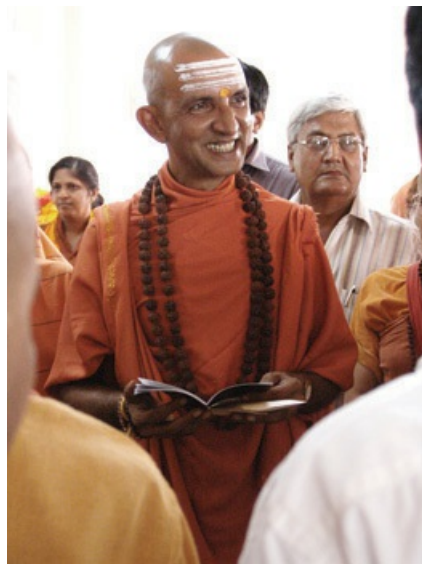
The five vrittis mentioned by Patanjali are *pramana*, proof or right knowledge, *viparyaya*, illusory or wrong knowledge, *vikalpa*, doubt, *nidra*, sleep, and *smriti*, memory.

Pramana is connected with buddhi. When buddhi experiences something, it concludes that the subject is not a mere belief, but a proven fact. That which can be experienced is proven. How can you prove the taste of sugar? By experiencing it. How can you prove the heat of fire? Your experience is proof. That which is perceivable, visible, factual, and can be the basis of an experience is pramana. It is the basis of knowledge and does not change.

Viparyaya is *bhramanti jnana* or illusory knowledge. It is what you surmise or estimate. It is not proof, it is conjecture. If you see smoke in the distance, a thought will arise, "There is a fire somewhere." However, it is not certain as yet whether the cause of the

smoke is fire. When a distant object, which cannot be perceived directly, is accepted by the consciousness, it is conjecture. If you need to know the arrival time of a train, you call Railways Enquiries and learn that the train is two hours late. Now you keep estimating when the train will arrive and look for proof based on your estimation. At the end of two hours you make a phone call again and find that the train has been further delayed. There is proof of delay, but your mind is engaged in estimation. This is called illusory knowledge.

Vikalpa, doubt, is a state in which many thoughts crowd the mind. You are not able to follow any one thought to its end. The presence of many thoughts deludes the mind and represents lack of clarity, discrimination and wisdom. Doubt is a condition which overpowers the mind. People doubt each other and they also doubt God and guru. Doubt is an integral part of everything. If I don't look at somebody, the person will think, "Swamiji doesn't like me any more." The doubt will come, which will disturb the mental harmony. If I talk and laugh with one person, someone else will think, "Why is he talking and laughing with that person, he is not even looking at me!" The doubt will come, and that is a *vritti*. From doubt issues jealousy, hatred and other negative qualities. Your garden of life is adorned with these negative qualities. Hate, jealousy and greed are all flowering in your garden and you take care of them so well, you protect them and desire that these flowers should grow. You identify with these qualities; you don't identify with wisdom.



You identify with things that are restrictive in nature; you don't identify with those that are uplifting. Doubt always gives birth to negative *vrittis* and will always give birth to positive *vrittis*. Will strengthens the positive while doubt strengthens the negative. Will makes the mind clear, sharp, creative, dynamic and vibrant, while doubt makes the mind clouded.

Sage Patanjali has also explained *nidra* or sleep as a *vritti*, as it is an altered state of

consciousness in which there is absence of awareness for a period of time. The absence of light at night indicates not the absence of the world, but the absence of perception. The world will continue to function, but you will not be able to perceive it. Similarly, nidra is absence of awareness from the mental dimension, while the presence of awareness in the mental dimension is the waking state where you are up, active and alert. The absence of that awareness indicates the sleeping state. Vrittis are active in the waking state, and in the absence of awareness, a vritti is also generated in the form of nidra, sleep or disconnection.

The fifth vritti identified by Sage Patanjali is *smriti* or memory, which is an aspect of chitta. Smriti is an altered state of consciousness in which there is lack of awareness. When you are lost in memory you forget your surroundings, you lose touch with reality and the external world. At that time you are not aware of the mind, the time, the place, your responsibility or duty. Smriti, in the form of memory, which becomes visible and dominates the environment of the mind, becomes a vritti.

According to Sage Patanjali, the five vrittis are what one needs to know, understand and go beyond in order to attain the state of yoga. Vrittis are born due to the union of the mind with the senses. If the mind does not unite with the senses, vrittis will not be born. The senses perceive an object and create a desire in the mind. The two unite at this point and that is where the mind becomes trapped in its own whirlpools. Thus, union of desire and object, senses and mind, gives rise to vrittis.

The experience of vrittis is internal, or mental. They bring about a change in the normal state of the mind. The dominating vritti at any given point of time influences your thoughts and behaviour. Sage Patanjali's teachings on raja yoga are aimed at checking these vrittis. He says that if there is a vritti, it will always influence your mind and make it dissipated, and a dissipated mind cannot become one-pointed. It cannot perfect dhyana, experience samadhi or attain a balanced state of life. Therefore, try to be free of these conditions which disturb your mind, which alter your natural state of mind and thinking. Know them, understand them and change them.

He has used a special word in this context: vritti nirodha. He did not use the word *virodha*, opposition. He does not say that you should oppose your mental states or struggle with them. People usually practise virodha. When you sit down for your japa or meditation, you realize that your mind is running everywhere and you struggle with the mind so it can be inspired to come to a point of focus and practise dhyana. Here you are opposing the dissipated vritti of the mind, but yoga says, not *virodha*, not opposition, not even *avarodha*, not suppression, but *nirodha*, cessation.

Nirodha means to stop a process which is taking place. If there is a flow of water, you put your hand on it and it stops. A thought comes, you flash the red light at it. Another thought comes, you again flash the red light at it. Slowly, the number of thoughts reduces. Nirodha means to provide the right direction for a natural process, not by opposing it but by redirecting it. When you become anxious, thinking that your mind is not engaged in the practice and therefore you will not be benefited, you begin to struggle with yourself, and practise virodha. It is when you understand that yes, your mind is not engaged in the practice and slowly try to bring it under control that the

dissipations of the mind will cease and you will attain one-pointedness.

If one drop of black ink falls in a jar of water, never mind, just don't put ten drops in. Accept what has happened, don't oppose it, but don't allow it to be amplified. At the same time, try to clear up the cloudiness that has already taken place. You can do this by adding some clear water to the jar. This is what is achieved through the practices of raja yoga. Managing the vrittis is possible through raja yoga and that was the message of the *Yoga Sutras*.



States and Functions of the Mind

27 April 2010

STATES OF MIND

The whole concept of the mind is based on its four functions of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. These four functions provide an understanding and presence of the conscious faculty known as the mind. Apart from this, the mind has also been visualized as dynamic, rational, emotional and psychic by the trends of psychology.

Four types of mind

Dynamic mind: Yoga says that the first type of mind is *kriyasheela* and psychologists call it the dynamic mind. The *kriyasheela* or dynamic mind is active and extroverted. A dynamic mind will find it very hard to sit quietly. Children have dynamic minds; their mind is not dissipated or diverted. Dissipation and diversion are different from dynamism. The dynamic mind picks up a link and follows that link all the way through, whether consciously or unconsciously.

When the dynamic mind is predominant in an adult, the person becomes extroverted and interactive, with society, profession and family. Such people are involved in every action that can bring them closer to other human beings and society. The dynamically minded person is very social and practical.

Rational mind: The second type of mind is the *buddhijivi* mind, which psychology calls the intellectual mind, the rational, logical, mathematical, scientific mind. Such a mind predominates in those who research, investigate, originate theories and develop formulas. Scientists have such a mind. Philosophers and knowledgeable people also have intellectual minds.

When the intellectual mind predominates, it is difficult for the individual to associate with the external environment. Such people prefer to remain in solitude, thinking, analyzing, reflecting and working out the details of problems.

Emotional mind: The third type is the *bhavic* mind, in which the *bhavas*, sentiments and emotions dominate the mental behaviour. They are people who are sensitive, who hurt and feel pain easily and also move into states of dejection and depression easily.

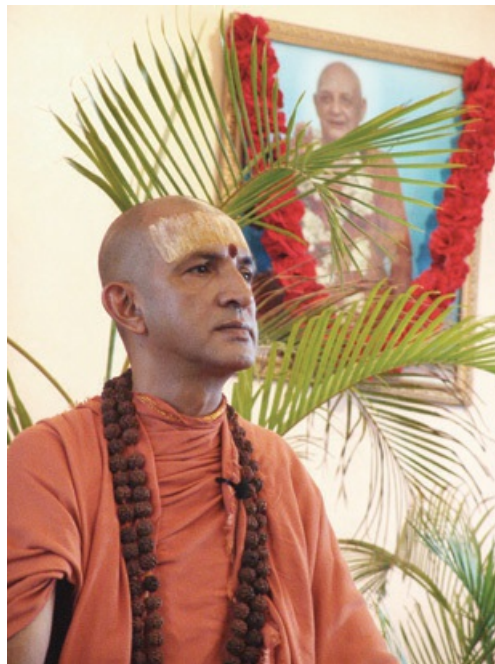
They are too sentimental to face the realities of life.

This type of personality sometimes becomes inspired to connect with the divine or higher force. Such people become bhaktas; they become priests, nuns and sannyasins. The world is too irrational for them and the only rationality which they find is in their own connection with the divine. It is in that connection that they find happiness and contentment. If such people associate with the world, they see it as a painful experience. They see the world as a destructive experience and suffer on account of that.

Psychic mind: The fourth type of mind is the psychic mind, *antarjagrit mana*. Here, each faculty of the mind, manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, is more aware of its internal experiential processes rather than the outer environment. People who are born with this type of mind generally become yogis or involve themselves in higher mystical, spiritual practices. Spiritual life becomes the foundation of their behaviour and life.

Different minds, different paths

According to the quality of mind that one has, a different path is needed to reach the goal. Yogis of yore came to the conclusion that for each type of mind the approach to self-discovery has to be different.



For a psychic mind, the approach to self-discovery is introspection, reflection, meditation and contemplation. For them raja yoga is important.

For an emotional mind, the approach to self-discovery is management of emotions – trying to realize them, understand them, manage them, purify them and connect them with the object of one's faith and reverence in which there can be greater satisfaction and happiness in life. For them the path of bhakti yoga is prescribed so they can

discover the purity of their sentiments.

For the intellectual mind, yogis have identified the process of jnana yoga, knowledge. The path of jnana yoga begins with understanding the state one is in and then deciding upon the process which can help one realize the true nature of the self.

For the dynamic mind, for the person who is extroverted and associating with society and the world intensely, the path of self-discovery is through the process of hatha yoga and karma yoga, harnessing the energy manifestations in life. Not just the practice of postures or breathing techniques, but harnessing the energies, the faculties of life.

In this manner, the yogis devised a process, a method, a system by which the different types of minds can be dealt with and inspired to attain higher experiences, leading towards the realization of one's nature.

Western and yogic parallels of states of awareness

Present day psychology classifies the mind under three categories: conscious mind, subconscious mind and unconscious mind. The use of these words, 'conscious', 'subconscious' and 'unconscious' in relation to the mind defines the state of awareness that the mind holds at a given moment. They do not define the mind; they only determine the range of conscious perception in the waking state, the dreaming state and the state of sleep.

Jagrit avastha: The waking state is known as *jagrit avastha* and it corresponds to the conscious mind. When you are awake, when all the senses are active, when all the mental faculties are at their peak of performance, then there is a connection with the environment, with the world, with the senses and sense objects. In the waking state all the faculties are active; the conscious awareness is performing one hundred percent. How aware you are is a different matter, for such awareness within does not reflect your mental nature. If you shine a torch in a big hall, it will illuminate only one area of the hall. It will not illuminate the whole hall. In the same way, human beings who are not in control of their mental faculties are not able to experience the completeness of the conscious faculty, the full range of the conscious awareness in their daily life. They are only aware of those areas where sense awareness has taken place.

Sense awareness is an important factor in guiding the awareness. When you look at something pleasant or desirable, that is sense awareness. When you taste something which is pleasing and desirable and which gives you contentment and joy, that is sense awareness. When you touch something soft, the contact is sense awareness. In your daily activities you only follow the awareness of one sense at a given moment. In your response to or understanding of the mind, you use only partial awareness even when you are awake. However, the full range of conscious awareness is active in the waking state. This is the meaning of *jagrit avastha*, and only yogis can become aware of it, for their mind is not confined to one observation. They are able to observe and be the *drashta* of everything that is happening.

Swapna avastha: The second state of mind is the subconscious mind, which in the tradition is spoken of as *swapna avastha*, the dreaming state.

The dreaming state does not reflect the state of sleep in which you dream at night. It is an indication of the range of conscious awareness having reduced from one hundred percent to fifty percent. It has become half, so you are neither here, fully attentive and alert at the external level, nor are you there, fully attentive and alert at the internal level. You are on the threshold of the waking and sleeping states, of full conscious awareness and the absence of it.

In the dreaming state, even the powers and senses of the mind are reduced by fifty percent. When this happens, the mind moves into a drowsy, dreamlike state. That drowsy state has been identified as the subconscious mind, where you are not in total control of the senses, the total range of your conscious awareness. There is neither absence of conscious awareness nor direct cognition of or relationship with any sense object. However, you are aware that you exist and that awareness keeps your mind active.

Many people take a siesta after meals. During this rest one often comes to the point of subconscious experience. You are not sleeping, you are awake, but at the same time you are not awake. You are sleeping. There is no depth in the sleep and there isn't total awareness. It is an in-between state, a drowsy state, and that is the subconscious state, *swapna avastha*.

Nidra: The third state is *nidra*. It is the equivalent of the unconscious state, indicating the absence of conscious awareness from the senses and sense objects. The senses are disconnected from the mind. This happens when you sleep at night. There is no awareness of sensory experiences; instead, the mental awareness becomes powerful. When the mental awareness, the *chitta* and *buddhi* awareness becomes powerful in the state of deep sleep, corresponding dreams appear. However, these dreams do not reflect the state of *swapna*, which precedes this state of the unconscious.

There is absence of consciousness and awareness in the unconscious or *nidra* state. However, this lack of awareness is only in regard to external objects, not the internal subjects. When you fall asleep, the body and mind assume a certain state, the state of relaxation. Even if there is external commotion, it does not disturb that state until the disturbance crosses the threshold of the state of relaxation. If a mosquito bites you in deep sleep you will not wake up, but if someone beats a drum next to you it will cross the threshold and stir you into wakefulness. In the state of unconsciousness the mind is not connected with the senses and external objects, the energy of the mind remains contained in itself. Such containment of the energy of the mind in itself is the state of *nidra*.

It is not necessary to be fast asleep in the state of *nidra*. Many yogis who practise meditation and have control over their minds do not sleep. They rest, but they do not fall into deep sleep like ordinary people. Their sleep is called *shwana nidra*. Their awareness remains so alert that if even a needle falls on the floor they will hear it, respond to it and ask, "Who is there? What is happening?" This is possible because their mind is not restless. When a restless mind becomes quiet it enters into deep sleep, but a mind which is not agitated does not fall into deep sleep. It attains a state of rest.

When you withdraw yourself, the agitations of the senses and the mind lessen. When

you are active, the mind and the senses are agitated, but when you become internalized, when you are able to balance and restrain your mind, you become free from the effects of mental agitation.

Four states of mind in Mandukya Upanishad

The *Mandukya Upanishad* is one of the major Upanishads which describes states of mind: conscious, subconscious, unconscious and superconscious or turiya.

Vaishwanara: The text describes the conscious mind as vaishwanara. The word *vaishwanara* is formed from the words *vishwa*, which means the universe, and *nara*, which means a presence, a body, a figure or a form. In the jagrit state there is total identification of the mind with the world, and that is the vaishwanara state. You are connected with vishwa, the universe, the world.

The text says that vaishwanara has nineteen mouths. 'Mouth' represents the faculties of the senses and the mind by which you receive, assimilate and process information about the world. The *karmendriyas*, five organs of action, and *jnanendriyas*, five organs of knowledge, are the ten mouths with which vaishwanara enjoys the pleasures of the world. The antahkarana with its four components, and the five tattvas, elements, are added to this number, which makes a total of nineteen. Thus vaishwanara in the waking state uses nineteen faculties to recognize, receive, process and analyze information from the environment, the surroundings and the world.



Tejas: The Upanishad further says that the dreamlike state is the tejas state. *Tejas* is where you are aware of the luminosity of the mind partially, and the luminosity of prana partially, 50:50. The prana shakti and the mind in that drowsy, subconscious state represent the fifty percent range of both. In the waking state you are only aware of the luminosity of the senses. In the middle state you are aware of the luminosity of the mind and prana at the same time.

Prajna: The third state of the mind, the unconscious mind of Western psychology, is defined in the text as *prajna*. In this state only the luminosity of the mind is experienced, not that of *prana* or the senses. *Prajna* means to know. Thus, *prajna* is the state where total knowledge is contained within the mind and the mind is aware of it. That is the unconscious state.

Turiya: The fourth state of mind which has been identified in the *Mandukya Upanishad* is *turiya*, the transcendental state where the mind has separated from the influences of the senses and sense objects. Here the mind is not influenced by its volitions, *sankalpas*, or its *vasanas*, desires, obsessions and attachments. It is free from it all, and continues to exist as an entity beyond the influence and gravitational pull of time, space and object. That is the *turiya* state as described in the Upanishad.

The Indian system of thought is a step ahead of Western psychology, which stops at the unconscious state. Indian thinkers said that there is another state beyond the unconscious in which the mind breaks all its barriers. In this state it is able to see the internal world and the external world as one, it does not differentiate between the two. Right now there is a separation between your experience of the external world and the internal world. There is a push and pull between the mind and the senses and that is perceived as this separation.

Once the separation ends and the mind becomes balanced, its agitations cease and its wandering tendency lessens, then the mind force awakens. The mind becomes so powerful that it can influence the environment. The mind assumes total consciousness and becomes the witness of the senses. It becomes its own witness and directs its behaviour as well as that of the senses. This is known as the state of *turiya*.

Sages and siddhas attain the state of *turiya* spontaneously. Once the individual attains this state, the boundaries between past, present and future are no longer binding. The boundaries of time do not apply. If such siddhas look at you, they do not see you as a person but as an open book. They can look at all the chapters of the book, they can know you completely. They can know your past as well as your future.

In this way, the Indian system of thought has carried the concepts of mind and consciousness beyond the realms of psychology. What has been said may not have been proven scientifically, but the subject has been explained in-depth through contemplation and experiential understanding by the sages. It is these thoughts that modern psychologists are now adopting, trying to understand and research so that psychology has a firmer base. This is the gift of Indian thought to modern psychology.

Moods

Another aspect of the mind that must be understood is mood. Often it is stated that someone is in a good mood or a bad mood. But what is the actual meaning of mood?

Mood in Sanskrit is called *bhava*, and the scriptures say that there are two kinds of *bhava*: *prasanna* or joyous and *shokagrasta* or despondent. In *prasanna bhava*, joy, happiness and contentment spread over the mind like sunlight spread over a whole area. The mind feels light and weightless. Along with the mind, the body also feels light. You feel as if you are floating on air. To walk or even run feels effortless. You totally

flow in that mood.

The other kind of mood is *shokagrasta* and this also totally envelops the mind. When there is worry, anxiety, grief or despondency, it changes the mood of the mind. When you came here this morning, a stream of thought would have been running through your mind. You may have been thinking of what you would do later in the day or tomorrow; you may have been thinking of the difficulties you are facing or the resources at your disposal. You were on your way here, but you were lost in your own thoughts. At that time your mood was different. It was a worrisome mood. On arriving here, you participated in the kirtan and the mood changed. The thoughts that were earlier clouding the mind disappeared.

The two moods of joy and despondency colour the mind differently. Mood is also connected with *vrittis*, and *vrittis* are often connected with whims. What are whims? Children are whimsical. Whims are waves that arise in the mind. One wave arises and that is one whim, a second wave arises and that is another whim, and so on. The waves are many and they break on the surface of the mind due to *vrittis* and moods.



Equanimity

There is another state beyond whimsicality: the state of equanimity which the scriptures hint at. Not everyone is able to attain this state; therefore, it is not generally spoken of. Most people get swept away by their moods, always swinging this way and that way. Five thousand years ago Sri Krishna said, *Samatvam yoga uchayate* – “Equanimity is the highest yoga”, but how many people have been able to live equanimity in these five thousand years? How many among the millions of people in this world possess equanimity?

Only a person who walks in awareness can attain the state of equanimity, and such a person is a yogi, a *sadhaka*, a spiritual practitioner. Those who are not aware cannot possess equanimity. The *Bhagavad Gita* has been chanted for the last five thousand years by millions and many have spoken and written on its philosophy; however, they are not able to apply the philosophy in their own lives, as they are not aware, they are not

accomplished spiritually, they are not yogis. They are immersed in the material world. Therefore, all that is written in the *Bhagavad Gita* sounds good, but no one is able to incorporate it in their life. That is the human weakness.

The yogis say that it is when you are able to adjust with the *dwaita* or dual state of mind – the fluctuation between the opposite states of joy and sorrow, gain and loss, heat and cold – that you will be able to attain equanimity. That is when you will be able to live your life properly and peacefully within the limits of your capabilities. The biggest sadhana in life is adjustment. Reaction is a behaviour which arises spontaneously; you react to situations automatically, that is natural.

The method to train the mind to break free of its reactive nature is samatvam, and before samatvam comes adjustment. Equanimity can only be acquired by adjusting to the mind. You cannot attain equanimity by opposing your own mind. Learn the methods to adjust and compromise so that you can keep your mind balanced throughout gain and loss, good and bad, and continue to march ahead. This will bring about equanimity in your life.

Four wild horses

Sri Swamiji used to tell me a story when I was a child to explain what it means to adjust with the mind.

A king had four wild horses which no one could ride. No one in the entire kingdom had been able to train them. The king proclaimed that any person who tamed and trained the horses would be generously rewarded. Many people came out of greed for the reward, but they did not know how to ride a horse; they had only seen others do it. They would try to saddle the horses and climb on their back, but the horses would shake them off and trample over them. Some ended up with broken bones and some even died. Years passed and no one was able to bring the horses under control.

One day a young man arrived. He said to the king, “I would like to try my luck with your horses.” The king replied, “Think well before you make the attempt. Many people have failed.” The young man said, “I have thought it over, that is why I have come. However, I have a condition. I would like to keep the horses with me for a year. For that period do not try to find out how I am managing with them. After a year, I will return them myself.”

The king agreed and the young man went away with the horses. Days passed, months passed, a whole year passed, even the day when the man was supposed to return with the horses dawned and faded. The king thought the man must have either sold the horses or died under their hooves, or the horses may have run away.

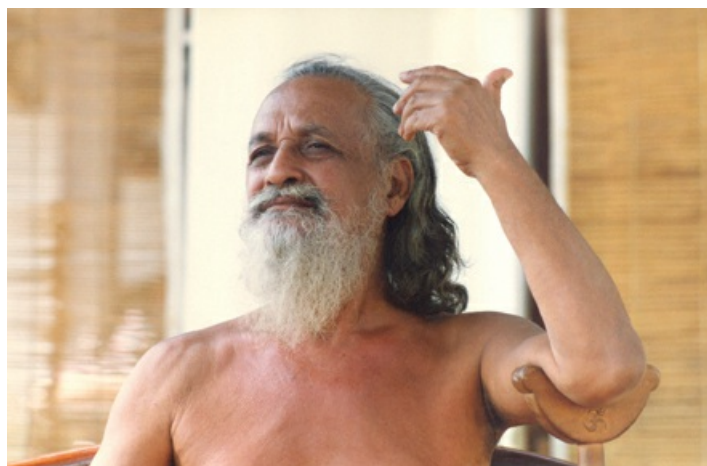
A few more months went by. One day the king was strolling on the terrace of the palace. Suddenly he noticed that on the royal pathway was the young man astride a horse and leading the other three, making his way to the palace. The king went down to the palace entrance and the man handed the reins over to him. He said, “Their training is complete. I am returning the horses to you. Now you can ride them, trot them, canter them or even make them participate in horse shows. You can take them anywhere and they will follow your instructions.”

The king said, “I thought you had run away with the horses or died. I am happy that you have returned today. Now tell me, how did you train the horses?”

The young man replied, “When I took the horses from here, at first I set them free and wherever they went, I went along. Slowly, they started to recognize me as the fifth horse. We became slightly friendly and they would no longer run away in my presence. Gradually, I was able to walk closer to them. One day, I put my hand on the coat of one horse. At first he shivered and bolted, but after a while they became used to my touch and I could pat their backs. In this way, when the horses would run I would also run with them, when they would sleep I would also sleep, when they would graze I would also cook my food and eat, when they would drink from a stream I would have my cup of tea. I was able to train them on the basis of friendship and finally ride them. All the people who came before me tried to ride them at the very first go in their greed for the reward. They did not try to become a friend to the horses but their master, and that is where they failed.”

These four horses are manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. You try to become their master and they kick you. You get hurt and cry in pain and anguish. Have you ever tried to befriend your mind? You have always opposed your own mind. You have tried to rule the mind, but you have not tried to shake hands with the mind.

The first thing to learn in order to manage the mind is: no enmity with the mind. Sri Swamiji always says, “I have made friends with my mind.” He was born in the mountains and there was a time when he could not bear the heat if the mercury crossed twenty-seven degrees. However, he knew what he had to do. When he left Ganga Darshan and embarked on his sadhanas, he performed the panchagni sadhana. A person who could not stand a temperature above twenty-seven degrees performed panchagni for nine years, in which the temperature would go up to sixty, seventy, even eighty degrees. Sri Swamiji did not struggle with the mind, but befriended it and changed its behaviour so that not a single drop of sweat would form on his body at eighty degrees.



Sri Swamiji says, “The mind is something which will stay with me all my life.

Therefore, why should I fight with it? If you have a fight with your spouse, you may sleep in separate rooms and not speak to each other for days. You can manage the external circumstances, but the mind which stays with you twenty-four hours, which sleeps and eats and talks and works with you all the time, you cannot quarrel with that and be at peace.” He says, “I have learnt that one should never fight with one’s mind. Always keep it happy. Even if the mind wants to do something wrong, first say yes to it and then, with the help of discrimination, slowly change it. If a child does something wrong and you try to stop him abruptly, he will react. Tell him ‘Don’t put your hand in the fire’ and he will certainly put his hand in the fire. Tell him ‘Don’t open that door’ and he will go and open it. When you do this with the mind, it reacts in the same way. Therefore, if the mind says, ‘I want to do this’, you reply, ‘Okay, go ahead and do it.’ Ten minutes later, give it another instruction, ‘If you do that, it is possible that harm will be caused. Think again.’”

Sri Swamiji also says that he looks after his mind with the help of mantra. He says, “I put the water of mantra in the plant of the mind. When the mind is watered by mantra it remains healthy. Once healthy, it is friendly with you. It will say, this is a good person, he keeps me healthy. All others make me sick.”

Jealousy, aversion, lust, arrogance, etc. are diseases of the mind and they cause mental dissipation. All these affect the mind like a disease. The way the body falls sick in fever, the mind falls sick in aversion and jealousy. The mind can remain healthy in the state of joy, and that can be achieved with the help of mantra. If you look after the mind, the mind will want to cooperate with you. Once you become friends with the mind you can use it in any way to progress in life.

FUNCTIONS OF MIND

Three mental processes

The Upanishads say that in the total mind, comprising manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, three different types of processes take place. The first process is cognition, the second is desire and the third is volition. They constitute the normal behaviour of the mind.

The first is cognition. You look at something and identify it. Cognition identifies, it makes you aware that something is there. The second process is desire, *kamana*. You associate with the sense object that you identified and either like it or dislike it. You are not only aware of its presence, but a sentiment has been attached to that object now. This is followed by the third process of volition or *sankalpa*, the effort to acquire the object.

Whether it is manas, buddhi, chitta or ahamkara, the total mind expresses itself in this threefold form. Ahamkara first recognizes, then creates a desire, and thereafter creates volition. Chitta also acts through recognition, desire and volition. Buddhi too acts because of recognition, desire and *sankalpa*. Manas becomes active only because of cognition, desire and *sankalpa*. The total mind, MBCA – I will use the term MBCA to define the mind from now on – expresses itself through these three processes.

Three states of experience

While the MBCA is guided by the three processes of cognition, desire and volition, it also goes through three altered states of experience. I am not using the phrase 'altered states of consciousness', rather the phrase 'altered states of experience'. These three states of experience are active, passive and neutral.

The process of cognition, desire and volition can be active, passive or neutral. If it is active, then you are motivated to do something instantly, to take quick action. If the mind is passive, you will wait and say, "I will wait for the right opportunity and the right time. I don't have to rush into something." That becomes a character of the mind. While the neutral state is, "Okay, I've seen it. Now I am considering how to act appropriately. "

The active mind rushes into things, the passive mind thinks twice and the neutral mind analyzes whether the object of cognition is really important.

Three governing laws

There are three laws which govern the MBCA. The first is the law of continuity, the second is the law of relativity, and the third is the law of association.

1. *Law of continuity*: The MBCA faculties can never be tranquil. The moment they become tranquil, the mind in its natural form will cease to exist. It is the agitations, the spikes, the movement in the MBCA faculties that give realization of the mind within you. If they become still, then you are with no mind and only two kinds of people have no mind: idiots and siddhas. They are the two groups of people who can exist without a mind. Of course every idiot is not a siddha and every siddha is not an idiot. It is the application of the MBCA behaviour and response which makes one an idiot or a siddha.

The first law of the mind is the law of continuity. The wheels of the mind have to go on rolling all the time. The mind is always looking for something new to identify, to associate with and appreciate. If there is newness, then there is excitement. There is a propulsion and motivation within. There is a feeling that you are doing something new, something unique, out of your routine. If things become routine, the MBCA gets bored.

You may have heard the story where a genie appears before a man and says that he will grant whatever the man asks of him, the only condition being that he should be given something to do all the time. If not, he will kill the man.

The man is very happy and asks the genie to build a house for him. In the blink of an eye the house is ready. He asks for riches, servants and all kinds of luxuries, and the genie brings them to him in seconds. The man asks the genie for all he has ever desired in life and the genie presents them in no time. There comes a point where all his desires are fulfilled, all his needs have been met and there is no work left for the genie.

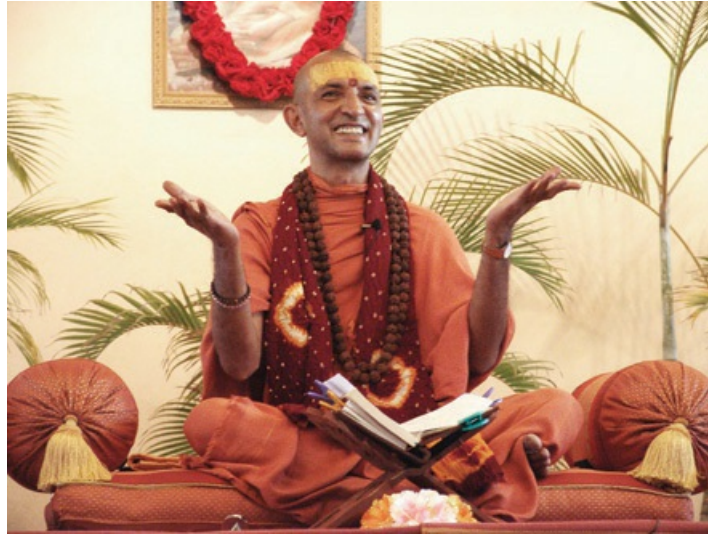
The genie says, "Give me work." The man says, "I don't have any more work." The genie says, "Then I will kill you." Hearing this, the man begins to run and the genie chases him. He runs and runs and finally reaches a sage and asks him for a method by which he could be free of the genie. The sage says, "Fix a wooden pole in the ground, rub grease all over it and ask the genie to climb up and down the pole until you give

him something else to do.” It is impossible to climb up a greased pole, try it, the genie inside you won’t be able to do it, and this genie was also unable to do it. Finally, the man was at peace.

The mind is like the genie. It always looks for something new to do to keep itself occupied, to stay connected with the world. It is this principle that has been understood in yoga. In yoga nidra, you are asked to keep moving your awareness. The mind is so engaged that it becomes completely steady in the experience and that is when you achieve the state of relaxation. If you are lying down and the mind is travelling all over the world, you will not experience relaxation. When you rise you will feel the same tiredness, since you left the mind free and it used its energy to travel at whatever speed it wanted to. This does not happen in yoga nidra. The mind is asked to follow instructions continuously. Through this process, the mind is slowly withdrawn from its external identification and becomes focused in what it is doing or the vision it is watching. This focused state of the mind brings about relaxation and removes tensions and anxieties.

Karma yoga also follows the same principle; it allows you to harness the potential of the law of continuity. The basic concept of karma yoga is not hard physical work. That is the medium. The basic concept of karma yoga is to acquire a different perception or awareness of mind so that boredom does not set in. You connect yourself with the creative aspect of your nature. You change your ideas in relation to yourself and everything around you. The idea that ‘this is routine work and I have been doing it for so long’ has to change. Even if it is routine work, you have to believe that it is something you are doing for the very first and the very last time in your life, and therefore give it the best possible input. Karma yoga directs the continuity of the mind in a more creative direction. The activities of the mind become much more creative so that dejection, boredom and depression do not set in.

Many people pursue entertainment to relax the mind. They say, “I am very tired. Therefore, let me enjoy myself.” Enjoyment only excites the mind even more; it externalizes the mind even more and its desires and passions are only enhanced. For a little while you do forget your problems, as the car of the mind has been diverted elsewhere, but as soon as the entertainment comes to an end, the mind goes back to its previous state. Therefore, entertainment is not the right medium to relax the mind. You can resort to entertainment for your pleasure, but not for the sake of mental relaxation.



2. *Law of relativity*: The second law of the mind is the law of relativity. Einstein said that everything is relative. When the science of psychology first came in with Freud, he said the cause of all human problems is sexuality. Later, as new discoveries were made, other psychologists said that the cause of human problems is emotion. Human beings cannot manage their emotional and sentimental behaviour, therefore problems come up. That was also accepted in psychology. Then somebody said, "It is not sexuality, sentiment or emotion, it is the mind which is the cause of all problems." Then came Einstein who said, "Everything is relative!" The law of relativity applies to the mind.

3. *Law of association*: The third law of the mind is the law of association. The mind cannot exist without associating. It is very hard to survive and feel fulfilled without association. Many people come to me and say, "Swamiji, I want to live in total isolation in the forest, in a cave, have nothing to do with the world or family." I only ask them one question, "Are you ready for it?" They say, "Yes, I am ready to leave everything now." I say, "Okay, go." After one month I see them back and when I ask, "What happened?" they reply, "Life was very hard up there. No water, no electricity, no bed, you have to sleep on the rocks without any cover. There is no market in the mountains, you have to go down to the village every day to buy your vegetables and for that you need money." People think that living in the mountains and jungles is an easy affair. It is not.

In 1977 I once said to Sri Swamiji that I wanted to have an experience of living in the forest. He said, "All right, go ahead." He asked, "For how long are you planning to go?" I said, "About a month." He said, "How will you live? When you go to the mountains, first of all you have to make a shelter. Caves are difficult. They may be damp and wild animals may be living in them. To light a torch, you will have to have the necessary items, where will you get all that from? Are you going to carry a supply of candles, matches and food with you? Living like a recluse is not easy. You may meditate eight hours a day, I agree, but you will need to eat some time. What will you eat? Leaves? A person who is used to spaghetti, pizza, roti and daal cannot survive on leaves

and flowers. When you feel thirsty, where will you get water from? You will have to find a stream. If you get dysentery and you are on top of the mountain, what will you do?" He presented a realistic picture.

I said, "Okay, I won't try for one month, but I can try for at least a few days." I went and was back in three days! What he had described was true. The first night I slept under a tree and it rained. I was wet the whole night. Then a cold wind started to blow. By the morning I was sneezing away. I said to myself, "This is no way to live."

I am telling you something which many of you think is very simple and easy. You think that you can survive in the forest and mountains, but it is not that easy. When you are alone, all the memories of chitta surface in the mind because there is nobody to talk to. You have to hold everything within. That is why chatty people find it very difficult to live in solitude and silence, and everyone is chatty. 'Chatty' means that you like to create associations. The reference here is not to verbal chatter, but the need for association and connection.

There are people who come to the ashram for the first time and spend all their time trying to talk to everyone. The person has come for spiritual sadhana, yet they cannot remain centred. Many people here are also chatty. I was like them at first and I recognize that, but awareness has to set in some time and you have to put a stop to the mental behaviour which is dissipated and diverted in many different directions, and focus those energies at one point.

The light from the bulb is radiating all over the room, but if you are able to focus that light at one point, it becomes a laser beam capable of cutting through steel. All human beings have the same quality. Their mind is governed by the law of association and it is this law which creates *asakti*, attachment, which creates a need and highlights what you desire.

Four sources of knowledge

The MBKA has four sources of knowledge or experience. The first is instinct, the second is reasoning, the third is intuition and the fourth is super-intuition. An ordinary person usually makes the first two sources, instinct and logic, the basis of their knowledge while a yogi uses the other two sources, intuition and super-intuition, more often.

1. *Instinct*: Instinct here does not refer to the four basic instincts of human nature, but that which you grasp through your reflexes. Many times children will go by instinct while working out a mathematical problem when logic fails them. They will say, "I am going to write down this number. I can't understand the mathematics of it, but I believe this is the answer." It is something they have grasped instinctively.

Such instinctive understanding is not intuitive understanding; there is a difference between the two. Instinctive awareness is one source of knowledge, and it becomes more pronounced with experience. When you first learn to drive a car, you have to be aware of each and every action. Once you start the engine, you have to be aware of the brake, the clutch, the accelerator, the gears, the sound of the engine. You have to be attentive to all those little details and remember them. When you have mastered driving it is

instinctive, everything flows and merges. All the actions flow and become one without any conscious thought of what needs to take place next. Therefore, instinctive awareness develops with experience.

2. *Reason*: The second source of knowledge for MBCA is reasoning. That is easy to understand. You acquire knowledge through logic, through buddhi, through reflection, analysis, search and enquiry.

3. *Intuition*: The third source of knowledge is intuition. A book titled *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* by Malcolm Gladwell describes typical intuitive behaviour: when you look at something, the first impression is the right impression, and that is unconscious. Many times that first impression is rejected because logic intervenes and clouds the impression.

You come across somebody, a total stranger, and suddenly you feel very uncomfortable. You wonder why you are experiencing that discomfort when you do not know the person. At other times you come across a person and get a very good feeling. Sometimes you enter a room and get a depressive feeling and sometimes you enter a room and get a happy feeling. You cannot pinpoint the source of this. Why do you feel this way? It is a flash and when the flash disappears and logic takes over, the first impression loses its clarity. Intuition is the first thing that comes to mind, which you often ignore because you don't know where it has come from.

For most people their intuition is related only to themselves. If you develop intuition, it will be in relation only to you. For example, you are faced with a problem and wonder what its solution could be. You throw the question in the air and suddenly an answer comes. Intuition has acted. Or, when you look at an object or a person, the first sight gives you an impression. However, all this is in relation only to yourself.

4. *Super-intuition*: The fourth source of knowledge is what yogis attain: super-intuition or *brahmajnana*, supreme knowledge. The term *brahmajnana* here does not indicate philosophical, metaphysical or spiritual knowledge. It refers to an awareness which extends beyond all boundaries. A person sitting here can know what is happening in a distant country. This is due to super-intuition, for in that state the consciousness crosses the boundaries of mind and unites with the cosmic consciousness and energy. At that time, time, space and object become one. Therefore, it is possible to know what is happening in a distant place or what will happen in a distant time. Yogis and siddhas have this ability.

We have seen this in Sri Swamiji's life. He would tell someone that this or that will happen. Initially people would not understand why he was saying it. They would realize it years later when events took place as he said they would.

One example is the experience of one of our sannyasins, Swami Gyanbhikshu. When he used to come here initially he was a professor of political science and had a different frame of mind. At that time the former USSR and China were in full power. Once, during a conversation, Sri Swamiji said, "Look, communism is not going to last for long." Swami Gyanbhikshu began to wonder, "Why is a sannyasin speaking on politics? He probably does not even know what communism is, so why is he saying that communism will come to an end", especially as the communist countries were at the

peak of their power then. However, five or six years later the world circumstances were such that the structure of communism fell apart. The Soviet Union was divided into different countries. Swami Gyanbhikshu was taken aback by the turn of events and said to me that Sri Swamiji had said this would happen six years ago.



That was super-intuition. Sri Swamiji was not only seeing the things attached to him through his intuition, but was able to see and realize everything that was happening in the world. He was able to see what the consequences of events would be and what the structure of society in the future would be. There are many other such instances where he indicated what would happen ten or fifteen years before the events actually took place.

There is an intuitive link between a parent and child also, but that is only in relation to themselves. When the same feeling is experienced by a yogi, its intent is to help others. Through that supreme knowledge one acquires the ability to help others.

Supreme knowledge, cosmic intuition, makes one into a siddha, an adept. It is not necessary for a siddha or yogi to know or have any association with anybody in the world, yet they are able to help everyone whose cry they hear. Once, in a satsang somebody asked Sri Swamiji, “Does God hear your prayers?” He said, “God receives every prayer, listens to every prayer and decides whether to act or allow the natural course of karma and destiny to take you through. There are times when God does not interfere with destiny and karma and then there are times when God sends help. How does God send help? Your prayer, no matter where you are in the world, is received by God. He then forwards that prayer to someone who appears in your life for that particular time to help you out through that situation, and you may never see that person again. This person who appears in your life at the time of crisis and helps you

and has no further connection with you is the person directed by God to come and help you.”

That help comes because God has heard your prayer, your petition. Many people have had the experience that during a crisis, a stranger appears, helps them and they never see that person again in their life. A person who can become the intermediary between God and a sufferer is one who has that higher intuition, the cosmic intuition. I have told you about the event when Sri Swamiji told the sannyasins that a house had been burnt down in a village and the family had lost everything. I realized what had happened and how Sri Swamiji knew of that incident when he gave this answer to the question on prayer. That woman with three little children, sitting under a tree, whose house had burnt down and whose husband had died, must have cried out to God for help. Instantly, God heard the petition and forwarded it to the mind of Swami Satyananda. That is why Swami Satyananda heard that cry, the pain and the suffering, and instructed us to find that lady and make the necessary arrangements for her.



That is the power of prayer. When God directs a prayer to someone, that person becomes the medium to provide the help required. A person who has the ability to receive the e-mail from God is the person who has super-intuition. You have intuition, but you never receive an e-mail, fax or phone call from God because you have our own personal agendas. Super-intuition is received and is a skill acquired by those who have no private agenda in their lives.

Association of mind with gunas

Apart from all the above, one significant factor that influences the behaviour of the mind is its association with the *gunas*, the three inherent qualities in creation. The gunas are *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, representing purity, dynamism and inertia respectively. The gunas are like the clothing that you wear, like a dhoti which you wrap around yourself. The body is separate from the dhoti, yet when you wrap it around the body it is the dhoti which is seen and not the body. In the same way, the mind is distinct from the gunas. Yet, when a guna covers the total mind, it is that guna which becomes

predominant, not the mind.



Sattwa guna and shanta vritti: When sattwa guna predominates in the mind, a particular vritti, pattern, develops within. That is *shanta vritti*, the peaceful vritti. This peaceful vritti is the domain of yogis. Only they are able to achieve it; others have to struggle through the usual vrittis of right knowledge, wrong knowledge, confusion, sleep, memory and so on to discover shanta vritti.

The other vrittis agitate the mind, but in sattwa there is no agitation, no movement. There is *saumyata*, balance and stillness of mind. Sattwa guna represents internal purity and luminosity in which there is absence of *avidya*, ignorance, *abhinivesha*, fear of death, and *maya*, illusion. When sattwa and MBCA come together, the shanta vritti is experienced. There is a wrapping of peace and luminosity around the mind. People who possess shanta vritti remain peaceful, uninfluenced, restrained and appropriate in all circumstances. The agitations of the mind do not affect them. They are siddhas, whether they live as a recluse or a king. Sri Swamiji had shanta vritti, for his life was perfect in every way.

Rajo guna and ghora vritti: When rajo guna predominates, the vritti which is experienced is called ghora vritti. *Ghora* means aggressive, dynamic or harsh. People in whom this vritti predominates become the leaders of society and nations. They are conquerors. They also become discoverers, scientists and researchers, as they have the ability to pick up the thread of a thought and follow it through. They can manipulate situations and words. They can manipulate anything and everything to arrive at their point of desire.

Ghora vritti is a self-oriented vritti, it makes a person think that they can save a situation. They take charge, they take the lead. Aggression comes forth when there is ghora vritti. Anger is also a result of ghora vritti. When rajo guna predominates, the mind becomes aggressive, manipulative and tries to control situations; it tries to

highlight itself. That is the outer wrapping of rajo guna on the mind.

Tamo guna and moodha vritti: Tamo guna represents lethargy, disinterest, lack of motivation, brooding, depressive and negative thoughts, ideas, behaviour and responses, destructiveness and eccentricity. This is the behaviour or character of the mind when there is a wrapping of tamas around it. The vritti which comes with tamas is called *moodha vritti*, the slothful vritti. When this vritti is predominant, the person enjoys causing trouble for others. They continuously think negatively of others and spend all their time in detrimental ways. Thieves, murderers and terrorists all fall in this category. They ruin society and hurt people; they find pleasure in causing pain to others. They are so caught up in their own state of stagnancy that they are not able to connect with positivity. They are wearing black glasses and the whole world appears black to them.

Thus, shanta vritti is sattwa, the peaceful state of mind, ghora vritti is rajas, the aggressive state of mind, and moodha vritti is tamas, the negative state of mind. It is important to know which vritti predominates in your life. Analyze your behaviour for one week, one month, six months or one year, and try to find out the percentage of time when the mind was wrapped by tamo guna, rajo guna and sattwa guna respectively. You will know the present character of your mind. Once you know this, make the effort to transform it. If you find there is a predominance of the moodha vritti, make the effort that will convert it to the shanta vritti. If you find that for one whole month the ghora vritti dominated your life, make a little effort and you will be able to discover the shanta vritti. Becoming aware of the gunas is another method to change the behaviour of the mind.

Raja yoga

The mind and its management is also the subject of raja yoga. Sage Patanjali has provided a clear process of mind management, but people have not been able to understand the simplicity and depth of these practices. You chase after mirages created by your own mind and ignore the process and the steps which you can and should take to go beyond the mirage.

A good experience in meditation is often the only aim that aspirants have. Visions of luminosity during meditation is their only aim. That becomes the mirage which they chase in every attempt at meditation or sadhana and therefore their sadhana never fructifies. It can never lead them anywhere except creating fantasies and fuelling the imagination. You cannot progress on the spiritual path until and unless you follow the path prescribed. That is the subject of raja yoga.

Mind: Doorway between Consciousness and Creation

28 April 2010

The mind has to be understood in the form of a portal, a doorway. On one side of the doorway is the transcendental reality and on the other is the empirical or material reality. The mind is in the middle, and it is able to experience the transcendental as well as the gross. It is the agent by which you can go towards the gross and the material and also towards the spiritual and the transcendental.

After birth your emotional and mental identities become attached to the world. Therefore, your mind becomes worldly. If you want to experience spiritual awakening and inner evolution while living in the world, you will have to make the effort to turn the direction of the mind towards the transcendental reality. This is the sadhana that the sages and scriptures speak of.

Doorway between the transcendental and the empirical

In the transcendental dimension, where consciousness and energy coexist in absolute harmony, the mind manifests from consciousness and prana manifests from Shakti. Through mind and prana, the cosmic reality, the cosmic powers have limited themselves in a form and shape, which is the expression of life in all its myriad forms. Therefore, mind and energy exist in each and every particle of creation.

Mind and prana shakti are latent in a rock, in an insect, in minerals, in the animal kingdom, in the vegetable kingdom, in birds, reptiles and human beings. However, the expression of mind and prana shakti in each life form is based on the evolution and maturity of the mind. The mind matures fully when it attains the human form. The conscious and intellectual faculties of the mind are realized only in the human form, which is why human beings are conscious of themselves. They are conscious of the world and the environment around them. Animals have a mind too, but they are not conscious of their environment. Their span of awareness is very short. A dog will remember events for a short period, an insect may remember events for a fraction of a second, but human beings can remember an event for their entire lifespan.

It is necessary to realize that the individual mind is part of the higher cosmic consciousness. When that ever-expanding, eternal, endless consciousness limits itself

into a mind, you are not able to experience its cosmic identity and therefore attach yourself to the material world. This attachment follows a law of nature. In Samkhya philosophy it has been said that first is *Ishwara*, the undecaying principle, then comes *Prakriti*, the manifest nature, and then comes the mind.

Doorway between gunas

All the various expressions of the greater mind in human beings in the form of thinking, intelligence, memories and self-identity are coloured and covered by the layers of the gunas.

The mind is separate from the gunas. You wear clothes on the body. The body does not change, but you can change clothes whenever you like. In the same manner, the mind does not change in the expression of its faculties of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, but they are perceived in different ways as the mind wears the different robes of sattwa guna, rajo guna or tamo guna. If you consider the mind to be a portal, the doorway between the transcendental and the material dimension, the cosmic and the manifest dimension, then on the side of the manifest dimension or Prakriti, the robes that the mind wears are predominantly of tamas and rajas and on the side of the transcendental nature, the robes that it wears are of sattwa.



Imagine a door which is closed. One side of the door is coloured white, representing sattwa, the other side is coloured black, representing tamas, and the frame in the middle is coloured red, representing rajas. Rajas is always there. Whether you move from sattwa to tamas or from tamas to sattwa, you have to use the strength, the power, the capacity and the faculty of rajas to move from one guna to another.

Rajo guna implies intention, motivation, action and drive, whereas tamo guna implies a fixed condition of life in the material dimension, and sattwa guna implies a condition of transcendental life. Tamo guna is the fixed nature and condition of

samsara, the world of the senses, sense objects and illusions leading to infatuation and obsession. Sattwa guna represents the luminosity, purity, innocence and simplicity of nature which is untainted by the influence of the senses, time, space and object. When you are on the material side of the mind in the state of tamo guna, the mental behaviours are perceived as tamasic and the vrittis that manifest are also tamasic.

What are the vrittis that manifest when tamo guna is predominant? You always compare yourself with others; you always see what others have and you do not. You are jealous of those who you believe have had a little more than you. You are envious of those who have succeeded in life because you wish to see yourself in their position. You become aggressive when things are not in your control. You are arrogant and react negatively to situations. Jealousy and hatred, arrogance and greed are rampant in your mind. All such tamasic qualities manifest and become the cause of debilitating the faculties of the mind which lead you to transcendental knowledge and awareness.

Remember that when the mind is directed towards the world, it wears the wrapping of rajo guna and tamo guna, and when it is directed towards spirituality and the transcendental principle, it is wearing the robes of sattwa. There is no room for sattwa in the material world and there is no room for tamas and rajas in the experience of the spirit. If there is tamas or rajas in the mind, you will not be able to recognize the higher spirit, and if there is sattwa in the mind, you will find it very hard to connect with the world. The two are opposite conditions like day and night, like sunshine and darkness.

Purpose of yoga

The transcendental principle, whether you call it God or consciousness, illumines the world and life. It is the cause of the luminosity of the body that you have received, of the mind and prana that you have received. The cause is not any subject or object of the world.

When you come into this world, you begin to think that the aim of life is enjoyment and sensory gratification. An average person cannot see beyond these, but the wise say that enjoyment is not the only purpose of human life. Along with enjoyment or *bhoga*, one also needs to experience yoga. Bhoga takes you far away from the transcendental reality, whereas yoga brings you closer to it.

We are not talking of yoga as a practice here; we are talking of yoga as a principle. The basis of yoga is: control the mind by befriending it and then turn it towards the transcendental reality. This is the final attainment of life. It is the aim of every soul born as a human being upon earth.

At the material level of life, you may earn wealth, eat and enjoy, live with a family in society or as a recluse in the forest, it does not matter. But make sure that you are connecting your mind with the higher reality. Everyone who comes into this world will have to undergo worldly experiences; everyone will have to experience pleasure and pain. Just as you are able to experience pleasure or pain, you can also have the experience of that higher consciousness. However, it requires effort. It requires sadhana.

Our sages say to use the life that has been given to you for the purpose of sadhana.

Even while you work in the world and perform your duties, keep some time aside for sadhana. If in the twenty-four hours of the day you give twenty-three to the world, give one to your spiritual evolution. If you can spare just one hour in which you perform your sadhana whole-heartedly and one-pointedly, you will definitely have attainments.

Sadhana is the way to balance your karmas. Once you become involved in karmas, they go on increasing and you can never get away from them. You are so tied up with them that you do not find the time to do what is necessary for your growth and evolution. However, if you want to you can definitely find the time, and this can be done by creating a discipline for yourself.

The discipline is created by finding that one hour in which you sit down in seclusion. Whether you sit on the floor or on a chair does not matter. It is not even necessary to sit in padmasana. Just become quiet for some time, and disassociate yourself from your obligations in the world and thoughts of the world. Think, "For this one hour I am not a worldly person, I am a spiritual aspirant. I have nothing to do with the pleasures and pains, gains and losses of the world. I will again think about my material life after this hour." For that one hour become aware of your mind. Watch the behaviour of the mind. What are the desires that arise, what are the emotions that arise? What is the direction in which these desires and emotions are taking you? What is the mental attitude they are creating in you? What are the subjects and objects, joys and sorrows they are taking you towards?

It is necessary to know the activities of the mind before you can bring it under control. Once you know the activities of the mind, you will also acquire an understanding of its different forms and processes – of the fourfold function of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

When the four functions of the mind connect with the material world, the worldly vrittis are born. The mind attaches itself to objects of enjoyment, which is the cause of the birth of vrittis such as lust, anger, delusion, pride, jealousy and so on. When these vrittis are born, the mind becomes subservient to them and acts according to them. All these vrittis manifest in the form of desire. The word for desire in Sanskrit is *vasana*, which means the craving which resides within you and from which you are unable to free yourself. If greed comes to reside in your mind, you won't be able to free yourself from it; if jealousy comes to reside in your mind, you won't be able to free yourself from it. If aversion takes birth in your mind, it is very hard to be free of it. These vasanās create their own niche in the mind due to the presence of the gunas.



Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* states that the purpose of yoga is to free oneself from the negative vrittis of chitta. Not from all vrittis, not from the positive vrittis. The positive vrittis will eventually blossom and establish the sattwa state in the antahkarana. In order to explain the aim of yoga, he says, *Yogah chittavritti nirodhah*. He has used a special word: chittavritti. He did not say manovritti, buddhivritti or ahamvritti. Why did he use the word chittavritti? Why did he not include the other mental states here?

I have told you that manas is the field of sankalpa and vikalpa, will and doubt. Buddhi is an instrument used to conduct negotiations with the world, and chitta is the storehouse of life. You put away everything that you are not able to let go of in this store. It even hides the desires and samskaras of previous lives in the form of smriti, in the form of images and deep latent memories. The karmas, samskaras and experiences of the present life also get filed away here so that whenever you come across a person or object, you search for it in chitta – have I seen this person before? – and suddenly you remember that you met him fifteen years ago and recall the circumstances under which you met him. That memory came out of chitta, not out of manas, buddhi or ahamkara.

When you practise meditation or concentrate the mind, images flash on the mental screen and thoughts appear which you are not able to control. It happens when you withdraw the senses from the external world. The memories of chitta acquire force and come to the surface of consciousness. You may remember things from very long ago during your meditation, things that you thought you had totally forgotten. That is why Sage Patanjali says that the vrittis that need to be restrained are the chitta vrittis. When you are able to contain these vrittis, then the storehouse is cleaned. You can throw out the unnecessary things that have been kept there. Even from the psychological point of view it is necessary to restrain the chitta vrittis, as the behaviour of the body and the mind is different. The body will digest what you eat. It will extract the nutrients and

throw out the toxic substances, providing energy to the body, the pranas and the mind. The gross energy goes to the body, the subtle energy goes to the mind and the waste material goes out of the body.

This does not happen with the mind. Whatever you take in, remains in. All the worries, tensions, disturbances, agitations and pain that you experience indicate that your mind is constipated and needs to be treated. Every person suffers from mental constipation. Every mind is a constipated mind. You still remember an unpleasant incident that took place twenty years ago and continue to feel that pain. This is due to chitta from which nothing goes out.

The sages always say, “Your mind is full of rubbish. Clean it out, make it pure.” Clean the mirror, only then will you be able to see your face. Don’t throw away the mirror, saying that it is covered with dust. Don’t say, “My mind is bad, tamasic and negative. I don’t know how to manage it.” Just clean the layer of dust that is covering the mind. This is the purpose of sadhana: remove the dust of chitta, the negative vrittis, and cultivate the positive vrittis.

Cultivation of virtues

The spiritual traditions have maintained that more important than God-realization is the cultivation of positive virtues in life. A virtuous life automatically becomes the residence of divinity, whereas a life which is full of vice becomes the residence of demonical energies. Material life leads you towards vices, not virtues. Therefore, cultivating virtues while living material life is the sadhana of human life. If you can cultivate the right virtues, you can improve the garden of your life.

When you want to create a lawn, you prepare the ground, remove rocks and thorns, spread the grass seed, layer it with sand, water it regularly and wait for the grass to sprout. However, along with grass, weeds also come up. If the intention is to have a good lawn, then the effort and attempt is to remove the weeds that come up along with the grass. Every time a weed comes up, you must remove it. If you go on removing every weed that comes up, eventually the good grass will take over the entire lawn and then you only need to water and maintain it. This principle has to be applied in your life if you wish to cultivate virtuous qualities.

If you spread the seed of virtue in your life, then you have to be aware and alert for the vices that can crop up along with the virtues. You have to be able to remove the weeds of those vices from the ground of your life. That is something people never do. Most people, even sadhakas or spiritual aspirants think that yoga sadhana, the practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, will lead them to a state of purity, without any effort on their part to dig out the weeds of negativity from the mind. Remember, weeds are always stronger than grass, their stem is thicker and bigger, the roots are deeper. Therefore, despite all attempts, people still have no control over their mental functions. Anger still envelops them, greed still creates havoc, envy and jealousy still create havoc.

There are times when two people cannot see eye to eye because of jealousy, arrogance or other negative and destructive mental attitudes and behaviour. There is no compromise; the tamasic mind, the moodha mind, is so powerful that there is no

compromising, only justification that your action is right and there is no way that you are going to submit yourself or become friendly again with the person with whom you cannot see eye to eye. That indicates the mind which is looking in the direction of the senses and sense objects, a mind which has forgotten its own spiritual qualities, better qualities, creative qualities, a mind which is obsessed with expressing feelings which are negative. This is the state of spiritual aspirants as well as average people.

You want to have some awareness, some higher understanding, some higher realization, but you cannot manage the lower functions of the mind. Therefore, all the negativity comes to the forefront when you try to meditate and you begin to wonder, “Am I doing the right practice? Spiritual practices are not supposed to give me an awareness of negativity; they are supposed to give me the experience of luminosity.” You lose your faith and trust in the practice when you should actually lose faith and trust in your own mind. What manifests in your meditation is the mental behaviour which you are going through. You are flowing in the same current as the mind and trying to develop spiritual understanding and spiritual awareness. It does not work.

Applying sankalpa shakti

The seers say, “Practice is always difficult, precept is easy.” You can understand what I am saying intellectually, but you cannot apply it practically in your life until you have sankalpa shakti. You can nod your heads and say, “Yes, correct”, but what is the use of nodding your head when you are unable to apply it to yourself? If you have the knowledge and understanding to realize that what I am saying is correct, then you should have the strength and ability to apply what you know in your own life. Otherwise, don’t nod your head.

Manu’s tenfold virtues

In one of the scriptures of India, *Manu Smriti*, the sage Manu has defined the qualities that should be cultivated to manage the destructive vrittis of the mind.

Equanimity, patience and forgiveness: These are not intellectual concepts; they represent behaviours of the mind. If it is said, “Be forgiving”, what does that mean? That you forget and forgive the injustices done to you? No. Forgiveness means a change in your own nature to begin with. What you do externally is secondary, but the change has to come in your own nature initially. You can only forgive something when you are non-reactive within.



If you are reactive, then there is no question of forgiving anything, you will respond in a like manner. A condition of jealousy will be responded to by another condition of jealousy. A condition of aggression will have a response of aggression, a condition of envy will have a response of envy, and people will always fight, they will always be at loggerheads with each other. Therefore, forgiveness means being non-reactive. If somebody inflicts an injury on you and you say, "I forgive you, don't worry about it", while you are reacting inside, seething with anger and the desire to give that person two tight slaps, it is not forgiveness. Forgiveness indicates a non-reactive state of mind.

Similarly, patience indicates a balanced state of mind and not a mind which is hankering, seeking and craving for quick achievements. You have to remember that whatever time is destined for the attainment or development of anything, it will take exactly that length of time.

A man wanted to have a mango tree in his garden, so he went to the market, bought a mango, ate it and planted the seed in the ground. Every day he would take the seed out of the ground to check if it was sprouting. For twenty years he took it out and put it back every day, and that seed never sprouted. One day, a knowledgeable farmer asked him, "What are you doing?" The man replied, "I've been waiting for twenty years for the mango seed to sprout so that I can enjoy the mangoes before I die. But I don't know what kind of a seed this is, is it a genetically modified seed that does not sprout?" The farmer said, "No, you are making a mistake. When you plant a seed, you leave it under the ground and let nature do its work. If you take the seed out every day to see whether it is sprouting or not, nothing will happen. Just let the seed lie there, in a state of dormancy, and take proper care of it. Protect it from animals, weeds, the environment and natural upheavals. Give it the right nourishment at the right time. Then watch what a beautiful tree it becomes in the course of time, healthy and green, full of sweet fruits."

That is patience, waiting and allowing the normal course of evolution to take place. Remember, you will receive whatever is destined for you. Nothing can deny you that.

And if events must happen in the course that they will, what is the use of worrying and being anxious?

Cultivating patience transforms the quality of the mind, while cultivating forgiveness changes the behaviour of the mind, making it non-reactive.

Control of mind, non-stealing, purity: The next virtue to be developed is control of mind, keeping the mind in check all the time. Hold the reins of the mind tightly, for the moment you loosen the reins the horses will run wild and you won't be able to control them. Control of mind is achieved through *sanyam*, restraint, and *asteya*, non-stealing.

There is a tendency in every individual to psychologically, mentally, steal things. If you see a nice object in someone's house, you will wish that you also had it. This means that you have already set your eyes on that object with the intention of possessing it. Whether you lift it from the house or buy it from a shop is another matter. The intention is to possess it, to acquire it. If you see a nice flower, a nice painting or a nice statue in a house and the desire comes to your mind, "Oh, such a beautiful thing. I wish I also had something like this", it means that you have already made plans to possess it, to acquire it.

Freeing yourself of this *vritti* of the mind, this psychological tendency to possess things before you have actually acquired them, this desire to possess things before an actual analysis of your need, to accumulate things which you don't ever use, is called *asteya*. Appreciate things, but don't crave them, don't demand them until it is your immediate need. Possessing things just to satisfy yourself is not necessary. That is the concept of *asteya*. To acquire this quality, purity of mind, thought, speech and behaviour needs to be cultivated.

Truthfulness, control of senses, knowledge, absence of aggression: There is a story of a king who gave his birth chart to a famous astrologer of the nation to interpret. When the astrologer looked at the chart, he beat his head on the ground and said, "What a deadly chart you have, my king!" The king said, "What is deadly about it?" The astrologer said, "I see in your chart that your family, your kingdom, your friends, your society, your subjects, all will be destroyed. Only you will survive." The king was furious. He said, "How dare this astrologer speak this nonsense to me, throw him in jail!" The astrologer was put behind bars. Another astrologer came and said to the king, "My king, maybe that astrologer was wrong. Let me see the chart." He looked at the chart and said, "You have a very auspicious chart, my lord. You are going to outlive everyone, you have the longest lifespan on this planet. You will outlive your sons and grandsons, your present courtiers and subjects. You have the gift of longevity." The king became so happy that he bestowed great honours upon this man.

Both said the same thing, but the language was different. One was blunt, while the other used the language of diplomacy. This is important, to know the appropriate behaviour, speech and thought according to the situation, time, environment, person and place. There is a saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." When you are in Rome, don't behave in a barbaric way; behave in a way which is proper to the culture of that place. This indicates that your responses have to be appropriate to the situation,

people, need and time. When this appropriate response takes place, then the mind becomes stable, pure and balanced. Thus, purity of speech, purity of thought and purity in behaviour have to be maintained.

Control of the senses is the same principle as control of the mental faculties. One is called *mano nigraha*, control of mind, and the other is called *indriya nigraha*, control of the senses. The mind represents control over the subtle forces of consciousness, and the senses represent control over the manifestations at the gross level, the development of empirical understanding and knowledge. Cultivate the ability to understand, gather knowledge, be truthful without any falsity in life, and be free from aggressive behaviour.

According to Sage Manu, these are the ten symptoms of dharma. The word 'dharma' does not mean organized religion. Dharma indicates virtues with which you need to equip yourself, virtues which you need to hold dear in your life. Just as you hold a thought of money in your mind, just as you think of your family in your mind, just as you have a special place for your enemies in your mind, so you should have a special place for virtues in your mind. It is the cultivation of these virtues which will eventually lead to the betterment of mental behaviour.

Patanjali's mind management

There are two methods of managing the mind. One is the method of cultivating virtues and the other is the sequence of sadhana as described by Sage Patanjali. He describes the sadhanas of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana to transform the quality of the mind and divert the awareness from the outer gross material dimension to the internal transcendental spiritual dimension.

Pratyahara, dharana and dhyana are techniques to train the mind, just as a child is trained at school to write the letters of the alphabet and numbers. Only when you know the alphabet and numbers can you figure out words and sentences, figure out what is written and what is spoken. Just as a child is trained and educated to recognize letters and words, to know their meaning before progressing to higher studies, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana are used to train the mind step by step. They are used to become self-aware, to recognize where the mind is reacting, responding in a negative and destructive way and where it can respond in a positive and constructive way.

The conscious patterns of the mind are modified with pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, but the subconscious and unconscious patterns have to be managed by cultivating different virtues in life. The indication and guidelines for this are given in the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga.



Yamas and niyamas are meant specifically for this purpose. On one side you are modifying the behaviour pattern and on the other side you are modifying the response factor. The behaviour pattern is being modified through yamas and niyamas and the mental response factor is being managed through pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Thus, raja yoga has applied both approaches to target the mind.

Beginning of spiritual life

In your life, before thinking about spiritual ambitions you have to manage your mind. I am using the phrase 'spiritual ambition', as everyone who comes to spiritual life has an ambition, whatever it may be. Your journey in spiritual life begins with an ambition. It does not begin with an understanding that you have to become balanced in your life. However, yogic traditions have maintained that one should not begin one's spiritual journey with an ambitious aim like God-realization or self-realization. That is a mistake.

Begin your journey by realizing how you tick and function in this world and how you can improve your performance in this world. Therefore, in the yogic traditions the practices are specific to psychological conditions of the mind, a physical state of the body or a specific condition of prana.

If God-realization was the aim of yoga, then there would be no need for yama, niyama, asana and pranayama. Yoga would only have been pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, stages which allow one to move from the conscious to the subconscious to the unconscious to the super-conscious. If the rishis had thought that God-realization was possible for everybody, then they would have talked only about these four systems in yoga.

Pratyahara relates to conscious perceptions and management of the conscious faculties, the senses and the mental activity of which you are aware. Dharana relates to the subconscious performance of the mind, where through concentration and visualization you can bring the dormant and latent impressions of the subconscious to the surface. Dhyana relates to the unconscious mind, where you go beyond the limitations of the conscious and the subconscious into the unknown realms of the

psyche. Once these unknown realms of the psyche are realized, then one moves into samadhi naturally where transcendental realization can take place.

If the spiritual aim or the aim of yoga was only God-realization, the other practices would not need to be attempted. But every yoga exponent has emphasized that before you come to the point of cultivating mental awareness and its faculties, manage, control and awaken the forces of your own body: prana shakti. Manage your body, eradicate ill health, acquire good health through enhancement of prana and mind management. If the pranas are balanced, the body is healthy; if the mind is balanced, the mind is healthy. However, your mind is never healthy. Just as the body suffers from asthma, diabetes or high blood pressure, the diseases of the mind are hatred, jealousy, greed, envy, anger, frustration and so on.

It is the natural tendency of the mind to be extroverted and connect with the senses. To extract the mind from its association and connect it with something abstract is not possible for everyone because they lack the training. You start your journey with the great ambition that one day you will become a great yogi and a self-realized being and ignore the little things which can make a big difference in the management of your life and spiritual aspirations.

Sage Patanjali did not advocate pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi only. The first steps of ashtanga yoga are cultivating positive habits in life, to first improve the quality of life. Then come the practices of asana and pranayama to enhance and harness the flow of prana shakti. Hatha yogis emphasize the physical practices and concentration techniques for the purpose of redirecting the flow of prana. Similarly, the purpose of jnana yoga is for the mind to analyze its own nature and behaviour patterns.

If somebody abuses you with negative words, you react because you identify with what the person has said. If you don't identify with what the person has said, there would be no reaction. How many of you can be non-reactive? It happened in the life of Buddha.

One day a man came to him and began to abuse him. All the disciples became very agitated. Buddha stopped them. He said "Why are you becoming anxious? After all, he is only abusing me." After the man had exhausted his abuse, Buddha asked him, "Have you finished?" The man said, "Yes, I have finished." Buddha said, "Now answer one question. Somebody brings a gift in a package and gives it to you. Are you bound to accept that gift?" The man replied, "No." Buddha asked, "What do you do with the gift that you don't want?" The man said, "You give it back to the person who brought it." Buddha said, "Right. I am returning to you all the abuse that you gave to me. You may take it back." In that manner, Buddha remained unaffected. He was able to do it because he was enlightened; he was not you, he was not buddhu. *Buddha* means enlightened, *buddhu* means idiot. Most people are buddhus because before someone can even start abusing them they would be at the person's throat. Buddha had the patience to listen to everything and return everything that he had received with a smile.



Other guidelines

In the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna indicates the signs of a person who is able to become free from the world even while living in it.

The first indication is the quality of *advेषhta*, without the feeling of duality. The statement is: *Advेषhta sarva bhootanam* – one who looks upon all beings without duality. An average person will always think in terms of you and I, high and low, but a realized being who has attained the state of *advेषhta* does not differentiate between high and low, happy and unhappy. For such a person every being is a child of that one God. This is a state of mind which is free from the experience of duality, for it is duality which is the cause of pain. Sri Krishna says (12:13–14):

*Advेषhta sarva bhootanaam, maitrah karuna eva cha;
Nirmamo nirahankarah, samadukhahsukhah kshamee.*

One who looks upon all beings without duality, who is friendly and compassionate to all; who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving.

*Santushtah satatam yogi yataatma driranishchayah;
Mayyarpitamanobuddhih yo madbhaktah sa me priyah.*

Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction; with the mind and intellect dedicated to me, such a devotee of mine is dear to me.

Sri Krishna says that a person who remains under control is dear to him. Now you may ask, why does God say that only such a person is dear to Him? Is everyone not dear to Him?

Think in terms of yourself. If you have four children, would you not be fonder of the one who listens to you rather than the three who don't? You may look after them all equally, but the one who is obedient will be dearer to you. In the same way, God prefers those who are obedient to Him, who adhere to what He says. Therefore, never think that just because you are God's child you must be dear to Him. You have to raise yourself to the level where you can be dear to God. This is where the need to acquire

positive qualities comes in.

Positive qualities can be established in life through sadhana. The scriptures say that to be rid of the negative qualities that constrict the mind, you need to practise truth. You need to make room for positivity in life. Many methods have been given to attain this state of mind. These methods are a compilation of practices which can be adopted in life to evolve, grow and reach the highest state.

Kirtan: The first method, as mentioned in many scriptures, is kirtan, not meditation. This is because kirtans are mantras, and mantras are vibrations which influence the energy patterns.

I have mentioned earlier that the cosmic consciousness manifests in individual life in the form of mind and the cosmic energy manifests in the form of prana. When cosmic consciousness and energy come into this body, their behaviour, nature and character undergo a change. However, their basic form is the same, the mind being a manifestation of consciousness and the pranas of energy.

Kirtan creates two effects. One, its vibrational force affects the energy in the body so that the pranas are awakened. The second effect is on the mind; it changes the form of your consciousness.

You have heard the story of Sage Valmiki. He was a dacoit and Sage Narada asked him to chant the mantra *Rama*, but he was unable to utter it. Narada said to him, “Say *Mara* instead”. *Mara* means ‘dead’ and Valmiki could say it easily since he was used to killing people. As he continued to chant *Mara, Mara, Mara, Mara*, it converted to *Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama*. As he continued to chant the mantra, it brought about a transformation in his consciousness and he became one with *Rama*.



Kirtan creates two effects. Its vibrations awaken the pranas and its bhava transforms the consciousness. This is why kirtan is the first sadhana the scriptures prescribe to bring the mind under control.

Kirtan began to be perceived as part of religion with the coming of other cultural and religious influences to India. Kirtan has nothing to do with religion; it is a science

to purify your life. It is a sadhana of life, and it must be understood, learned and practised in that form.

Mantra: The second method is mantra. It is said in the scriptures: *Mananat trayate iti mantrah* – “That which can liberate the mind from its bondages is mantra.” That energy, element or force which can free the mind from its involvement with sense objects is mantra.

When you sing kirtans and dance to their tune, you can attain bhava samadhi, while mantras are practised to make the mind one-pointed, to quieten its distracted behaviour. When you sit down with closed eyes and start doing japa of your mantra, the mind will automatically become quiet, at least for twenty beads.

Usually when people sit down to meditate, they seem to be running after two rabbits at the same time. That can never be achieved. One thought appears and you run after it; the second thought appears and you run after that. If you want to catch a rabbit, you need to chase only one. This is what is achieved through one-pointedness. If you catch one thought, follow it to the end. If a second thought arrives, ask it to go away. When you can do just this much, you can be free of the bondages of the mind; your mind energy can be freed.

Vairagya: The third sadhana is vairagya. Vairagya does not mean renouncing. To be free of the effects of *raga*, attachment, is vairagya.

Imagine that it is the height of summer and you are standing out in the sun. After a few minutes you become uncomfortable and restless. Now, how can you adjust in this situation? You can come indoors and stand under a fan or in air-conditioning and you will again become comfortable. This is the analogy for vairagya. The heat does not go away, the blistering sun does not go away; you only change your location. In the state of *raga* you hold on to something, whereas in *vairagya* you shift your focus to something else.

Another example. Your neighbour goes away for a few days and gives you the keys of his house to look after it, saying that you may make use of the house whenever you are there. You look after the house, perhaps watch the television, play music, use the fridge, but you do not become attached to anything there. You do not think that the objects there belong to you. Your sentiment is, “They belong to my friend. I am only looking after them.”

When you feel concerned about others, it is a state of *vairagya* and when you are concerned only about yourself, it is a state of *raga*. *Vairagya* means that you accept an object, but you do not become involved with it. You look upon it as something given to you for safekeeping, you do not attach a sense of mine-ness to it. When you think that it is yours, it is *raga* and *asakti* or attachment. When you think that you are only looking after it, that is *vairagya*. Therefore, *vairagya* does not mean renunciation, but modification of *raga*.

Santosha: The fourth method is *santosha*, contentment. Cultivate the *vritti* of *santosha*. Right now discontentment holds a large space in your mind. You are discontented with most things, even insignificant ones. In fact, discontentment is a permanent mental condition for everyone and getting rid of it is a difficult task.

A human being is never contented. It is easy to speak of contentment, but it is hard to experience it. Contentment can be experienced when there is a certain degree of sattwa in the mind. There is no contentment in tamas or rajas. Santosha manifests only in the state of sattwa. Therefore, if you want to free yourself from tamas, practise santosha as a sadhana and awaken it in your life. It will be difficult, you may struggle, the mind will again and again go towards discontentment, but bring it back to the state of contentment. Keep saying to yourself, “It is all right. Whatever has happened is all right.” Say this to your mind again and again. Don’t get upset, be happy, you have received whatever was destined for you to receive.



Sri Swamiji always says that irrespective of the effort an individual puts in, they always receive what was destined for them. You may perform millions of actions to enhance your status in life, to make yourself look good, but they only indicate the discontentment of your life. The highest manifestation of sattwa is contentment. Once there is contentment in your life, know that sattwa has become established in it. The sattwa guna has finally entered your life.

Satsang: The fifth method is aimed at transforming your way of thinking. *Satsang* means association with truth. The word is often used to mean the company of a sage, but that is not its real meaning. Satsang can also be practised in seclusion. You don’t need to come to an ashram for that. If you can associate with truth in your life, that is satsang.

Once you become aware of truth in your life, you become free from untruth, of that which is changeable. Instead, the truth which is permanent, the ideas which are eternal, take over the mind. Thus, satsang means researching truth, searching for truth and making the effort to live with truth. It means making your life *satyamaya*, filled with truth. It means that there is no pretension in your life, no hypocrisy.

When you practise satsang, you don’t pretend to be that which you are not, for your essential nature cannot change. It can be modified, you can try to improve it, and it will

improve only when you allow the practice of truth to manifest in your life. A person who practises and lives truth is known as satsangi.

Shraddha and vishwas: The other methods to uproot the negative vrittis and allow the birth of positive vrittis in life are *shraddha* and *vishwas*, faith and trust. They are essential for evolution of the mind, as it is faith and trust which connect you with the inner spirit.

Once, a person came to a sage and said, “Master, I need to cross the river, but I don’t have any means. There is no boat and I don’t know how to swim.” The sage said, “Bring a piece of paper and a pen.” He wrote something down on the paper, folded it and gave it to the man, saying, “Put this piece of paper in your pocket and walk over the river.” The man did as he was told and found that he could indeed walk on water. He walked ten or fifteen steps and suddenly a thought came to his mind, “What is this powerful mantra due to which I can walk on water? Let me see it once.” He opened the piece of paper. It had only one word written on it: ‘Rama’. “That’s it!” the man exclaimed. Instantly, he went under. As long as he had faith and trust in the sage and in what he had written down, he could walk on water. The moment his faith faltered, there was no trust, and he drowned.

It is faith and trust that intensify the energy of the mind. If there is faith and trust, don’t try to find out what is written on the paper. Faith and trust connect you with your inner self, and when you are able to create this connection you experience peace and clarity of mind, and manifest outstanding abilities. This, say the sages, is the goal of life. This is what will allow you to live appropriately and act for your evolution as well as that of the world.

The biggest sadhana

God-realization is not possible in this life, but cultivating self-awareness and the appropriate virtues to excel in life is within the domain of every individual’s effort. If you do only this much, then God is not a distant reality either.

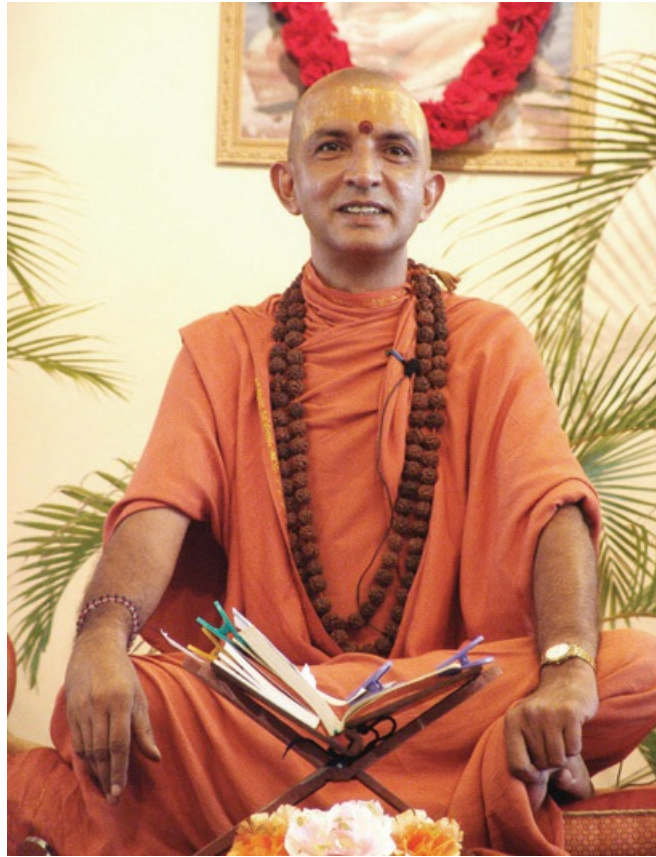
Therefore, the highest sadhana in life is mind management, not meditation. The highest awareness is how the mind responds to different situations. Sadhana is not an abstract idea; it is a practicable, step by step method. This is the approach that the yogis and seers have adopted in order to harness the potential of the mind.

Transformation of the mind is possible provided you are committed to cultivating awareness of your responses and reactions. Such awareness is the awareness of mental vrittis. Responses and reactions are due to vrittis and they manifest continuously. They go by the law of continuity. The three laws which govern the mind are the law of continuity, the law of relativity and the law of association. The law of continuity indicates the continuous response of the mind to every situation. Thus the scriptures say that instead of responding to everything instantly, develop patience and forbearance. Develop knowledge, restrain yourself and try to change the vision of the mind which is looking outwards at the material world and make it look towards the internal world. For this entire samsara is nothing but a play of the mind. As has been said:

Mana hi devataa, mana hi ishwara, mana se baraa na koye, toraa mana darpana

kahalaaye.

“Mind is the ultimate god. Mind is the undecaying principle. There is nothing greater than mind. Your mind is a mirror.”





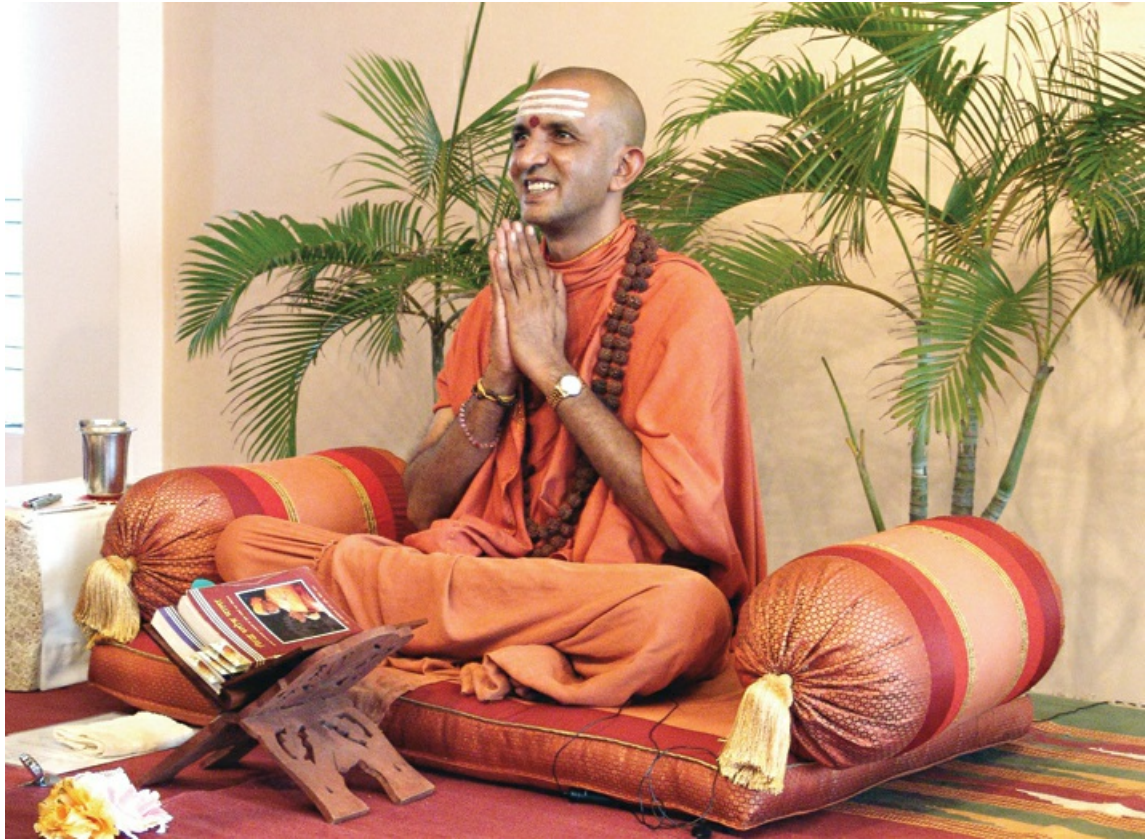














Raja Yoga

Ashtanga Yoga: An Overview

24 May 2010

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, there is a reference by Arjuna in relation to the mind. Arjuna says to Sri Krishna (6:34):

*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna, pramaathi balavaddridham;
Tasyaaham nigrham manye vaayoriva sudushkaram.*

Krishna, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful, and to control the mind is as difficult as controlling the air that flows all around.

When Arjuna makes this remark, Sri Krishna agrees with him. He replies (6:35):

*Asamshayam mahaabaaho mano durnigraham chalam;
Abhyaasena tu Kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate.*

What you say is true, the mind is restless no doubt, and difficult to hold. But it can be brought under control by repeated practice and cultivation of vairagya.

Krishna has pointed to two things in order to control or manage the mind. The first is *abhyasa*, practice. The second is *vairagya*, non-attachment or dispassion. Keeping these two references in mind, we will first consider the aspect of vairagya and then of abhyasa.

When the word mind is used in yoga, it refers to all the four components or behaviours that manifest in life: *manas*, the ability to reflect or think, *buddhi*, intelligence, *chitta*, the storehouse of memories, and *ahamkara*, ego.

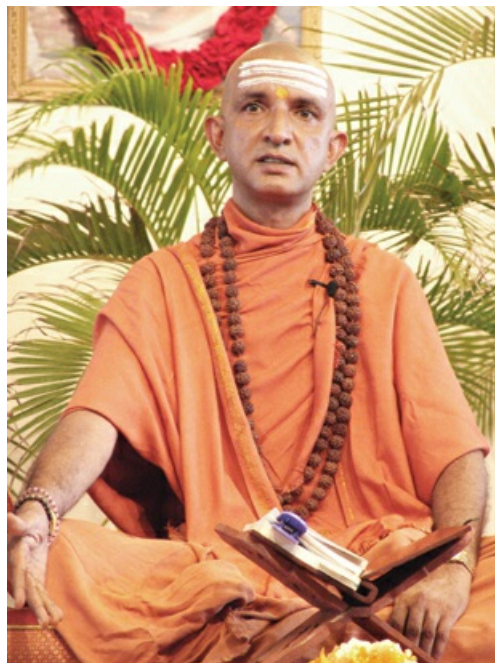
The total mind identifies, interacts and associates with the senses and sense objects. The mind perceives what the senses experience. If your eyes see an object, the mind will recognize it, identify with it, give it a name and understand it. If you smell something, the mind will identify the smell and appreciate or reject that smell. If you touch something, the mind will recognize the touch. If you taste something, the mind will recognize the taste. In this way, the mind identifies with sense experiences.

Why does the mind identify with sense objects? It has to. In order to survive in this world as a normal human being, the mind has to follow the law of *Prakriti*, Nature. The law of Prakriti is that once the soul takes birth, all the faculties of the body, whether

sensory, mental, emotional or intellectual, will connect externally with something tangible and recognizable. That is why the mind begins to interact with the world.

In this process of interaction there is a search, an unconscious search, to discover contentment and happiness. No matter which direction the senses and the mind go in, you are searching for happiness and contentment through that connection or association. The desire to possess and acquire manifests with an underlying perception that you will become happier than you were upon acquisition of the object of your desire: “I live in a shack, if I live in a house I will be a happier person;” “I go around on a bicycle, if I get a motorcycle I will be a happier person;” “I go around on a motorcycle, if I get a car I will be a happier person;” “I don’t have a family, if I have a family I will be a happier person.” In this way, all the interactions in life, with any sense object or subject, person or idea, are a search for personal fulfilment and satisfaction. That is what everyone strives for throughout their life.

As long as the mind pursues the senses and sense objects, it is distracted, dissipated and volatile. When the attractions for sense objects and sensory fulfilment reduce, the mind becomes peaceful and quiet. Everyone knows this, but you are not able to practise it because you are not able to stop the mind from following a train of desire. You are not able to guide the mind to know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. This is where, in order to control the mind and manage mental behaviour, the two ideas of *abhyasa*, practice, and *vairagya*, non-attachment or dispassion, come in.



Besides the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Yoga Sutras* also mention that in order to reduce the afflictions of the mind and overcome suffering and mental imbalance, one has to follow *abhyasa* and *vairagya* (1:12):

Abhyasavairagyabhyam tannirodhah.

It is possible to overcome the afflictions of the mind through practice and through non-attachment.

Law of attachment

Raga means attachment, to connect, and *vairagya* means without attachment. *Vairagya* indicates that one remains free from the influences of attachments.

The *Yoga Sutras* state that attachments are caused by the search for pleasure and happiness (2:7):

Sukha anushayi ragaha.

Raga is the liking accompanying pleasure.

You are attracted to those things, people, places and objects, where you feel you will be happy. You attach yourself with the feeling and perception that a given association, attachment or connection will make you happier. The opposite of this is suffering or *dukha*. In *dukha*, there is repulsion (2:8):

Dukha anushayi dwesha.

Dwesha is the repulsion accompanying pain.

Attraction and repulsion thus represent the pendulum-like movement of the mind. The mind goes on swinging from *raga* to *dwesha*, from attachment and pleasure to rejection and suffering, from *sukha* to *dukha*. That has been your mental behaviour right from the day you were born till today.

You are always gravitating towards those places, sense objects or people with whom you are able to experience joy and happiness, and rejecting those which create strife, conflict, tension, confusion, suffering and disharmony. That is the natural trait or behaviour of the mind.

The attraction for pleasure gives birth to the state of *raga* in the mind. Once it has taken birth, the experience of *raga* intensifies and attaches you to the object that you expect pleasure from. In that attachment and attraction you lose your balance of mind. When you do not receive pleasure from the object of attachment, you lose your balance of mind and experience suffering and dissatisfaction. This is the state that Patanjali described as *dukha anushayi dwesha*. When the experience of suffering manifests due to non-experience of pleasure, you will want to remove yourself from that state. This swing between *raga* and *dwesha* becomes the cause of mental dissipation, depression and disease. Psychological disorders are caused because you have not freed yourself from the swing between *raga* and *dwesha* and expectations.

In the state of depression you connect yourself with suffering. If you disconnect from it, there is no reason for depression. On the other swing, when you are joyous, there is greater expectation of pleasure, as you have connected yourself with pleasure. This

connection results in attraction to pleasure, giving rise to corresponding thoughts, behaviour and actions.

When you keep swinging between pain and pleasure, then all the faculties of the mind, including manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, become restless, immersed in material life and removed from balance and restraint. There is lack of internal peace and contentment, a heightening of mental agitation, greater attraction for sense objects and greater repulsion from suffering.

Cultivating non-attachment

To manage the state of mind which swings between opposites, abhyasa and vairagya have been emphasized. To understand vairagya or non-attachment, first identify those areas which attach or bind you to the feeling of pleasure and happiness in your connection with sense objects. That is the meaning of non-attachment. There is no negation of sense objects, but an awareness that you are not attached to the object. That is vairagya.

You are not negating, denying or renouncing anything, but being free from the effects of attachment. The sense objects exist, the pleasures exist, but the mind has not been influenced by raga towards them. In raga you are bound by the effects of attachment and in vairagya you are free from the effects of attachment. In dwesha you are bound by the effects of pain and in the state of adwesha you are free from the effects of pain.



Vairagya is a mental attitude; it is an aware and awakened state of mind through which one can witness raga, attachments and desires. Having become the witness, one can know their usefulness or uselessness and modify the behaviour and thoughts accordingly. A person who understands the necessity or superfluity of sense objects and modifies his or her life appropriately to arrive at a state of balance is called a yogi.

A person who practises asanas or meditation is not called a yogi, just as a person who studies science is not called a scientist or one who studies history is not called a historian. A student of science will be called a scientist only when they attain mastery over the subject. In the same way, a yogi is one who has realized the thinking and wisdom of yoga, which begins with vairagya. This is the first chapter of yoga for the serious practitioners of yoga.

Yoga practitioners are divided into several groups. Some are whimsical practitioners. They come to yoga to find a cure for a disease or a problem and once the problem is taken care of, they move on to something else. Serious practitioners are those who try to take their life towards the path of sadhana while contemplating the various aims of yoga in order to achieve a positive result, a positive mind and a healthy body, and realize their inherent potential. Such serious practice of yoga does not begin with asana, pranayama, yama, niyama, japa or dhyana, but with vairagya. First, you need to know how to be free of the stresses, pains, dissipations and problems that arise in life. There is only one way: let go of that which you are holding on to.

Once there was a person who caught hold of a tree and started to cry out, "The tree has caught hold of me. Someone come and free me." Everyone is in that state. You are all holding on to trees and saying, "We are not able to be free. The family does not free us, society does not free us, the world does not free us, the pleasures and sense objects do not free us." Remember, no one and nothing is keeping you prisoner, it is you yourself who is clinging to things, and that is the raga of your life.

Once there was a sadhu who had a bright disciple. The disciple used to run an enterprise. Every time they met, the disciple would say, "Soon I will follow your path – once I am free of my responsibilities." The sadhu would reply, "All right, I will wait for you." The disciple got married, had children, his wealth enhanced and he acquired a bigger house and better comforts. Nothing was lacking in his life any more.

One day, the sadhu arrived at his house and said, "Now you have achieved everything you wanted to in your life, you are free of all responsibilities. Come with me." The disciple replied, "How can I go right now? I have just settled my family. Let me at least see the face of the next generation, let me see my grandchildren. Then I will go with you." The sadhu went away and soon the disciple became a grandfather.

A few years passed. The sadhu arrived again one day and said, "You have seen the face of your grandchildren. Now come with me." The disciple replied, "How can I? I have to see them married. You come back after they are married." The sadhu went away. The grandchildren grew up and got married. Soon after, the disciple died. When the sadhu arrived again, he found that the disciple was dead.

The sadhu sat down in meditation and realized that the disciple's spirit was residing in the dog that was guarding the house. He said to the dog, "Your life is over. Come with me. What are you doing in the body of this dog?" The disciple replied, "I am guarding my house. When everyone is asleep at night, I stay awake and guard the house. The children are still young. Therefore, I will remain in the body of this dog for some time. When the children grow up, I will leave it." The sadhu replied, "All right, as you wish. I have waited for so many years, a few more will do no harm."

When the sadhu returned a few years later, he found that the dog had died. He again sat down in meditation and realized that the spirit of the disciple was now residing in a snake which was guarding the family wealth hidden underground. The sadhu said, “Now you have gone and acquired the body of a snake. Leave it and come with me.” The disciple said, “How can I? I am guarding the family wealth.” Finally, the sadhu gave up and left to walk his own path.

This story indicates the attachment that everyone has for enjoyment, pleasure and fulfilment of desires. It indicates how you forget that you come into this world with a destiny and no one can impose anything on it. You will have to undergo whatever is written in your destiny. However, when a thought arises that you want to be free of your pain and suffering and a desire to accomplish this is experienced, the first method to be followed is vairagya.

Vairagya has to be cultivated over a period of time. It is not something that you can acquire through practice; it needs to be cultivated, it is a process of mental education. In order to achieve it, be observant and clear about the associations and attachments which bring fulfilment or discord in life. Identifying both, remain unaffected by the positive as well as the negative aspects. This is how vairagya can control mental behaviour and association. It can check the gross mind which is seeking sensorial, emotional and physical fulfilment. It is a mental perspective, an outlook of awareness.

Abhyasa

The second method to bring the mind under control is abhyasa. *Abhyasa* means practice. What kind of practice? To regulate the mind. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:58):

*Yadaa samharate chaayam kurmongaaneeva sarvashaha;
Indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyastasya prajnaa pratishtithitaa.*

Like a turtle which draws its limbs from all directions into its shell, a person should also withdraw all the senses from sense objects. Only then will the mind become steady.

This is the practice to be undertaken to harness the mental faculties. Sri Krishna says that the mind is connected to sense objects. It follows the senses wherever they go. Therefore, withdraw the mind from following the senses. If the eyes look at something pleasant, recognize it. At the same time, say, “Yes, it is beautiful, I appreciate it”, and stop there. Acknowledge it, accept it and stop there. Don’t crave it. Don’t be obsessed by it. The moment you begin to crave, you are obsessed by the need to possess something. If the ears hear something nice, acknowledge it, appreciate it, but don’t be attached to it. If the nose smells something nice, acknowledge it, appreciate it, but don’t hanker after it. In this way, you will gradually withdraw the mind from following the senses and creating more desires and expectations.

Right now, your mind is a slave to the senses. When the mind becomes a slave to the

senses, the senses also become a slave to the mind. Both fuse into one. There is no distinction between a sense experience and a mental experience because at one point they come together and merge into one. If you look at something delicious to eat, your mind is desiring it. Your mind has merged with the desire, the vision, the expectation, the hunger, the taste, everything.

Remember, the mind and the senses are not two separate things, although they are spoken of as such. They are gross and subtle behaviours of the same shakti, the same power. The senses are the gross behaviour and the mind is the subtle behaviour of the same cosmic power. When the senses are active, the mind fuses with the senses and follows the senses all around. When the mind disassociates from the senses, as happens during sleep at night, it establishes itself independently of the sense experiences. The mind continues to exist, but the senses don't exist.

In sleep, smells don't bother you, visions don't bother you, different sensations don't bother you until and unless they become extreme. Only when they become extreme do they draw the mind out from its self-identification and into the outer gross dimension. At night you hear many sounds, but you are not disturbed by them. However, if the telephone rings you will be disturbed, as that extreme sound will draw the mind out from its own identification with deep sleep. Several mosquitoes can bite you while you are asleep and you will not even be aware of it until a delicate spot is touched, and then you will be forced to open your eyes and make yourself comfortable.

When the mind is established in its own identity, the senses have to become more powerful than the mind in order to draw it out. This is what happens during the sleep state. In the normal waking state, the senses and the mind act and function as one entity, one power, one experience. If the senses are withdrawn from the sense objects in the waking state as well, the mind will become still and established in itself. Sri Krishna has used the term prajna in this context, not manah. He says (2:58:2):

Tasya prajna pratishthita.

One (whose senses are withdrawn) is established in prajna.



Sri Krishna is indicating a specific faculty of the mind. Prajna is higher intelligence. It relates to the faculty of buddhi with which one decides upon joy and sorrow, and which thus becomes the cause of agitation of the senses.

Objects of enjoyment will always exist. At the beginning of creation when life had not manifested, something existed. Human beings were not there, but objects were there. When human beings cease to exist and creation remains, objects will continue to exist. Creation is made of object and subject, while life is formed out of prana and relates to living beings. Even when there are no living beings, the objects and subjects of enjoyment will remain. Living beings come into creation to enjoy them, and when the time period for which they were meant to enjoy is over, they depart. Therefore, Sri Krishna's words signify that sense objects will always exist, but you have to make the effort to withdraw the senses from them. Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs, withdraw the mind. This is the abhyasa or practice that needs to be undertaken. The sequence indicated in the *Bhagavad Gita* is the sequence of raja yoga, which is expounded in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Ashtanga yoga

When the yogis were contemplating the development of yoga, one yogi focused on how to free the mind from its attachments and associations with the world of objects and centre it, so it could begin to experience its own purity and transcendental nature. This yogi developed the subject of raja yoga. He was called Patanjali. Sage Patanjali had other contemporaries who developed other branches of yoga. Hatha yoga was developed by Swatmarama and Gheranda, bhakti yoga was developed by Shandilya and Narada. In this way, many thinkers and rishis developed different branches of yoga to cater to a specific need or develop a specific human faculty.

When Sage Patanjali was thinking about the mind, he devised different systems to access different areas of the mind in order to gain mastery over it. These different systems were grouped into eight different categories; therefore, the original name of the yoga dealing with the modification of mental behaviour was known as *ashtanga yoga* or yoga of eight limbs. Collectively, these eight limbs were given a name: raja yoga. *Raja* means king and the name was given as an indication that with these practices one will become the ruler of one's own life, one's own mind. Thus raja yoga consists of practices which allow you to become the ruler, the king of your own life.

You have to understand the intent of becoming a ruler. A king has many responsibilities. He has to look after many areas. He must possess an overall picture of everything that is happening in the kingdom. A king is not the manager of one department, but has to control many departments together. Similarly, when you embark upon the journey and practice of raja yoga, you have to be attentive to many things, as the mind is a subtle *indriya*, sense organ. The mind is also subtle prana and it is also consciousness.

The mind has three functions. It is seen in the form of consciousness where its function is to know and realize. It is seen as subtle prana shakti. Prana is not solid like the body or physical organs, but is subtle and its body is energetic. The mind is also

seen as an indriya, a sense organ, which connects the internal world with the outer world.

Sri Krishna calls mind the sixth sensory organ. It is a complete sense organ in itself. All the *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and *jnanendriyas*, organs of knowledge, are the outer or gross sense organs which relate with the material and gross world. The mind is the only sense organ which links the subtle and the gross, and has access to both planes with equal intensity and reach. As it is subtle, it maintains its existence even without the physical sense organs. When the senses become inactive, the mind does not become inactive. It goes on creating its own world in a subtle form without any connection with the external world. Thus, in the practice of raja yoga, the mind is first separated from the sense organs.

To gain mastery over the mind, to realize it and awaken its potentials, eight systems are followed step by step in the ashtanga yoga or raja yoga of Sage Patanjali. With the practice of these eight limbs, one can achieve full restraint over the entire range of the mental states. When this happens, life and creativity evolve continuously. Even from the scientific point of view it is accepted that human beings use a fraction of the potential of the mind. If the total mind is awakened, who knows what potential will manifest in your life! This is the subject of raja yoga: to expand the mind to one hundred percent capacity, to fine-tune it fully.

The eight stages of raja yoga are: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. All these specifically deal with mental behaviour and management of mental modifications or *chitta vrittis*. The first four practices are aimed at quietening the externalized tendency of the mind, the pranas and the senses. The last four are methods of mental practice which provide a direction to the mind and help develop vairagya.

Yama and niyama

The *yamas* are codes of mental behaviour which one needs to cultivate. They include *satya*, identifying with truth; *ahimsa*, absence of violence from the mind; *asteya*, not trying to possess things which do not belong to one; *aparigraha*, non-possesiveness; *brahmacharya*, maintaining a positive and higher frame of mind. These five codes of mental conduct rectify the mental behaviour. The natural tendency of the mind is tamasic; therefore, the response of the mind in any given situation is bound to be tamasic, and if not tamasic, then rajasic. Since there is continuous fluctuation between *tamas* and *rajas* in normal life, cultivating strengths of mind which can counterbalance the negative factors are the mental codes of conduct, or *yamas*.

The *niyamas* are disciplines to be followed in life to maintain physical, mental and spiritual purity, and awareness. Sage Patanjali has identified five *niyamas*. Of course there are not just five *niyamas* or five *yamas*. In the yogic tradition, sixty-four *yamas* have been identified. Out of those, Sage Patanjali has chosen only five. The rest which appear in other yogic scriptures are equally valuable, as they reinforce the mental strength and *sankalpa*, resolve, of the mind to attain purity and transcendence. Sage Patanjali chose five with an understanding that it is not practical or possible for all to go

through the sixty-four yamas and niyamas. Therefore, the relevant ones for mind management can be perfected by the serious spiritual aspirants.

The yamas and niyamas are not teachings on ethics and morality. That may be the social interpretation of people who have not understood the yogic process. They represent a condition of mind and a state of life which is harmonious, balanced and uplifting. Fine-tuning of the mind comprised of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara begins when you begin to adopt one yama and one niyama and gradually work your way through them.

Asana and pranayama

The third step of ashtanga yoga is asana. The asanas defined in the *Yoga Sutras* are not the asanas of hatha yoga, but asanas conducive to internalization of awareness, attention and focus. Therefore, the definition of asana according to Sage Patanjali is a posture in which the body is steady and comfortable for an extended length of time. Any posture which allows one to internalize and go deeper in meditation and also maintain the pranic balance of the body is an asana for the mind, for meditation.

Sage Patanjali believed that once one adopts a meditative posture, the energies of the body begin to flow along the *nadis*, energy pathways, in a specific manner according to how one is seated in that particular posture. The flow of this prana shakti is not discharged from the body, but retained in the body itself when the posture is maintained. Discharge of energy takes place through the extremities of the body much more than through any other part. This has been recorded by Kirlian photography as well. Therefore, when you place your hands on top of the knees, the energy is being recycled into the body, into the legs. When you sit in padmasana or siddhasana, an energy circuit is created and prana begins to flow according to the posture. In this manner, asanas are used to deepen mental awareness and attain mental tranquillity by redirecting the prana shakti.

Pranayama is the fourth step of ashtanga yoga. Not only from the yogic perspective but also from the scientific point of view, matter is nothing but compressed energy. This body is nothing but compressed energy. Wood and metal are nothing but compressed energy. Everything is a form of energy. Through pranayama one is able to activate the subtle flow of prana shakti and once prana shakti is awakened, the vital forces of the body are harmonized with the vital energies of the mind. This frees the mind from its material and gross identifications and awareness, and makes it self-contained.

The first four steps of ashtanga yoga, yama, niyama, asana and pranayama, are the practices or techniques through which you are able to modify the mental behaviour and the pranic flow before you attempt to discover the mind, which begins in the fifth stage.

Pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi

When Sri Krishna refers to withdrawing the mind from sense objects just like a turtle withdraws its limbs, he is referring to pratyahara.

Pratyahara means withdrawal of the senses from sense objects. The mind is

withdrawn from the external world, from objects of distraction, dissipation and disturbance. With the mind isolated from sense objects, a new condition of mind sets in and that is the focused, concentrated mind which is realized in the state of dharana.

Dharana means focus of mind. In the state of dharana, the mind is fixed and one-pointed. That is the sixth stage of ashtanga yoga.

The seventh step is dhyana, which follows dharana. After having acquired a non-fluctuating and focused mind, identification with the inner self begins to take place. That awareness and identification with the inner nature is known as *dhyana*, meditation. In dhyana the mind becomes so subtle that its energies become one with the energy of the atman.

When identification with the atman intensifies, deepens and is prolonged, that is known as samadhi. Thus, in the eightfold path of yoga, Sage Patanjali has described a sequence of abhyasa, practice, which can be undertaken to overcome the dissipations and afflictions of the mind.



A Sequential Method of Transcendence

25 May 2010

Sage Patanjali compiled eight systems or practices of yoga which are together known as *ashtanga yoga*, the yoga of eight limbs or branches. Later, ashtanga yoga was renamed raja yoga. The word *raja* means ruler, and normally it is the mind which rules your life. However, when you become the master of the mind and develop total mastery over the mental processes, you become the controller, guide and ruler of your mind and nature. By managing the mind, you can control and guide your entire life.

The ability to direct one's life is a very special ability, which not everybody possesses. Everyone is looking for crutches, support and dependency in their lives. Everyone is looking for somebody they can lean on and depend on for encouragement and sympathy. Human beings are a totally dependent species. You are dependent on the opinions, thoughts and views of other people. Your ideas and thoughts are modified by the ideas, views and attitudes that other people have. This is a clear-cut indication that the human mind is not free from external influences. You are dependent on others for even insignificant things and follow not your own wisdom, but the opinions of others. It is not even necessary to have a relationship with someone to become dependent on them. Anybody can be picked, and that is the flaw of human life.

Highest accomplishment

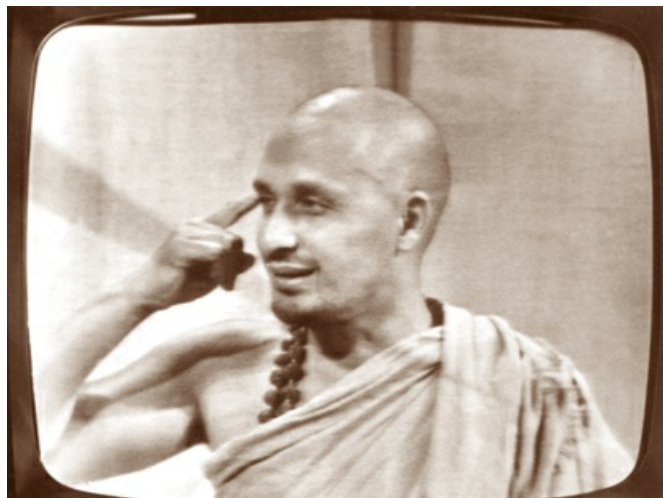
The highest quality that you can aspire for in life is the courage, strength and stamina to stand on your own feet. This can happen only when you have made friends with the mind, when you are able to guide your own mind. There are two instances from the life of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, that I would like to narrate in this context.

In 1976, during an international program in Australia, a newspaper reporter pestered Sri Swamiji, trying to know his *siddhis* or spiritual powers. The reporter said, "Your disciples claim that you have special powers. I want to know what they are." Sri Swamiji said, "I don't have any special powers, I am just an ordinary human being." The reporter insisted. Ultimately Sri Swamiji said to him, "Ask your questions and I will answer." The reporter asked, "Can you read other people's thoughts?" Sri Swamiji said, "No." "Can you see the future?" Sri Swamiji said, "No." "Can you hear distant

conversations?” Sri Swamiji said, “No.” “Can you turn water into wine?” Sri Swamiji said, “No.” “Can you fly in air?” Sri Swamiji said, “No.” In this way, the reporter continued to ask question after question and Sri Swamiji’s answer was in the negative each time. Finally the reporter said, “You tell me what ability you have.” Sri Swamiji said, “I have the ability to stand on my own two feet. That is my biggest achievement in life.”

How Sri Swamiji was able to achieve this, he indicated in another satsang. He said that if you have a fight with your spouse, there is an option to live in separate rooms and find a few hours of peace and solitude. If you fight with your mind, which separate room will you go into? The mind lives with you, sleeps with you, enjoys life with you, experiences the sufferings with you. It is your constant companion. There is not a single moment when you can say, “I have lived without my mind.”

When you fight with this mind, how can you ever find peace? You fight with the mind and sleep with the mind in the same bed, in the same body. You fight with your mind and you take it along with you wherever you go. It is advisable, and these are his words, that just as you ensure that your spouse remains happy to avoid a fight or strife, learn to treat the mind in the same manner. If you can water this plant of the mind regularly, you will never have *ashanti*, lack of peace, in your life. You will always experience peace, happiness and contentment.



Learning the ABCD of mind

What your behaviour needs to be with your mind is indicated in these two examples. In order to come to this understanding, you have to realize the mind from the beginning. In order to read a book and understand it, you need to first have mastery over the language. You need to learn the ABCD. You have to learn the words, learn how to form sentences, and in due course when you have acquired that skill, you are able to read any book and comment on it. Similarly, without basic training and education, you cannot have a peaceful mind.

If there is disturbance in life and you want to find peace, then instead of searching

for peace, manage the disturbances of your life. You will automatically find peace. Identify what is happening inside your mind. There is strife and there is the desire for peace in there. You are negating the strife and tension, and saying, “I want peace, I want peace.” You are not managing the cause of the tension and strife, and becoming frustrated because you cannot find peace and there seems to be no solution in life. That attitude, idea and thought is incorrect. There is always an antidote to every situation. That solution has to be discovered. This discovery begins with realizing the behaviour of the mind.

When the mind is identifying with the external, sensorial, gross and material world, it evokes responses which are in relation to its sensory identification. If you see a bag of money lying on the floor, the eyes have seen it and the mind has identified it. Now an altered state of mind takes over the normal behaviour. This state is greed, which makes you want to go over and pick up the bag of money.

When you see a child and feel affection, remember that it is an altered state of mind. Five minutes ago you were not feeling affectionate, but something happened which made the mind manifest that particular response. The response can be envy, jealousy, greed or frustration, based on the situation. This mental response to a given situation or in relationship to a sense object indicates an altered state of mind.

An altered state of mind means a state which is different from the normal state of balance and equipoise. Once these altered states dominate the mental behaviour, they become habits, known as vrittis in Sanskrit. These habits or vrittis can be both painful and pleasurable. It is said in the *Yoga Sutras* (1:5):

Vrittayah panchatayah klishtaklishtah.

There are fivefold modifications of the mind; they are painful and not painful.

Klishta and *aklishta*, painful and not painful, difficult and easy. The vrittis or mental habits, formed due to identification and association with sense objects and the sensory world, become the cause of distraction and tension in life. Distraction and tension lead to dissipation of the mental forces and loss of mental clarity.

There is a saying that the quality of life depends on the quality of thought, and the quality of thought depends on the quality of associations. If you associate with the right people, the quality of thought will be different. If the quality of thought is positive, optimistic and creative, the quality of life will be different. Therefore, if you want to improve the quality of your life, improve the quality of thought. If you want to improve the quality of thought, improve the quality of association. If you want to improve the quality of association, improve the quality of the total mind, as the mind will gravitate to different associations according to its attractions and needs.

Purpose of ashtanga yoga

The ashtanga yoga of Sage Patanjali attempts to discover, step by step, the mental behaviour, and trim the branches of the tree which are growing in different directions.

Without this pruning and trimming, the tree will grow in an uncontrolled way. When you want to grow a tree, you do not merely place the seed in the ground and wait for it to grow up, but as the tree starts growing you trim and prune the excess parts, which ensures that in the course of time the tree becomes straight, strong, healthy and full of life.

In the same manner, you have to prune and trim your mental behaviour, which nobody ever does. When you do not trim and prune the tree of the mind, it becomes the cause of discontentment in life. You always find discontentment, no matter where you look. Even if the sun is shining, you see a dark cloud covering it.

The practices of yama and niyama are like scissors which prune the tree of the mind. This is how ashtanga yoga begins. Ashtanga yoga or raja yoga begins with yama. Then niyama, then asana, then pranayama. These four constitute *bahiranga yoga*, the practicable, attainable, external yoga for pruning, trimming and fine-tuning the mental behaviour. The remaining four, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, constitute *antaranga yoga*, internal yoga, in which the powers, faculties and potential of the mind are cultivated. They are methods by which one is able to cultivate the positive strengths and qualities of the mind.

Reflecting upon this system and process of raja yoga, you will come to an understanding that it is one of the best sequences available to humankind for rediscovering, managing and awakening the strengths and qualities of the mind.

Yama

Yama is the first component of *bahiranga yoga*. The five yamas are: *ahimsa*, absence of violence; *satya*, truthfulness; *asteya*, honesty; *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness; *brahmacharya*, mental firmness.

There is a statement in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62–63):

*Dhyaayato vishayaanpunsah sangasteshoopajaayate;
Sangaat sanjaayate kamah kaamaatkrodhobhijaayate.*

When one thinks of objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises.

*Krodhaatbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah
Smritibhranshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaatpranashyati.*

From anger comes delusion; from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination one perishes.

In these statements, Sri Krishna says that when you look at something, the first experience to evolve from that connection or association is desire. By the act of looking you create a desire. With the creation of desire arise motivation and aggression. Due to identification with the object, desire is created. With the birth of desire in the mind,

motivation and aggression also come forth in order to fulfil the demand of the mind, to fulfil the desire. This infatuation, aggression and motivation, this one-track mind to fulfil the desire deludes you from seeing the real situation. When the mind is deluded, you are not able to think appropriately; there is no concept of right or wrong in the state of delusion. When the mind is without any notion, the intellect takes a backseat, wisdom takes a backseat and you are just an automated person propelled by desires. When wisdom takes a backseat, it is similar to the death of a human being. Thus, Sri Krishna has defined the psychological approach and outcome that you experience due to identification with a sense object.

Ahimsa: One component of yama is *ahimsa*, which means the non-aggressive nature. People generally translate *himsa* as violence and *ahimsa* as being non-violent. However, violence and non-violence are two extreme expressions. You undergo an entire range of experience to come to that extreme end of *himsa* or *ahimsa*. This entire range of experience has to be seen in one view, one glimpse, one thought. The aggressiveness or assertiveness that comes with infatuation, passion and desire has to be contained. Therefore, to rid the entire personality of all aspects of aggressive qualities is *ahimsa*. When negative thoughts of dislike, hatred, anger or pride arise, they have to be managed by adopting the *vritti* of *ahimsa*. You have to remove the tendency to think ill of or feel enmity towards anyone from your thoughts, intellect and emotions.



An aggressive person can sit quietly and say, “I have become non-violent.” That is incorrect. It does not mean anything. If a person knows that they have overcome all aggressive qualities and behaviours, that is an achievement of life. The aggressive quality in life, *himsa*, disturbs the mental peace, and when the aggressive qualities are overcome, it is the first connection with peace in life.

What should be done first to discover peace in life? Just become observant of your

own aggressive nature and behaviour and try to reduce the intensity of that aggression. In the course of time, you will become totally free from the grip of aggression and violence. Meditation helps in that process, but awareness is the primary component because it is through awareness that you will be able to observe yourself, not through meditation. In meditation you cultivate and increase the range of your awareness, but it is the awareness which actually works to reduce the intensity of aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour means tamasic and rajasic behaviour. Violence is a mix of rajasic and tamasic components. Therefore, when you are able to lessen the influence of rajas and tamas in your life and enhance sattwa, you move towards ahimsa.

Satya: Another yama is satya. According to the *Yoga Sutras*, if you follow the path of satya you develop divine intelligence, *para buddhi*. The normal buddhi is simply responding and reacting to different situations and circumstances. It fights a fire only when it sees a fire; it is not prepared. It does not anticipate that a fire can be sparked off. It will not take any prior precautions to ensure that there is no cause for fire. If you are able to take precautions to ensure that there is no cause for fire, you are applying a different buddhi. That is anticipatory buddhi. That is *para buddhi*, which allows you to see the bigger picture.

Satya allows the development of divine buddhi. It also helps in overcoming the hypocritical nature that everyone expresses from time to time. Human behaviour is definitely hypocritical. You put on different guises and masks to hide from the real situation and project yourself as a different person from what you are. There is a saying that inside every bully is a crying child. It is that crying child which hides from its own cry by becoming a bully. In order to assert itself and prove that it is strong and can manage situations, the child becomes a bully. Therefore, if you are bullied by a bully, it is your shortcoming. If you are able to recognize the crying child inside a bully and help it, you will never be bullied by a bully. It is a fact of life.

Many times you also put different garbs and coverings on your emotions, expectations, desires and feelings. Many times you suppress them, elevate them, modify them, change them and never get to know what your real nature is. Your nature changes like a chameleon changes its colour; in the morning it is one colour, in the afternoon it is another colour and in the evening it is yet another colour.

Hypocrisy, pretence, guilt and inferiority complexes can be removed by practising satya. Right now your intelligence is sensorial and gross, due to which these negativities find room in your mind, taking you away from the practice of truth. Satya is a tool by which the mental behaviour can be refined and the covering over clarity and wisdom, which are inherent in everyone, can be removed. It is not mere ideology that by adhering to satya one acquires divine intelligence. It is real, as the power of truth is luminosity.

Truth, however, is not an easy matter. Many times people say to me, “I am going to be truthful and tell this person what he really is.” I say, “Very good, if you want to be slapped go and tell him the truth. If you don’t want to be slapped, keep quiet.” Be truthful to those who are truthful to you.

Once, someone asked Mullah Nasaruddin, “What is the definition of truth?” He

replied, “Truth is something which I have never spoken, never heard and never will speak.” Perhaps he said this in jest or perhaps it is only a story, but the thought behind this incident is true. People always run away from truth. Knowing the truth about yourself becomes the cause of guilt and inferiority complex; speaking the truth about others becomes the cause of hatred and abuse. You think of truth as speaking that which is visible. This is not what the spiritual traditions state. Truth is a state of mind through which you become free of hypocrisy and pretence, anxiety and guilt, and experience peace within. Therefore, truth has never been defined. To go on saying “Speak the truth” is nonsense. Truth is experienced within. When you are free of hypocrisy, pretence and guilt, and your life is no longer in darkness but illuminated, you are able to practise truth. Truth is the experience of a liberated state of mind.



Asteya: The next yama is honesty or asteya. It is said that those who have perfected honesty in their life develop a vision by which they can discover untold treasures. I have never had the chance to live with our Paramguru, Sri Swami Sivananda, but his disciples speak about his honesty. He was a totally honest person, in thought, word and deed. Due to this, he had cultivated a complete understanding of other people's natures and behaviours. By seeing a person he could say, “This is your condition or situation in life.” He could even tell how much someone's bank balance was by looking at them. Swami Sivananda had awakened this quality. This can be achieved by anyone who has awakened the power of honesty or asteya.

Honesty is like cleaning your mirror. When there is a covering of dust on the mirror, you cannot see your face in it. If you want to see your face, you have to first clean the mirror. In the same manner, honesty represents a clean mind, not a devious mind. Honesty represents a pure mind and in that purity you can see yourself reflected. In that clear mirror you can see your own face and the face of anyone else who passes before it.

Aparigraha: The next yama is aparigraha or non-possessiveness. The desire to possess, own and acquire has been a human trait right from the day the first caveman

started to walk this planet. It is identification with the feeling, “Something glittering, something nice, something pleasant, something beautiful is in my possession, I have acquired it.” This possessiveness is not only confined to the needs of life, but also to ambitions. If you can identify with your needs and work to fulfil only these, life will be far gentler on you. If you identify with your ambitions and strive to fulfil them, life will be hard on you.

Acquisition of possessions is the ultimate human dream. You want to possess everything you can lay your hands on, but remember that possession binds one to the world of sense objects. Just answer a question, how many pairs of shoes and items of clothing do you possess, and what do they all represent? They do not represent your need. You have them because when you acquired each one of them you felt you would be happier. Your need was fulfilled by possessing one pair of shoes, you don’t even need two pairs, but the desire does not stop there. When you see a different design or colour, you are attracted to it, you feel they will look nice on you and you want to obtain them. Vanity, status and quality – these are the things that get tagged on to your desire. They are not your need; they are your infatuation, ambition and aspiration. When you buy the second, third, fourth or subsequent number of items, they are not based on your need but your desire – to prove to yourself that you are capable of acquiring what you desire.

Aparigraha, non-possessiveness, is an antidote for the mentality which is craving for acquisitions and possessions. The second antidote is learning how to give. There is a story in the Upanishads. A representative of the human civilization goes to meet the Maker to bring a mandate on how to live happily. Along with him also travel representatives of the gods and demons. The three walk a certain distance. While they are waiting, an intense storm breaks out. There is thunder and lightning, and each representative hears a mandate of the Maker in the thunder.

Upon their return to their respective communities, the gods ask their representative what the message was. The representative says, “Restraint.” For gods, restraint is the command. The demon representative is also asked the same question. He says, “Compassion. The message from the Maker is that we should have compassion for people and not kill and trouble everyone at random.” When the human representative is asked the question, he says, “The Maker has told us, ‘Learn to give. Give and share, do not accumulate and possess.’”

This is an old story from the Upanishads. It seems that human traits have always been the same in all ages, whether Satya Yuga, Dwapara Yuga, Treta Yuga or Kali Yuga. Human nature and behaviour has never changed. The affluent or the powerful have always enjoyed life. The demons have always harassed society and humans have always been on a spree to possess and acquire things. These three messages are valid even today and applicable to all, for these are states of mind.

The mind becomes the demonical force and becomes ready for himsa. Therefore, through ahimsa, reduction of aggression, you are able to cultivate compassion and love. The affluent, the powerful, love life; they enjoy life and have no worries or fears. They feel they are immortal and have a clean chit to do anything. For them the message was,

“Learn restraint.”

All human beings like to accumulate and possess what they desire. The desire is only to accumulate. To counteract the desire for accumulation, you have to develop the desire to give and keep only what you require to fulfil your need. Give all that is extra to others so they can also fulfil their requirements and needs. If you have ten pairs of shoes, give one to somebody who does not have any shoes. That person will be thankful and grateful. By your gift their feet will be protected.

Letting go of your attachments to possessions one by one is *aparigraha*. Identify your attachments one by one and let go of one which is not your need, let another one go which is not your need, let a third one go which is not your need, and finally keep only those that are your need.

Brahmacharya: The next yama is *brahmacharya*. *Brahmacharya* is translated as celibacy, or abstinence from sexual activity. *Brahmacharya* does not mean sexual abstinence or living a bachelor's life. The word *brahmacharya* means a higher conduct, a higher awareness, a higher perception which has to be cultivated within.

The word *brahma* comes from the Sanskrit root *brinh*, which means to grow or expand, so *brahma* means the expanding and evolving reality. *Acharya* is living according to a principle, a precept or philosophy. For example, *sannyasins* try to follow *sannyasa acharya*, the disciplines of *sannyasa*. *Brahmacharya* is similar. It is living according to the precepts of the higher personality, the transcendental self or reality.

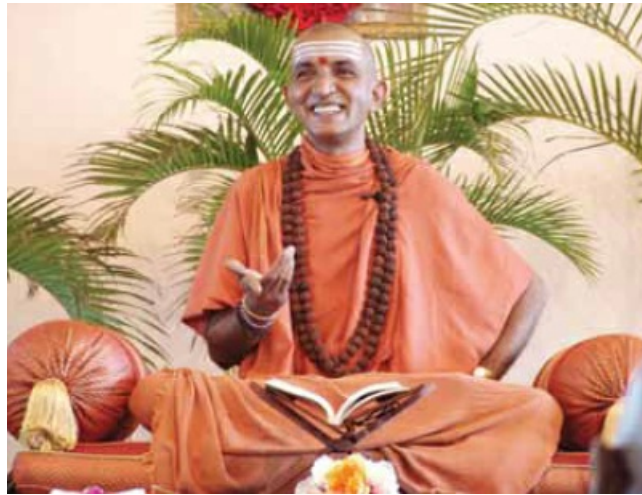
Another perspective is that one whose life expresses the *brahmi vritti* is a *brahmachari*. The *vrittis* have been talked about in the *Yoga Sutras*. People read it and say that to make the mind completely free of *vrittis* is yoga. However, that is not true. The mind can never be totally free of *vrittis*. Just as you need the solidity of earth to walk, the mind needs the support of *vrittis* to function. Cessation of *vrittis* is not possible in anybody's life.

When the *Yoga Sutras* speak of *vritti nirodha*, it refers to cessation of five *vrittis*: *pramana*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra* and *smriti* – right knowledge, wrong knowledge, doubt, sleep and memory. However, there are not just five *vrittis*. A *vritti* is like a train compartment. The mind is the train and the *vrittis* are the compartments. In the compartments of *pramana*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra* and *smriti*, the experience of the material world or the subjects of your connection with the world of senses are held. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, go into these compartments. The five compartments contain objects of both pleasure and pain, which direct and guide your life. They connect you with the material world, with sense objects and enjoyment, giving rise to like and dislike, pleasure and pain. Therefore, Sage Patanjali says that *vrittis* are of two types: painful and pleasurable. These are the *vrittis* that need to be blocked so that you can remain free from the influences of the world, like a lotus in water. When you block these five *vrittis*, the mind needs a support where it can centre itself. It cannot be centred in void. That is why yoga says that after you have been through all the experiences and arrived at the point where you can block the mental *vrittis*, a new *vritti* takes birth in the mind. This is the *brahmi vritti*.

Brahmi vritti is the connection with the transcendental reality. The connection with

the transcendental nature is a natural, spontaneous connection, which does not require any effort. Brahmi vritti means connection with the higher nature. The mind must be continuously flowing in a stream of higher awareness, just as a mother is constantly aware of her child, whether or not she is looking at him. The mother does not need to hold the child in her lap all day long to be aware of him; she goes on performing her daily chores yet her mind is centred on her child. Whether she is cooking food or washing clothes, a part of her mind is connected with the child and the moment she feels that the child is in danger, she leaves her chores and puts him in a safe spot.

Constant awareness or remembrance means that you are able to have the attitude of a mother. With faith and belief you keep alive the connection with that Supreme Element and live as God wants you to live. This world that you have come into is God's home. It is said in the *Ishavasya Upanishad* (1):



Ishaa vaasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat.

All this, whatsoever moves in this universe, is indwelt by God.

This world belongs to God, you live here on rent for a short period, just as when you travel to a different place you book a hotel for a specific period. You do everything necessary there, eat, drink, sleep, live, but you do not own the hotel. In the same way, the owner of this hotel called the world is someone else. Therefore, with faith and belief allow the awareness and remembrance of that power to go on continuously in a part of the mind and let the thought always be, “I am a traveller on this earth. The owner of this world is that Supreme Spirit and I have to live and work according to what is appropriate here.”

Every place has its own appropriate purpose. You do not use the kitchen as the bathroom or place your bed in the bathroom. When you go to a temple, you go with a certain feeling and leave your shoes outside. When you go to a club, you wear your best clothes. Every place has its own rules of conduct.

When the mind thinks of the world as real, it becomes the enjoyer and suffers on

that account. When the mind makes room for the transcendental reality by being free of material vrittis and becoming established in brahmi vritti, this vritti becomes the basis to centre the mind and take the train of evolution forward. Thus, brahmacharya means acquisition of brahmi vritti, which is not a material vritti but a spiritual vritti. It is not a vritti of ignorance but of wisdom and knowledge. When the flaws and negativities of the mind lessen, a positive, creative and balanced vritti is acquired naturally. One who attains it is called a brahmachari.

There was a point in time, however, when brahmacharya was also identified with the energies of the body. Yogis discovered that the cells which are created in the body and produce life are the most potent cells within a human being. The sperm which is created in the male body and the ova which is created in the female body are known as veerya in Sanskrit. *Veerya* does not only mean semen, but also inner strength. In Hindi it is said, *Yeh aadmi veeryavaan hai* – “This person is full of inner strength, inner courage, inner determination, inner conviction.” In the context of semen, the word *veerya* points to the fact that all the cells that are produced in it have the potency to create life. At the time of intercourse, millions of sperm go into the female body and out of those only one is enough to impregnate the womb. That is the power of *veerya*, and this power is called *ojas*.

Due to this association and the fact that the energy of *veerya* can be transmuted and transformed and the powers of life can be retained in the body, the concept of brahmacharya was also integrated with human sexuality. In this way, brahmacharya was recognized as celibacy and placed in relation to human sexuality later in time. First it was identified as the effort to transform the inner powers, the inner forces, the inner shakti. Instead of losing the life force through unguided sexual activity, retain that life force and transmute it into a spiritual power. *Veerya* can be converted into *ojas* through sadhana. A person who is able to do this is also called *urdhvaretas*, one who has mastered retention of vital energy and its transformation into spiritual energy. This is what came to represent celibacy. However, this perspective was social. The spiritual traditions clearly state that one can remain a brahmachari despite sexual interaction. *Manu Smriti* says that sexual interaction is not prohibited, but must be controlled for one to be a brahmachari. Sexual interaction is not wrong. It is only uncontrolled sexual interaction that makes one depraved, whereas controlled sexual interaction makes one a brahmachari. When the scriptures make this statement, it indicates that one need not shun sexual interaction, but bring it under control.

Thus, brahmacharya means two things: establish your awareness in the highest reality and uplift your energies, transmute and transform your gross energies into spiritual power, into spiritual force.

The word *yama* means to hold, retain or change. When you change a basic condition of your mental nature or behaviour and the new condition takes root and becomes a permanent feature of your mental behaviour, it is called *yama*. It is something which has been retained and held by the mind. The five yamas – ahimsa, satya, asteya, aparigraha and brahmacharya – are codes of altering the normal mental behaviour into a more harmonious and uplifting behaviour. With the practice of yamas you are

pruning the tree of its crooked branches so that the trunk can grow straight.

Swami Sivananda says that if you are able to perfect any kind of mind control, it will give you a psychic power or siddhi. If you can perfect one yama, you will acquire one siddhi; if you perfect two yamas, you will acquire two siddhis; if you perfect five yamas, you will attain five siddhis. *Siddhi* means talent, not miracles. Miraculous abilities are also called siddhis, but siddhi is exceptional talent. It is a state of mind in which the mental modifications have changed and the mind is able to experience its real nature. This gives the individual the knowledge of the self, as stated in the *Yoga Sutras* (1:3):

Tada drashtuh swaroope avasthaanam.

Then the seer is established in his own essential nature.

By knowing one's self, one is able awaken the sleeping potentials and use them for a positive cause in life. That is called a siddhi and that is also the power of the siddhi.

Niyama

The second component of ashtanga yoga is *niyama*, which means personal discipline to change one's perception, vision and attitude towards life.

Shaucha: The first personal discipline is *shaucha*, cleanliness. People say that cleanliness is next to godliness and if you analyze the statement, it is true. When you are clean there is a feeling of pranic euphoria, the pranas are bubbling with happiness. Don't take a bath one morning and watch how you feel during the day. The body will feel uncomfortable, dirty, sweaty and scratchy. You will feel unclean, and as the body is feeling unclean the mind will also feel unclean, it will be disturbed. When the mind begins to feel unclean, those who come in your presence will also feel that you are unclean, for you will express that mental state in your behaviour. If you go and have a shower at that time, you will come out smiling and thinking, "I feel clean, I feel happy, I feel pure." Just a simple act of taking a bath can change the mental perception, mental behaviour and attitude.

If you are able to maintain cleanliness not only of the body but also of the mind, that is the biggest sadhana. It is known as *shuchita*, keeping the mind clean of all the rubbish that the environment throws into its bin. You are continuously engaged in criticizing people, analyzing people, speaking well or ill about this person or that person. The mind is full of dirt. It is difficult to walk into a room that is dirty, but you are living with a dirty mind all the time. You are living with a critical mind, a negative mind, a destructive mind, a political mind, a manipulative mind. Try to identify how many types of minds you have lived with: a manipulative mind, a confused mind, a clear mind, a compassionate mind, an agitated mind. Make a list and see how many minds you have lived with till now. Cleanliness is not only physical, but also elimination of all the dirt from the mind.

When the mind is light and free of impurities, you experience a rush of energy in the mind, you experience the blossoming of talents. When the mind and body are full of

impurities, there is depression, laziness and disease. Thus, shuchita means freeing the body, mind and emotions from the causes of impurity, dissipation and agitation.

Santosha: Santosha is the next niyama. Cultivate contentment in life. Whenever you come across any discontentment or discord, always think the opposite. That is called *pratipaksha bhavana*, opposite thinking. If somebody tells you that a certain person was speaking ill of you, you can immediately react by saying, “Oh really, I will give him a piece of my mind.” That is one reaction. The other response would be, “All right, he is expressing his views, he is free to do that.” This is another approach. In which behaviour do you see greater balance and contentment?



In reactive behaviour discontentment sets in and in positive behaviour contentment sets in. Therefore, whenever there is a negative, destructive or detrimental thought in the mind, counteract it by creating or forcefully bringing in a positive thought. Only then can santosha be developed. Otherwise, it only remains an idea.

Tapasya: The next niyama is *tapasya* or austerity. Just as gold is purified by putting it in the flame of fire, the mind has to be purified by putting it in the flame of tapas. The flame of tapas has to burn the dross of the mind. That is why in tapasya one becomes intensely involved in spiritual practices.

Mantra japa can become tapasya. You have been told to practise two malas of mantra every day before going to bed. For a few days you do it comfortably, but when lethargy sets in or the excuse of not having the time comes into your mind, the effort to pursue and follow a path is lost. If you are able to sustain your practice every day continuously, despite all your anxieties and moods, that is tapasya. When you take it easy, sometimes you practise and sometimes you don't, that is not tapasya. When you sustain something and follow it to the end, that is tapasya. It is said in the *Yoga Sutras* (1:14):

Sa tu deerghakaala nairantaryasatkaaraasevito dridhabhoomih.

It (the practice) becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time with reverence, without interruption.

Tapasya is what you are able to do for a long time, continuously and for which you feel faith and respect. That is the practice which will bring about transformation in your life. Ultimately, by involving yourself in tapasya, you will create a positive outcome or result for yourself. That involvement will clear the negative and give birth to something new, good and positive. One has to go through difficulties and accept them. Acceptance of difficulties is tapasya.

When you accept a negative situation and work through it, you are trying to improve the quality of your karma, you are working to improve the quality of your own responses to the environment. In the epic *Mahabharata*, after the great war was over, Krishna was taking leave of everybody to return to his own kingdom of Dwaraka. He came to Kunti and said, "Aunt, you have attained everything you wished for in your life. Now give me permission to go." Kunti replied, "As long as there were trials and difficulties in our life, you would always appear at the very thought of you, but now that we have everything in life you are going away from us. If you want to give me something, give me suffering so that I can always remember you. For whenever I remember you, I feel your presence before me."

Kunti was the only person in human history who asked for the boon of suffering. That boon of suffering is tapasya, as to maintain that constant awareness of God without being swayed by the pleasures and distractions of life indicates a quality of mind which is all-powerful, transformed, fixed and firm.

Swadhyaya: The next niyama is *swadhyaya*, self-awareness, self-analysis and self-study. *Swa* means self and *adhyaya* is chapter. Therefore, *swadhyaya* does not mean scriptural study, although that can be part of it. What it means is deepening your own understanding, comprehension and awareness of your spiritual and psychological self by reading the chapters of your life. Ultimately you have to make your own body, your own life the experiment ground, the experiment lab in which you can discover a new form of life.

Scientists recently declared that they have been able to make a synthetic living cell. Synthetic life is now a reality, but yogis have claimed that spiritual life is also a reality provided you understand yourself. Once you create and take birth in spiritual life, there are no barriers which restrict you from achieving the highest in life. Self-study, self-awareness, knowing how you are behaving and responding, by making your life and body the laboratory is *swadhyaya*.

Ishwara pranidhana: The last niyama is *Ishwara pranidhana*, faith in the highest cosmic reality, *Ishwara*, the undecaying principle, the unchanging principle.

To have that faith is *Ishwara pranidhana*. It is having faith in your own spirit, as God is not separate from the spirit which is inherent in all, even though you have not been able to realize it. You talk of *atma* or the spirit, but you have not realized it.

Prior to the advent of psychology, people did not even know that the mind existed. At that time, the senses and the body were believed to be the ultimate reality. Then,

through discovery, it was found that within this body there is something called the mind. Psychological systems started to develop because of the concept of the mind, something non-physical existing within a being. Although the existence of the mind cannot be proved physically, you know that it exists and you can experience it in the form of thoughts, desires, expectations, and so on.

A time will come when people will identify with a power more subtle than the mind, which is the atma. They will realize that. Just as today it is possible to experience the mind, with spiritual awakening people will experience their own spirit and that experience is an experience of the divinity within oneself, *Atma devo bhavah*. That is the experience of divinity or the transcendental nature within oneself. That is the point where one realizes, “I and my Father are one.” There is no separation between the two, there is no distinction between the two. Christ said it and the rishis and seers have also said it, *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am That.”

Thus, the niyamas are disciplines that you can adopt and incorporate in your life to improve the quality of life. Yamas and niyamas are like scissors that can trim and prune the tree of life and mind to ensure they grow straight, strong and shady, and provide plenty of fruit.



Bahiranga Yoga and Antaranga Yoga

26 May 2010

Yoga has a two-pronged approach to the mind. The first approach is modifying the mental behaviour through an effort which is wilful and conscious. The second approach is cultivating the positive powers, forces and qualities of the mind in meditation. These two aspects of mind management are clearly seen in raja yoga.

The process of external effort and internal transformation becomes clearer if you look at the example of the growth of a tree, as discussed before. When the seed is planted and the plant begins to grow, at that stage in its infancy, in order to ensure that the plant grows straight, upright and strong, the gardener trims the excess branches and straightens the plant by tying it to a small pole. From time to time, the same trimming, pruning and straightening process needs to be undertaken. That is the external process by which it is ensured that all the extra bits which will become an impediment to the proper development of the tree are removed. However, the health or growth of the tree cannot be ensured by just looking after it externally. To ensure this, it has to be given the right feed of water, compost and nutrition. If such an environment is prepared and the tree is cared for in the right manner, in the course of time it will gain in strength, form and shape. It will become big, strong and vibrant. Taking care of the tree externally by trimming and pruning is one activity and providing the necessary feeding material so that it becomes stronger internally and takes in nourishment from the earth is the second process.



BAHIRANGA YOGA

The first four aspects of raja yoga – yama, niyama, asana and pranayama – represent the effort which is external to manage and modify the negative, restrictive and destructive behaviour of the mind.

It is the nature of the mind to be externalized and attach itself to sense objects. The main task of the mind is interaction with the world, in which the four faculties of the mind – manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara – are engaged. Engaging the mind with the world gives rise to *kleshas*, stress, anxiety and tension. All these states are a result of the externalized nature of the mind, and the purpose of the bahiranga part of raja yoga is to manage this external behaviour.

The mind is influenced by gunas. The predominant gunas in most people are tamas and rajas with very little sattwa; therefore, the expressions of the mind are also tamasic and rajasic. When the mind is caught in the wheels of rajas and tamas, stress and anxiety are experienced. It is only when sattwa becomes the dominant force that joy, peace and bliss are felt. Due to the inherent human nature where tamas and rajas predominate, stress and anxiety have become a natural part of everyone's life.

When you are not able to control your stresses, you become subject to mental disease. This happens when you are swayed by the opposites and cannot find a balance between them. You are pulled by *raga*, attraction, and *dwesha*, repulsion, which gives rise to negative and stressful states of mind such as anger, fear, hatred and arrogance. The constant swing between the opposites gives rise to experiences of the state of imbalance. Therefore, Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:48):

Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhootva samatvam yoga uchayate.

Balanced in success and failure, evenness of mind is the highest yoga.

One who can maintain a balanced state of mind throughout gain and loss is the highest yogi. Gains and losses are a result of the actions undertaken in life and they are influenced by the gunas, by raga and dwesha. How can this externalized nature of the mind which causes all the troubles be fine-tuned? Sage Patanjali says that it can be

controlled through yama, niyama, asana and pranayama. With this perspective in mind, we will go over the yamas and niyamas once more before moving on to the other aspects of raja yoga.

Tools of pratipaksha bhavana

There is a term in yoga, *pratipaksha bhavana*, opposite thinking. When a negative thought comes up, counteract it with a positive thought. You are not resisting or blocking the negative thought. The flow of thoughts continues, but with the help of awareness you allow positive thoughts to be born in place of negative thoughts.

If a negative thought manifests, take a moment, and with the help of pratipaksha bhavana think what could be its opposite positive thought. Normally, if someone abuses you, you abuse them in turn. If someone approaches you with a negative feeling, you also project a negative feeling towards them. Every individual is reactive and everyone believes in tit for tat. If someone throws a stone at you, you will throw a brick in return, which means that you are caught up in the whirlpool of aggressive reactions. However, if someone throws a brick at you and you stop for a while and analyze the person's character, you may come to the conclusion that it was an act of anger and the person will feel guilty later, and therefore there is no need for you to be angry. That is pratipaksha bhavana.

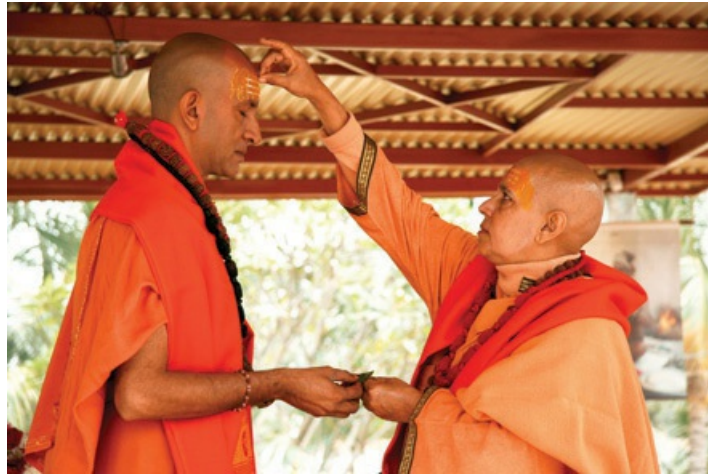
In the story of the *Ramayana*, when Sri Rama is exiled to the forest, his stepbrother Bharata goes with a large contingent of people and the army to persuade him to return to the kingdom and assume the throne. On the way, all who see Bharata and his army think that he is marching to slay Rama so he will be able to rule the kingdom without threat. Even Lakshmana, Rama's younger brother, thinks that Bharata is arriving for a confrontation. He runs up to Rama and says, "Bharata is coming with a large army, it is possible that his intention is to kill us." Sri Rama replies, "You do not know Bharata. He does not harbour the kind of thoughts which will make him want to kill us. He loves us, we share unlimited love. He is not coming for a confrontation, so put down your weapons. He has another purpose in mind."

Sri Rama analyzed Bharata's character. He did not base his judgement on the external circumstances. This is pratipaksha bhavana. Had it been you, you would have become ready for battle, due to a deluded vision. Such delusion is what proves painful in life. Such false notions become the cause of afflictions. Therefore, pratipaksha bhavana has been advised in yoga to know the reality of a situation. The purpose is to stop the negative process that has begun to form in the mind right at its doorstep and start a positive process. If you get carried away by the negative process, then the reaction that you express will also be negative. You will reply to a slap with a brick. However, if you are able to look at the bigger picture, you will be able to arrive at the right judgement.

Practising the yamas is a method of developing pratipaksha bhavana. When aggression comes up, counteract it with compassion. That is ahimsa. When falsity comes into life, counteract it with truthfulness. That is satya. Use the qualities of honesty, *asteya*, and non-possessiveness, *aparigraha*, and be constantly aware of the higher reality,

brahmacharya.

Removing the dust: The niyamas include purity of body, thought, speech and emotions. Purity or cleanliness does not only mean that you clean the body by taking a shower and scrubbing it with soap. That is an external act. That is also important, as it activates the pranas. If the body is clean and pure, the mind feels clean and pure too. However, the concept of cleanliness and purity should not be restricted to the body only. Purity has to be practised in thought, word and deed. If the expressions and mental behaviour are pure, then you influence your immediate environment with your purity. That affects the household, social and also the global environment. This is considered a discipline or niyama.



Discipline means an attempt which you wilfully and consciously make to rectify some defect in yourself. Attainment of purity and cleanliness in body, mind, speech, thought, word and deed represents the nature of being of an individual who is balanced, harmonious, focused and one-pointed.

Biggest wealth: The second discipline to be cultivated is contentment, *santosha*. It is the most positive quality of mind. Discontentment leads to strife and frustration, depression and anger, and is the natural result of the association of the senses with the sensorial world. As long as the senses are connected to the world, there is discontentment. You are always unhappy no matter what you do. No matter what you gain in life there is a feeling of unhappiness and discontentment with yourself. If not with yourself, then with other people. If not with other people, then with society. If not with society, then with the world. There is a feeling of discontentment and unhappiness all the time due to strife, pain and suffering.

The opposite quality of discontentment is contentment. The moment you feel contented, you begin to experience peace and happiness. In the absence of contentment, there is no peace and there is no happiness. Therefore, if you want to discover peace within yourself, develop the quality of *santosha*.

Santosha is a mental attitude of 'Make me an instrument of Thy love'. It is the state

of mind where you submit yourself to the higher grace and live according to the cosmic will, not your own will. If you follow your will and desires, then at every step discontentment will raise its head. If you begin to believe and feel that you are only an instrument being played by the divine, then contentment will gradually set in.

Someone once asked Krishna, "Why do you always hold a flute?" He replied, "The flute is very dear to me." "Why?" asked the questioner. Krishna said, "The flute is empty inside." Nothing obstructs the bamboo, it is hollow inside a flute. Therefore, any music can be created and played with it. Be like a flute, empty inside, if you want to be dear to God. Let Him play the melody that He wants to play with you.

The melody which God plays in your life is already defined and written. It is your destiny. Your destiny is the melody played by God. If you accept that, you become happy and content and there is no problem at all. However, if you wish to create and play your own melody, there will be a problem, for you are not a master-musician nor do you know how to use your own instrument.

How many of you know how to use the instrument you have received in the right manner? You have received this body; it is an instrument. Instead of using the faculties of the body properly, you misuse and abuse it. You have received this mind, a great instrument which can connect you with both the material and the transcendental, but you have never used it properly. You have always misused and abused the mind, the intellect, the memory and the ego. You don't have the skill, the knowledge or the understanding of how to improve the quality of your karma, mind and life. Therefore, God is the only musician who can play music through you, and that music is prewritten in the form of destiny. Those who struggle against destined events find conflict, pain and anxiety at every step of their life. Those who practise santosha or contentment are able to accept any condition or situation they find themselves in.

Santosha can come alive only if there is an internal connection with the transcendental Self. In India, if a beggar on the street does not have anything to eat for three days, in the evening he will bring the palms of his hands together and say to God, "This is what you planned for me today; I did not have any food. I hope your planning for tomorrow is different." This is the attitude that beggars here have: "If I did not receive anything today it was the will of God. He is deciding what I should receive and what I should not." In other countries, if a vagabond has not had anything to eat for a few days, he will come at you with a gun and shoot you to take your wallet. It is a different understanding of life.

A person who is even remotely connected with any concept, idea or thought of God, as manifest or unmanifest, with the idea of a cosmic higher Self, will always have greater access to contentment than a non-believer. That connection with the higher Self gives the inner strength to accept and survive any situation of life. It gives the strength and conviction that you are being looked after and can survive. Therefore, santosha is the outcome of having a connection, an understanding, a relationship with your inner higher Self. The biggest wealth of an individual is contentment. Once you have acquired the wealth of contentment you do not need anything else. Until then you keep running after mirages. The mirages are created by objects of enjoyment. Therefore, if you can

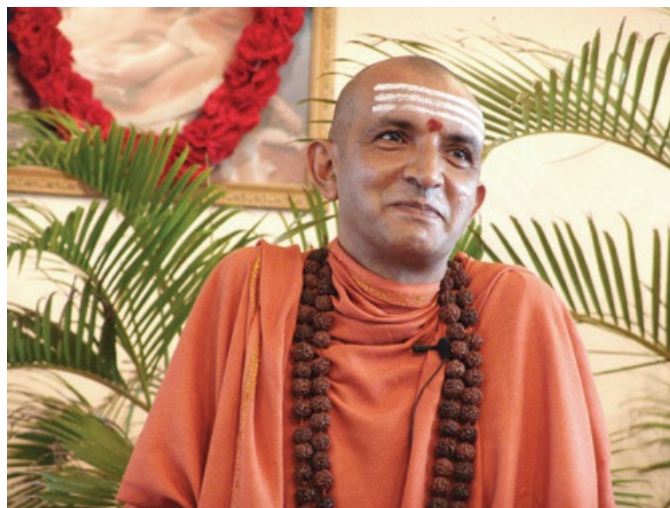
cultivate balance in enjoyment, you will experience contentment and become free of the attraction for mirages.

Sustained effort: The third and fourth niyamas, *tapasya*, austerity, and *swadhyaya*, self-study, are efforts to modify the conditions of the environment and also to realize one's own nature.

Tapasya or austerity means sustained effort. A sustained effort fixes the mind on one object, one point, one idea, in one effort. When the effort is not sustained, the mind fluctuates and you follow the wanderings of the mind.

Tapasya means that you have to hold, sustain and retain the mind at one fixed point. For instance, if those who practise mantra can hold the mental awareness of the mantra for 108 beads, that is tapasya. It is not easy. After ten beads, the mind goes some place else. After forty beads of mantra, the mind again wanders off to some other place. The concentration, the focus, the awareness gets broken every ten, fifteen or twenty seconds. And you think you are meditating! You are observing the jumping mind and thinking that you are meditating. Tapasya means sustained effort so that the mind can be fixed and the boredom that comes into any activity is transformed into positive optimism and creativity.

Boredom can be converted into a creative process if you follow my sutra. Always think that whatever you are doing, you are doing it for the very first and very last time in your life, even if it is something that you have done for fifty years, such as cooking. Therefore, while you are in the kitchen, do your best. This is the sutra of my life, and that is tapasya.



Even if a person tells me the same thing a hundred times for a hundred days, I will hold the mental attitude that I am listening to it for the first time each time. For every situation in life the attitude needs to be: "I have never done this before, I have never spoken of this before, I have never thought of this before." That is how I never get bored, and it is because I have made pratipaksha bhavana the medium of my tapasya.

The solution to boredom is pratipaksha bhavana. If you hold the thought that whatever you are doing is for the first and last time, you can do it to the best of your ability and with full awareness, even if you do it every day.

Living wisdom: *Swadhyaya* is self-awareness, self-analysis and self-modification. *Swadhyaya* does not mean studying literature or scriptures. The process of reading is the same, whether you read fiction or the *Bhagavad Gita*. When you read fiction, after some time the story goes out of your brain and when you read the *Bhagavad Gita*, after some time the mantras go out of your brain. Nobody remembers what is written till the pages are reopened and the matter is recalled. *Swadhyaya* means awareness and knowledge of how to apply what you already know in your life. It means practical application of the wisdom that you have understood and acquired.

Surrender and faith: The last *niyama* is *Ishwara pranidhana*, cultivation of faith and belief in a higher power. There are many things that you do faithlessly. Even when you go to a temple and pray, you go with your desires, not with faith. You go with your suffering, not with the faith that from today you will be free of your suffering. If someone went with such faith, undoubtedly God would remove their suffering. I challenge you: pray with total faith and you will receive proof of my words. Until there is faith you can visit temples every day. It will become a habit but you will not attain anything. It is said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Bhavaanee shankarau vande shraddha vishvaasa rupinam,
Yaabhyaam vinaa na pashyaanti siddhaah svaantahstham eeshwaram.*

Without faith and conviction, even great siddhas will not be able to have the vision of God residing within.

This is *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrendering oneself to the higher reality with faith.

The five *yamas* and five *niyamas* are each a different instrument to trim the different branches of the mental tree. A small twig can be cut off with secateurs or even snapped off with your hand. For a bigger twig you need a bigger cutter, and for a bigger branch you need a saw. At every stage you need a different kind of instrument; you cannot use the same secateurs to cut a big branch. Just as in order to cut different branches and twigs different instruments are used, to overcome the different conditions of mind different *yamas* and *niyamas* are used.

What is appropriate for you, only a master, guru or teacher can tell. In the absence of such guidelines, start from number one and go up to number ten. If a competent teacher is available who understands the process, they can tell you the appropriate antidote for your mental condition or behaviour, the *yama* or *niyama* that you need to focus on, and you can follow that.

Asana

Asanas are the third group of practices in *bahiranga abhyasa*, external practice. The asanas in the *Yoga Sutras* are mainly used in meditation to redirect the flow of prana

shakti. It says (2:46):

Sthirasukhamasanam.

Steady and comfortable should be the posture.

There are many commentaries on the *Yoga Sutras* which say that this sutra can be applied to every asana, that in every asana *sthirata*, stillness, and *sukha*, pleasure, can be experienced. That is their opinion and no one disagrees with it. If you can fix yourself in any posture, even if it is the headstand, you can become still, steady and comfortable. However, just being steady and comfortable in a posture does not indicate that it is the right practice for accessing the mental dimension.

For accessing the mental dimension, meditative practices which redirect the flow of prana shakti in the body are used, and there are only eight: sukhasana, padmasana, ardha padmasana, swastikasana, siddhasana, siddha yoni asana, veerasana and vajrasana. The legs are placed in certain ways and the hands are placed in certain mudras, which ensures that the flow of prana shakti takes place through specific nerve channels or *nadis*. By creating contact with different parts of the body, you are redirecting this pranic flow back into the body and not allowing it to be discharged. Therefore, these asanas are intended only for the purpose of meditation or internalization. The other asanas which are taught in a yoga class are asanas of hatha yoga, not of raja yoga. The dynamic asanas such as surya namaskara are asanas of hatha yoga, whereas the meditation asanas are asanas of raja yoga. They are practices in which one can experience steadiness, one-pointedness, bliss and freedom.



To attain mental stillness it is necessary to first still the body. If you have been playing or working hard and come back home and lie down, the body becomes still. The muscular movement stops, the activities of the nervous, respiratory and cardiovascular systems quieten down and become harmonious. In that state you gain physical relaxation and after some time the mental fatigue is also removed. Yoga nidra is an

example of this process. In the practice, you remove your mind from external stimuli and rotate it through the physical experiences arising within. You take your awareness to different parts of the body. This takes the mind away from its externalized state and makes it centred in the body.

Try this any time: whether you are sitting on a chair in the office or the car, for five minutes close your eyes and rotate your awareness through different parts of the body. Visualize each part as you go over it, feel it and relax it. When you have travelled through the whole body, open your eyes. In five minutes you will become more relaxed than you would by lying on the bed for half an hour. This is because the mind has become centred in the body; it has been removed from the senses and become focused in itself, which makes it calm and relaxed.

The eight meditative asanas still the body and harmonize the pranas so that the mind also becomes still and harmonious.

Pranayama

The purpose of pranayama is to fuse the mind with prana shakti. Prana is tangible; it is the vital force that flows in the nerves which are physical. Prana which is subtle is known as the mind.

Prana is not air. Prana exists in air and also in food. When you practise pranayama, you make use of air to receive prana. This is because air contains maximum prana, just as certain food products contain more protein, and when you require more protein you eat more of those products. Air contains many different gases and you intake all of them upon inhalation. However, in the lungs oxygen is extracted. Of course a certain percentage of other gases are also absorbed by the body, but they are eliminated as waste products. The body is able to filter oxygen selectively and distribute it throughout the body which provides energy. Air also contains prana. It has not been established if prana can be equated with any gas, but it is clear that it is not oxygen.

An experiment was once conducted on Swami Nadabrahmananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda. For one hour he was placed in an airtight chamber with his nose plugged, his body smeared with wax so he could not breathe through the pores, and he was asked to play the tabla. A monkey and a burning candle were placed in two other similar airtight chambers. After a few minutes the candle went out due to lack of oxygen and after some time the monkey became unconscious due to increased carbon dioxide, but this sadhu continued to play the tabla without breathing while instruments recorded his body parameters. He had perfected *nada kumbhaka*, the ability to remain alive by prana and not the breath. This experiment was conducted at the Menninger Foundation in the USA by Dr Elmer Greene. I was a witness to this experiment and it made me realize that prana shakti and air are two different things. Even if you don't breathe you can continue to live if you absorb prana shakti from the atmosphere. You hear of yogis who go into samadhi for several days, their breathing stops, the heartbeat stops, but they remain alive. This is due to their ability to channel prana.

I also participated in an experiment with Swami Rama of the Himalayan Institute. He was asked to go into the state of samadhi. He did so and the scientists noted that his

heartbeat had stopped, the ECG line was flat. He was not breathing, there was no pulse. For fifteen minutes he stopped all the autonomic functions of his body wilfully. Imagine the state of such a person's pranas and consciousness! A person can stay alive on the basis of prana even when all the functions of the body cease. This can be achieved by mastering pranayama.

Pranayama means expanding the range of prana. The *Yoga Sutras* discuss four types of pranayama: *rechaka*, inhalation; *pooraka*, exhalation; *antar kumbhaka*, internal retention; *bahir kumbhaka*, external retention. Think about this for a moment: you have been inhaling and exhaling throughout your life, but that is not called pranayama. It is when there is a harmonious rhythm between inhalation and exhalation that the process is described as pranayama.

When there were no clocks, pranayama was practised with the help of mantras, by measuring the *matras* or units of the mantras. Some traditions believe that real pranayama is breathing in with one Gayatri mantra, which means twenty-four matras or seconds, and breathing out for two Gayatri mantras or forty-eight matras. This amounts to more than a minute for one breath. In the practice of pranayama the exhalation must always be double the inhalation, though when you begin the practices the inhalation and exhalation can be equal while the count is steadily increased.

Harmony between inhalation and exhalation, internal retention and external retention, is the basis of pranayama. When this is achieved, the body and mind become capable of receiving prana from the atmosphere, and you are able to expand the range of pranas and harmonize them. With the pranas harmonized, the mind attains balance. This is the pranayama of raja yoga.

Through pranayama, you reorganize and restructure the flow of prana shakti in the body, and that also influences the mental behaviour. Thus, yama and niyama, asana and pranayama are external attempts to observe, analyze, modify and manage the mental behaviour.

ANTARANGA YOGA

The practices of pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, which comprise *antaranga* yoga, are internal practices. They do not require external discipline, action or behaviour. They are not intended to modify, change, control or guide anything; rather, they are conditions of mind. The effort here is to go beyond the superficial experience of the mind into the deeper mind and realize the strengths and qualities that can be awakened. You are activating a different function of the brain and the mind in antaranga yoga.

Science says that only one-tenth of the human brain is active and the remaining parts are dormant. If you are able to awaken a few more centres in the brain and the total potentiality of the brain increases from ten to fifteen percent, twenty percent, thirty percent, fifty percent or even one hundred percent, it will create a drastic change in the quality of life, mind and interaction with family and society. The developed,

expanded and awakened brain and mind will change your entire behaviour in life, whether this behaviour makes you into a siddha or an enlightened being is another matter. The point is that everything will change. The mind will not be the same as it is now, the body will not be the same as it is now, life will not be the same as it is now.

Pratyahara

Pratyahara is the first of the mental practices. It is not meditation. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to withdraw the senses from their identification with sense objects just as a turtle pulls in all its limbs into its shell. That is a description of pratyahara.

The word pratyahara has two definitions. The first definition is derived from the combination of the words prati + ahara. *Ahara* means food or nourishment, while *prati* is a prefix indicating negation or 'instead of'. The senses feed the mind and when that feeding is brought to a stop, it is the state of pratyahara.

The senses are continuously feeding the mind; all the information that you receive is ingested by the mind. Every experience that you receive through your senses is being acknowledged by the mind. The mind is active and functional because of the sensory activity. The environment, society and its distractions are continuously feeding the mind. Life is continuously feeding the mind. That is ahara.

As long as the mind is being fed, the cravings, desires and expectations go on increasing. Therefore, pratyahara or prati-ahara means using a method to stop the feeding of the mind through the senses. Detaching from the source or object of identification is defined as pratyahara: withdraw yourself, withdraw the senses, stop feeding the mind.

The second definition of pratyahara comes from the word *pratyaya*, which means archetype or an impression which is latent, dormant and hidden, but which you realize in the form of your nature, qualities, samskaras and karma. These pratyayas, impressions or archetypes are unconscious. They are the latent impressions which remain in certain corners of the mind and manifest from time to time. When you bring them out from the unconscious to the conscious level wilfully and nullify their influence, the process is called pratyahara. This means that you become aware of every mental response at all times and are able to check the pratyayas which continue to manifest and try to direct your life.

In the practice of pratyahara, the first step is to awaken your awareness of yourself. The purpose is to have complete mastery, dominance or control over the senses. The *Yoga Sutras* clearly state that the purpose of pratyahara is to acquire complete mastery over the movement of the sense organs. It says (2:55):

Tatah paramaa vashyatendriyaanaam.

There is highest mastery over the sense organs (by pratyahara).

People confuse between pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi by grouping them as

one kind of meditative practices. They are not one group of meditative practices with different names; each is a separate group of practices and has a specific purpose. Our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, is one who defined the progression of pratyahara.



Yoga nidra is the first stage of pratyahara. It is a practice where the physical components and mental components are finely and acutely observed in order to achieve development and expansion of awareness. The mind is made aware of different parts of the body. The mind is so engaged that it becomes the observer of all the activities of the body and mind. There are versions of yoga nidra where you go through every finger joint, and when you go into such depths there is greater expansion of awareness. There are more than eighty versions of yoga nidra, though we normally teach only three (beginners, intermediate and advanced). All these expand the consciousness, develop awareness and make you more aware of yourself.

Antar mouna or thought observation is the second stage of pratyahara. The thoughts are not stopped, but allowed to come as they will and you become their observer. Thoughts are surfacing even now, but you are not aware of them. It is when you become aware of your thoughts and are able to guide and control them that the process is called antar mouna.

Ajapa japa is another practice where breath and mantra are used to internalize the senses and the mind. Here pratyahara is practised by focusing on something physical: the breath, and something psychic: the mantra.

Dharana

The practices of dharana were also outlined by our tradition in the course of time. You enter the stage of *dharana*, or cultivation of concentration, when the senses have been mastered. You don't even have to close the eyes; only develop the skill to focus at one point instantly. For example, everyone is quiet so you can hear me. However, if a

loudspeaker was blaring outside and I was speaking at the same time, you would have to focus to hear me. You would have to filter out all the noise and focus on my words. That is the practice of dharana. When you are able to block out everything and just remain focused on one thing, that is dharana.

This is substantiated by the story of Arjuna and his guru Dronacharya. During an archery test, Dronacharya told all the students that they would have to hit the bird's eye. He called each student and asked, "What do you see?" Everybody replied, "I can see the bird, I can see the eye, I can see the tree, I can see the twigs, I can see the branches, I can see the leaves, I can see the sky, I can see the clouds, I can see other people." Dronacharya knew that they were not perfect students, as they had not perfected their concentration. When Arjuna's turn came, he answered, "I see nothing but the eye of the bird."

Arjuna did not have an eye problem, he was able to block out every other object. He was able to focus at that one point, the target, which was the eye of the bird. He was able to remove every other visual impression from the mind and just remain true to the visual image of the bird's eye. That is dharana. You don't have to close the eyes in order to practise dharana. It is not meditation. Dharana is concentration, and you can fix your mind anywhere, anytime, to perfect dharana. It is a method where you gather the energies of the mind and focus them on one point. When all the rays of a light bulb are gathered and focused on one point, they turn into laser. In the same way, in dharana you gather all the energies of the mind so that you see only the eye of the bird even though it is possible for you to see everything else.

Dhyana

When concentration becomes intense, when there are no distractions in the mind and the object of concentration becomes alive and awakened, that is *dhyana* or meditation. Attainment of concentration is the beginning of dhyana.

Ultimately, dhyana is identification with the inner transcendental nature, which is not the limited being, but the expansive being. Once concentration on the object of meditation is achieved, identification with the object of meditation follows naturally. If the object of meditation is a flower, in the state of dhyana you will become the flower. If the object of meditation is the sun, you will become the sun. If the object is a star, you will become the star.

Once I underwent this experience of meditation and it was not a pleasant experience at all. I was travelling in a car in Tasmania. The driver was at the wheel and I was sitting in the passenger's seat. We were the only two people in the car, driving through a forest. At a particular spot on the way there was a tree. Somehow, my attention was caught by that tree. I looked at that tree for maybe a few seconds as the car passed by and that was it. After a few minutes, I became very uncomfortable physically. My eyes were open, I was not in a meditative state. The cause of discomfort was, I realized, that my mind had identified with the tree and I had become the tree. I could feel the wind passing through the branches and leaves. I could feel the insects crawling on the trunk and the branches. I could feel the roots being compressed by the

earth from all sides. I could feel each and every thing that a tree can feel. It gave me a jolt. I was very uncomfortable because this body, this mind, had become the tree. The experience lasted for maybe ten seconds, but it seemed like hours. I did not know that I was sitting in the car. My mind was left behind.

The deep identification where one becomes that is meditation. That is why the philosophy of Vedanta says that when you meditate, believe that you are the higher Self – *Aham Brahmasmi*. If you think in that manner continuously and constantly, suddenly the mind will flip over and you will begin to experience that higher nature. Vedanta does not begin with preparatory stages of meditation; it goes straight into a meditation where one identifies with the higher Self. People try to practise this, but they cannot sustain it because they have not overcome the dross of the mind. Despite their attempt to identify with the higher nature, the lower tendencies and qualities pull the mind and consciousness back to the gross level. Therefore, yoga says that meditation is a state of mind which is acquired after perfecting dharana.

At the beginning of meditation there are three things: the meditator, the object of meditation and the method of meditation. At the beginning, you are aware of all three things: I am, I am practising a method, I have an aim. Slowly, as absorption in the method and the object of meditation intensifies, the meditator is left behind. After some time, the method is also left behind, you are only aware of the aim or object of meditation. You move from trinity to duality to unity. Once the state of unity is reached, the object of meditation becomes the guiding truth of life and eventually one attains the state of samadhi.

Meditation is experienced only during identification, when the object of meditation and the meditator become one. At the beginning this stage lasts for only a short while, maybe five seconds or five minutes. Then the mind falls back to its normal pattern and behaviour. Then, in another attempt, the identification is maintained for another few seconds or minutes. Then the mind again falls back to its normal pattern. Thus, in meditation, identification and separation continue to take place. When there is separation, there is pain. When there is identification, there is joy. At this point meditation also becomes bhakti, when you begin to feel the pain of separation and the joy of union.

Samadhi

With continued attempt, the meditative span is increased. There comes a time when instead of that state coming to you for ten seconds, one minute or half an hour, it stays with you for days and you live in that dimension. If you live in that reality, that is known as samadhi.

Samadhi is union of the individual self with the higher Self. It is realization and awareness that the two are united, that the grace is flowing through you, and that you are a part of that reality. At this point, you are freed from the attractions and repulsions of life, from raga and dwesha. You become free from the attachments and dependencies of life; it is the state of *asakti mukti*. You realize that you are not restrained by the body or mind, but have unlimited ability and power, which can be used to uplift yourself and

also others. You are able to share your light with everyone.

The practices of pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi strengthen the inner shakti. The mind receives a greater quantum of prana, which makes it more powerful and energized. Once the mind becomes energized, the hidden potentials in the dormant areas become accessible. Thus, in the second component of raja yoga, antaranga yoga, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi are the internal meditative techniques which allow the inner power to manifest. The sequence of antaranga yoga allows you to harness and fully experience your inner potential, whereas bahiranga yoga is intended to harmonize the external behaviour. Once the power of the mind is awakened, it is not a slave to the senses; rather, it becomes the medium to take you closer to the experience of the Self. This is the reason why the mind has been called the portal between the gross and the subtle worlds.

Right now, you are engrossed in the experience of the gross world; once you enter within you will experience the subtle world. While you are connected with the gross world, suffering, pain and sorrow will be your companions. However, when you establish a connection with the internal world, you will connect with love, spontaneity, compassion, patience, all the soft qualities of life. Your behaviour will also become an expression of expansiveness and creativity, and you will act for the welfare of all.

When the mind is externalized, it only thinks of its own welfare; when it goes inside, it thinks of the welfare of all, selflessness becomes the natural state of mind. This is the teaching that we receive from yoga and from the life of sannyasins. And this is how the mind can be brought under control with the help of ashtanga yoga, the yoga of eight limbs defined by Sage Patanjali. This yoga is the royal yoga. With its practice, you become the ruler of your life, of your existence, your mind and your nature. When you become the ruler, you become a raja, one who has perfected raja yoga.

















Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.