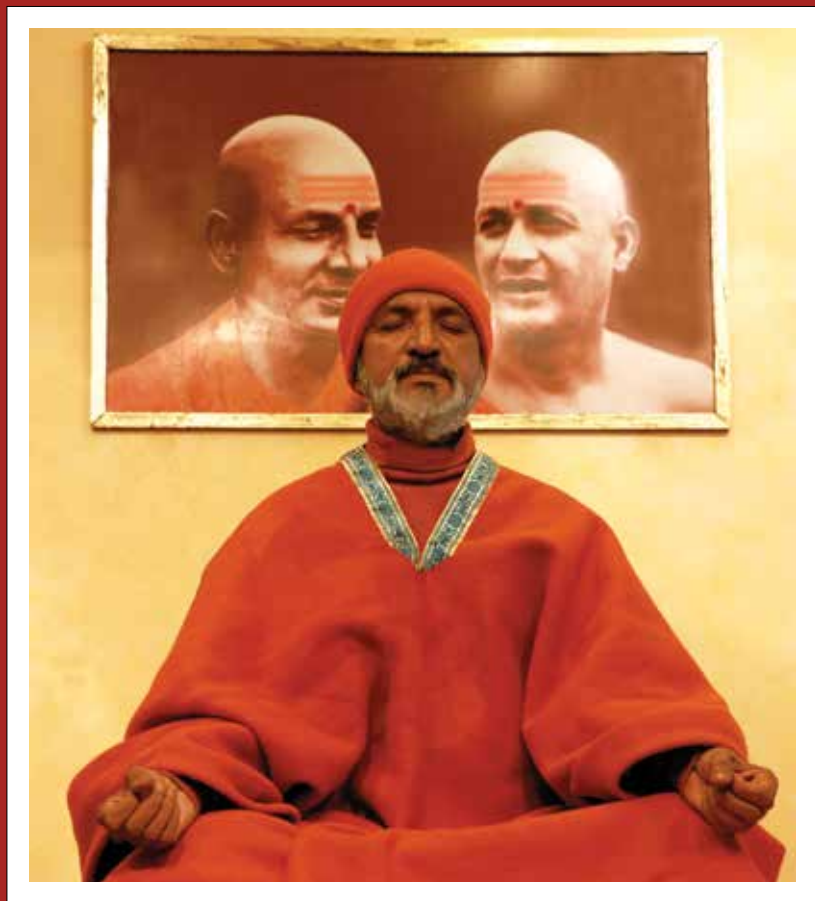


Raja Yoga Yatra 2

Understanding Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Raja Yoga Yatra 2

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Raja Yoga Yatra 2

Understanding Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
during the training of Raja Yoga Yatra 2: Pratyahara Intensive,
held from 17th to 23rd December 2017 at Ganga Darshan
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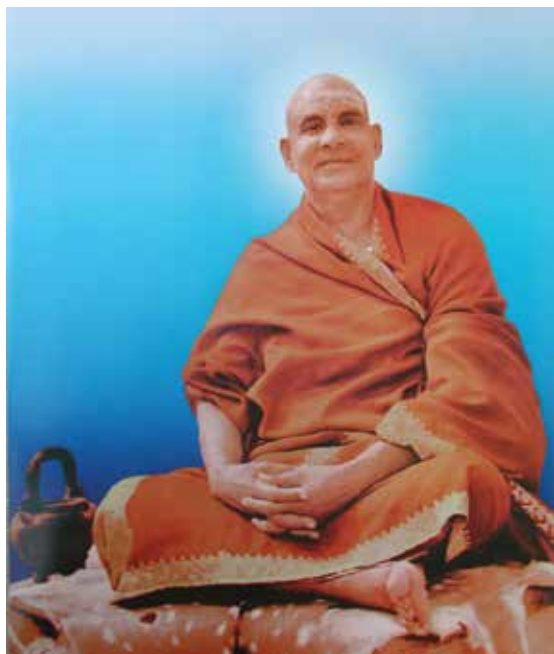
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Preface:

The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The mandate Swami Satyananda received was to propagate the science of yoga and take yoga from “shore to shore and door to door”. In the days of Swami Sivananda, yoga was far from the globally recognized and accepted word it is today. Yoga was considered a spiritual practice reserved for sannyasins and renunciates who had renounced society and were seeking enlightenment. It was not seen as something that could be incorporated into society and practised by the general public.

When the Bihar School of Yoga was established, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle of yoga as practical and scientific systems were unknown, even in Indian society. From the beginning, yoga training and propagation by the Bihar School of Yoga took the form of intensive residential programs, in which yoga was taught as a way to qualitatively enhance physical health, mental peace, emotional harmony. A sequence of progression in yoga was defined fifty years ago by Swami Satyananda, by giving systematic training first in hatha yoga, raja yoga, and kriya yoga, as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. Simultaneously, training in *antaranga*, internal, aspect of karma yoga, bhakti and jnana yoga was provided through the lifestyle and inspiration of the ashram environment. A holistic or integral yoga system developed in which the yoga aspirant

could awaken and integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands. The different *angas*, limbs, of yoga become the means of attaining this personal harmony and integrated expression.

In the early 1940s, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by teachers and masters of different traditions, introducing the idea that through the practice of yoga one could explore the body, mind, emotions, and have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. The first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to human society according to the need of the society at that time. In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety, tension and to improve the physical and mental functions. In the 1980s, research into the various possibilities and potentials of yoga to assist and promote physical and mental health took the forefront. By the 1990s, a rapid increase in the popularity of the practice of asana was evident across the globe. The asana component of yoga had been accepted worldwide and other components of yoga were relegated to the background and largely ignored by the mainstream practitioners and majority of yoga teachers. Today, 28 million people are practising yoga in the United States alone and statistics estimate 300 million practitioners worldwide.

In 2013, the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers, students and aspirants participated in this historic event either in person or through the internet. The Convention was a milestone that marked the completion of fifty years of yoga propagation. The mandate of taking yoga from shore to shore and door to door was fulfilled. Over a fifty-year period, with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance had taken place. The chapter of yoga propagation was complete and when one chapter closed, the next chapter opened.

Thus the World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga.

The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision of yoga not as a practice but as a *vidya*, a wisdom to be understood, imbibed and expressed in life. This understanding of the fundamental need for integral development was the vision of Swami Satyananda, which he imparted and taught through the concept of the *yoga chakra*, or the wheel of yoga.

The second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and the teachings which are being presented are not concerned with propagation of the practices of yoga. Isolated practices of yoga do not bring about the qualitative change and spiritual evolution intended and envisaged by the seers. The transcendence of the negative and restricting conditions and the real evolution and growth of the personality takes place only when the *vidya* of yoga is comprehended, absorbed and realized.

The profundity of yogic understanding must increase and the depths of yoga must be fathomed, if the *vidya* is to be realized and maintained for future generations. The experience and wisdom of accomplished yogis and spiritual scientists is recorded in the scriptural and classical texts detailing each *anga* of yoga. The second chapter teachings are a progressive effort to discern and elucidate the experiences and realizations of the ancient seers, within the blueprint of the *yoga chakra*.

For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The *yoga vidya* dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to *sadhana* and makes a sincere effort to experience the aims defined by the different *angas* of yoga. Until that sincerity awakens, the commitment to adhere to the system and the *vidya* of yoga is lacking. With sincerity, seriousness and commitment, each aspirant has to accept responsibility for their own development and betterment in life.

Ultimately, yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. For, once the yogic principles are imbibed and become part of life, the attitudes, perceptions, interactions, the mind, actions and

behaviours will improve. To meet the challenge of the second chapter, the expressive and the behavioural components of yoga, the antaranga and the bahiranga aspects, have to come together. When head, heart and hands unite, an ordinary moment can become divine. An ordinary life can become a divine life.

Pratyahara

17 December 2017



What is raja yoga? The book that is available on raja yoga is the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. In his book Patanjali describes eight aspects of yoga: yamas, niyamas, the first two; asana, pranayama, the next two; pratyahara, dharana, the next two; dhyana and samadhi, the final two. These are the eight stages of raja yoga according to Patanjali. The focus of Patanjali is not on asanas. Asanas have become part of raja yoga globally but classically, traditionally, asanas are not part of raja yoga and no practice of asana has been defined in raja yoga. Asana practices have been explained in detail and defined in books such as *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and other traditional texts. There is no reference to any asana in raja yoga, nor is there any reference to pranayama. The only statement which

Patanjali made in relation to asana is that it is a posture in which you are comfortable and still, *sthiram sukham asanam*, a posture in which you can sit for an extended period of time without feeling any discomfort and you can be still. That is the only definition of asana.

The same happens with pranayama. There are no practices given in the *Yoga Sutras* as in other texts. The *Yoga Sutras* only has one simple statement: inhalation, exhalation and retention is pranayama. These are the only few references to what we like most: the practice of asanas. Everybody enjoys doing asanas. Everybody likes to do pranayama. The focus of raja yoga is not on asana and pranayama, it is on mind management and learning how to guide the mind in the right direction for its upliftment. Therefore, if you look at Patanjali's raja yoga system, it is the yamas and niyamas, certain qualities and disciplines that have to be cultivated in life. It is inferred here by Patanjali that you have already practised and perfected asana and pranayama and that you are ready to go the next step where you can, instead of practising, be still and comfortable in an asana to practise raja yoga. The same applies to the regulation of breath. Breathing is used as a way, as a means to internalize the awareness. After that the whole focus of Patanjali becomes meditative. Pratyahara is meditation, dharana is meditation, dhyana is meditation, samadhi is meditation.

In the last Raja Yoga Yatra training which we conducted at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, our focus was on the practice of asana and pranayama with a difference. We included and incorporated the main theme of Patanjali in the practice of asana and pranayama. That is pratyahara, and the book is *Raja Yoga Yatra 1: Understanding Asanas and Pratyahara*. We look at how they are related, how they are to be combined and how they are to be practised. Raja Yoga Yatra 2 will focus predominantly on the practice of pratyahara, which is the main theme of raja yoga. Again it will be a different kind of experience because we shall also practise some asanas and pranayama, yet the main focus will be pratyahara, not asana and pranayama.

Pre-Patanjali raja yoga

We are aware of Patanjali's system of raja yoga but that is a modified system. Pre-Patanjali, raja yoga existed and this raja yoga has an interesting story. In the world there are three types of personalities or mindsets: the sattwic, the rajasic and the tamasic. Sattwa is the illuminated mind, rajas is the dynamic mind and tamas is the negative or conditioned mind. Tamas, rajas and sattwa are part of human nature. The people who express tamas are known as demons, the people who express sattwa are known as divine beings, and those people who live in the state of rajas are the human beings. In humans, rajas is 80 percent, sattwa is 10 percent, tamas is 10 percent. In a sattwic mind, sattwa is 80 percent, rajas is 10 percent, tamas is 10 percent, and in the tamasic mind, tamas is 80 percent, rajas 10, sattwa 10. If we go by this calculation, tamas brings out the negative, the dissipated, the destructive, the qualities which connect us to the senses, our emotions and desires which are self-oriented. If the fire of tamas is given oxygen, it burns very bright, and when it burns bright, the mind, the behaviour, the responses of the individual become tamasic and that is the demonical nature.

According to mythology there are three types of people: gods, humans and demons. They had their space and lived according to their nature. Each group, gods, humans and the demons had a guru. The guru of the gods was Brihaspati and his duty was to inspire the gods to continue treading the right and just path and not fall in the abyss of darkness. The demons had a guru, called Shukracharya. Shukracharya saw that the demons were doing every kind of atrocity in society, creating pain, suffering, destruction, disturbance. So one day he went to Shiva and said, "Listen, you made me the guru of demons but nobody is changing, nobody is following the righteous path. I can't make them stop or reduce their evil or wrong actions. Can you suggest a method by which I can bring them to the path of light?" Then Shiva gave the teaching of raja yoga to Shukracharya. Shukracharya, the guru of the demons, taught raja yoga to the demons for

their mental peace, for their mental harmony, for them to learn how to control the negative and bring out the positive. Whether he succeeded or not, that is another story, but the point is that the teaching of raja yoga was specifically tailored for people of a tamasic nature.

In today's society there are no gods, there are no demons, yet the nature is within us. The dissipated thoughts and actions, the dissipated behaviour and understanding, the fragmented interaction and expectations, they mould and shape our personalities. There is no path in the world which can help us maintain sanity in an insane world. If we look at the global scenario, what do we see? Anguish, suffering, strife, pain, harming other people, trying to put oneself on a high pedestal to be known as successful. The whole global or social mindset is not a supportive or cooperative mindset; it has become a very individualistic mindset: 'Me and mine', 'I am important, others are not'.

In the course of time, changes will happen in this mindset, either for worse or for the better, we don't know. The trend that has been seen globally is that from a comfort zone and peaceful life, we are moving into the area of discomfort and a not so peaceful life.

What we are going to look into is how raja yoga can help us make our mind a better mind. Shukracharya initiated the process of raja yoga and many centuries later came Patanjali. He modified the raja yoga of Shukracharya into what we know today to suit the mindset of people in society. What was the mindset of people in society? The dualistic mindset: Me-you, that-this, desire, wanting, that is the dualistic mindset. Patanjali said that while you are watching your mind, don't get involved, but remain a witness to what you are going through in yourself, the experiences, the moods, the changes. Patanjali emphasizes the witnessing aspect: you become the observer, you become the seer, you become the supervisor of your mind and tweak your mind. You, a person, and your mind are to be treated as separate entities.

This thought appealed to people due to the materialistic nature. The materialistic nature is not of today, it is an ancient nature, an old nature. People wanting to possess. Even the Stone Age man, if he found a good piece of flint, he would want to possess it to make some kind of tool. Anything good that people see and feel which could be useful or beneficial for them, they acquire. The materialistic mindset has always been there as part of life: collect, accumulate, enjoy, right from the time of Stone Age until today. This dualistic nature is utilized by Patanjali to allow a person to observe themselves.

In the pre-Patanjali raja yoga, there is no concept of observer, there is no concept of drashta, there is no concept of becoming the supervisor, yet there is one concept. Instead of observing, you immerse yourself in the experience. Don't observe the experience, which Patanjali says: 'observe'. Here it is said: 'immerse yourself in that experience'. That is the main difference. Immerse yourself in the experience and observe your experience. For fifty years you have been listening to Patanjali's concept: become the drashta, become the observer, but this time I am introducing the merger concept. Patanjali is a dualistic system, *dvaita*, and Shukracharya is *advaita*, merger, you become one. In Patanjali, you maintain your identity of two, in Shukracharya, you just become that.

Pre-Patanjali raja yoga also gives the example that when you put salt in the water, it mixes completely. Although the element is different, the taste is different to water, it cannot be compared to water. Once you put salt in the water, it dissolves completely, it loses its own identity, but if you put rock in water, it won't lose its identity. In the Shukra system, just as salt is mixed in water and cannot be separated, in the same manner in your progression you have to merge one level of mind into the other. The next level of mind into the next, that into the next, that into the next, and *laya*, dissolution happens at all stages. That is a powerful tool. If that raja yoga is practised, then when the dissolutions of *pratyayas* or desires

happen, you separate yourself from the world. In Patanjali's system, you have to observe. Even though the rock is in the water, observe the rock in the water, whether it sinks, whether it floats, whether it is a big rock or a tiny rock. You have to analyze the rock and you have to analyze the water. That is the Patanjali system.

The greater mind

In both systems, the focus is pratyahara as a way to explore the various dimensions of our nature. The mind, the greater mind is composed of two expressions. The first expression is intellectual; the second expression is emotional. The intellectual expressions are channelled by the agencies of buddhi and manas, and the emotional expressions are channelled through the agencies of chitta and ahamkara. The concept of mind in yoga is not the functional mind which we use on day-to-day basis, but the concept of mind in yoga covers four large aspects or areas of self-expression and that yogic mind, that is known as the greater mind.

The greater mind is known as having four compartments or four aspects. One is *manas*, which is reflection, thinking, analyzing; the second is *buddhi*, rationality, intelligence, knowing; the third is *chitta*, impressions, archetypes, samskaras, karmas; and the fourth is *ahamkara*, or the ego identity. Manas and buddhi correspond to or are attached to the expressions of intellect. They are the main tools for intellect to express itself.

Chitta and ahamkara are tools to express the emotional aspect. If you analyze, then ahamkara is a great emotion, and all your emotional responses happen when your ahamkara, when your ego, is somehow challenged, affected or influenced. When you say, "No, I don't like this," that is the ahamkara, the ego, putting the power behind the "No, I don't like this." The sentiment, the feeling also will arise out of ahamkara; there is no logic in that. "I like this." "I don't like this." "I will do this." "I will not do this." "Don't come and disturb me. Who are you?" These moods and sentiments

reflect behaviours of ego containing emotional responses. Why does one become angry? Ego is hurt. Why does one become jealous? Why does one hate? Something deep and personal manifests at that time.

Emotional responses always work through the ego, and those impressions are contained in chitta. Chitta is like 'the cloud', the internet cloud, where you put everything but you don't know what is up there. You can put the rubbish there and that can become your garage in the sky. So chitta is 'the cloud' of this body where everything is stored. Just as computers now are not having a hard disk because everything is to be stored in the cloud, in the same way, this body has lost its hard disk because everything is being stored in chitta. Chitta becomes a dimension which has all the impressions, all the archetypes and all the memories. When the time comes, instantly the experience of the past memory comes to aid in your present act.

Why don't you put your hand in fire? Today you will give me a logical answer, "Because fire burns." In your childhood, when you put your hand in fire, did you give yourself a logical answer? No. The act of putting your hand in the fire, feeling the heat, feeling the burn is in chitta. Throughout life, you will never put your hand in fire because of that first memory. If the first memory was not there, or if memories went away after a day, then every day you would be putting your hand in fire and burning yourself. So the first memory is always the impression or the pratyaya. It contains in it the experience, the emotion and the self-projection or ego. Experience is the first memory, or the first memories; and emotion is the content of those memories.

On the other side, we have manas and buddhi. They are reflective, yet we never use our intellect properly. We have never used our intellect properly. There is no depth to our understanding, our understanding in our life is shallow. We get influenced by little, little things, and we are not able to see the big picture; that is lack of intelligence. Although the buddhi is there, the buddhi can be distorted, and we can

think the wrong thing. This distortion of buddhi, intellect, happens in everybody's life. Even when you know the right procedures, when the buddhi is distorted, you won't bother about procedures. Even if you know the right methods, when the buddhi is distorted you won't bother about the right methods. With this distortion, challenging takes place. People challenge each other for a little thing, for a big thing, for a small thing, for a medium thing. Despite buddhi or intelligence, we are not able to use it. This is a syndrome which is known as the Duryodhana syndrome.

Duryodhana was a prince, and well versed in the functions of the kingdom. But he was a bad one. He said it very clearly, "I know what is right, and I know what is correct. I know what is good, and I know what it is proper, but I am not inclined to it. I have no inclination towards the good. Although I have the knowledge, I have no inclination. I know what is incorrect, wrong, bad, detrimental, and I find myself unable to extract myself from that situation."

Many times in your life when there is crisis, confusion or conflict in your own interests, you know what is right, proper and correct, but can you follow the right, the proper, the correct procedure at that moment? No. It won't happen. That is the split of personality that Sri Swamiji has spoken about. He said that every human being has a split nature. They know what is right but they can't do that which is right. They know what is right but they will encourage other people to do the wrong, just to needle somebody. People cannot maintain their own harmony. People cannot maintain their own peace. Everyone is a hypocrite because our actions do not match our beliefs. Our thoughts don't match our performance. Our philosophies don't match our lifestyle. Good books are to be kept on the shelf, yet keeping good books on the shelf is no indication of wisdom of the person who keeps them. Just as having a health centre or gym at home is no indication of health in the family. It is just a mental time pass: "I have this." Once I have it I will never go to the gym. It will just be there for when I need it.

Sri Swamiji said that if we want to live a complete, full life, then our philosophies, our actions, our beliefs and performance have to become one. Everybody has a peaceful, quiet and holy face, but in the privacy of the room it is the demonical self which comes out. The angelic self comes out in order to project that I am good, not because you are an angel. It is only a projection, a mirage that you create in your life for yourself and for other people.

Pratyahara has to happen in this area, in this greater mind, manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. There has to be pratyahara of manas, there has to be pratyahara of buddhi, there has to be pratyahara of chitta and there has to be pratyahara of ahamkara, ego. Pratyahara is not just withdrawing the senses and going into a stupor or meditative state but it is a sequence of dealing with every condition of mind. In fact, in the old literatures, the pre-Patanjali raja yoga even speaks of prana pratyahara, that even pranas have to go through pratyahara.

Our understanding is limited yet during this training we shall try to look into the benefits and the techniques of pratyahara. One important criteria for raja yoga, to experience real pratyahara is to be 100 percent happy and positive, and that is not a joke. Only when you are 100 percent positive and happy can you actually go deep into yourself. If you are negative, disturbed and conflicted, then no matter what you do those thoughts will keep on coming back and dragging you into the pits again. So, as a rule, and this is scriptural rule, people who are in a bad mood are not advised to practise raja yoga, because the outcome, the result is different. If you are positive and happy then the outcome, the result will be different.

For five days forget everything: all your worries, all your problems, all your difficulties, all your gossips and criticisms, your hugs and kisses, and just focus on maintaining your inner positivity, on maintaining your external happiness. Be positive and be happy. That is the only rule to seriously and really experience pratyahara.

Manas Pratyahara

18 December 2017



Yesterday we had opened the subject of raja yoga as an introduction to the course. I told you about raja yoga before Patanjali and about raja yoga after Patanjali. The intent of raja yoga is to balance the negative, the restrictive and harmful tendencies, to cultivate the positive, the good and the constructive qualities and to come to a state of inner peace where you experience absolute harmony which is samadhi. In order to come to this stage of purification and positivity, one has to go through sorting out the files of personality and human nature. These files of our life are kept in one specific area of the greater mind, which is known as chitta.

The office of chitta

Chitta is like the office that people have in their home where all the books, all the files and the documents are kept. Manas

is like a sitting room where people come and chat. Buddhi is like the kitchen where things are concocted, and ahamkara is the whole house which contains the other three in it. This is the greater mind, or what is known as the *mahat* concept, the greater mind concept. Raja yoga deals with the greater mind, not with this mind which you have. The focus of raja yoga is chitta, not manas nor buddhi, not the reflective power and not the intelligence, but that area or office where all the files are kept, which is chitta.

This chitta gives birth to understanding, responses, assimilation of experiences, creation of impressions, expression of the samskaras, bringing out the latent karmas which define our nature, character and mindset. If there is agitation in this area, then that is known as *chitta vritti*. This chitta vritti is not the idea of rationality or reflection but something much deeper than rationality and reflection which alters your nature and your personality. Chitta vritti alters the nature and the personality, just as anger alters your thinking, your behaviour, your responses; just as fear alters your thinking, your behaviour, your responses. They are the vrittis.

Fear can be considered to be a vritti, a nature, a character, a trait which is manifesting at a particular time. Anger can be considered to be a vritti, it changes everything. In the same manner, other sentiments and emotions can be considered vrittis for they alter and colour the entire nature, behaviour and performance of the individual. Logic does not alter your behaviour; it enforces your behaviour. Reflection does not alter the behaviour; it clarifies the behaviour. The alteration of behaviour happens in chitta and that alteration of chitta is known as vritti.

The word 'vritti' is derived from the word 'vritta', which means a circle. So *vritta* is a circle and *vritti* is a vortex, a continuous circle. Vritta is one but vritti is you going around a circle continuously like some cartoon characters. The cartoon character is going around the room in circles and gradually he sinks into the ground because he is going round and round and round in a circle. That is vritti. When you simply

walk on the surface, it is all right. When you begin to dig holes around you and start sinking, then that is a vritti.

Vritti is generally characterized as a new idea, as a new mood of mind and it is that mood which conveys your prana shakti, it is that mood which conveys your mental shakti, it is that mood which conveys your physical shakti, it is that mood which conveys your emotional shakti. Every dimension of human personality is resonating and responding to a particular environment of mood. That is the chitta vritti that Patanjali asks you to observe and be a witness of. It is the same chitta vritti which Shukracharya asks you to merge into, merge into a higher and subtle quality, into something different and higher.

The torch of awareness

How does one become aware of chitta, or the mind? There is one component of mind which is used to know oneself and that component of the mind is called awareness. Awareness is like a torch in the night. It is dark, you light your torch and you shine the light on the ground. Where the light is falling, that area is what you are observing. You are not observing the dark area, you are observing the lit area and you are walking on that path. That lit area is limited, depending on the size of your torch bulb, yet the expanse of light from any torch is a limited light, and that is like awareness.

So many things continue to happen always around you, but you become aware when you are aware of a particular thing. There are many people sitting beside you, yet right now your awareness is focused on listening. While you are listening, something else is also happening behind the awareness, which is you capturing all the information around you but you are not aware of it. You are aware of the sound as that is what you are listening to. Your focus is on sound and that is not the full range of senses, it is only one.

According to modern understanding, people can become aware of one item at a time. If I am aware of this flower, then I am watching this and not that. If I become aware of the

second flower, then I am not aware of the first one, it has gone. One thing is always more predominant, which you are experiencing and that predominance is the awareness of whatever you are experiencing. That is awareness. In Hindi there is a word called *savadhan*; in English it means to be attentive. If you analyze this word *savadhan*, it is actually derived from *saptavadhan*, where the ancients found that you can stretch the human mind to be aware of seven things happening at the same time. With *saptavadhan* you become aware of seven things. Just as you are aware of one thing now, can you extend the limits of your mind to become aware of seven flowers at the same time? That is the attentiveness of the mind desired in yoga.

Therefore, awareness plays the first major role which allows us to look at ourselves, yet from a very limited point of view. Gradually we begin to expand the light, enlarge the size of the torch light so that more and more areas come in the purview of the mind, focus and awareness. Awareness is the first item in order to observe oneself, in order to meditate, in order to know what we are doing, attempting to do, going to do, planning to do; this attention, this awareness has to be continuously enlarged. Awareness is point one.

Once awareness is there, what do you observe? You have to observe the four: *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. As you observe these four different areas of the greater mind, of which we are an integral part, we come to know how interconnected these four areas are. *Manas* is not a separate function to *buddhi*, it is part of *buddhi*. Due to its function it is identified as a specific qualified function, not a general function, but *vishesh*, qualified, specific, and that takes the majority of *buddhi*. *Manas* has been assigned as a separate identity but it is part of *buddhi*. If you observe *manas*, the first thing that appears in front of the mind is to be seen – they are the thoughts. From awareness comes another important point which is observation. Observation is another quality which has to be cultivated before you can attempt to know yourself or even begin to meditate.

Patanjali has been specific that you have to observe from a detached perspective. The moment you become subjective you lose the capacity to observe in a detached manner. Children are playing – one person is a stranger and one is a parent. Who is a greater observer to the play of the children? I would say the stranger; the parent will become subjectively involved. The parent will always say, “Don’t do this,” or “Don’t do that,” “Don’t go here,” or “Don’t go there.” It is always subjective, there is always involvement, there is always engagement. Observation happens when there is no engagement. When you do not engage yourself with any situation but you are aware of it, then you are observing it.

It is this principle which has to be applied. Don’t engage yourself, just observe. If you are watching manas, thoughts come, you are not engaging yourself in thoughts, thinking about them, reflecting on them, no. You are observing them. This becomes one practice and this practice you know as antar mouna. Antar mouna is observation of manas. The entire practice of antar mouna is observation of manas.

Need to relax

Before this observation begins, Sri Swamiji included another component which was relaxation. This relaxation is conscious relaxation, as it was Sri Swamiji’s experience that people want to meditate but their psyche is too stressed out at all times. The psyche is stressed out because of various reasons. The past impressions that come up to the surface of the mind unconsciously, the correlation of memories and actions that continue to happen unconsciously at a deeper level, the confrontation with the environment of today which is causing inner stress in my life, with my friends, my family, my relationships, my communications, my ambitions, aspirations, fulfilled or unfulfilled desires, they all create psychological stress. When psychological stress is there, the mind will divert from concentration and from meditation. You won’t be able to maintain your focus. If you are trying not to think of something, the stress and the stressor will pull your attention to it.

Your actual effort is not in doing your sadhana, your meditation or your attempt to move forward; your effort will be in brooding over that point of discontent and your efforts are gone. At that time there is no detachment. We are caught up in the same thoughts. So Sri Swamiji brought in relaxation before meditation. He said, "As a rule everybody should relax before they attempt to practise any mental journey, whether that be of meditation, concentration or visualization."

He brought in the idea of yoga nidra, the deep psychic relaxation. Even in his talks, he defined yoga nidra in many ways. In the early days, he used to define yoga nidra as 'sleepless sleep'. Then later on he defined yoga nidra as 'psychic sleep'. His last statement was, "The more I think about yoga nidra I can't define it in any other manner except to say that it is yoga nidra." He went through different definitions, but at the end he said, yoga nidra is neither psychic sleep nor sleepless sleep, it is yoga nidra. One cannot define that; one cannot classify that as to what it is. One cannot even experience that in a daily practice.

How many of you are aware all throughout the practice of yoga nidra? We do practise it, but we practise it to drift off, not as a practice of pratyahara. We practise it, but we practise it to sleep, not to move into that state of consciousness which is the yoga nidra state. Although the practices are there, are we able to do them? I can teach you thousands of practices but what is the use? We can't even do the most simple relaxation with proper attention and awareness, so how can we practise the higher practices with conviction that this will elevate me when whatever I do puts me to sleep? In sleep, I am not elevated. I am very much grounded, so there is no elevation.

Yoga nidra is the beginning of a specific practice in raja yoga which is known as pratyahara. I gave you an example of the manas component and how you have to observe manas. In the same manner, you have to observe buddhi. In the same manner, you have to observe chitta. In the same manner, ahamkara has to be observed, for vrittis or the

spikes are happening in all these four peaks: the peak of manas, the peak of buddhi, the peak of chitta and the peak of ahamkara. Observation has to be used in these different levels of mind.

Why this observation? Through observation we become aware of those trigger points which make us behave in a particular manner. Those trigger points are known as pratyaya. *Pratyaya* means latent impression, like in a passport. In your passport you have a stamp of every country that you have visited; that is your record. Similarly, pratyayas are impressions or imprints in chitta which tell you of your life's journey and everything that you have carried in your life's journey at that moment. Your memories are powerful tools and memories also change.

A few years back, a research was carried out as to what is memory. Some scientists said it is the ability to recall. They picked that up, the ability to recall something that has happened to you, and they labelled that as memory. Then they started investigating about the accuracy of the memory and they said that people can remember with 90 percent accuracy things that have happened in the past one week. After a gap of thirty to forty years, the accuracy of your memory is only 5 percent as gradually those impressions also fade. If you look at your paper when the ink has faded, you will still see the writing. If you look at your paper when the pencil has faded, you will still see the impression on the paper. That is memory, and memory has been termed as one of the forms of vritti: pramana, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidra, smriti. Smriti is memory, the last one.

Yoga nidra is not a post-Patanjali practice. Even in the ancient pre-Patanjali raja yoga scriptures, there is mention of yoga nidra. This yoga nidra in pre-Patanjali is different. Sri Swamiji's yoga nidra is not a raja yoga yoga nidra. Sri Swamiji's yoga nidra is a tantric yoga nidra, which he discovered in the nyasa system. The tantric yoga nidra uses mantras and the different body parts, and is a totally different experience for people who have done it.

In pre-Patanjali yoga nidra, the purpose of yoga nidra is to withdraw the pranas. That is pre-Patanjali purpose: to withdraw the pranas from their associations with the senses and sense objects. I introduced that concept of pre-Patanjali yoga nidra in the form of prana nidra many years ago. This prana nidra then goes into mana nidra, and from mana nidra it comes to yoga nidra. From prana to mind to fusion. That is pre-Patanjali yoga nidra. Pranic, mental and fusion of both, and that is the beginning of pratyahara.

Sri Swamiji looked into this aspect and another aspect in the tantric tradition and scriptures of how to place the awareness, how to develop the awareness and he came upon this nyasa system. In the vedic times, the nyasa system was a method in which during meditation, you would visualize the presence of an illuminated form, a devi and devata, not gods or goddesses, but an illuminated form. Something which is luminous and which illuminates its surroundings is known as devata, deva. A flame can be called a deva too. When you light a flame and it becomes luminous and it spreads light, it is called devata. It is the placement of the pranic devatas and the psychic devatas in the body. With mantras, each part is visualized, mantra is chanted in that part and the deity is placed. The whole body is then seen as a temple, there is nothing in your body which is devoid of that divine or transcendental presence. The whole body becomes the living manifestation of the luminous self, the devata, and that is the nyasa system.

There are many variations and gradations in this procedure but that is the general concept. Sri Swamiji used those points which are mentioned in nyasa to focus the attention in the body and that became the rotation of consciousness through different parts of the body.

Yoga nidra becomes the first practice to relax the four aspects of mind and then antar mouna becomes the first practice to observe the first level of mind which is manas. Then there are other supportive practices to antar mouna which help manas, and then we go into buddhi.



MANAS MEDITATION – ANTAR MOUNA PRACTICE

Please sit in a comfortable posture. Body upright and straight. Both hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Eyes and lips gently closed. Mentally observe the whole body, observe the whole body from top of the head right down to the toes. In one thought, in one glimpse try to have a vision of your whole body seated on the floor as it is right now.

Visualize that there is a full length mirror in front of the body and try to see the reflection of your body in the mirror. Become aware of yourself by observing the reflection of your body in the mirror. If you need to adjust your body posture, then do so now and ensure that there is nothing tight; there is no tension, muscular or skeletal, you are completely at ease and comfortable.

Once you have adjusted your posture, become still and minimize all physical movements. If you can stop your physical movement completely, very good, if not, definitely minimize all the physical movements and whenever you move, do it slowly, gently, without creating any disturbance to others and to yourself.

Complete awareness of yourself. Observe the reflection of the body in the mirror. Feel and experience the state of comfort in the body.

Check the position of your legs and make sure that the legs are comfortable. Check the position of your arms. Check the position of your back, spine, neck, head. Make yourself comfortable and become aware of your whole body internally.

Once you have seen the level of comfort in the body, experience the body to be absolutely motionless and still. Develop the awareness of stillness in the body. Still like a statue, immobile, motionless. Like you are carved from a rock, your body is carved from a rock.

Now bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre and observe the dark space that you can see in front of the closed eyes. Simply watch the black space. If anything appears in that dark space, such as lights, colours, shapes, geometrical designs, just look at them, observe them. After you have looked at them, after you have observed them, clear them from the mind.

Now become aware of the outside sounds. Awareness of all outside sounds. Imagine your mind to be like the microphone of a recorder. Whatever is in the range of the microphone, it will pick up. In the same manner, your mind is like a microphone. Become aware of all the different sounds that you can hear, distant and near. Start with the furthest sound, the most distant sound, the most subtle sound, and come closer. From distance into this room. From the most soft and subtle sound to the loudest one that you can hear which at present is my voice. Listen to a sound, acknowledge the sound, say to yourself mentally, 'I have acknowledged you', and move your mind to the next one.

Now again become aware of chidakasha and see the colours, the shapes, the movements. While your attention is fixed in chidakasha, also become aware of the other physical sensations that you may be experiencing. Of heat, cold, pressure of one organ over the other, pressure of one part over the other, contact between the parts of the body. Contact between the body and the floor. Contact of clothes with the body.

Just go through the whole body and feel everything. From top of the head to the toes, just become aware of all the experiences. As you move the awareness down from the head, come down to the eyelids and feel the touch of the two eyelids.

Then move down to the lips, the contact of the lower and the upper lip. Move down to the neck, the clothes and neck. Clothes and shoulders. Become aware of the armpits. Become aware of the arms and clothes covering the arms. Become aware of the fingers and the contact of the fingers with each other in jnana mudra or chin mudra. The contact of palms or back of the hand against the thigh, the knee. The back and the clothes covering the back, the contact between the clothes and the back. The front. The waist where dhotis and pants are tied. Feel the tightness, feel the contact, feel the sensation. The hips, the buttocks. Back of the thighs and ground, the floor. Lower legs, two lower legs crossing each other. Feel the point where they touch each other. The bones in the foot and the floor, ankles and the floor, heels and the back of thighs, socks and the skin. Acknowledge all sensations in the body.

Again bring your awareness to chidakasha. Again continue to observe everything that happens in chidakasha, and this time also observe what kind of thoughts enter the field of awareness. Just be an observer of thoughts when they come. When thoughts come, acknowledge them and send them off by saying 'I have seen you'. Wait for the next one. If it comes, observe. If it doesn't come, be aware of the thoughtless state and continue to observe chidakasha.

Continue with this practice for a few moments more, observing chidakasha and being attentive to all the thoughts that come to the mind and after you have seen them, acknowledge them, push them away. If no thoughts come, it doesn't matter. Just enjoy the silence, just enjoy the space and peace inside. When thoughts come, see them, acknowledge them and push them away. They can be any kind of thought, good or bad, positive or negative, it doesn't matter. Don't try to stop any thought from appearing. Be a stranger to your thoughts, not the creator of your thoughts. As a stranger, observe them dispassionately.

Now stop this practice and once again externalize the awareness. Become aware of the sounds. Slowly become aware of the breath. Feel the movement of breath in the

lungs, in the throat, in the nose. Come out from the inner space and connect with the physical body. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me and then repeat the shanti mantra after me.

Breathe in, *Om*. Breathe in, *Om*. Breathe in, *Om*.

Repeat after me, *Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. Hari Om.*

Hari Om Tat Sat

Defining pratyahara

What we practised today was the beginning stages of antar mouna. There are five stages of this practice. In the first stage, it is more like stillness of the body, *kaya sthairyam*, and awareness of the senses and the environment, and to become stable. In the subsequent stages, we begin with thought observation, then removing the thought, the thought observation is of the natural thought, then removing the thought. Then again thought observation, yet this time we are creating it, and then removing it, then we keep in the mind, or the manas, free from thinking. That is the practice of antar mouna.

This begins the process of observing the pratyayas or the impressions. Pratyahara has been defined as withdrawing the senses from its contacts outside and bringing them in, like the turtle bringing in the legs and arms, head and tail, into the body for protection. When all the limbs are drawn in, you just become the single unit with no contact whatsoever. In case of the turtle, the arms, the legs, the head, the tail, all is contained in the shell, totally contactless. That is the state of pratyahara as it is defined in the classical manner.

The word pratyahara has two meanings. One meaning comes from the word pratyaya: observing the impressions, pratyayas are impressions, observing the archetypes, pratyayas are archetypes. The process of observing the archetypes, the process of observing and releasing those impressions, is the practice of pratyahara. That is one definition. The second definition is *prati-ahara*, reverse

feeding. Whatever you are feeding yourself from the outside world, now you feed it back, give it back. Clear yourself. *Ahara* is to feed, to consume, to eat; and *prati* is reverse. Whatever you are receiving, you stop it and give it back.

Both definitions work in *pratyahara*, for you are giving back whatever is unnecessary, and you are also observing the impressions which are there defining who you are. The old impressions define what you are and you are observing them; to the new impressions which are coming, you say, 'Please go back. House is full, no vacancy.'

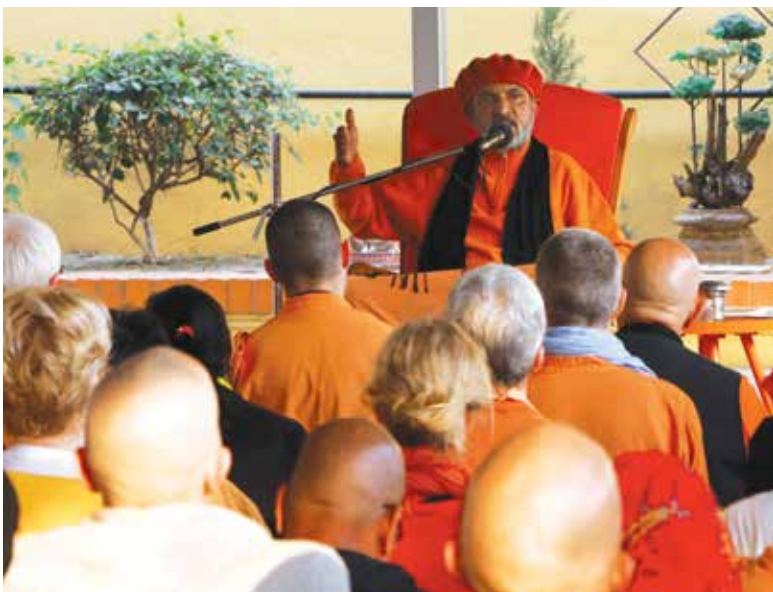
In *raja yoga*, the entire eight stages are not physical in nature. *Yama* and *niyama* is not physical in nature, it is attitudinal. *Pratyahara*, *dharana* are not physical in nature, they are mental. *Dhyana* and *samadhi*, they are not physical in nature, they are also mental experiences of a purified mind, of a greater mind. *Asana* and *pranayama* are also not of a physical nature. They are just static postures which allow you to introspect, they are not dynamic postures which allow you to move your body and feel good.

This is an indication that the entire range of the *raja yoga* sequence is a preparation to make yourself know about yourself at the mental, emotional, pranic and psychological levels. The upheavals in the mental, pranic, emotional and psychological levels are the *vrittis*. So it is more a psychological dimension that you are working on.

As we progress further, it becomes difficult to deal with the mind. Especially when *chitta* is disturbed, when the mind is disturbed and we are not listening to anybody, ignoring all the good advice, and trying to turn the tables on the other person who is trying to help us by making him the victim. That level of *pratyahara* is the most difficult as a lot of the stuff from inside is self-destructive too. We have more self-destructive elements within us than self-constructive elements. As we progress further in meditation, it is not a bed of roses, bliss, peace and quietness. Rather it becomes a method by which we actually, like Luke Skywalker, in the planet of *Tatooine*, confront our own dark self.

Antar Mouna and Buddhi

19 December 2017



Yesterday it was the subject of pratyahara, the intent of raja yoga and the experience of pratyahara at the level of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. This constitutes the complete experience, not just closing the eyes and watching the thoughts and saying, 'I am doing perfect pratyahara'. We also looked at the practice which is most relevant to deal with a particular manas condition, which is the practice of antar mouna. We practised the initial foundation techniques of antar mouna, and today we are going to do the complete practice.

FULL ANTAR MOUNA PRACTICE FOR MANAS

Sit in a comfortable pose. Keep the body upright and straight. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Adjust your body posture. Gently close your eyes and lips. Mentally move through the whole body, from the head right down to the toes. Check each and every part of the body. There should be no discomfort, no tension, no tightness. Be completely at ease with yourself.

Observe the whole body from top to bottom. Imagine that in front of the closed eyes is a mirror and in the mirror try to see the reflection of your whole body and acknowledge that the reflection is me: 'That is the pose of my body. That is how I am seated right now. Such is the placement of my hands. Such is the condition of my body'. See in minute detail the reflection and experience yourself in that reflection.

Become aware of the space in the body, become aware of the stillness in the body, become aware of the silence in the body.

Now bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre and visualize the image of a candle flame burning bright. Focus your awareness on the image of the flame. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me. Breathe in. *Om. Om. Om.* Repeat the shanti mantras after me.

Hari Om.

Remain focused on the image of the flame which is burning in chidakasha, the space of chitta. Chidakasha is the name of the space that you can see in front of the closed eyes. Keep looking at the flame and experience the vastness of chidakasha, the mental space, the space of chitta, and say to yourself 'I am prepared for inner silence'.

The preliminary practice of inner silence or antar mouna is not the awareness of internal things but awareness of the external, sensorial experiences. Different sounds, different sensations, different experiences.

First focus on outside sounds. Become aware of the sounds that you can hear. Sounds that are near and distant,

sounds that are subtle and loud, sounds that are outside and inside. Become aware of every sound that your ears can hear. The mind is to become like the microphone of a recorder which when turned on picks up any sound within the range and records it. Your mind is also recording everything. Just become aware of what sound is recorded. Hear it, acknowledge it and then move your awareness to another sound. Focus on the external sounds and physical sensations.

Just as you are aware of the external sounds, become aware of the physical sensations. The heat, the cold, the pressure of one body organ on top of the other, the contact of skin with clothes. The air, coolness of the air as it goes in through the nostrils, warmth of the air as it comes out through the nostrils. Stability, immobility, firmness. Become aware of all sensations in the physical body. Move your mind, acknowledge each sensation and then move to the next. You should also awaken the awareness of 'I am aware', 'I am hearing', 'I am feeling', 'I am experiencing', and with this awareness be a witness to the sounds and all physical sensations.

The senses have to be quietened down with the cultivation of the *drashta*, the witness attitude: 'I am a witness of experience', 'I am hearing the sounds', 'I am experiencing the physical sensations'.

Now stop this practice and once again become aware of chidakasha, the space of the mind, the space in front of the closed eyes.

While you are being the witness of chidakasha, observe the natural thoughts that come to the surface of manas. Become aware of thoughts, the spontaneous thought process, thoughts that come and go of their own accord. Observe them, good or bad does not matter, positive or negative does not matter. Whatever kind of thought it may be, become an observer without any emotion, without any passion. Just observe. Let the thoughts come spontaneously and let them go whenever they go. You just remain a silent witness of every thought that is going through the mind. When you become

aware of a particular thought, mentally remind yourself, 'I am aware of this thought, I am witnessing this particular thought'.

If the mind at any time becomes free of thoughts, then you should try to become aware of that state also. It happens many times that when you are observing your thoughts, they stop coming. So if there is absence of thoughts from the mind, become aware of that state, that condition of mind also. And when a thought comes, observe it dispassionately and let it go whenever it wants to go.

Remind yourself that you are the witness of the thought and not the thinker of the thought. The thoughts may be good or bad, positive or negative, but those thoughts do not come from anywhere outside. They are expressions of your inner personality. In the first part of the practice, the sense experiences came from outside and in the second part of the practice, thoughts are your own impressions and expressions of the mind, coming from inside. Whenever the thoughts come, look at them indifferently, with absolute detachment.

Now stop this practice of observing the thoughts and once again observe chidakasha. Become aware of the colours and shapes and forms that appear spontaneously, naturally. Streaks of light, spots of colours, shadows and shapes and geometrical figures, visualizations. Anything that comes to chidakasha, observe it. Whatever movement is happening in chidakasha, observe it. Whatever you are able to see internally in your chidakasha, observe it and know that you are observing. Don't get carried away by asking or following one colour or image or visualization, shape or shadow. Just be a witness, an observer to that.

Now stop this practice and once again come to thoughts. This time you have to bring in a thought, acknowledge it and then put it out of the mind voluntarily, consciously by saying to yourself, by acknowledging that 'I have seen this and you can go'. Then bring in another thought, look at it dispassionately, put it out. Do not allow spontaneous thoughts to express and manifest at all, but create a thought, don't allow the natural thoughts to come. Say, 'Not now'. Create

a thought, look at it and put it out. Again create a thought, look at it and put it out. Again think another thought, maintain it, brood upon it for some time and then put it out. Again go to the next thought, create a thought, maintain it for some time, and then put it out. It is not difficult to get rid of good thoughts, but evil thoughts are very stubborn, negative thoughts are very stubborn. Just be alert and make sure that you are able to put out the thoughts.

In the next stage of inner silence, spontaneous thoughts are to be allowed. Spontaneity of thoughts means you don't bring thoughts at will, as you did earlier, but allow thoughts to come. Think about them for some time and when the point of disposing of the thought comes, you should dispose of the thought at will. The arrival of thoughts should be spontaneous but the departure should depend upon your will. Spontaneous thoughts are coming, you are witnessing them and then disposing them at will. Just keep on clearing your manas of all thoughts.

Now dispose of the thoughts that are at present prominent in your mind and once again become aware of chidakasha. The state of silence, stability and thoughtlessness. Experience all the three. If at all any thought comes, immediately push it away. Try to remain thoughtless, try to merge with the space, the vastness. Try to experience the silence.

Now in chidakasha, again see the emergence of a flame in the space which sometimes is colourless, sometimes is colourful. In the space where you are experiencing silence, vastness, stability, thoughtlessness, see the emergence of a tiny flame burning bright and focus on the image of the flame.

While maintaining the awareness and focus on the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me. Breathe in, *Om*. Feel the vibrations of the mantra *Om* travelling through the inner space of chidakasha, calming the mind. Breathe in, *Om*. Breathe in, *Om*.

Repeat after me, *Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. Hari Om.*

Hari Om Tat Sat

We practised the first component of pratyahara, which Sri Swamiji has published for these were his class transcriptions. He never went beyond antar mouna for he felt that the manas level, the area of the mind which is assaulted all the time by desires, expectations, ideas and thoughts, is the area which has to be managed first by everyone before they move on to the next stage. There are many other practices of pratyahara, but he highlighted the simplest one, catering to the level of manas, which is antar mouna. Pratyahara has to happen at other levels too. You can clear the chatter of manas, but what about those other subtle dimensions of the mind which are responsible for creating mindsets of your other responses, behaviours and mindsets?

Introducing buddhi

The next level is the buddhi level. Some foundation work has been done for this buddhi level over the last ten years, and you are well aware of the practice too, yet you have not linked it to buddhi and you have not practised it as meditation.

Before I tell you what it is, you have to understand the nature of buddhi. Manas is devoid of any guna. There is no guna in manas. It is only the emerging point, the volcano head from where the lava comes up. Manas is the emerging point of all the experiences of the mind. What you are doing in manas pratyahara, in manas antar mouna, is stopping all those emerging experiences which come to the surface of your awareness and cognition, and that is the extent of antar mouna. Anything that comes to the surface of your awareness and that you are able to cognize as being part of your expression and are able to identify with that and act according to that, is the manas level. There the ideations come, the thoughts come, the plans are made, sequences are seen and implemented by thinking, by rationalizing, by thinking, by rationalizing, by thinking. It is colourless. It is only the emerging point of everything that is contained in the lower three strata of the volcano, the mental volcano.

The next level, the next strata is buddhi. Buddhi has two predominant qualities: one predominant, 60 percent; second predominant, 30 percent; and third predominant, 10 percent. 60 percent predominance in buddhi is of rajas; 30 percent predominance in buddhi is of tamas, and 10 percent predominance in buddhi is of sattwa.

Buddhi becomes the agent for motivating and for creating motion in a state of inertia. That is the rajas component. This rajas component is also attached to and associated with the identity of 'me'. Without the awareness of 'me', rajas does not come up. This is the only link that buddhi has with ego, the 'me'. That 'me' in buddhi is always prominent; that 'I' in buddhi is always prominent. The prominence of 'I' in buddhi is seen as selfishness, where I desire everything for myself. That is the prominence of ego in buddhi. Due to the prominence of ego in buddhi, in the rajasic dimension, which is 60 percent, self-oriented awareness develops to a great extent. As soon as the self-oriented awareness develops, anything that is connected to the self becomes highlighted: image, prestige, esteem, you can add 'self' in front of all these different words to define different expressions of that ego in the rajas state in buddhi.

Due to this rajas state, buddhi becomes an identification with 'I', buddhi also becomes a tool to manipulate the environment, the senses and the people. Chitta is not a tool to manipulate people, the environment or the senses, it is buddhi which becomes the tool to manipulate the environment, the senses and people. The prominent nature of buddhi is always rajasic.

When due to the rajasic nature, the desire to control and manipulate and the 'I' are coming together, then what does one look for in another person? Either shortcomings or their weaknesses. Where is the Achilles' heel where I can shoot the arrow? That is the first thing that buddhi sees in everybody, the shortcoming. Buddhi knows that the shortcoming will become the failure of that person, and it can manipulate it for its own gains.

When we look at a person, we automatically question and observe, 'What are the flaws of character, of nature, of personality? What are the insecurities, what are the fears, what are the anxieties? Is that person an anxious person or a strong person, a determined person or changeable, pliable person?' Friendship is always made with those who are pliable for the need to manipulate.

Friendships are never made with those who are strong for you can't change their views, opinions or attitudes. If you see a gathering of people, all talking away in one corner, that is the weakness which is in all of them because that has brought them together. They are looking at the weaknesses of everyone, criticizing, complaining, instigating another person to say something which highlights another weakness, which highlights another flaw, which highlights another fault. That is the rajasic buddhi.

Tamas kicks in in this rajasic buddhi, when you know that you are able to control and manipulate the person, control and overpower the person. Then the relationship changes from friend to master and victim. It is the buddhi and rajas which create havoc in our interactions with other people, in our perception about ourselves, and that is where all the conflict lies.

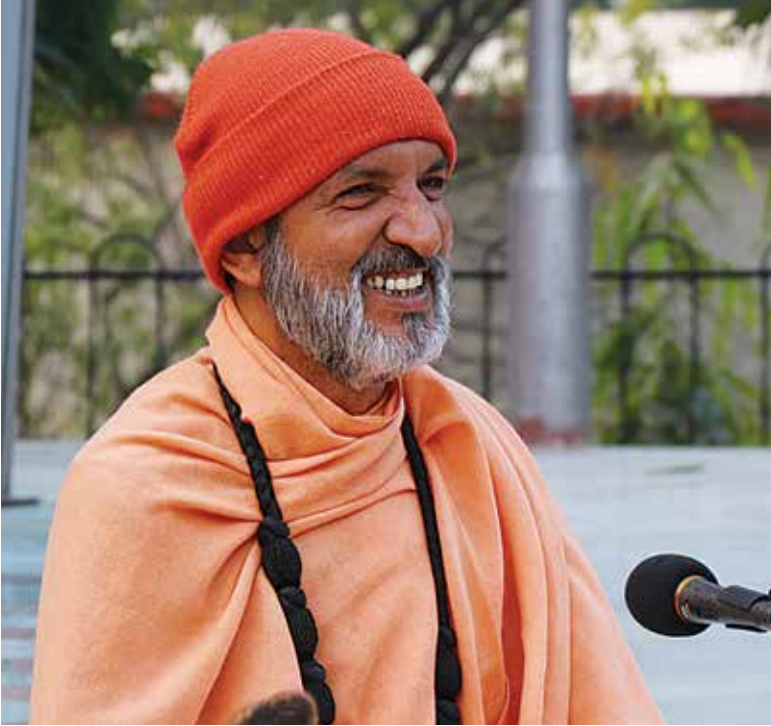
Buddhi is further supported by expectations and desires and deep-rooted cravings and instincts. When they appear, buddhi analyzes those instincts and cravings and gives them justification because they also support your nature, your being, your 'I-ness'. The negatives are always supported by buddhi as they are supporting the I-ness, whereas the positive is not actually acquirable by buddhi. It is easy to imbibe negative traits and negative habits; it is difficult to imbibe good traits and good habits. Even the basic restraint in life is not possible, knowing full well that something is not good for us, we still do it. Even that basic, simple restraint that can be a life-saver is not appreciated by the individual. And this kind of individual wants to be realized, illuminated? It is not practical nor possible.

What is possible is the management of the imbalances created by buddhi. Buddhi looks at four aspects of personality defined as strength, weakness, ambition and need using the SWAN theory. SWAN is a practice of pratyahara. Initially SWAN was presented in a written form, not a meditative form. The same thing in a meditative form becomes a pratyahara practice for the buddhi dimension. Writing is a precursor to meditation, writing supports your meditation. When you are writing, you are thinking, you are analyzing, you are defining. From your perspective and your logic, you write down what your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs are, but then what do you do with them? That will be the meditation which we will do next.



Buddhi Pratyahara

21 December 2017



Some people have expressed that they always thought buddhi to be the higher faculty. You have to work at two levels, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. What is in the macrocosmos? It is transcendental. What is in the microcosmos? It is contained, defined and accessible to the individual. You are the microcosmos. Your body, your

life, your existence, your individuality is the microcosmic self. The elements which are transcendental in nature at the macrocosmic, the cosmic, the universal dimension are given identity, form and shape. They are congested together and they are reflected in you. Condensed together they come in you. You are an expression of that macrocosmic dimension. In the microcosmic self, you are the expression of the microcosmic nature. In the microcosmic too, there is intelligence, but that intelligence in the microcosmic dimension is known as intellect. In the macrocosmic dimension it is known as all-pervasive intelligence. So you are working with a confined, limited version of what is up there and in here.

Your buddhi, your manas, your chitta, your ahamkara are limited versions of what is up there in the transcendental dimension. The condensed, the limited version is able to fit in this skull cap. Anything more than this cap, and the nerves will burn out, like electrical wires. If more power goes in through the wire which conducts 110 volts, there will be a short-circuit, the wire will burn. What is contained in the skull is the microcosmic condensation of the macrocosmic expansive nature.

This microcosmic condensation of that cosmic nature is subject to gunas whereas the macrocosmic is not. Everything that happens within this skull cap is always subject to and conditioned by the predominant quality, the guna. A human being can never be without any guna. Only God is identified as attribute-less, the higher self, the transcendental self. Everything except God is expressing an attribute and that attribute is conditioned by the individual. Whether you are sattvic, rajasic or tamasic, that is a conditioning of your nature.

An apple will not become an orange; it will remain an apple, because of the genetic composition. A banana will not become a mango; it will always remain a banana. You can make a bigger banana, smaller banana, greener banana, yellower banana, fatter banana, longer banana, thinner banana, hybrid banana. You are free to do that, but

the banana will never become an orange. It can become hundred types of bananas, but never an orange. So that is the attribute, the quality or nature that is manifesting. In the individual too, the same nature manifests, the same traits manifest. We all share the same traits as humanity, yet the way of expressing those traits is different from individual to individual, society to society, culture to culture, civilization to civilization.

In this microcosmic dimension, the individual mind, you are trying to attain the state of pratyahara, as it is through the state of pratyahara that you can cut off from those connections which give you the identity of being an individual and connect you with the awareness of the transcendental. Pratyahara is the process of disconnection, withdrawing. This withdrawing has to happen in five dimensions: at the level of manas, at the level of buddhi, at the level of chitta, at the level of ahankara and also at the level of pranas. These are the five areas where pratyahara has to be achieved and mastered.

Until now, all the effort in meditation was to observe only the aspect of manas. All the practices that you have been doing in form of antar mouna, which is the primary practice, is to recognize what comes to the surface of the mind, manas. Here I am introducing the first idea about buddhi pratyahara, which is the next level.

The play of gunas

Buddhi comes from the root '*budh*' which means 'to know'. To 'know' is a peculiar word. It means to know something that has come in the field of your cognition, perception and awareness, something which you have recorded and analyzed, something that has become part of your understanding and natural acceptance, something that has become part of your evolution. Knowing full well that 'I know this now, I can go one step beyond leading to more maturity'. Knowing is a very intricate state of buddhi. When you know something, it means you have accepted, identified, analyzed and, at times, implemented something. Something that is in the field of

your awareness. Fire burns, I know – it is in the field of my awareness although it is in the back of my memory, yet it is known to me. This ‘I know’ is the nature of buddhi, but the basic tendency of buddhi is rajasic. Buddhi is 60 percent rajasic and 30 percent tamasic as the senses and mind all interact with the world outside, with the sense objects and they feed information. That information, in turn, increases like or dislike, *raga* and *dvesha*, involvement or separation. So that process is happening.

It is this rajasic buddhi which becomes self-oriented because of its connections outside with sense objects. When it becomes self-oriented and when I begin to look at myself, then desires come: ‘I am naked; I need to cover my body’. ‘I am hungry; I need to eat’. ‘I am thirsty; I need to drink’. ‘I am cold; I need to be warm’. That is the rajasic buddhi looking at me, myself and when that identification with myself increases and I make the effort to do something to fulfil my requirements and needs, then everything I do becomes self-oriented, self-motivated, self-centred actions. The idea of selfishness, I working for myself, comes from here: identification with me, my satisfaction, my fulfilment, my success in life. That is where the tamas begins in the rajas state of buddhi.

The rajas state of buddhi analyzes the individual and the environment; it recognizes the people with whom we interact as friend or foe. In a place, there are some people with whom you keep your distance and there are some people with whom you come close, whether it is restaurant, club, family, circle of friends, ashram, home, anywhere. There are some people who gravitate towards you and there are some people you stay away from. Not that you don’t want to associate with them, you just accept them yet you are not connected to them, you don’t feel connected to them. That kind of awareness begins to develop.

Like and dislike then begin to define the rajasic nature of the mind, in form of ‘What can I get from this person or this situation or this event?’ ‘What do I have to give to this

person, this situation or this event?’ The idea of give and take enters. If there is aggression in taking then it is tamas. Seeing in another person more things than what you have makes you feel jealous, envious about it. That is tamas. Tamas is the negative of what you are living. You have one hundred rupees, you see your neighbour who has two hundred. You are jealous. ‘How come he has one hundred more?’ One person got a glass of juice and by the time the waiter brings the plate to me, it is only a glass of water, so I am cursing the other person. Why am I cursing him? I am cursing the other person for receiving the juice.

These things colour the mind, they colour buddhi, and buddhi becomes tamasic. The tamasic buddhi is always a manipulative buddhi. The tamasic buddhi will always look for flaws and weaknesses, shortcomings in the other person with whom one is interacting. Give a chocolate and find out what the weaknesses are. Become the friend and by becoming the friend, try to know everything about the other person. Is that not manipulation of a good relationship? It is, but people do it in the garb of friendship and goodness. It is an expression of buddhi, and buddhi will justify all the actions and behaviours. In the tamasic buddhi, buddhi observes the weaknesses and expectations, desires, ambitions.

Then there is the other side, the sattwic buddhi, the buddhi which is to be attained. This one has to be rational while the tamasic one is the irrational buddhi. Sattwic buddhi has to be a rational buddhi. Tamas can be knowledge of the dark, but sattwa has to be knowledge of the light or the white, not the black. If there is anger here, then there has to be peace. If there is disturbance here, there has to be harmony, the total opposite. With that sattwa nature, the influence of the sensorial world does not affect the mind. Then you live in this world unaffected by the waters like the leaf of the lotus flower. The leaf of the lotus flower stays in water all the time. It grows in water, it takes birth in water, it dies in water but it is unaffected by water. It remains absolutely dry. You can throw water on top, the water will just roll off and the lotus

will remain dry. Just as the leaf of the lotus remains absolutely dry even while living in the water, in the same manner, the person with sattwic buddhi remains firm. It is this sattwic buddhi and the attainment of the sattwic buddhi, which is defined as samadhi.

Sthitaprajna

Arjuna asked Krishna, *Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa, samaadhistasi keshava* – “How do you define a person who is stable in wisdom who has attained samadhi?” The question itself defines what samadhi is: *sthitaprajna*, stable wisdom. It doesn’t say stable ego or eradication of ego or nothingness. It uses a specific word – stable wisdom. That stable wisdom is the sattwic buddhi, which is free from the influences of the senses and sense objects, which is non-manipulative, which is not rushing to fulfil its own ambitions and desires but is stable, like the bubble in a builder’s level. So when the bubble is perfectly still in the level, the bubble is perfectly on top, on the line. If there is one millimetre deviation, the bubble will go towards the higher side. Rajas is like this all the time, but the orientation of rajas makes a tilt, so there is more water on the tamas side and less density on the sattwa side. Buddhi has to again become like this – stable.

If you go like this, too far on the other side, you disappear from the face of the planet, for nothing is left, you simply merge. Your brain, your intelligence fuses into something totally different, *mastanapan*, intoxication. Sometimes the mastanapan becomes the intelligence as it happened in the case of Kalidas or in many other poets. In many people, like Archimedes, high intelligence became the cause of mastanapan: ‘Eureka!’ and he forgot everything about his body. When the tilt is more on the sattwa side, mastanapan happens. *Mast* means intoxication of knowledge, and that intoxication of knowledge makes one forget everything about oneself. You simply become the knowledge itself and that is 100 percent sattwa manifesting in your nature, in your personality. That is very rare. It is not something that you

and I can aspire for and achieve through our efforts, but yes, the balance can happen.

The sattvic buddhi is what is to be aspired for before you move on to the next level of chitta. Only due to sattvic buddhi will you be able to handle the onslaught of chitta, as you open chitta's Pandora's box. Before you deal with chitta, your buddhi has to be sattvic, and therefore in this raja yoga session, I am not going to go beyond buddhi. If we are able to manage the sthitaprajna state of our buddhi, where rather than the dark, the negative, the pulls of the senses influence us, we become the master of what we wish to do, what we wish to become, what we wish to achieve. That is the pratyahara of buddhi.

To perfect the pratyahara of buddhi, four things are to be observed because they are what buddhi always observes. On the minus side, weaknesses and ambitions; on the plus side, strengths and needs. On the minus side, the materialistic side and the manipulative side, weaknesses and ambitions play a major role. On the spiritual side and on the side of inner strength, it is being in the presence of and connecting with the positive and the strength which plays the major role.

SWAN practice

Here the SWAN practice comes in, which was introduced first in the year 1986. We started the practice in a simple manner: Take a sheet of paper, write down what you consider your weaknesses to be, your strengths to be. On another sheet of paper, write down what your ambitions are and what your physical, immediate, short-term and long-term needs are. Write down 1, 2, 3, 10, 15 points that come to mind today. Then put away the piece of paper. Next day again, take that piece of paper, look at it. Add a couple more, delete a couple, put it away. Do this for about fifteen days. Just look at that piece of paper, add, cross, whatever comes to your mind, the strength, the weakness, the ambition, the need. After fifteen days of looking at the piece of paper and crossing, analyzing, adding and deleting, you will discover that you

have a pretty good picture of yourself which is not taken by the camera but which is drawn by the pen, a good picture of yourself. In fifteen days you will come to that conclusion, 'Yes, now I think I have been able to clearly write what my strengths and weaknesses are, what my ambitions and needs are'. You can't do that in one day. That was the first stage: identify your SWAN.

The second stage was: pick one strength. Develop that quality, develop the strength more. Cultivate that strength, that ability, that creativity, joy, inspiration, motivation. Cultivate only one strength, only one. In the same manner, pick up one weakness and try to overcome it, whatever it may be. Fear, insecurity, inferiority complex, stuttering in front of others, not having confidence, whatever it may be, falling head over heels when you come across a person. Just think of one weakness and try to improve that. Only one. Do this for one month. Not one day, three days, one week, half-hearted, full-hearted, no! As a regular practice, do it for one month.

Then pick up the next weakness. Work to overcome it the next month. Pick up one strength. Work to cultivate it for one month. In twelve months, you will be dealing with twelve of your shortcomings and weaknesses, improving them, even if it is 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent, 40 percent or eradicating them 100 percent, in twelve months you will be cultivating twelve different creative abilities, skills, qualities. Nobody is willing to do that. To go through this much of effort, nobody is willing to do. So why speak of chitta, when the logic of buddhi and the analysis of what you are is difficult?

Just as you have worked with your strength and weakness, you have a list of your ambition and need. Ambition can be to become an astronaut and walk on the surface of Mars, but your need is to have your next meal. There should be a difference between ambition and need. You should know what your ambitions are and you should know what your needs are. Don't confuse the ambition to be a need and don't confuse a need to be an ambition – need is necessary;

ambition is a bonus. Just work hard and if you work hard, then maybe you will get a bonus. Working hard is the need, bonus is the ambition. In the same manner you have to pick up an ambition and need. Know the difference. Know, 'Okay, my immediate effort has to be in fulfilling my needs. When I am free from this side, I can fulfil my ambition'. That way you will prioritize your life, your time, your effort. That way you will be able to see something which is attainable or non-attainable. You will be able to give a new sense of direction and purpose to your efforts and actions. When you are working on paper, you keep a good understanding of yourself and therefore it is a good introduction.

Once you have identified everything on paper, you meditate. You pick up one weakness, go to the root of it, 'Why? Why is it there?' It is self-psychoanalysis. You have to be your own psychiatrist. Sit down with a notebook, ask yourself a question and write down the answer – in your mind. Pick up a weakness. 'Oh, I tremble when I go in front of other people. I can't speak, my mind goes blank, I know so much but I can't even say greetings. My whole body begins to tremble and shake. Why?' What are the experiences the body is going through? Trembling and shaking is a nervous response, it is not emotional or psychological, it is very much nervous. If you begin to tremble and shake, your nerves are shot. It is not mental. So something has to be done for the nerves. How do you deal with it? The weakness is there; you have identified one item. You do those practices which will help strengthen your nervous imbalance. Next time you go on the stage, 'No, I am not shaking anymore, but still my mind is blank'. Again you pick it up two months later, 'When I go in front of the crowd my mind goes blank, although I have controlled my trembling and shaking but my mind goes blank'. You analyze that, 'Why is it going blank?' Because you have made no plan, no points, or is it because you are under-confident and you know that you won't be able to manage if people begin to ask you questions and you are no Einstein.

You know the story of Einstein? After he had discovered the Theory of Relativity, he was called all around America for lectures. He had one driver who used to hear the same lecture again and again and he had memorized everything. One day, the driver said to Einstein, "Listen, I have heard your lecture about 108 times, I have memorized all your vocabulary, your sentences, your mathematical calculations. I would like to give the lecture once. You become my driver." Einstein agreed and they went to a new place where people did not know Einstein, there was no television, social media, mobile or WhatsApp.

So they come to this conference hall and the driver comes out from the back and on to the stage, looking like Einstein. He goes up to the desk. Einstein comes in and sits in the back after parking the car. The driver is on the dais, there is a whole group of scientists standing, sitting, all listening intently. The driver speaks on the Theory of Relativity and gets a standing ovation after the end of the lecture. He had done good homework; he had memorized everything.

Then came the time for questions and answers. The first scientist asked him a question denying the Theory of Relativity and bringing some other logic into play. The driver was so flustered, he did not know what to answer, so he hit upon an idea. He looked at the man and said, "Listen, your question is so simple that even my driver can answer it. Driver, come here! Answer this question."

The people who use their strengths of intelligence and knowledge are the actual intellectuals in our society. Not those people who cram their head with knowledge, as nothing is sorted inside the head anyway. Despite knowing everything, nothing is categorized, nothing is filed, nothing is sorted and they still are in the same mess as they were before.

Intellect is what we express in our microcosmos. This intellect has to be guided and it has to observe the limitations, the limiting conditions and remove the weaknesses. It has to observe the strengths and cultivate them to go to another higher dimension. It has to stop fantasizing and desiring

the abstract which is not going to be possible at all. You can't see a flying rabbit despite having this ambition all your life. You will die without seeing the flying rabbit. Those ambitions which are not tenable have to be deleted and wiped out from the memory. The computer has to be de-fragged and all the remaining files to be made whole. The need emphasizes that you be in the present, decide on your priorities and be involved in karma.

This is the pratyahara of buddhi and only when sattvic buddhi is attained, like it is stated by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, one gets the strength to deal with the Pandora's box of chitta, as that can be challenging, difficult and traumatic also. Therefore, the chitta component and the ahamkara component are not public knowledge yet they do find mention and references in the raja yoga texts.



SWAN MEDITATION FOR BUDDHI

Sit in a comfortable posture, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Gently close your eyes and lips. In this posture, mentally become aware of the whole body, observe the whole body internally. Become aware of the whole body from top of the head right down to the toes and acknowledge the condition, the state of your physical body. If you come across any tension, discomfort or tightness, then adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable. Once you have adjusted your body, once you have adjusted your posture, become still and bring your awareness to chidakasha.

In chidakasha, the space in front of the closed eyes, the space of chitta, observe the movement, the arrival and departure of colours, streaks of light, shapes, figures, movements. Whatever you can see happening in chidakasha, observe it. As you observe chidakasha, mentally see the emergence of a jyoti, a flame, in the centre of chidakasha, a flame that appears out of nowhere, it emerges from the dark shadows and takes a luminous form. Move that luminous form to the centre, the middle of the chidakasha space.

While maintaining the awareness of the jyoti in chidakasha, think of three qualities or strengths that you are able to see in yourself as constructive, creative, positive. Think of three qualities that you express in your day-to-day life, not in reserve but in use, all the time. Not what you want to have but what you have. Something that is an expression of the positive, harmonious, kind and compassionate you. Identify the three qualities. You must have thought before about that when you wrote your strengths. From the list that you have made in the past, pick up three with which you identify now. The three that you are able to use on a day-to-day basis, expressing the positive, the harmonious and the creative you. Now out of the three, pick up one which you consider to be the weakest of the three and identify that. Out of the three which you selected, pick one which you consider to



be weak and which can be strengthened and cultivated to greater potentials and identify that.

Now look at the next page of weaknesses, shortcomings and limitations. Identify three. Be objective about it and clear about it. Identify three which you consider to be your weaknesses. Identify three which become the medium to express the negative, something that you experience and live on a day-to-day basis. Now out of the three which you have identified, pick one which is the strongest. Pick one which is the strongest weakness and take the sankalpa to work with that for one month to overcome it.

This was in relation to yourself. Now, think of a person with whom you interact, who is your friend, who is your companion, who is your associate, who is your well-wisher. Think of a person. Look at the three strengths of that person from your perspective. Look at the three strengths of that other person from your perspective. What could those three strengths be in the other person? Once you have identified the three qualities or the three strengths in the other person, with your associate, with your friend, with your partner, with

your family, whoever it may be, identify one which is the strongest quality, the best quality.

Just as you thought of the qualities and strengths, think of three weaknesses of the other person. Think of the three shortcomings, limitations and weaknesses of the other person in whom you just saw the three good qualities, son, daughter, husband, wife, family, friend, associate. Out of the three, pick one – identify one, which you feel is hampering the process of improving the connection, the relationship, the understanding and happiness. Out of the three shortcomings, pick one, and now make a sankalpa to help that person overcome that weakness.

You are looking at yourself, your weakness and strength, you are looking at the person with whom you interact on a regular basis, and you are looking at their strength and weakness. You are taking the sankalpa to cultivate positivity and overcome the limitation which you have identified. You also have taken the sankalpa to help the other person overcome their limitation, their difficulty and their problem, and to bring strength, life, joy and fulfilment in your life and in the life of the other being.

Now stop this practice and externalize the mind. Externalize the awareness. Become aware of the external environment. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me all together. *Om Om Om. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.*

Hari Om Tat Sat



This concludes the buddhi, the analytical aspect. The new understanding which has come today is that samadhi goes up to the buddhi level, not beyond. If you look at the forms of samadhi, there is *savichara samadhi* and *nirvichara samadhi*, with thought and without thought. So where would samadhi with thought and samadhi without thought fall into? Manas. Then there is *nirbija samadhi* and *sabija samadhi*, the seedless samadhi and samadhi with seed. Where would that seed fall? The seed is a conditioned, *gunatmika* seed. That would be buddhi.

Patanjali described the stages of manas and buddhi in relation to samadhi. A person with balanced wisdom is samadhi, *sthitaprajna*. *Prajna* is knowing and *sthita* means fixed, unshakeable, unchangeable, the defined truth, which does not change, which does not alter. If that is the state of mind in samadhi, then that is the awakening of buddhi, the balance of buddhi. In that balance, all the rajas activity ceases and that harmony gives you the awareness of sattwa. If it tilts on the sattwa side, you go into the mastanapan level, the intoxicated level. If it does not slip to the sattwa side, you still remain in sthitaprajna, in the state of samadhi.

Although the concept of samadhi is up to buddhi in the microcosmos, Patanjali is talking of chitta vritti nirodhah. Even after that you have to clear it, as it gives you the strength to face, confront and regulate the flow of chitta vritti. If you try before, you will go to the mental hospital, for the negative will be highlighted. If you try after sthitaprajna, then you will attain illumination. Therefore, the real yoga is a path which few walk. The physical, aerobic yoga is the path which thousands would walk every day.

Prana Pratyahara

22 December 2017



We have been talking about the different practices of pratyahara. In the *Yoga Sutras*, Rishi Patanjali does not speak of the techniques or practices of pratyahara. He only states that it is an experience yet no techniques are provided by him. The techniques of pratyahara have been provided in pre-Patanjali raja yoga, and there are five different types of pratyahara. Out of the five – manas pratyahara, buddhi pratyahara, chitta pratyahara, ahankara pratyahara and prana pratyahara – the two first ones are attainable by a normal human being living in society, with a profession, a commitment, with duties, obligations and responsibilities. That person can easily go up to buddhi.

Just as you do your antar mouna for clearing the manas level, you practise the SWAN for clearing the buddhi level, at a personal level and also at a level of interrelationship. These are the two prominent areas of buddhi: I and the person with whom I am interacting. Chitta and ahankara are much more difficult to manage, for whatever comes to the surface of chitta is not the refined material but the raw material or the essence that you have kept in the form of an archetype, a memory. Memory is not the event; it is just a recognition of an event that took place and which is retained. It is like a picture that you take of this group. This group is spread over a big area of the lawn but in the picture, it is just one sheet of paper. Not even 3D. There is a lot in chitta, yet when you see those things, the memory brings in all the associated experiences which are unconscious in nature.

The six friends, *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya* – desire, aggression, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy, are raw responses, which trigger your chitta and which are connected to ahankara. When you see them, you are actually seeing a side of you which you would not generally accept of yourself, the dark side. It is the dark side and therefore, dark meaning not negative, not bad, but something which you have not known. The impression which comes up is unknown to you and you would not know how to respond to it in a balanced, harmonious, logical manner. And because you are unable to respond to that situation, you can go into a state of anxiety, depression, or any other type of mental state can be developed. Therefore, I am not going to talk about chitta and ahankara at present.

Pranic connection

Yogis realized it and brought in the fifth component, prana pratyahara, and placed it as the third component before the practice of chitta pratyahara and ahankara pratyahara. In the sequence of practices, prana pratyahara is number three for a specific reason. After all, what is prana? Prana is the life-force and without this life-force, even senses cannot

function. You can have the eyes but if there is no prana you will look at nothing. Only when prana flows through the eyes will your eyes connect with the object and recognize it to be an object. If prana is not there, how will you recognize the object? How will you recognize what you are looking at? How will you know that you are even looking? Without prana that vitality, that life is not there.

Senses are dependent on prana, mind is dependent on prana, buddhi is dependent on prana, chitta is dependent on prana, ahamkara is dependent on prana, for it is this prana which gives them life. It gives you the life to know that 'I am watching, I am observing, I am realizing, I am experiencing this'. If we take away prana from you now, what will happen? Your eyes will stare at nothing, your nose will not function, your taste will have no cognition, your contact will make no difference to you whether you are sitting on a bed of nails or on a cushion. There is no feeling, there is no experience of life.

Raja yogis placed prana pratyahara as the third component and said that if you are able to withdraw the pranas from the senses first, from the sense objects, if you are able to withdraw the pranas from your association and identification, then whatever is there will not have any influence on you. It is dead.

When I am looking at this flower, my eyes are just one sense organ. What is it that is making them appreciate the shape, the form, the colour and the smell of this flower? You may say logic, you may say buddhi, but what is that power which is making even your logic tick and function and in the absence of which even your logic will not function? That is prana. When I look at this flower, my connection to this flower is not with my mind but it is with my prana. This pranic connection will bring a thought in my mind, 'I like the colours, I like the flower, I like the shape, I like the smell'. It is this pranic connection which will make me perceive that this flower is wilted, it is brown, it has no smell, it is dry and dying. The mind is only analyzing that connection yet the connection is not intellectual; the connection is pranic.

We are connecting at the pranic level, not at the intellectual, physical, or sensorial levels. If I withdraw the pranic connection, you can be there but you are non-existent. This is one way to understand the pranic pratyahara. You withdraw the prana from wherever that particular association is. It is the pranic connection which will give birth to *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion. Your buddhi connection will enforce it, your manas connection will say, 'Yes, it is necessary and important for me, this raga and this dwesha, this repulsion and this attraction'. However, it is your pranic connection which will make you aware that, 'Yes, that is something that I would like to possess because I enjoy and like it, be it the beauty or the smell'. This pranic pratyahara has to happen at different levels. If you can disconnect or withdraw the prana from the senses, nothing goes in. You are in a state of total disconnection from every input. That is the sensory withdrawal.

What do you think 'withdrawing the senses means'? Pull the senses from their connection with the outside world. If I am looking at you, I should stop looking at you. How will that disconnection happen? If I am looking at you, how will I disconnect? By not looking at you. Or is there any other method? How do we disconnect? How do we disassociate with that with which we are connected?

Different situations demand different acts. If you go back to your country and never come back again, it is simple – you have forgotten. That is the disconnection. If you choose not to come, 'I am not going back to India and Munger again', you are choosing to forget. You are wilfully withdrawing your prana. Once that pranic sentiment has been withdrawn, you don't even think of the place. 'Oh, it's far away in my memory, I don't even think about it'. If the pranic connection is there, then you feel 'Oh, I am going to save for my next visit'. Why? Because I enjoy, I like, I am comfortable, I learn, I get to know, whatever the reason may be. That pranic connection is also responsible for your efforts in life. Therefore, it is not only the pranic connection from the senses which has to be withdrawn. The senses can remain connected: my husband is my husband,

my wife is my wife, my children are my children, my parents are my parents. At the same time, the bond or the bondage of that relationship does not weigh on me. I fulfil my dharma, but I am a free man. I am not bound by the associations that somebody is my father, somebody is my mother, somebody is my husband, somebody is my wife, somebody is my son, somebody is my daughter. I live my duty for everybody.

King Janaka

King Janaka was the father of Sita, wife of Rama. He was ruler of Mithilanchal, a place in Bihar. He was considered to be a videhamukta, who had no self-awareness. He was the most benevolent king of his time. One day out of inquisitiveness, a rishi goes to Mithalanchal, wondering, 'How can the emperor, the king of the land be a jivanmukta, totally detached from life. I have to discover how he can be so'. So he goes into the king's court and there he sees the splendour of the court, the courtiers, the beauty, the grace of the people in waiting. Everything is like heaven. He sees the king enter, he sees the king sit on the throne, he sees him dispense justice. He sees him interact with the public, and when his number comes, he walks up to the king and says, "O King! People call you videhamukta, one who is liberated in life, yet I see you surrounded by all the worldly pleasures. How can you be free from life and life experiences when you are totally surrounded by gold and silver, wine, good food, dancing girls and courtiers who are at your command and call. You don't even have to lift a finger. Even when you sneeze, somebody comes with a napkin to wipe your nose."

The king said, "In order to answer your question, look up!" The rishi looked up. Above the king's head were hanging one thousand spears, all held and hung by a single strand of camel's hair, which could break at any time, fall, injure and also kill the king. The king said, "This is where I sit every day knowing that I can go at any time. Therefore, I dispense with my duties immediately and leave nothing for later on." Although he was the king and doing his dharma, he had

withdrawn all associations, attachments and identifications. He was living in the present, for the present and not thinking of what would happen five minutes later, knowing full well that at any time the strand of camel's hair could break and a sharp spear would pierce him through and through.

That is withdrawing the prana from everything to which we are attached. An emotion gains strength due to your prana, if you withdraw the prana from the emotion, the emotion has no strength. Anger will not be anger if you withdraw the prana shakti. Fear will not be fear if you withdraw the prana shakti. A dog's bark won't be a bark if you withdraw the prana shakti. The moment you withdraw the prana shakti, both object and experience will become lifeless. If at this level you are able to withdraw the pranas, then if you enter into the chitta level or ahamkara level, all identifications can be withdrawn and you don't have to go through a crisis, a trauma, struggling and fighting with yourself. It is a simple solution of not feeding the weed but letting it dry so that it dies completely.

Don't feed the weeds

Don't water the weed, just let it dry. Let it wilt completely, don't give your prana shakti. This is what everybody has said but nobody seems to listen. Christ said the same thing. Krishna said the same thing. Swami Sivananda said the same, so did Swami Satyananda. Don't feed the negative weeds in your life. Don't feed the non-cooperative weed in your life, don't feed the arrogant weed in your life. Let them all wither and die, remove the prana from them. At least once in your lifetime you have to make the effort to clean your garden from rocks and weeds and to plant good flowers. Or do you want to continue living in the same plot of land as God has given to you without any improvement at all? I see people making choices to live without improvement. Such people are not yogis.

Yogis are those people who try to make improvement and bhogis are the people who try to change the improved

and make it a convenience to suit themselves, turn it into a convenience to suit themselves. Yogis abide by the systems, disciplines and rules for they know to construct it takes many months and years, to destroy it takes one second.

It is the natural tendency in people to destroy what has taken ages to construct. Systems are destroyed because of a whim of one person, methods are changed because one is unable to follow a proper guideline. This indicates the weakness of every individual at chitta and ahamkara level. Dealing with that is next to impossible. You remove that which powers the emotion, you remove that which powers a sentiment, you remove that which powers negativity. Once this pranic pratyahara is attained, then chitta pratyahara and ahamkara pratyahara are child's play. The connection, the identification, the recognition becomes objective and does not remain subjective. Then you are able to witness your chitta and ahamkara just as you are able to witness your manas and buddhi.

Among the practices which have been defined for pranic pratyahara, the first practice is to withdraw the prana from different parts of the body. Sixteen marma points have been identified. Sixteen marma points have been identified from where the prana has to be actually removed to attain pranic pratyahara. That is the first level, removal of prana shakti, removal of vitality, removal of the experience or life from the identified sixteen marma points.

Then next levels are personal, then interpersonal. What I see in myself, where my mind is getting pulled towards, can I remove the pranic element from that pull, that attraction? Yes, it is possible. My worst enemy suddenly becomes a normal person. I don't have to interact with that person, but the feeling which I had in my heart, bubbling and boiling is not there anymore. I can go and hug that enemy with a clear heart and mind. He may not appreciate or she may not appreciate it, but I can! I have been able to achieve it. In this manner, when you are able to withdraw the prana, the object or the person ceases to have any hold or influence over you.

PRANA PRATYAHARA PRACTICE

Close your eyes. Sit in a comfortable posture. Both hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, or in front, wherever comfortable. Keep the spine upright and straight. Gently close your eyes and lips. Become aware of the whole body. Become aware and observe the whole body internally. If there is any tension or tightness, observe it. Make yourself comfortable and quiet. Just become aware of space, silence and stillness in you. Be aware of the space and the silence. Just see the whole body internally.

Take your awareness to the big toes, internally. In the region of the big toes, in your big toes, inside the big toes, visualize a vortex of light. Inhale and bring that vortex of light up from the big toes to the eyebrow centre. Exhale, take the awareness back down. Inhale, again bring the vortex of light from the toes to the eyebrow centre. Then take your awareness down. Then again bring the light from the toes to the eyebrow centre.

Then take your awareness to the ankles. Visualize wheels of light, a vortex of light in your ankles. Breathe in and withdraw those lights from the ankles to the eyebrow centre. Breathe out, take your awareness down. Breathe in, bring the lights up to the eyebrow centre. Breathe out, take the awareness down. Breathe in, bring the light up.

Breathe out, take your awareness to mid-shank. Visualize wheels of light. Breathe in and withdraw to the eyebrow centre. Breathe out and take your awareness to mid-shank. Breathe in and withdraw. Breathe out and go down. Breathe in, withdraw.

Breathe out and go to root of the calf. Visualize wheels of light. Breathe in, withdraw. Breathe out. Breathe in, withdraw. Breathe out. Breathe in, withdraw. Breathe out.

Bring your awareness to the knees. Visualize a vortex of light. Breathe in, withdraw. Breathe out, awareness down. Breathe in, withdraw. Breathe out. Breathe in.

Breathe out and go to mid-thighs. Visualize a vortex of light, a wheel of light, a circle of light. Inhale, withdraw to the

eyebrow centre. Exhale, go down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale, go down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, go to the perineum, the root of the anus. Feel both legs to be totally lifeless, devoid of prana. Inhale and withdraw the prana from the perineum. Exhale. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, come to the middle of abdomen. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, come to the navel. Visualize the vortex of light, prana. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, come to the heart. Visualize the circle of light. Inhale withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale withdraw.

Exhale, come to the hollow between the collar bones. Visualize a circle of light. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, go to the root of the tongue. Not the tip, but the root of the tongue, in the throat region. Visualize a circle of light. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale, come to the root of the nose, where the sinus glands are. Visualize a circle of light. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale down. Inhale, withdraw.

Come to the eyes while you exhale. Both eyes, circles of light. Inhale and withdraw the light to ajna chakra. Exhale, come out. Inhale to ajna. Exhale out. Inhale, withdraw.

Exhale come to the middle of the eyebrows, the eyebrow centre. Inhale and withdraw to ajna. Exhale come forward to eyebrow centre. Inhale ajna. Exhale out to the eyebrow centre. Inhale to ajna.

Exhale, the full frontal forehead. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale, the full frontal forehead. Inhale, withdraw to ajna. Exhale, frontal forehead. Inhale, withdraw to ajna.

Exhale, go to the crown of the head. Inhale, withdraw from the crown of the head, sahasrara to ajna. Exhale go

back to the crown of the head. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale go back to the crown of the head. Inhale, withdraw. Exhale, crown of the head.

Now, we shall chant the mantra *Om* seven times. With each chant of the mantra *Om* experience a white light spreading from ajna chakra, pervading the entire body, in form of the vibrations of the mantra – balancing and harmonizing, all the different pranas that energize our senses and our body, our mind and our life. With each *Om* chanting feel a shower of white light from ajna chakra into each and every part of the body.

Breathe in. *Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, Om.*

Merge yourself in the experience of light, silence, space and stability.

Repeat the mantras after me. *Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. Hari Om.*

Hari Om Tat Sat

We conclude our theory and practice of the basic technique of pranic pratyahara. It is something that you have to sensitize yourself to perceive, as prana is not something that you can just feel, visualize or imagine by closing the eyes; it is something subtle, so there has to be sensitization towards prana shakti, the flow of prana. Only when that sensitization happens can you actually direct that pranic flow. Whether you withdraw it, whether you immerse in it, without sensitization of the pranic energy, this practice will not be experienced in the proper manner by you.

Sensitizing does not mean that every moment you become aware ‘I am breathing in prana. I am breathing out prana. I’m breathing in prana. I’m breathing out prana’. That is obsessive behaviour. No. Sensitization does not mean obsessive behaviour. Sensitization means whenever you are practising your pranayama feel the prana, whenever you are practising pranic pratyahara feel the prana. At that moment immerse your mind to experience prana. And, one day, you will feel the whoosh of prana.

Understanding and Experience

23 December 2017



Over the last few days we have been looking into the principle of pratyahara as it has been stated in pre-Patanjali and post-Patanjali raja yoga. The main practice of raja yoga is pratyahara. Just as the main practice of hatha yoga is asana. Just as the main practice of bhakti yoga is mantra for without mantra you cannot do bhakti yoga. In the same way, the main practice of raja yoga is pratyahara. It is supported by yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, yet they are supports. The main subject has been pratyahara.

An indication of this is seen in Patanjali's statement *chitta vritti nirodhaha*. Wherever there is *nirodhaha*, diversion, there is pratyahara. You are diverting the flow of the sense perceptions and the senses from one direction towards another direction, from one direction to another direction. That change of flow is the concept of pratyahara.

This pratyahara in today's society is turning out to be one of the most important, necessary and required practices, as we find ourselves unable to deal with the expressions of the mind. You have had your share of dealing with the expectations of the mind. You have to deal with your share of the mental distractions, disturbances and distresses. You don't have to worry about what the future generation is going to feel or face. You will be long gone before they feel or face any situation which will shape their life. What is shaping your life? You have to realize that. What is shaping your life is the behaviour and attitude, awareness and involvement. Behaviour, attitude, awareness and involvement are faculties, expressions and creativities of the mind. The better behaviour and attitude you have, the more creativity you have, the more successful you will be, the more advances you will make in all fields whether it be material, external, or spiritual, internal.

You look at mind in a limited form, when mind is not that limited. If we use the word *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, *ahamkara* to define a certain function of the mind, they are only limited functions. You may not have the maturity to understand *chitta* or *ahamkara*, so don't question it. Deal with that which you understand, which is *manas* and *buddhi*. Maturity of understanding will come when you apply the things which you have learnt in relation to *manas* and *buddhi* rather than jumping up and down to see what is coming ahead.

The word pratyahara has two different meanings. The first meaning is connected to the word *pratyaya*, which means impressions. There are many ways through which the mind receives its impressions. Out of the many, ten are sensorial. The five *karmendriyas* and the five *jnanendriyas*, organs of action and organs of cognition. Then there are the subtle

four, the mahat – manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara, which also feed the mind. Then there are qualities which colour the mind – tamas, rajas and sattwa. The colouring gives birth to a particular type of definite behaviour, attitude, action. Instead of going into the mechanics, focus on those things that you can apply in your life. Intellectual gymnastics are not necessary; practical experience is very necessary.

The whole purpose of *chitta vritti nirodhaha* is to deal with pratyayas in a practical, applicable, manageable manner. That is the reason why Patanjali used the word *nirodhaha* – you can observe and you can divert these pratyayas or impressions from limiting your expressions and you can convert your expressions into creative expressions. The focus of Patanjali also has been in the application of the practice and not expansion of theory. The western mind thinks of expanding the theory, not in applying the practice. You should be focusing on applying the practice, to walk at least that first step which has been defined rather than asking how do I jump to the third one and the fourth one. This is a pratyaya behaviour, this is a vritti behaviour: ‘This is too simple for me; I can do something different and much more advanced’. Remember, you may want to become a nuclear scientist, but your education begins with learning ‘A and B and C and D’, not by reading the book on nuclear physics. In the absence of knowing ‘A and B and C and D’ you will never be able to progress.

You think by jumping up and down on your buttocks your kundalini will be awakened? Tadan kriya. Do you think that by holding your nose your pranas will be awakened? Do you think that by moving your toes absolute health can be regained? Do you think that by practising kunjla or shankaprakshalana absolute purity can be obtained? If you think that then please rectify your thoughts. At least people who are involved in teaching and experiencing this yoga should not think in that manner. It has been made amply clear that the human personality is an integrated and holistic personality.

Pratyayas

Today, globally, Bihar School of Yoga is the only institute, and the system created by Swami Satyananda is the only system which caters to the holistic development of human personality. You have mantra, you have asana, you have pranayama, you have relaxation, you have concentration, you have shatkarmas, you have kundalini kriyas, you have kriya yoga kriyas. No other yoga institute is able to provide this holistic approach.

When you can't even keep your eyes closed in meditation, you want to know about chitta? When you can't stop dozing off in meditation and frequently open your eyes to look around, you want to talk about chitta? Only a hypocritical teacher will teach an undeserving student the deserving teaching. The expectation of a student is that they behave, practise and come to realize out of their own experience, and take up the challenge and responsibility for their growth. If people can do that, they will have overcome a major pratyaya of intelligence, intellect. That is a major pratyaya that has to be overcome. Otherwise that pratyaya will always keep on questioning – what then? What next? You haven't started on the first one and you are asking what next, what next, what next. That is a pratyaya.

Questioning is pratyaya. I am not saying don't question. Question. But the right question has to be there. Not questioning for the sake of a discussion or argument, for that becomes a pratyaya. That pratyaya then inhibits your receptivity, and you become self-opinionated. You have your opinion about everything, and that opinion may not be compatible to the situation, environment, people, or location. That pratyaya will force you to have your views and your opinions.

These impressions are received through many agencies: through the senses, through the mind, through other subtle receptors that we have in our life, such as ahamkara. Ego is also a receptor. Ego can create pratyayas, can create moods, can alter and shape behaviour. In raja yoga when we are

observing the different layers of our impressions, which are psychological and subtle in nature, then we see different levels of pratyayas, the surface and the lower ones too.

The deepest ones, the deepest pratyayas are the karmas. The deepest pratyayas are the karmas. Above them are the samskaras. Above them are the unconscious and the subconscious pratyayas, which we retain from this life in form of memory, in form of *smriti*. Smriti has been identified as a chitta vritti. Memory has been identified as a behaviour of chitta. You also have the short-term and long-term impressions. Short-term are those which have not much relevance, and long-term are those which have a lot of relevance.

Identification with these pratyayas invariably leads to experiencing the different pleasures and pains. Each memory will bring up a different pleasure and different pain. Each memory will be a story in itself.

Dreams and illness

Dream is not clearing of pratyaya; dream is clearing of overloaded information. When you overload your truck with material, it becomes too heavy then you have to unload some of the material from the truck. That is dream. When you have to unload the overloaded brain and mind then the unloading is in form of a dream. It is not a chitta function, it is not a chitta vritti; it is a state of unloading and, therefore, it is defined in yoga as *swapna* state, the dreaming state. Jagrat, swapna, shushupti and turiya. So dream is a state; it is not a vritti. It is a state in which the overflow of mind is observed. When the tank overflows, where do you observe the overflow? The water pouring through a pipe which is the overflow pipe. When the mind becomes full and nothing more goes in, then what happens? The overflow of mind is seen in form of dream when you sleep. Therefore, some dreams can be highly descriptive of some situations and events. Some dreams can be imaginative and fantasy. Some dreams can be indicative of what is going to happen. Some dreams are just memories

that you are witnessing again and again because you happen to like it. Whether you see a good dream or a bad dream, it is a state of mind which you are going through at one particular moment. The overflow of that condition is seen in form of a dream. So dream is not a pratyaya. A pratyaya is different.

Many years ago, a medical student had come. He was suffering from asthma. He came here to see if yoga could help the asthmatic condition in any manner or not. When he came here he met with Sri Swamiji and told him, "From childhood I have my asthma, and I became a doctor to see if I could help myself treat my asthma. Rather than go knocking from door to door of specialists, I have studied medicine. I have taken every kind of asthmatic medicine available until now, but I haven't had any relief. Can yoga help me?" Now Sri Swamiji was a person of a different nature and calibre, he could see what was wrong. So he told this person to practise one meditation and gave him instructions. The person started to practise that particular form of meditation. Whenever he used to have his attack he used to take his bronchodilators and medicine. He used to look after himself, but continued with the meditation.

After about one month of meditating, one night while he was meditating he had a dream or a vision. He was not sleeping. In that vision he saw himself as a little child, four-, five-year-old. The parents had gone to work. The babysitter was at the house and was feeding him his meal. As a child he was moving the head from side to side, shaking, "No, I don't want to eat this. It's not nice. No, I don't want it," and pushing the spoon away. This babysitter threatened the child, "If you don't eat, I'm going to complain to your parents and they will punish you for not eating." He remembered her force-feeding him. Only that much.

When he came out of his meditation he discovered that his breathing was much more easy and over a period of a few days he discovered that he had no asthma anymore. That was the pratyaya. Once the pratyaya was released, once the pratyaya was observed, acknowledged, the cause of

suppression, rejection and dejection was noticed, the disease went away. The person was Doctor Swami Shankardevananda, who wrote the book *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes*. Now he is a practising healer and yoga teacher. I told you this story for one reason only. If the pratyaya can be exploded and cleared, then anything that governs or controls our life, our body, our mind, our emotions due to that pratyaya, is also free from the influence.

If there is an illness or disease and a pratyaya is removed, disease will not be there anymore. What is the pratyaya of disease? Fear. The pratyaya of disease is not disease; the pratyaya of disease is fear. Disease-Induced Fear Syndrome, D.I.F.S., that becomes the pratyaya, ‘I have cancer. I’m going to die’. Fear sets in and that becomes the pratyaya. That pratyaya is what kills you, not the disease, the impression which eats you up from inside. When you dislike somebody it is the pratyaya which kills you. Not your hate for somebody, but what you feel inside for that person, it burns your heart out. It blackens your luminosity. You feel happy because your luminosity is blackened. I don’t know why people become happy when they are able to bug other people. When you bug somebody you feel satisfied – ‘I’ve been able to bug this person today’. People become happy in their darkness. People are not happy in their lightness.

These pratyayas can work at many levels and in many ways; pratyayas are also picked up. I used to say in my satsangs that we all behave like cats and dogs, always barking, always scratching, always defensive and always on the offensive. That is the human nature. We all behave like cats and dogs and we should improve that. One day I asked someone to speak, and his opening statement was, “Swamiji calls us cats and dogs.” Throughout the lecture it was about cats and dogs, not about improvement of our nature. That is the receptivity of a human being who does not see the positive but hears that the ego is being hurt.

This example shows one thing which we pick up and we hold on to that word which becomes our pratyaya. One

thing we pick up and that word becomes our pratyaya. It goes on and on in the head. It goes on and on in the head, it goes on and on in the head. Those impressions have to be removed. That is the main subject of pratyahara in raja yoga without which dharana is not attainable and without which meditation is a distant reality. That is one definition of pratyahara in relation to pratyaya.

Reverse feeding

The other definition is *prati-ahara*. Pratyayas are those impressions that you are receiving but pratyahara is reverse feeding. Pratyaya is you feeding yourself from the outer dimension. Just as you eat food, it is something external but you are taking it in. Pratyaya is something external which is coming in. Prati-ahara is reversing that: don't allow anything to come in and remove all that which is in. This prati-ahara concept of reversing everything, pushing out everything, is done through the cultivation of the positive awareness, which Swami Sivananda called *pratipaksha bhavana*. Change the limiting, change the restrictive, change the negative, change the bad with something positive, constructive, creative and good. Replace it. Pratipaksha bhavana is also not so easy for people to follow. In order to follow pratipaksha bhavana you need to become a gardener. If you see a weed, you have to remove it. You can't say let the weed grow and then once it is grown I will remove it. Once you see a weed, once the gardener sees a weed in the wrong place in the garden the first work is to remove it, not to protect it.

That is how it has to be done in life too. When anything negative is observed in the garden of your life, the first attempt has to be to remove it, not to get more good things around it, but to remove the negative which is there. Only after removing that which is there taking root in your life you plant the positive seed. That is the concept of prati-ahara, reverse feeding with pratipaksha bhavana, with positive and constructive clarity. *Bhavana* here means clarity, awareness, sentiment, with clear feeling, with clear idea, with clear thought.

In the system of pratyahara two definite ways have been defined. One is the meditative way like we have followed over the last few days: manas pratyahara, buddhi pratyahara, prana pratyahara, step by step up. The other is pratipaksha bhavana, just replace, keep on replacing, keep on replacing until nothing restrictive remains, everything has been replaced. In that new state of positivity when pratyayas are finished pratyahara is complete and *dharana*, total focus, one-pointed absorption begins. In the state of dissipation that we find in our life, in our mind, in our society, pratyahara seems to be the system which will bring relief to the agitated nerves and the agitated minds. Therefore, focus more on perfecting and deepening your experience of pratyahara, not as a process of meditation but as a process of regaining the harmony in your life. That will be another important step in your journey.

Sadhana

Certain practices of asana and pranayama are there mainly for your benefit, not as part of raja yoga. Your body needs the hatha yoga asanas and pranayamas. Your body needs to move and become dynamic. The circulation has to happen, so asanas are done. However, the asanas which we practise are not part of raja yoga. In fact, raja yoga asanas very few people can do. Try sitting for half an hour in padmasana. You will know how difficult it is. When the basic practice of lotus pose, *padmasana*, can't be practised for half an hour by any aspirants, it is an indication that we are focusing more on the practice of hatha yoga. Our focus is more on the dynamic practices of hatha yoga and the raja yoga practices of asanas are practically non-existent for they are only meditative. Even the simple meditative asanas few people can do. Very few people can practise siddha yoni asana, very few people can sit in siddhasana, very few people can sit in padmasana which are the asanas of raja yoga.

In your practice you are free to select a set of asanas according to the need of your body for a certain period, one month, fifteen days, twenty days. Stick to one set of asana and go deep, using your movement, your breath, your visual-

ization, chakra awareness, mantra awareness, go deep into the practice. While you are practising an asana, even if it is a dynamic one like surya namaskara, in every pose experience the withdrawal, the stability and the silence. In the practice of asana try to practise disconnection from the senses and just be absorbed in the experience of the body. That will be a good start to experience pratyahara in dynamic movement.

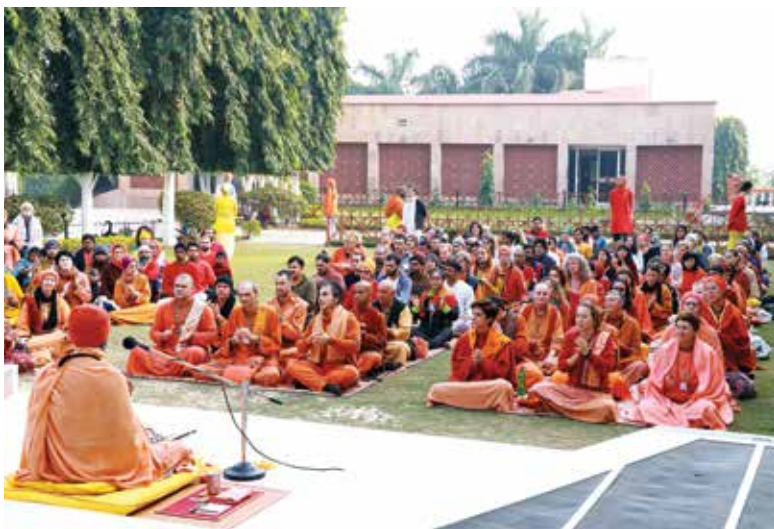
In raja yoga pranayama, you have to focus more on retention, not on inhalation or exhalation but on retention. Inhalation and exhalation are used to increase the capacity of retention. The focus is on increasing the length of retention. In your pranayama practice try to increase two seconds more of kumbhaka, every week, two seconds. You will discover that your retention develops effortlessly rather than forcing yourself, turning red, black and blue and gasping for breath. Why don't you just be gentle and increase two seconds every week? In one year how many seconds will you be able to hold?

In your relaxation practices, enjoy your yoga nidra, yet this time make a sankalpa not to sleep in yoga nidra. That should be the first sankalpa rather than any other sankalpa. What should be the first sankalpa of yoga nidra? 'I shall not sleep in yoga nidra'. That correction of behaviour has to happen before you think of how to stop smoking, drinking and changing other habits. 'I will not sleep in yoga nidra', let that be the first sankalpa until you are able to go through the whole yoga nidra for one week without sleeping. Then you can change it.

The first day was a short class of antar mouna. The second day was full antar mouna. Then we did the SWAN meditation and prana pratyahara, whatever you can remember as your personal practice you do it. Do not start teaching once you go back. It is my humble request to all of you. If you come here then be sincere, serious and committed to yourself and to the path you have chosen to walk.

There is a definite sequence and plan which has to evolve and develop. I will keep on walking my own path and yoga will keep on walking its own path, as that is the mandate of Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth.

IMPRESSIONS OF PARTICIPANTS



Steady wisdom from Swamiji,
Laughter, jokes,
Support and upliftment,
The invitation and ease
To withdraw prana from negativity;
So much given and
So much gratefully received.
I feel blessed, inspired and
Encouraged to take this wisdom with me
And use it in my life.

—Sannyasi Yogadhara, Ireland

Arriving at the ashram from the world where everything is complicated, superficial and shallow, teachings of Swamiji came like a balm from ancient times with its simplicity and depth. Exactly that is the motto of Bihar Yoga: simplicity of practices and depth of experience.

In this modern and fast age, to be able to sit at the feet of a sadhu, on the grass, under the sky and get life-changing instructions, brought an image of Dakshinamurti giving his silent teachings to a few. I do feel part of a privileged few from over the globe, who were lucky enough having good karmas to be a part of this magical training.

Simple practices which we all know gave us the right perspective and understanding of their actual depth whether it be nadi shodhana, antar mouna or tadasana. That approach and attitude in practising brought us to a deeper space within, close to the self. In the whole training the awareness of prana was highlighted. To pay attention, to become aware, to know your own prana, life-force, to feel it, to see it, to be able to manage it, to place it, to remove it at your own will is to be closer to yourself. It felt so good.

The most profound teachings and the sankalpa I will take with me and cherish for life is: the possibility of willingly withdrawing one's prana from your negative side. We all heard so many times 'do not feed the black wolf if you want the white one to win', but when the black wolf is charging at you, how to disconnect then? There must be prior training and that is what we got – the HOW. If we can keep this vidya within for life, then we actually have the (magic) formula for transforming ourselves completely.

So, you see, it was far from an ordinary yoga course or even training. It was receiving right vidya-prasad, from the times immemorial.

—Swami Omgyanam, Serbia

A smooth and seamless flow from Raja Yoga Yatra 1. It has been a year of discovering the level of commitments that Swamiji has been speaking of. If we wish to travel the path of yoga, it requires the letting go of my expectations, ideas, ambitions of what yoga should do for me and the wasted effort to push in that direction. It does not work.

I will be carrying away and working with the attitude Swamiji highlighted in the practices: positivity towards ourselves, finding the positive approach and solutions to seeds for the flowers in the future and being patient in their blossoming. It has been an amazing week, so much given to us and with joy and patience. *OM*

—*Swami Yogajyoti, Ireland*

I have been feeling that Swamiji is now doing the same thing, following Sri Swamiji in fulfilling his sankalpa. Just as Sri Swamiji used the yajnas as the medium to share his wealth with everyone, Swamiji is now using the Yoga Vidya training to share his spiritual wealth with us, to uplift, to purify, to develop understanding.

I did the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training in October 2016. Swamiji had begun that course by declaring October to be a happy month so we took manahprasad as a yama and it was a happy time, however this past week of Raja Yoga Yatra 2 was a week when happiness became embedded. It wasn't something to work at or achieve but became a natural expression.

In Raja Yoga Yatra 2 Swamiji led us daily into the workings of the mind and he gave us tools and techniques to develop awareness of and to manage the different components of the mind. We worked with manas and buddhi this year and Swamiji explained in detail how the different gunas affect the expressions of the mind. The main theme was pratyahara and the five types of pratyaharas. Swamiji taught a new practice called prana pratyahara which we loved. From the bottom of my heart I thank God and Guru for the patience, the teachings and the love which we have got, are getting and hopefully will continue to receive. *Jaya Guru!*

—*Swami Chetanshakti, Ireland*

After the Raja Yoga Yatra 1 training last year I took the advice from Swamiji to be happy and sustain happiness in life seriously. Observing myself I realized I needed to bring back the smile on my face. All through the year I had the feeling I was on the right path and I was smiling more often, I knew that smiling is the outcome of an inner state of joy and contentment, which cannot be faked. But still I wasn't really there yet.

During the second day of the Raja Yoga Yatra 2 training, I suddenly felt being 'put together' complete and balanced as one unit. One unit of my head, heart and body. Very naturally, without any strain I was smiling from the feeling of being connected and comfortable with my body, mind and emotions. My face just mirrored the inner state and smiled. Having experienced that state I now have the techniques and tools which were given to us by Swamiji to sustain it in daily life. Thank you Swamiji for showing me the way to my smile and I promise to keep and nurture it until I return.

—*Sannyasi Antarshuddhi, Austria*

The 2017 Raja Yoga Yatra 2 has been for me a life-changing experience. It has taken me to new depths of experience and understanding of yoga, of myself and my life. Thank you Swamiji for taking us on this journey.

—*Swami Maitreyi, Colombia/Sweden*

From steadiness and stillness, we were taken carefully to the initial steps of pratyahara. Familiar faces make the disciplined environment an enhanced place for learning and patience. The real raja yoga is in how we can bring positivity to all aspects of our lives.

Just like peeling back the layers of an onion. Each layer has a different quality, some flawed, some perfect. How we choose to use these layers or discard them is by free will. I feel so blessed having been here. To all at BSY, you are paving

the new wave with Swami Niranjanananda. *Go raibh mile maith agaibh go leir* (Thank you one and all a thousand times).

—Brighid Liston, Ireland

We were fortunate to have been blessed with this opportunity of learning directly from Swamiji himself.

In fact, during the introductory session itself we got the reminder from Swamiji to remain in a state of happiness and exude positivity at all times and we continue ourselves to practise this in our lives. We also learnt the importance of doing asana from the perspective of raja yoga.

I sincerely make a sankalpa to do these practices especially identifying and developing the weakest of the strength and also my counterpart and eradicate the strongest of the weakness as well. Staying in the ashram helps us to know the value of karma yoga, develop self-discipline, time management, doing our sadhanas, acceptance and shraddha. I would like to take this opportunity to say a big *Hari Om* and offer my humble pranam to Swamiji.

—Sannyasi Yoga Sharan, Chennai

My father was fond of saying to us as children “Just keep putting one foot in front of the other” and the message I get from Swamiji is the same; keep practising and applying what you have learnt until the understanding and transformation come about naturally and when you are ready come back to the next instalment.

Like a good parent, Swamiji wants the very best for us; we can make him and ourselves very happy by applying ourselves appropriately and transforming into our best selves. Ever grateful.

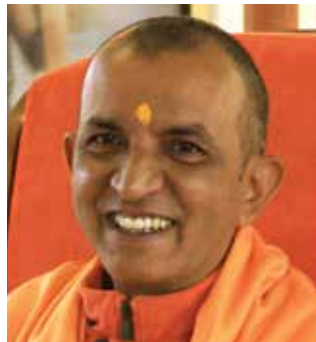
—Sannyasi Yogasutra, Ireland

Swamiji has given tools for betterment and improvement, to balance the negative and cultivate the positive. I will especially apply the technique of a gardener: pull out the weeds and then plant beautiful flowers. I will go back and integrate what I have understood of the teachings, the vidya, in my day-to-day life. Thank you very much.

—*Sannyasi Jayatma, Sweden*



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.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

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.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda announced: “The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.”

In writing the second chapter, a complete change in the training programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth has come about since 2016. The new programs are setting a standard of understanding the practices and principles of yoga from the perspective of the original intentions of yoga.

Among these programs was Raja Yoga Yatra 2: Pratyahara Intensive during which the importance and purpose of pratyahara was described and the three practices of manas, buddhi and prana pratyahara were introduced.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program.



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