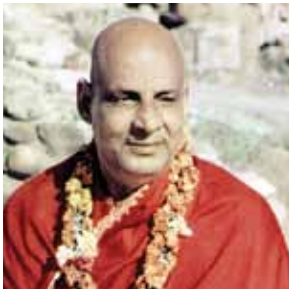
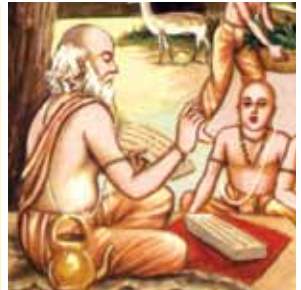


Yoga Chakra 3

The Seven Foundations of Jnana Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Chakra 3

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Yoga Chakra 3

The Seven Foundations of Jnana Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
during the Yoga Chakra Series held at Ganga Darshan
Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, from 1st to 7th November 2015.*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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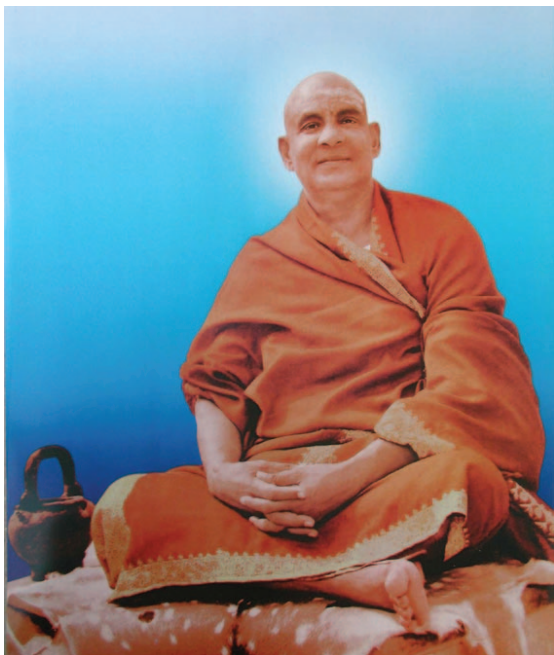
Printed by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2016

ISBN: 978-93-84753-56-6

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Aegean Offset Printers, Greater Noida



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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Introduction: Live the Vidya

1 November 2015

During the World Yoga Convention, it was announced that the first chapter of yoga propagation is over and the second chapter of understanding yoga has to begin. Thus over 2014 and 2015, since the World Yoga Convention, I have been involved in two areas: my own sadhana and developing the yogic learning, as these were the two mandates given to me by my guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. He said to me: “Continue to work for yoga away from the trappings of the Bihar School of Yoga, and continue to explore and live sannyasa.” These two instructions have been my inspiration and provided the direction for the future.

In the area of yoga, a lot of thinking has been done to understand how to deepen the yogic experience. In that process, a few new teaching programs have been introduced in 2015. The purpose of all these programs is to connect with *yoga vidya*, the essence of the yogic knowledge, and the Yoga Chakra Series is part of that effort.

Connection to vidya

When Sri Swamiji taught us yoga, it was not to make us into yoga teachers, but to introduce us to the subject of yoga. He transmitted the knowledge of yoga, the vidya of yoga. He was an imparter of vidya; that was what he taught and that was the basis of his interaction with everyone. He imparted vidya wherever he went. He would go on a tour and say,

“I am teaching you this much now, practise this, when I return the next time I will teach you beyond.” He never told anybody, “Practise and teach.” The first generation of his disciples followed that same principle. We imparted that same training wherever we went, and we were successful in doing that as we were connected to the vidya.

However, after the first generation the essential connection to vidya was lost and propagation itself became the direction. The next generation of teachers came in, and they in turn began training others. Eventually a whole sea of yoga teachers emerged who had no direct contact with the source and no connection with the vidya. After all, how can the tenth or fifteenth generation of teachers represent the original teachings? Yet all these people believed they had the authority to teach yoga, and this trend has continued. Now, in order to connect with and preserve the *parampara*, the tradition, in the second chapter of yoga our focus has to be to once again connect with the vidya, to water the roots.

The phase of propagation

What was the first phase of propagation? What is called ‘integral yoga’ or Bihar Yoga, the yoga of head, heart and hands, in the first fifty years has remained as an idea only. What was practised and taught by teachers across the globe were some limited practices of hatha yoga and raja yoga. A limited understanding of hatha yoga, the dynamic part consisting of physical asana and movements, captured the imagination of yoga teachers. Similarly, a limited aspect of raja yoga, only certain aspects of pratyahara and dharana such as yoga nidra, antar mouna, ajapa japa, tattwa shuddhi, captured the imagination of people.

That is the extent of what they teach and they call themselves yoga teachers, as that is inscribed on the certificate they have received from a sixth or tenth generation teacher. This is the situation across the globe today. People have introduced the physical aspects plus some relaxation and stress-buster techniques and they call it yoga. In this way,

the scope of Satyananda Yoga was gradually reduced from its intention of integrating the faculties of head, heart and hands.

The propagation phase of yoga claimed that ‘yoga is good for this and good for that’, but the application of yoga was, and is, limited to a few physical and mental practices. With these limited practices people want to achieve the highest spiritual experience? That is not possible. It is like eating a few sugar-coated pills and expecting your stomach to be filled.

People speak of a high philosophy of yoga, they say that yoga has the ability to unite the individual with the cosmos, and that is their aspiration in life. They want to explore and experience prana, chakra, kundalini, yet their practice is limited to a few aspects of asana and meditation done once or twice a week. They do not have any knowledge of the principles and foundations of yoga, they have not studied any original writings of yoga, and they expect to gain the experience that yogis have devoted their life to? With this sporadic practice, participation and involvement? And when they are unable to do so, they try to debunk the whole yogic science saying, “That it is not possible as I did not experience it.”

The drive to change

Where is the drive or determination to experience a change in yourself? If that drive and determination was there, you would connect with the spirit of yoga, with the aspirations of yoga that help to bring out the goodness in life. As Sri Swamiji says, “The genius can be applied constructively or destructively.” If you apply it destructively you are missing the point; if you apply it constructively you are connecting with the beauty of life.

People want to experience beauty, yet they negate beauty. They negate that which is beautiful in life. It is easier to fall prey to negativity than to imbibe the positive. It is easier to adopt a negative quality than to cherish and hold on to a

positive quality. Ask if you actually want beauty, or if it is only a desire in your mind which is never going to be fulfilled. If you cannot allow the beauty in your life to express itself, then what are you searching for in spirituality, or in your life?

The sages have said that the aspiration and the aim of life is the discovery of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. The aim of life is not samadhi, moksha or nirvana; the aim of life is to discover *sundaram*, the beauty in life. To discover the beauty in life you have to integrate yourself constructively and positively with life.

Yoga is not isolationism. Rather, yoga is integration, coming together. This coming together has to happen now, as we move from the basic practice of yoga to yoga sadhana. That is the second chapter of yoga: how one can deepen the yogic experience and understanding, and increase one's appreciation to something inner and beautiful.

Integrating with life

You are not an isolated feature in this world, you are part of a greater society, and as part of the greater society what are the codes of conduct required? There are two model codes of conduct for every human being when interacting with other people: tolerance and respect. You can forget about spiritual realization, meditation and the search for goodness in the absence of respect and tolerance. If you can tolerate and if you can respect, it indicates a level of your mind – a state, condition, mood, nature, character and trait of your mind. Tolerance and respect are lacking now in social as well as personal behaviour. Intolerance and disrespect both are on the rise. If you look all around, intolerance, non-acceptance of people, non-acceptance of knowledge and wisdom is on the rise. The experiences of the elders are not listened to.

I will tell you an incident about a family that lived in a farm. The children grew up with animals, being out in the open, getting dirty, picking up lizards and worms and playing with them. When they were older, they migrated to other countries to make their living. One of them migrated

to Europe, began to live in a large city, got married and recently had a child. This child is not looked after and cared for by the mother but by an App called Mum's App. The child sleeps in a climate-controlled crib, is not allowed to play on the floor, and is even fed according to the instructions on the App. The grandmother advised the family, "Let baby play on the floor, hold earth in her hand", but they would not listen saying, "There are too many bacteria and viruses which she can ingest." So the wisdom of the mother who raised five children on a farm is not being listened to by the sons and daughters who live in a plastic society.

Is this carry-forward of wisdom? No. It is death of knowledge, death of understanding and experience. The new generation is unable to carry forward the wisdom and understanding of their elders as they are too distracted.

Where wisdom is carried forward it becomes a custom. Where wisdom is carried forward and lived it becomes a tradition. Today, even the family traditions don't survive in the face of individual whims. There is disrespect everywhere, not only for other people but also for ideals and principles, systems and disciplines. That is the tendency of the mind. You complain about unrighteous conditions, but are you righteous in your own life, behaviour and action? Do you respect the teachings? Do you respect and honour a place, a tradition, the continuation of vidya? Do you respect that ideal? If you do then you must be able to live it. That is the challenge, as even people with good intentions fail in this.

Influence of transmission waves

One reason why today people are unable to control their own behaviour seems to be the flow of waves in the environment. It is said that thoughts are energy, whatever one thinks gets transmitted. If someone's mind has the right tuning, it can pick up those thought transmissions. There are radio waves in the air around us. Although the transmitter is in another town, the waves are being carried here and if we

have the right instrument we can catch them. Similarly, waves from transmitters and microwaves are also all around us and affecting us. If you look at a NASA picture of Earth at night today, you will not find a single dark spot, there is light everywhere, there is no dark space on earth anymore. Whereas if you look at the NASA pictures of Earth from 1960, you will see big swathes of black patches, with light in only a few areas such as New York, Washington, the bottom part of England, the middle of France, etc.

Today the waves from mobile phones, the internet, the information that people are putting out, are all there around us. That subtle transmission affects the brain. If thoughts can affect the brain and change an environment, then all the thoughts that are being put up in the form of electrical impulses, travelling through space at incredible rates and passing through our brain – they are altering the connections in the brain as well.

If dark water flows over white ground, in the course of time, the ground will become dark. If crystal clear water flows on the ground, in the course of time the darkness can be removed by the clarity of the water. In the same manner, one's peace of mind is disturbed by these inputs from the environment, from space and from the internet. They represent the collective thought of the human unconscious. This collective unconscious is what we see on the internet. It is this collective unconscious that we see on Facebook. The most simple and humble person can project himself or herself through the Facebook as a roaring tiger, somebody to be feared. Different identities can be created to project yourself, and none of them are you. The Facebook is the egobook, and everything goes up there. All the aspects of your ego and your material self, your rajasic and tamasic tendencies are seen there. This egobook is energy also. What you are putting up is in the form of electromagnetic waves and everyone on this planet is being bombarded by that, even now, and that is creating disturbance in the integrity of human personality and nature.

This constant electromagnetic bombardment is contributing to a global rise of intolerance. Scientists are talking about it, other people are talking about it. We are living in a sea of electromagnetic viruses and bacteria floating around. Just as fish live in water, human beings are living in the bombardment of electromagnetic waves on the brain and the environment, and it is taking its toll on human behaviour. There is so much strife and intolerance, and it is not the government, but the individual who is becoming the cause of destruction.

Where do you stand?

In this deteriorating environment in society, where all systems, disciplines and caution are being thrown to the wind, and everybody is wanting to grab whatever they can for themselves, what is the role of yoga? What is your role in this situation? What has been your effort to improve the understanding? What is the role of the yoga philosophy that you talk about to your students? If you are a yoga teacher, then think about where you are at. Are you the copy of the photocopy of the photocopy of the photocopy of the photocopy of the original? What are you? What is the aim of the yoga training that you give to your students? What is your intention when you teach? What is your aspiration and how many of your students follow that aspiration? Is your understanding percolating down? Think about it.

Think about what culture you are helping to create for the next fifty years. Will you contribute towards improving it or making it worse? As yoga teachers you are always willing to fill your coffers, but as yoga teachers can you help humanity? You may have many justifications, but the point is that the tamasic nature is not reducing. If you cannot do something yourself, you can at least inspire somebody else to do the right thing at the right time. However, for that you have to feel the change inside and live it. You cannot live in an undisciplined manner and expect the future to be disciplined. In order to make the future better you have

to make yourself better today. Only then can the correct samskaras be given to the future generations.

Live the teachings

Everybody listens to the teachings, but how many follow them? Is the teaching confined to the classroom only or is it being applied in life? Is it being thought of as a spiritual idea only, or is an effort being made to apply it in life? Think about it. Ask yourself what do you appreciate, understand, take in and live? What do you honour and hold dear? What do you do to grow? There is a thought to connect with goodness but are you making the effort to apply it? Are the teachings only words that go through your brain and which you write down in your notebooks and say, “Wonderful!” or do you make the effort to actually live them? That is the question that you have to answer.

If the intention to learn is there, every moment you can learn something. If the idea is that learning only happens in a classroom and the rest of the time there is no learning, then you have missed the point. If the learning is only to pass exams in school and not to improve life, you have missed the point. That is why in everybody’s life there is a disconnection from vidya.

There are very few people who try to appreciate the vidya. The majority exploit the vidya. Ask yourself, to which category you belong. If you come thinking, ‘What I learn here will make me a better teacher in the competition of yoga teachers in my city’, that is an indication that you are exploiting vidya. Is that your aim or do you want to live the vidya and express it naturally? Those who come for the vidya, they have to remain connected to the vidya and make the necessary changes in their nature to imbibe it.

Everybody is not a sponge, many are stones in their mind. Many are sponges in their mind, many are wood and many are plastic. If you submerge sponge in water, it will soak in the water. If you put wood in water and leave it there, eventually the wood will absorb whatever it can according to

its porosity. If you put a stone or rock in water, it will absorb according to its porosity. If you put plastic in water, leave it there for weeks, then take it out and give it a wipe, it will be as dry as the first day. The best element in spiritual life is a sponge. It just soaks in everything and gets filled. The medium quality mind is like the wood; it can soak in, get damp and wet but again it will become dry. Once the wood is out of water again it will become dry. The sponge will not become dry; it will retain the water for a long time.

Discover what kind of a mind you have. Is it a plastic mind, stone mind, wooden mind or sponge mind? Discover whether you are a sponge, stone, wood or plastic. Very objectively, think about it and recognize it. If you are plastic, recognize 'I am plastic.' If you are stone, recognize 'I am stone.' If you are wood, recognize 'I am wood.' If you are sponge, recognize 'I am sponge.' That will be your achievement and possibly the biggest that you can ever make in life: recognize who you are and see if there is a possibility to imbibe and absorb.

The eternal music

You have to think of what qualitative change you can bring into your own mind and behaviour. If you live that, others can be inspired to experience similar qualitative changes in their lives, and connect with the happiness and beauty, which is God-given and natural. Otherwise we will soon come to a point in time when even trees will be manufactured in factories and brought as decoration to be kept in front of homes. This is already happening.

In order to bring a change at a personal level as well as the social level, we must focus more on the development of yoga vidya. The Progressive Training conducted this year was the first attempt to get the serious yoga teachers together and find methods on deepening yoga sadhana, and this idea will be taken further in the Yoga Chakra.

The purpose of the program is clear: to explore the deeper dimensions of yoga. This can happen only if people have a good background and foundation in yoga. There

are people from the first generation whose long association indicates how well they have integrated themselves with the vidya. The vidya has inspired them, and that is the connection they have felt with Sri Swamiji. That is also the inspiration for this Yoga Chakra program: the connection with vidya.

It is the vidya which is the tradition, not the person. It is the music which is important, not the musician. The seven musical notes are universal and by combining these notes musicians have made their compositions.

Musicians can be many, but the music is eternal. It is the continuation of vidya that represents a tradition, not the succession of individuals. For those who look for connection it is the flow of vidya that is important. In our tradition of vidya, what we are following is the teaching of Swami Sivananda, for he is the source. Swami Satyananda enlarged the vision of Swami Sivananda, yet the teaching was the same. I am giving you what I received from Sri Swamiji, not to make you into a yoga teacher, but to make you into a yoga experienter. Before I pass on and become a fading memory in the minds of people, it is my sankalpa to transmit the vidya that I have received from Sri Swamiji so that the flow of vidya is always there.



The Intention of Yoga

1 November 2015

The intention of yoga right from the early period has been the overcoming of human suffering, and not all types of suffering but only adhyatmic suffering, the self-generated suffering. The focus of yoga is not management of the *adhidaivika dukha*, the destined suffering, or *adhibhatutika dukha*, the natural calamities, but the management of *adhyatmic dukha*, which is the self-generated idea of pain and suffering.

Each culture has developed its own idea of pain, suffering, happiness, pleasure, and not all ideas match or are compatible. The concept of purity in the Christian tradition, the concept of purity in the yogic tradition, the concept of purity in the Vaidic, Islamic, Buddhist or Jain tradition, are all different. They are all different as they are defining the goal of their own practices. Whatever is the practice of a tradition, when its goal is defined, an idea is created. It is not necessary that all ideas across the planet will match universally. There is mismatch, there are impositions, and there is also the human experience. For this reason, in the Vaidic tradition nothing is conclusive, although there were many contributors to knowledge. They all said, “This is my understanding.” Even after writing the four Vedas, they said, “*Neti, neti*”, indicating that this is not the final statement, future generations can add to this pool of knowledge. Thus from the Indian spiritual perspective, there is no conclusive

answer to anything, rather it is discovering how every individual is able to realize the truth. This is the process, journey or system that has been followed.

Founding idea of yoga

The idea that started off the whole subject of yoga was adhyatmic suffering, self-generated suffering. This is an immense subject, as all that you experience in life comes into play here. Every moment of your life has contributed to the development of your experience, so you have to see the whole situation from the perspective of how you can find harmony and peace within, and overcome suffering, strife, conflict and confusion. This idea became the foundation for the development of yoga. Therefore even samadhi is not the aim of yoga, rather it is a mood of yoga, a state of yoga, which you can attain, sustain, leave aside, maintain, reject, just as you are able to maintain your mood of happiness or alter it. The intention of yoga has always been to manage the different upheavals and distortions and the accumulation of impurities on the pure human nature.

The impurities are of two types: the imposed which is known as *mala*, and the distorted or deformed, which is known as *vikara*. Mala always comes from outside, it is imposed. Somebody clouds your thinking, somebody changes your thinking, somebody disturbs your mental peace; an agent, an extra input that has come from outside and disturbs your peace is mala. Vikara, deformity, is your natural character, an inner trait. Sometimes by nature you may be over-reactive, so it is always difficult to discover peace within yourself. You are desperate for peace but you cannot find it, as your nature is to be over-reactive. It will be waste of time and effort for you to sit down and struggle with the mind to discover peace. With such a nature something else needs to be done. Use that overactive nature in a constructive manner to find peace rather than straining to sit quietly.

How many people apply such understanding? Not even teachers. If they see a disturbed person, they say, "Come and

sit down here, and sit still.” They try to impose a condition of stillness and silence, and of course they are unsuccessful. In this way, it is the management of the mind and the suffering created by the mind, the crises created by the mind due to the inabilities of the mind that yoga focuses on in relation to the whole life; not self-realization.

Branches of yoga

There are many different types of yoga. Each can be considered a branch of yoga, however, the major branches that everyone has agreed on down the lane of history are: hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya and kundalini yoga as external sadhanas; and karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga as internal sadhanas.

Hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya and kundalini yoga are disciplines that you follow at a specific time, with a specific intention, in a specific manner, to acquire a specific result or benefit. You become involved in living a discipline, in regulating your life, in fine-tuning yourself, your routine, work, home, everything. This effort that you make physically and mentally is known as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. The sequence that Sri Swamiji developed was that you begin your primary level schooling in hatha yoga, then complete your middle level schooling in raja yoga, then complete your college in kriya yoga, and then you can specialize in a subject – kundalini yoga.

The yogas which he chose as the *bahiranga* sadhana, the outer effort to attain stability, are followed by three other yogas, which constitute the *antaranga yoga*, the internal yoga, as they represent attitudinal, behavioural and mental efforts. They are related to sentiments, feelings, perceptions, different behaviours of the mind. Through these yogas one makes the effort to fine-tune the mind and manage one’s moods and attitudes. They are bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and karma yoga. These yogas, the outer and the inner, are supported by other yogas, such as nada yoga, laya yoga, etc.

All these yogas together constitute the progression that Sri Swamiji saw from body to mind to psychic awakening to spiritual stability. This is the sadhana. The full circle culminates in karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga.

Understanding the path

Many commentators reverse this view of external and internal: what we are calling external they call internal; what we are calling internal they call external. However, what we are discussing here is in relation to a process, to the journey of yoga.

When you are involved physically in doing something, would that be an internal or external process? External. On the other hand, when with eyes closed you are trying to manage your mind, would that be an internal or external process? Internal. Hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga are practices that you dedicate yourself to for one or two hours regularly, to perfect them. You don't have to devote one or two hours for the practice of karma yoga, bhakti yoga or jnana yoga. You can do them every moment of the day; they are part of your awareness, expression and perception. Therefore they constitute the inner yoga.

Bhakti yoga

Bhakti yoga is usually perceived as the yoga of devotion, and an expression of religious feeling. That is only a partial understanding of bhakti yoga, as bhakti yoga is divided in three parts. The ritualistic aspect, *karma kanda*, belongs to the religious expression. Then there is *upasana kanda*, the invocation and worship, which can be a part of the religious organization and discipline, and it can also be one's personal inclination to discover something within. You may practise upasana as an effort to create a personal connection with your higher nature, so from ritual you move into an experience of invocation and worship. Here religion has become the medium to connect you with your inner self. Upasana is the subtle aspect, and the dogmas and

fundamentalist beliefs are separate from it. The purity of the essence is imbibed in upasana. Then comes *jnana kanda*, which is the yogic bhakti yoga.

Karma kanda or ritualism was the religious bhakti. Upasana or invocation and worship are your personal association and connection, done according to your choice and will, not according to a dogma or ritual. Jnana kanda is the expression of that experience of worship from the yogic perspective; it is living that purity, living and expressing that essence. Therefore bhakti is an idea that is used by religion as ritual and used by yoga as an understanding. The middle part, upasana, is left for you to decide how you wish to experience that quality within you.

There are nine stages of bhakti. In order to discover that pure nature within you, you have to go through nine different stages of transformation and change. They are meditations, practices and perceptions that have to be cultivated. Just as you are constantly reminded in yoga nidra to be aware – to be aware of what? Of developing your perception about yourself. In the same manner, in these yogas too, different instructions are given that allow you to develop a perception of your experience.

People don't see the yogic aspect of bhakti, they see the ritualistic and the upasana aspects, as these two are highlighted in society. If you see religious movements, you see the first aspect, the ritualistic, the religious. If you go to a temple or a place of worship, you see the same. However, if you see what happens in people's homes, where they don't have to go to a temple or a church or a mosque, but where they are free to express their own sentiment, the connection is from the heart. In that state, no matter what one does, even if the prayer is wrong, it will give the right result. Even if the words are wrong, the prayer will give the right result, as the intention is right. That is your feeling, that is your communication with a better you. It doesn't matter whether you are an atheist or a believer; there is something that connects you with your sense of fulfilment, contentment, peace and purity.

That connection is something only you can develop. I cannot inspire you to develop it. Literature cannot inspire you to develop it. How does the love between a mother and child develop? Can anybody write a thesis on that? No. It is just a natural expression and experience. It is an expression of the pure sentiment.

Karma yoga

Similarly, for many karma yoga is just an opportunity to get the work done. And why not? If everybody wants to meditate together, then why can't they work together also? However, the actual purpose of karma yoga is threefold: *atmashuddhi*, self-purification; *akarta bhava*, the feeling of 'I am not the doer'; and *naishkarmya siddhi*, freedom from the effects of karmas. These three intentions indicate the sadhana of karma yoga.

Jnana yoga

In the same manner, there are seven steps in jnana yoga. People think jnana yoga is nothing but the enquiry, 'Who am I?' How can you answer 'Who am I'? It is very difficult. What to answer, and from which perspective? If you say, "I am the holy spirit", if you say, "I am the immortal soul", one can disprove that. The point is, whatever you say can be disputed. Jnana yoga has to instead be seen as a process of flowering of consciousness and the seven stages indicate this process.

People talk of the unfolding of consciousness, symbolized in the image of the lotus. People try to awaken their chakras so that all the lotuses can open, but do you know which lotus needs to be opened in yourself, and what the significance of the lotus or the awakened consciousness is? It is to become established in jnana.

Are you established in the jnana of mooladhara? Are you established in the jnana of swadhisthana? *Jnana* means knowledge of everything, mastery of everything, command of everything. If there is no jnana, no knowledge, then there is ignorance, no understanding.

Jnana yoga has been misconstrued as questioning about oneself. It is a way to discover the method to manage the distorted conditions of your nature and, through self-observation and reflection, come to a point where you can develop your *sankalpa shakti* and positivity.

The strength of positivity

Earlier we discussed about the bombardment of electromagnetic waves we are subjected to in our environment and how they affect the human behaviour and brain and gradually distort it. Can that situation be counteracted? The answer is: yes, it can be, but only if you empower yourself to think positive, sattwic and happy thoughts. If you can empower yourself to think in this manner, yes, the change can happen. The strength of *sankalpa shakti*, willpower, can alter the negativity that you are subjected to, and to which you subject yourself. This is the focus of jnana yoga, not enquiry into 'Who am I?'

Even if you say, 'I am the holy spirit', what have you gained from it? Just inflation of the ego, and the moment the ego inflates you stop being the holy spirit anyway, you become the unholy devil with an expanded head. Therefore, it is not the search for divinity that we are aspiring for in yoga, but the search for inner positivity and purity. All the yogic traditions and systems help you to go that way and jnana yoga is an important medium.

To actually live jnana yoga takes an immense amount of mental clarity and willpower. Your jnana yoga will have to stand up alone against everything that the world can throw at it, including your attachments and maya, infatuations and passions, raga and dwesha. Jnana has to be strong. It has to be stronger than your *dwesha*, aversions, much stronger than your envy and jealousy, hatred and dislike. If it is weaker, it will be destroyed in half a minute. Your jnana has to be much stronger than the negatives of life. Therefore it is the cultivation of the strength of wisdom which is the purpose of jnana yoga, not the accumulation of theories and thoughts,

not the reading of literatures and scriptures. In order to develop that intensity, you have to be serious, sincere and committed.



The Path of Jnana Yoga

2 November 2015

The intent and purpose of yoga is not self-realization but management of suffering. To manage suffering its source is identified, and accordingly suffering is described as of three kinds: the destined, the natural and self-generated. It is the self-generated distress and suffering that yoga helps to manage, and this suffering has to be understood from all aspects of life and human experience.

The map of the journey

Keeping this understanding of the purpose of yoga in mind, we see how Sri Swamiji developed the yogic system, comprising of components which are to be practised physically to come to a level of perfection and of components which are to be practised mentally to express that level of perfection. The sequence he created was: hatha yoga–raja yoga–kriya yoga, followed by kundalini yoga, to perfect sadhana and gain mastery over oneself. These were the external practical sadhana components. Then the living components were karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. These three are expressed in life: karma yoga relates to the faculties of hands, bhakti yoga to the faculties of the heart, and jnana yoga to the faculties of the head. It is the expression of these three which is the focus of perfecting the previous practical sadhana yogas of hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya and kundalini yoga.

The second level of the yogic journey is from practice to sadhana. Practising gives an introduction to yoga; sadhana means connection to the vidya of yoga. Sadhana means that you connect with the intention of imbibing the yogic knowledge and live what yoga has given to you as an ongoing experience.

Six little elves

If you look at every kind of self-generated suffering, you will discover that the causes are only six. They are the conditions or the moods of mind that are identified as *kama*, passion; *krodha*, aggression; *moha*, delusion; *lobha*, greed; *mada*, arrogance; *matsarya*, envy. Self-generated problems always indicate that there is something that you react against, and you are reacting due to the six components that you have within you, which are altering your thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, behaviour, actions, needs and desires; everything is being managed by them.

These six are the little elves who sit inside your brain and push all the buttons in this factory and make it function. They are the workers in this industry, and whatever they touch brings some current into existence. If they press one button, some connection will take place; if they press another button, some disconnection will take place. They just keep on pressing the buttons and the connections and disconnections take place inside. Unconsciously, those connections are being made and unmade by the six. There is no control or input from your wisdom over this; you let these six play with your mind and life, believing that they will lead you to your destination.

Changing direction

The six do lead you to your destination but only at the external, outer level. It is through them that you rise in life; it is through their input, motivation and drive that you rise in material life. Therefore up to one point they are okay, as they represent the tools to survive in the material, rajasic and tamasic world.

These tools of survival in the material world become redundant when you access your spiritual dimension and enter the spiritual world. There the qualities that nurture growth are not these six, but pure sentiments like love and affection, sympathy and cooperation, compassion, understanding, kindness and generosity. The six bad elves have to be replaced in spiritual life, and that is the effort in sadhana: see the negative and convert it into a positive strength. Once you can see a negative weakness, strive to convert it into a positive strength. Normally, the interaction of the six with your life happens at the subtle, unconscious level and your mental behaviour and output contain traces of the six. Therefore your mental behaviour is tamasic, as that is the only outlet for those negative influences to express themselves naturally.

In sadhana it is the sattwic state that has to be cultivated. People ask: “How can I become more kind and compassionate?” They don’t ask: “Where can I learn to be more angry, passionate, hateful, jealous and arrogant?” These negativities are natural expressions in life. Positive expressions are not natural like that. The positivity has to become a trait, a character, a nature of an individual’s behaviour in all circumstances, and that is not easy. One has to work hard to become good, but one can become bad without working hard. Therefore in sadhana it is the combined effect of the six that you have to become aware of. You have to consciously experience this within, and then cultivate their opposite positive traits and thoughts.

The collective consciousness

If thoughts and desires are energy, then they are being transmitted. Everything that happens in the human head is transmitted to the collective consciousness. This little head-computer is connected to the collective computer, its transmission is going there, and from there it is being made available to everything. Just as from your computer the information goes to the server, and from the server

you can download that information anywhere in the world, not only to your computer but to any computer. From this little individual computer the information has gone to the server where all information is stored, and from there the information is accessible to anyone who has the password and the access.

This is the understanding that you have to develop about yourself and the superconscious. The superconscious, or the higher self, is only a reflection of yourself, not in the material sense but in the spiritual sense. It is the server where everything is being uploaded and there it is becoming a *samskara*, creating a conditioning, an impression. That impression is being radiated in all directions. Wherever the channels are open, that information will flow; what you are putting out into the environment is again being received back by others in the form of electromagnetic waves.

Now, in this collective consciousness the tamasic traits are becoming stronger today, as that is what everybody is putting out and that is what everybody is feeling. You, I, everyone is being affected by the environment; the anxiety, the stress that you suffer at the psychological level is a result of your interaction with these subtle energies and inputs. The struggle is taking place behind the curtain of consciousness.

Exercise in self-awareness

To see which one wins, the negative or the positive, just analyze yourself for one week and compare the percentage of your negative and critical thinking and behaviour, to the percentage of your constructive and positive behaviour. You can come to your own conclusion. If you compare the two, you will discover for yourself where you are at. That will give you a weekly indication of how you are inclined: towards the positive or the negative.

In fact, rather than writing down your inclination, write about the actual situation that happens and you will discover that the negative will outweigh the positive. Note down the negative and critical thinking, the negative behaviour, the

angry expression, the frustration – all that on one side, and everything containing happiness and joy on the other side. One side will definitely be much more.

One can use this exercise in self-awareness to counter the invisible, unconscious and global phenomena, and create positive energy. Creation of the positive energy represents the *sankalpa*, the coming together of the positive intentions in life. Then you must ensure that those positive intentions remain together.

Take the example of a garden. Through your hard work you make a nice garden: carpet grass is laid out, everything is looking beautiful. Then for two months you don't work that garden, what will happen? All the beauty that you created will be altered by the weeds that will grow. You did not plant the weeds, they will grow naturally. You made the *sankalpa* and the effort to beautify the garden, but the moment you ignore it, the weeds will come up. In order to ensure the beauty of the garden, every day you have to work on it. Every day. You have to take care of it every day, even if it is only for five minutes. You cannot ignore beauty if you want beauty.

That is the nature of life too. If you ignore this life it will become ugly. Don't do anything, from birth till death, just live normally and you will see how negative and destructive your mind will become: aimless and senseless. The only relief is when you try to connect with something that you consider beautiful, peaceful and uplifting. You feel the change in the mood of your mind only when you connect with the idea, 'Oh this is inspiring, this is encouraging.' Then some relief, some happiness and hope comes, and a smile comes to your face. Otherwise, in the absence of happiness, the mind is totally engrossed in its own stressful imaginings.

Develop positive willpower

To deal with this state, what is required is an immense amount of willpower. That is what allows you to look at your garden for five minutes every day and see that nothing unwanted is growing. To cultivate this willpower you have to

be focused, serious, sincere and committed, otherwise willpower cannot be generated.

How many times have you tried to develop your willpower and failed? A smoker tries to give up smoking, he has to struggle; an alcoholic tries to give up drinking, he has to struggle. Everyone has to struggle with their habits and conditionings. It is the habits and conditioning that ensure that people fail most of the time. One cannot go against the grain; only those with a strong conviction and willpower can do it.

Conviction and willpower come when there is a focus on attaining *shuddhata*, purity, for purity indicates a clear state of mind and not a confused state of mind.

Clarity of mind and jnana yoga

Cleaning the mind of its impressions and influences, and developing a new awareness is the subject of jnana yoga. Jnana yoga and rational thinking is supported by the components of *shuddhata* and *pavitrata*, purity. Without *shuddhata*, jnana yoga only remains *jnana*, knowledge and knowing. You know so many things but they are never applied. You have read and learnt, that is jnana. However, it is when the purity of intention is there to apply that learning, when you decide, 'I make that effort with the truest intention in my life', that it becomes jnana yoga. When that knowledge is applied, it becomes practical wisdom.

Jnana yoga has two components: the first is discovering purity and the second is knowing and discovering how to deal with yourself, how to experience yourself. Jnana yoga will connect you to vidya, and it is living that vidya which will bring positivity in life. Until you live the knowledge, you are just walking in the maze of your own mind and mental creations. Therefore, the purpose of jnana yoga is connection with vidya.

In order to be true to vidya, you have to identify the aim and purpose of vidya. The aim and purpose of vidya is always *atma shuddhi*, self-purification. It is this idea of self-purification that has to be developed.

Internal and external cleansing

There are two types of impurity or accumulations, the external and the internal. The external is known as *mala*, external impositions, whether of thoughts or other influences. For example, you hear something about somebody from your friend. You have never met the person being discussed, yet you form an opinion. That is an imposed understanding. It is not your own understanding; it is the understanding of your friend which you have totally accepted and made your own, as you believe him. That is an imposed mala. Somebody else's rubbish has come into your mind. In the same way, somebody else's wealth can come into your mind, somebody else's peace can come into your mind. All these things that come from other people, where you have taken in other people's suggestions, thoughts and ideas and changed your own response based on those, that is mala.

The second kind of impurity is *vikara*, which is your own creation. Vikara is your own reaction to a situation which allows one of the six to emerge as a powerful figure and distorts your natural condition and peace of body, senses, mind and spirit. That deformity is generated when one of the six traits becomes active. If you get angry, that is your deformity. If you hate, that is your deformity. Any of the six, when they take a shape and form, when they gather in strength inside, create a deformity.

The external impositions and the internal expressions both have to be managed to attain purity, and purity means that you are maintaining the clarity of your mind. For example, a crystal ball has no colour of its own, but when you place it on top of a coloured cloth, that colour is reflected in the ball. Similarly, purity represents the colourless state of mind, the unconditioned state of life. This unconditioned, colourless crystal, when it comes in contact with a sense perception, sense object, a desire, or one of the six, takes on the colour of that state, mood or trait of the mind.

Purity means to free the mind from its associations which create deformity, or block or reduce its clarity by external

impositions. The idea of purity is to go beyond the mala and the vikara and to establish yourself in that crystal clear nature. That is the atmashuddhi that yoga speaks of.

A hint has been given in the yogic scriptures and literatures, that the focus of every action in life is to attain purification. *Yoginah karmakurvanti sangam tyaktwa atmashuddhaye* – “Yogis perform actions by becoming detached for attaining inner purification.” A specific phrase has been used here, ‘*Yoginah karmakurvanti*’ – ‘yogis’ perform the actions. It doesn’t say ‘normal people who perform the actions,’ or ‘bhogis who perform the actions’. It says, ‘yogis who perform the action’. Here the attention is being drawn to the intention of the mind: where one has taken the decision, made the choice, to become a yogi. That means a level of awareness has come in. It means that you are creating a goal for your efforts and direction in life.

With the goal defined and with that awareness of karma, one’s actions are guided so they become free from the effects and influences of the magnets that pull the mind-iron in all directions. That freedom is purity: those influences and their colours are not seen in the mind. Once the mind becomes pure then knowledge is expressed naturally and spontaneously, and perceptions become positive, uniform and harmonious. That is the beginning of jnana yoga.

Seven levels of purity

From the yogic perspective, there are seven levels of purity. The first level begins with the intention to remove impurity and the cause of sorrow. It is known as shuchi. The word *shuchi* is related to sorrow; it means ‘that which removes sorrow of any kind’. Whenever there is any problem or suffering, first there has to emerge a desire, an intention to remove that problem or sorrow. Once the intention is there to become free from sorrow, then the effort you make to free yourself, to distance yourself from that condition is known as shuchi. Shuchi is also an awareness of any kind of

discomfort arising from the presence of impurity. In this way, the concept of shuchi includes more than one idea.

In order to come to the level of shuchi, first analyze in meditation what is the discomfort that you feel in your mind. To begin with, just become aware of the general feeling of discomfort, then pinpoint where it is coming from. What is the source? An incident, an event, a person, a thought, a behaviour, an idea? Discover the cause of that sorrow, and see if you are able to eliminate that cause or not through your normal behaviour, applying the concepts of wisdom and justice. Therefore first comes the analysis, the understanding of sorrow and the cause of sorrow, and then the effort to remove it. That is one level.

The second level of purity is *nirmal*, meaning the absence of mala, the imposed attributes. At this level you make the effort to remove the impurity that is present. If the mala is negative thinking about somebody, can you stop that and become nirmal? Hating somebody is a mala. Can you stop that and experience nirmal by separating yourself from the hatred? Disliking somebody is mala. Can you convert that into liking them, and become nirmal, without that imposition?

The third level is *vimal*, which is also in relation to the impurities coming from outside. Vimal means to bring in the opposite quality of the impurity that you have now recognized. If you have seen your impurity as hate, then in vimal you cultivate the quality of love, the opposite virtue, so that that negative quality can be eradicated at the deepest level possible. Don't leave the roots there, even the roots have to be taken out, so they don't grow back in the future. Therefore vimal is converting the negative into a positive, hate is converted to love, separation changes to union. Anything that helps you to bring yourself back in the positive state of mind is vimal.

In the fourth level of shuddhi we move into the area of deformity, vikara. Up to the third level we were in the realm of mala. Now from four to seven, it is the realm of vikara.

The fourth level is called *shuddhi*, which is translated as purity. However, in the seven levels of purity, the level of shuddhi means the state where one is ready to create a state of purity by expanding the effort. It is like expanding the ratio of nadi shodhana: first you do 2:2:2:2, then you go to 5:5:5:5, then you go to 10:10:10:10. You are expanding the period of pranayama. In the same manner, you try to expand the state of purity. The more you do so, the more the negatives are reduced in size. They are not fully eradicated yet, but they are reducing.

The fifth level is *vishuddhi*, meaning a special kind of purification. It is the same word that is used for vishuddhi chakra. From the general condition of purification now you move into more specific or subtle realms of purity. That is the vishuddhi component.

The sixth level is *pavitra*. This is the attainment of sattwic understanding; it is the awareness or realization of purity. The previous levels were efforts, but pavitra is an experience. The previous levels were steps that you were taking, but pavitrata is an experience of having expanded the positive and reduced the negative. It is also interesting that the word pavitra has the same root as that of *pavak*, fire, which means to burn, to consume. So the word pavitra is also an indication of the fire tattwa. Whatever you throw into fire, is all consumed, burnt, digested and turned into ash, all identity destroyed. In the same way, pavitra indicates the state where everything negative has been consumed and only the pure essence remains. Purity is the dissolution of form and shape; it is the ash. When name, form, shape, idea, everything is burnt, then the pure essence that remains is the ash. And ash is anti-fungal and anti-bacterial. If you mix it into the soil around trees, a chemical change takes place in the soil, and all the bacteria and insects run away. Nothing can grow in ash, nothing survives in that dead matter of ash.

In the state of pavitrata the state of mind is such that nothing can now alter its conviction, its sankalpa and its harmony. No matter who comes and says what, the mind

will not change its course. No matter what reactions come up from inside, the mind will not change its course, it will maintain its course. Continued absorption in the state of purity is *pavitrata* and therefore it becomes an experience.

The final stage of purity is *ujjwal*, luminous. You become the luminous self, the untainted self as an effect of purity, you become bright. It is the state of *atmashuddhi*, where the luminosity and the brightness of the inner self shines.

Jnana yoga has spoken of purity in relation to understanding the state of mind that you have to develop when you are watching yourself. There have to be markers on the way to indicate where one is at, and these levels of purity are the markers for jnana yoga, showing how you have to apply your wisdom, understand yourself and your mind.

Purification of all the koshas

Before reaching *atmashuddhi*, there is *sharira shuddhi*, purification of the body, through hatha yoga. There is *mana shuddhi*, purification of the mind, through raja yoga. There is *prana shuddhi*, purification of the pranas, through the practices of managing, increasing, manipulating prana, such as pranayama, prana vidya and others. Then there is also clearing the *vijnanamaya kosha* of its *samskaras* and impressions, which is *vijnana shuddhi*.

Each kosha has to go through a process of purification. Therefore it is not only a mental practice that you do in jnana yoga; you apply the concept of purity to other levels as well. You do not only deal with the six traits of the mind but also apply the idea of *shuddhi* in the body, prana, mind, psyche and spirit. Purity percolates from the physical body to the inner self.

Therefore, in order to practise jnana yoga move away from the notion of asking, 'Who am I?' That is not jnana yoga, that is mental diversion. It is like children who visualize all kinds of things when they go to sleep at night, with eyes closed, tucked under the blanket. They may visualize being an astronaut, travelling to different planets,

meeting different aliens, and create a whole mental story and visualization. That is not real. In the same manner, this idea of ‘Who am I? I am the self, I am the spirit’, is the play of grown-ups moving into a realm of thinking they can enjoy. Just as a child can enjoy being an astronaut in his imagination and fantasy, grown-ups enjoy being the Supreme in their imagination and fantasy.

Don’t you like being the Supreme? Of course! Everyone likes to be that, so that is your fantasy and imagination. “Who am I?” “I am the Supreme Self.” “Can I realize the Supreme Self?” “I don’t know.” “Then how can I be the Supreme Self?” “I don’t know.” You say “I am the Supreme Self” but for everything else it is “I don’t know.” How can that be a conclusive experience or understanding? It cannot be. For the experience to be real it has to be conclusive. Every pore has to feel it, every atom has to vibrate to that frequency. After all, when you are happy, your body becomes happy too. Your body experiences that lightness, joy and happiness when your mind is happy. Your body feels the heaviness and dejection when the mind is heavy and dejected. In the same way, the body will also respond to the state of inner mental luminosity; even the cells will become bright and luminous.

Misconceptions about jnana

Change the idea of asking ‘Who am I?’ with regard to jnana yoga. That is the trend of thinking followed by intellectuals who don’t reach any conclusion but like to think and talk about everything. Intellectuals can write a thesis and volumes of literature inferring that “This is possible, that is possible”, and justify their theories. Yet no intellectual has ever come to any conclusion. The people who have come to conclusions are people who have been brave and taken the risk to travel the path of experience.

Another misconception about jnana yoga is that it is not for other types of aspirants such as bhaktas and karma yogis. That is incorrect. Jnana is like the salt in a meal. No matter

what you cook, a little bit of salt has to be put into every meal. That is jnana. Your vegetable can be totally different from your rice, your rice can be totally different from your chicken, your chicken can be totally different from your dal, but the sprinkle of salt in everything to bring out the taste is the sprinkle of jnana. That is the jnana yoga which has to be applied in everything, not only in questioning 'What am I doing here?' That salt has to be sprinkled into everything.

Jnana and the drashta

What is jnana yoga? It is the yoga through which *spashtata*, mental clarity, *viveka*, discrimination, and *samajh*, understanding, develop. These three things are the outcome of jnana yoga, as once you understand the nature of your own mind you are in a position of strength to change that nature also.

One practice of jnana yoga is to become the *drashta*, the observer. When you are the *bhokta*, the enjoyer, there is no jnana in that. There are two terms in yoga: *karta*, one who does, and *bhokta*, one who enjoys. Right now you are the doer and the enjoyer both. When you begin to observe yourself, you begin to see yourself doing, you become the observer of your doership and the doer nature, and you also become the observer of your bhokta nature, the enjoyment that you crave and seek.

In jnana yoga meditation, an attempt is made to become the drashta of oneself. It is different from pratyahara. Here you have to emphasize to yourself, 'This is what I am and not what I experience myself to be.' An example: you are hungry and you are meditating. You are aware of your hunger. Your mind is travelling to your stomach again and again, you can hear all the sounds of your hunger pangs. Now if you are observing this as a drashta, you will be saying to yourself, 'I am observing my hunger, I am feeling the hunger, I am experiencing the hunger', but you will not be in panic mode. You will not stop the meditation practice and run to eat something. If you go into panic mode, then you are not the

drashta anymore. Therefore, being the drashta is not just awareness but a detached awareness. Remember that. People think that to be the drashta is just to become aware. No. The drashta awareness is actually a detached awareness so that the inputs of pleasure, *bhoga*, are not being received by the mind, you are not being pulled towards them or repelled by them, you are simply observing them.

The jnana yoga meditations begin with drashta bhava, then they develop the idea of shuddhata, purity, and then they develop clarity, discrimination and understanding. The foundation of jnana yoga is purity, then come other components and practices. The path that we will be taking in the coming days is to experience the applicability of jnana yoga in our sadhana.



Creating the Foundations of Jnana

3 November 2015

We were talking of the levels of *shudhhata*, purity, that one has to attain in life to overcome the material maya and connect with spiritual awareness. The first level of purity is *shuchi*, and the word *shuchi* comes from the same root in Sanskrit from which the word *shoka*, sorrow, is created. Therefore *shuchi* means to become aware of the problem and to remove the sorrow associated with it. First there has to be the intention to remove the sorrow.

From physical ease to mental ease

If you get a pimple on your body, you look at it and the instant thought is, 'Get rid of it.' That is the first level of thought in *shuchi*: you identify a cause, you identify an incident, and you instantly take a decision, 'I have to find out what it is and I have to clear it.' The intention is to take yourself away from the sorrow that you are perceiving, or that you know you will experience if the little pimple becomes a big boil. You are taking a preventive measure: although the root has come up, you are not allowing it to grow big.

You are always alert and aware of the body and of physical health. The skin has to be clear; there should be no pimples, no this, no that, and the cleanliness of the skin indicates the health of the skin. Similarly, if there is indigestion, instantly effort goes into discovering the cause

and removing the effect of indigestion. The idea is that 'My systems, my organs have to be well, they have to function properly.' If you get a headache you know that something is happening in your body. If you get a sinus problem you know that something is happening in your body, and you take the necessary precaution immediately. When people feel physically sick, instantly they take medicine. This idea of physical health prompts you to move into thinking of physical shuchi. When you are aware of your body, you instantly identify the areas where you need to apply the idea of shuchi; you do not allow the deformity in health to take place.

You have this understanding of the physical body, but what about the health of the mind? How does one discover what is the normal health of the mind? When mental pimples come up, you don't take care of them; they become boils, and even turn into cancer. When that happens, the situation has gone too far for you to come back.

You don't know how to come back either. You have never cultivated a sense of mental health. You have an understanding, an awareness of the physical health, and any imbalance or disharmony in the physical condition instantly triggers the awareness that 'I need to look after this problem.' Even if there is a feeling of momentary breathlessness in the morning due to a cold, you will visit the doctor that day to check why you could not breathe properly. Any little thing in the body will prompt you to look after it. But does any little thing in the mind prompt you to look after the mind? The little pimples that come up in the heat of mind, the rashes that come up when the mind is hot?

What intention have you created to remove that sorrow from your life? What awareness have you developed to recognize that sorrow as a sickness disturbing the health of your mind? So where is the concept of shuchi when it comes to the mind? If your hands get dirty you will go and wash your hands, but if the mind gets dirty it won't be washed, rather the dirt will accumulate.

This example indicates that when there is awareness then you want to maintain better qualities and conditions, and anything that disturbs that quality and condition is seen as the onset of a problem or illness. The moment you become aware of that you should try to improve yourself and not allow that condition to take root.

The normal mind and the distorted mind

In order to identify the diseased condition of mind, you have to first discover what the normal state of mind is. From the yogic perspective, the normal state of mind is expressed by two behaviours: happiness and peace. You look at children, they are not concerned or worried, they are living life. They can fight, they can cry, but they are happy and free. They can fight but instantly they can go to sleep also. They won't be tossing and turning in bed, worrying about what will happen tomorrow, 'That boy is going to hit me back.' They don't carry anything with them. They feel, 'The fellow with whom I fought today will become my friend again tomorrow.' They are at peace.

When there is peace in mind one does not carry anything. No animosity, hatred, jealousy or anger can be carried on; the state of peace does not allow the emergence of any of these pimples in the mind. The healthy mind is peaceful, harmonious, balanced and contented. The happy mind is the healthy mind.

There are two functions of the mind: *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*. The lower mind perceives many things and has two functions: *sankalpa*, or ideation, which means having thoughts here and there all the time, and *vikalpa*, or imagination.

The mind is constantly creating thoughts, imaginary objects, situations, and so on. That is how the mind binds you to the material world. The attachment that you develop to the outside world is due to these functions of the lower mind. The lower mind, due to *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*, is constantly being moved and guided by the six traits which make it the mind. Therefore across the world, not only

in yoga but in all spiritual traditions, people have spoken about developing contentment, happiness, kindness and compassion.

Since time immemorial people have been talking along these lines. Why is that? Why have these been considered the foundations for the betterment of life? Why has it always been said that the sattvic qualities, the uplifting and luminous qualities are required to achieve enlightenment in life? Not only this, it is constantly repeated, “Be aware of the obstacles that come in the way of attaining these qualities.” In fact, dealing with the obstacles is more important than trying to acquire and attain a new spiritual experience. Even Swami Sivananda has said that there are certain things that people have to guard against. You sing his ‘Song of 18 ITIES’:

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity!
Practise daily these 18 ITIES . . .

You say these are nice ideas and one should adopt them, however, you are only looking at the good words as your target and focus. That is all right, but then you also have to be aware of the pitfalls on the journey to that goodness. The goodness of your destination will not ensure that your journey is also good. To come to that destination, to come to that achievement, you have to manage all the obstacles on the path.

Just as Swami Sivananda enumerated the qualities that one should cultivate, he has also listed the obstacles in ‘The Song of ‘Avidity’ and ‘Obstacles to God-realization’:

Avidity, cupidity, stupidity,
Audacity, turbidity, instability,

Angularity, eccentricity, irritability.
These are the obstacles to samadhi.
These are the impurities of the mind.

Avidity is covetousness or greed – *lobha*; cupidity is lust or passion – *kama*; stupidity is delusion or infatuation – *moha*; audacity is arrogance or impertinence; turbidity is confusion of mind; instability is wandering of the mind; angularity is a form of vanity; eccentricity is slavery to the whims and fancies of the mind; irritability is anger – *krodha*, in all its forms. One has to remove these impurities through the opposite virtues, so he says, “Avidity should be removed through the practice of generosity; cupidity should be removed through the practice of purity; instability through *trataka* and *pranayama*, *upasana* and *japa*; angularity through the practice of humility, eccentricity through practice of right conduct, irritability through the practice of patience and forbearance.”

Is this philosophy, or is this yoga, or is this psychology? People don't look at these things that need to be watched out for. After all, these are what create mental illness and remove the experience of inner health. Again Swami Sivananda says:

Duality, multiplicity, plurality,
Individuality, slave-mentality, superiority,
Ahamkarity, *raga-dweshity*, *abhiniveshity*,
Sensuality, sensitivity, sentimentality,
Inactivity, rotundity, *da-dee-da-deety*
These are obstacles to attaining Divinity.
Atrocity, curiosity, cruelty,
Anxiety, partiality, timidity,
Immorality, debility, morbidity
These are obstacles to attaining Divinity.

In this way, Swami Sivananda has spoken of the obstacles that represent a distorted or deteriorating condition of mind and behaviour, and he warns us not to become prey to these influences.

Be the drashta

The idea of shuchi begins with recognizing what your optimum health condition is. That kind of awareness is there with regard to the body, but the same awareness is lacking when it comes to the mind. So, first develop an awareness of the mind and the little illnesses in the mind by becoming the drashta. That is the first stage. You have to observe, you have to see objectively, you have to be a witness.

A doctor analyzes you in a detached manner. He has to keep his interpretation objective; he has to give the correct and the factual information. Even if the patient is a family member, they will not be treated as a family member in hospital but as a patient, and the same objectivity will be maintained.

The aspect of drashta that you have to cultivate within is maintaining the same objectivity and not getting involved in thinking, ‘This is my experience’, or ‘This is my joy’, or ‘This is my hurt.’ You have to disconnect from your experiences in order to be a drashta. If you get taken by the current of the mental state through thought, feeling, absorption, or even memory, you are carried by the wind, by the current. Thus, on the practical side, the ability to be a witness of one’s own mind is important.

Recognize disturbances and resolve on purification

The second stage is to recognize the disturbances in the peaceful waters of the mind-lake. Ask yourself, ‘In the still waters of the lake of my mind, which stone has fallen and what type of ripples is that stone creating?’ The stone that falls in the stillness of your mind indicates the unhealthy quality that is disturbing the health and peace of your mind.

First there has to be recognition and then the correct intention has to be created. Otherwise that situation, condition, incident or experience will give birth to distress, anxiety, strife, conflict and confusion. That is the beginning of mental illness. What can you do to prevent that from happening?

Take the right steps

In jnana yoga there is a progressive sequential process. The stages of jnana yoga are called *bhumikas*, just as stages of other yogas are called *angas*. *Anga* means part. *Bhumika* means foundation. When you say “There are many *angas* to this body”, it means there are many parts to this body. However, the body is supported on one *bhumika*, one foundation: the earth. This is how you have to understand the stages of jnana yoga. They are progressive and sequential, and you cannot move into the second stage until you complete the first stage. You have to come to the first *bhumika*, reach the first floor, before you undertake the journey to the second floor. Once you are established in the first floor then you start climbing the steps to arrive at the second *bhumika*, the second level.

Each level has to be attained before you move on to the next in jnana yoga. That is not the case with the *yogangas*. You don’t practise *asanas* in order to access *mudras*. You can practise both together. You don’t practise *mudras* in order to access *bandhas*. You can practise your *bandhas* along with *asanas* and *mudras*. Different *angas* can be put together, different parts of yoga can be put together. However, in jnana yoga there are no different parts; first you must attain one *bhumika*, one foundation, and from there you go to the second *bhumika*. Once established in the second *bhumika*, you go to the next one. These levels that one must progress through support different experiences of the mind and that is why the sequential path is followed in jnana yoga.

The right intention: shubhechha

The first foundation of jnana yoga is called *shubhechha*. *Shubha* meaning good, auspicious or positive; and *ichha* meaning ‘intention or desire’. Therefore the first indication of jnana yoga is: try to keep the mind positive at all times. Try to always have good thoughts, uplifting thoughts, positive thoughts. If you see the mind slip into negative

dimensions, the tamasic dimension, bring it back and reconnect it with the positive. The positive intention to overcome a state of difficulty or crisis indicates the beginning of your effort, and that is the first foundation of jnana yoga.

In the first step, *bhumika* or foundation, you remain positive and happy in all situations and conditions in life, and do not allow negativity to set in. If negativity does set in, it has to be removed by cultivating the positive intention, which is the *pratipaksha bhavana*. If you notice yourself thinking, ‘I am sick’, bring in the thought, ‘I will be well.’ Rather than identifying with the negative content of the mind, create a positive idea. ‘I am sick and as I am sick I am going down in the depth of suffering and agony and pain’, that is *vikalpa*. ‘I am sick, but I am going to make the effort to become better’, that is *sankalpa*. This allows the negative content of the experience to be reduced. *Shubhechha* is reducing the negative content of a thought, sentiment or feeling in any situation, event or condition in life.

When you make the effort to connect with the positive, then you have to analyze and eliminate the negative. This process of observing and eliminating is done through the meditations of jnana yoga. So we have two things: the aspect of *drashta* and the aspect of *shubhechha*.

Maitri karuna muditopekshanam sukhaduhkha punyaapunya-vishyanam bhavanatashchittaprasadanam. (Yoga Sutras 1:33)

Maitri: friendship; *karuna*: compassion; *mudita*: happiness; *upeksha*: indifference; *sukha*: happiness; *dukha*: suffering; *punya*: virtue; *apunya*: not virtuous; *bhavanatah*: this attitude; *chittaprasadam*: mental happiness or peace.

This statement in the *Yoga Sutras* indicates *shubhechha*. It means: “Be happy for those who are virtuous, positive and happy in life, be compassionate towards those who are suffering, be content when you encounter virtue in life, and ignore the unvirtuous in life.”

The four ideas here are: be friendly to those who are happy, be compassionate towards those who are suffering, be happy for those who are virtuous, and ignore the crooked. Some people ask why a spiritual philosophy like yoga says ignore the crooked. Well, Patanjali knew that even yogis cannot handle the negativity of the crooked. Can you handle the negativity of somebody crooked who comes in front of you? Unless you go into a physical fight, you cannot. Nobody can handle it without coming into conflict and confrontation. So why go through that stage where everyone is a sufferer, nobody is a winner and nothing positive is established? In that situation just get out of there, avoid it, ignore it.

If you follow this principle in your life, you can apply it with your friends and acquaintances also. If they are supportive and encouraging, then be friendly with them. If they are not and drag you down, then ignore them, as their influence on you will destroy your positive intentions and change your positive sankalpa.

One rotten apple can rot a whole basket of apples but a hundred good apples cannot change one rotten apple. The power of tamas is much more intense and sucks you in like a black hole. Tamas is the black hole from where even light cannot escape. If you want to be a good astronaut, make the effort to not get sucked into a black hole. You can remain on the periphery, beyond its gravitational pull, and look at it, but don't get sucked in or you won't get a job in your next life as an astronaut!

You have to follow the safe route. Apply this principle with the black hole of the mind. Consider a change of environment from time to time to receive new inputs and fresh inspiration. Extract yourself from the environment of pressures and tensions, this will relax you and give you greater clarity on how to deal with situations.

The power of sankalpa

The cultivation of positive sankalpas indicates an increase of willpower. How can you gauge your willpower? Try changing

one habit and you will discover how much willpower you have. Smokers, for example, try to stop smoking and say, “I will not smoke from tomorrow, today is my last.” The next day most fall prey to that feeling again and say, “Okay, last today, tomorrow no more.” There are some people who say, “Okay, this is my last today”, and from that day they totally forget about it. It does not even come into their mind.

One is a strong mind and the other is a weak mind. The weak mind always fluctuates, and the negative habits and traits become prominent in it. A strong mind is able to reduce negative traits with greater ease. That is the power of sankalpa: you can make a decision to leave something and not feel that you are missing out on life.

If you want to see whether you have cultivated any sankalpa and how much your willpower has increased, try managing one of your habits. That will be the indication of your progress and achievement. Closing your eyes and intensely repeating some sentence three times is not sankalpa. Sankalpa is the ability to change a limited, deteriorating or distorted condition with ease, without any effort or stress. That sankalpa has to be cultivated through whatever practice you can do.

Living shubhechha

Keep in mind that in jnana yoga the desire is not only to know, but to live the change. It is not only to know how to be compassionate but to live that compassion, not only to know how to be kind but to live that kindness, not only to know what is right and wrong but to live the right and avoid the wrong. That level of understanding comes in when you decide that ‘I am going to apply goodness in my life.’ This is where the three ideas of sincerity, seriousness and commitment come into play.

If you are willing to live your intention then that is an indication of your commitment, that is an indication of your sincerity and seriousness. If you are not willing to live it, it is an indication that there is no sincerity or commitment in

your life; everything is covered by just one label: curiosity. Curiosity does not lead one to knowledge, it only leads to further ignorance. That is the statement of *Ishavasya Upanishad* (v. 9):

*Andham tamah pravishanti ye avidyaamupaasate;
Tato bhooya iva te tamo ya u vidyaayaam rataah.*

Those who worship *avidya* (ignorance) enter into darkness and those who worship *vidya* (knowledge) enter into still greater darkness.

Here the phrase ‘worship vidya’ indicates those who follow a method or path only out of curiosity. That has to change.

When can one live the change? When you are not directed by your mind but you are connected to vidya. When you are connected to the mind, the mind will divert you, but when you are connected with the intention of jnana yoga, the understanding of jnana yoga, the purpose and aim of jnana yoga, then that vidya will hold you in line. You have to always keep the vidya at the forefront of your awareness.

Let us say you are travelling at night and it is pitch dark everywhere. In the distance you see a glimmering light and you start walking towards it. Sometimes you see the light sometimes you don’t, but you know the general direction and you keep on walking towards it. You reach the top of the hill and now you see the light clearly, and you know that you are going in the right direction. Similarly, in the absolute pitch black darkness of your mind, a distant glimmer of light gives you the direction, the strength and the courage to walk. The intention, the aim, the focus of jnana yoga is that light, and you have to walk towards that in every bhumika, and the first steps are taken with shuchi and shubhechha, the intention to purify and the effort to keep the mind positive at all times.

Step by Step

5 November 2015

SHUBHECHHA: THE FIRST FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

The first bhumika of jnana yoga is shubechha. *Shubechha* means positive intention or desire and this positive intention is the outcome of recognizing a condition which you want to change, to alter and make better. For example, you have an awareness of physical health. Bad health worries you instantly and propels you to treat it so the physical condition can be rectified. In the same way, one has to have an understanding of what is the general health of mind, and any pimple, rash or boil that comes up in the mind has to be treated.

Three attributes of shubhechha

Shubhechha is the awareness and recognition of a condition that is developing and is going to deteriorate your peace and happiness, and must therefore be dealt with instantly. That intention to not allow the negative to set in and disturb your health, and to make the effort to ensure that it is not affecting you, is the first bhumika of jnana yoga. In this bhumika the intention is to remain positive all the time. Secondly, there has to be intensity in that desire to remain positive at all times, there has to be shakti in that sankalpa to remain positive.

The third point is that the desire is not just to know, but to change and apply the change. You have to understand the

change and apply the change. If you get a rash, you get the medicine and then apply it. You don't just hold the medicine in your hands knowing 'it is good for my rash'. Knowing is not enough. You have to apply the medication on the rash. The 'desire' here is not just to know the change but to live and apply the change.

In order to live and apply the change, seriousness, sincerity and commitment have to come in. Without these three you cannot do it, you cannot remain positive. You will fall back in the trap of the negative. Therefore you can live a change when you have understood and imbibed the knowledge, the vidya.

When the vidya becomes part of you and it is a natural expression then you can live it, but if it is not a part of you, today you will do it under compulsion, but tomorrow it won't be your natural behaviour. For example, today you do your asana class under my supervision, under compulsion, but if it is left to you, you may not do many of those asanas as they are strenuous. Or instead of doing them ten or twenty-five times, you will say, 'Today I will do it only five times', as in your free time your mind is guiding you, and there is no discipline in that.

You have to live the vidya, you have to identify with it. You have to identify with the change and the idea in order to make it naturally applicable. If you cannot identify with it then it will not be naturally applicable, it will be an imposed application. An imposed application will never survive more than a few days in your life, but natural application remains a part and parcel of your life till the very end.

The sankalpa of shubhechha

The sankalpa or the shubhechha, the first foundation, is not just saying, 'May I change for the better.' It is not just thinking, 'I will change for the better.' It is the resolve: 'May I understand the teaching so it can become a part of me.' That whole connection from self-oriented awareness to knowledge awareness, vidya awareness, has to come in. When you say,

‘I want to feel better’, you connect with yourself and your needs, and you know that ‘the moment I feel better I will stop’. So the ‘I’ has to be overcome. Instead the connection has to be: ‘May I understand the teachings so that they become a part of me, a part of my expression.’ Now your focus is on understanding and imbibing the teachings and making them a part of you.

In that process you will become better no doubt, but then you have to allow the time. You cannot plant a seed today and take it out every day to see if it is sprouting or not asking, “Why has it not sprouted? It has been there for one week now.” How can it sprout when you are taking it out every day? Why don’t you just leave it there and let nature do its work? When the time is ripe the seed will sprout. In the same manner, you have to protect your positive intention and let nature do the work. The problem is you don’t protect your positive intentions, and animals eat it up, or you don’t allow nature to do its work, you try to do the work instead of nature. That is where failure happens.

When this sankalpa to understand the knowledge and make it a part of your own expression becomes the driving force in your life, then you begin to develop an understanding of your dharma and how you can live it. Then linear education becomes redundant. You no longer say this will follow that. The expression now is an artistic expression, not a linear, logical continuation of knowledge or understanding. You are not creating encyclopaedias of information in the mind, you are living the information. To come to this state, there has to be strength in your sankalpa. How do you strengthen your sankalpa?

In order to give compost to the seed, to strengthen the sankalpa which you have planted, you need to do two things: have association with good people who support, inspire and encourage you, and come to spiritual centres where you can reconnect with the teachings from time to time. Reconnect with the teachings, become inspired and go back with a strong positive motivation to continue your connection with

and exploration of the vidya. This is the shubhechha aspect of jnana yoga, the first foundation.

VICHARANA: THE SECOND FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

The second foundation of jnana yoga, the second bhumika or platform is vicharana. *Vicharana* means investigation or contemplation. In the first bhumika of jnana yoga there is an intention and a sankalpa to bring a positive change and to live the vidya. After that comes vicharana, which is moving into the state of contemplation.

Two kinds of contemplation

This contemplation can be of two kinds: abstract or definite. An abstract contemplation can be, 'I am not what I experience myself to be', 'I am the Supreme Self, the Holy Spirit.' It is like shoonya meditation. In shoonya meditation, you become aware of yourself, your body, your physical experiences, and then you start disconnecting: 'I am not the body', 'I am not the experiences of the body', 'I am not the stiffness, tiredness, pain, comfort or pleasure of my body. These are experiences that are happening in this annamaya kosha, but I am the drashta, the spirit, the luminous self.' That reflection on the higher nature by disconnecting from the physical is the abstract form of vicharana, contemplation.

The concrete form of vicharana is that once you have identified your positive intention to deal with a condition that is developing, then through reflection, you look into the triggers of that experience. What were the triggers? Maybe someone said, "You are not a good teacher." What did that sentence trigger in you? Did it hurt your ego? Which aspect of your six has that sentence hit? Which of the six targets which you have inside you did that bullet hit? Your kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya? It hit your *mada*, your self-image, your ego. Therefore now in vicharana, the reflection has to take place that 'In this incident, the trigger

was my ego.’ Why did your ego react in that manner, can you find that out? Why is your ego feeling hurt due to that sentence?

The purpose of vicharana is to understand a reaction as soon as it takes place. If you don’t manage that condition instantly, it will reflect in your behaviour in other ways. It will instigate *krodha*, anger, aggression, or other vrittis, so you need to reflect on it. Discover what the trigger was, and reflect on it. Then change that trigger; change the negative trigger into a positive one. Change it into something positive in your mind. The person who seemed like an enemy, make that person your friend in your mind. It may not happen in reality, but in your mind if you are free from that feeling of animosity, from ego, anger, envy, hatred; you are free from the six. Such reflection is involved in vicharana, the contemplative aspect.

Here again the strength of sankalpa plays an important role, for you cannot identify a trigger and then change it into a positive content just by thinking about it. You have to feel it. There is no use saying, ‘I have forgiven that person’; you have to feel the lightness in your heart which comes out of having truly forgiven someone. It cannot remain just as an intellectual idea while the heart and mind are heavy. Thus the feeling part of sankalpa is emphasized in the vicharana component, which is what allows you to let go of whatever you are holding on to.

The dog and ducks

Once there was a man who was hunting ducks in the duck season. He shot one duck, and it fell in the middle of the lake. The man was tucked away behind the big grass. He whistled and his dog goes, gets the duck and brings it back. Then he shot another duck, again the duck falls in the middle of the lake, dog goes, gets the duck and comes back. This happened a few times. Now the man was watching every time the dog went to get the duck, and each time he saw that instead of swimming, the dog would walk on water, grab the

duck and bring it back. The man was surprised, but he did not say anything.

Next day he called a friend and said, “Come, let’s shoot some ducks today.” The two went to the same spot and started shooting. One duck fell. The dog runs over, grabs the duck in its mouth, and runs back. Both are watching. Then another shot, another duck falls. Again the dog runs to the middle of the lake, grabs the duck, brings it back. Now the owner says, “Do you notice something different about the dog?” The other guy says, “Yeah, you know, you’re right – the dog can’t swim!”

I remembered this story in relation to what we are discussing: many times someone is walking on water, but you comment, “He can’t swim.” You don’t see the achievement; you see what the person cannot do. What you see as their failure or incapability is from your perspective, not from the perspective of their achievement. You see what you expect of people, you see everything by bringing things down to your own perspective. You never elevate yourself to a higher perspective or even another person’s perspective, but you always try to drag people down to your perspective, to your level. That is where you miss observing the miracles of life, and you only notice what you are used to: the limiting conditions of life.

One of the purposes of the second platform of jnana yoga, vicharana, is that you drop the negative and hold the positive. The negative of your ahamkara, mada, moha, matsarya, the negative of this, the negative of that, it is all dropped. In this process of dropping there has to be honesty and courage. You have to have the ability to see the negativity exactly for what it is. This is where most people fail; they want to experience the positivity without dealing with the negativity, and that is why it comes up again and again.

Also know and realize the futility of carrying that negative impression in you. It will always create strife and suffering, that is why it is futile to carry it. If you insist on

doing so, that is your choice, but then know what you are doing to yourself. If you drop it, replace it with something positive to fill the vacuum, so you feel inspired and uplifted.

Developing resilience

Thus the idea of vicharana, contemplation, has two aspects: the abstract and the concrete. When you combine the abstract and concrete contemplation, over a period of time the resilience develops where you can move between the inner and outer worlds effortlessly and maintain positivity and balance in all conditions.

In the abstract contemplation there is disassociation: 'Everything that I have experienced until now, I am not that.' This is the shoonya experience: 'I am the luminous self, I am the eternal space.' There is disconnection from the body and physical experiences and from the mind and mental experiences. All that remains is the effulgence of the spirit. Then again you have to connect with the mind and the mental experiences to externalize the awareness, again you have to connect with the body and physical experiences to act in the world. To remain positive in this externalized state of awareness you have to do the concrete contemplation.

When an incident occurs that creates disturbance in your mind, first you develop shubhechha, you resolve that 'This incident will not make me negative or cause me suffering and pain.' You also realize that the incident shows something that has to change. So you now begin to reflect, 'What is it that I need to bring in, in order to change? How can I apply that and come out of the situation maintaining my optimum mental and physical health?' There is a process of identification and then reflection. You ask yourself, 'Due to this incident, which area of my character, which of my traits is being affected? If I don't look at it now, which other areas will be affected? To manage it now, what is the opposite virtue that I can apply which will counteract the negative responses that are arising out of me?' This is the concrete aspect of vicharana, the second bhumika of jnana yoga.

Steps of vicharana

To sum up, the process of concrete vicharana involves:

- Identifying what has to change.
- Moving into the state of contemplation.
- Understanding with honesty where one is at and where the vidya is pointing to: where you are and where you need to go, seeing what is the gap and why the gap is there. Then reflecting on the chasm, and identifying how you can bridge that. That contemplation here is not thinking about the higher nature, but understanding the mind stuff. Until and unless you understand the mind stuff, higher contemplation will not have any creative impact on your psyche. So first the mind stuff has to be understood.
- Ensuring that this understanding is not just a general understanding but that you go to its root by identifying which aspect of your mind is being triggered by the incident.
- Keep doing this through a process of elimination. Look at any given expression of the mind, and try to see what lies at the root. Identify which of the six are at play and try to understand their cause. Identify that and ask yourself, 'Is it this?' 'Not really.' 'Is it that?' 'Close, but not quite.' In this manner you come to the crux of the matter.
- Drop the negative and hold the positive. One has to be careful in this process, even with the experience of happiness sometimes, as it is possible to derive happiness from other people's troubles also. You may think that you are living the yogic yama of being happy, but your actions are making another person suffer. Therefore you have to ask, 'Why am I happy?' It is not that you should merely be happy, your happiness must have a positive connection. It must have a positive input. Grinning like an idiot the whole day, saying 'I am happy, I am happy' is not an indication of happiness. Keeping the heart light is the indication of happiness.

Vicharana also allows you to develop your intuitive wisdom, the state of *nirmal* where the clarity involves seeing

the true nature of things. When you begin to analyze which of your trait is being affected and how you can move away from that, you have to depend on your intuition. You cannot find these answers with just linear analysis. You may begin with linear analysis but as you go deeper, you begin to access a higher wisdom to gain the correct understanding with regard to situations, people and the obstacles you face. Of course everyone will have a different experience, but with reflection it is possible to develop the intuitive wisdom, and development of intuitive wisdom is the fulfilment of the second platform of jnana yoga.

TANUMANASA: THE THIRD FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

The third foundation or platform of jnana yoga is tanumanasa. *Tanu* means subtle and *manas* means mind; therefore *tanumanasa* means entering and observing the subtle mind.

Once you have established yourself in shubhechha and vicharana and identified which traits were affecting you, now you go up one level to tanumanasa which deals with the whole *mahat*, the great mind composed of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

Here, you understand the involvement of the different aspects of mahat in any given situation and their individual effect on the whole mind. You search in chitta for all the photographs you can find of the particular incident, you take them out and eliminate them. You search your buddhi for any input there might have been from other people which helped form an opinion, and put it aside. You search the manas and try to see the train of your thoughts in relation to that incident – whether it is positive, neutral or negative. If it is negative, try to make it positive. If it is positive try to make it neutral. In tanumanasa you don't even hold on to the positive. Up to the second bhumika you were holding on to the positive, but in this third platform even that is seen

and let go of. The Swiss neutrality is maintained. Similarly, you deal with ahamkara, which is the root cause of every dissatisfaction and problem in life. That is the last aspect to be observed.

The emphasis here is in knowing the subtle mind and the subtle behaviour of the mind. You scan the manas, you scan the buddhi, you scan the chitta, and take out all the relevant documents, files and pictures from these areas. Then you organize them, sort them, see how each one evokes a different response. Know that it is that response which is actually making you suffer pain and agony, and therefore let it go. You don't hold on to painful memories. You divorced your husband or wife thirty years ago but you still retain the memory. You recognize that and let that go. You suffered from some incident ten years ago; it is over but the memory is still lingering. You recognize that and let it go. You recognize that these leftovers in the different areas of the mind evoke a tamasic response and stop you from connecting with sattwa. This clearing, which creates the state of *vimala*, bringing yourself back in the positive state of mind, has to take place. This is known as the third bhumika of jnana yoga, tanumanasa.

The first bhumika, shubhechha, gives you the platform for identification, recognition and the creation of positive intention. The second bhumika, vicharana, is the platform where you can see which of the traits is being affected by a particular situation, and is making you act, behave and think in an unnatural negative, tamasic and restricted manner. Then the third stage of jnana yoga, tanumanasa, involves the clearing of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

Breaking out of the Shell

6 November 2015

In order to understand, receive and apply the vidya, you have to prepare the ground. In the absence of the proper preparation or foundation, the vidya is not recognized as vidya. On the contrary, it is thought of as an imposed belief or *mala*. An imposed conditioning does not remain a vidya. It is only when you are able to receive it that it is not an imposed idea or conditioning on the field of your mind, rather your mind soaks in that water.

Put a sponge in water and the water will pervade the entire sponge through and through. Not a single part of the sponge will remain dry. That is receiving. The water becomes part of the sponge. There is no separate identity any more. In jnana yoga the ability of the mind to become like a sponge happens in the third stage, called *tanumanasa*, while the previous two stages prepare the ground.

Preparing the ground

The first foundation or *bhumika* of jnana yoga is *shubhechha*, creating a positive intention. It is a small beginning, but it allows you to develop your awareness and extend it to all the little things that can happen to alter the peace and balance of your mind and your responses.

The desire to remove any stone or piece of dirt that you see on the clean floor is the first *bhumika* of jnana yoga. The desire to keep your room clean, not allowing dirt to

accumulate, picking up any piece of paper that you see fallen on the floor and putting it in the bin, is shubhechha. It is the positive intention and the corresponding action to maintain order and the natural state of peace, contentment and balance. The beginning that you make with shubhechha and then holding on to that idea reduces the negative inputs of the malas and vikaras, the impositions and the deformities of the mind. Then picking up one item and reflecting on that, going deep into it, is *vicharana*, the second bhumika or platform.

Vicharana can only happen when you have established yourself in the first platform of shubhechha. When the platform of shubhechha is firm, vicharana happens naturally, as now you have a positive mind, a mind that is able to see, observe, analyze, accept or reject. You can now see the value or worthlessness of any object or situation. The positive powers of the mind come to play with shubhechha. Using this positive power of the mind, you can now pick up one item and discover its cause.

As an adult, you are used to ascribing a cause to everything. Can you be happy without any cause? No. You are always looking for a cause to be happy. When you don't have a cause, you are unhappy as there is nothing to identify happiness with. Where is the shortcoming? The shortcoming is in the mind which does not recognize happiness as a continuous state but is identifying happiness as piecemeal, connecting it with different causes: 'If I have this, I will be happy; if I do this I will be happy; if I am this I will be happy; if I get this I will be happy.' You attach little causes to the idea and experience of happiness.

Discovering the cause takes place in vicharana, reflection or contemplation. You find out the real source of your response, which lies in one of the six chapters of the mind-book. The mind-book is comprised of six chapters, and everything is written there; nothing is new. All you need to do is identify from which chapter an idea has come. Is it from the chapter of kama, from the chapter of krodha, from the chapter of moha, lobha, mada, matsarya?

When you identify the chapter, when you locate the source, can you separate that cause from the experience? This separation is what helps you become positive, and if not positive at least to develop neutrality. It helps you come out of the conditioning of the cause, and after that you can connect with positivity, with a positive cause. If you are unable to reach the state of positivity, be neutral, be objective, be the drashta. When you are connected to that negative cause, you identify with it, but when you are the drashta you are not identifying yourself with it, you are neutral. Although you are following a train of thought, ‘Today this person disturbed me, fought with me, I am under stress for this reason, I am having this problem, I am having this difficulty, I had this conversation, it hurt me,’ whatever it may be, you just go and see what the cause was. See what associated experiences or responses were being developed. The cause can be one, but the responses can be caused by its many arms as well. Thus, identifying the six chapters and the connection of your thoughts with the six chapters, and then becoming free of it is the contemplation, vicharana.

TANUMANASA: THE THIRD FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

Just as in vicharana you searched for the cause of your disturbance in the six chapters of the mind-book, now you close the mind-book and go and look at another level, and that is known as tanumanasa. That is the third bhumika, where the contemplation becomes deep enough to understand the subtle levels and the experiences of the greater mind, the *mahat* mind.

The mahat mind or *antahkarana*, the inner instrument, is comprised of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. For the sake of understanding, it can be said that the gross mind, the interactive mind in the world of senses and sense objects, is the mind-book of six chapters. Whereas the mind that governs both the outer and the internal life is mahat. Mahat deals with the interaction with the external world as well as

the internal spiritual dimension, whereas the six chapters of krodha, moha, lobha, etc. deal only with the outer world and not with spiritual experiences.

Purifying mahat

As you progress in tanumanasa, the different aspects of mahat come into play and are observed. You see the influence of a situation on manas, the influence of a situation on buddhi, the influence of a situation on chitta as it brings up many connected memories, and the relationship of the event with ahamkara. You begin working with the manas level and clearing it out. 'Did manas analyze the situation wrongly? Was my assessment incorrect?' That is the manas reflection. 'Where did I go wrong? I could have given my baby a candy to keep him quiet rather than putting him in a separate room.' That is a reflection of manas. 'Where did I go wrong? Could I have improved the situation? Could I have done better and avoided the negative?'

Then you work with buddhi in relation to the same situation, and ask yourself, 'Did my buddhi come to a wrong conclusion? Did my buddhi fail to apply understanding and common sense and wisdom? Maybe it was a failure of my buddhi as well.' It is possible that in a given situation manas was okay, but there was a failure of buddhi, as the knowledge or wisdom did not kick in.

Similarly, you work with chitta: you witness all the associated memories that come up in a situation, and see how they can be cleared and eliminated. Once these three – manas, buddhi and chitta – are cleared and purified, the single strand of ahamkara becomes lighter without the weight of the other three holding it down. Instead of being heavy and tamasic, ahamkara becomes sattwic.

Managing the gunas

After observing manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, the next stage in tanumanasa is observing the three gunas. When an incident, event or situation takes place, which guna is it

triggering? Rajo guna, tamoguna or sattwa guna? What is the effect, the feeling of that guna in your heart and mind? Live the colour of that guna in your heart and in your mind. If it is dark and tamasic, live that, observe that, but then come out of it. Clear the influence of that guna from the heart and mind. If it is rajasic, observe that. See the redness of rajas and then clear it. Clear the influence of that guna. If it is the luminous sattwa and you see that it is nourishing and uplifting, then encourage and strengthen that. So in the second level of tanumanasa, you observe and then clear the three gunas.

Once you start working with the gunas you will notice another thing, which is the next level: clearing the mind of all influences. You get influenced by what other people tell you. If you have had a nice relaxing experience and tell your friend, "I had a beautiful experience", and the friend says, "Wow! How nice, you are so fortunate", even that "Wow! How nice, you are so fortunate" is conditioning your brain.

If somebody says something bad about you, you are more likely to reject it. It won't condition you as much. You will say, 'Ignore that person, he is saying that because he doesn't know what I have done.' If a person says something good about you, that will have a stronger influence on your psyche as it will boost your ego. Here you have to be watchful and clear so that no matter who says what, whether someone praises you or abuses you, your gunas are at peace and you are not reacting.

An incident from the life of Buddha indicates this state. A man came, stood before Buddha and started to abuse him left, right and centre. After he had vented his anger and his throat had gone hoarse from yelling, he became silent. Now Buddha said, "Can you answer a question of mine?" The man said, "What?" Buddha said, "You are a guest in somebody's house and you go with a gift in your hand. You offer the gift to the man of the house, and he does not accept it. What do you do?" The man said, "I take back the gift." Buddha said, "Exactly. So all that you have given me, I am not accepting it. I am returning it to you. Take it back."

Buddha could have reacted in a normal manner like you would have, tied your dhoti and got ready for a fight. Which guna would that have instigated? Which guna would it have strengthened? Rajo guna. However, by maintaining his balance Buddha strengthened sattwa guna. Therefore, if you can maintain your balance, you can stop and observe the response of your own gunas and not allow the gunas to palpitate your heart but help you smile in even the most difficult conditions. If you can do that, then suffering is lessened by seventy-five percent.

Thus it is not just the influence of other people but also the influence of the lower vrittis that one has to be observant of. It is not only other people but also the gremlins that play havoc underground in your life that you have to watch out for. You have to be watchful of those little bugs that remain underground even though you can't see them on the surface. The outer influences, the inner perceptions, and the influence of the inner perceptions, all have to be seen and balanced.

Accessing samskaras and intuition

As you become more established in tanumanasa, you access the *vijnanamaya kosha*, the psychic sheath of the personality, and you observe and analyze your samskaras, drives and motivations. What drives you is your samskaras. If you like to go and eat in restaurants, it is your samskara; if you like to spend time alone, it is your samskara; if you like to spend time listening to music, it is your samskara; if you spend your time painting, it is your samskara. Hobbies, habits, ideas, they all emerge from this inner drive of samskaras. They have to be observed and analyzed.

As you observe your samskaras, intuition begins to develop due to this intense self-observation and self-awareness. Now the mind is breaking all the boundaries of tamas and the bondage of the senses and sense objects. The mind is attaining purification from its colourings caused by the outer world and dimension.

As you develop your intuition, it becomes a part of your natural lifestyle, like instincts. When instincts come into play, there is no thinking, and instincts are always for self-preservation. The focus of instincts is always self-preservation. Similarly, the focus of intuition is always connection with higher knowledge, the unconditional knowledge. With the dropping of the mental dross, and the lessening of the content in the mind, the lessening of the content from manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, the effulgence of knowledge develops, becomes brighter, and intuition becomes an experience.

This intuition is the effect of becoming established in tanumanasa. The result is that there is appropriateness in life, as appropriateness is an outcome of having developed intuitive knowledge. Then everything that you think and do is appropriate; there is no flaw in it. Many people who have seen Sri Swamiji and interacted with him, have seen this nature in him: his intuitive flawless understanding. That is the state of tanumanasa, where the mind is clear and pure.

Constant effort

Remember that even if you are able to reach the state of tanumanasa, it is easy to slip out of it and again connect with the lower vrittis and tendencies of the mind. This happens when a constant and continuous effort is not there. That is when you again become caught up in subjectivity and the game of the six. So again you have to bring in the awareness and the sankalpa shakti.

It is the determination, the conviction and the will to complete the journey that becomes your strength and the vehicle for you to ride on. Therefore, sankalpa shakti and drashta bhava must be applied in every stage of jnana yoga. Without them jnana yoga is never complete. Without them jnana yoga can never be an experience, it only remains an intellectual exercise.

Breaking out of the shell

The first three bhumikas represent the effort that you make while the next four bhumikas represent the attainments of the effort. The next stages are: *sattwapatti*, reaching the state of luminosity; *asamsakti*, non-attachment; *padartha abhavana*, lack of feeling for objects of the world; and *turyaga*, becoming one who moves from this dimension into the fourth dimension of turiya. Turyaga is the final stage of jnana yoga where you leave awareness of the material dimension and connect with the higher fourth dimension. The traveller from three dimensions to the fourth is known as turyaga.

In the first three stages of effort, the first is a very small effort. Shubhechha, the intention, is just a tiny point of light. It is twenty percent of the whole range of effort you need to make. The next one, vicharana, reflection, is a slightly bigger effort, forty percent. The third one, tanumanasa, accessing the subtle mind, is the biggest effort, seventy percent. In the first bhumika there is cultivation of good intentions and awareness. In the second bhumika, there is reflection and you see the six chapters of the mind-book, and establish yourself in drashta bhava. In the third, there is seeing and clearing the manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, then the three gunas, then the influences, whether good or bad. Tanumanasa indicates that you are clearing the whole subtle mind, *tanu*: subtle, *manas*: mind, to establish yourself in intuitive wisdom and attain that pure awareness. The next four bhumikas are expressions and attainments resulting out of perfecting the first three bhumikas.

Do you now realize that jnana yoga is not just self-enquiry but is much deeper than that? It is more of purification and realization of what one can be. The first three stages represent the methodology and the next four represent what you attain. However, these attainments are not like getting a degree; they indicate an inner change.

What is the attainment of a seed? To become a tree? No. That is its destiny. The attainment of a seed is breaking out

of its shell. The hard shell has to break. That is the final attainment of the seed, after that nature takes over, destiny takes over. It is the breaking of the shell that you have to aspire for, in a manner that is not detrimental but provides clear vision and perspective, hope and optimism. Then all the good tattwas that are in the seed will come together to become a beautiful plant. That has to be the focus of your effort.



The Attainments of Jnana Yoga

7 November 2015

The first three platforms or *bhumika* in jnana yoga represent the effort of the individual. The first is cultivation of positive intention, forming and deepening of the sankalpa shakti, so you focus on what you are going to do next and what you need to achieve. That is *shubhechha*, the identification and development of positive intention.

Next comes *vicharana*: contemplation, with the desire to change. Through that contemplation you identify which trait is being highlighted that you need to change. So first comes the positive intention, shubhechha, and to achieve that intention you have to go through a process of contemplation, vicharana, to balance out the trait which is being highlighted.

The third stage is *tanumanasa*, clearing all the levels of the inner mental perceptions from chitta, manas, buddhi and ahamkara, clearing the three gunas, clearing the influences and samskaras, and reaching into vijnanamaya kosha.

A lifelong effort

The progression through these three bhumikas can take years; it is not a matter of weeks or months. Somebody asked me this morning, “How do we know that we are ready to move from one level to another?” Don’t think of the ‘next’ level. Think of the first one and live that. By living the first, you will come to a point where you will naturally move to the

next. You will understand it to the extent that you will begin to feel, ‘Okay, now what?’ All the little things become known to you when you live a condition and keep an open mind, and then you naturally progress beyond.

If you keep your eyes open when cleaning with a broom, you can see where the dirt is and nobody has to tell you, “There is dirt here. You have left dirt there. Come and sweep here, come and sweep there.” Your own vision indicates whether the place is clean or not. The instruction is: clean the place. That becomes your vision and you ask yourself, ‘Is this place clean or is there dirt anywhere?’ When your awareness again sweeps the area and you are able to say, ‘No, there is not a single speck of dirt anywhere’, then you know that it is clean.

While cleaning the area, nobody is guiding you or telling you what to clean. In the same manner, nobody needs to guide you in shubhechha. If someone needs to guide you, you are not ready for jnana yoga. Similarly, if someone has to guide you in vicharana then you are not ready for jnana yoga. You are trying to learn the lessons of a higher class before completing the lessons of the previous classes of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. By the time you come to jnana yoga, to that level of observation, analysis and understanding, you should be able to deal with the basic structure of the mind.

In jnana yoga you have to deal with the vrittis, calm them, pacify them, silence them. If they are creating agitation, how you can focus on jnana? If you are sitting in a room trying to watch your favourite TV show and your children are screaming and playing their games around you, how much are you able to focus on the TV show and how much are you distracted? Similarly in jnana yoga, how much are you able to focus, absorb, know and understand? Therefore, just maintain yourself at one level and when that area gets cleaned, the thought will come naturally, ‘Okay, now what? Where do I go next?’ without your having to judge yourself.

You should not have the expectation, ‘I have done this, now I am ready for that.’ How can you judge, what reference do you have to know whether you are on the right track or not? That is why in jnana yoga there are only bhumikas. You can remain at one level for a month or a lifetime or you may progress after three, four or five years. There is no specific time; it is not as if you have to complete the course within a specific period. Whatever time is required to deal with yourself is the time given.

One man saw a grandfather clock. He wanted to wind it up and get it working again but the grandfather clock said, “Stop.” The man was surprised and he said, “Why are you asking me to stop?” The grandfather clock said, “You know what you are doing? By winding me up you are doing an injustice to me. Just imagine how many minutes, how many hours, how many days, how many months, I will be ticking and ticking and ticking. I am already tired thinking about it, so don’t wind me up.” The man said, “I will wind you up, but instead of thinking about how long you are going to tick, just think of the first tick and then the next one and then the next one.” In the same way, just focus on the first tick and after that another first tick and then another first tick. Don’t think about how many times you are going to tick and for how many months, but remain focused on the tick which is happening at present. In jnana yoga, remain focused on the first tick and don’t think beyond.

SATTWAPATTI: THE FORTH FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

When you have become established in the first three bhumikas, then the next four attainments come naturally. The first attainment is *sattwapatti*: *sattwa* is luminosity, goodness, and *patti* indicates reaching the state of luminosity and goodness. Therefore, *sattwapatti* means that now you establish yourself in the luminous state, you are no longer in the state of enquiry, observation or analysis.

Remember that you have already gone through the first three bhumikas. So what is the natural progression? After you have cleared your lower mind of the six chapters and your greater mind of the four aspects of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahankara, you have cleared the three gunas, the influences and samskaras, then what is left? Only neutrality, only transparency. It is like becoming a crystal ball that is not reflecting anything but is transparent and neutral. That is the state of sattwapatti.

Here nothing is affecting you, the mind is not taking on any colour from the outer or inner inputs or influences. If you put a crystal ball on top of a cloth, you see the colour of the cloth reflected in it, but when the cloth is removed, the cause is removed, what remains? Just the transparency of the crystal, and that is neutral. It is like going into neutral gear. You have driven yourself through the first, second and third gears, and now sattwapatti is where no cause is moving you but you are in a state of luminosity, balance, harmony, equipoise. Nothing is affecting your mind, you are in that neutral transparent nature, clear nature. That is the attainment. The whole perspective shifts; when there is no cause for the mind to identify with one of the six traits then the whole perception changes.

How do you know that the perspective has changed? When, in a situation of conflict or crisis, your thoughts don't reflect any negative aspect of the crisis, that is an indication that your mind has become crystal clear. When you don't fall prey to subjectivity and negativity, rather the thought comes, 'How can I help improve the situation?' When you look forward to dealing with that situation in a happy, optimistic and positive manner thinking, 'I can improve this situation', rather than, 'Oh God, now I have to go and fix that mess.' There is a difference. One is a pessimistic attitude and the other is an optimistic attitude. When feeling and intensity are there, 'Yes, I have been given an opportunity to improve something!' and you don't see the situation as a problem, obstacle or impediment to your growth and attainment, then

the nature of the thinking reflects sattwapatti, the sattwic conditioning of the whole mind.

First expression of sattwapatti: selfless giving

This sattwic conditioning of the mind, 'I can improve the situation' is connected with the idea of giving, not with the idea of taking. The self-oriented thoughts and actions suddenly become selfless; they become outgoing thoughts and expressions. There is more connection to 'give' and less with 'take', and this is a natural progression in life. The attainment of jnana yoga is that you are no longer focusing on what you can get, but on what you can do to improve the situation, the environment or the association. With this focus there is a natural tendency to extend one's efforts to improve things all around, and that is the beginning of giving.

When you think, 'What can I give?' you begin to give to people around you. There is another aspect to this attitude: you also begin to give to people who are not immediately around you. For example, you may help to improve the situation in your country or city. You may help poor people, refugees, or other groups of people who need assistance in one form or another. You may also inspire others to help them so it becomes a social involvement. However, beyond that, there is another level of giving.

Second expression of sattwapatti: transmission of vidya

In the state of sattwapatti, if you connect with the guru tattwa you will become its conduit and develop the ability to impart the vidya to others. The giving will not only be social work, but there will be a purpose; transmission of another level of knowledge will take place in your giving. That is the giving of the guru tattwa. The vidya is the guru tattwa. Connection with the guru tattwa at the time of giving is the point here. You are not just doing social charity; you are also reviving that connection with purity and the vidya, reviving that connection with sattwa.

You are now acting in the world endowed with the power of guru's grace. When you connect with people and situations now, you are being propelled by that force, that energy. This is when vidya is not used for self-gratification, but to uplift people. In the normal state, vidya is always used for self-gratification, but in the sattwic state self-gratification is not the purpose, sharing and giving is.

Third expression of sattwapatti: happiness without cause

This is also when, for the first time in your life, you realize what it is to be happy without a cause. We have talked about being happy without a cause, here it becomes an experience. We had the idea in the three initial levels of jnana yoga, now it becomes an experience. The moment you have that experience of happiness without a cause, without identification with the ego, desire, expectation, or any positive or negative content, but with an understanding that the correct and the appropriate is happening – that is being established in the nature of sattwa and expressing the nature of sattwa.

**ASAMSAKTI: THE FIFTH FOUNDATION
OF JNANA YOGA**

The fifth bhumika of jnana yoga is *asamsakti*, which means non-attachment. Again, this is a natural progression. If you are established in sattwapatti, you don't have to cultivate non-attachment. When you are established in the state of giving, what are you attached to? Giving naturally creates non-attachment. Taking is attachment, so when you are in the process of giving, then asamsakti is attained. You are not attached to your actions, ideas or thoughts, you are just doing your duty as a responsibility, as a *kartavya*, obligation. That obligation is not towards any other individual, but it is your obligation to your Creator.

What is your obligation to your Creator? To make everybody happy. That was the purpose of God's creation. The

purpose of God's creation was not to make everybody sad and carry a sour face, it was to make everybody happy. It was to connect with the beauty of life, the *sundaram* of life. When there is a distribution of *sundaram*, then there is no attachment to anything material, and there is acceptance.

I am not talking of non-attachment as rejection. Don't think of non-attachment as rejection and don't think of attachment as possession. Attachment is where you identify with what is there, with a sense object; you see it as an inseparable part of yourself, your life and life expressions. That identification is attachment. When the inseparableness is dropped, then there is no attachment. It is the 'inseparable' idea that creates the desire to hold on: 'I don't want to be separated from this, I want to hold on to it as it gives me happiness, safety, security.' That identification was dropped in *sattwapatti* when you no longer wanted to hold on to anything but give and share it all. Therefore, the natural outcome of *sattwapatti* now manifests as *asamsakti*. When the desire to give becomes prominent then where is the self and where is selfishness? *Asamsakti* is where *sattwa* becomes an expression in life and there is no imposition of the identification and association with sense objects.

PADARTHA ABHAVANA: THE SIXTH FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

The sixth *bhumika* of *jnana yoga* is *padartha abhavana*. *Padartha* means object and *abhavana* is lack of feeling. Therefore *padartha abhavana* means lack of feeling for objects. This 'lack of feeling' should not be taken as moroseness; it is the absence of possessiveness towards objects.

In this absence of possessiveness there is only appreciation of beauty and no desire to possess it. You can experience the beauty, you can experience the colours, you can see the paintings of Van Gogh, you can hear the compositions of the masters, you can admire and appreciate them, but there is no feeling of, 'Oh I want to possess it.' The same principle

applies with everything in life, with all other attachments in life. Your wife is there, you respect and honour her, but you do not identify with her as you did before. Your husband is there, you respect and honour him, but you do not identify with the same attachment that you had before. Your Alpha Romeo is there, previously you would get annoyed if there was a scratch on it, now even if somebody crashes it you will take a few deep breaths and control yourself! That is padartha abhavana. Remaining detached.

This is a continuation of the state of asamsakti, for when there is no identification then there is no idea of possessiveness either. The idea of possessiveness comes when you are identifying something with an aspect of your own needs, demands, expectations or desires. If there is a need, demand, expectation or desire, identification will take place.

Children go to a shop and see a particular toffee on a shelf. While they are walking around with their mother, they will go on asking for the toffee, “Can I have that one, can I have that one, can I have that one?” If there is no identification with sense objects, you are free. Once there is an identification, you are caught. Without identification you are free because there is no possessiveness. It is possessiveness that leads to maya. When you are in the state where you do not need to possess anything then you are empty. Empty within, empty without and surrounded by emptiness, and yet full within and full without and surrounded by fullness. As it is said in the *Yoga Vasishtha*:

*Antah shoonyo bahih shoonyah shoonyah kumbha ivaambare;
Antah poorno bahih poornah poornakumbha ivaarnave.*

He is empty within and empty without, like an empty pot in space;

He is full within and full without like a (water-) filled pot in the ocean.

TURYAGA: THE SEVENTH FOUNDATION OF JNANA YOGA

Finally, you come to the seventh bhumika of jnana yoga, turyaga. *Turyaga* means moving in the fourth state, or one who has gone beyond the fourth state. This fourth state represents the ultimate, however you define the ultimate. In describing this state, the *Yoga Vasishtha* says:

Manovachobhiragraahyaa.

It is not graspable by the mind and words.

Thus, these are the seven levels of jnana yoga: three efforts and four attainments. The final attainment is becoming turyaga, the unspoken level which is beyond words and cannot be grasped by the mind.

Second initiation

To end our discussion, I will tell you a story. In a small town an accident happened, and people gathered around with concern. In the crowd was also the local news reporter. He wanted to go closer to see what had happened, but due to the crowd he couldn't. So he hit upon an idea: he started crying false crocodile tears, and screaming at the top of his voice, "Let me go through, I am the father of the victim, I need to see him. He is my son." People made way, and gradually he made it to the front, crying and screaming, pushing and shoving. When he reached the spot, there he saw, hit by a passing car – a donkey!

So make sure your jnana is accurate and not for the sake of impressing people or serving your own ends, or you will end as the father of a donkey!

As a spiritual aspirant, after you have gone through hatha yoga, raja yoga and other practical yogas, ultimately you have to establish yourself in jnana yoga. Ultimately and finally, you have to establish yourself in jnana yoga: in connecting with the understanding. It is that understanding and awareness which must guide the emotional feelings and the sensorial actions.

In the yogic sequence, the physical, the mental and the psychic components of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga are to train yourself. Then you come to karma yoga, to interact in the world; to bhakti yoga, to connect with the family and the divinity which is beyond attachment, where the connection is a deeper connection; and finally to jnana yoga, which is what you must live ultimately, as it represents the understanding of what one is and where one is going. It is through jnana yoga that you can see your own markers and how much you have progressed.

Therefore, begin your journey into jnana yoga and connect with the vidya. If the intention to connect with the vidya is there, it is like a second initiation. The first initiation was the physical one, when somebody gave you a name, a cloth, and a mantra. You made the effort to do your mantra. Now, to connect with the vidya you have to become serious, focused and committed. If you are, then the little pains here and there should not deter you. Before you were connected to the vidya, you were aware of these things. Now that you are aware of the vidya, you should drop the awareness of these things and remain true to your commitment. That sankalpa is the re-initiation that we are taking by coming together in the spirit of imbibing the yogic vidya, the yogic lifestyle, the yogic culture.

Hari Om Tat Sat



Meditation on Developing the Drashta Awareness

The purpose of this meditation is to develop an understanding of what it really means to be a drashta. Is it simply that a thought comes, an idea comes, a vision comes – and you keep looking at it? Is that all? No, being a drashta is much more than that. To watch a thought, etc. is the beginning, the primary class, of drashtaship, but then you go much further, as we will discover in this practice.

Step 1: (Preparation) Sit down comfortably, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, eyes gently closed. Become aware of the whole body, awareness of the whole physical body . . . and make yourself comfortable . . . If there is anything tight then loosen it, if you are uncomfortable then adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable.

Step 2: For a few moments just watch the body, be the drashta of your body. As an observer, with detachment, identify the state of the body at present, identify the predominant experiences of the body – comfort, discomfort, restlessness, stillness, ease, unease, tension, relaxation, balance, imbalance, heaviness, lightness. Become aware of all the predominant experiences of the physical body. Identify them, watch them, observe them . . . just be a witness to every experience of the body.

Now, bring the body to a state of stillness and ease. With your willpower, direct your body to be steady and still . . . And experience the space, the silence within.

Step 3: Now watch the state of your pranas, the state of the flow of energy in your body . . . the state of the experience of energy in your body. Be the drashta of your pranic state. Do you experience the prana in your body as heat, as a flow, as tingling? Is there more prana in one area and less in another? Become the drashta of your pranamaya experience.

Now, with the use of the will, make the pranas balanced . . . feel a homogeneous flow, a smooth river of prana in the whole body, from head to toes.

Step 4: From the pranas, take the awareness to your mind and become the drashta of your mind, observe the state of your mind. What is the predominant state of your mind at the present moment? What was the predominant state of your mind during the day today? Identify the state the mind was in for the majority of time, whether it was restless, one-pointed, tense, relaxed, drowsy, expectant, confused, irritable, clear, happy, balanced, positive, or something else . . .

Once again, use the power of your will to release every state of mind and bring it to only that of relaxed one-pointedness, to total focus without feeling stressful.

Step 5: In this state of relaxed one-pointedness, observe the thoughts passing through your mind. You may think that there are no thoughts, or that the only thought is 'I am doing the practice', but look deeper, and see the underground, the background thoughts, the thoughts that are likely to come to you when you do your japa, meditation, or sit quietly . . . Let these thoughts come to the surface, and see what they are. They may relate to a person, a situation, an experience . . . 'My back hurts' can be a thought, 'I met such and such person' another thought, 'I liked the sabzi at lunch' another thought, 'I like that person', 'I dislike that person', 'I could improve that situation' . . . whatever the thoughts are, just watch.

Step 6: Now pick up one thought that has rattled you, that created a negative state in you. It may relate to something that happened this morning, yesterday, last week, last month, during the year – but it is a thought that is creating disharmony in you. Identify which of the six traits this thought has triggered – is it desire . . . is it anger . . . is it delusion . . . is it arrogance . . . is it greed . . . is it envy? Which of the six is playing in your mind? With detachment, without feeling guilty, and with total honesty, identify the trait, knowing that you are undertaking this process to be free of that trait.

Now watch the associated thoughts that come up due to this thought . . . watch how the mind exaggerates a thought into many forms. You are familiar with this process, you do it every day: bring it into your conscious awareness. Be aware of how one negative thought multiplies into many negative thoughts. Use your discrimination to be aware of this exaggeration. Use your awareness to be aware of this mental exaggeration.

Also watch if any other influence comes in to add to that thought. Maybe someone said something, maybe you read something, maybe negative thought waves in the air added and enhanced your experience. See if you can identify these influences and observe them, see if you can separate your experience from the influence.

Go deeper, explore further, go deeper into yourself, into your mind, into your psyche. Find what experiences, ideas, samskaras, impressions are stored in you that relate to these thoughts. Bring them up and watch them dispassionately.

And now, in that deeper mind, create the experience of positivity and sattwa. Use the power of will, the sankalpa shakti, to create this positive experience. It may be in the form of a specific quality that you feel you need to counter the negative state, such as understanding, compassion, kindness, tolerance, respect, inclusiveness, humility – or it may be a general experience of positivity in the form

of luminosity. Put aside any kind of negativity or tamas from the mind and connect with a harmonious, happy and positive state.

Allow the experience of this positivity to become strong, feel it expand until it has erased all the negative impressions and thoughts that were playing in your mind. Experience the surge of positivity. And in that positivity, allow yourself to be balanced, tranquil, calm, silent and still.

Step 7: Now let go of this experience, this inner awareness, and become aware of the outer environment.

Bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre and visualize the image of a candle flame. Fix your attention on the image of the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra Om three times.

Slowly bring the hands together, rub the palms, feel the heat in the palms, place them over the closed eyes and then slowly open your eyes.



Notes

Notes

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 1995 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

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

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

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



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

From 1st to 7th November 2015, Swami Niranjanananda gave a series of satsangs during the Yoga Chakra program held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. The program was part of the ongoing effort to develop the next chapter of yoga where the focus is on connecting with *yoga vidya*, the essence of yogic knowledge, and exploring the deeper dimensions of yoga.

The theme of the satsangs was jnana yoga, one of the spokes in the six-spoked *yoga chakra*, the wheel of yoga. Swamiji explained the sequential process inherent in this yoga, which is often misunderstood as abstract self-enquiry. Beginning with *shubhechha*, positive intention, and ending at *turyaga*, transcendental awareness, the seven-step ladder of jnana yoga leads one to apply the learning and develop strength of wisdom. This allows one to manage the negative manifestations of the mind and experience inner positivity and purity. To live jnana in this form does require immense willpower and mental clarity, but Swamiji invited every sadhaka to embark on this path – with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.



ISBN : 978-93-84753-56-6