

GUIDE TO YOGA MEDITATION

BY

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PUBLISHERS NOTE

THESE MONOGRAPHS presented by the International Board of Yoga, on a single or specific aspect of Yoga, are meant to clarify the genuine ideals, concepts and technology of classic Yoga.

This little booklet is compiled from the published and unpublished manuscripts of Shri Yogendraji's writings on Yoga since 1916 and other articles published in the *Journal of The Yoga Institute*.

The earnest student of classic Yoga, hoping to achieve meditation is offered this guide to explain what preliminaries are essential for success in meditation. There can be no meditation without Yoga and there can be no Yoga without meditation. It may be noted that classic Yoga meditation is different from other forms of meditation which do not represent the ultimate stages of Yoga – consciousness absolute (*kaivalya*).

TO
YOGISVARA PARAMAHANSA MDAHAVADASAJI

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UNDERSTANDING MEDITATION

MEDITATION AS YOGA

Supernatural and supranormal events and conditions attracted the attention of even the average mind, first as curiosity, later emerging as vague concentration. The controlling of the mind as a physical effort is termed fortitude (*tapa*) where the individual remains unaffected by the changes taking place around him. This was recognized as an achievement. Thus “achieving the unachieved” in the *Rig Veda* period was referred to as Yoga. Further, *tapa* also became associated with *dhyana* simultaneously because of similar achievement at the mental level; *tapadhyana* in the Vedic sense was acclaimed as Yoga.

ORIGINS OF CLASSIC YOGA

Searching through psychological sequence of experience, Patanjali did not admit *tapdhyana* either as synonymous or as the ultimate of classic Yoga. The simulated meditation manipulated through various devices including drugs, hypnosis, penance, mass frenzy austerities, etc, was equally repugnant to classic Yoga.

Tapa at primary physical level was given its place as one of the observances (*niyama*) while meditation (*dhyana*) was included in *samyama* – concentration-meditation-trance complex. Patanjali specially particularized the classic Yoga as the Eight-fold path of Yoga (*astanga yoga*) and absorbed

tapa and *dhyana* respectively as primary and secondary essentials.

YOGA FOR KNOWING THE UNKNOWN

Moreover, behind the superficial knowledge of things with *names* and *forms*, there lies within everyone a deep-rooted craving for the knowledge of things *unknown*. The nature of *Self* is one such unknown, and the innermost desire of many intelligent beings is to secure during his lifetime all possible knowledge about one's Self. This quest – this search for the knowledge of the Self is at once both universal and eternal.

Thus, the struggle to know this "I" which is able to stand against the entire burden of this creation, the "Not-I," to discriminate the one from the other, and finally to realize the true nature of "I" has necessarily been very intense throughout all ages and civilizations. It may be even interpreted that the entire history of mankind, especially the efforts at civilization and culture are nothing else but mere approaches to the proper understanding of this great factor, the Man – the true MAN (*purusa*) within the man.

Fortunately, one fact seems to have become fully recognized by now, that is that the Self is neither this physical body nor the mind, both of which are knowable and transitory. The Self is therefore something unknown and unchangeable. Also, that it is the duty of every individual to investigate its true significance and, if possible, to attain the realization of this Self.

THE KNOWER AND THE KNOWN

The theoretical knowledge of Self available through analytical studies and indirect cognition of both science and metaphysics respectively impress the *yogin* as something imperfect and consequently unsatisfactory, for it lacks direct and intimate contact with the object of knowledge. Mysticism has been successful and even acceptable to the *yogin* as a means of understanding the Self, but it cannot be denied that while it tries to bring the knower in harmony with what is known, the whole process leaves no traces behind which the others can follow or which may even guide them to achieve identical results in the same manner. Yoga does not stop at the mere analysis of what is supposed to be Self in terms of metaphysics or physical sciences. It does not also consider the empirical methods of mysticism to be fully reliable for practical guidance and assured progress. It therefore proposes to evolve a culture of its own. What actually the *yogin* tries to do is to combine in his own way the exactitude of science and the intellectual analyses of metaphysics with the intuitive perception of mysticism and thereby evolve a practical process for realizing the Self which may be equitably termed scientific mysticism.

KNOWLEDGE VERSUS REALIZATION

It is thus clear that what the *yogin* seeks is not mere knowledge of the Self, not even the abstract realization that he is the Absolute, acquired through intellectual affirmations. With him everything is

Practical, and especially in such a supreme matter as the realization of the Self, inexactness has to be completely eliminated.

Let us quote an example bearing on the realization of the Self through Yoga. Of course, this is but one aspect of the many practical measures followed by the *yogins*. In the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (II, iv, 5/iv, v 6) it is suggested that the Self must be seen (*atma va are drstavyah*) and (*atma va are darsanen*) which means that one should strive not merely for the Self but also for the actual realization of it. The *yogin* defines this process of *seeing the Self* by a concrete metaphor, “as if with a lamp” (*dipopamena*). We refer here to the practical process known as the inner gaze (*antaradrsti*) which is recommended by and is quite popular with the *yogins*. Thus we are told by the Yoga authorities that they “see with their own eyes” (*netre drstuna*) the All-luminous Soul which cannot be realized by any other means. This shows how avoiding other indirect methods practical Yoga advocates and finally achieves what may best be termed concrete realization of the Self wherein there remains no doubts, wherein direct contact with the Self is established and after knowing which there remains nothing further to be known. Meditation is an aid in reaching this lofty goal.

ETHICAL BASE FOR YOGA MEDITATION

A clear conscience is regarded in classic Yoga as the first desideratum of any attempt to practice Yoga either physical, mental or spiritual. It is an established fact that a healthy state of mind has importance if success is to be assured in the achievement of anything above the normal. Freedom from emotions then allows for whole-hearted undertaking, which is capable not only of withstanding failures but of increasing enthusiasm to reach the desired end.

Modern scientific findings confirm how even the less distressing emotions cannot fail to leave behind a trail of ill-effects. As progressive intoxication brings a train of distortions, so do slow traumatic effects of the emotions bring forth functional crises even in a healthy organism and often exaggerate them in an unhealthy one, It is thus believed that anything which makes for emotional instability is likely to interfere with the steadiness of the normal level of consciousness

In fact no successful beginning in the practice of Yoga can be made before removing the turbidity of the mind. The importance and usefulness of a code of ethics in our daily life is entirely unquestionable not only for the attainment of high spiritual motives but also for mental and physical well-being. According to Dr. Therse Brosse, "The reason for the requirement of a code of morality is that, in terms of Yoga, the moral principles as such are

recognized as biological laws. The violation of these laws entails the destruction of health when violent psychophysiological forces are prematurely released in a personality yet not prepared to face them.” Ethical purity is thus the preliminary step since, according to Yoga, morality is the basis of spiritual unfoldment.

DISCIPLINARY YOGA

What then are the requirements of progress on the path of Yoga? For how can one begin Yoga with all sorts of physical, mental, moral and spiritual impurities, and still hope to achieve success in it? Such a course of conduct which an aspirant should follow, *right in the beginning*, is known as disciplinary Yoga and consists of both negative and positive norms of ethical virtues which are expected to purify the ordinary mind.

Being universal in their conception and application, and also being in complete harmony with teachings of all known religions and schools of thought, this preparatory stage is evidently emphasized among the Jain and Buddhist traditions besides the Yoga system. They are incumbent on all students of Yoga. They form a universal code of moral life and represent the initial aspect of the background of this ancient culture.

YAMA OR RESTRAINT

The first accessory in classic Yoga is known as restraint (*yama*).

UNIVERSAL ETHICAL NORMS

According to Patanjali, there are five restraints (*yamas*). They are (1) Non-violence (*ahimsa*), (2) Truthfulness (*satya*), (3) Non-Stealing (*asteya*), (4) Discipline of sex life (*brahmacarya*), and (5) Non-covetousness (*aparigraha*). These broad-based essentials and universal social virtues demand varying degrees of self-control throughout life and are indispensable to purification and steadiness of the mind so necessary for meditation.

The restraints (*yamas*) are thus recommended as the first step because it is very necessary to stop the outgoing tendency of the mind, where we are likely to get lost and no stable mind can be built up. “You tame a river by building a dam across it. You break a colt in a corral. You cannot do it otherwise, you cannot for example repair the engine of a car while the car is speeding away. It is in this act of stoppage or restraint that we succeed in carrying out the necessary changes. We cannot just become different from what we are unless we are prepared to let go of something of our old self. Overcoming our compulsive habits is a precursor to embarking on building up a newer pattern. Old opinions and old ways of behavior tend to inhibit newer and more creative processes to take roots.

Unfortunately our psychological tendencies grow out of our own biological being, and these biological impurities and drives make it difficult to take to a newer way of life. In Yoga, therefore, we first refer to the restraints rather than observances. First removal of the debris even before constructive

Progress is possible, seems right in this context. Breaking of old habits with a view to stop acting in a compulsive way, provides a chance to look at ourselves and thus gain steadiness.

IMPLICATIONS OF NON-INJURY

Any negative involvement with others causes problems especially when the normal mental level is affected. For example, if we cause pain to others, reactions are sure to come back to us. Nothing stops our progress in Yoga more than causing injury to others, because we are directly interfering with another's life. We unconsciously make others unhappy. Subconsciously we know that we hurt others and would not like the same to happen to ourselves. Memories of this come back as reaction (*karma*) when we are at our weakest. There can be no *karma* unless in some way we cause pain or injury. Thus difficulty is created by our own thoughts about others. The reactions may not be seen but their vibrations are felt. Feelings can be understood without words. We should be aware of others, their points of view, their feelings and should try to come down to their level and help them. Think of others and behave accordingly. This is a good training since it involves control over our inherent nature which need much disciplining over a period of time."

NON-VIOLENCE OF CLASSIC YOGA

The importance of non-violence (*ahimsa*) has been recognized by all humanists who see in its practice

The precious seed of self-improvement. In the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, non-injury (*ahimsa*) is mentioned as one of the principal forbearances that form the integral part of the eight subservients of concentration. These are directly conducive to meditation as they help to remove impurities of the personality-complex (*citta*). A close analysis of Patanjali's *Sutra* will reveal that by the sustained practice of *ahimsa* all impurities are destroyed and enlightenment of wisdom reaches discriminative knowledge.

In the process of practicing non-injury (*ahimsa*) there is likelihood of our mind being confronted with perverse thoughts and therefore Patanjali exhorts us to have habituation to the contrary feelings (*pratipaksabhavana*) when we are troubled by such perverse thoughts. We are also told that if the habit of non-violence is firmly established, all hostilities are given up in one's presence. This is also borne out in numerous examples one finds in religious works dealing with the atmosphere of the hermitages where the most ferocious of animals and the most timid could coexist in the same surroundings emitting the vibrations of non-violence (*ahimsa*).

In the *Mahabharata* (*Moksaparvan* 245, 18) it has been stated that just as all footprints of others get accommodated in those of the elephant, so do all religious and ethical virtues become merged in the great vow of *ahimsa*. A question then arises: if this is so, where is the necessity of all other Yoga restraints and observances? The Yoga authorities explain that the object of all other virtues is to render this *ahimsa* itself purer by turning away from evil

committed on account of forgetfulness, playfulness, or necessities having, of course, their origin in the injury to others.

CATEGORIES OF NON-VIOLENCE

Injury may be of three kinds: (i) *krta* or caused by oneself, (ii) *karita* or caused through others, and (iii) *anumodita* or approved. Again each of these injuries can be prompted by (i) greed born of temptation or *lobha*, (ii) anger born of ungratefulness and disappointment or *krodha*, (iii) delusion born of misconceived notions of pleasure and sense of duty or *moha*. The intensity of injury also varies considerably and may be further grouped in three varieties viz. (i) *mrdu* or mild, (ii) *Madhya* or moderate and (iii) *adhimatra* or intense.

Yogi Yajnavalkya in his *Yoga Samhita* (I,59ff) interprets *ahimsa* with other *yamas* as being threefold. It consists in not causing pain to any living being either by (i) speech (*vaca*), (ii) mind or *manasa* or (iii) actions or *karmana*. A combination of these various groups when analyzed singly or jointly really evolves infinite varieties of injury.

PERMISSIVE OPTIONS

Thus it is very nearly impossible for one to escape from causing pain to some being at some time in life, if the standard of Yoga ethics is to be maintained. Our purpose is not to elaborate these technicalities but to impress upon the mind of the aspiring student that the main cause of most pain

and suffering in this world is to be found in the evil of *himsa* or injury.

The *yamas* like *ahimsa*, is not limited by life state, place, time and circumstances, constitute the great universal vow (*mahavrta*). But later commentators on Yoga believe in a graded course of training from *anuvrata* (modified vows) to *mahavrata* (universal vows) thus recognizing fully the weakness of the flesh.

FRUITS OF NON-VIOLENCE

The adherence to *ahimsa* creates an atmosphere of friendliness and peace which brings about some form of steadiness of the mind, so essential on the path of meditation.

TRUTH IN CLASSIC YOGA

Among the universal vows imposed by Yoga, the next in importance to *ahimsa* (the observance of non-violence) is truth or *satya*.

IN PRAISE OF TRUTH

Exaggeration has to be tolerated in the praise of ultimate achievements and also in the eulogy of ethical merit. In the adoration of truth, i.e., both the ultimate and the unchangeable as well as the finite, the ancient authors rivaled each other. The *Upanisads* reveal to us for the first time in the history of Indian thought an earnest enquiry after truth in all its aspects. Thus, amidst all the diversities of cosmic change, they sought to find out the final truth which is unchangeable. In the

Mundakopanisad, truth is represented as the one and only means of knowing the Absolute.

The zealous exponents of this virtue claimed for truth a place even higher than *ahimsa*, notwithstanding the fact that the former is dependent on the later. We are thus told that there is nothing higher than Truth.

NATURE OF TRUTH

The Yoga authorities, however regard truth as merely auxiliary to *ahimsa* and is defined by Vyasa, the commentator of the *Yogasutras* (II, 30) as follows: “Truthfulness consists in word and thought being in accordance with the facts.” This describes the nature of truth. Now as to the nature of facts both the speech and mind should correspond to what has been seen, heard, and inferred. Otherwise how can it be truth? Speech is uttered with the object of transferring one’s thoughts to another, that is, for the purpose of creating in the other minds a knowledge similar to the knowledge existing in the mind of the speaker. Again, such speech must not be deceptive, i.e., appearing as innocent or true but where the speaker knows that he is not conveying the same thought which he holds at the time of uttering it. Deceptive speech and knowledge are born of selfishness or ignorance and even though the words uttered appear as true, the thought is dissimilar. Confused speeches are also regarded as not-true, such confusion may exist either at the time of speaking or at the time of ascertaining the object of knowledge. Also speech which is barren in

knowledge carrying no information is regarded as not-true. For example, the knowledge of the barbarians carries no impression of the objects of knowledge of the mind, and there is thus no accord between thought, words and facts. This also includes the speech which may be objectless. According to Yoga ethics, such speech is not desirable to be uttered. For, in this case, even though the knowledge of the speaker is transferred to the mind of the hearer, yet it is not, as it were, transferred because of its uselessness.

WHEN TRUTH IS NOT TRUTH

The most binding condition, however or truth – here we are discussing the aspects of finite truth and not the unchangeable truth – is that it should be employed solely for the good of others and not for their injury. If it is not so uttered, it is only a semblance of truth, not truth. In order to avoid conflict with the first and most meritorious observance of non-injury, the authorities have advised the students to test all truths by the canon of non-injury. Thus, if it proves to be injurious to living beings, even though uttered as truth, it is not truth. Take, for example, the case of a man who has taken the vow of truth, being asked by a gang of robbers if the caravan they were in pursuit of had passed that way. Of course, he has seen it passing that way and says so. But his utterance, even though it technically conveys truth, is not so in reality when measured by the Yoga ethics, as it tends to the injury of others. Vyasa and his

commentators, therefore, regard such injurious utterances as not only not-truth but even as sin. The contention is that though outwardly such a truthful course may be considered virtuous yet, since by his truth he has caused injury to other persons, he has in reality violated the true standard of Yoga ethics – the fundamental principle of ahimsa or non-injury.

LIMITATION OF TRUTH

Thus it is evident that in defining truth there are specific limitations for all that is simple, natural or obvious is not regarded as all-truth. The ideal of Yoga ethics has, therefore, imposed a series of limitations on truth firstly to harmonize it with its highest and most noble concept of non-injury and secondly to secure its undisturbed peace of body and mind during the course of its non-aggressive living by depriving truth of its natural roughness and inclemency.

In the comments on the *Yogasutra* it is argued that truth which is unpleasant and unprofitable (*ahitakari*) is not truth. Its five-fold significance is that when uttering such truth one should be free from (a) laughter or *hasya*, (b) greed or *lobha*, (c) fear or *bhaya* (d) anger or *krodha*, and further that (e) the same should be spoken with all due care and forethought.

Manu, the great Hindu law giver, further elaborates the limitations confining truth since, according to him, one should (i) neither speak unpleasant

Truths (*apriya satya*), (*ii*) nor pleasant untruths (*asatya priya*), for both are forbidden.

BETWEEN TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

The question arises as to what one should do under such circumstances. To meet this contingency the need for silence (*mauna*) is commended. The principle underlying this alternative is to secure a compromise between the vows of non-injury and truthfulness.

In the *Mahabharata* (Moksaparva) various alternatives have been offered to the students of Yoga with regard to the universal vow of truth. “Self-knowledge is the highest knowledge, there is nothing higher than Truth. Truthful speech is good but one should speak what is beneficial. What is of maximum benefit of the creatures is good according to me.”

Later commentators are diverse in their details of these limitations but one fact seems to have been fully realized by all of them and that is: Morality is the basis of our entire living and that truth is the substance of all morality. Therefore, let everyone first examine well (taking into account the entire field of influence) and then utter truth, not only for the sake of truth but for the benefit of all living beings, as Vyasa says. According to Patanjali when Truth is confirmed, then whatever a person says becomes fulfilled.

THEFT IS A SOCIAL EVIL

Non-stealing (*asteya*) is the virtue of abstaining from stealing. Theft is making one's own unlawfully,

things belonging to others. Abstinence from theft consists in the absence of the desire thereof. It is believed that when a man becomes steady in this virtue, all 'jewels' from different quarters approach him. Acquisitiveness is a common weakness of man. Usually the more he has, the more he desires. That is why spiritual and religious philosophies condemn stealing, which is not only immoral as an act but can soon pervert the healthy development of one's personality. Besides, as in the case of the other restraints, asteya has definite social implications. Acquisitiveness is not only damaging to the inner growth of an individual, but is also an offense against society.

SUBLIMATION OF SEX LIFE

Besides the two cardinal principles of motion and nutrition, every living cell or aggregation of cells possesses also the capacity for reproduction. The sexual sense and organs on which this entire process depends thus touches the very foundations of biological, moral and psychic life of man.

In the human beings the sexual instinct and its expressions have a very far reaching and decided influence on (1) psychic, (2) moral, (3) mental and (4) physical growth of the individual.

Psychic: It has been maintained during all ages and by all classes of spiritually inclined persons in all countries, that psychic evolution is not possible except through purity of sex matters. All the systems of spirituality therefore, either Indian or non-Indian, consider the control of the sex urge as

an essential requisite which is enforced upon the would-be students of spiritual life.

Moral: The moral influence of sex is evident in the classic social institutions and marriage rites and imposition of certain moral laws concerning sex matters and sex relations.

Mental: The sexual sense and its development is a far greater causative factor in the production of mental states than is commonly supposed. What is undoubted though hardly observed or fully realized and appreciated is that sexual problems get translated in many cases into mental problems. This principle, the relationship of sex to the mind, was thoroughly recognized by the ancient students of psychology in India.

Physical: The physiological significance of the sex instinct and sex hygiene is self-evident and reassured by our everyday observations during the growth of a boy into a man and a girl into a woman. Consistent with the hygienic effects of the sex organs, it has been rightly emphasized by physiologists of repute that the removal of the sex endocrine glands in either sex has a deleterious effect upon the mental and physical growth of an individual. The psychoanalysts interpret that the sexual impulses and energy become directed to more useful and not-sexual purpose in adult life through a process of sublimation. Should the sexual impulses and energies, however remain unsublimated or unexpunged, they become invariably manifested through various psycho-sexual perversions. Thousands of years ago, Yoga recognized

the full significance of all such issues, namely the need and usefulness of the process of sublimation, recommended the replacement, deflection or purification of the energy not only of the sexual impulses but also of the non-sexual mental modification (*cittavrtti*). This is best achieved by efforts of concentration and elevated moral and spiritual life, humanism, devotion and purity so necessary to deflect the mind from sexual impulses.

NIYAMAS OR OBSERVANCES

While the *yamas* are of a negative nature consisting of desisting (*nivrtti*) from certain things, the *niyamas* are positive and they enjoin actions (*pravrtti*). In the practice of the *niyamas* the *yogin* is concerned more with himself and less with the society.

There are five observances (*niyamas*). They are: (i) Purity (*sauca*), (ii) Contentment (*santosa*), (iii) Fortitude (*tapa*), (iv) Study of the Self (*svadhyaya*), and (v) Resignation to the will of the Absolute (*Isvarapranidhana*).

Purity

By *sauca* is meant cleanliness of both the body and the mind. Cleanliness of the body is brought about by the use of earth, water, and disinfectants. It also consists of eating purifying foods.

Cleanliness of the mind is brought about by the removal of mental impurities like pride, vanity, jealousy, anger, etc.

HOW TO REMOVE THE MENTAL IMPURITIES

The means for removal of mental impurities is through the cultivation of such compelling human virtues like universal brotherhood (*maitri*) universal sympathy (*karuna*), complacency (*mudita*) and non-violent non-cooperation with evil (*upeksa*).

Since passion and envy are the chief causes of distraction, when these are thoroughly eradicated, the cheerfulness that is induced allows for the concentration of the mind.

“By external cleanliness ensues disinclination to one’s body and cessation of contact with others. By internal cleanliness the *citta* becomes pure and one acquires high-mindedness, one-pointedness control of the senses and fitness for the knowledge of the Self.” (*Yogasutra* II, 40, 41).

CONTENTMENT

Santosa is the absence of desire to possess more than the necessities of life – more than is necessary for the preservation of one’s life. It should be added that it is the natural result of correction in respect of the appropriation of things belonging to others.

Study of self and introspection

The need for this discipline is quite obvious. It is the acquisition of the knowledge about self (*svadhyaya*) and its philosophy which also included the repetition of the sacred symbol *AUM*. “Like the man who is possessed of an idea, and who voluntarily devotes himself completely to his mission, the student of Yoga quietly engages himself, absorbed

in the study of the subject and the repetition of the sacred symbol *AUM*.” It is also said that “by steadiness through *svadhyaya*, the *rsis* and *siddhas* become visible to him who is blessed by them”.

Svadhyaya also included introspection while trying to find out the true nature of the Self through constant enquiry and deep penetrative self-study. This introspection makes one aware of the painful and non-painful tendencies present in one’s character and help him to augment and foster the non-painful tendencies in him, which eventually would give rise to a feeling of tranquility and clarity.

FORTITUDE

Tapa means the strength of remaining unaffected by such opposites as heat and cold, hunger and thirst, standing and sitting, etc. The psychosomatic immunity to the effects of pairs of opposites thus came to be regarded as a great virtue productive of the highest power. According to Geraldine Coster, the admitted purpose of bodily austerities is to break the rigidity of the automatism of habits at the physical level and to make the body more amenable to the dictates of the will. Preliminary Yoga demands a much more extensive loosening of the grip or tension than this, a relaxation not only of the physical habits but of the mental and emotional automatisms and this latter is a far subtler and difficult achievement.

Tapa for the mediocre

Vijnana Bhiksu includes in *tapa* many social and personal virtues that are not included in the

yamas and *niyamas*. Vacaspati following Vyasa in his comment on the first sutra in the *Sadhana Pada* warns that only so much of a purificatory action is to be performed that does not cause the disturbance of the equilibrium of physiologic forces. Together with *svadhyaya* and *isvarapranidhana*, *tapa* is regarded as the Yoga of action (*kriya yoga*) and is recommended for the middling types of students.

RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF THE ABSOLUTE

The word *isvarapranidhana* has two different interpretations in the *samadhi pada* of the *Yoga Sutra*. As a *niyama* it means the bestowal of all our actions to the Absolute i.e. to work not for one's own sake but for the good of all that exist. As a result the individual is to refrain from the fruits of all action. IT is propounded in the *Bhagavadgita* that while doing one's duty, one should not think of the consequences thereof, thus renouncing the fruits of all actions and their consequences.

Apart from the necessity of acceptance of and submission to the Yoga teacher, there is also involved in this requirement the need for a profound acceptance of the conditions of the individual life. The student of Yoga needs to be so intent on the creation of a new self, that he had no time to grumble at his environment. The ambitious or resentful person is never sufficiently at leisure from himself to achieve the recollectedness and concentration faculty necessary for the practice of Yoga. The requisite of Yoga is resignation to the will of the Absolute or its acceptance is in a sense comparable to the preliminary stage of what the analyst calls sublimation. By *isvarapranidhana* it is believed that trance is obtained. The student of Yoga is then supposed to know everything for what it is.

Thus it is fully recognized that by following the basic ethical norms, *yamas* and *niyamas*, the mind of the would-be student of Yoga meditation is 'conditioned' for delving deeper into the practices of stilling the mind.

AIDS FOR STEADYING THE MIND

Many obstacles come in the way of the would-be student of meditation, even in the very early attempts of external conduct. Thus, in spite of the sincerity to fulfill the great vows of *yama* and *niyama*, he may be troubled not infrequently by evil thoughts and bad desires. Yoga therefore holds that mere philosophy and acceptance are not sufficient. Knowledge alone is not enough in destroying immoral tendencies and recommends a graduated practice of identical reflection (*vipaksabhavana*) so, formulated that by generating the will for higher habits and better modes of life, one can by steadying the mind on its subtler states, ultimately uproot the evil habits of an ordinary life.

RELATION BETWEEN THE CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS

Yoga also holds that our conscious plane is closely related to the subconscious plane in such a way that by exerting superior control on the conscious states, we can control the subconscious ones in which are contained the roots, the memory potentials (*samskaras*) of all conscious processes. That we are apt to indulge in bad thoughts or evil emotions is largely due to a previous habit of indulging in them consciously by which such modifications took place in the subconscious plane and these bad thoughts and evil tendencies can recur over and over again under the slightest excitement caused by our environment. If, therefore,

we want to reassure ourselves against such recurrences of bad thoughts and emotions, we have to generate such an opposite tendency in the subconscious plane that by their continuous opposition the roots of the evil propensities in the subconscious are ultimately destroyed. Then we may be sure that there shall be no recurrence of them in the conscious plane.

NEED OF CONTEMPLATION ON THE OPPOSITES

The purpose of Yoga is to uproot the evil tendencies by constant training first by the acceptance of the universal vows of *yama* and *niyama* and, secondly, by strengthening moral influence to purge the unconscious mind of all its evil propensities. If in performing the great vow of *ahimsa* (non-injury) he is troubled by contrary thoughts, he should remove such evil thoughts by habituation himself to those that are contrary to them. Thus when the old habit of evil opposed to virtues tend to drive him along the wrong path, let him banish such evil thoughts by meditating upon such ideas as the following:

“Being burnt up as I am in the fires of the worldly environments, I have sought refuge in the practice of Yoga as the last resort to save myself since it assures protection to all living beings; I have thus given up injury, untruthfulness, theft, greed, immoderation in sex, and were I to resume these evil tendencies over again, Which I have now abandoned, I would certainly be behaving like a dog which licks its own vomit.”

This contemplation on the opposites (*pratipaksa-bhavana*) is successful in overcoming evil thoughts which obstruct the path of Yoga. Further, through constant reprisals through meditation on the opposites of the temptations for the time being occupying the mind, one is able to generate and sustain a healthful opposite tendency which when gradually strengthened helps to destroy the evil potencies, which stand as obstacles on the way of one's spiritual progress.

EMOTIONAL CONTROL FOR MEDITATION

It is therefore essential that every student of Yoga desirous of achieving success should after initiation in the disciplinary training immediately undergo the purification of the mind through emotional control. During the early stages of emotional conflicts, contemplation on the opposites is recommended and the same should be practiced daily. This moral achievement gradually turns into a habit so that there can be no repetition of the evil desires and bad thoughts. This is also the best remedy for eliminating immoral influences and evil effects which obstruct the path of meditation.

NON-KNOWLEDGE: CAUSE OF SORROW AND PAIN

Again, not only do evil tendencies cause continuity of sorrow and pain, but they lead to untrue knowledge. Thus, pain and untrue cognition are the unending fruits of the immoral tendencies. In the understanding of this context lies the power which produces

the habit of giving a contrary trend to our thoughts.

Non-knowledge (*avidya*) is the breeding ground for all the afflictions (*klesas*). The process of *pratipaksabhavana* may be said to act on the intellectual level, 'to dissect knowledge, discernment of the constituents of knowledge and the removal of false knowledge', all of which lead to perfect discrimination (*viveka*).

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

Vyasa recommends that prior to undertaking any action, a person should analyze whether he is prepared to do the particular deed himself (*ii*) or is he making someone else do it, or (*iii*) whether he permits it being done. Also the motivation of the same (*iv*) whether preceded by desire or anger or ignorance, (*v*) the intensity of the accomplishment, whether slight or intense and (*vi*) its overall repercussions *viz.* pain and untrue knowledge. Such intellectual activity reduces the strength of the evil thought by constant habit of thinking to the contrary and is likely to act in accordance with it on the spur of the moment.

In *pratipaksabhavana* each idea may be taken up separately and habituation to the contrary ideas may be cultivated in detail to overcome the particular evil tendency. It is however important to find the exact positive chain of thought in connection with the negative evil thought. In the *Yoga Sutra* (II, 4) in the description of the *kriya yoga* the *paksa* and *pradipaksa* and the five *klesas* are mentioned.

The five afflictions (*klesas*) are (i) ignorance (*avidya*), (ii) egoism (*asmita*), (iii) attachment (*raga*), (iv) aversion (*dvesa*) and love of life (*abhinivesa*) which are all clear about the scope of *pratipaksabhavana*. Thus for example, in spite of his restraint when the desire for doing injury to others comes to his mind, even if it be prompted by a righteous motive to punish the evil doer, he should immediately meditate on the evil effects of this bad desire, i.e. he should think of the trouble and grief such an injury causes. He should further make a resolve that once he has forsaken the principle of injury to all living beings, he should not under any circumstances take it up again as it is the source of all sorrow and pain.

CULTIVATING MENTAL DETACHMENT

The restraint of mental modifications (*cittavrittinirodha*) is the object of Yoga as interpreted by Patanjali, the compiler of the *Yogasutras*. The restraint is not only necessary for the attainment of self-realization but it is equally desirable for the success in the achievement of any object in life. Thus among the means of control advocated by Patanjala Yoga may be mentioned (i) constant exercise or *abhyasa* and (ii) non-attachment or *vairagya*. Both these means are recognized as interdependent since none is fruitful without the aid of the other. Constant exercise is necessary because of the habit of the mind to change its modifications every moment. Constant exercise, again, by itself cannot achieve anything, if there is the seed of desire. And that seed of desire can

Only be removed by cultivating the habit of non-attachment or desirelessness.

It is also evident that such supreme mental tendency cannot be created without certain definite efforts towards that end. Such attempts therefore should first establish themselves, through discrimination and realization in the lower conscious planes before permanent imprints could be made upon the subconscious mind. The most simple kind of training consists in selecting suitable ideas for daily auto-suggestions. With every philosophical system and school of Yoga they differ, but since mental detachment is to be considered here, we shall take up such reflections as are common to many schools of philosophy and are moreover in harmony with the teachings of Yoga.

Here is an intellectual reflection (*bhavana*) for initial autosuggestive purposes and the student may meditate upon it for ten to fifteen minutes each day till the understanding is deeply rooted in his conscious mind.

ANITYA BHAVANA

“What was in the morning is not at mid-day; what was at mid-day is not at night, for all things are transitory (*anitya*). Our body which is the cause of all kinds of human effort is as transitory as the scattering clouds. All our objects of pleasure are changing. Wealth is as transitory as a wave (*kallola*), youth like a cotton particle blown off in a whirlwind; and opportunities like the fleeting

dreams. Why should I be attached to anything when nothing is permanent and everything is changing?”

This pondering over the transitoriness (*anityata*) of all things is called *anitya bhavana* which is highly recommended for the cultivation of mental detachment and equability to all beings. Let the student seriously reflect over this simple truth and ask himself, why should I foolishly attach my mind to all transitory objects and enjoyments? And why should I behave differently to others when the body for which the differences arises is not permanent? Then, after the realization is over, the would-be student may take up other *bhavanas*.

NISPANDA BHAVA

Nispandabhava is derived from the Sanskrit words *nispanda* – non-changing and *bhava* – a state of mind. This practice is formulated by the author. In *nispandabhava* the person assumes any comfortable position – comfortable for two reasons; firstly he should be relaxed and secondly he should be able to retain the posture for a considerable length of time without the need to change it.

Having secured a comfortable relaxed posture, close the eyes and feel relaxed mentally and physically. Passively try and follow one sound – real or imaginary, which is constant, rhythmic and feeble like the distant whistling sound of a train, the chirping of a bird, or the tick of a wall clock. Soon a state of no movement of the mind is noticeable as one becomes more and more passive.

RATIONALE OF MEDITATIVE POSES

Posture training has been accepted by Yoga as the third step since quietude and steadiness being essential to Yoga, all bodily movements during the period of concentration are regarded as obstacles.

ORIGIN OF ASANA

Whenever concentration is desired, the need of a steady comfortable and balanced pose is invariably felt. The importance of asana as an external aid to meditation was keenly felt and recognized by the ancient seers of India even before the Vedic period, Mohenjadaro to wit. This is evident from the various references occurring in the Vedic literature. The practices, however, could be undoubtedly, much older than their references. These, in turn, passed through a series of modifications before they were finally perfected by the early students of Hathayoga.

ASANA AS A SPIRITUAL AID

One fact, however, is certain that asana (posture) from the very beginning of mysticism in India, was recognized as an essential factor in meditation. Not only was it so with the Hindu Yoga, but even with the Buddhist, Jain, Chinese, Egyptian, Akkadian, Hebrew, Christian and other schools of mysticism who recognized the value of steady and comfortable position of the body, as an aid to higher meditation.

PATANJALI'S INTERPRETATION

Concentration leading to trance or *samadhi* and *kaivalya* or absolute freedom and aloneness is the ultimate aim of the Yoga student. But in order to practice concentration one has to see that there may be no disturbance, and the yogin should select a place that is secluded and quiet. This however, is not all, for one of the main obstacles is to be found in our constant bodily movements and the respiratory action. The former has to be stopped by the continuous practice of asana and the latter by the efforts of pranayama or control of the bio-motor force through breathing.

ASANA AS AN EXTERNAL MEANS

This training forms the preliminary Yoga and as such is referred to by Patanjali as an external means for achieving the highest. In its broad sense, any comfortable fixed position in which a man can think undisturbed for a considerable length of time is known as asana. Thus, the necessity of comfort and steadiness represents the indispensable virtues of the Yoga postures. At any rate, it was regarded as such during the period when Patanjali compiled his Sutras. He thus defines asana as that bodily posture which is both firm and pleasant. Later commentators interpreted this as "steadily easy". Steadiness means absence of movement. The same must be also easy for it should not cause discomfort which is likely to distract the mind of a yogin. Such should be the posture for the purpose of Yoga. This, of course, is the early history of asana.

VALUE OF ASANA FOR MEDITATION

Is it possible for one to think of very high thoughts with the chest in? The general experience is that when we are uncomfortably seated, we cannot easily collect our thoughts nor can we keep up concentration for any definite length of time even if the same is once achieved. Again determination and firmness of will are influenced as much by our thoughts as by the outward demeanor of our person. Efforts in Yoga do require a certain amount of will-power to achieve the desired end.

This has to be cultivated through *yama* and *niyama* and also through sustained efforts in posture training. A man with a strong will usually sits upright and walks with more or less upraised head, straight and steady, which demonstrates self-control and confidence. On the contrary, a weak-minded person always changes his posture nervously and is consequently restless and unbalanced in his physical bearing as in his thoughts. It is therefore that a correct posture in which one can sit for hours undisturbed in meditation forms the essential requisite of Yoga endeavors.

FAULTY POSTURE DISTURBS MEDITATION

Further, awkward and faulty postures contribute to physical disturbances and this may happen even in the midst of concentration. Moreover a particular posture may suit a certain type of student and not others. A very wide range of selection has therefore to be allowed and the practical yogins

did rightly offer scope for such meditative poses. Some of these definitely contribute to harmony of thoughts and ease in concentration more than others. Meditative poses are expected to produce mental equilibrium and it is just quite possible that its continuity may produce certain beneficial physiological and psychological effects upon the individual.

ESSENTIALS OF MEDITATIVE POSE

All the authorities are agreed on the following essentials of meditative postures:

1. It should be easy, agreeable, well-balanced and steady.
2. That the lower extremities should form a fixed base and that the upper body (above the waist) should be held erect.
3. Slouching of the body should be strictly avoided.
4. The mind should free itself from the burden of the body and the consciousness of its very presence should be forgotten.

PRANA AND MIND

In the eight-fold path of Yoga, *pranayama* is placed after the *asanas*. It has been said that “He who has controlled his respiratory system had controlled the activities of the mind”. In the same way, one who has gained control over the activities of the mind, has also acquired control over the respiratory movements.

There are however two main causes for the activation of the personality-complex (*citta*): (i) *vasands* or desire and (ii) *prana* or the persistency of energy, expressed mostly through the breathing mechanics. Of these, the control of one is the control of the other. Thus the breathing is lessened when the mind becomes absorbed. Both the mind and the *prana* are inseparably merged into each other like milk and water, and consequently the activities of both are equal.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF PRANA AND MIND

The personality-complex (*citta*) begins its activities where there is *prana* and *prana* begins its activities where there is the mind (*manas*). By the suspension of one therefore comes the suppression of the other and by the activities of one are brought about the activities of the other. When they are both present the senses remain engaged in their usual functions, but through the restraint of them both is attained the ultimate freedom.

When the mind becomes steady there is nothing in the universe which cannot be accomplished.

What is the purpose of *pranayama*? How does it fit into the overall objective of the *Yogasutras*? The practice of *pranayama* slows down and stops the further generation of *karma*. For example, the unavoidable effects of actions by a householder are expiated by practice of *pranayama* as mentioned in the old literature. This is its main purpose. It is achieved by creating a balanced mind. Impulsiveness is avoided. The vicious circle of actions and reactions is broken. *Pranayama* does not generate knowledge. The idea is to avoid agitation of the mind by controlling the *prana*. A witness-like attitude is a step further in the overcoming of the afflictions (*klesas*). The control of *prana* creates a mental condition of steadiness, thus allowing for the growth of discriminative knowledge. It is this knowledge which in its perfection leads to the ultimate objective of Yoga i.e. independence absolute or *kaivadya*.

The methods of gaining control over *prana* are discussed in another publication of the Yoga Institute.

CONTROL OF THE SENSES

The chief food of the internal senses is the visible and the invisible objects of the material world. The eyes look about for beautiful things and the ears crave for musical sounds. It is the sense of joy thus directed that finds its way in the objective phenomenon. The process of abstraction or control of the senses (*Pratyahara*) consists in the subjugation of these senses. What the yogi seeks to do is to subjugate them all so as to make them obedient to every call of his mind.

THE TECHNIQUE OF ABSTRACTION

Therefore for successful meditation the senses have to be subjugated through the process of *Pratyahara*. *Pratyahara* is a sort of abstraction in which the senses are drawn back or restrained from performing their functions. It is the same process as that of a clever charioteer who controls his horses whenever desired. He gives them free rein when necessary, but the very moment that he thinks it is undesirable he simply draws back the reins. It is so simple with him because he knows how to command them. Or else without the art of control the same horses which give him pleasure will become a sort of burden to him. Again, to handle the horses without the proper knowledge of their control it is not only a risk on the part of the charioteer but is also a danger to the passer-by on the road. According to the Upanishads, the five senses are our horses and the mind their charioteer.

It is essential therefore for the mind to learn to control these senses whenever necessary. *Pratyahara* however is a state of mastery much higher than mere control. It is a sort of voluntary abstraction, at will.

ORIGINAL DERIVATION

According to the Sanskrit derivation *prati* + *ahara* makes *Pratyahara*. *Prati* means back and *ahara* means to take in. Literally, it means to take back the mind (from its objects). Restraining the senses from performing their functions is the first step towards this practice. Though the music is going on, let not the ears hear it, though the flower is before him, let the nose not sense its perfume. Thus when he does not want to be disturbed let not the external objects make any impression on his senses.

MIND AND THE SENSES

Yoga believes that it is not the senses only that feel. In fact, it is the mind that sees, hears, etc., because the mind controls the different functions of these senses. When you move away the mind from the sense of hearing i.e. ears, and utilize it for attending to the functions of the eyes as for example internally looking towards the sky, you naturally do not hear the noises going round you. And it is not the general impressions of most of us that, when we deeply follow the rhythmic flow of some chanting music, even with our eyes wide open, we often do not see the things that pass before us? Why? Are not the senses present there? They are, but the mind

is not there. And it is the mind that helps us to see not merely the eyes. The mind was taken away from the sense of vision and was consequently concentrated on the sense of hearing, and the result was that the eyes failed to see.

So, in *Pratyahara* when you withdraw the senses from performing their functions, you have to make the mind the object of their concentration. In this, the subjective world must be created at will with a sufficient control over the objective. The object here is not to produce insensitivity to external objects like in mesmerization or anesthesia but to aim at directing the energy towards the object of contemplation. Thus the positive part of *Pratyahara* leading to *dharana* is trying to steady the mind on an object after abstracting it from other objects.

Thus you voluntarily change the object of your senses.

YONI MUDRA

This is the technique which is meant to facilitate training in the practice of *Pratyahara* or abstraction, with the aim of withholding the conscious mind from soliciting sensory perceptions. It is recommended to the Yoga student who might be having some difficulty in obtaining such mastery. Etymologically the word *yonī* refers to the ultimate *Brahama* or *Brahama yoni*. This *mudra* is also known by the name of *sanmukhi mudra* because it aims to see the object face to face after closing the avenue of the senses thus keeping the organism away from sense impressions. It could be one of the best means

for exteriorization necessary for success in reaching the highest stage in Yoga.

During the posture of *padmasana* or *ardha padmasana* the palms of the hands are to be placed over the face on the respective sides while the fingers fill in the apertures. Thus the thumbs will cover the ears, the index fingers will close the eyelids, the middle fingers placed on the two sides of the nostrils, the ring finger on the upper lip and the little finger on the lower lip.

After a few minutes a state of conditioned internal equilibrium should be realized through which nothing external should be perceived and nothing should be allowed to distract the mental state any more. It is then that the *mudra* may be completed by the speechless chanting of the mantra in rhythm with the respiratory movements or by a pranayama *kumbhaka* (with breath retention). Two syllables are thus repeated: *ham* during inspiration and retention *sa* during expiration.

The state of serenity experienced by the practice of this *mudra* can be very helpful.

CONCENTRATION

The first portion of this accessory (*dharana*) corresponds to the last end-process of Pratyahara. It begins with the mind. After drawing back the mind from the senses, as in the case of abstraction, the Yogi proceeds further to concentrate his mind on specified objects. Like the mischievous monkey, the mind is very difficult to control. Try to fix it on a certain point and you will soon find that it moves away. It is however only through the continual practice of Yoga that it can ever be controlled. It often wanders without reason and the physical senses help to carry it away to the external objects. Only when a certain definite object is given – can this be stopped.

WHAT IS CONCENTRATION

According to Patanjali “*dharana* is the steadfastness of the mind when the same is bound in a specified locality”. It is just what we normally understand by the word concentration. Where the centering of the mind or the fixing of the mind on a particular point is the object, the process is referred to as concentration. However, the difference between *Pratyahara* and *dharana* must be clearly understood. What happens is that in abstraction, we draw away the mind from the senses and thus bring them under the control of the mind, whereas in concentration we take a step further and fix it on a certain object instead of allowing it to wander or be merely passive.

TOWARDS CONCENTRATION

In its broad sense the restraint of all mental modifications (*vrittis*) is Yoga. It has been generally recognized that without concentration, nothing is possible. Only upon the power of concentration, more than upon any other one thing, depends the law of attracting, controlling and mastering life's conditions. Concentration has been defined by the Yoga authorities as steadfastness of the mind where the same is bound in a specified locality. It is the bringing together of the mind-stuff where the fixing of the mind on a particular object instead of or out of the many, forms the basis of all mental efforts. The process begins with abstraction and negation. Thus, after drawing back the mind from the senses, as in the case of abstraction (*pratyahara*), the yogin proceeds to concentrate his mind on a specified object. We know from experience that the mind is the last thing one can possibly control. Try to fix it on any object and you will find that it soon slides away. It is only through the continuous practice of Yoga that it can be ultimately controlled. The first thing is to disassociate it from the physical senses which carry it into external objects. Through abstraction one can easily learn to draw away the mind from the senses and they can then be brought under the control of the mind. In concentration you take a step further and the abstracted mind is definitely fixed upon a given object.

There are many ways of concentrating and many things to be concentrated upon. These are either

physical, ultra-physical or mental. The simplest form of study consists in reproducing images of the physical objects. But, before undertaking concentration exercises, it is desirable that the student should get himself ready by starting with the preliminary discipline. The following practical code of concentration must be attended to scrupulously before any attempt at real Yoga concentration is made.

1. In the beginning the student needs to be alone. The presence of any living being is undesirable as it will distract the mind. The very consciousness of someone being present will likely obstruct any effort, and it is therefore essential that the student should so arrange that he can be alone.

2. He should have a fixed time and place in which to begin his exercises. A quiet secluded place free from noise of any kind is indicated. It should be clean and sanitary besides being lonely. The time best suited is early in the morning or late in the evening. The student should be punctual and create an atmosphere of quietude by avoiding any other type of activity.

Those who cannot arrange to be alone and lonely in a quiet place (due to their circumstances) should make the best use of a corner available and take advantage of any time that is least disturbing.

3. Wear loose-fitting clothes and take any comfortable position which one can maintain for a long period without inconvenience. Sitting, standing or even lying down positions, if best suited for

this purpose, may be followed. Try and study the *sidhasana* pose, for it is highly recommended by the yogins and is really the ideal pose for prolonged concentration. It belongs to meditative postures but has the advantage of physical symmetry and poise.

4. Seated in a lonely-quiet place in any comfortable position, let the student first get physical silence, emphatic silence. Let him establish perfect relationship with his body, by forgetting everything else. Let him create a vision of himself as he is (sitting, standing or lying down) and then centralize the attention. Get started right in the physical place before any attempt is made to find other levels of consciousness.

5. After he has gone somewhat far in centralization, let him avoid all feelings and emotions which are sure to arise by negation or by contemplation of the opposites.

6. The next step is to create rhythm or breath to harmonize thoughts. Watch your breath in and out. Try to feel it, concentrate your mind on the movements that make your mind rise and fall, as if it were, in perfect harmony with your breathing. Now is your chance to get composed by slowly withdrawing the mind-stuff from the senses.

7. The last step in concentration is to relax and this is accomplished by assuming a listening attitude. Try and get quiet, quiet and more quiet. Then listen – listen and listen to the depth of your being, so deep that you can your own heart beat. When you are able to hear your own heart beat or even feel fully the vibrations of blood pulsing

through your heart and blood-vessels, you have achieved something towards conscious rhythm. Try and maintain this stage as long as possible, for the control of this is the basis for your future success.

MEANS OF PHYSICAL CONCENTRATION

There are many ways of concentration and various things to be concentrated upon. They are either physical, ultra-physical or mental. Concentration on the toe, tip of the nose, between the eyebrows, et cetera, form the physical objects of concentration. Concentration may also be made on the images of the physical objects. These can be decided upon according to the method utilized. So when you shut your eyes and picture the sun in your mind, and then concentrate in it (the mental picture of the sun), the process becomes ultra-physical. Even so with our concentration on the different parts of the body. You can shut your eyes and concentrate inwardly on any part of your body. This part can again be subdivided into the minor processes.

What one has to do in all the cases of concentration is to stop all the sensations that are alien to the objects of concentration. At the same time, you should enter into the object with full consciousness of the mind. The physical awareness slowly diminishes, as the mind gradually merges in its object. The physical then becomes ultra-physical and thence mental.

SUGGESTION ON PHYSICAL CONCENTRATION

Failure to achieve mental concentration may be attributed largely to lack of primary control over the physical activities. Many students seem to believe that concentration is very easy and may be successfully taken up at any stage of Yoga study without the paraphernalia of physical training in this direction. To only a few highly developed minds – receptive to finer elements and less conscious of their physical vehicles – *Pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* may prove easy, but the average student is taking too much of a chance in thinking himself to be an exception.

NEUROMUSCULAR EDUCATION

In general practice therefore, it is essential first to acquire by methodical training, a disposition for concentration with the aid of certain physical and psycho-physical exercises. Nothing probably taxes the powers of a Yoga student so much as does his physical instability and nervousness. Fixity of the body is no doubt achieved, though partly, by the practice of asana and other accessory processes, but nervous irritability has to be first controlled by neuromuscular education through exercises of effort before the habit of concentration may be successfully acquired.

We commend to all students for this reason, neuromuscular education or what may be termed physical concentration, before actual attempts are made to study either abstraction, concentration meditation or other higher stages of Yoga. The

advantage of this process consists in the fact that the body is gradually trained to harmonize with the intensity of concentration instead of lagging behind the mind or being an obstacle.

The initial movements are very simple and uncomplicated. The exercises are based upon the possibility of educating the central nervous system and the muscles in do-ordination and thereby in a perfect rhythm of physical concentration.

GAZING AS AN AID

In this practice *trataka* or gazing is very useful and may be effectively combined both for the purpose of aiding as well as testing of the various methods so employed. Assume a sitting meditative posture. Take a book or a smooth piece of wood or any article having an even surface. Hold it in your right hand. Now extend the hands at full length, place the other hand on the knee, keep the body erect and the neck straight. Bring the hand and the book to the level of your shoulders and keep it fixed there. Do not shake or move the hand. Now look up and see closely any article opposite to you. Draw up an imaginary dark line and fix a point where the furthest corner of your book meets (as in the horizon). Keep your eyes fixed to this meeting point and see that you do not move the corner of your book however slightly from that point.

The ordinary tendency of wobbling must be avoided and every effort should be made to steady the hand. Variations in movements, changing of

meeting points and attention-complexes will follow soon, but the object of this exercise is to train you to coordinate your muscular movements with the sight and this should be maintained as long as possible. One need not be discouraged if the attempts fail in the beginning. Precautions must also be taken to avoid continuous demand on the rapidly tiring will and muscle power. Even though very simple, it will, cause rapid exhaustion and neuromuscular strain if not carefully watched. The exercise should be stopped short of fatigue.

It is best tried in the early morning for a period of five to ten minutes. The progress may be checked by observing the variations of the point of meeting on the horizontal plane and from the unsteady movements of the surface of the book. The purpose is to encourage concentration to the point of physical fixity like a statue.

TECHNIQUE OF GAZING

Of the six main purificatory methods recommended by Hathayoga authorities, *trataka* or gazing is one. The object is to remove the impurities of the eyes, to influence the optic nerves by concentration of vision and thus ultimately to gain control over the nervous system through the control of the external senses leading to trance (*Samadhi*). The *Hathayogapradipika* discusses the process in general by recommending quietude and gazing without a twinkle on a very small object. Thus when one being calm gazes on any small

object without blinking till the eyes are filled with water, this process is known as *trataka*.

By shutting off optic impressions, one finds it easy to achieve abstraction (*Pratyahara*) which is the first step of external-cum-internal Yoga. The *Hathayogins* have placed great value on this simple technique in the attainment of trance and have therefore included this process as an imperative purificatory duty before pranayama could be mastered.

THE CORRECT TECHNIQUE

Sit in *sukhasana* in a windless spot. To avoid distraction of the mind and disturbance from the wind, it is suggested that this practice be performed in the corner of a dark room. This will ensure a perfectly steady flame which is so essential for the *trataka*. Take a simple candle and place it at about sixteen to twenty inches distance. The tip of the flame should be at the level of the eye. The eyes should be fixed on the tip of the flame and the body is held erect. Do not think but try and avoid all tendencies to close the eyes. Also avoid all strain or use of force in keeping the eyes open but achieve *trataka* through determination and will power. The struggle to keep the eyes open should gradually cease as the student advances in his practice. If the strain to keep the eyes open is to occupy his mind, he will become physically conscious and thus miss the important factor of concentration which is the objective.

If one can keep the eyes relaxed and still open, it becomes evident that *trataka* could be done for a much longer period than otherwise. In the very early stages, there will be a tendency to shift the eyeballs and the focus will change often but this has to be strictly avoided. By keeping the eyes fixed only on one point, i.e. the tip of the flame, all the surroundings fade into blankness. The visual distractions thus eliminated, it becomes easy for the mind to forget sense objects. If this condition is further flavored by silence and with the sense of hearing within control, one may feel the state of abstraction approaching.

The beginner may stop short of fatigue and the process might be continued for not more than ten minutes. It is best practiced in the morning when the mind is calm and the body is not fatigued. When practiced in the evening, a tired body may lead to drowsiness. Gazing on the tip of the flame is doubly effective because it encourages visual accommodation and secondly because the association of light induces both concentration and absorption.

STUDY IN MENTAL MOVEMENTS

Conscious mental training not only includes concentration exercises and restraint of mental modifications but it also admits movement of the mind, within and outside of the body. The positive method of training, which may appear contrary to the usual procedure, is essential for the control of the mind as the accepted means of concentration.

Not only is this approved by the practical yogins, but it has its own special advantages in the easy focusing of the mind.

A LESSON IN MENTAL MOVEMENT

Here is an excellent psychophysical practice recommended by the practical yogins which may be followed in the beginning.

In a secluded spot usually chosen for your Yoga practices and concentration, lie supine and fill the entire body from the top of the head to the tip of the toes as if with air by inhaling slowly through the left nostril or *vamamarga*.

Now concentrate your mind on the end of the toes, then slowly move it upwards by centering it on the ankles, the knees, the thighs, the anus, the generative organs, the navel, the stomach, the heart, the neck, the tongue, the palate, the tip of the nose, the eyes, the space between the eye-brows, the forehead and ultimately on *brahmapuri*. The general conception about the spot is that it is somewhere in the brain and further that it is the seat of the soul. Keeping it fixed there for some period (about ten seconds) let the mind travel downwards in the same manner till it feels the toes. After holding it there for some time, let it move it upwards again till it reaches the lotus of the navel (*nabhipadma*). Concentrate there for a few seconds and then discontinue. Move the mind slowly and make pauses at each spot for at least two seconds. When you begin the study close the eyes in order that your attention may not be distracted

by the objects around you. When you discontinue, you may open your eyes and allow the mind to take its own modifications. This study may be repeated with or without any interval of rest for a period of ten minutes.

CONCENTRATION METHOD

Apart from such psycho-physiological processes for concentration as the centralization on geometrical patterns and designs, the manifold *trataka* practices, the listening of various sounds, the chanting of mantras, and the projection of colors and concentration upon various lotuses (*cakras*), the most easy of study, especially in the beginning, is the method delving on mental pictures.

Enter your lonely quiet place previously selected, and take any comfortable posture. Do nothing, think nothing for a few minutes. Breathe naturally and rhythmically; and try to hear the very sound of your breath. When the rhythm is stabilized, look about and around everywhere. Let no thoughts be associated with any emotions; be passive and abstract. Avoid association of all ideas of what you have seen. Shut your eyes, rest in this condition for a few minutes and then begin to mentally reproduce what you have just seen. Stop and concentrate. Slowly try and see if your eyes can *photograph on your mind* the objects you have just seen. If the vision is imperfect, open your eyes slowly, quietly and peacefully without any thought. Keep your mind blank, absolutely blank, and look around yourself again. Notice the objects, their wholeness

and other details. Slowly absorb everything while you are busy looking, and see that you do not overlook a single detail. Take *ample* time to observe and absorb the data. Only after you feel sure that you are now able to produce identical pictures on the mind should you close your eyes and retire. Now do not struggle; get your mind quiet, free from any excitement, nay even from any effort. Then, out of the quietude and peace of mind, project the vision of the objects you have just seen. Search and see that no detail is missing. If you cannot see wholeness all at once, do not be disappointed, but take up one thing at a time. First take that which you believe you can easily reproduce, *e.g.* a chair, a flower vase, a clock, a piece of paper or anything. Reproduce one object at a time, and then try to see them all as a whole. Do not be satisfied with anything less than a perfect image. Try and try again till the complete mastery over this method of visualization is achieved.

Of course it is not all possible in a day; but practice this continuously each day. In your studies or even while resting, just shut your eyes for a few minutes, get yourself composed and forget all thoughts, and picture on your mind anything that has particularly impressed you during the day. Raise the vision out of darkness and hold your mind to it *anchored there* as long as possible. Try this over and over till the mind learns to keep to the one image from five to ten minutes. If the mind wanders or other thoughts drift in, displace them by negation.

CONCENTRATION ON SPACE

The intensity of concentration (*dharana*) varies with each individual depending upon the stages of one's inner development. A mere abstraction of the senses or *pratyahara* is possible even without any training, for it comes like a flash of lightening at certain moments in everyday life, when the senses and the mind happen to get fully occupied in some object of rare interest. Such incidents, however, last only but only for a few moments and pass away unconsciously. During this state, there is complete forgetfulness of all sense objects, lifting one beyond pleasure and pain and considerations of mundane nature. The *yogin* is not satisfied with these *casual* experiences *beyond* his control but seeks to *master* the very subtle processes that lead to such abstraction and ultimately to *oneness with the object of his thought*. With him nothing should happen *unconsciously* for he is a scientist and desires to be fully aware of the circumstances that lead to it and to achieve it *whenever he commands*.

CONSCIOUS TRAINING NECESSARY

In order to be able to do this, *conscious* training in concentration should be undertaken. Various objects may be used for this purpose of concentration, *e.g.*, a crystal, an earthen ball, a flower or anything available. Similarly ideas may also be concentrated upon, *e.g.*, thoughts of health happiness, prosperity etc. Concentration is even possible on such attributes as love, tolerance, compassion and so forth. But since the *yogin* aspires to remain

A self-contained unit during all his efforts at self-culture, it is desirable to avoid all external aids as far as possible.

In the initial stages, attempts at conscious training may be confined to such bodily symbolism as are most efficient to arrest thought till the habit of concentration gradually grows into an *effortless* pursuit. Further, these psycho-physiological symbolisms serve a two-fold purpose of (1) demanding physical steadiness and control, and (2) instrumentality in mental focusing.

Let the student begin with *Akasamudra* or the symbol for concentration on space. Sit in any comfortable posture. Keep the body erect and the neck straight. Arrange each hand so that the thumb and the forefingers form a circle, while the other fingers are held straight over each other. Now fix your gaze on these hands and concentrate your mind in the open space within and their rhythm. The distance between the hands and the eyes may be two feet. If fatigue is experienced, the arms may be allowed to rest upon the legs. Continue as long as it is comfortable.

THE TRIANGLE TEST

Have you succeeded in visualizing your objects of concentration and for how long? For if the mind wanders or other thoughts creep in, take it for granted that the mind is not *yet* clear. Under such conditions it is undesirable to take up new exercises with advantage or make any progress

towards actual conditions. If alien thoughts waver your mind from your efforts, displace them over and over again with consciousness of *only one thing held for concentration*. Thus whatever object is taken for centralization or conscious imagining should be practiced with over and over again until it can be held for at least *five minutes* to the exclusion of any other thoughts. Then pass on to the next step of mono-thought-conglomeration.

Only those who have *actually* tried it can understand how really hard and complicated a task it is to control the mind, for in theory while it appears to be an easy job to concentrate the mind, in actual practice, the mind not only refuses to be concentrated but virtually creates mental *uneasiness* when attempts are made to harness it. With the first experiences at thought-control does one realize what an uncurbed and ungoverned state his mind has always been in. the necessity of regulating his thought-waves and other mental modifications startles him with humiliating memory of the wasted time and energy in many aimless and fruitless toils. Like physical control of the body which imparts muscular agility, mental control ultimately leads to self-mastery which *is* the *key* to all success in life.

At first the mind refuses to be controlled for it has been habituated to wander. But the true student need not feel disheartened, nor should he be tempted to give up the attempt in despair, for that would indeed be disastrous. What he should do at this stage is to cultivate patience and seek

aid of the easiest methods of mental control so that he may at least make a beginning.

After freeing yourself from outside influences, be composed and try to go into silence – emphatic silence – as previously suggested. When the thought waves have duly subsided, take up this easy exercise.

Look at the figure carefully. Notice the triangle, the arrangements of the lines and the relative positions of the letters. Are you sure that you have looked at it enough to be able to reproduce it *exactly* as it is in the figure, without looking at it again? Now close the eyes and imagine that you have a chalk in your hand. Try and draw a triangle similar to the one you have just seen. Then after the mind has been somewhat fixed on the given figure, try to write of course, visually on the blackboard, the letters, A, B, C, D, E, on the respective places. You are supposed to visualize the object without further reference. If the vision is hazy do not slacken your efforts, but try every type of mental endeavor to remember the details. Only when you find that the task is impossible and the mind needs a reminder or fresh impressions should you look at the figure again. Now repeat the process after closing the eyes. Do not forget your blackboard and your chalk. Draw your triangle and place the letters as before.

When this is secured, repeat by effacing the vision and tracing it again mentally. Such repeated attempts will in time give complete control over the whole process.

YOGA MEDITATION

The continuation of this mental effort (*dharana*) to concentrate on a fixed point is meditation or *dhyana*. When the duration of concentration is prolonged in the same line of thought, contemplation naturally follows. The English words, contemplation, meditation, etc., do not fully express the meaning of the word *dhyana*. It is the unbroken flow of realization of the object which is *dhyana*. Or, rather, speaking more scientifically, it is the magnifying process of the object in the light of self-consciousness after the object has been fixed that forms the main activity of this stage. The inner consciousness becomes more powerful in this case than in any of the previous stages. Concentration is the process of determining a particular object out of many, while *dhyana* is the maintenance of the same object to the conclusion of other vibrations for a considerable length of time.

Here the senses, instead of analyzing the objects by themselves and thus using the energy of the mind, combine and form a powerful focus and with the mind at their head enter into the reality of the object. In *dhyana*, the object of concentration presents itself in reality and the ultra-conscious mind directly perceives it. According to the psychology of consciousness, when the “soul-cells” are once properly placed under rhythmic vibrations, the same vibrations *if not disturbed* produce a deeper state in that particular condition. Whether it be some abstract state or a purely conscious one, it

makes no difference, so far as the duration of the process is concerned. It all depends on the totality of the object in the mind and the capability of the man to receive the vibrations.

Suppose you catch sight of an ordinary rose petal. Then try to imagine that the actual petal is just before your eyes. Bringing the knowledge about the object in focus is the second stage of the operation. Then the object begins to expand. The shape retains its own peculiarity and even its color for some time, but the size alters according to the time of contemplation. In the beginning it is small, even smaller than the ordinary petal, and that is the center of consciousness. Then it gradually evolves itself into limitlessness, as you go deep into the object and lose yourself. The main color slowly vanishes and a new color takes its place. These colors often change according to the tendency of the individual mind. If it is peaceful, green or blue is seen. But if the concentrated cells present a part of physical activity, red mostly forms the background and so on. The psychic colors also work upon the object, even though the main color of the object may be different, sometimes even just the opposite.

Or for the sake of variety, try to visualize the whole figure of a rose after the internal energies have become completely centered. Now enlarge and narrow the size of the object alternately. Here the original petal does not stand out prominently but in common with other petals of the same flower. Feel as if you see the rose in reality before your mind's

eye. Also try to experience its perfume, if you can, by recalling the memory of some past experience. In this state let the mind throw away its anxieties and be perfectly free. This steadiness of mind thus created produces a kind of inner delight. With this, the inner consciousness becomes brighter like a strong searchlight formed by the control of the mental energies to sense things in the actual world.

It is in this state of consciousness that the man in *dhyana* can tell of things in a room which is closed or relate incidents happening in far off countries. These things are not impossible at all in the sense that the present scientists take them. No doubt it is very difficult to find a genuine man who possesses such supernatural control over his higher activities.

You can contemplate on a thought as well. Only in this case a positive attitude must be first followed. Take up any thought which you wish to concentrate on and form a thought-picture, as it were of the main idea. Do not bring in any odd relations of objects and go nibbling at various things, but try to feel the main thought in harmony with its inner nature. Whirl around the senses of that thought avoiding all your own impressions. Then wait for sudden vibrations and if they take you deep into the state, silently follow them. This is the witness-like state of the objects that bring new revelations which the senses fail to grapple.

Thought-reading also comes under this accessory. It is only when the operator puts himself into the

same condition of mind as his subject that he is able to trace his thought vibrations. He feels that the subject's body is his own and consequently his thoughts. In other words, he transforms himself into another man, the man whose thoughts he wants to know. This can be done by two methods. First by being totally passive, controlling the lower and the higher energies so as to be sufficiently able to receive and reproduce the thought vibrations of the man in view. Secondly, by forcibly directing his thoughts either by the influence of the sub-conscious state of the mind or by the direct use of the will. Apart from these processes there is another method of putting the subject into a hypnotic condition and then making him speak his thoughts. But in any case the passive condition of abstraction is primarily necessary.

SAMADHI

It is the continuation of this contemplation that produces the state of trance in which the *object* of the mind *and the mind become one*. In this state, the physical consciousness disappears and even the mind itself merges into its object. Thus the object represents nothing else but a dazzling light – the combined light of the knower and of the thing known. So “when on account of the object of contemplation taking entire possession of the mind, contemplation shows forth only the light of the form of the contemplated object and is devoid, as it were, of its own nature of self-cognition, then it is called trance or *samadhi*.”

Trance is the highest state of inner consciousness that is produced either through the scientific cultivation of the inner control, or through the sudden emotions resulting from congenial circumstances. Its realization brings a sudden change in life. One often experiences illumination and joy when everything that he sees becomes transparent. “Sometimes, such a spiritual glimpse comes like a flash of lightening in the sky. It comes like a sudden flash of strange light, streaming forth from the simple nudity. By this the spirit is uplifted for an instant above itself, and at once the light passes, and the man again comes to himself.” “Forgetfulness of one’s own self in a state where nothing can move him and that Gnosis from which the mind and the speech turn back baffled” is the real state of *Samadhi*. It is this state which

every being consciously or unconsciously tries to reach – that state of realization having been obtained there is no greater joy beyond it.

Who knows the true greatness of this trance? Realization, deliverance and the attainment of supernatural powers can be studied through the instruction of a teacher only. Mental indifference to worldly enjoyment is rather difficult to obtain and even more, the realization of the Ultimate Truth.

Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* has given definite but very short guidelines for meditation. Many of the commentators, the chief among them Vyasa, Vacaspati, and Bhikshu have expanded on them and made them a little more intelligible for the common man. It has been mentioned that for pure consciousness to shine forth, the basic thing to get done is to make the mind pure and stop the mental modifications. All the techniques for concentration make this possible. It is stated in Chapter 1 *sutra* 41 that, when the modifications of the mind cease, the *citta* becomes like a transparent crystal, with the power of appearing in the shape of the object presented to it, whether the knowable, the knower or the act of knowing. This is *samadhi* or *samapati* in Yoga. This is a very important *sutra* because it gives the technique of meditation and how it works. It questions what would be the nature of a superior type of meditation and when one gains steadiness of mind, on what object one should meditate upon.

And how did this one-pointed stage arise from a mind which is possessed by the *gunas* of *rajas* and

tamas and occasional *satva*. Patanjali has given various techniques for people of different kinds of temperaments and mental stability. The two fundamentals put forth are the cardinal virtues of habituation to practice (*abhyasa*) and *vairagya* (disinterestedness). The simile is given of the mind being like a river which can flow to its source or to the sea. One must learn to stop the mind from going onward, so disinterestedness and continuous practice are recommended to make this possible in *sutras*; 1, 13, and 1, 14, 15, and describe what true disinterestedness is according to Yoga. Thus when someone loses all interest in mundane things one would gain clarity and in *sutra* 1, 17, a systematic way of developing meditation has been presented. It starts by saying that there could be a beginning with an object on which to concentrate and eventually no object of concentration. By this kind of meditation we can gain direct and ultimate knowledge which would not be available if we relied solely on disinterestedness.

Patanjali has divided *samadhi* into *Samprajnata* and *Asamprajnata*.

Samprajnata is broken down into four categories:

Samprajnata

Vitarka *Vichara* *Ananda* *Asmita*

Vitarka is a special way of knowing. In the first stage we concentrate on gross objects.

Vichara is the second stage – subtle objects. This means the sources and causes of gross objects.

Ananda is when the mind becomes very subtle and is full of *satva*. Concentration is on the feeling of joy.

Asmita is when the *buddhi, mahai and prakrti* have gained the knowledge of the *purusa*.

In 1, 18. Patanjali refers to the second type of *samadhi* – *Asamprajnata samadhi*. This is also known as *Nirbija samadhi* or *samadhi without seed*. Here there is complete stoppage of the mental modifications. Even knowledge ceases, and no further experiences are there.

To reach these high stages, Patanjali has given means, alternative to the ones reserved for the highest types of *adhikaris*. Faith, which can be equated to disinterestedness in one sense, according to Dasgupta. Enthusiasm is also mentioned as consisting of depth energy to reach the goal. Memory is said to be keeping the mind fixed on the spiritual purpose. Through the combination of these, the highest *viveka* or discrimination arises, together with the highest *vairagya* which has been equated with *asamprajnata samadhi*.

Among the other aids mentioned by Patanjali for meditation are meditating on the word, AUM, or on the *parikarmas*; friendliness, compassion, complacency, equanimity, which all help to make the mind free of impurities and thus one-pointed 1, 33.

Patanjali has emphasized the removal of the obstacles for reaching such a stage or in fact to begin the process of steadiness of the mind. These are mentioned in Chapter 1, 30 which consists of disease, languor, indecision, carelessness, sloth, sensuality,

wrong notion, missing the point and instability. These, he has pointedly mentioned, are distractions and have to be removed as they are obstacles on the path of gaining the highest clarity.

SAMYAMA

We now come to one of the most inspiring part of Yoga known as *samyama*. The central feature of this technique represented by the three accessories of concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*) and trance-consciousness (*samadhi*) is technically known as *samyama*. Thus *samyama* begins with concentration and ends with the Absolute. It is the internal process of conscious development when the mind tries to concentrate its energies for the knowledge of a certain object. So when the mind holds on to a certain object out of many, the process is known as *dharana*. But when the concentration on the same object is continued for a longer period with the intention of gaining better knowledge of that object, the process is termed *dhyana*. In *samadhi*, instead of duality like the thinker and the thing thought, the process of thinking or concerning becomes non-existent, as it were, as the mind partakes of the nature of the object of thought and becomes one with it.

However, it must be remembered that *samyama* as a whole always concerns only one object. When you take a flower for your concentration, the meditation must be on the same identical object – the flower. The flower too has to be the same flower which you thought before and no other. There should be no gap between the same stages nor in the object itself. The whole process must be continuous merging one into another, without any kind of disturbance in the flow of rhythmic vibrations.

Thus, for the purpose of *samyama*, you cannot take the lily for the object of concentration, the jasmine for contemplation and then the rose for trance, even though they are all objects of the same flower-race. It is thus essential that, for complete knowledge of any particular object, the same object must be with the mind from the very beginning.

Apart from this, there is another thing very important to be noticed about *samyama*. While it consists of trance conditions also, its process clearly leaves us to understand that it never reaches to the seedless state of samadhi (*nirbija samadhi*). The reason is that in the higher states of *samadhi*, the union is with the mind and the soul and of the soul to the over-soul. Whereas in *samyama* on any object except the soul itself, the object remains the centre of consciousness throughout the whole process – the end being merely the union of the object and the mind. Therefore, the highest culmination of *samyama* is the sphere of seeded trance where the knower, the act of knowing and the thing to know become one in a certain plane of consciousness.

As *samyama* becomes firmer and firmer so does the trance-condition become more and more lucid. One has to work on different planes of consciousness.

The brain activity, mind and consciousness, all three are required for a deeper knowledge of a thing. These, three are different and independent of each other, in the sense that they have their own characteristics.

Take electricity as an example. Can we call it hear? No, nor is it light alone. The truth is that it is

both light and heat as well, but at the same time it cannot be called one or the other separately. It is the same with the brain activity, mind and consciousness. Brain activity is the physical manifestation of the mind-stuff, while mind is the second reflection of consciousness. Again this consciousness is dependent for its existence on the spirit; rather it is the characteristic of the spirit itself. So when you take away the electricity, you neither have heat nor light. In the same way when the spirit is taken away, as it were, there is no consciousness, no mind and consequently no brain activity. But when all these three elements of inner cognition are combined for the knowledge of any object, the object becomes highly magnified and transparent which naturally leads to its perfect knowledge. In *samyama* therefore, these things are all put in rhythmic vibrations where the flower remains undisturbed.

Patanjali in his aphorism says “The word, the object and the idea appear as one, because each coincides with the other, by *samyama* over their distinctions comes the knowledge of the sounds of all living beings.

Apart from any instrumental education, it is the *samyama* that should be properly studied for the knowledge of different objects. The process, however, is not so easy as to be learned within a short time nor is its frequent use for supernatural powers desirable. These supernatural powers are of no use for the higher spiritual development. On the contrary, while they are perfections to the out-going mind, they are obstacles to the state of realization.

KNOWLEDGE OF REALITY

Of the ten main objects of Yoga promulgated by the practical teachers, the *Yogins*, the awakening of superior knowledge where Reality may be seen face to face is one that has a special appeal to the intellectually inclined. Non-knowledge or *avidya* is considered by almost all the schools of philosophy as the cause of evil, pain and sorrow. It is further held that the same can be removed only by the awakening of right knowledge. There is no bondage greater than ignorance (*ajnana*) and no pain greater than illusion (*maya*) born of nescience, and unless this is loosened, there is no chance for ultimate deliverance (*mukti*).

It is argued by the practical Yoga authorities that knowledge achieved by Vedanta and other *sastras* (systems of thought) as merely theoretical, and, furthermore, it is not possible to acquire *direct knowledge of objects* only through abstract reasoning, and that, therefore, a special type of practical training becomes absolutely necessary to enable one to put oneself in direct touch with the object of knowledge. It may be observed that it is only the system of practical Yoga that undertakes to systematically train the students to place themselves in direct touch with reality (of objects on which they can contemplate). By Yoga therefore, as stated in the commentary on the *Hathayogapradipika*, one acquires the direct knowledge of things.

ALTERNATIVE TO REASON

The central feature of the Yoga meditation

consists in the securing of a habit by which one can put oneself in direct touch with Reality of the object instead of going around it through the ordinary processes of the mind. There is a way of acquiring Truth by the exercise of the ordinary logical powers of the mind and there is also a way by which *new Truth* can be attained, viz. by stopping the logical processes and the outgoing functionings of the mind, thereby bringing oneself in direct and intimate touch with the object of knowledge. This second method is in some way akin to the flash of light which illumines the mind of a poet or a scientist absorbed in his own task of bringing out a new creation or discovering a new truth.

The scientific Yoga supplies us the technique of this unique method by which this flashlight of knowledge can be brought within one's control – giving us the possession of a new means of attaining knowledge such as cannot be achieved by ordinary perception or inference.

This process of intellectual acumen (*prajna*) and *samyama* has, therefore, nothing mysterious about it; it is directly derived as a result of the operation of the ordinary psychological laws and processes with which we are all familiar. The point on which any doubt can be raised is whether or not by a special category of knowledge dawns forth. Yoga experience holds that it *does*. Nor is there anything improbable about it. If the mind by its constant change of objects can produce one dimension of knowledge, *there is no reason why* it cannot produce

another superior dimension of knowledge by the reverse process of steadying the mind on a particular object. Those who have performed the experiment testify to its validity.

FIRM BELIEF IN HIGHER REALITY

Disciplining the mind so that the mind can be constantly fixed on a chosen objective is commended, if one desires self-development. It is not a cursory participation of oneself but is one where one's thoughts, feelings and actions are all unified into one and directed to the highest. In yogic language, with perseverance and sincerity, fix the gaze on the space between the eyebrows or control all the senses and fix the mind on the lotus of the heart and draw *prana* in yogic meditation to the top of the head, uttering the word "Om", and then contemplate simultaneously on the absolute consciousness. These are some of the techniques recommended.

By such steadying of the mind and fixing it on a higher goal, one transcends the limitation of the manifest. The apparent world we know of is changeful and perishable. Against this is posited the unmanifest world which is the base for the manifest, while beyond these two, is what is eternal and unchanging – the origin and essence of all things – consciousness absolute.

The benefits and values of the path of activity and inactivity are fraught with their own consequences. Yoga transcends this humdrum by remaining permanently established in the unchanging state of awareness.

Of course, there are people who cannot understand the existence of a higher reality than the apparent. Unfortunately, they have false hopes of

solving all matters by their belief in the immediate material world and by their inadequate power of the mind and intellect. They are distracted individuals, who have moved away from the true nature of this universe. They can become a menace to society, if they continue to multiply. This danger has to be stopped through right knowledge and discipline of Yoga. Faith in something bigger than oneself is indeed the cornerstone of another belief in a superior reality that pervades all. A one-pointed attention to this belief in all activities of life is necessary. This superior reality is the event itself as also the process, the participants, the instruments and all.

In fact, by tapping at the sources of this reality at all times, one succeeds. Little one-pointedness even in small actions and a little faith in someone bigger than ourselves seems to be at the back of our success in all major events of life. Belief in the absolute that gives meaning to our live, lived otherwise in fragments, will help any one to achieve success.

THE END

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