

BHAKTI

KARMA

GYANA

RAJA



ANANDA RAJA YOGA
SCHOOL OF EUROPE

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HANDBOOK:

**ARYTT RAJA YOGA 1: THE FOUR PATHS TO
ENLIGHTENMENT - GYANA, BHAKTI, KARMA E RAJA
YOGA**

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Preface

This study handout is a selection of different texts and writings by Paramhansa Yogananda and his direct disciple Swami Kriyananda. Through these different texts one can find different nuances and insights into the various topics and themes that are presented during this course.

The study manual is an invaluable support for the student on his or her journey in search of the Truths proclaimed by the saints and sages of ancient India. It will not only be useful during the training but also later as a valuable support on many levels as the understanding of sacred texts occurs along a process of expanding one's own consciousness.

The order of the chapters corresponds to the main topics of the course:

- The first chapter is a collection of different texts related to the topic of the four Yogas.
- The second chapter is dedicated to the understanding of fundamental teachings that will be used to help students understand the four Yogas in greater depth. All these paths must be travelled with a firm understanding of the purpose of each yoga practice: *Yogas chitta vritti nirodh* (definition of yoga according to Patanjali).
- The third chapter is dedicated to the path of **Gyana Yoga**.
- The fourth chapter is dedicated to the path of **Bhakti Yoga**.
- The fifth chapter is devoted to the path of **Karma Yoga**.
- The sixth chapter is devoted to the path of **Raja Yoga**. This path will not be covered extensively in this course because it will be expounded throughout the training and in the subsequent courses, both theoretically and practically.
- The seventh chapter is the Spiritual Diary.

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

From Awaken to Superconsciousness, chapter Four – Swami Kriyananda

Of all spiritual practices, the oldest and most complete is the science and art of yoga. The yoga tradition contains many systems, all of them with superconsciousness as their final goal.

Yoga means, simply, “union.” Implied, of course, is the concept of divine union. External paths to this goal are, like tributary streams, the paths of action (*karma yoga*), of devotion (bhakti yoga), and of discrimination (*gyana yoga*, or *jnana* as it is sometimes transliterated). The internal path of meditation (*raja yoga*) is the river into which these tributaries flow.

The usage of Sanskrit terms has become widespread in the West. I’ll try to limit my use of them for the sake of the average Western reader. In fairness to that same reader, however, it is necessary to use Sanskrit terms when the English translation falls short of conveying their full meaning. To translate *karma yoga*, for instance, literally as “the path of action” is misleading, for it doesn’t make clear what kind of action is implied.

Karma yoga signifies freeing oneself from one’s karmic bonds, a suggestion that is lost by substituting the word “action” for karma. *Bhakti yoga*, similarly, implies an intimacy of love that is lacking in what many people call the “path of devotion,” for devotion is associated in many people’s minds with formal rituals and ceremonial practices. And *gyana* signifies the practice of discriminating in such a way as to lead to the unfoldment of yoga wisdom. The way of *gyana yoga*, then, involves intuitive perception, not merely intellectual analysis as suggested by the translation, “the path of discrimination.”

Nor, rightly speaking, are any of these even paths, though people generally refer to them as such. A path is a specific route, one that therefore excludes other routes. But the “paths” of yoga cannot be so separated one from another. They are intended for three basic types of human beings, yet no human being belongs exclusively to one type or another.

Karma yoga is for active types. Karma yoga as a teaching, however, also provides guidelines for everyone. For no one can live without performing action of some sort. The Bhagavad Gita declares that even to do nothing is a kind of action. The mind is not stilled thereby, nor are countless involuntary functions of the body suspended.

Bhakti yoga is for those who live more by emotional feeling. The teachings, however, make clear the need for every human being to refine and uplift his feelings, that they flow upward to God.

Gyana yoga is for those who go primarily by intellect, but it also teaches everyone how to direct his native intelligence toward the highest truth in any situation.

No one’s temperament is limited to only one of these aspects. None of us, in other words, is only active, or guided only by his emotions or intellect. No one can avoid depending on each of these three aspects of human nature at various times in his life.

None of the three yogas, moreover, can be practiced perfectly on its own. Devotion needs discrimination, lest it become merely emotional. Discrimination needs devotion, lest it sink into inaction. Action requires both devotion and discrimination, or it may take the mind into mere restlessness. And both devotion and discrimination require action to make them practical, for they may wander off in mere sentiment or in endless theorizing.

The three yogas, in other words, are intended to be seen as complementary to one another, as means of developing the complete human being.

From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga (2:I) – Swami Kriyananda

Yoga is the neutralization of ego-directed feelings, because once these become stilled, the yogi realizes that he is, and that he has always been, one with the Infinite—that his awareness of this reality was limited only by his infatuation with limitation.

The different paths of yoga, then, must be understood in the light of how they help to bring about this neutralization of the waves of feeling. Merely to whip oneself into a lather of devotional excitement does not constitute bhakti yoga (the attainment of yoga by the path of devotion). Merely to work hard, even in a good cause, is not truly karma yoga (yoga attainment by the path of action). Merely to study and philosophize intellectually is not the path to gyana yoga (the path of wisdom). All these paths must be followed with a firm awareness of the goal of all yoga practices: *Yogas chitta vritti nirodh*.

This is, moreover, the true goal of all seeking. The reason Patanjali's aphorisms are accepted as a universal Scripture is that he was dealing with universal spiritual truths, not with sectarian practices. Every truth seeker, regardless of his religion, eventually reaches the same state of divine calmness that is yoga.

From Conversations with Yogananda ~ 354 ~ Swami Kriyananda

“Of the several branches of yoga,” a visitor asked, “which one do you teach?”

“All of them are basically the same,” the Master answered. “They take the seeker by different paths, but their goal is the same: Self-realization.

“Most of the yoga branches, however, are based on different human temperaments, which may be primarily devotional, rational, or active. What we teach here is called *Raja Yoga*, the ‘royal’ yoga; it is so called because it is central to all of them, and is primarily concerned with what they are all meant to achieve, though they go less directly.

“The inner silence of communion is, in fact, the goal of every path of yoga. The others attain that goal less directly. We, in teaching *Raja Yoga*, don’t ignore those other practices. We take a little bit from each of them, according to people’s different temperaments, and show people how to direct their understanding toward that highest purpose: the stillness of inner communion.

“The goal of *Bhakti Yoga* [the path of devotion] is not to keep on singing to God. Every great *bhakta*, or devotee of God, has entered at last a state of silent communion with Him, where his devotion flows toward Him *inwardly*. All the great *karmis* — those who served God according to the principles of *Karma Yoga* [the path of selfless service] — have reached the point where they realized that the supreme service is to direct all one’s energy inwardly, in silence, to God. And all the great *gyanis*, who follow the path of discrimination and wisdom, have realized at last that it isn’t, in the end, by thinking that one achieves wisdom — that wisdom can only be received, in inner stillness.

“Thus, all the paths of yoga lead eventually, like tributary rivers, into the one, all-uniting river of *Raja Yoga*.”

Chapter Two: Yogas, Chitta, Vritti, Nirodh

Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodh

From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, chapter 2 – di Swami Kriyananda

Yoga, literally, means "union." This union can be understood on different levels: Philosophically, as that of the relative, limited self with the absolute Self; religiously, as that of the individual soul with the Infinite Spirit; psychologically, as the integration of the personality—a state wherein a person no longer lives at cross-purposes with himself; emotionally, as the stilling of the waves of likes and dislikes, permitting one to remain in all circumstances complete in himself.

It is this last level that serves as the classical definition of yoga by the ancient sage, Patanjali. Patanjali's profound Yoga Sutras, or aphorisms, have been looked upon for millennia as yoga's definitive Scripture. He wrote: "*Yogas chitta vritti nirodh*—Yoga is the neutralization of the waves of feeling." *Chitta* (feeling) has been variously translated as "mind-stuff, consciousness, subconsciousness, the lower mind." In a series of classes on *Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms* many years ago, Paramhansa Yogananda pointed out that those waves in the mind which produce delusion and bondage are primarily the likes and dislikes, the biased feelings of the heart.

Vritti (vortices) literally means, "whirlpools"—the whirling eddies that interfere with life's smoothly flowing stream, sucking into a purely private orbit whatever one likes, making one so preoccupied with egoistic selections and rejections that he is no longer consciously a part of the stream. Thoughts pass through the minds even of enlightened sages whenever they wish them to, though they subside easily because of the sages' nonattachment to them. Other functions of the mind, too, such as memory, idea- association, and analysis, the sage can perform far better than the average person. It is not as if he ceased completely to function as a human being after achieving enlightenment. What cease for him are the waves, or eddies, of selfish likes and dislikes of attachment. Entering thereby into the sacred life-stream of *Pranava*, or *Aum*, he merges consciously into the silent, infinite ocean of Spirit.

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Swami Kriyananda

There are four basic aspects of consciousness: mind (*mon*), intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahankara*), and feeling (*chitta*). Paramhansa Yogananda described them thus:

The mind is like a mirror. It reflects, simply, whatever is placed before it.

The intellect defines what it sees reflected in the mirror. If the reflection is of a horse, the intellect determines, impersonally, “That's a horse.”

The ego then personalizes what it sees in the mirror by declaring, “That's my horse!”

Feeling, then—in Sanskrit, *chitta*—strengthens the bond of involvement by declaring, “How happy I am to see my horse!”

It is *chitta* that ties the knot, so to speak, in the rope of delusive involvement.

Mind is centered at the top of the head; the intellect, in the frontal lobe of the brain at a point midway between the eyebrows; the ego, in the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain; feeling, in the region of the spine opposite the heart. Human consciousness, more generally speaking, is centered all along the spine.

Some of these points are easily corroborated by our everyday experience. Whenever we think deeply, for instance, we tend to knit the eyebrows (the seat of the intellect). Often, too, we'll look upward—one more indication that our consciousness is focused there.

Again, whenever we feel a strong emotion, it's in the heart that we feel it. People who have been disappointed in love are prone to say, “I'm heartbroken!” I can't imagine anyone crying, “She's left me! Ah, how my knees ache!” It is in the heart—or, rather, in the spine in the heart region, that we experience emotional pain.

The medulla oblongata is more difficult to relate to the ego in terms of common experience, but a little reflection makes the connection. Simply observe common human gestures. When people express pride, for example, they draw their heads back—indicating tension in the back of the neck around the medulla. The popular description for such a person is: “He's looking down his nose.”

Again, when people feel flattered, they have a tendency to move their heads slightly from side to side, as though waves of pleasure were passing through the medulla.

It is from the location of the medulla, Yogananda explained, that the sperm and ovum, when united, move outward to create the physical body. The energy, as it creates the body, moves upward from the medulla to the brain, and downward from the medulla through the spinal column, whence it radiates outward to form the nervous system and the body. The medulla oblongata is the

seat of life in the body, and contains the only body part that cannot be operated on, except peripherally.

The spine is the center of the body. The ego is the center of body-consciousness. Various spiritual teachings recommend concentrating in different places along the spine, but all of them in one way or another relate to the spine as the center from which spiritual practice begins.

There are different degrees of involvement with delusion. All of them, in varying degrees, involve the feeling quality. The deeper the ego-involvement, the deeper the delusion.

The first degree is a simple distraction rather than an intense involvement. Nevertheless, it does constitute a serious obstacle to meditation. I'm referring more to **impressions** on the mind than to reactive emotions in the heart.

The impressions formed by sense-stimuli linger in the mind to influence the direction of our thoughts. For example, I remember picking strawberries for a month on a farm in upstate New York, following my graduation from high school. For the first few weeks, upon closing my eyes at night to go to sleep I would see nothing but strawberries.

Everyone has similar experiences. You watch a movie, for instance, that has no special meaning for you, but the impressions imprinted on your mind linger annoyingly, especially when you try to go to sleep—or, to meditate. These impressions aren't deep, but they are distracting. **Feeling** is involved primarily in the pleasure or irritation you derive from those impressions.

If there are too many of them, then, certainly, they add up to a serious disturbance to your inner peace. Try to surround yourself with impressions that will uplift the mind. An important result of so doing will be that your meditations will be deeper.

Likes and dislikes form deeper roots in the consciousness. Whereas impressions are like waves, rising and falling without special reference to the ego, likes and dislikes have a greater resemblance to vortices: They draw feeling-energies to a focus in the ego; they define us to ourselves, instead of merely distracting our minds. These vortices are the real bonds of our delusion. It is they above all that need to be dissolved.

The strongest vortices are those of **karma**—actions, and the results we attract to ourselves as a consequence of those actions.

An illustration may help to clarify these increasingly deep commitments of will power and energy. **Impressions** represent the lightest commitment, or no real commitment at all. They may be compared to hearing a violinist practicing next door, but paying little attention to what we hear. Thus, even though the memory of his practice sessions may intrude on our dreams at night, or on our meditations, they have no binding effect on the mind.

Likes and dislikes have a binding effect. They arise when we reach the point where we shudder every time the violinist plays a note off key. In this case, there is personal involvement in the thought “I wish he'd play in tune!” There is even self-definition in the idea “I can't stand music that is out of tune.” There is, in this dislike, an element of bondage, for it implies **feeling rotated around the thought of the ego**. Some karma is involved in this dislike, because karma is simply movement, even of energy.

Of the three—impressions, likes and dislikes, and karma—**impressions** are the least binding because they are primarily on a level of ideation; they do not yet involve energy. Likes and dislikes involve more energy, causing the mental ripples, both small and large, to rotate around the ego, forming vortices. There is some karma here. If our dislike becomes so seething, however, that we go next door and smash the violin, our flow of energy has reached the level of material action, and is a stronger **karma** still, one that will have to be worked out on this material plane.

Thus, meditation practiced for Self-realization must be directed toward calming, and thereby neutralizing, the vortices of ego-feeling. First, we must neutralize our **likes and dislikes**. Gradually also, in time, we must neutralize the specific **karmas** born of commitment, through action, to our likes and dislikes.

Thus, we come to the classic definition of yoga (divine union), as it appears in a great Indian treatise, The Yoga Sutras [Aphorisms] of Patanjali. The definition reads, “Yogas chitta vritti nirodha”—“Yoga is the neutralization of the vortices in the feeling aspect of consciousness.”

Our material involvement isn't due only to our mental definition of the world as an apparent reality. (In fact the definition is delusive.) It is our desire for, and our enjoyment or despair of, the world that ensure our bondage to it. Our first task in meditation is to still these likes and dislikes.

To some extent, we accomplish this end by simply watching our likes and dislikes impersonally, while disengaging our egos from personal involvement. *The Bhagavad Gita* makes it clear that we cannot escape the coils of karma by merely not acting. We have to act out our outward karma, but with an attitude of inner non-engagement.

Thus, the impersonality required both in an intellectually honest and a spiritual search for truth entails, not the suppression of feeling, but the refinement of feeling to calm, intuitive awareness.

In calm, intuitive feeling, science and meditation meet.

In watching the mind or the fluctuations of feeling, it is important to do so from the right *place*, mentally. The practice of *vipasana* (“mindfulness”) has become popular nowadays, but it has been found in many cases to increase stress instead of decreasing it. Difficulties arise when people do their “watching,” not from a place of inner detachment, but in a state of intense mental involvement.

Vipasana is suitable only for those who have already achieved a degree of inner peace. This practice is unsuitable for people who are caught up in the hurry and excitement of busy lives.

While watching your mental process, do so from above, as it were—that is to say, from a higher level of awareness. As much as possible, practice “mindfulness” from a superconscious level. For the conscious mind cannot easily achieve self-understanding. Clear insight comes from superconsciousness.

The following meditation exercise is adapted to that kind of watchfulness which produces inner calmness.

Meditation Exercise

Visualize your heart's feelings as a boundless lake. Strive to see reflected in that lake the full moon in the sky above. Ripples in the lake's surface, and deeper vortices churning below its

surface, disturb that reflection. This agitation is due to disturbances in your heart's feelings, past as well as present.

Calm that movement—not by suppressing it, but by seeking at the center of every ripple and vortex the undistorted reflection of the moon above.

You do not have to work to develop divine love. The calmer your lake of feeling, the more clearly and spontaneously will love and devotion appear, reflected, in the heart.

Love is the very essence of reality.

Every unfulfilled desire, every wave of like or dislike, every karmic action creates a subtle **vortex of energy**, which the ego spins around itself. They are held together by the centripetal thought: “I want this; I reject that; I like this; I don't like that; This is what I have done; That is what I failed to accomplish.” The ego hugs these thoughts and impulses to itself until they gain release outwardly in action, or inwardly in Self-realization. To work out a desire or a karma in the outer world is, ultimately, not feasible, for out of every fulfilled desire there arise two, or twenty, or a hundred others. This is the inner significance of the Greek legend of the Hydra, the many-headed serpent that Hercules slew. The mythical monster would grow two heads for every one that was cut off.

The **vrittis**, or vortices, enter the subconscious and sink to their respective levels in the spine, according to the relative grossness or refinement of the energy they express. A powerful energy, generated by an intense involvement of the will, creates a similarly dynamic vortex. Very old vortices, as yet unresolved, are submerged, so to speak, by more recently created vortices, and have little or no effect on the waking consciousness. They continue, however, like little ripples on the surface of larger waves, to obscure the clear reflection of the Eternal Spirit until long after the larger waves of **chitta**, or intuitive feeling, have subsided. For each vortex, even the oldest and least active, represents a commitment of energy on the part of the will, even if long ago and forgotten. This explains why some people find it difficult to rise above bodily awareness even when they strive their very best to grow spiritually. There are countless such vortices, not even taking into account the possibility that we may have incarnated before in other bodies, each incarnation producing its own nest of *vrittis*.

By centering our consciousness in the superficial spine (the ida and pingala), we concentrate our likes and dislikes there where our thoughts and emotions manifest their reactions to outer circumstances. These reactions carry the mind outward by focusing its attention on the circumstances instead of inwardly, on the reactions themselves.

As we retrace pleasure and pain back from outer effect to inner cause—to the reactive process itself in its place of origin in the spine—we learn to control our involvement in the ups and downs of life. We develop equanimity thereby, instead of projecting likes and dislikes onto a world we can do little to improve anyway. Instead of thinking, for instance, “Oh, how wonderful that we're going on an outing!” or “How I hate having to go to work today!” we calm the reactive process in ourselves and thus remain always peaceful and happy, regardless of outer circumstances.

For to react positively is still to react, and by so doing to identify ourselves with outwardness. Because the universe, moreover, is founded on duality, every positive reaction must perforce be succeeded by a negative one; every ascent in the superficial spine through ida must be succeeded by a downward movement through pingala—even as a ball, thrown into the air, must come down again. The yogi learns, instead, to be inwardly always “even-minded and cheerful.”

Interestingly, by the very act of **calming our emotional reactions to circumstances**, we find ourselves able to influence outer circumstances far more than people do who dance unceasingly in reaction to them.

Conscious decisions are tainted by influences of which the conscious mind is not even aware. We say we are free to do what we like, but what makes us like to do what we do? It isn't that attractiveness is inherent in those things. Likes and dislikes are subjective. They rise to the conscious level from the subconscious, and keep us bound to the world's delusions whether we consciously agree or not. Merely to recognize a fault intellectually, or to recognize a rationalization as being subconsciously inspired, is no guarantee of readiness on our part to be rid of it.

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From The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita – Swami Kriyananda

(2,47) ction (in this realm of vibration) is a duty, but let not your ego crave the fruits of action. Be not attached to either action or inaction.

Be like a divine lark, which enjoys singing without trying to impress or to gain anything from anyone. Those who act with ego-motivation become caught in the web of maya. The universe was brought into existence through the power of Cosmic Vibration, the great sound of AUM. So long as one lives in the realm of manifestation, and is not merged in Spirit, he cannot avoid acting altogether. The important thing is to act rightly.

To attain God-consciousness, it is necessary to release all attachment to thoughts of “I” and “mine.” The infinite consciousness appears finite in the ego, as in the atom. That is merely an appearance, however. The atom cannot help whirling in its own minuscule reality, but the ego, being conscious, can aspire to be released from all vibratory manifestation. As Patanjali wrote, “**Yogas chitta vritti nirodha:** Yoga is the neutralization of the (whirling) eddies of feeling.” The spiritual duty of every ego is to stop the movement it generates by releasing itself from such “whirling” thoughts as, “Everything I do is for my own personal benefit!” Bondage to delusion consists of nothing but the constant reference of everything one does (and thinks, and enjoys, and suffers) back to one's own self. Not only action, but all one's enjoyments in this world—indeed, also one's sufferings—are tainted by the simple thought: “I am the doer. I am the enjoyer, and I am the sufferer”—and then the outraged demand: “But why am I the sufferer?”

The solution is not to refrain from acting. Some people—many hermits, for example—think to develop spiritually by refraining from all action. That idea is a delusion. As long as one must breathe, think, and move, he cannot rightly claim to be inactive. The yogi who sits breathless and motionless in samadhi is a different case. To go beyond action you must merge your consciousness in the Cosmic Sound of AUM, allowing it to act through you and around you until you merge in that infinite vibration, and then pass beyond vibration itself into the calm

consciousness of the Supreme Spirit. As long, however, as you are conscious of having a body, you will only be deceiving yourself if you try to achieve the actionless state by not acting. All you will become, in time, is lazy and dull-minded!

To reach God, one must first learn to act without selfish motive: for God, not for personal reward. Indeed, it is necessary to be intensely active for God if one would develop that intense awareness which alone lifts one to superconsciousness. Lazy people will not find God!

In everything you do, feel that God is acting through you. Wash your body, feed it, give it rest—do everything needful to maintain the body in good health and glowing with energy—but always tell yourself, “It is God I am serving through this physical instrument.” The very enjoyment of good food, beautiful scenery, and the good things of life can be offered up to God. Share those enjoyments with Him, rather than depriving yourself of them. What need to be released are the thoughts, “I am doing, I am enjoying,” and even the delusive consciousness, “It is I who am suffering.”

Even in meditation, it is important not to meditate with desire for the results. To eliminate the strain and tension of trying to concentrate, release also the thought, “I am meditating.” Think, rather, “The Cosmic Vibration is reaffirming its own reality, through me. Cosmic love, through me, is yearning for God’s love. Cosmic joy, through me, is rejoicing in our Infinite Beloved.”

§

(3,34) *Attraction and repulsion (regarding) sense objects belong to the natural ebb and flow of duality. Beware equally of them both, for they are man’s greatest enemies!*

Attraction and repulsion are extreme forms of likes and dislikes. To like anything excessively is as great an error, virtually by definition, as to dislike its opposite. The realization of God depends on **neutralizing all one’s reactions**, leveling out their peaks and their valleys, and seeing the one, changeless Spirit at the heart of everything.

The secret is not to cease from enjoying anything—a “solution” which leads only to apathy, and consequently, to a deadened awareness. The secret, rather, is to center every enjoyment in the heart: to feel that its cause lies there, in your reactions; and then to draw that energy consciously upward in the spine, from the heart to the brain.

Ordinary **likes and dislikes** are not man’s enemies, as such. Rather, they are like troublesome neighbors. Extreme forms of these emotions, however—any strong attraction or violent repulsion—can plunge one into violent storms of emotion that toss him helplessly about on great waves of delusion. Never let yourself become infatuated (infatuation is extreme attraction) with anything or anyone. Never let yourself hate anything or anyone. Develop an attitude, rather, of accepting the cosmic dream as it is, even when it becomes a nightmare! Your only hope is to escape to a higher level of consciousness.

Some people do have ugly traits. Don’t waste energy in reacting to them, neither by dislike nor by abhorrence. Don’t welcome them into your “galaxy” of interests. Move through life, rather, like a swan off of whose back the rain flows lightly, never touching its body.

Protect your heart’s feelings from the excitement of all extreme reactions. Surround those feelings with emanations of peace and good will. Relax in the heart. Relax also outward from the

heart, to the shoulders. Then direct the heart's energy upward through the spine to the brain. When there are people around you, for instance, shouting angrily—and especially when they shout at you personally—relax inwardly; be centered in the Self; smile in your heart, and remind yourself, “I love God alone!”

Chapter. 7 ... One such method is described in Chapter 4, Verse 35, where Krishna tells Arjuna of the importance of the guru, or spiritual savior. A guru is more than merely a teacher. The power of the guru can transfer his magnetism to disciples who tune in to his consciousness. Thus, his magnetism can help to transform every fault in them into its opposite virtue, by rechanneling the energy in their spines—in a sense realigning the “molecules” of tendencies and helping them, ever increasingly, to flow upward. A river, when its flow is strong, dissolves any eddies lingering along the bank, and causes those eddies and any debris swirling in them to enter the river's powerful flow down to the ocean. In similar fashion, a strong upward flow of energy in the spine can dissolve all the “**vrittis**,” or eddies of feeling, and carry them up to the spiritual eye. Hence Patanjali's definition of yoga: “**Yogas chitta vritti nirodha** (Yoga is the neutralization of the eddies, or whirlpools, of feeling in the consciousness).” The subtle help of a true, or Sat, guru can help the disciple to transform his own tendencies and direct them all toward God.

§

(6,18) *When the chitta (feeling) is completely calmed and centered inwardly in the Self, the yogi, freed from every attachment and desire, attains the state known as union with God.*

Entanglement with delusion begins not so much with the ego itself as with the reactions of feeling in the heart to the fluctuations of maya. Even a master needs to retain enough ego-consciousness to recognize that certain duties in his world, though God-ordained, are specifically his. He is not identified with his ego, but only works through it in somewhat the way a trumpeter blows his horn. What really traps people in delusion is the thought, “I like this!”—or, “I dislike that!” Even liberated masters need enough ego-consciousness to hold the atoms of their bodies together. In the illustration of the waves and the ocean, the master is the low, sattwic wave, the very crest of which remains close to the ocean bosom.

Therefore it was that Patanjali gave his definition of yoga as, “**Yogas chitta vritti nirodha**: Yoga is the neutralization of the eddies (whirlpools, great and small) of feeling.”

§

(6,19) *A candle flame burns steadily, protected from the wind. Even so is the consciousness of that yogi who has subdued his chitta (feelings).*

The moon's reflection on a lake is distorted by ripples in the water. Such are the ripples of feeling, which often grow and become waves of agitation, distorting the clarity of human perception. To calm the mind that it reflect the truth as it is, one must calm the waves of reaction in the heart. Only when the flame of concentration burns steadily and one accepts calmly whatever is rather than trying to view it differently and wishing it were different, can one achieve complete truthfulness. One must learn to remain unmoved by either good fortune or adversity. Only then is the deep perception of Infinity possible.

§

(7,4) *Earth, water, fire, air, ether, the perceiving mind (manas), discernment (buddhi), and causative self-awareness (ahankara): such are the Eightfold divisions of My manifested nature (Prakriti).*

Krishna is speaking here in cosmic, not in limited individual terms. In so doing he pushes outward the very edges of what mankind in this age is capable of understanding...

Nature (Prakriti) contains other "divisions": **mind (manas)**, which perceives all; **intuitive intelligence (buddhi)**, which comprehends all; and the **ego principle (ahankara)** on a cosmic scale, which is the one Self in all outward manifestation. Egoism, in this case, is still a principle, but not individualized as it becomes in man, with his sharpened perception of himself as living in a particular human body. **The ego is the soul identified with the body.** Even so, cosmic (causal) Self-awareness, as distinct from Brahman, is that Self identified with the entire manifested universe as its body.

It is interesting that Krishna in this stanza does not give the fourth aspect of consciousness that is classically listed: chitta. **Chitta is feeling.** We perceive with the mind; define with the intellect; identify personally with the ego; and feel one way or another about things with the chitta. Most people identify their capacity for feeling with their emotions, and therefore with their reactive process, both subjective and objective. Yoga itself is defined as the **neutralization of this feeling process**—not as its cancellation, but as (so to speak) its subduing or pacification. Thus, one might expect Krishna to have not merely listed, but stressed, this aspect of consciousness.

On the other hand, chitta is more than an aspect of consciousness: It is consciousness. In man, chitta is far more than the reactive feelings in his heart: **It is deep, intuitive feeling**, which defines the very consciousness of self. In divine consciousness, chitta becomes cosmic feeling: not that of the ego, but of the divine Self: Absolute Bliss. Bliss is ever-existing, ever-conscious, and (as Yogananda added) ever-new. In the chapter of Autobiography of a Yogi titled, "An Experience in Cosmic Consciousness," Yogananda stated of his first experience of that state, "I cognized the center of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart..."

§

(16:3)... To neutralize the vrittis, or vortices of chitta, as Patanjali recommends, does not mean to deaden one's feeling capacity, but only to calm one's feelings and make them perfectly

receptive. There cannot be consciousness without feeling. Indeed, feeling is consciousness. Spiritual progress depends on refining the receptivity of feeling. This is possible only when the intuition is calm and, therefore, pure.

§

From The Path, chapter 23 – Swami Kriyananda

...egoic awareness gives rise to countless millions of subsidiary eddies: vortices of likes and dislikes, resulting in desires, which in turn lead to ego-motivated activities. Every such vortex draws energy to itself, and thereby also reaffirms and strengthens the ego from which it derives its energy. Until a desire has been fulfilled in action, or else dissipated by wisdom, it may remain dormant, like a seed, in the subconsciousness for incarnations. The stronger the mental tendency, the greater the ego's commitment to it. The amount of energy diverted toward these myriad commitments is incalculably great. Paramhansa Yogananda used to tell us, "There is enough latent energy in one gram of your flesh to supply the city of Chicago with electricity for a week. Yet you imagine yourselves powerless in the face of a few difficulties!" The reason we can tap so little of the energy potentially available to us is that most of what we attract to ourselves from the surrounding universe has already been "spoken for"; it is absorbed by countless eddies of prior egoic commitments...

Likes and dislikes, and their resultant desires and aversions, are the root cause of mortal bondage. The progressive stages of involvement with maya may be traced through the basic functions of human consciousness: **mon, buddhi, ahankara, and chitta: mind, intellect, ego, and feeling**. Paramhansa Yogananda explained these basic functions by the illustration of a horse seen reflected in a mirror. The mirror is the mind (mon), reflecting the image just as it appears through the senses, without in any way qualifying or defining that image. **Buddhi** (intellect) then defines what it sees, informing us, "That is a horse." **Ahankara** (ego) steps in next to say, "That's my horse." Up to this point we are not yet really bound by the thought of ownership; the identification, though personal, remains more or less abstract. But then comes **chitta** (feeling), which says, "How happy I am to see my horse!" **Chitta is our emotional, reactive process, our likes and dislikes**, and is, as I said, the true source of all our delusions. Thus, the ancient sage Patanjali, classical exponent of the yoga science, defined yoga itself as "**the neutralization of the vortices (vrittis) of chitta.**"

Master once told me, "When I applied to the Maharaja of Kasimbazar for permission to transfer my school to his Ranchi property, he called in several pundits to test my knowledge of spiritual matters, since the request involved a religious institution. I could see they were all set for a theological bullfight, so I turned the tables on them. I said, 'Let us talk only of truths we have actually realized. An ability to quote the Scriptures is no proof of wisdom.' I then asked them a question for which I knew there was no answer in any text. 'We read,' I said, 'of the four aspects of human consciousness: mon, buddhi, ahankara, and chitta. We also read that these have their respective centers in the physical body. Can you tell me where in the body each center is located?' Well, they were completely stumped! All they knew was what they had read. I then told them, 'Mon (mind) is centered at the top of the head; buddhi (intellect), at the point between the eyebrows; ahankara (ego), in the medulla oblongata; and chitta (feeling), in the heart.'"

"Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus, "for they shall see God." The teachings of the Galilean Master and those of India's great yogis were cut from the same cloth of Self-realization. Only when the likes and dislikes of the heart, and their resultant vortices of desire and aversion, have been dissolved—in short, when the heart has been purified—can Self-realization be attained. The vortex of ego itself is then dissipated with relative ease, for without objective attachments it soon loses its momentum, and is dispersed at last by the currents of divine inspiration...

Spiritual awakening takes place when all one's energy is directed upward to the spiritual eye. Hence the saying of Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength": that is, "with all thy energy."

This upward flow is obstructed in most people by countless eddies of chitta, which, once formed in the heart, get distributed along the spine according to their anticipated level of fulfillment—the lower the level, the more materialistic the desire; the higher the level, the more spiritual. These eddies, or vrittis, can be dissipated by a flow of energy through the spine strong enough to neutralize their centripetal force. Numerous techniques of yoga have as their main objective the awakening of this energy-flow.

Of all such yoga techniques, the most effective, according to Paramhansa Yogananda and his line of gurus, because the most central and direct in its application, is Kriya Yoga. This was the technique, they said, that was taught in ancient times by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. And Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, states that he gave this technique to humanity in an incarnation long prior to the one in which he taught Arjuna. Of all the techniques of yoga, Kriya is quite probably the most ancient.

Kriya Yoga directs energy lengthwise around the spine, gradually neutralizing the eddies of chitta. At the same time it strengthens the nerves in the spine and brain to receive cosmic currents of energy and consciousness. Yogananda stated that Kriya is the supreme yoga science. Beside it, other yoga techniques that work on calming the breath, concentrating the mind, etc., though important in themselves (Yogananda also taught a number of them), must be classed as subsidiary.

He often said that Kriya Yoga strengthens one in whatever path—whether devotion, discrimination, or service; Hindu, Christian, Moslem, or Judaic—one is inclined by temperament, or by upbringing, to follow.

§

From Yogananda

The great master and exponent of Yoga, Patanjali, says that it is the heart or **chittwa** and its **feelings** that have to be controlled in order to attain God-realization. As the moon reflected in a whirling pot of water looks distorted, so also the blessed image of God or soul reflected in the sensation-disturbed mental water in the bodily pot looks distorted and filled with grief. Patanjali says when, by meditation, the waves of sensations are taken away from the mental waters of the bodily pot, then the pure blessedness of the soul can be perceived.

All experiences invading the mind do not create disturbance of restlessness until the heart is touched. If all experiences remain within an individual as academic knowledge, they could not hurt or bind him. So it is the heart which has duality and becomes intimate with all experiences

by having attraction or repulsion for them. If an individual watched his life's experiences as one unaffectedly watches motion pictures, he would go from this earth a free master. But it is the heart which through likes and dislikes binds an individual to the wheel of birth and death and mortal suffering. The heart therefore is the index of an individual's life.

--*The Second Coming of Christ, Inner Culture, April, 1938*

According to the great Hindu Master, Patanjali, the feelings of the heart are responsible for all our entanglements in earthly lives. According to him, man was sent on earth as a perfect image of God to be entertained there. But when a man forgets the immortal nature within him and forms likes and dislikes in his heart about material things, he becomes earthbound. He reincarnates on earth due to the likes and dislikes in his feelings acquired in past lives.

The soul that comes on earth and experiences everything with nonattachment in the heart does not reincarnate but becomes liberated in God from which it came. Man is sent on earth to witness earthly experiences with the attitude of a divine being made in the image of God. But when man builds likes and dislikes in his heart about all earthly experiences, he becomes entangled in them.

--*The Second Coming of Christ, Inner Culture, August 1939*

Be neither elated nor depressed at anything outside yourself. Behold the passing spectacle of life with an even mind. For life's ups and downs are but waves on an ocean, constantly in flux. Shun emotional involvement with them, while remaining ever calm, ever happy at your inner center in the spine.

--*Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Stanza 9*

§

From Kriyananda

Likes and dislikes only agitate the heart's feelings. They'll prevent you from perceiving anything as it really is. Rise above them by affirming contentment regardless of any turmoil surging around you.

--*Do It Now! (January 27)*

The definition given by the ancient Hindu sage, Patanjali, to the state of divine enlightenment is: *Yogas chitta vritti nirodh—yoga* (divine union) is the neutralization of the waves (literally, whirlpools) of feeling" (Yoga Sutra 1:2). **Chitta** signifies, in a general sense, the lower mind. The disturbances in the **lower mind** that obstruct divine union are, as Paramhansa Yogananda explained them, the tumultuous **feelings**, the **attachments**, the likes and dislikes, of the heart. Their movements, or *vritti*, are usually explained as waves, but literally mean whirlpools, or eddies...

--Your Sun Sign as a Spiritual Guide (5)

...let's go back before the Bhagavad Gita, because the Gita takes place at a late point in this much broader story. In the beginning we have two brothers, Pandu, who represents the soul, and Dhritarashtra, who represents the mind. Dhritarashtra was born blind, meaning that the mind by itself can't see clearly, can't discriminate. You see, our mental qualities are divided into four: *mon*, *buddhi*, *ahankar*, *chittwa*—mind, intellect, ego, and feeling. Yogananda described the blind mind as a mirror. Imagine a horse reflected in a mirror. The mirror doesn't say, "That's a horse"; it merely reflects back what it is shown. You, standing there and looking at the mirror, see the reflection and say, "Oh, that's a horse." The intellect looking at what is reflected in the mind defines what it sees: a horse, a building, and so on.

Then the ego steps into the picture. Seeing the horse, it says, "Oh, that is my horse." Here arises the first real threat of delusion, this separation of things into "mine" and "not mine." But so far the threat is not yet serious.

There is a story of Paramhansa Yogananda when he was still in his teens. I've told this story in my book, *Stories of Mukunda*. His father gave him a motorcycle as a present. Though he owned the motorcycle, he wasn't attached to it, but enjoyed it as if it belonged to somebody else. In fact, he thought of it as God's motorcycle. And when somebody came along who liked it, he gave it away just as freely as if he had never owned it. Did his non-attachment mean that he had no sense of ego? In his poem, "Samadhi," he wrote, "I, the Cosmic Sea, watch the little ego floating in me." The fact is, there has to be some sense of ego to keep the body going. In a master, however, it's not ego as you and I know it. It's just a tiny abstraction of his infinite consciousness. So in a sense you could say that he had no ego, because it wasn't a limited ego, an ego of body identification.

What really causes the bondage of ego is *chittwa*—feeling. You look at the horse, you say, "That's my horse," but then you add, "Oh, how wonderful it is to see my horse!" Then you're trapped! This is where we find the bondage of ego coming into it, causing us to like what relates supportively to our ego, and to dislike what seems to relate unsupportively.

I remember once, when I was a child, how my father gave my brother and me a couple of toys. I was just saying to my brother that my toy was much nicer than his, and he was saying, no, no, his was much nicer than mine, when Dad came into the room and said, "Wait a minute, you've got your toys mixed up." We both very quickly then made the little mental gymnastic of saying,

"My new toy is better than yours." You see? That's the way of delusion: the consciousness of I and mine, and of liking I and mine.

--*Keys to the Bhagavad Gita*

Likes and dislikes only agitate the heart's feelings. They'll prevent you from perceiving anything as it really is. Rise above them by affirming contentment regardless of any turmoil surging around you.

--*Keys to the Bhagavad Gita*

"Life will bring you many ups and downs. If you let your feelings rise and fall with the waves of circumstance, you will never attain that inner calmness which is the foundation of spiritual progress. Be careful, therefore, not to react emotionally. Rise above likes and dislikes.

"A good rule to live by, and one that will take you sailing through many tests in life, is, under all circumstances, to remain even-minded and cheerful."

--*The Essence of Self-realization*

An ever-tranquil heart comes naturally when the waves of likes and dislikes become stilled forever in the calmness of divine perception.

--*Rays of the Same Light, Bhagavad Gita, Week 40*

One way we can test our power over our habits is to command the mind to like or dislike a certain food at will. When I first arrived in America, I was served at a dinner some Roquefort cheese and crackers. No sooner had Mr. Roquefort touched the palate and its arrival become known to the cerebral cells, than the habit lords rebelled and were about to upset the honored guests in my stomach. I didn't enjoy this sudden embarrassment, and saw that everyone else at the table was greatly enjoying this peculiar cheese. I strongly urged my senses to immediately elect the Roquefort-cheese-enjoying habit. I liked the taste at once and do so to this day.

--*Yogananda, Article from East-West, January, 1926*

Ahankara: The Ego

From Autobiography of a Yogi, chapter 4 – Yogananda

Ahankara (means) egoism; literally, "I do." The root cause of dualism or illusion of maya, whereby the subject (ego) appears as object; the creatures imagine themselves to be creators.

From Raja Yoga, chapter 13 – Swami Kriyananda

The seat of ego, as I have said elsewhere, is in the medulla oblongata. This ego-consciousness must be transformed into soul-consciousness by prolonged concentration at the Christ center, until one's actual center of consciousness shifts to that point. An enlightened master always acts, thinks, and lives from that center. His consciousness becomes centered in the sahasrara only when action ceases, and his soul merges with the Infinite in samadhi. The Christ center, then, also represents an aspect of soul-consciousness: the spiritualized ego—the soul in its state of active manifestation. For practical purposes, and for all but the fully enlightened soul, we may say that the Christ center represents the sahasrara as the seventh chakra. For not only is it the positive pole of the sixth center (the medulla oblongata); it also serves in place of the sahasrara as the seat of soul-consciousness in the aspiring yogi.

O yogi! Strive always to act, think, and live from the Christ center in the frontal lobe of your brain, between the two eyebrows. Do not wait to become a master to live as a master lives. It is by living in a divine way even now that one becomes divine. Renounce ego! You are not that little self. Dwell always in the thought of your soul's freedom, of the soul-guidance that emanates in soothing rays from your own Christ center.”

From Raja Yoga, chapter 14 – Swami Kriyananda

It is one of the strange paradoxes of life that, while the ego is the greatest barrier to divine attainments, one needs a well-developed ego to long for those attainments. The animals have very little ego sense. The very real greatness of primitive peoples is due largely to the unobtrusiveness, or at least the relative simplicity, of their egos.

As man progresses through the long spiral of incarnations, however, seeking happiness and fulfillment in one material channel after another, and repeatedly being disappointed, he begins to become painfully aware of his own personal frustration and inadequacy. Consequently he begins gradually to develop a desire to find deeper, personal, solutions. The desire to seek something deeper demands this sense of personal need. The ego, therefore, though in the end our enemy, is for a long time our greatest friend.

What carries man through incarnation after incarnation of delusion is the outwardly propelling force of desire. Wisdom is the realization that everything we are seeking may be found truly in the Self alone. But for many incarnations the soul seeks itself in outward reflections, and projects onto mere things the joy that is its own nature...

Egoism is the sole cause of bondage. It is because of ego that desires infest the heart. My guru defined the ego as the soul identified with the body. So long as this identity persists, every action by the body will be viewed as an action by oneself. So long, therefore, will the body (or its successor in a future incarnation) have to bear the consequences, good, bad, or indifferent, of that action. Such is the law of karma, the counterpart, on a subtler level, of the physical principle of action and reaction. Soul freedom consists essentially of banishing this sense of ego by realizing that we are not the body, but the Infinite Spirit.”

From Awaken to Superconsciousness, chapter 16 – Swami Kriyananda

The Ego's Positive Aspect

A word here about the ego, which receives many brickbats and few roses from those whose job it is to explain these spiritual teachings. Granted, the ego stands in the way of spiritual progress. Indeed, ego-consciousness is the cause of all our spiritual diseases: pride, selfishness, aggression, and—more negatively still—self-doubt, insecurity, and fear. But it is easy to forget that there is good and bad in everything.

The three gunas, or qualities, coexist at all levels of creation. Although the ego must be vanquished in the end, to make room for superconsciousness, it is also our egos that make it possible for us to attain superconsciousness, and the highest levels of refinement available to human nature. To say deprecatingly of anyone, “Oh, that's just his ego,” is to invite the response from anyone who understands these things, “Well, of course it's his ego! What else could it be?”

The cure for ego-consciousness is not self-suppression. It is to use our self-awareness as an incentive to self-expansion, not to personal power and pride.

The ego is like the gravitational field of a planet, which is used by space probes to give them the additional power they need to extend their voyages into outer space. The ego magnetizes a thought or an inspiration by spinning it around the consciousness of “I,” that it may pass on further toward the Spiritual Eye, and superconsciousness.

The ego also, however, can block the flow of creativity and inspiration by crying, “Wait a minute! The credit is all mine.” In this case, the simile that comes to mind is a rubber tube such as one sees in a science laboratory. If the tube is squeezed tightly at any point, the substance or liquid passing through it may swell the tube and even burst it. This simile is actually suggested in common parlance, by the description of egotists as people with “swollen heads.”

To keep the tube from bursting, one can either release one's pressure on it, or turn off the flow at the faucet. In the case of human beings, one can either release the pressure on the medulla by relaxing the thought of “I,” or send less energy up to the brain. To release the pressure, we must stop taking personal credit for what we do, that our creative energy may continue flowing toward its natural destination in the Spiritual Eye. The way to send less energy up to the brain is to keep it engrossed in physical pleasures and satisfactions, to accept apathy as a normal mental condition, and to convince oneself that mediocrity is a normal state of being.

Many people who denounce ego in others (never in themselves!) seem to be suggesting that mediocrity is a sensible alternative to high aspiration. It is the solution delusion itself proposes: Lower your energy output; you'll be more comfortable if you avoid life's challenges.

It is interesting, incidentally, to note that bowing is the universal gesture of humility. To bow to others, or to God, releases tension in the medulla, and enables the energy to flow onward to the positive pole of the medulla, at the point between the eyebrows.

§

The Dissolution of the Ego

In the stage of dharana, ego is still present. Ego can't be merely affirmed into non-existence, any more than a flying bird can affirm the non-existence of air. From where else would a person begin his spiritual journey, if not from his human sense of self, which is the ego?

When the ego reaches the stage of dharana, it beholds, in a state of exaltation, that lofty Truth towards which it has so long aspired. Clearly, now, it sees the inner light, or hears the inner sounds. Yet it is still separated from these experiences by the thought, "I, this human being, am enjoying this experience."

§

From the Bhagavad Gita – Yogananda

(1:8) ...The Ego consciousness in man tries to keep the soul attached to matter in the form of individual traits and mortal desires born out of them. The Soul, being a reflection of the Omnipresent Spirit, ought to reflect its omnipresent, all-knowing character. It is the pure, perfect reflection of the Spirit, but when it forgets its own real nature and becomes identified with the body and its attachments, it loses its consciousness of Omnipresence and becomes conscious only of the limitations of the body. This body-bound soul is called Ego. The soul in the Ego state is a prisoner of the flesh and its limitations.

The soul, through meditation, can reach the state of Samadhi and thus can do away with its Ego or matter consciousness. Reaching Samadhi, or Oneness with God, is the only method by which the Ego consciousness can be completely defeated...

The Ego consciousness tries to keep the body under its control by reminding it of the limited physical relations of country, race, nation, family, possessions, characteristics, and so forth. The soul is held to the body by the Ego consciousness. In the highest Nirbikalpa Samadhi state the soul unites its Ego consciousness of race, country, family, body, possessions, and characteristics with the omnipresent, omniscient, all-blessed Spirit. The Ego reminds the Soul of its limitations, while Samadhi reminds the Soul of its omnipresence.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, East-West, 1930s

§

From The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita – Swami Kriyananda

(7:4)... In ordinary, unenlightened human beings, the ego is centered in the medulla oblongata. The yogi looks forward, as it were, from that point to the Kutastha, or “Christ center” between the two eyebrows. The more he concentrates on that point, the more his consciousness becomes identified with it, until his center of self-awareness shifts from ego to superconsciousness. Most people, in whatever they do, radiate energy outward from the medulla oblongata at the back of the head—the seat of ego in the body. An enlightened master, by contrast, radiates energy outward from his transformed self-awareness, which is centered in the Kutastha at the point between the eyebrows. This is still the ego, which even the enlightened man needs in order to keep his body functioning. The divine Self, as differentiated from the enlightened ego, has its center in the heart...

With the yogi’s rise spiritually, yoga practice purifies his ego to the point where he perceives egoism as a general, impersonal principle, and not as limited to his own (human) ego. His perception, then, is with the cosmic mind (manas), and is no longer limited to his individual self. His intellect, too, becomes a universal, intuitive intelligence and understanding.

§

(5:12) The God-united yogi, relinquishing attachment to the fruits of action, attains unshakable inner peace. That person, however, who does not direct his energies (upward) toward union with God is ruled by desire. Attached to the fruits of action, he lives in (perpetual) bondage.

The secret to divine freedom (this worthwhile thought cannot be repeated too often) is to renounce ego-motivation. A person has no choice but to act, outwardly or inwardly, with thoughts and with subtle energy. He must in any case, however, neutralize the vrittis, or eddies which draw the consequences of every action back to himself with the thought, “I did it; it is mine!”

§

From Super-Advanced Course, 1930 – Yogananda

What is the ego?

The soul's subjective consciousness of the body and its other material relations is termed the ego. The soul itself, being individualized Spirit, should manifest only its kinship with the Spirit, which is unmanifested, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. Hence, as Its reflection the soul, in its true state, is individualized, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. The ego, however, being identified with the three bodies--ideational, astral, and physical--(and their normal-abnormal conditions), has put on their natures...

Man's attachment to matter keeps the soul confined to the body prison and prevents it from finding freedom with God in the realm of Eternal Bliss. The ego attempts to satisfy the soul's constant, insatiable longing for God through material channels. Far from accomplishing its objective, it increases man's misery. *The soul's hunger can never be appeased by indulgence of the senses.* When man realizes this and masters his ego, i.e., when he achieves self-control, life becomes glorified by Bliss while he is still in the flesh. Then, instead of being the slave of material desires and appetites, his attention is transferred to the heart of omnipresence, resting there forever with the hidden Joy in everything.

§

From the Essence of Self-realization , chapter 4 – Swami Kriyananda

"What is the ego?" asked a devotee.

"The ego," Paramhansa Yogananda replied, "is the soul attached to the body.

§

From a talk in Portland, 1996

The ego is our friend and our foe, depending on how we use it. It's our friend if we use it to decide, "I want to grow spiritually. I want to get out of this ignorance. I want to get out of my capacity for suffering that I have as a human being. I want to find a state of consciousness...

It's a simple thing that just as people hate to go to prison, so they don't like being in this ego. And so when the ego thinks that way, it becomes its own enemy.

But the ego when it thinks expansively and realizes that this little center that is my ego is the same center that is in all, that is in every atom. When you can expand your sensitivity to include that that's one way to raise your consciousness from human to divine consciousness.

There's another way to do it and that is not by shrinking but by giving over to God to reduce the ego to non-existence by saying You are in everything, I'm nothing. And in that you automatically embrace a large reality also, both ways have the same ultimate result.

Now God if we think of ourselves as this little dot of ego and we want to go at it in a, the Sanskrit term would be gyanic way, gyanic means wisdom. And if you want to go according to the philosophy of Vedanta, which is I am God. That Infinite consciousness is I. There is truth in that. There is inspiration in that, but somehow it tends to be cold...

I've noticed in years of living there that many Swamis are very egotistical. They have too much the consciousness that I am everywhere. That's not good. The ego in that way is an obstacle. If you use the ego to say, "I want to find liberation. I want to get out of this suffering. That's good. That's what we have over the animals, who otherwise in some ways are more spiritual than we, at least in their intuitive flow. But mankind has reach the point where we begin to say that I don't like to suffer. Animals suffer and they don't know that they're suffering. It's not the same thing. But we have the sufficient awareness to say, "I want to know how to get out of it." It may take us a long time to reach that point...

When you can get out of this ego, when you can get out of this thought, I have to have this, I have to do that, I need this recognition, or all these strokes from other people and everything. And just realize, "I'm myself. I'm complete in myself." When you can reach that point and that doesn't come except by meditation, then you suddenly find, "ah, now I know who I really am. You don't find it until then.

It's like peeling an onion, the onion isn't finally peeled until there are no peels left and there's no onion left, nothing. So think of yourselves as an onion if you life. Because you have to peel away those things you have thought of as yourself.

Now the Divine grace is very important to this process, because you need somebody, you know when you're trying to scramble out of well you fall in, you need somebody to pull you out.

You need somebody who is out of that consciousness to bring into your consciousness that sense of freedom, otherwise you just struggle backwards and forwards, right and left all the time, and don't know how to get out...

§

From Keys to the Bhagavad Gita, – Swami Kriyananda

The ego, although it is our greatest obstacle, is also our greatest friend. We can use the ego in the right way to help us. The ego tells us what gives us pain, and what gives us happiness. If we didn't feel, personally, "I'm not happy," or "I am happy," then we wouldn't have the incentive to discriminate and do good. A person who knows that there is good food in a restaurant isn't going to go there unless he's hungry. It's the ego that says, "Oh, *I want* it." As Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness."

The ego that aspires for truth, that aspires to absorb itself in the Infinite, is the guru of human consciousness that leads us ever onward. The aspiring ego is the guide that tells us which actions will lead us toward the truth and which actions will obstruct that search. But even the good ego can't enter into the promised land; we have finally to surrender the ego itself...

Where there is ego, there will be duality between you and God. You've got to destroy that, eventually, and realize that you are God. Your ego can't be God, any more than the wave can say that it is the ocean. You have to realize that the ocean is the reality of the wave, that the wave has no reality except the ocean. When we see that God has become this I, that God *is* I, that there is no other reality but God, then finally the ego offers itself into the soul, the ego offers itself into the Infinite, and then freedom comes.

It's not easy. That highest and final test is the toughest of them all. At that moment the ego recoils and says, "No, no, no, no—wait!" And they've all gone through it: Buddha told how, on the eve of his enlightenment, suddenly Satan appeared in tempting forms to try to draw him back into ego consciousness. Buddha, with one supreme effort, rapped on the ground and said, "*Mara—Death—I have defeated you!*" And it all disappeared."

§

From the Secrets of Self-Acceptance – Swami Kriyananda

An expansive consciousness is the mark of a healthy ego. An unhealthy ego, on the contrary, is demonstrated by contractiveness.

A person with a healthy ego is not, as some people imagine, self-assertive or aggressive. These qualities are symptoms, rather, of a contractive consciousness. One with a healthy ego gazes outward in appreciation upon the world around him. He seeks to understand rather than to be understood; to relate to rather than be related to. He is self-giving and empathetic.

A person whose ego is unhealthy is preoccupied with himself—with his complexes, problems, and worries. He concentrates on how others treat him, not on what he can do for them. He might be described as a psychological vortex: His perceptions turn inward upon himself as the focus of all his interests. His contractiveness is unhealthy because it distorts his perceptions of reality, robs him of his native ability to enjoy life, and becomes ultimately a prison from which he can imagine no escape.

Few of us live wholly in either of these modes of consciousness. Sometimes, and in certain ways, we are expansive, but we are also contractive at other times, and in other ways. If, however, we seek to live wisely and well, we gradually learn that expansiveness leads to self-fulfillment, whereas contractiveness is the surest route to self-limitation and suffering.

Contractiveness tempts the mind with suggestions that, if we will only withdraw mentally into ourselves and hide from the world, we shall escape the trials with which people and circumstances threaten us. If—so our contractiveness whispers—we can but numb ourselves to pain, to insensitive treatment from others, and to their unkind and unperceptive opinions of us; and if we can only build psychological walls to exclude inconvenient realities from our lives, we'll find peace at last.

Unfortunately for those of us who succumb to this temptation, withdrawal and self-enclosure afford false security. Any attempt to banish the "barbarians" into outer darkness only makes our problems loom all the larger and more menacing, as we ourselves grow ever smaller. The more the ego withdraws into itself, the more painfully aware it becomes of its own limitations and inadequacy. The difficulty people have with accepting themselves as they are is rooted in their contractive consciousness, and not in any other flaws they may have. It isn't themselves they can't accept: it's their increasing sense of littleness. Littleness mocks the universal life-urge in all of us for self-expansion.

In the contractive mode, the very effort to accept oneself as he is only further affirms his littleness and pain. Any attempt, moreover, to objectify that pain by blaming it on others only causes further self-contraction, and an increase of pain.

The way back to self-acceptance, then, is not to begin with affirmations of self-worth. Such affirmations can only force comparison with other people: "I'm just as worthy as he is"; "I'm *more* worthy than he is!"; "he's preventing me from developing a sense of my own worthiness!" Statements like these are typical reflections of a contractive mind. The cure lies in self-forgetfulness, not in self-affirmation.

The way back to self-acceptance is, first, to get into an expansive mode by affirming a more generous, giving attitude toward others. Only after cultivating an expansive outlook can a person see himself accurately in his relation to others, and to the greater scheme of things.

Later, from an expanded perspective, it will be possible for him to affirm his independence of other people, or non-dependence on them, without at the same time affirming those attitudes of self-withdrawal which make a person forever—in his own mind at least—a victim of life. At this point, one can affirm safely at last his own integrity in relation to others, and to Life as a whole.

While traveling the road back to self-acceptance, bear in mind that you, in common with every other human being, are unique. The melody you have to sing is yours alone for all eternity. The role you have to play on Life's stage can be played by no one else. Your allotted task is to learn to play it to perfection. That melody, however, or that role, belongs to a more expanded selfhood than the realities you experience in your little ego. Transcend all limitation by contemplating ever-more-expanding vistas of reality. Ultimately, you will discover who you *really* are, behind all the ego masks that you—in common with most human beings—wear.”

§

From Art as a Hidden Message , chapter. 12 – Swami Kriyananda

There can be ego-awareness without it necessarily posing an obstacle. Indeed, some ego-awareness is necessary, for the ego is an energy-motivator.

Ego is what gives human beings the incentive to seek solutions to their difficulties. It generates the desire for self-improvement, for creative activity, and, ultimately, for self-transcendence. If the energy remains focused in the ego, however, instead of being allowed to flow on toward a broadening awareness, then instead of helping us to grow toward further understanding it becomes mired in pride and pettiness. If, at the moment of inspiration, the ego intrudes itself with the cry, “Look at me!” it blocks the onward flow of energy.

The simple thought, “It is I who am painting this tree,” as opposed to, “What I am painting is a *tree*,” is enough to hinder the clear flow of inspiration. In this case, the greater the creative flow, the greater the blockage of energy. Creative artists are more apt than many people to be egotistical, not because their egos are naturally stronger, but simply because during creativity there is an increased energy-flow to the brain. Temptation awaits them in the thought, “See what a good artist I am!” It is important for them—for artists more than for less creative people—to exclude the ego-principle as much as possible while at work.

Paramhansa Yogananda stated that the seat of ego in the body is the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain. It is interesting to note how emphasis on the thought, “I,” produces a greater focus of energy at that point. Try it. See, for example, what happens when you accept too personally another's flattery. And notice the tendency that proud people display to hold their heads “high” as if they were looking down their noses at the world. Tension at the back of the head makes them draw their heads backward. In Italy, the expression is similar: Instead of calling it “looking down the nose” they speak of seeing the world “beneath the nose.”

The way to remove this energy blockage in the ego, Yogananda said, is to divert concentration forward in the brain from the medulla oblongata. Best of all, focus it in the seat of superconsciousness in the forehead, between the eyebrows. Next, try to penetrate that point mentally. Project your energy out to the inspiration you hope to manifest.

Even people who lack awareness of the energy-flow in the body should find it easy to understand how the ego becomes an obstruction to creative self-expression. For it is always more productive to think, “What is appropriate?” than, “What do *I* want done in this situation?”

The ego, then, plays a role in creativity, as its generator. It must, however, keep a firm rein on the flow of thought to make sure that the mind doesn't get sidetracked. For there arises constantly in the mind the temptation to turn creativity to prideful ends.”

§

From the Hindu Way of Awakening, chapter 14 – Swami Kriyananda

To become an expression of Infinite Consciousness is to harbor some degree of awareness. Even rocks respond, however dimly, to human love or hatred. The greater that degree of awareness as it unfolds, budlike, during the wakening process of evolution, the greater also the consciousness of personal awareness. This consciousness of individual existence cannot but be separative at first, as an entity beholds itself as being distinct from every other individual expression in infinity. As this sense of separateness becomes intensified by feelings of attachment to that individuality, it becomes ego-consciousness. Thus, the ego was defined by Paramhansa Yogananda as the soul attached to the body. The seed of ego-consciousness sprouts in the astral, not the physical, body, and survives the death of the physical body.

The ego, then, is not the misfortune so many people consider it. It is a necessary stage in the evolution of manifested life toward divine Self-realization. Our ego-consciousness should be self-expansive, however, not self-contractive. It should reach out toward universal consciousness, and should not contract inward upon itself in fondness for its own separate identity. If the ego is expansive in the right sense, it will reach out to the universe in sympathy, and not merely in a spirit of intellectual questioning. For the essence of that Consciousness which produced us all is not only Intelligence, but Love: a sympathetic identity with all that exists. Love is as intrinsic to true wisdom as is the quality of intelligence. It is love, indeed, that brings clarity to the understanding.”

§

Stories and articles about the ego

The story of Namdev

From the Path, chapter 21 – Swami Kriyananda

Namdev (said Yogi Ramiah), a famous saint of Maharashtra, used to worship Krishna in his local temple with so much devotion that the Lord often appeared to him in vision. Namdev was revered by many devotees, who came great distances to sit at his feet.

In his village there was also another saint, a potter by profession. Like Namdev, this potter was widely reputed to have seen God. One day a large crowd assembled in the temple to celebrate an annual spiritual festival. Many of those present were devotees of Namdev. Partway through the proceedings, the potter, acting on some divine whim, decided to test the spiritual caliber of each of the assembled worshipers.

A potter tests the soundness of his wares by rapping on them with his knuckles. From the sound a pot emits he can tell whether or not it is cracked. With this practice in mind, Namdev's fellow saint went about the crowd, slapping the devotees. Because he was held in such high esteem by all, no one complained; it was assumed that his peculiar behavior was intended as some sort of spiritual lesson. But when the potter-saint slapped Namdev, Namdev was incensed. Wasn't he this man's spiritual equal?

"Why did you hit me?" he demanded.

Calmly the potter stood up and announced, "There appears to be a crack in this pot!"

Everyone laughed. Later, Namdev, stung to the quick, went into the temple and prayed, "Lord, You know I love You. Why did You allow me to be so humiliated before my own devotees?"

"But what can I do, Namdev," said the Lord. "There is a crack in that pot!"

"Lord!" cried Namdev, prostrating himself full-length on the floor, "I want to be worthy of You. Won't You show me the way to perfection?"

"For that you need a guru, Namdev."

"But I behold You, the Lord of the universe! Of what use would a guru be to me?"

"I can inspire you through visions," the Lord replied. "I can even instruct you. But I can't lead you out of delusion except through the medium of one who knows Me, for such is My law."

"Lord, won't You then at least tell me who my guru is?"

The Lord gave Namdev the name of a certain saint, and that of the village in which he lived. "He will be your guru," the Lord said. He added with a smile, "Don't be surprised if he seems a bit peculiar. That is just his way."

Namdev went to the village Krishna had named, and made inquiries as to the saint's whereabouts.

"That lunatic?" laughed the villagers. "Who would want anything to do with him?" It is a practice of some saints to disguise their spiritual greatness, you see, to protect themselves against curiosity seekers. But when Namdev pressed the villagers further, they replied off-handedly, "Oh, you'll probably find him somewhere around the temple. He usually spends his time there."

Namdev went there. No one was in the courtyard, but on entering the temple itself he found a wild-looking, disheveled old man sprawled carelessly on the floor. "Surely this can't be my guru," he thought anxiously.

A moment later, the question faded from his mind. For, to his horror, he noticed that the old man's feet were resting on a Shiva Linga.⁽⁷¹⁾ Furious at this act of desecration, he strode over to the man and ordered him to shift his feet at once.

The old man opened his eyes drowsily. "You see, my son," he replied, "my difficulty is that I'm old. This body is no longer so easy for me to move. Would you do me the favor of moving my feet to some spot where there is no Linga?"

Namdev hastened to oblige. But as he was about to set the old man's feet down in a new spot, he saw, directly under them, another Shiva Linga! He shifted them again; a third Linga appeared. Yet again: a fourth one. Suddenly the realization dawned on him: This man was indeed his guru! Prostrating himself humbly before him, Namdev prayed for forgiveness.

"I was blind, Gurudeva!"⁽⁷²⁾ he cried. "Now I know who you are, and I understand what it is you've been trying to teach me."

With calm majesty, then, the old man rose to his feet. "God is everywhere, Namdev," he said. "Realize Him in yourself, and with transformed vision behold Him residing in all things!" The Guru struck Namdev gently on the chest over the heart. Breath left the disciple's body. Rooted

to the temple floor, Namdev stood as if transfixed, unable to move a muscle. His consciousness, like rising waters in a lake, burst the frail dam of his body. Like fluid light it streamed outward in all directions, embracing temple precincts, the village, the whole of India! Nations, continents, oceans became absorbed by his expanding bliss. At last it included the entire world, solar systems, galaxies! In every speck of space he saw God alone: unending light, bliss infinite! Too deeply absorbed for mere amazement, he realized that all this was he!

From that day onward Namdev lived immersed in divine consciousness. He wandered about the countryside, intoxicated day and night with fathomless bliss.

One day, many months later, he happened to be in the vicinity of his old village. Passing the temple where he had first worshiped God, he entered and sat for meditation. Again the Lord appeared to him in the form of Krishna, as of old.

"My child," He said, "for so many months you have neglected Me—you, who never failed to worship here a single day! I have missed you. Where have you been?"

"My Beloved," cried Namdev, smiling happily at the Lord's playfulness, "how could I think of coming here to see you, when everywhere I gaze I behold Your formless presence!"

Blissfully, then, the Lord replied, "Now there are no cracks in that pot!"

The "crack" in Namdev's "pot" was his awareness of himself as a unique being, distinct from all others. In cosmic fact, our egos are nothing but vortices of conscious energy that, within the vast ocean of consciousness, take on the appearance of a separate reality of their own, like the swirls of water in a brook."

Chapter Three: Gyana Yoga

Introduction

From the New Path, chapter 20 (footnote) – Swami Kriyananda

Gyana (wisdom) in books is often spelled *Jnana*. Master once commented to me on the problems of transliteration from Sanskrit to Roman characters. He was going over some of his writings with me at Twenty-Nine Palms, after I'd been with him about a year, when we came upon this word, gyana. "*Jnana* is how scholars like to spell it," Master scoffed. "It isn't pronounced J-nana. And how else are you going to pronounce it if you find it spelled that way? This is just an example of scholars' pedantry. Gyana is the correct pronunciation. The g-y in English doesn't show it exactly, but at least it's much closer to the right way of saying it.

§

From The Essence of Self-realization (chapter 2:3) – Swami Kriyananda

"God gave you intelligence that you might use it properly, to solve the mystery of your existence. He made you intelligent that you might develop the discrimination to seek Him. Use this divine gift wisely. Not to do so is to do yourself the greatest possible injustice."

§

From The Essence of the Bhagavad-Gita 5:5 & 20

(5:5) The state attained through wisdom (gyana yoga, the path of discrimination known as Sankhya) is the same as that attained by action (the science of yoga). The two paths lead to one single realization.

(5:20) Such sages, established in the one Supreme Being and unwavering of discrimination, are neither jubilant when they confront pleasant experiences, nor depressed when they confront painful ones.

§

From Conversations with Yogananda (354) ~ 354 ~ Swami Kriyananda

And all the great gyanis, who follow the path of discrimination and wisdom, have realized at last that it isn't, in the end, by thinking that one achieves wisdom — that wisdom can only be received, in inner stillness.

§

From Conversations with Yogananda ~ 366 ~ Swami Kriyananda

“With all thy getting,” says the Bible (Proverbs 4:7), “get understanding.” What, people may ask, is the meaning of, “get understanding”? The understanding implied is wisdom. The Master explained that wisdom doesn’t come from books. It comes with discrimination.

“Discrimination is necessary,” he said, “and doesn’t come by reasoning only, but by soul-intuition. Reason can help one to understand the how of things — that is, how they work, how they occur. It cannot, however, show one the subtle interrelationships between things. Nor can it, in a deeper way, show the why of things. Discrimination is an individual exercise. It is the wave aware that it is dancing on the ocean of Spirit. Wisdom comes with deepening one’s perception of the Absolute. The understanding that is wisdom is universal.”

§

From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga (2:I) –Swami Kriyananda

Gyana yoga is the yoga of wisdom. Wisdom first comes through the practice of *viveka* (discrimination). The temptation of the ego, once it takes up this practice, is to flatter itself with its own profundity by stepping further and further afield in its analyses of different aspects of reality. *Yogas chitta vritti nirodh*. The important thing is not how many different deep truths one can grasp, but rather how deeply one grasps the central truth: the need to rise above personal likes and dislikes. Many *gyana yogis*, in their exercise of incisive discrimination, actually feed their likes and dislikes—in the form of an inordinate fondness for profound ideas.

Discrimination means in all things to look for the kernel of reality. It means penetrating to ever-deeper levels of insight. One person's gift to another, for example, may really be intended only to buy the recipient's friendship. Yet his apparently cynical wish to buy friendship may actually spring from a pathetic fear that he couldn't win it in any other way. This fear, in turn, may be due to an awareness, on a still deeper level, that friends can never be won, nor owned—that nothing, in fact, can be owned. Such an awareness, again, though sad at first glance, springs from the soul's even deeper knowledge that it is complete, in itself, and need look nowhere outside for its fulfillment. Its sense of self-completeness, finally, is rooted in the deepest fact that, essentially, it is the Infinite Itself. The gift given for selfish gain, then, was due in the last analysis to the soul's inner, divine urge to claim the very universe as its own.

"Neti, neti—not this, not that." By looking behind veil after veil that obscures the door to Truth, the *gyana yogi* comes at length to the Truth Itself, stripped of every superficial appearance.

But he will never come to this reality so long as he seeks it only on a level of ideas, some of which will attract him, others of which he will find repulsive. His search must take him within himself, to ever deeper levels of realization of who and what he is. It is his own heart's false identifications that he must dispel. As in *bhakti* and *karma yoga*, it is not what he sees, but how he sees, that really matters.

And that is why this path is called *gyana yoga* (the yoga of wisdom), not *viveka yoga* (the yoga of discrimination). Wisdom is not only the goal; it is also the path. The *gyana yogi* must view all things with the impartial consciousness of a sage. It is less important that he see through human follies than that he not be affected by man's supreme folly: delusion itself.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, India's favorite Scripture, states, "He finds contentment who, like the calm ocean, absorbs within himself all the rivers of desires." (II:70.) Man seldom realizes that even his outward, worldly enjoyments spring in fact from within himself—from his reactions to things rather than from the things themselves. The *gyana yogi* tries, even at the time of outward enjoyment, to interiorize his consciousness, feeding the inner flame of soul-consciousness. He knows that if, like worldly people, he borrowed its embers to give light to things, the true source of joy within himself would burn itself down at last to gray ashes.

He deals similarly with his desires. He realizes that their fulfillment depends entirely on his own mental pictures that he has formed of fulfillment, and not on any outer circumstance. He therefore sets mirrors, as it were, around himself. He refers his mental images back to the light of joy within himself, and sees those images as reflections, only, of that inner joy. In this way his soul's light becomes intensified, not diffused.

A comparison might also be drawn here to the extra comfort one derives from a blazing fireplace in a warm home, when one is aware at the same time of a raging blizzard out-of-doors. The more deeply aware one becomes that all joy is centered in the Self, the more the lures of the world serve only to strengthen one's affirmations of soul freedom.

Gyana yoga is not only a particular path to God. It also points out the direction all our thinking should take, even in *bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga*, if we want it to lead to liberation.

§

From Awaken to Superconsciousness, chapter 4 – Swami Kriyananda

Gyana yoga, finally, requires that the questions be asked constantly in the mind, What? Why? Who? Where? "What is the true goal of life? Why is it the true goal? Who am I that seek that true goal? Where shall I find that goal?"

At first, as in the other tributaries, or bypaths, of *yoga*, the discrimination is directed outward: "What makes people behave as they do? Is their motivation what they think it is? What are their deeper motivations? Why are they motivated?"

Careful observation reveals a common purpose that runs threadlike through the tapestry of everything that people do: the coarse thread of selfish motive.

The discriminating *yogi* asks, "Is this motive good? Is it bad? What makes it either good or bad?" In time, he comes to realize that ego-motive that is self-contractive rather than self-expansive is obstructive to happiness. Only self-expansion gives the broad fulfillment that all human beings seek.

Again, the *gyana yogi*, in the contemplation of life, realizes that the objective world is not much different from the dream world we enter in sleep. “Is not human life, then,” he asks himself, “merely another kind of dream? What, in the last analysis, is reality?”

He observes suffering, old age, and death, as the Buddha did, and asks himself, “Is this the whole story of existence? Is there no state of being from which these universal miseries are forever absent?” Discrimination leads him to this conclusion: “There must be such a state! Otherwise, why have I this conviction in my soul that nothing else is real? Perfection must be a potential of life if only because, were it not so, the desire for it could not have arisen in my mind.”

Finally, there arises the fundamental question of the *gyana yogi*: “Who am I?” This question demands an increasingly inward focus. For who is it that is asking the question? The intellect can provide no answer. The mind thus reaches a state of inner stillness.

Neti, neti is the practice of the *gyana yogi*: “Not this, not that.” Discrimination, practiced unceasingly, reveals nothing to be substantial—no thing, no fulfillment, no grief—nothing.

What is left, then? Nothing! The practice of *neti, neti* leads the mind to the “nothingness” of perfect silence: superconsciousness.

§

Discrimination

From The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita – Swami Kriyananda

(4:27) Others, by discrimination, offer up their sense activities, and the energy within those activities, in the fires of self-control. (They ask themselves, "Who is seeing? Who is hearing? Whose energy is activating me to experience these sensations?").

This method of offering ego-consciousness up to cosmic expansion comes down to the question, finally, "Who am I?" First one asks, "Who is this that is eating?" "Who walks, when my body walks?" "Who, really, is breathing?" "Who thinks?" "Who is reacting with positive or negative feelings?" "Who is asking these questions?"

And finally, again, "Who am I?"

This is the approach of gyana yoga (the path of discrimination), but it is one that everyone should include in his sadhana (spiritual practice). Watch yourself eating, walking, breathing, conversing, thinking. Stand mentally aside from your own body and mind. Become the silent observer of your own self. Gradually you will feel inwardly detached, and will accept that you are another reality entirely: the divine soul merely dreaming everything that happens outside of it.

§

From Yogananda

Spiritual Recipe: How to read books and make your home happy. Swami Yogananda

Read only spiritual books which contain self-realization. Such books as the Bhagavad Gita (the Hindu old and new Testaments) and the Christian Bible should not be read as you would read a novel. Read a passage, think about its meaning, then meditate on its truth. Then try to live the truth in life.

Spiritual introspection and perception of intellectually studied truth both reinforce the Infinite source from which all intelligence comes. There are three Bibles which I read and from which I draw my outer inspiration: the Christian Bible, the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, and my Whispers from Eternity, which were given to me by God. Through meditation and intuitive perception I get more intellectual truths than through reading books. I tune my intelligence to my intuition after meditation, and then I hold my pen on paper and it writes, without stopping, anything I want to write. My pen stops only when I want it to do so.

Read books after meditation. Criticize books with intuitive perception. Keep your mind busy most of the time with good books unless you are meditating. In your spare time keep busy reading good, interesting books, which will keep your mind safe from the company of so-called friends and idle thoughts which create boredom and dissatisfaction.

--From East-West magazine, May 1932

From Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita, introduction, Section 8 - Yogananda

Byasa, the soul, was the reflection of God the Father. A reflection of the sun can only partially (half) represent the real sun. Hence, Byasa was spoken of as the half-brother of Bichitrabirya, or God the Father. As the sun becomes a thousand suns when reflected in a thousand cups filled with water, so also God the Father, reflected in the bodies of many men, becomes many souls. Byasa represents the original passively-active soul in man, which is responsible for creating the two children, the blind king, or Emperor Mind, (Dhritarashtra), and the pure King Discrimination (Pandu).

Pandu is derived from a word which means “that which signifies intelligence.” The Senses and the blind king Mind, and the pure Discrimination, all reigned in the Kingdom of the Body. The name of the field of battle stands for the body, thus: Kurukshetra,–(Kuru–action; Kshetra–field), signifies the field of action. Originally, in childhood, the kingdom of the body is reigned over principally by pure discrimination and calmness. The eldest of the five Pandu brothers was Yudhisthira,–(Yudhi Sthira Ja Sa,–who is calm in psychological battles)–calmness is thus the eldest offspring of discrimination. The other four brothers were Bhima, (power of Vitality), Arjuna, (Self-Control,–he who is non-attached), Nakula, (power to Obey Good .Rules), and Sahadeva (power to Stay Away from Evil). But after childhood, the Ego, the pseudo-soul, or the body-bound soul, (Duryodhana, the eldest child of restless mind), and the hundred sense inclinations, all offsprings of restless mind, by a clever dice-play with sense lures and material desires, filched the bodily kingdom from pure discrimination and its kindred princely faculties, and sent them into exile for twelve years. When bad sense habits are once well established in the body, good habits and wisdom are usually banished for at least twelve years. Complete physiological and mental changes as well as the creation of new habits often are possible after twelve years. The story of the Bhagavad Gita allegorically tells how after the bad habits had reigned for twelve years in the bodily kingdom, the good habits, being now reawakened by discrimination, tried to return after their twelve years of banishment with aid of Krishna or the Soul-force. In like manner, after the growing youth goes through evil experiences for twelve years, and takes many “hard knocks” under the sense regime of greed, anger, sex, jealousy, and egoism, then discrimination and the warriors of calmness, vital force, and self-control try to return after twelve years of banishment by the bad sense-habits and seek to regain their lost bodily kingdom. But the crooked Kurus, or mental tendencies, with their sense armies refuse to give in or part with their kingdom of the body, which originally belonged to the discriminative faculties.

So Krishna, the GURU, or the actively awakened Soul, or meditation-born Intuition, comes to aid Self-Control, or Arjuna, and the other four discriminative tendencies of calmness, pranayama, (controlling the life-force in the nerve-telephones by switching it off from the senses), thereby shutting out the invading senses from the castle of discriminating concentration, and prohibiting and proscribing rules of conduct to fight the psychological battle with Ego and its army of the following bad mental tendencies of greed, avarice, hate, jealousy, wickedness, sex madness, meanness, cruelty, covetousness, ill will, ill-feeling, spiritual procrastination, false sense of delicacy, pride of caste or social birth, high-handedness, physical laziness, spiritual indifference, unwillingness to meditate, “putting off of meditation until tomorrow,” to hurt others, disloyalty to God, ungratefulness to God, saucy temper, unkindness, lack of vision, lack of foresight, physical,

mental, and spiritual ignorance, inharmony, harshness of speech, selfishness, harshness of thought, evil actions, joy in evil, sense attachment, delusion, bitterness, bitterness of mind, seeing evil, thinking, willing, feeling and remembering evil, fear of disease, worry, fear of death, ignorance of bliss of soul, lack of initiative, quarrelsome attitude, swearing, speaking evil, disease of the body, sex abuse, immoderation, too much sleeping, too much eating, too much pretending goodness, shunning God and postponing Meditation.

So you see that the scene of battle is the body. There, the Krishna soul-force, with the five princes of discrimination and its warrior tendencies, are trying to regain their lost kingdom by driving away entrenched evil and sense habits. These sense Bolsheviks, occupying the kingdom of the body, have brought only sickness, mental worries, and the pestilence of ignorance, and spiritual famine, due to the shortage of wisdom in the bodily kingdom. So again, the awakened soul-force and the meditation-evolved self-control, must seize the kingdom of the body, and establish there peace, wisdom, abundance and health, and place the banner of the Spirit therein.

§

(1:2) ...Material Desire reigns supreme in the person who does not meditate. Material Desire is the King of all sense tendencies, because it is desire which lures discrimination to follow the sense pleasures of idleness, bodily comfort, and so forth, instead of following soul happiness, which consists in all-round peace of mind. As soon as meditation awakens discriminative qualities, King Material Desire becomes extremely afraid of losing his hold in the kingdom of life and tries to reinforce himself by recalling the pleasures of past evil habits.

King Material Desire by himself is easily overcome by an act of judgment, but Material Desire, that has been ripened into habit, is hard to eject by discrimination, so King Material Desire tries to overcome discriminative tendencies by luring them with the memory of past evil habits, and the joy which they yielded. It is easy to conquer a material desire, but hard to conquer material habits. That is why we find that the spiritual aspirant, who tries to meditate, will be bothered, not only with new desires to go for distraction to shows or plays, or eat, or while away time in idle talk, or sleep, or laziness, or to travel, or to go after money, and so on, but he will also be invaded by strong habits of the body, such as restlessness, idle talking, sleep, amusements, bodily enjoyments, and pernicious habits of spiritual indifference. The spiritual aspirant should be aware of this.

§

(1:23) *Here in this field of Kurukshetra I wish to behold those who are gathered here to fight, desirous of pleasing the evil-hearted Durjodhana by taking his side in the battle.*

“Here in this bodily battlefield of action, I wish to behold the sense-loving tendencies that have gathered around the confusion and misery-making King Material Desire.”

The Soul of the devotee during meditation looks at the misery-making material desires that dare to lure him and his Spiritual perceptions from their superior, lasting, and blissful states by offering cheap temporary pleasures latent with poisonous, ultimate suffering, both mental and physical.

In a psychological clash between discrimination and the senses, all the fire of bad material habits is kindled by King Material Desire. King Desire pictures the will-o'-the-wisp of the hope of new comforts in the wicked tendencies in man, and thus misleads him. The inner discrimination of the yogi sees how material desires, by false hopes, reawaken the bad habits in man, though he knows they are misery-producing.

Whenever King Material Desire tries to encourage false hopes, true discrimination should discourage the bad habits by exposing to them their inability and impotency to hold man permanently by their misery-making ways. When the living bad habits are convinced of their worthlessness, they cease to exist.

(2:68) *O Mighty-armed, his wisdom is well established whose sense faculties are wholly subjugated from sense objects.*

Therefore, O son of self-control, a person who has enthroned wisdom in all his activities, keeps the stallions of his senses unhurt by preventing them from running wildly in the dangerous forest of sense objects.

Anyone who lets his mind act according to the wild urgings of his tempting bodily sensations finds his chariot of life and the driver of his discrimination who holds the reins of self-control, dragged by his rebellious sense-horses into the ditch of dire miseries.

A man without discriminating self-control is powerless to steer the steeds of his senses to the goal of eternal happiness. A man who is ruled by his senses is confused. He displaces his calm inner soul-judgment by ever-restless purposeless habits and whim governed, dissatisfied, sense-enslaved mind. Such a person can never hav

In the above stanza the Bhagavad Gita asks every individual to keep the stallions of his senses under full control, that they do not run wild into the thickets of misery. The Gita advises all to keep traveling on the straight and narrow path of proper virtuous actions which lead to the kingdom of eternal happiness. Only the person who governs his senses without being governed by them can be spoken of as the true possessor of the calm, unswerving, unshakable light of wisdom which shows the pitfalls in the dark tortuous paths of life.

The senses must not be paralysed.

A driver of a chariot does not need to completely tie up his horses and make them paralyzed or useless because of lack of exercise, just because he fears they might run wild. All that is necessary is to train his steeds that they obey the driver and follow his directions to keep on the road and not run wild and smash up his chariot in the ditches by the roadside.

A driver of the car of life must not paralyze his senses by destroying his powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and sex sensibilities, lest they run wild. A man of self-control should so train the steeds of his senses that they perform their proper functions according to the dictates of inner soul-guided discrimination. A man of self-control always makes his senses obey him, by training them to follow the path of self-control and self-discipline which leads to the kingdom of true happiness.

A man who lets his car of life be ruled by the sense-horses has no discrimination of his own. But a man who has full control over his obedient senses is spoken of as the possessor of his own steady discrimination. A man guided by steady discrimination always stays on the straight and narrow path of virtuous actions which leads without difficulty to the kingdom of unending divine happiness.

Destruction of the eyes does not destroy the desire for sensuous beauty. Cutting off the hands does not destroy the desire to hurt or steal. What is needed is to control the misery-making desires which guide the eyes and hands. The senses are mere instruments of the mind. They cannot act by themselves. It is the mind and discrimination which must be kept free from enslavement. A wise man keeps his wisdom free and steady, that he can direct his life in the pathways which lead to God and complete emancipation.

§

From affirmations for Self-Healing: Discrimination – Swami Kriyananda

As science judges the relative speed of any object by one constant, the speed of light, so the devotee judges the relative merit of any idea by the one constant, God. Discrimination is clear only when it relates everything to the Eternal Absolute. Thus, while the intelligence may toy with ideas endlessly, discrimination asks, “Is this wisdom? Is it of God?”

True discrimination is not even the product of reasoning. It is soul-intuition. Reasoning, even from the highest point of reference, is uncertain compared to the inspirations of superconsciousness. To discriminate clearly, meditate first. Ask God to guide your understanding.

Affirmation

Resolutely I quell my inclinations, that my mind be open to the wisdom-guidance of my soul.

Prayer

Guide me, Lord, that in all things I know Thy will, for I know that only by Thy will are all things led to perfection.

From The Hindu Way of Awakening, chapter 12 – Swami Kriyananda

All three deities have “vehicles.” Brahma's is the swan. The Sanskrit word for swan is hamsa (or hansa). Swans symbolize two important truths. First of all, they are a symbol for discrimination, based on the fact (or perhaps only the belief) that milk in a swan's beak separates into its natural components, curds and whey.*⁽¹⁾ Discrimination, similarly, is the ability to separate reality from false appearances.

The highest spiritual title in India is paramhansa, or “supreme swan.” A paramhansa's perfect discrimination makes him lord of himself, no matter what his outward role on earth. In his self-mastery he resembles the swan also in its ability to be at home equally on water, on the ground, and in the air.

§

From Rays of the Same Light - Week 19/Bhagavad Gita – Swami Kriyananda

Secrets of Discrimination, Swami Kriyananda

This passage is from the 2nd chapter, the 56th Stanza:

“He who is not shaken by anxiety during times of sorrow, nor elated during times of happiness; who is free from egoic desires and their attendant fear and anger: Such an one is of steady discrimination.”

Commentary

Worldly people are forever tossed on rising and falling waves of pleasure and pain, success and failure, fulfillment and disappointment, happiness and sorrow. Whatever understanding comes to them of life's deeper purpose is like the brief glimpses one might obtain of the broad ocean from a succession of cresting waves.

People often turn away from life's deeper issues, which, to them, seem abstract and theoretical. Preoccupied as they are with their own pleasures and pains, they have little energy left over to do much thinking at all! In the experience of pain, they cast about urgently for some pleasure to distract them. And in the experience of pleasure, they seldom pause, in their enthusiasm, to recall how consistently their past moments of emotional upliftment, like ocean waves, have sunk back to become troughs of disappointment.

Unreflective minds actually welcome emotional extremes. They imagine that it would be impossible, without them, to know intense happiness. Edna St. Vincent Millay, the American poetess, wrote:

*“I burn my candle at both ends;
It will not last the night.
But O my foes, and ah, my friends,
It gives a lovely light!”*

Is the light of dissipation really as beautiful as these verses suggest? Far from it! Extremists confuse happiness with excitement, and intensity with mere tension. They imagine they have found

peace, when their emotions are merely exhausted. Their very pleasures are but synonyms for confusion!

It is only when the recollection of past suffering weighs too heavily on a person's hopes for the future that he begins to dream of finding some better way of living.

In this passage of the Bhagavad Gita we learn the secret of true happiness. It is inner tranquility—not the fleeting peace of spent emotions, but the deep sense of spiritual rest that comes when the emotions have been calmed, and when feeling has been transmuted into a steady flow of intuitive perception.

Non-attachment need not imply indifference, nor calmness, the aloofness of non-involvement. Rather, calmness and non-attachment make it possible for one's awareness to expand. An expanded state of consciousness might be compared to a large body of water, in relation to which mere ripples seem hardly worthy of notice.

So many of life's tests might prove instructive, even inspiring, if one would only broaden his self-identity! A little rowboat is threatened by every passing wave, but a large ocean liner can move calmly even through mighty waves. The broader one's spiritual base, the less affected he is by any hardship.

A steady discrimination gives one a sense of proportion in life. It reveals all things, and all experiences, in relation to infinity.

The non-attachment referred to in this passage of the Gita should not be confused with joyless stolidity. Such is the popular, but erroneous, caricature of the stoic. True non-attachment is achieved not by dulling one's sensibilities, but by deep soul-awareness. The state of Self-realization is the natural fruit of daily, deep meditation. Only with soul-expansion can a universal identity be substituted for that of petty ego-consciousness.

In the silence of inner communion one finds himself rising above the turbulent passions of human nature. In divine ecstasy, the soul soars through skies of radiant light into God's infinite freedom and bliss.

Discrimination is that inner clarity of soul which guides one's footsteps unerringly on the upward path to union with the Lord.

Thus, through the Bhagavad Gita, God has spoken to mankind.

§

From Rays of the Same Light: Week 43/Bhagavad Gita, Swami Kriyananda

God-Personal or Impersonal?

This passage is from the twelfth Chapter, the first, second, and fifth Stanzas:

(12: 1,2,5) "Arjuna said, 'Those who, ever steadfast, worship Thee as devotees, and those who contemplate Thee as the immortal, unmanifested Spirit—which group is the better versed in yoga?'"

The blessed Lord replied: 'Those who, fixing their minds on Me, adore Me, ever united to me through supreme devotion, are in My eyes the perfect knowers of yoga....'

"Those whose strict aim is union with the Unmanifested choose a more difficult way; arduous for embodied beings is the path of dedication to the Absolute."

Commentary

Arjuna asks here whether it is better to worship God with form, or to dwell on the more austere thought of Him as impersonal and formless.

It is important when studying this passage to realize that Arjuna poses his question right after experiencing God in His formless state. What Arjuna asks is not which reality is the higher, but rather which mode of worship is preferable for the devotee, even assuming that one aspires to reach that highest state.

For human beings, Sri Krishna answers, living as they do in physical bodies, it is difficult to feel devotion to formlessness. To contemplate God as an Infinite Void could lead them into spiritual vagueness.

Even when undertaking worldly projects, if a person hasn't a clear idea of what it is he wants to accomplish, he won't find it easy to give direction to his energies. His ideas may change in time, as he gains experience. At every stage of his progress, however, he needs a clear sense of purpose. Otherwise he will find himself merely drifting.

It is not impossible to attain God by worshiping Him as the Unmanifested. The path of wisdom, or Gyana Yoga, however, is not what most philosophically minded seekers imagine it to be. It is not a path for intellectuals who want exact, carefully worded definitions. And it is certainly not a path for fuzzy-minded, so-called intellectuals whose sense of truth is satisfied with vague words such as "Absolute," or "Unqualifiable."

Gyana Yoga begins and ends with the task of demolishing the sense of "I" and merging it into the divine consciousness.

In pure Gyana Yoga there can be no analysis of Truth, for the simple reason that the intellect itself doesn't belong to Absolute Reality. Nor is it really consonant with Gyana Yoga to practice yoga exercises, or yoga breathing and meditation techniques. One who refuses to recognize God in form cannot conscientiously recognize even his own physical form. Thus, the gyana yogi is enjoined to live in the thought that nothing, not even his own mind, intellect, ego, and feelings, has any reality at all.

To live in this state of awareness is difficult for most people, if not quite impossible. As Krishna states elsewhere in the Bhagavad Gita, moreover, the yoga meditation techniques, which

help to calm the body and mind and to develop concentration, are a great aid on the spiritual path. Affirmations of abstract truth, without practical assistance from scientific spiritual methods, can take only a very few rare souls to the infinite shores. Even those truth seekers who succeed at last in soaring spiritually deprive themselves of the subtle assistance that yoga practices would provide them. To break the bonds of attachment to body and senses by mental effort alone is a lengthy process indeed.

Most self-styled gyana yogis fall far short of the gyanic ideal. They conceal beneath a pretense of sagacity the fact that they lack heart quality. Even the gyana yogi needs to awaken love in his heart. Otherwise he will never succeed in his spiritual quest.

Best, for mankind, is the path of devotion to God, of visualizing Him as endowed with form. Best is it for one to accept his humanity as his starting point. It is best, in other words, to recognize and deal with one's own present realities if he would rise to increasingly subtle heights of understanding. Devotional love, combined with the practice of scientific yoga techniques, is the surest and fastest path to God. As Sri Krishna says elsewhere in the Bhagavad Gita: "Arjuna, be thou a yogi!".

One who worships the Infinite in a finite expression should always be aware that God cannot be confined in a form. Behind any form that one visualizes, one should visualize the consciousness of infinity. For if we want to avoid the pitfall of dogmatism, we must desire that our understanding ever expand.

Jesus Christ began the Lord's Prayer with the words, "Our Father." Hence its common name, the "Our Father." That word, our, is a reminder that God is the Father of all His human children, and not the special property of any one worshiper or congregation of worshipers. It would be foolish to say that one's own way of worshiping God, or that any definition of God formulated in his religion, is the last word in divine truth. God, though loved and worshiped by human beings in personal terms that they can visualize, is, after all, far more than anything they can ever visualize. As a certain Indian saint put it, when speaking once of the Spirit as inconceivable by human minds: "It is, and It isn't; and neither is It, nor is It not"! The Lord, in other words, cannot be captured mentally. It is we who must allow ourselves to be captured by Him! And yet, we can make Him forever the Prisoner of our hearts' love.

Thus, through the Bhagavad Gita, God has spoken to mankind.

§

From The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Swami Kriyananda

*Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong:
Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.*

Quartina 69

Paraphrase

By introspection I find it sadly true that I, like many others, deified the desire for name, fame, and worldly enjoyment. I thereby lost the esteem of wise men, and cowered before my own self-convicting conscience. Like so many, I drowned my soul's honor, founded on divine discrimination, in a shallow cup of sense-pleasures.

Foolishly I bartered my soul's wisdom, held widely in high repute, for a drunken—and only briefly rousing!—ballad

Expanded Meaning

This quatrain and the next two deal with a common dilemma of the struggling aspirant: the conflict between the allure of sense-pleasures and the inward call to soul-happiness. Omar puts himself in the position of the aspirant. With compassionate urgency he pleads with him not to let the keen-edged, ignorance-destroying sword of discrimination rust while, nightly, he drinks himself to stupefaction in the tavern of sense temptations.

The worldly person's sense of honor rests shakily on the good opinion of others, most of whom are as deluded as himself. Omar Khayyam contrasts this false pride with soul honor, the innate dignity of which demands no approval by the masses. True honor depends on right understanding and on a clear conscience. Seldom does it receive mob endorsement. But it wins applause from men and women of true insight. Omar urges everyone to see that firmness in the truth is honor, truly.

Wise and honorable is he who keeps his sword of discrimination sharp and shining, who actively combats the invader, sense-temptation, and who makes his home within the protecting walls of his castle of inner peace.

O noble souls! drown not your conscience in wine, drunkenness, and the wild music of sense-indulgence! Be mighty in your Self! No one but you, in your steadfast devotion to the truth, can win the supreme fulfillment your heart has so long sought.

§

From Education for Life, chapter 19, Swami Kriyananda

An important aspect of reasoning correctly is to understand the difference between reason and discrimination.

A line of reasoning will be false if its premise is wrong. Often, however, reason alone is inadequate to the task of evaluating the merits of a premise. Hence, the necessity for discrimination.

Take this example: We grow up in America in the belief that freedom is an “inalienable right.” For many people, this means they have the right to do anything they like. If a person plays his radio full blast at three o’clock in the morning, he may answer his neighbors’ objections with the retort, “It’s a free country, isn’t it?” More than reason is needed to counter his false argument. That is, there must first be the feeling that his reasoning is specious. To test oneself for such a feeling, one must pull back a little, mentally, from every argument and think, “Wait a minute! Is this true?” Discrimination weighs reason against feeling in the heart to see whether the reasoning process has a good “ring” to it; whether it feels right.

Many people reason speciously. The entertainment industry, as an example, staunchly defends violent, prurient, or otherwise tasteless movies with the argument, “It’s what the people want.” Discrimination, however, replies, “No, it’s what you want. You are conditioning people to accept, and perhaps even in time to enjoy, what you give them, but just look how often movies that are based on beautiful and noble sentiments and ideals have outsold the trash you people are putting out.” Discrimination is not cold and abstract. It results when we consult our inner feelings. Calm inner feeling cuts through the twisted cleverness of sophistry and says, “This I know to be the truth.”

Great scientists employ the faculty of discernment quite as often as people who deal with matters more closely touching the human condition. Without discrimination, no one would ever know which line of reasoning to follow, out of myriad choices. The great scientist would be like thousands of lesser scientists who, perhaps no less intelligent than he, lack that quality of sensing the right direction for their thinking.

This simple fact explains why so many brilliant people, even those with the highest I.Q.s, make drastic mistakes in their lives. They have the reasoning ability: What they lack is discrimination.

Discrimination is based on intuition. It is calm inner feeling, held in a state of reason, but guided from deeper levels of consciousness. Intuition is calm awareness of what feels right inwardly—literally, in the heart. It is the surest basis for making right decisions. Rationalists may—in fact, do—scoff, but intuitive discrimination is a faculty they themselves, like everyone else, use sometimes, albeit often unknowingly. It is a faculty on which great geniuses rely constantly. Without it, mankind would never have invented the wheel, nor known what to do about fire once human beings had discovered how to produce it.

For what is the alternative? If we rely on logic alone, we find ourselves entangled in so many strands of possibility that it becomes almost impossible to move. It is feeling, not logic, that tells us, “This is the right strand to follow.” Nor is it a question of simplifying by random selection. Calm, intuitive feeling points again and again to the right decisions.

Discrimination can only proceed from an awareness of reality on many levels; certainly, it cannot grow in a vacuum. Here is an example of this need for broader awareness:

In a certain university a few years ago there were two groups of aspiring writers. Both groups were talented, perhaps equally so. One group consisted of women students; the other, of men. The purpose of each group was to help its members to develop their writing skills.

The men tried to accomplish this end by critiquing one another's papers. This in their eyes meant criticizing them. Any paper submitted to the group would be analyzed by the other members for its flaws.

The women, on the other hand, although analytical also, understood the additional value of offering positive suggestions.

Of the men's group, not one went on after graduation to become a professional writer. Of the women's group, several achieved fame later on as authors, editors, and reporters.

Both groups used intellectual analysis skillfully. The men, however, used it to address the only level of reality that appeared relevant to them at the time: the manuscripts. The women used it to address other levels as well: the need of each member above all to believe in herself and in her ability. Both groups may have reasoned with equal clarity, but they didn't do so with equal effectiveness.

A worthwhile exercise in the classroom would be to set up positive encounter groups.

We are familiar with the negative type of encounter group, where people sit about and tear one another to psychological shreds. The tradition is by no means new. Christian monks and nuns have made it a practice for centuries. They would (and, I suppose, still do) gather together and draw one another's attention—in "Christian charity"—to their spiritual flaws.

Far better, I believe, would be another kind of encounter group altogether: one in which the students offered one another suggestions in true charity: suggestions, for instance, for strengthening their positive qualities. In the process, each member of the group would be assisting, even unwittingly, the development of such qualities in himself.

Young people need to learn how to reason well, but also effectively—that is to say, appropriately. They must learn how to recognize when the time is right for analysis—for separating and distinguishing things and concepts from one another—and when the time has come for putting things together and making them work as a harmonious whole. The intellect must learn when to function on a level of abstraction, and when to shift to a level of encouragement and compassion.

The intellect must join feeling in discerning that there are, in fact, many levels of reality.

Maturity, as I have said, means the ability to relate appropriately to other realities than one's own. In human affairs, then, it means the ability to relate to other human realities, and not merely to the things in which human beings happen to be involved.

In the above instances, it was the people as writers who needed developing, even more than their manuscripts. The men failed because they treated one another primarily as producers of manuscripts, not as human beings. The women succeeded because, in the modern expression, they got their priorities straight.

Discrimination is the ability to perceive various levels of reality at once, and to sense which among them, in any given situation, are of primary importance.

Discrimination is impossible without humility, for it demands an understanding that truth exists already, that it cannot be created, but only perceived.

As a part of such humility, students should be taught to respect the insights of others, and above all to respect the longer rhythms and traditions of civilization: those accepted verities which, through the ages, have clarified the difference between wisdom and ignorance.

More important even than valid traditions is the possibility of fresh, but valid, discoveries. In freshness lies creativity, and in creativity lies self-expansion. A well-stated definition may help us to rise from one level of understanding to another, but no definition can serve in place of the reality it defines. The student should be encouraged to be always ready to discard old definitions in favor of new, fuller insights into reality.

§

Introspection

From Affirmations for Self-healing – Swami Kriyananda

Introspection, Swami Kriyananda

People commonly delude themselves with easy rationalizations. "Maybe I wasn't as kind as I might have been," they'll say, "but wouldn't you have been unkind, too, if he'd treated you that way? It wasn't my fault. The fault was his." Thus, the blame for every wrong is placed at one's neighbor's door.

Introspection means to behold oneself from a center of inner calmness, without the slightest mental bias, open to what may be wrong in oneself-not excusing it, but not condemning, either. Introspection means referring what one sees to the superconscious mind, and detachedly accepting guidance, when it comes.

Affirmation

I am what I am; wishing cannot change me. Let me therefore face my faults with gratitude, for only by facing them can I work on them, and change them.

Prayer

Let me not delude myself with desires, Lord. Teach me to see behind the play of my thoughts Thy ever-calm gaze of wisdom.

§

From Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita, I:1 – Yogananda

Daily Introspection Necessary to Prepare for Better Success in Psychological Wars

The Gita says that it is necessary at the end of each day to find out whether discrimination and its warriors won the battle over ignorance, or whether wisdom was carried off a prisoner by the soldiers of error. Every day the psychological battles for health, prosperity, self-control, and knowledge have to be launched successfully in order to advance inch by inch into the territories of ill-health, failure, and ignorance. The Gita says that most individuals who lead their lives unconsciously find the kingdom of their bodies overrun by the insurgents of disease, failure, and ignorance. So everyone's blind, unconscious mind, before sleeping at night, should ask within itself, "Gathered together on the bodily, sacred tract and field of action, my children, the crooked, tempting, mental tendencies and the opposing clans of self-discipline and self-control, what did they?"

The Sage Byasa used the past tense, "What did they?" to depict the past tense involved in all psychological battles that should be introspected. Historically—King Dhritarashtra should have asked Sanjaya, "My children, the wicked Kurus and the pure Pandus, what are they doing? The past tense is used especially to draw the deep attention of the student of the Gita to the fact that the Sage Byasa refers only incidentally to a historical war in order to illustrate a psychological battle which is always over when the time comes for it to be reviewed mentally.

§

Introspection: Psycho-analysis and dreams, Swami Yogananda

(a) Self-analysis is the greatest method of progress. Without it man becomes a living machine. Every tomorrow is determined by every today. Did you ever count your faculties or measure their strength? Perhaps you do not care to think what faculties you possess or not, as long as you can earn a good living. Man is more than a civilized animal only. All his rational faculties have a deeper significance than just their use in keeping the body animal well fed, well clothed. It is necessary to maintain the body and have all the necessities of life, but there are the higher needs of the Soul, which should be fulfilled also.

Suffering is the great teacher. Business failure starts the satisfied ones to think. Disease, unhappiness in family and social life makes wealthy people think. Death makes everybody think.

Failure, suffering, etc., in material or spiritual life, do not occur in one's life by chance. Self-analysis tells one the nature of one's difficulties, and the knowledge of one's own power to cope with them. Self-analysis in one word furnishes us with the knowledge of what we are, what our difficulties are, what strength our faculties have, and what our mistakes or short comings are.

Keep a mental diary every night. Consult my analytical booklet, "Psychological Chartctx_py_PsychologicalChart_contents."

- (1) Analyze your good, bad and active qualities.
- (2) Analyze the kind and quality of your memory.
- (3) Analyze the kinds and quality of your feelings, emotions, sentiments.
- (4) Analyze the quality of your will power.
- (5) Analyze your inclinations in life's business.
- (6) Analyze your attachments to objects of senses of touch, smell, taste, etc.
- (7) Analyze your predominant habits.
- (8) Analyze the conditions of your health and the causes that disturb it.
- (9) Analyze your predominant emotions of fear, anger, jealousy, etc.
- (10) Analyze your matrimonial or single life.
- (11) Analyze your instincts and hereditary tendencies.
- (12) Analyze your national mind and compare it with other national minds. Analyze defects and good qualities in the national mind.
- (13) Analyze the causes which retard progress in your business or the causes that involve it in failure.
- (14) Analyze the causes of your unhappiness
- (15) Analyze the causes that create trouble with your wife or husband or friends.
- (16) Find out the methods that can make your family life better.

(17) Try to find the remedy for your strong habits and inclinations which you want to get rid of.

(18) Analyze your progress in contacting the Infinite.

DREAMS

Dreams are produced by the Life Energy passing through the film of experiences preserved in the sub-conscious mind. Super-conscious experiences can produce realistic dreams or visions. Visions are given and can be produced by will and concentration.

Remember, while you are dreaming you are not resting. Dreams must not be imposed on you. You must be able to dream at will, by producing a perfect state of passivity. Do not allow intruding thoughts, memories, habits, sensations, vagrant thoughts to pull your attention away. Free your attention from everything—then put it on the thing you want to dream about. The desired dream will follow if no thoughts are allowed to intrude upon your attention.

(1) Spiritual or superconscious dreams are true.

(2) Sub-conscious, meaningless dreams are to be avoided.

(3) Don't wish to dream, but try to have visions of realities in the third eye or the Light which you can see by practicing the 5th lesson by Yogoda Lessons.

--*“Yogoda” Course (1925): Lesson 11. By Swami Yogananda*

From Religion in the New Age: The final exam; Swami Kriyananda

Detachment, the final exam

The most important moment of life is, in a very true sense, its last moment. For death is when we take our final exam. The thought uppermost in the mind at that time will determine whether our future take us upward, or sideways, or downward: upward toward greater spiritual clarity and freedom; sideways toward further involvement in desires and worldly attachments; or (the least fortunate) downward toward greater darkness, confusion, and ignorance. The Bhagavad Gita, India's best-loved scripture, says that if our last thought is of God, it is to Him we will go; if that thought is of family and relatives, it is to them we will go; if the last, lingering thought in the mind is of regret for the mistakes we have made in this life, our direction will be downward toward less ability to pass similar tests in the future; and, finally, if that thought is of attraction to those mistakes, our downward motion will be farther and more rapid.

"Those who worship the lower gods go to their gods," says the Bhagavad Gita. "Those who worship Me come to Me." This is one of the most important statements in that great and timeless scripture.

Although the end of life is when we should make a special effort to prepare ourselves for life's final exam, we should, throughout life, remind ourselves of the impermanence of everything here on earth. Someday, late or soon, we must all come face-to-face with that moment. Instead of dreading the inevitable, would it not be wiser to accept its inevitability? Embrace it with an attitude -- one that should be held throughout life -- of affirming, "What comes of itself, let it come; and let it come whenever it does so."

Foolish indeed is he who lays up for himself treasures here on earth. Money, bank savings and checking accounts; home; cherished possessions; family members, both near and distant; the reputation, and even the fame, for which we may have labored longingly; the pleasures and delights of the senses; the fond attachments to things and people; the familiar scenes and localities; the parties and good times; the neighbors and acquaintances, both near and distant; the skills we've honed so patiently; the language, or languages, we've spoken; the books we've read; the knowledge we've acquired and stored so assiduously on mental shelves; the fond memories garnered over the years; the dear friends and shared understandings; the unfulfilled hopes; the events on which we gaze back now with nostalgia; the laughter, the happy moments; the bright certainties of future, happy fulfillment: all these must be swept away as though they had never been.

Has Mozart, so relatively little known during his lifetime, realized since his death that the whole world now loves his music? Does Vincent Van Gogh now, who, during his lifetime earned hardly fifteen dollars from his great paintings, know the fabulous worth each one of them has, today? How many great men and women of history have become aware of the influence their lives have had on world events? Very few, one suspects. Our lives are like tiny puffs of breeze on a few grains of sand.

Life, moreover, may end at any moment. Wouldn't it be a good practice, even now, to prepare for our final "Day of Reckoning"?

Certain practices will help you not only to prepare for that exam, but also to meet your present, daily responsibilities most effectively. Such practices will help you also to prepare for what might be called life's "intermediary exams." An attitude, for example, of non-attachment, so necessary for attaining finding freedom after death, will also be a much surer attitude for success in this world than would eager anticipation of success, and excessive dependence on getting results.

Here, then, are a few practices I suggest:

Make it a point, every night before you fall asleep, to check the feelings in your heart. See whether any burrs of attachment still cling there, affixed by the desires you may have awakened during the day. If you find any such "burrs" there, mentally build a fire and cast them into it. Watch with a smile of relief as those burrs burn to ashes.

Every time you take a bath, think as you wash an arm, for example, "This will not be mine forever. Someday it will be ashes, or dust." And then affirm, "This is not what I am in my true Self! I am Spirit! I am bliss! I am ever free in God!"

Attachment is not only binding, but also blinding. It stirs the heart with emotions of fear, hesitation, and confusion. In anything we do, excessive concern for the outcome of that action saps energy and concentration, both of which are necessary for success in all undertakings. Nonattachment, far from signifying an attitude of indifference, frees us to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever project we attempt. If a person can detach himself emotionally from everything he does, he will find himself capable of living completely in the moment. Everything he attempts will then be done more effectively.

What is nonattachment? It is not accepting anything as being truly one's own. Everything that seems your own is so only on loan. When you build that mental bonfire nightly that I suggested, cast into it, from your heart, every branch and twig of possession, of self-definition, of personal association in life. Tell yourself, "Everything in my life, including my very self, belongs to You, oh Lord."

Nonattachment, in a practical daily sense, means above all the principle of nishkam karma, which the Bhagavad Gita defines as giving to God the fruits of everything you do and everything to which you aspire. Giving, however, is a tricky word, for as it is usually understood, whatever we give, we give away. Don't give your life to God in the sense of abandoning to Him all further responsibility for it. Act always in a spirit of commitment to what should be, for all that, impersonal duty. Thus, when offering the fruits of an action to God, instead of relinquishing further interest in it offer the outcome to Him, giving Him the final decision. Share with Him, meanwhile, everything you do. When saying "grace" before meals, offer your food up to God -- not in the sense of giving it away, but of sharing with Him your enjoyment of it. When you see something beautiful, share your enjoyment in that beauty with Him. Eventually, His joy within you will become your very definition of whatever enjoyment you feel.

One lifetime passes so quickly. The wheel of repeated rebirths, however, turns very slowly. It is studded with the nails of sorrow and grieving. It takes many incarnations for the soul to pass through this "veil of tears" before one attains freedom at last in the Infinite. Meanwhile, the Law of Karma works hand-in-hand with another principle: that of Duality. Every fulfillment is sooner or later canceled out by a disappointment; every success, by a failure; every joy, by a sorrow; every "up" by a corresponding "down." Isn't it ironic, that after countless incarnations, we can never "win the game"? The sum total of all our striving always ends in that final cipher: ZERO!

Why cling so determinedly to what must be lost anyway? All things pass in time. You alone, in your soul-essence, are what remains, eternally. Why not from today onward live more in your inner Self? All else is only a dream. Life succeeds life, and each life seems so real until death. Death, too, moreover, wakes us only from that fleeting "dream within a dream." Why not make a serious effort, now, to wake yourself from the long sleep of delusion and ignorance? Realize that nothing of this world has any lasting significance -- not for you; not for anybody.

Old age, and also, at any age, lingering illness with the possibility of death: these are the best times, for those who have been dilatory in preparing, to start "cramming" for the final exam. At these times particularly, people often have a tendency to withdraw passively into themselves. In the astral world after death, such negative withdrawal before death produces "postmortem" passivity. If, owing to your good deeds (especially to any meditation you've practiced), you are conscious enough to enjoy your astral sojourn, that process of sinking into the death sleep will leave you unable, even after you've awakened, to make further spiritual progress in that subtler realm. You may enjoy existence, but your sojourn there will last only as long as your good karma allows. You will be unable to participate actively enough in that existence to make an active effort to advance spiritually. Or, perhaps, you will simply not feel the incentive to develop further, since, for most visitors, life on that plane seems so idyllic that they have no aspiration for anything higher.

It may be mentioned here, incidentally, that desires for beautiful and uplifting sensory experiences, such as inspiring music and bucolic earth scenes, can be fulfilled also in the astral realm.

I once read about the near-death experience of a would-be suicide, who (fortunately) failed in her attempt and came back to describe a very different world from anything suggestive of heavenly beauty. She had, until then, always loved "rock" music. During her temporary sojourn in the astral world, she found herself in a region where the predominant vibration was of that kind of sound. Everyone around her was steeped in self-enclosing darkness and misery. Shafts of loving light from above sometimes bestirred one or another soul, but many had been there for a long time -- even for centuries, judging by the clothes they wore, many of which were in old-fashioned, and even ancient, styles. This woman spent years, after she'd been brought back to life, going about and warning people to stop indulging their taste for such music. Any music that has a low vibration -- not only rock music, but dance and other music with a heavy downbeat, is affirmative of ego-consciousness. Rock 'n roll, particularly, vibrates with lower astral regions. It is easy to see that the taste for it can draw one down to darker regions after death.

The enjoyment of life also in the higher, beautiful astral realms may last for many earth years, even for centuries, depending on a person's good karma. When His period of karmic respite

ends, however, his latent material desires reawaken, and draw him back to be reborn here on earth, or on some other planet in the material universe.

A belief common to some parts of the world is that the soul's return to earth can be quite haphazard. One may, according to this belief, be reborn in other-than-human forms: in animal forms, or as birds, or even as insects. ("Don't for heaven's sake squash that spider: It may have been your mother!") Paramhansa Yogananda, fortunately, declared that the likelihood of coming back as anything but human is so remote as to be almost non-existent, especially for anyone who is spiritually aware enough to concern himself about it. Rebirth in a lower form, admittedly, can happen, but it occurs only to those with sufficiently heavy materialistic karma. If such should occur, it will be for only one lifetime, and will involve but a short, not a long, step downward in evolution. A deeper fall is much rarer, and occurs only in the case of very hardened sinners. Those who are sufficiently evolved to have lived a heavenly existence before their return to earth are born into good families, whose influence will help them to hasten their upward evolution.

Every return to human life is fraught, however, with many woeful uncertainties. The discriminating person who dreads the danger of any further delay ought to do everything possible to break out of earth's fetters forever. Indeed, consider this: Even for reincarnated yogis, there is always the danger of karmic delays. Consider the least of them: the time one wastes spiritually as he passes through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and perhaps then getting enmeshed in further worldly involvements. Sooner or later his good karma will draw him back to his spiritual quest, but how soon? or how late? We have every incentive to start as soon as possible, while still we inhabit our present bodies, to prepare for our "final exam."

Throughout life, and particularly during old age or prolonged illness, when a person may feel a special impetus to start "cramming" for that exam, there are things he can do to make his present existence spiritua

List of useful advice

1. Life Review: Go over your life up to the present moment. Concentrate rather on the happy times than on the sad, since positive expectations will be more likely to attract you to a happy state after death. Still, do not avoid reflecting on the mistakes you may have made. Try, instead, to view those mistakes in a positive light. And bear in mind also the following, important points:

a) Feelings of guilt will block your further progress, acting as affirmations of failure. Cast out guilt, therefore, from your heart. You could even tell God frankly, if you want to, "It's You who set up this wretched show! It isn't my fault entirely that I was too inexperienced to know where the pitfalls lay!"

A certain Catholic saint (I forget her name) had many visions of people "on the other side." Often, the departed souls she saw, many of whom weren't known to her, were verified later as having lived on earth. What struck me particularly about her visions was the astonishingly large number who were in hell, or purgatory, though they'd been nuns here on earth, living spiritually dedicated lives in convents. How could such souls possibly have fallen so low? That saint said it was because of their feelings of guilt. Yet that so-called "guilt," in each case I read about, was for only some minor sins like failing to be properly obedient to a monastic superior! How could such minor "sins" have brought them to their miserable state? The only explanation I can suggest is that they'd been conditioned to feel unnecessarily guilty over those sins.

I remember a student of Yogananda's, a Mr Brockway: very dignified; he was a retired architect. I visited him in the hospital shortly before his death. As he lay there in waning outward awareness, I heard him mumble sadly, "I've done many wrong things in my life!" I mentioned these words later to my Guru, who responded sadly, "He shouldn't have said that."

Another sad recollection during that same episode: a hospital orderly addressed that patient as "Ernie." To me, "Ernie" deserved the more dignified appellation, "Mr Brockway." It appalled me to hear him addressed so almost patronizingly, and by a virtual stranger. It seems to me, now as it did then, that all of us should treat one another, and ourselves especially, with a certain dignity. For we are souls, made in God's image.

Confession and final absolution may be a good thing if they leave the penitent feeling truly released from all his sins. Usually, however, this death rite is more likely to leave the dying person dwelling more on his sins than on how completely he has been released from all sins. For he must surely think afterward, "Did I remember to confess every sin? And was I, in every case, sufficiently contrite?" Surely there is a good chance he will continue dwelling on his concern with sin. It must be better, surely, to make one's confession to God, and to ask Him, directly, for His forgiveness. Even then, I wonder how adequate it is to want forgiveness? God is stuck with us anyway -- one might say, whether He likes it or not! We are a part of His eternal consciousness.

One time, fearing the possibility that the soul may experience eternal destruction, I questioned my Guru on this point. His answer was definite: "The soul is a part of God. No part of God can be destroyed, ever." The soul simply cannot be damned, either, for all eternity! Our final destiny is fixed and immutable: Sooner or later, we must all be saved, even if it take us innumerable aeons.

OF COURSE God forgives you! What is needed only is your own forgiveness!

Go over your past mistakes, then, and offer them up to God. Don't think of them as "sins," for they were committed in ignorance of the underlying, true nature of things. God alone has dreamed your existence. He infused into you from the beginning the delusion of your ego-identity. View any mistakes you've made as having been made by Him, through your own dream-existence!

Here's a way you can do it: Think of everything that to you is attractive, then withdraw your energy and concentrate on the superior attractiveness of inner, soul-bliss. Bliss is the higher and true alternative to every outward attraction. In soul-bliss -- even in the memory of it, and even

(I might add) in the affirmation of it -- notice how, by comparison, sensory attractions simply disappear. At this point in your reflections you will find it reactively easy to offer up every lesser attraction to God.

If you remember ever having hurt anyone, or acted unjustly toward him, send blessings to him mentally. Visualize him (or her) swimming in the ocean of God's bliss.

If ever you've desecrated your own higher life-aspirations, face what you've done quite frankly, but don't beat yourself mentally for having done wrong. Rather, say to God, "It was you, Lord, acting through my ignorance. Come fully into that experience, now. I want to share it with You that I may understand fully that it really was You: Your energy, wrongly directed by my folly. I won't cling to that thought any longer. I release it. It is evaporating in skies of Infinite Bliss! Help me to see that, compared to your light, that folly has been only empty darkness, foreign forever to my true Self."

If ever you have spoken or acted inconsiderately toward another human being, perhaps only in haste, recreate that scene in your mind and ask God to bless all those whom you may have hurt. Project rays of love and bliss outward from your heart to all those who have ever had to bear the brunt of your anger or unkindness.

If ever you've held an unkind or angry thought toward anyone, send blessings to him to replace those harsh vibrations. Bring yourself to the point where you think of that person kindly. Don't consider it sufficient merely to forgive him; forgiveness may imply a lingering thought of his need for it. Send kindness, rather, and say to him, "It is your job, not mine, to work out any problems you have to face. Meanwhile, for my part I wish you strength, happiness, and wisdom. We are fellow pilgrims on the long journey to eternal bliss in God, who is our common Father."

If in any way you've ever cheated anyone, or deprived him of his dues, ask God to bless him; send blessings also, yourself. It might even be good to pray that he be reimbursed out of whatever store of good karma you yourself may have accumulated.

If ever you've spoken critically of, or mocked anyone even mentally, offer that person heartfelt kindness, support, and good wishes for his eventual wisdom and inner freedom.

If ever you've acted in any such way as to embarrass you, laugh happily with God over that moment of folly. Share it with Him, as a good joke. Tell Him, "I've learned something from that experience. But please, Lord, don't let me make a fool like that of myself ever again!"

b) Remember this: every desire must be fulfilled. My Guru once made that statement to me, and I inquired, "Every desire? Even for something so trivial as an ice cream cone?" His answer surprised me because it was so definite; he didn't even smile. "Oh yes!" he assured me. Don't try, however, to search out every fleeting wish you may have had. (That process might take you forever!) Rather, make a sweeping overview of your life and simply say, "It is all Yours, Lord. I want only Thee, nothing but Thee!"

I heard about a fellow disciple who, at the end of her life, was blessed to linger on for two weeks. Those two weeks gave her the time to let everything go, mentally. Years later, a disciple who had known her told me, "I could see her saying to herself day after day, 'This desire doesn't matter to me any more,' and, 'I no longer feel that attachment.' At the moment of death she cried out joyfully, 'Swamiji is here!' [Swamiji was what the disciples used to call our Guru.] At that point, she left her body."

Go over each desire mentally, then offer it to God. Think of the higher, spiritual counterpart of the fulfillment that desire promises.

If you've had a desire for a car, for instance, don't merely tell yourself, "I won't be needing a car anymore." Say, rather, "Now I will fly in heavenly freedom through vast skies of bliss!"

If your a desire was for -- yes, let's say, for an ice cream cone! -- remember these words, addressed to me by Ananda Mayee Ma, a wonderful woman saint whom I knew in India. Speaking with a radiant smile while giving me a few sweetmeats, she said, "Sabsomoy mishti khao -- Always eat only sweetness!"

If your desire was for a mate, offer that desire up to God, and pray for the supreme bliss of eternal union with Him.

If you've had a desire to go anywhere or to see anything, tell God, "Let me soar in Infinity, enjoying Thee everywhere, in everything!"

If your desire was to do anything at all, tell God, "In infinite consciousness, let me accomplish everything!"

Mostly, dwell on happy thoughts. Tell yourself, and tell God, "This life has been a brief dance in Your bliss. Even the hard tests You've sent me have helped me. I've learned so much from them; I'm grateful for every lesson. But I offer everything up to You, now. It was Your life I lived, not mine. Let me rest now, eternally, in Your love."

2. If you feel any attachments, visualize a cord stretching out from your heart to them. With a sharp knife sever that cord, or slice through it with a strong axe. Feel that every attachment is being cut off and replaced by the divine blessing of inner freedom.

3. Dwell on the thought of that freedom: freedom from every delusion, every desire, every attachment, every self-definition. Above all, if you feel you can do so, rid yourself of the thought of having a personal, separate, individual identity. You are nothing but a ray of God's light. See your reality becoming absorbed in His bliss.

4. Listen to spiritual recordings, whether of music, of lofty, God-affirming mantras, or of God-reminding thoughts. Listen to someone chanting AUM, or reciting selected scriptural passages. Listen to recordings by persons whose voices express a higher consciousness.

5. Dwell on thoughts of God's eternal love for you and for all creatures. Dwell not only on His forgiveness, but on His utter acceptance of you as His very own child through all eternity.

6. Pray for all beings. Bless them in God's light. Send them love. Reflect that everyone on earth, no matter how deeply deluded he may be, is in his own way seeking eternal bliss. Reflect also that it is his destiny to find that bliss, no matter how long his journey. All beings, equally, are children of the same one Light, Love, and Bliss that Jesus Christ knew, and Krishna (Christna), and Buddha. It is the underlying nature of YOUR OWN, ETERNAL SELF!

Questions and Answers:

1. Q. Is the "postmortem passivity" you mentioned necessarily a bad thing?

R. No, not necessarily bad. If you want to keep on advancing spiritually, however, your consciousness must be filled with determination. It cannot be passive.

2. Q. If someone sinks into a coma, or seems, perhaps, already dead, might it help him to chant AUM in his presence?

R. Yes. Chant softly, particularly in the right ear. The sense of hearing, Yogananda said, is the last to go. A person may appear dead, but he may not yet have withdrawn completely from his body. By chanting AUM, or by calling to him in the right ear, you may actually bring him back to life.

Yogananda told of two students of his during his early years in America. One of them, a young woman, died or seemed to have died. Her brother, also a student of this path, called urgently to her in her right ear, "Sister, come back! I'm not ready for you to leave me. I need you. Please come back to me!"

After a minute or so she actually opened her eyes. "I heard you calling to me," she said, "as if over a great distance!"

3. Q. Is there anything else we can do to help someone who is dying?

R. Yes. Place your finger on his forehead at a point midway between the eyebrows. This is the body's seat of ecstasy, will power, and concentration. Direct energy through your finger to that point, and try to draw that person's energy up in sharp focus at that point.

At death, people usually sink back passively into unconsciousness. Thus, they leave the body, as the soul first entered it, through the medulla oblongata. Next they pass through what the Greeks called "the waters of Lethe": forgetfulness of this life. Remembrance may return somewhat, later on, but generally speaking people simply pass from there to a new life.

Yogananda did say that our loved ones may come to us in dreams. He told about the mother of a disciple of his who had died of breast cancer. He sought her out in the astral world. As he said to us later, "I saw her being led away by an angel. She was pausing at that moment, admiring a beautiful flower. I called to her, and she turned back. At first she didn't recognize me. Then I touched her on the forehead, and she exclaimed, 'I remember! I remember! I'll never forget you again.'"

4. Q. How much effort should be expended toward keeping a dying person alive?

R. It is right, of course, to try to save him. I consider it a mistake, however, to resort to what are generally termed "heroic efforts" to do so.

My own father suffered a heart attack one year before his actual death. At that time he was mentally prepared to go. I remember him saying to me, "I've had a good life, and I have no regrets. I'm ready to go now, whenever the time comes."

The doctors went to "heroic" lengths, however, to keep him alive. And that last year was the most unhappy of my father's life -- perhaps the only really unhappy period of his life. He could hardly see; his hearing was almost gone; his sense of taste and smell virtually disappeared. Even his sense of touch was minimal. How much better it would have been for him to die back when he was mentally consenting to do so!

On the other hand, a friend of mine once asked me, "How much effort should I put forth to remain alive? I feel I ready to go at any time." I replied, "The job of being reborn and coming back again as a baby, then growing up, then taking who knows how long before remembering your spiritual aspiration and deciding to take that responsibility seriously: Think of the risks involved also, of further detours, and of consequent pain! I suggest that as long as you feel able to make a spiritual effort, you do your best to stay alive and keep working at it." Fortunately, she took my advice and lived several years longer. Those years were important for her spiritual growth.

5. Q. Many people, when they die, are in great pain. The doctors give them pain medication, but as a result the patients, often, are only barely conscious. Is that a good thing, or a bad?

A. I would say that, to the extent that a person is able to retain his consciousness, and not require sedation, the better.

6. Q. What about people who go into a coma before they die? Will they necessarily go out unconsciously?

A. I'm not sure, but I think it depends primarily on the spiritual effort a person has made during his lifetime. If his effort has been deep and sincere, I think such a thing as a final coma will prove only temporary, for its cause will be merely physical. As soon as he leaves his body, surely, he will wake up again in his astral form.

7. Q. If desires are what bring us back to be reborn on this plane, is it not also a mistake to desire to know God?

A. Of course it isn't! No uplifting desire is wrong. Rather, it rates as what is called a "desireless desire," for it lifts one out of ego-consciousness and toward freedom in God. Bondage to ego is what makes our desires wrong. They strengthen our bondage. Specific desires, moreover, determine to a great extent our next state of existence. As Yogananda put it, "If you die with an attachment to curried food, you may be reborn in India. If you go out with a hankering for apple pie, you may be reborn in America." He was speaking, of course, with light humor.

I remember seeing someone eating curry who had often told me he didn't like it. He explained to me quite seriously, "Master said if we like curry we'll be reborn in India. I hope to be reborn there, so I'm trying to overcome my distaste for curry by eating it now!" I commented, "Such things are determined by many factors. Don't place so much emphasis to this one factor alone!"

8. Q. What effect does grieving for a departed person have on him?

A. Grief is born of attachment. It holds the soul back, keeping one tied to our earthly plane of existence. Try, instead, to help speed others on their way by sending them loving blessings for soaring freedom in God.

9. Q. Will the disciples of a true guru see him on the other side?

A. Our Guru told us, "Those disciples who stick it out to the end -- not for just 'sticking it out,' but for the love of God -- I myself, or one of our other gurus, will be waiting to welcome them on the other side."

10. Q. Is it a good thing to donate one's bodily organs to help others who are still living?

A. In a somewhat abstract sense it is, of course, a good thing. Death, however, is a sacred occasion. I myself would not want anyone "mucking about" with my organs at that time. A dying person's consciousness doesn't withdraw immediately from the body. The fact that his physical organs still have enough vitality to be useful to someone else means that the life force has not yet withdrawn from them fully.

11. Q. Which is better: cremation, or burial?

A. Generally speaking, cremation is better. For it actually happens, occasionally, that people return to outward awareness after they've been buried. Think of the horror of waking up in your own coffin! The expression, "He would turn over in his grave if he heard that," is based on people's observation of corpses that, on exhumation, were found to have turned in their graves.

The mother of Robert E. Lee "died" temporarily when she was still a young woman. She was in her coffin, which was still above ground, when she returned to outward consciousness. Knocking desperately on her coffin, she was heard and was hastily rescued. It was after that event, in fact, that she gave birth to Robert.

On the other hand, it is better not to bury saints. Their physical bodies retain high vibrations that will help anyone who prays to them later at their tombs. My Guru said Lahiri Mahasaya's body should not have been cremated even though he was a householder. (Usually, the bodies of swamis are buried, with the rationale that they've been "cremated" already at the time of taking their sannyas vows of renunciation).

12. Q. I know suicide is considered a sin. Are there any extenuating circumstances when suicide might be a virtue?

A. Of course there are! A person may sacrifice his life for a high cause, or in expiation for some sin he himself has committed. This second rationale should be reserved, however, for persons of spiritual realization. And it depends always on the motivation behind the deed.

13. Q. Can it help those who have died to pray for them?

A. Indeed, yes. It may be good also to pray to them. I recall a time, years ago, when I'd intended to pray for my departed mother on her birthday. When that day came, however, I suffered a trying episode with my heart, and found myself praying to her rather than for her. Help reached me instantaneously. My mother was a very spiritual woman, but I believe that many who have gone before can help us also, if we ask them.

14. Q. Q. Should one be vigilant about superficial distractions as one grows old?

A. Yes, certainly one should. Many old people waste their time sitting all day before their television sets, or play cards. Television is especially pernicious. I myself never watch it. The thought of all those worldly personalities invading my consciousness with foolish ideas and attitudes: what absurdity! Yogananda referred to television as "satanic."

In summation, two things will help you especially in preparing for your "final exam":

First, try as much as possible to avoid anything that might have a distracting influence on your mind. Avoid especially things that might draw your thoughts downward into negative thoughts and emotions.

And second, surround yourself as much as possible with uplifting, God-reminding influences.

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Habits

From East West magazine, January 1926 - Yogananda

Fixing Habits in the Brain at Will

Who lives in this marvelous Hall of living walls of mortared osseous tissues fitted with the various ocular, tactual, auditory, olfactory and gustatory doors? This hall of life, the human skull, presents a veritable epitome of a huge state. It includes the range of hilly convolutions of the cerebrum, inlaid with the arterial streamlets and dark rivers of veins. Is this exquisite territory vacant, unoccupied? Is this hall filled just with a senseless mass of physical cells? Is there a book without an author, a child without parents, a clock without a maker, a rose without a designer? Nay—and similarly there are wondrous ruling agencies behind this kingdom of mystic beauty. Beneath the dome of the human skull is enacted scenes of intense activity and pulsating life and intelligence. The strange colony of myriads of little brainy cells are guided and controlled by a mixed host of good and impish invisible sprites, pixies and fairies of unseen habits.

There the little blood vessels are paddling their tiny boats laden with various vital commodities in the arterial stream. There is buying and selling, absorption and elimination, going on here. The little intelligent cells are engaged in banqueting or introspecting, or receiving the guests of sensations from the outer sensory doors, some are creating mischief by inviting sprites of invisible disorderly habits into this great commonwealth.

The habit lords and the commoners, the brain cells, are gathered together and are furiously debating who should assume the responsibility of the bodily government. These united states of flesh have been the scenes of many wars and revolutions. At certain election times, the whole state is in disorder and confusion. Who is going to be president? How many votes will the various candidates receive? Every human action, mentally or physically performed, is a voter. When a particular action is repeated, it swells the number of its votes, and a huge number of such actions elects a certain habit candidate. Then a collective vote of all human actions determines at different periods of life which habit is going to be the predominant one and rule supreme.

Election by numerical superiority often ignores the qualitative standard. If the majority of voters are morons or criminals, they are bound to blunder and elect the wrong habit candidate. Unless the voting human actions are guided by the supreme law of discrimination, they enslave themselves anew under an undesirable ruler.

A true spiritual democracy in this bodily kingdom necessitates the thorough education of the voting human activities. They should not only depend on their numerical power of repetition, but also on the quality of attentive performance. Above all, they should be trained to be guided by ideal rationalism and warned against the bribing effects of sentimental environment, leading to the misuse of their voting powers. The power of reason should select the candidates.

Habits of greed, anger, envy, drinking, excessive smoking, coffee or tea drinking, sloth, failure, result from their being elected to office by unwise hordes of little actions whose numerical strength alone elected them without thought of the after-effects of enslavement. Habit-slaves are not born, they make themselves so, unknowingly or knowingly, thru their constantly repeated actions. The first drink never made a drunkard, the first act of sensuality never made a sensual slave, the first use of dope never made a dope fiend. A series of mechanical or thoughtless

repetitions of the wrong action elected the gripping habit as ruler. Quantitative strength won against the weak qualitative voice of reason that had no votes because it had not been exercising its powers.

Guard yourself against the first performance of evil actions. What you will do once, you are liable to do again. Like a rolling snowball, habit grows stronger and bigger by repetition. Use your reason in all your actions, otherwise you become converted into helpless slaves of undesirable habits.

Impeaching a Bad Habit President and Installing a Better One

A strong bad habit presiding for a long time in the bodily state brings chaos and misery. Spiritual famine, mental fevers, universal poverty of body and brain exist in a kingdom thus misruled. A strong bad habit should be impeached before a tribunal of daily introspective and conscience judges, who should reform the daily offending actions that the inevitable outcome of their persistence will be nervous breakdown, wasted youth and exploded happiness. This constant note of warning may serve gradually to awaken the enslaved reason and will of the habit-bound victim.

Many excessive smokers, drunkards, sex-slaves, are not free because they do not think they are doing wrong and because they don't die immediately. But tho the shovels of habits dig slowly, yet they dig surely a yawning untimely grave, preceded by the scorching flames of suffering.

Convince your actions of the tyranny of the undesirable ruling habit first, then begin the work of constitutional agitation and actual impeachment. A whining or sorrowing attitude, remonstrance, or even violent but spasmodic rebellion, is of little avail. You are the maker of your habits and you must undo them by regular effort.

Relate your actions to new, better ways. Keep them continuously busy, interested, attentive, in serving and fraternizing with good actions. If the actions begin to revert back to their old dangerous associations, don't get discouraged. Persist, give sufficient time and attention, and the voting strength of the new actions will increase and finally get power enough to overthrow the worthless ruler, and elect in his place their own good candidate habit.

A bad habit takes time to attain supremacy, so why be impatient about the growth of its rivaling good habit? Do not despair about your undesirable habits, simply stop feeding them by repetition.

The time used in the formation of habits varies with the individual kind of nervous system and brain cells, and is chiefly determined by the quality of attention. But any habit can be installed in the brain, almost instantaneously at will, by creating brain-grooves thru the power of deep trained attention.

True democracy presupposes rational, willing obedience to good laws, ungoaded by higher authority or any other external influences whatsoever. Similarly, a wise man, one who is really free, avoids error and performs good, not compelled by habit, but from free reasonable choice.

All natural tastes, human customs, are the results of habits, and are environmental in nature. Love of Americanism of Hinduism is the outcome of habit and familiarity. When I was a baby, if I had the choice, I would have preferred to be a human chameleon, free to embrace the desirable aspects of all nations and creeds.

Government of actions by internal self-evolved discrimination, unguided by good or bad habits, imparts unbounded power of will. A man with such power can instantly fix a new habit in his brain, or stop one at will, without feeling the compulsion of a habit-president. One must not be dominated by a good habit, either, because the habit may be in power simply because there has never been any temptation of evil. Such a good habit is not permanently fixed in the nature, because it is born not from choice and reason, but thru circumstance.

One way we can test our power over our habits is to command the mind to like or dislike a certain food at will. When I first arrived in America, I was served at a dinner some Roquefort cheese and crackers. No sooner had Mr. Roquefort touched the palate and its arrival become known to the cerebral cells, than the habit lords rebelled and were about to upset the honored guests in my stomach. I didn't enjoy this sudden embarrassment, and saw that everyone else at the table was greatly enjoying this peculiar cheese. I strongly urged my senses to immediately elect the Roquefort-cheese-enjoying habit. I liked the taste at once and do so to this day.

Why do things happen contrary to your desires? Because your habits are also contrary to your desires, and your actions flatter your habits. Your habits must cater to your true Ideals.

Habit is an automatic mental mechanism for performing actions without the labor involved in initiating new actions. Wrongly used, this mechanism becomes man's arch-enemy. Be practical. Try from today to overcome the hidden enemy habits within you, garbed with your environmental likings, and be free to act from reason alone. Your habits are not you. Be yourself, and you will remember the lost image of God within you.

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Installing Habits of Success, Health, and Wisdom in the Mind at Will, Yogananda

Super-Advanced Course Lesson 6 (1930)

By Swami Yogananda

Cosmic law and "needs"

In search for success one must concentrate on "needs" and not on "wants." It is well that man does not get everything he wants, and that the Cosmic Law does not grant the wishes which would result in harm. A child may ask his father to catch him a beautiful poisonous snake, but the father does not fulfill such a dangerous wish. The Divine Law also denies the gratification of harmful, though momentarily pleasurable, desires. Of course, man, as the free-born child of God, can, and often does, persist in his longing for something quite delightful in the beginning but harmful in the end.

The greater the need, the greater the likelihood that it will be filled.

Before you can get that which you want, you must develop the power to get at will that which you need.

How to find true happiness

What are your real needs? Shelter; food for body, mind, and soul; prosperity; health; the power of concentration; a good memory; an understanding heart; friends; wisdom, and Bliss, are some human needs. Plain living, high thinking, cultivating real happiness within oneself in order to make others spiritually happy, are also real needs. True happiness is lasting, because it is spiritual in nature, whereas the "happiness" based on sense pleasure soon turns to sorrow. Making the senses serve the needs of body and mind leads to true happiness; indulging the senses brings nothing but misery. A desire for a pleasurable sense object is often mistaken for a natural "need" instead of an artificially created "want." "Wants" must not be multiplied; instead, the whole of concentration must be directed toward the filling of real "needs" or the securing of actual necessities.

As a rule, the attention is absorbed by loosely floating, unnecessary "wants" and constantly increasing desires. All desires for the gratification of needless "wants" must be stamped out.

Focusing the attention on one "need" at a time is the first step in the right direction. Determine your greatest "need," involving all the factors of life and true happiness; then devote all your attention and energy to attaining your objective by the quickest method.

Human lives are governed not by weak resolutions, but by habits. When people are used to good health, prosperity, a high standard of living, writing, lecturing, etc., all these seem to come easily. Likewise, poverty and failure come to those who are used to them.

Actions of habit, good or bad, are performed easily and naturally, bringing about good or bad results. Success and failure are habits. Therefore, if you are used to poverty or sickness, you must learn how to get used to health and prosperity instead. If failure, sickness, and ignorance are your constant companions, nothing but lack of will prevents you from enlisting the aid of success, health, and knowledge to drive and keep them away, definitely and permanently.

The soul's heritage

Success, health, and wisdom are the natural attributes and habits of the soul. Identification with constantly manifested weak habits and thoughts, and lack of concentration, perseverance and courage are responsible for the misery which people suffer due to poverty, ill health, and so forth.

You are paralyzing your faculty for success by thoughts of fear. Success and perfection of mind and body are man's inherent qualities, because he is made in God's image. In order to be able to claim his birthright, however, he must first rid himself of the delusion of his own limitations.

God owns everything. Therefore, know at all times that you as God's child, own everything that belongs to the Father. The whole mental attitude of an individual must be that of a son of God who is fully satisfied and contented, because he knows he has access to all his Father's possessions. your native endowment is perfection and prosperity, but you choose to be imperfect and poor. This sense of possessing everything must be a mental habit with each individual.

[Editor's Note: This last sentence is missing from the "Yogoda Lessons" photocopy book.]

Of what use are habits to us?

Habit formation is a device given us for the easy performance of certain actions. Habits are mental mechanisms which enable us to act automatically, leaving our consciousness free for other duties. A habit is formed by several attentive repetitions of an action.

Time required for habit formation can be shortened

A special mental note should be made here about slow or rapid habit formation. Some people require much time to form mental habits of health, prosperity, and the acquirement of wisdom. Actually the time needed for this purpose can be shortened. Slow or rapid habit formation depends on the general state of health; on the condition of the nervous system, including that of the brain cells; on habit-forming methods, mental imagery, will, etc. When a wholesome mental attitude is a strong habit--strong enough to be unshakable--no matter how many times you become ill, you will recover. Most people are "half hearted" in their thoughts and action; hence they do not succeed.

A mental habit, in order to materialize, must be strong and persistent.

For instance, the health or prosperity habit must be cultivated by health or prosperity thoughts until results are apparent. An unfailingly wholesome, courageous mental attitude is absolutely necessary to the attainment of one's "needs" and "wants." Failure to prosper and be healthy is due unquestionably to weak mental habits of health and prosperity.

Elimina i pensieri negativi

In affirming "I am healthy," or "I am wise," the positive affirmation must be so strong that it crowds out completely any subconscious, discouraging, negative enemy thoughts which may be whispering to you, "you fool, you will never succeed. You are a failure; wisdom is impossible for you." You must know that whatever you wish strongly, you can materialize in short order.

Disregard the time element while affirming

In practicing affirmations, the spiritual aspirant must be unfailingly patient. Believe you are inherently healthy when you want good health; *believe you are inherently prosperous when you want prosperity; believe you are inherently wise when you want wisdom--then health, prosperity, and wisdom will manifest themselves in you.*

Change the trend of your thoughts; cast out all negative mental habits, substituting in their place wholesome, courageous thought habits, and *applying them in daily life, with unshakable confidence.*

Remember that while an inattentive, scatter-brained idiot requires a long time for the formation of even a simple habit, an intelligent, purposeful individual can easily form or substitute a good mental habit for a bad one, in a trice, by the mere wish. Therefore, if you have a habit--mental, physical, or spiritual--that impedes your progress, *rid yourself of it now; do not put it off.*

Esercizi

A) If you are afflicted with a chronic case of indifference, make up your mind at once to "snap out of it." Be gay; think of something amusing until you find yourself bubbling over with laughter. Exercise self-control; learn to substitute, at will, joy for sorrow; love for hate; courage for fear; openmindedness for prejudice.

B) Know that anything others do, you can do also (See note 1).

C) If you have an inferiority complex, remember that success, health, and wisdom are your rightful heritage. Your difficulty is due to weakness which may have had its inception in one or more factors. It can be overcome by determination, courage, common sense, and faith in God and in yourself.

Therefore, if you are firmly convinced you are a failure, change your mental attitude at once; be unshakable in your conviction that you have all the potentialities of great success. At times you may find it helpful to recall your mental reactions on occasions when you were unsuccessful in some undertaking.

Practice the fourth Yogoda lesson faithfully and regularly, and consult your spiritual teacher.

You may find it necessary also to change your mental and physical environment in order to install the proper habits of thought.

After you begin to experience success, act with wisdom and perseverance, no matter what happens, until you demonstrate that you have succeeded just as you believed you would if you tried.

Summary

It does not take long to develop good mental habits. In fact, by exercising strong will, mental habits of health or success or wisdom may be formed at once. By concentrating with perseverance, courage, and faith in God and oneself on legitimate necessities, one can materialize them at will.

Note 1

Once I was having dinner with friends. Everything went well until the Roquefort cheese was served. In India we eat only freshly made cheese, so I viewed the little green specks of mold in the cheese with great suspicion. My soul rebelled against it, and my brain cells warned me to have nothing to do with it. But as I looked at my American friends eating the cheese, I mustered courage and took a lump of it into my mouth. No sooner had it landed there than all the aristocratic delicacies which had preceded it rebelled. There was great clamor and commotion within me, and they served notice on me that if "Mr. Roquefort" joined them they would all leave the body. And I dared not open my mouth, but just nodded in answer to my host's question whether I liked the cheese! Then, as I looked intently at the faces of my friends eating Roquefort cheese pleasantly, I suddenly made up my mind. Concentrating deeply, I told my brain cells, "I am your 'boss'; you are my servants. You shall obey me--this foolishness must stop." The next minute I was enjoying "Mr. Roguefort's" company pleasantly, and now he always receives a warm welcome when he enters my "hall of digestion."

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Creating a new habit, Yogananda

Method from the writings of Paramhansa Yogananda

I decide to create this new habit/attitude

Confirm this intention with your Self, praying for guidance and support

The benefits of this new habit are:

Thoughts that can contribute to the new habit are.

The affirmation that I will use every day to be able to carve this new habit.

The thoughts and visualisations that can contribute to the process of carving the new groove.

The environments/people/situations that can contribute to the transformation

The actions I need to cultivate to instil the new pattern of behaviour

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Affirmations

From Affirmations for Self-Healing: Introduction – Swami Kriyananda

An affirmation is a statement of truth which one aspires to absorb into his life. It has been said that we are what we eat. It would be truer to say, “We are what we think.” For our minds express, and also influence, the reality of what we are far more than our bodies do. Our thoughts even influence, to a great extent, our physical health.

No real progress in life ever comes haphazardly. A sportsman must work hard to master the techniques he needs: throwing a ball, skiing down a difficult slope, jumping the greatest possible distance. And a pianist must work at least as hard to master the movements of his fingers, to play with ease the most intricate musical passages.

Living, too, is an art. Unfortunately, it is one to which most people devote little energy. They take life as it comes, and wonder why things keep going wrong.

Thoughts are things. Words, which are crystallized thoughts, have immeasurable power, especially when we speak them with concentration. The mere thought of fatigue is enough to sap our energy. To strengthen that thought by the words, “I’m exhausted,” gives definition, and therefore added power, to the thought itself.

The opposite is true also. If one feels exhausted, but suddenly finds his interest drawn to something, his fatigue may vanish altogether! One is what one thinks. If, in addition to that sudden interest, he verbalizes it with the words, “I feel wonderful!” he may find that, instead of only feeling vaguely better, he actually feels as though he had acquired a new self-definition.

So many of our failures in life – to master new languages, to get along with others, to do well whatever we want to do – are due to the simple thought that what we want to accomplish is alien to us.

Again, many of our successes in life are the result of fully accepting the new as our own. French, for example, can be learned more easily by the student who absorbs himself in the thought, “I am French,” than by him who says (as children in the classroom often do), “Those people talk funny!”

The difficulty is that our habits are buried in the subconscious mind. Thus, even when we resolve to change them, we find ourselves being drawn back repeatedly, and quite against our conscious will, into old ways.

Affirmations, on the other hand, when repeated with deep concentration, then carried into the subconscious, can change us on levels of the mind over which most of us have little conscious control.

We are what we think. But we are also far more than what we think consciously. We are the myriad conflicting patterns of feeling, habit, and reaction that we have built up over a lifetime – indeed, over lifetimes – in our subconscious minds. To heal ourselves, we must also set those inner conflicts in order.

Nor is it enough, even, to affirm change on conscious and subconscious levels. For we are part of a much greater reality, with which we must live in harmony also. Behind our human minds is the divine consciousness.

When we try to transform ourselves by self-effort alone, we limit our potential for healing and growth. Affirmation should be lifted from the self-enclosure of the mind into the greater reality of superconsciousness.

To be healed is to “be rid of an imperfection.” To be perfect is to express the superconscious – the source of creativity and solutions. Therefore, in using affirmations we concentrate on positive qualities which are the solutions to our disease and imperfections.

The superconscious is that level of awareness which is often described as the higher Self. It is from this level, for example, that great inspirations come. It is through the superconscious that divine guidance descends and true healing takes place. Without superconscious attunement, affirmations, like any other merely human attempt at self-upliftment, have only temporary benefits.

Affirmations should be repeated in such a way as to lift the consciousness toward superconsciousness. This they can accomplish when we repeat them with deep concentration at the seat of divine awareness in the human body, the Christ center, which is a point in the forehead midway between the two eyebrows.

Repeat the affirmations in this book loudly at first, to command the full attention of your conscious mind. Then repeat them quietly, to absorb more deeply the meaning of the words. Then speak them in a whisper, carrying their meaning down into the subconscious. Repeat them again, silently, to deepen your absorption of them at the subconscious level. Then at last, with rising aspiration, repeat them at the Christ center.

At every level, repeat them several times, absorbing yourself ever-more-deeply in their meaning.

By repeated affirmation you can strengthen, and, later, spiritualize your awareness of any quality you want to develop.

Affirmation is only the first step to self-healing. We must do our human part. Without additional power from God, however, our efforts are forever incomplete. Affirmation, in other words, should end with prayer.

Why should one pray only after repeating the affirmations? Why not before? Prayer is always good, certainly. But if it isn't uttered with an affirmative consciousness, it can easily become weak and beggarly: a plea that God do all the work, without man's active participation. Effective prayer is never passive. It is full of faith. It matures in an attitude of affirmation.

To become established in any new quality, it helps first to affirm it, following the sequence that I have described. Then, however, offer that affirmation up in loving prayer to God.

It is at the point of our deepest and most positive attunement with Him that He helps us the most. By divine attunement, our resistance becomes minimized, and our cooperation with His grace becomes fully open, willing, and superconsciously aware.

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From Affirmations for Self-Healing – Yogananda

Spiritual Power of Mans Word

Man's word is Spirit in man. Words are sounds occasioned by the vibrations of thoughts. Thoughts are vibrations sent forth by the Ego or Soul. Every word that leaves your mouth ought to be potent with your genuine soul vibration. Words in most people are lifeless because they are automatically put forth into the ether, without being impregnated with soul force. Too much talking, exaggeration or falsehood used in connection with words is just like shooting bullets out of a toy gun, without the gun-powder. That is why the prayers or words of such people do not produce any desired definite change in the order of things. Every word you utter you must mean it, i.e., every word you put forth must represent not only Truth, but some of your realized soul force. Words without soul force are husks without the corn.

Words that are saturated with sincerity, conviction, faith and intuition are just like highly explosive vibration bombs, which when let out, are sure to explode the rocks of difficulties and create the change desired. Avoid speaking unpleasant words, even though they are true. Words must be intoned according to the convictions within. Sincere words or affirmations repeated understandingly, feelingly and willingly are sure to move the Omnipresent Cosmic Vibratory Force and render you aid in your difficulty. Only appeal to that Force with infinite confidence, casting out all doubt and the spirit of looking for the desired result. If you don't do this, your appealing attention is deflected and side-tracked from its objective mark. Besides you cannot sow the vibratory prayer seed in the soil of Cosmic Consciousness and then pick it out every minute to see if it has germinated into the desired result or not.

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God-Given Power of Man

It should be remembered that there is nothing greater in power than the Cosmic Consciousness or God. The Power of Cosmic Consciousness is greater than the power of your mind or the mind of others. Thus you should seek Its aid alone. But this does not mean that you should make yourself passive, inert or credulous, or that you should minimize the power of your mind. Remember God helps those that help themselves. He gave you will power, concentration, faith, reason and common sense to help yourself in your bodily or mental afflictions. You must use them all as you seek the Divine help. But remember in using your own will power or common sense to get rid of a difficulty or disease, you must not rely wholly on, or harness yourself solely to, your Ego and thus disconnect yourself from the Divine Force. Always during affirmations or prayer vibrations feel that you are using your own but God-given power to heal yourself or others. Always believe that it is not God only but yourself also who, as His beloved child, tries to employ His-given will, reason, etc., to react on the difficult problems of life. A balance must be struck between the old idea of wholly depending on God, and the modern way of sole dependence on the ego.

During the different affirmations, the attitude of the mind should be different, e.g., will affirmations should be accompanied by strong will; feeling affirmations by devotion; reason affirmations by intelligence and devotion; imagination affirmations by firm fancy and faith. In healing others select that affirmation which is suitable to the conative, imaginative, emotional or thoughtful temperament of your patient. In all affirmations the intensity of attention comes first, but continuity and repetition count a great deal, too. Impregnate your affirmations with your devotion, will and faith, intensely and repeatedly, unmindful of the results, which will naturally come as the fruit of your labors.

During the physical curing process, the attention must not be on the disease, which always damps the faith, but on the mind. During mental cures of fear, anger, any bad habit, consciousness of failure, unsuccess, nervousness, etc., the concentration should be on the opposite mental quality, e.g., the cure for fear is culturing the consciousness of bravery; of anger — peace; of weakness — strength; of sickness — health.

Chapter Four: Bhakti Yoga

From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, Chapter 2:I – Swami Kriyananda

Consider the path of **Bhakti Yoga**, the Yoga of Devotion. Those true saints in all religions, no matter how eagerly they prayed, sang, or danced in their devotion, reached a point in their development where deep inner calmness took over. All movement ceased. Saint Teresa of Avila reported that in this state she could not even pray, so deep was her inner stillness. Truly, she was a yogi though she had never heard of yoga. But because she was not aware that such perfect stillness is the goal of the spiritual search, she wasted many years (as she later stated) in trying to force her mind to return to superficial devotional practices which the soul was endeavoring to transcend.

Bhakti Yoga, then, must lead from personal fervor to impersonal calmness. The important thing is not how one defines God, but how one approaches Him. The **bhakti yogi** thinks of God first in personal, human terms: as Father, Mother, Friend, or Beloved. Such a personal view helps him to awaken and direct love towards God. Ignorant followers of this path waste much energy in arguing over the respective merits of their chosen deities. They see not that Spirit is all forms, and no form (because essentially beyond all forms). It is not what we love, but how we love, that is important if our devotion is to lead us to enlightenment. Sectarian differences only create more waves of likes and dislikes; they do not result in yoga..

Bhakti Yoga, or pure devotion, is essential to some extent for every seeker. Selfless love is one of the quickest ways of smoothing the selfish eddies of desire, and of drawing one's feelings out of an egoic orbit to merge in the Divine stream. **Bhakti Yoga** must be above all a self-offering: not noise and loud chanting only, but also silence; a listening for the divine reply. Devotion is a way of creating such a strong current of pure energy that all impure desires are simply carried along in its wake.

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From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga, Chapter 5:I – Swami Kriyananda

Devotion to the Supreme Lord, the fifth and last of the rules of *niyama*, may raise the question: "If yoga is not based on beliefs, but only on practices, why then speak of God at all?" Yet no man can rise spiritually who does not have in his mind some thought that there must be something higher than his present consciousness. If a child were to insist that it could learn nothing from its elders, it might remain forever in ignorance. If man rejected every tradition, he would have to re-invent everything for his own use—even the wheel. If, then, the yogi, in reaching out toward higher realities, chooses to call those realities, "God," what is the objection? Man can never understand with his little mind anything so vastly beyond his comprehension as a state of absolute perfection, but that he should be devoted to this ideal is right and proper. Without such devotion, he would stagnate in the shallow pond of egoic limitations.

My great guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, once said, "When you find God, you will know that He is a conscious Being to whom one can appeal, and not merely some abstract mental state." Those great souls who have communed with the Infinite have testified, each in his own language, to the reality of the Infinite Spirit. Though they have described God as man's own Self, they have

yet said that this true Self is infinitely greater than the little body and personality to which we presently limit ourselves—even as consciousness, expressed in the billions of creatures in this world, cannot conceivably be limited to their own little brains. To speak of the Infinite as our own self, though it is indeed that in essence, might be to limit it to our present level of egoic self-awareness, rather than to expand this awareness to the farthest boundaries of Self-realization. The yogis say, therefore, that it is good to speak of God as though He were apart from ourselves, even though in fact He is not. (For as Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within.")

To have devotion to the Supreme Being is essential for spiritual progress. Without devotion, one can no more advance on the path to God than one would advance on any difficult road in this world, if one had no desire to reach the journey's goal. True devotion is not a slavish attitude. It is only an effort of the heart to lift itself up into that consciousness where Divine Love is felt and known. As with self-study (swadhyaya), where one attunes himself to those rays of light on which higher beings move and is thus able to commune with them, so also with this practice of devotion: Patanjali says that by supreme love one enters upon that ray of divine love on which the Infinite Consciousness forever dwells. Without that love, it is not possible to receive the subtle broadcastings emanating from the heart of the Infinite Silence. That is why Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Even the yoga postures should be done with a sense of worship if one is to receive from them the fullest benefit. They were originated, not by football coaches and P.E. teachers, but by great sages who recognized in certain postures the outward expressions of inward movements of the soul.

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter Four – Swami Kriyananda

The practice of **Bhakti Yoga** is intended to awaken the emotions, but after awakening them to calm and focus them, not to agitate them.

As floating debris is drawn into the wake of a ship, so the desire for worldly satisfaction is drawn into the "wake" of intense devotional yearning for God.

Again, just as our daily responsibilities pale into insignificance before some overwhelming tragedy—the death, for example, of someone dear to us—so our lesser attachments loosen their grip on our minds when we are overwhelmed by intense pangs of separation from God.

Chanting to God, calling to Him with ever increasing zeal, stirring up devotional yearning in the heart—all of these are examples of **Bhakti Yoga**.

But if the heart's feelings, once awakened, are not withdrawn and directed upward in calm meditation, they fuel the emotions, merely, which agitate the heart's feelings and carry them outward, not upward to our source in God.

Saints who have achieved perfection in **Bhakti Yoga** have become rapt in ecstasy, where the only possible expression of their love was an expansion of inner silence.

As Paramhansa Yogananda wrote once, "Oh, how maddening! I can pray no more with words, but only with wistful yearning."

Bhakti (devotion) is fulfilled not by loud chanting, but in the attainment of inner silence, in superconsciousness.

Come scrisse una volta Paramhansa Yogananda: «Oh, c'è da impazzire! Non posso più pregare con le parole, ma solo con un desiderio ardente».

Bhakti (la devozione) si realizza non cantando ad alta voce, ma pervenendo al silenzio interiore, nella supercoscienza.

From The Essence of Self-realization, Chapter Sixty – Swami Kriyananda

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"I am intrigued by the concept of Self-realization," said a college student, whose major was in philosophy. "However, I don't see how you tie it in with worship. Surely it isn't your teaching that we should worship ourselves!"

"But isn't that what everyone does?" asked Paramhansa Yogananda with a humorous smile. "That is the very essence of delusion: to idolize the ego; to pour out libations to it, pamper it, sing praises to it!"

"Worship means to seek identity with the object of one's concentration. On the path of Self-realization, the devotee seeks to transfer his identity from the little ego to the infinite Self. Philosophically, then, it is valid to worship that greater Self.

"This is a difficult concept, however, for the human mind to grasp. One may affirm, 'I am infinite,' but without humility and devotion one slips all too easily into the error of thinking, 'I, in my exceptional greatness, am one with Infinity!'

"For this reason it is better, until one is highly advanced spiritually, not to think of God as, 'I,' but to address Him as, 'Thou.' It is also more natural to think in this way. After all, as human beings we see others as separate from ourselves, even though, spiritually speaking, all are manifestations of the one divine Self. We don't ask a friend how he is by saying, 'How am I today?' To do so would be confusing even for a philosopher! Instead, we say, 'How are you?'

"An 'I-and-Thou' relationship with God is simpler, and less confusing. It is also much more satisfying to the human mind. And it is a relationship that God recognizes.

"The Lord responds to sincere devotion from His human children, never to proud self-affirmation."

2

"Steam is invisible," Yogananda said, "but when cooled it becomes visible as water. Water, when cooled further still, becomes ice. Steam and water are without form, but ice can be formed into countless different shapes.

"The Infinite Lord, similarly, is invisible behind His creation, even though, like the steam in a steam engine, it is His power that makes everything function. By our devotion, however, we

may 'condense' Him into visibility as the inner light, beheld in meditation. By still deeper meditation, our devotion's 'frost' may 'freeze' Him and cause Him to appear to us in actual form.

"Thus, the Infinite Lord has appeared to many devotees as their Heavenly Father, or their Divine Mother, or in countless other aspects that their hearts held dear."

4

A student of comparative religion posed the Master a dilemma he'd encountered in his studies. "I find," he said, "that every religion defines God differently. It makes me wonder if the founders of the world's great religions really knew what they were talking about!"

Paramhansa Yogananda replied with a smile, "Your mind has been conditioned to think that defining a thing is the same thing as understanding it. No definition could ever encompass God.

"An architect, upon returning from a visit to London, might describe the city in terms of the buildings he'd seen. A gardener, having viewed all the same sights, might describe the city's parks. A politician might speak of the needs of the people of London. None would be able to convey the actual experience of visiting that city.

"Take another example: How would you explain the taste of an orange to someone who had never tasted one? You could never do so adequately.

"The goal of religion is not to define God accurately. It is to inspire in people the desire to commune with Him—to experience Him in inner silence, in their souls.

"The founders of the great religions spoke from that inner experience. When they sought to explain God, they did so in terms that they hoped would touch their listeners.

"Thus, sometimes they described Him as their Beloved; again, as a mighty King; and again, as a great Light. Jesus spoke of Him as his Heavenly Father. Buddha didn't speak of Him at all, lest the people of his time continue their passive dependence on God's help.

"No master is concerned with formulating absolute definitions. What he hopes, simply, is to convey a suggestion of the divine experience.

"Thus, if sometimes he compares it to the drinking of wine, or to the pleasures of human love, it is only because he wants to inspire people to seek perfection beyond the things of earth. Since at present they feel attracted to these things, he says to them, 'In ecstasy you will find a joy that is infinitely superior to everything you now enjoy.'"

5

A Hindu student in America once laughingly told Paramhansa Yogananda, "My grandmother in India listens to bhajans [devotional songs] on the radio. At the end of the singing, she places a flower on it as a devotional offering—as if the radio were a holy image!"

The Master smiled at this encounter between scientific materialism and traditional piety. "And yet," he commented, "your grandmother is not so superstitious as she seems. For with the flower she is expressing her gratitude to God. It isn't that she views the radio as a deity. She is simply seeking an external focus for her devotion.

"And isn't it good to see God enshrined everywhere? We think of the radio as man-made, but from Whom came the intelligence that made the radio? From Whom came even the materials from which it was made?"

"When we seek to remove God from our environment, it becomes all too easy for us to remove Him from our lives altogether."

6

"One thing I cannot appreciate in the Hindu religion," said a Christian severely, "is its plethora of gods."

"There are many," agreed the Master. "Each, however, represents an attempt to remind us of God in one of His innumerable aspects. They are abstractions—a way of saying, 'No human being can really understand what God is, but here, at least, is something that He does.'"

"Take, for example, the image of the goddess Kali. This is a good case in point, because, out of all Hindu images, Kali has been the one most misunderstood by Western minds."

"Kali stands naked. Her right foot is placed on the chest of Her prostrate husband. Her hair streams out, disheveled, behind Her. A garland of human heads adorns Her neck. In one of four hands She brandishes a sword; in another, a severed head. Her tongue, usually painted a bright red, lolls out as though in blood-lust."

At this point the Christian shuddered. Yogananda grinned roguishly.

"If we thought that this image depicted Kali as She is," he continued, "I grant you, it might awaken devotion in very few devotees! However, the purpose of that image is to describe certain universal functions of the Divine in Nature."

"Kali represents Mother Nature. She is Aum, the cosmic vibration. In Aum everything exists—all matter, all energy, and the thoughts of all conscious beings. Hence, Her garland of heads, to show that She is invisibly present in all minds."

"The play of life and death expresses Her activity in Nature: creation, preservation, and destruction. Hence the sword, the head, and a third hand extended, bestowing life."

"Her energy is omnipresent; hence Her streaming hair, representing energy."

"Shiva, Her husband, represents God in His vibrationless state, beyond creation. Thus, He is depicted as supine."

"Kali's tongue is protruding not in blood-lust as most people believe, but because in India, when a person makes a mistake, he sticks out his tongue. In the West, don't you express embarrassment somewhat similarly? You put your hands to your mouth."

"Kali is depicted as dancing all over creation. This dance represents the movement of cosmic vibration, in which all things exist. When Kali's foot touches the breast of the Infinite, however, She puts her tongue out as if to say, 'Oh, oh, I've gone too far!' For at the touch of the Infinite Spirit, all vibration ceases."

"Kali's fourth hand is raised in blessing on those who seek, not Her gifts, but liberation from the endless play of maya, or delusion."

"Those who feel themselves attracted to Nature's outward manifestations must continue the endless round of life and death, through incarnation after incarnation. Those devotees, however, who deeply long for freedom from the cosmic play worship God in the indwelling Self. Through meditation, they merge in the infinite Aum. And from oneness with Aum they pass beyond creation, to unite their consciousness with God—timeless, eternal Bliss.

"The statues of Kali are not intended to depict the Divine Mother as She looks, but simply to display Her functions in the aspect of Mother Nature.

"The Divine Mother is, of course, without form, though we may say also that Her body is the entire universe, with its infinity of suns and moons. She can also appear to the devotee in human form, however. When She does so, She is enshrined in supernal beauty.

"All the images of gods in India are symbolic. We must look beyond their shapes to the hidden meanings they represent."

7

"I have trouble visualizing God," complained a student of religious New Thought. "I've imagined Him as Infinite Intelligence, as the I AM principle, as my God-Self within, as the Cosmic Ground of Being. It all seems so abstract! But your relationship with the Lord is so loving. How can I achieve such a relationship?"

"The first step," replied the Master, "is not to imagine that He wants your definitions. He wants only your love.

"Why not," Yogananda then suggested, "worship the Infinite as your Divine Mother?"

"What a lovely idea!" exclaimed the visitor. "But is it valid? Is it true?"

"Indeed, yes!" replied Sri Yogananda emphatically. "God's love is already reflected in human relationships. His love, like the sunlight shining on countless pieces of glass, is reflected everywhere.

"The Infinite is the Mother behind all human mothers, the true Father behind all human fathers. He is the ever-loyal Friend behind all earthly friends. He is the eternal Beloved behind all human loves. He is all things to all men, because, you see, the Lord is everything.

"Through your parents He cares for you, supports you, and protects you. Through your friends He shows you that love is a free sharing, without any hint of compulsion. Through the beloved He helps one to find the selfless intensity of divine love. Through people's children He helps them to understand love as something precious, as a thing to be protected from harmful influences and nourished with devotion.

"Countless are the forms in which God comes to man. In each, He seeks to teach man something of His infinite nature. The lessons are there, for anyone whose heart is open to receive them.

"Thus, it isn't that the Lord wants you to deny your human nature. What He wants, rather, is for you to purify it: to expand whatever love you feel in your heart, and not to keep it locked up in ego-attachments.

"For the devotee, it is natural therefore to worship God in some human aspect: as his Divine Mother, for example, or as his Heavenly Father.

"I myself worship the Mother aspect, especially. For the Mother is closer than the Father. The Father aspect of God represents that part which is aloof from His creation. The Mother is creation itself. Even among mankind, the human father is more disposed than the mother to judge their erring children. The mother always forgives.

"Pray, then, to the Divine Mother. Talk to Her like a child: 'Divine Mother, naughty or good, I am Your own. You must release me from this delusion.' The Mother ever responds with compassion when the devotee prays to Her sincerely in this way.

"Of course, in the highest sense God is none of the forms in which people worship Him. But it is helpful to use human concepts as a means of deepening our devotion to Him.

"Beyond devotion comes divine love. In that perfection of love there is complete union. In that state the yogi realizes the supreme truth: 'I am That.'"

8

"You should not be too personal in your love for God. To be personal is to remain limited by ego-consciousness. But love for Him must take one beyond the ego. If you visualize God with form, and even if you behold Him ecstatically in visions, try to see expressed in those eyes the consciousness of infinity.

"The Divine Mother is so beautiful! But remember, in Her higher manifestation even that beauty is formless. She is in everything. Her divine, compassionate love is expressed in the raindrops. Her beauty is reflected in the colors of the rainbow. She offers fresh hope to mankind with the rose-tinted clouds at dawn.

"Above all, be ever conscious of Her presence in your heart."

9

"There are two ways of approaching God in Nature. One is to separate the Lord from all His manifestations. 'Neti, neti,' is the saying in India: 'Not this, not that.' Something of that consciousness there must always be, lest one become trapped in attachment to form.

"The other way is to behold the Lord manifested everywhere.

"The first way, by itself, may be too austere for most devotees. The second way is much sweeter. Best of all is a combination of both.

"The Divine Mother is busy with Her housework of creation. The baby devotee cries, and She gives him a toy to play with—riches, perhaps, or name, or fame. If he cries again, She gives him another toy. But if the baby throws everything away and cries for Her love alone, She picks him up at last and whispers to him lovingly, 'If you really want only Me, and not My gifts, then come. Be with me forever on My lap of infinity.'"

10

"I find it difficult to pray to God with form," said a visiting professor. "What inspires me, rather, is the thought of vastness—infinity! When I go out under the stars at night, I think, 'How wonderful!' Truth is so grand. How unimportant, at such times, seems my little life with its petty worries and afflictions. My spirit soars in the thought of infinite space, eternity!"

"Such thoughts should be held by everyone seeking God," replied Sri Yogananda. "Always, in whatever aspect you worship Him, your sight should be focused on infinity.

"It isn't necessary to think of God with form. It depends on a person's nature. Some people find more devotional inspiration, just as you do, in a formless reality. Devotion must not be confused with sentiment. Rather, devotion is the sincere aspiration of the human heart toward the center of infinite truth."

11

A visitor asked the Master, "Why, when referring to God, do you use the pronoun, 'He'? Is God really masculine?"

"God is both masculine and feminine," Yogananda replied. "He also is neither masculine nor feminine. When I use the pronoun, 'He,' it isn't to limit God.

"But would people be inspired to love God if they thought of Him as 'It'? The personal pronoun suggests a conscious Being, to whom they can relate individually. The masculine pronoun, moreover, is also impersonal.

"Westerners, besides, are accustomed to thinking of God as the Father, for that is how Jesus spoke of Him."».

13

"Don't be formal with God. Play with Him. Tease Him if you like. Scold Him if you feel to—though always with love. Remember, He is your very own. He is the Nearest of the near, the Dearest of the dear. He is closer to you than the very thoughts with which you pray to Hi

From The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita – Swami Kriyananda

(4:39) *The person of devotion who is engrossed in the infinite, having brought his senses under control, achieves wisdom, and gains that which he knows at once to be perfect peace.*

Devotees who think there is a conflict between devotional love, yogic self-control, and true (as opposed to intellectual) wisdom, fail to realize that all these paths (devotion, yogic practicality, and calm discrimination) are aspects of the same truth, and result in the same realization.

The word for devotion in this *sloka* is *shraddha*, which usually translates as, "faith." The reference is to that kind of devotion which doesn't hold God at a distance by appealing to Him for divine favors, but which, like an arrow, flies straight to the bull's eye of His divine love as a natural inclination of the heart toward its true, intuitively perceived Source.

The highest goal, the true bull's eye of devotional focus, is not love, but bliss. Love itself is lovable, but it must have a pure motive, and that motive, or goal, is *Satchidananda*. It is good, surely, to seek God for His love, but the highest goal of all is ever-conscious, ever-existing, ever-new Bliss. Without this as one's goal, even love, if one seeks it as his highest goal, contains the danger of awakening the desire for personal love. True, perfect love is always impersonal, expansive, and ultimately infinite. It has no object save Bliss alone.

§

From Conversations with Yogananda, Swami Kriyananda

~ 25 ~

Paramhansa Yogananda demonstrated no respectful solemnity toward religious practices that he considered false or merely emotional, rather than devotional. Indeed, he could make very merry at their expense. He once told us, laughing, about a "holy roller" gathering he had witnessed.

"There they all were, fat ladies, old men, all rolling about on the floor in their zeal. They thought they were being inspired by the Holy Ghost, but what really moved them was the 'unholy ghost' of emotions! Devotion must be internalized. When it is allowed to flow outward, it becomes emotion. Emotional devotion, by its very exuberance, takes one further into delusion. Excitement only extinguishes the lamp of pure love.

"God, too," he commented, "has a sense of humor! All men are His children, but why shouldn't He have fun when He sees them acting comically?"

~ 73 ~

Bernard asked the Master, “What is the best way to transform emotion into devotion?”

“The company you keep” the Master replied, “will determine in what direction your feelings develop. In the company of devotees, those feelings will more easily become devotional.”

“Master,” pursued the disciple, “what if I am alone — for instance, when I meditate?”

“Am I not always with you?” the Master replied with a loving smile.

~ 75 ~

One day a new disciple, in a fit of emotional frenzy, cried, pleaded, and shouted to God to appear. Others were meditating with him, and felt intensely embarrassed by his emotional outburst. One of them wrote the Master a note afterward, inquiring whether it is all right, spiritually, to be so outwardly expressive.

“By all means it is all right!” replied the Master. “Cry to God. Roll on the ground in your fervor of longing for Him. Halfheartedness will never take you to God.”

The Master had taken this opportunity, however, to fan the fire of devotion in those disciples’ hearts — especially in the one who had written that note, who tended, himself, to be rather lukewarm. As a rule, the Master never counseled emotional displays unless they proceeded from an uncontrollable inner fervor. On another occasion, he told that same emotional disciple:

“Don’t be like a straw fire in your devotion. Enthusiasm is good, but keep it under control. Otherwise, you will merely scatter its power.

“If you explode dynamite high in the air,” he continued, “it will only make a loud noise. If you bury it in the ground, however, its explosion may make possible the building of highways, or the construction of tall buildings. Enthusiasm, similarly, is wonderful, but learn to be enthusiastic about the right things, and in the right way. Feeling should be calmly focused. Don’t burn away its intensity as if in a straw fire.

“To demolish the mountain of delusion before you,” he continued, “inwardness is necessary. Devotion must be kept under control. It should be a secret between you and your Beloved.”

~ 216 ~

The Master told us that when he first came to Sri Yukteswar’s ashram, he would keep his mind and gaze focused at the point between the eyebrows as much as possible. “If you want to make very rapid progress on the spiritual path,” he used to tell us, “keep your mind always centered there.”

This practice must be joined to, however, and supported by the heart’s devotion. For concentration at the spiritual eye, which is known as the ajna chakra, develops great will power, but it can also make one ruthless if it isn’t combined with the heart’s love. When will power is combined with love, great joy is the consequence.

~ 331 ~

The absence of ego-consciousness does not mean that self-consciousness ceases to exist. Far from it! Rather, it is the sense of self made infinite. This great truth is described in his poem “Samadhi” in the following line: “Ever-present, all-flowing I, I, everywhere.” Often, with great enjoyment, he told the following story to illustrate a master’s complete lack of ego-consciousness:

“The gopis used to bring fresh cheese every morning to Krishna. Joyfully they would cross the river Jamuna to the other side, where Lord Krishna lived. He relished that cheese because of the devotion with which they brought it.

“One morning, to their great dismay, the river was in flood. How were they to cross it? One of them then had an inspiration.

“Byasa, a great disciple of Krishna’s, lived on their own side of the Jamuna. This was the famous Byasa who, years later, wrote the Bhagavad Gita. ‘Let us go and plead with him to perform a miracle,’ the gopi cried. Eagerly they all rushed to the hut where Byasa lived.

“‘Sir,’ they cried, ‘we’ve been taking cheese every morning to Lord Krishna. This morning, however, we can’t get across: the Jamuna is in flood. Would you please help us?’ They smiled at him winningly.

“‘Krishna, Krishna!’ shouted Byasa as if in anger. ‘All I ever hear is “Krishna”! What about me? Does it never occur to you that I, too, might enjoy a little cheese?’

“Well, what a dilemma! They deeply respected Byasa, but after all this cheese was intended for Krishna. If, however, the only way to get it to him was with Byasa’s help, what else could they do? ‘Please, Sir,’ they said, ‘take a little of this cheese for yourself.’

“Well, Byasa took it. And then he ate — and ate — and ate! He didn’t stop eating until he couldn’t swallow any more. There was only a little portion of cheese left for Krishna! Byasa then hoisted himself to his feet, and somehow carried himself to the riverbank.” (How I, Walter, smile at the memory of the Master’s pantomiming that lumbering act!)

“‘Jamuna!’ Byasa cried on reaching the river, ‘If I have not eaten anything, divide up and part!’

“‘What on earth is he saying?’ whispered the girls to one another. ‘First he stuffs himself like a pig. And now he cries, “If I have not eaten.” What a liar! What possible good can come of this adventure?’

“To their amazement, the river parted! A narrow opening formed between two great walls of water. The girls crossed hastily to the other side, not stopping to puzzle out this mystery. They hurried to Krishna’s cottage, crying out, ‘Lord Krishna! Lord Krishna!’ Usually, he stood at the cottage door, eagerly awaiting their cheese. Today, however, there was no sign of him. ‘Lord Krishna!’ they cried, ‘Where are you? What’s the matter?’

“When they reached his front door, they peeked inside and saw Krishna stretched out on a couch, his mouth curved in a happy smile. To their anxious inquiries, he replied sleepily, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, I just can’t eat any more cheese today.’

“‘But Lord, who fed you? No one else brings you cheese in the morning.’

“‘Oh,’ he replied, ‘that fellow Byasa on the other side has fed me too much already.’

“Byasa, you see, had been thinking only of Krishna as he ate. His body swallowed the cheese, but Krishna got all the benefit.

“Thus,” concluded the Master, “should one act in the world. Think always of God. Ask Him, in everything you do, to do it through you.”

~ 355 ~

A disciple was becoming somewhat proud of his success in developing devotion. The Master surprised him one day by saying, “If you love yourself, how can you love God?”

~ 410 ~

“Keep your devotion in a state of reason. Without reason, devotion becomes too easily emotional. But don’t be too rational, either! Reason alone will never give you true understanding. It must be balanced with feeling. Understanding comes best when reason and feeling work together, each inspiring the other to flow upward.

“Look at a flower and ask, How come you to be so beautiful? How come you even to exist, and your beauty to exist? Surely, there is some greater intelligence at work behind you, forming you.

“And this great city of cells, your body: How did they come together into a homogeneous population? How do they work together so intelligently? Isn’t there something behind the body, more than what the biologists claim? How can you have sprung into existence by mindless accident, as they teach? In these ways, reason can deepen and uplift your devotion.”

~ 432 ~

To those, especially, who served in public roles, but also to all devotees of God, the Master counseled: “Devotion must not be displayed before others. As soon as you demonstrate it outwardly, that is the end of your devotion. To express such feelings deliberately to others is a blasphemy before God.”

~ 442 ~

A man came to Mount Washington and was accepted by the Master for training. The man received Kriya Yoga initiation, and practiced it with great fervor for a few months. Once, he told me, he meditated for forty hours without a break. Impatient, however, with the seeming slowness of his progress, he left the Master at last in discouragement.

Commenting later on this devotee, the Master told me, “He will never find God that way! He is like a merchant who says, ‘Lord, I have given you so many Kriyas; now You have to keep Your side of the bargain and give me so much realization.’ God never responds to such mercenary devotion! He accepts nothing less from us than our unconditional love.”

I wondered if it wasn't of him that Master was thinking when he wrote, in his Gita commentaries, of some people who meditate with great will power, but without devotion, and who abandon their spiritual practices in time.

§

From The Hindu Way of Awakening, Chapter 11 – Swami Kriyananda

If a person visualizes God as Vishnu, for example, and if his devotion is deep and sincere, the Infinite Spirit may actually appear to him in that form—"crystallized," as it were, by his devotion. This divine manifestation will vary according to the character and customs of the worshiper. The Virgin Mary has appeared differently, depending on the circumstances. At Guadalupe, in Mexico, for example, she showed herself as having brown skin like that of the peasant to whom she appeared.

Swami Sri Yukteswar put it clearly in Autobiography of a Yogi, as quoted by Paramhansa Yogananda: "In order to please His beloved devotee, the Lord takes any desired form. If the devotee worshiped through devotion, he sees God as the Divine Mother. To Jesus, the Father-aspect of the Infinite One was appealing beyond other conceptions. The individuality with which the Creator has endowed each of His creatures makes every conceivable and inconceivable demand on the Lord's versatility!"

The devout Hindu looks upon his gods and goddesses as divine realities, not as mere symbols of cosmic forces. The modern mind, on the contrary, dismisses all anthropomorphic images of God as "superstition" and incompatible with the "enlightened" knowledge of science. According to the ancient teachings of Sanatan Dharma, however, both these concepts are valid and not mutually exclusive. The forms God reveals to His devotees in superconscious ecstasy are as real as, and indeed far more real than, any material form, for the sensory awareness normal to waking consciousness carries with it always a certain dream-like quality of unreality.

§

From The Path, Chapter 34: Kriya Yoga – Swami Kriyananda

A visitor who once came to his Ranchi school had been practicing Bhakti Yoga, the path of single-minded devotion, for twenty years. Though deeply devoted, he had never yet experienced the Lord's blissful presence.

"Kriya Yoga would help you," the Master suggested to him earnestly.

But the man was fearful of being disloyal to his own path.

"No, Kriya won't conflict with your present practices," Master insisted. "It will only deepen you in them."

Still the man was hesitant.

"Look here," Master finally said, "you are like a man who for twenty years has been trying to get out of a room through the walls, the floor, the ceiling. Kriya Yoga will simply show you

where the door is. There is no conflict, in that kind of aid, with your own devotional path. To pass through the doorway you must still do so with devotion."

The man relented at last, and was initiated. Hardly a week passed before he received his first deep experience of God.

§

From Swami Vivekananda

Bhakti-Yoga is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love. One single moment of the madness of extreme love to God brings us eternal freedom. "Bhakti", says Narada in his explanation of the Bhakti-aphorisms, "is intense love to God"; "When a man gets it, he loves all, hates none; he becomes satisfied for ever"; "This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit", because so long as worldly desires last, that kind of love does not come; "Bhakti is greater than Karma, greater than Yoga, because these are intended for an object in view, while Bhakti is its own fruition, its own means and its own end."

Bhakti has been the one constant theme of our sages. Apart from the special writers on Bhakti, such as Shandilya or Narada, the great commentators on the Vyasa-Sutras, evidently advocates of knowledge (Jnana), have also something very suggestive to say about love. Even when the commentator is anxious to explain many, if not all, of the texts so as to make them import a sort of dry knowledge, the Sutras, in the chapter on worship especially, do not lend themselves to be easily manipulated in that fashion.

There is not really so much difference between knowledge (Jnana) and love (Bhakti) as people sometimes imagine. We shall see, as we go on, that in the end they converge and meet and end at the same point. So also is it with Raja-Yoga, which when pursued as a means to attain liberation, and not (as unfortunately it frequently becomes in the hands of charlatans and mystery-mongers) as an instrument to hoodwink the unwary, leads us also to the same goal.

The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest and most natural way to reach the great divine end in view; its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical crew in Hinduism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment (Nishtha) to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else.

All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal, i.e. by hating every other ideal. Herein is the explanation of why the same man who is so lovingly attached to his own ideal of God, so devoted to his own ideal of religion, becomes a howling fanatic as soon as he sees or hears anything of any other ideal. This kind of love is somewhat like the canine instinct of guarding the master's property from intrusion; only, the instinct of the dog is better than the reason of man, for the dog never mistakes its master for an enemy in whatever dress he may come before it. Again, the fanatic loses all power of judgment. Personal considerations are in his case of such absorbing interest that to him it is no question at all what a man says--whether it is right or wrong; but the one thing he is always particularly careful to know is who says it. The same man who is kind, good, honest, and loving to people of his own

opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of this own religious brotherhood.

But this danger exists only in that stage of Bhakti which is called the preparatory (Gauni). When Bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is called the supreme (Para), no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism; that soul which is overpowered by this higher form of Bhakti is too near the God of Love to become an instrument for the diffusion of hatred.

It is not given to all of us to be harmonious in the building up of our characters in this life; yet we know that the character is of the noblest type in which all these three--knowledge and love and Yoga--are harmoniously fused. Three things are necessary for a bird to fly--the two wings and the tail as a rudder for steering. Jnana (knowledge) is the one wing, Bhakti (Love) is the other, and Yoga is the tail that keeps up the balance.

For those who cannot pursue all these three forms of worship together in harmony and take up, therefore, Bhakti alone as their way, it is necessary always to remember that forms and ceremonials, though absolutely necessary for the progressive soul, have no other value than taking us on to that state in which we feel the most intense love to God. Here is a little difference in opinion between the teachers of knowledge and those of love, though both admit the power of Bhakti.

The Jnanis hold Bhakti to be an instrument of liberation, the Bhaktas look upon it both as the instrument and the thing to be attained. To my mind this is a distinction without much difference. In fact, Bhakti, when used as an instrument, really means a lower form of worship, and the higher form becomes inseparable from the lower form of realisation at a later stage. Each seems to lay a great stress upon his own peculiar method of worship, forgetting that with perfect love true knowledge is bound to come even unsought, and that from perfect knowledge true love is inseparable.

Bearing this in mind let us try to understand what the great Vedantic commentators have to say on the subject. In explaining the Sutra Avrittirasakridupadeshat 1, Bhagavan Shankara says, "Thus people say, 'He is devoted to the king, he is devoted to the Guru'; they say this of him who follows his Guru, and does so, having that following as the one in view. Similarly they say, 'The loving wife meditates on her loving husband'; here also a kind of eager and continuous remembrance is meant."

This is devotion according to Shankara. "Meditation again is a constant remembrance (of the thing meditated upon) flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured out from one vessel to another. When this kind of remembering has been attained (in relation to God) all bondages break. Thus it is spoken of in the scriptures regarding constant remembering as a means to liberation. This remembering again is of the same form as seeing, because it is of the same meaning as in the passage, 'When He who is far and near is seen, the bonds of the heart are broken, all doubts vanish, and all effects of work disappear.' He who is near can be seen, but he who is far can only be remembered. Nevertheless the scripture says that we have to see Him who is near as well as Him who is far, thereby indicating to us that the above kind of remembering is as good as seeing. This remembrance when exalted assumes the same form as seeing. . . .

Worship is constant remembering as may be seen from the essential texts of scriptures. Knowing, which is the same as repeated worship, has been described as constant remembering. . . . Thus the memory, which has attained to the height of what is as good as direct perception, is spoken of in the Shruti as a means of liberation. 'This Atman is not to be reached through various sciences, nor by intellect, nor by much study of the Vedas. Whomsoever this Atman desires, by him is the Atman attained, unto him this Atman discovers Himself.' Here, after saying that mere hearing, thinking and meditating are not the means of attaining this Atman, it is said, 'Whom this Atman desires, by him the Atman is attained.' The extremely beloved is desired; by whomsoever this Atman is extremely beloved, he becomes the most beloved of the Atman. So that this beloved may attain the Atman, the Lord Himself helps. For it has been said by the Lord: 'Those who are constantly attached to Me and worship Me with love--I give that direction to their will by which they come to Me.'

Therefore it is said that, to whomsoever this remembering, which is of the same form as direct perception, is very dear, because it is dear to the Object of such memory perception, he is desired by the Supreme Atman, by him the Supreme Atman is attained. This constant remembrance is denoted by the word Bhakti." So says Bhagavan Ramanuja in his commentary on the Sutra, Athato Brahma-jijnasa.

In commenting on the Sutra of Patanjali, Ishvara pranidhanadva, i.e. "Or by the worship of the Supreme Lord"--Bhoja says, "Pranidhana is that sort of Bhakti in which, without seeking results, such as sense-enjoyments etc., all works are dedicated to that Teacher of teachers."

Bhagavan Vyasa also, when commenting on the same, defines Pranidhana as "the form of Bhakti by which the mercy of the Supreme Lord comes to the Yogi, and blesses him by granting him his desires". According to Shandilya, "Bhakti is intense love to God."

The best definition is, however, that given by the king of Bhaktas, Prahlada: "That deathless love which the ignorant have for the fleeting objects of the senses--as I keep meditating on Thee--may not that love slip away from the heart!" Love ! For whom? For the Supreme Lord Ishvara. Love for any other being, however great cannot be Bhakti; for, as Ramanuja says in his Shri Bhashya, quoting an ancient Acharya, i.e. a great teacher: "From Brahma to a clump of grass, all things that live in the world are slaves of birth and death caused by Karma; therefore they cannot be helpful as objects of meditation, because they are all in ignorance and subject to change."

In commenting on the word Anurakti used by Shandilya, the commentator Svapneshvara says that it means Anu, after, and Rakti, attachment; i.e. the attachment which comes after the knowledge of the nature and glory of God; else a blind attachment to any one, e.g. to wife or children, would be Bhakti. We plainly see, therefore, that Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realisation beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishvara.

Attunement Ceremony

Needed for the Service: Harmonium, Gong, Tall Candle

Brief Energization: (Standing.)

Prayer:

(Ask the congregation to be seated.)

Chanting:

Meditation:

Self Offering: (Light a tall candle.)

Please stand, and concentrate on the flame of this candle. Feel that it represents your devotion to God. Let us concentrate deeply as we recite together this poem of Master's:

“I was made for Thee alone. I was made for dropping flowers of devotion at Thy feet on the altar of the morning.

My hands were made to serve Thee willingly; to remain folded in adoration, waiting for Thy coming; and when Thou comest, to bathe Thy feet with my tears.

My voice was made to sing Thy glory.

My eyes were made a chalice to hold Thy burning love and the wisdom falling from Thy Nature's hands.

My lips were made to breathe forth Thy praises and Thy intoxicating inspirations.

My love was made to throw incandescent searchlight flames to find Thee hidden in the forest of my desires.

My heart was made to respond to Thy call alone.

My soul was made to be a channel through which Thy love might flow uninterruptedly into all thirsty souls.”

(End by having everyone hold hands and sing together. Song: “Joined in Prayer.”)

Joined in prayer, we worship Thee:

Rays of light that seek the sun.

Many drops do make a sea;

So our love, when joined as one.

Healing Prayers:

(Now, all continue to stand for healing prayers. First read from the healing prayer list if available. Or go directly into prayers, inviting the members of the congregation to request prayers individually, beginning each request with these words.)

“Friends, pray with me (us) that ...”

(All respond.)

“In Thy light receive this prayer.”

(At the end of these individual prayers, all pray together.)

“In Thy light, Lord, receive these prayers.”

(With hands upraised: Chant AUM three times. Ask the congregation to be seated.)

Welcome and Blessings:

(The purpose of this part of the ceremony is to welcome guests; new members, new disciples, new transfers from other centers; and to bless those going out on missions for Ananda.)

Each group may be invited to come together before the altar and stand or kneel there. The Lightbearer may want to say a few words. Then, the Lightbearer and congregation should raise their hands and chant AUM three times in physical, mental, and spiritual blessing.

After the separate groups have been blessed, the congregation may be led in applause for all the participants.)

Discourse:

(General theme: Taken from “Affirmations for Self-Healing” that corresponds to that week. End with a brief meditation which closes with the reading of the corresponding affirmation.)

Meditation:

(During meditation, chant AUM up and down the spine at the chakras, first out loud, then silently, changing the note for each chakra, as follows.)

Coccyx: G (below middle C)

Sacral: A

Lumbar: B flat

Dorsal: D

Cervical: E flat

Medulla: F

Crown Chakra: G (above middle C)

(Keep the eyes at the Christ Center through the above exercise; offer the energy of each chakra into the spiritual eye.)

Waves of Sound:

(Lightbearer plays the chord G, B flat, D, G.)

(While continuing to meditate, have everyone chant AUM, gradually developing the sound into spontaneous harmonies, like the overtones of a tambura. Visualize the sound spreading outward to Infinity. Continue for several minutes, as you feel. Conclude with the roll of the gong (if your center has one), as Master used to do on New Year's Eve, telling people to visualize the waves of sound spreading outward with AUM.)

Silent Meditation:

(Sit a long time listening to the inner sounds, or meditating in whatever way you desire.)

Closing Chant and Prayer:

Articles about Prayer

Prayer, or Loving Demand, from Inner Culture, April 1936, Yogananda

Effective prayer must be scientific and definite in performance and must give intelligent understanding of all its factors. All those who want to demonstrate the scientific nature of prayer must first be sure that there is a God to pray to. The word "prayer" should be changed to "loving demand." The Father made us His children, and we have chosen to be beggars. We must destroy our deficiencies and become acknowledged as His children, as Jesus did. To do that we must stop being prodigal children and retrace our steps homeward from the misery-making mainland of matter. We live in hope and die either with unfulfilled hope or broken-hearted. Very seldom does real, complete happiness dawn on the horizon of our lives.

The popular method of prayer does not reveal the psychology and art of prayer. Ordinary prayer consists of addressing our desires, half in belief and half in doubt, to an unknown God. If prayers are answered, a superstitious trust in God may result; if they are ineffective, distrust may follow. Even an answered prayer has to be tested and distinguished from a fulfillment which was coming anyway without the causal intervention and effective activity of the prayer.

The popular system of prayer is ineffective for the most part because we do not mean business. God, the Secret Knower of our thoughts, knows what selfish desires we have in our

innermost mind, so He seldom manifests Himself. While the demons of sensations and thoughts dance in the temples of body and mind, it is difficult to recognize God, who remains hidden behind the veil of Silence within.

Some people pray with excited emotion and become intoxicated with the exuberance of their own passion. Such people feel satisfied by being drunk with their own blind feelings, and they think that they are inspiration from God. Such emotions often lose their force in tears, or in religious dances, or muscular demonstrations. Visitation of God through intuition is different from emotional outbursts. Emotional prayers bring activity and excitement, while devotional prayers bring the calm joy of the Soul.

So-called intellectual prayers may uplift the intelligence but not the Soul. They may give intellectual satisfaction, but they do not bring conscious response from God. He does not reveal Himself unto the theoretically wise, but unto babies, who surrender themselves, their egoism, their pride, and their mustard-seed-like knowledge before the vastness and humbleness of His measureless Wisdom..

Are Your Prayers Answered?

Do you realize that you may have been praying to an unknown God and may not have been getting any response? Have you ever taken time to think that your ordinary daily prayer to God is almost always a one-sided affair? Do you like to talk to a deaf, mute person? Do you want to go on appealing or talking to someone who never replies?

You must pray intelligently, with a bursting Soul, seldom loudly, mostly mentally, without displaying to anyone what is happening within. Pray intelligently, with the utmost devotion, as if God were listening to everything you were internally, mentally affirming. Pray on into the depths of the night in the seclusion of your Soul. Pray until He replies to you through the intelligible voice of the utmost bursting joy tingling through every body cell and every thought, or through visible visions depicting what you should do. Pray unceasingly until you are absolutely sure of the Divine contact, then claim your material, mental, or Spiritual needs from the Most High as your Divine Birthright. Don't cry to Divine Mother like the baby who stops crying immediately his mother sends him a toy, but cry unceasingly, rending the heart of the Divine Mother like a Divine Naughty Baby, throwing away all lures and toys of name, fame, power, and possessions, and then you will find the answer to your prayers

You may say, "I know my prayers are answered, for I hear God talking to me. I have demonstrated His response to my prayers." "Well," I ask, "are you sure that your prayers reached God, and if they did reach Him at all, did He consciously respond to them?" What is the proof? You prayed for healing and you became well. Do you know whether your cure was due to natural causes, or medicine, or to your own or another's prayers, bringing help from God? Sometimes there may be no causal relation between your prayer and your cure. You might have been healed even if you had not prayed. This is the reason why we should find out whether the law of cause and effect can be scientifically applied to prayer. It has been said that God responds to law. Some people have experienced this response and have said that all people who conform to the law can test and experience it for themselves. Physical laws have to be interpreted by the physical senses and judged by the understanding. Divine laws have to be comprehended by concentration, meditation, and intuition.

There comes the question: Would a conscious God, Almighty in Nature, subject Himself to be commanded by the law of cause and effect which He created Himself? Why not? The maker of all laws certainly does not want to break the laws of His own making. Of course, we must remember that, although God is approachable through the law of cause and effect, still He, being above the law of cause and effect, has the right to respond or not to respond to a mechanical prayer. God is something more than can be demonstrated in a laboratory. Le leggi divine devono essere comprese tramite la concentrazione, la meditazione e l'intuizione.

To Sum Up

1. Solitude is the price of God-contact.
2. Knowledge of the laws of tuning the body, mind, and Soul radios to contact God is necessary.
3. Since God is also above law, devotion is necessary to call His attention. The devotional call, if sincere, deep, and continuous, and if it is supplemented by sincere efforts at deep meditation, must bring Divine response. Devotional demand is greater than law, for it touches the heart of God and makes Him answer His naughty and good children alike. Law is based upon mathematical precision, but devotion is based upon claiming God as our own true Love, for did He not make us in His own image? Law is exacting in its demand, while Love causes God to surrender Himself to the devotee. God can never hide from the person who exercises devotion, love, the law of meditation, and the Soul-Call.
4. Continuous personal zeal must be put forth. Whether God seems to respond or not, one must never cease loving. The beginner in devotion must not be discouraged if God does not respond to His immediate intense demands. God never fails to listen to all Soul-Calls, but He does not always respond in the way that we want Him to. He has His own mysterious ways. Besides, He consciously responds only when He is sure that the devotee wants Him and Him alone. That is why some Saints have been tested with disease, or extreme poverty, or temptation, and when found to prefer God to health, life, abundance, or temptation, then God came. If one persists long enough in seeking, one will surely find God at the end of the trail.
5. Never mind if you cannot see Him or hear His knock at the gate of your heart. For a long time you have been hiding from Him and running away in the marsh of the senses. It is the noise of your own rowdy passions and the flight of your heavy footsteps in the material world that has made you unable to hear His call within. Stop, be calm, pray steadfastly, and out of the Silence will loom forth the Divine Presence.

--da Inner Culture, aprile 1936

The Law Behind Answered Prayer, from Inner Culture, October 1941, Yogananda

Question: "Please explain the law of cause and effect in relation to prayer."--R.B.

Answer: First, you must find out what kind of prayers brings a response from God. Some people pray with excited emotion, which often loses its force in tears, or in religious dances, or muscular demonstrations. Emotional prayers result in activity and excitement, but devotional prayers bring the calm joy of the soul. Purely intellectual prayers give intellectual satisfaction, but they do not bring conscious response from God.

Pray with Devotion

To bring response to your prayers, you must pray intelligently with a bursting soul, seldom aloud, mostly mentally, without displaying to anyone what is happening within. You must pray with utmost devotion, feeling that God is listening to everything you are mentally affirming. Pray on into the depths of the night in the seclusion of your soul. Pray until God replies to you through the intelligible voice of bursting joy tingling through every body cell and every thought, or through visible visions depicting what you should do in a given case.

The increasing joy after meditation is the only proof that God has answered through the devotion-tuned radio of your heart. The longer and deeper you meditate and affirm, the deeper will you feel and be conscious of the ever-increasing joy in your heart. Then you will know without doubt that there is a God, and that He is ever-existing, ever-conscious, omnipresent, ever-new Joy. Then demand: "Father, now, today, all day, all tomorrows, every instant, in sleep, in wakefulness, all through life, in death, in the beyond, remain with me as the consciously-responding Joy of my heart.

Your Prayer Must Be Definite

The usual method of prayer is ineffective for the most part because we do not really mean business with God. He is the secret knower of our thoughts; He knows what selfish desires we have in our innermost mind; therefore He does not manifest Himself. While the demons of sensations and thoughts dance in the temples of body and mind, it is difficult to recognize God, who remains hidden behind the veil of silence within. Ordinary prayers consist of addressing our desires, half in belief and half in doubt, to an unknown God. If prayers are answered, a superstitious trust in God may result; if they are ineffective, distrust may follow.

Effective prayer must be scientific and definite in performance and must show intelligent understanding of all its factors. All those who want to demonstrate the scientific nature of prayer must first be sure that there is a God to pray to. How can this be known? By accepting the testimony of great souls such as Jesus, Krishna, Swami Shankara, Babaji, and others, who said that they found God, talked with Him, and solved the riddle of life after listening to the Truth from the Sacred Divine Lips. These saints have said that God responds to law. They experienced this response and said that all people who conform to the law can test and experience it for themselves. Physical laws have to be interpreted by the physical senses and judged by the understanding. Divine laws have to be comprehended by concentration, meditation, and intuition.

Never Become Discouraged

You must not be discouraged because of ill health, poverty, or moral weakness. Remember, sin is only a temporary graft; in reality you are eternally a Child of God. Even if the world condemns you and casts you away, God will ever seek to find you and bring you back home. Never mind if you cannot see Him or hear His knock at the gate of your heart. Remember, for a long time you have been hiding from Him and running away in the marsh of the senses. It is the noise of your own rowdy passions and the flight of your heavy footsteps in the material world that have made you unable to hear His call within. Stop, be calm, pray steadfastly, and out of the silence will loom forth the Divine Presence.

The Law of Cause and Effect

Perhaps you prayed for healing and you became well. Do you know whether your cure was due to natural causes or to medicine, or to your own or another's prayers, bringing help from God? Sometimes there may be no causal relation between your prayer and your cure. Even if you happen to pray before an inevitable recovery, that does not mean that your prayer healed you. You might have been healed even if you had not prayed. This is the reason why we should find out whether the law of cause and effect can be scientifically applied to prayer.

Then comes the question: "Would a conscious God, Almighty in nature, subject Himself to be commanded by the law of cause and effect which He created Himself?" Why not? The maker of all laws certainly does not want to break the laws of His own creating. Of course, we must remember that, although God is approachable through the law of cause and effect, He has the right to respond or not to a mechanical prayer. God is something more than can be demonstrated in a laboratory.

God Is Above Law

Solitude is the price of God-contact. Knowledge of the laws of tuning the body, mind, and soul radios to contact God is necessary. Since God is also above law, devotion is necessary to call His attention. The devotional call, if sincere, deep, and continuous, and if it is supplemented by sincere efforts at deep meditation, will bring divine response. Devotional demand is greater than law, for it touches the heart of God and makes Him answer His naughty and good children alike. Law is based upon mathematical precision, but devotion is based upon claiming God as our own true love, for did He not make us in His own likeness? Law is exacting in its demand, while love causes God to surrender Himself to the devotee. God can never hide from the person who exercises devotion, love, the law of meditation, and the soul-call.

Don't be like the baby who stops crying immediately his mother gives him a toy, but cry unceasingly, rending the heart of the Divine Mother like a divine naughty baby, throwing away all lures and toys of name, fame, power, and possessions; then you will find the answer to your prayers. Pray until you are absolutely sure of the divine contact, then claim your material, mental, and spiritual needs from the Most High as your divine birthright.

--da Inner Culture, ottobre 1941

Metaphysical Meditations on Devotion

May Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts.

§

O Father, receive Thou the fervor of our souls, the devotion of incarnations, the love of ages, which we have kept locked in the vaults of our hearts.

§

Divine Father, in my temple of silence I have made a garden for Thee, decorated with the blossoms of my devotion.

With aspiring heart, with flaming soul, with burning mind, I lay at Thy feet of omnipresence all the flowers of my devotion.

§

O God, I will worship Thee as beauty and intelligence in the temple of Nature. I will worship Thee as power in the temple of activity and as peace in the temple of silence.

Chapter Five: Karma Yoga

"Action without desire for the fruits of action."

From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga , Chapter 2:I – Swami Kriyananda

The path of *karma yoga* (yoga through action), similarly, leads not to ever-more-frenzied activity, but to deep inner calmness and freedom. Fulfillment in *karma yoga* lies not so much in doing many things as in acting more and more, even in little things, with the consciousness that it is God who, truly, is the Doer. Everyone engages in mere activity, yet few people are *karma yogis*.

The true *karma yogi* tries, by God- reminding activities, to redirect all the wrong impulses of his heart into wholesome channels. More than that, he tries to become aware of the divine energy flowing through him as he acts. As the *bhakti yogi* is taught to be more concerned with loving purely than with defining exactly what it is that he loves, so also the *karma yogi* is taught that the spirit in which he serves is more important than the service itself. *Nishkam karma*, desireless action, or action without desire for the fruits of action, is *karma yoga*. All other activity leads, not to yoga (union), but only to further bondage, for it stirs up more waves of likes and dislikes in the heart. ("I'll just die if I don't succeed!" "Look everyone—John, Mary, Bill—Isn't it wonderful what I've done? What else could possibly matter anymore?" "What happened? John liked what I did, but Mary didn't. I'll have to work harder now, until *everyone* is impressed with my achievements." Or: "I failed! Nothing in life now is worth living for!") With all this personal excitement, the mainstream of life flows by, and all we ever notice of it are the few little sticks that we struggle so desperately to draw into our private orbits, thinking in the acquisition of them to find peace, not realizing that in the very act of whirling with desire we only destroy whatever peace we may presently have.

Activity is a part of being human. We could never find inner freedom if we starved every impulse by inaction. Attunement with the Infinite

Creator comes in part by wholesome, creative work, not by denying every manifestation of His power in us. The neutralization of the waves of feeling comes partly by the satisfaction of our wholesome desires. But this satisfaction must result in just that: the neutralization of the feeling- waves. Personal satisfaction must be offered up to the Divine; it must be perceived as a mere ripple on the ocean of cosmic bliss. In this way right activity leads to inner freedom, which is the true, spiritual goal of all action.

Karma yoga does not necessarily consist of building hospitals or doing works that people commonly label religious. Since freedom is the goal, it is also the criterion of right action. If, for example, one's own nature (which is determined by past *karma*) impels him to work in the soil, gardening may be a more important—because liberating—activity for him than preaching to multitudes. In every man's life, the criterion of right activity is that which will bring him, in the highest sense, to a divine state of inner freedom.

It will be seen, then, that *karma yoga* is not only a distinct and separate path. Even *Bhakti Yoga* involves a kind of activity: the expression of devotion. So also does the exercise of discrimination. So also does meditation and the practice of the yoga postures. The teaching of *karma yoga* is not, "Do this or that, specifically," but, "Whatever you do, do it with a sense of

freedom. Realize that you are only an instrument of the Divine. Do nothing for selfish ends. Instead, act so as to neutralize, not to agitate, the waves of your likes and dislikes."

By acting without desire for the fruits of action, the yogi learns to live, not in the past or future, but in the timeless NOW.

By acting consciously as a channel for the Divine, finally, he realizes that actions are effective even objectively, not according to how zealously he works, but according to how much of God he expresses in his work. Because energy is an aspect of God, hard work will bring greater divine attunement than half-hearted, slovenly work. But a simple, divine smile may change more hearts than a thousand windy sermons or learned treatises. A single walking stick made with divine joy will be, to one sensitive enough to see deeply, a greater work of art than a gigantic sculpture carved with consummate skill, but without profound understanding. The more the yogi, by his selfless actions, develops an awareness of the divine power flowing through him, the more he realizes that he can accomplish more, even for humanity, by becoming still and serving as a transmitting station for the Infinite Power, whose sermons are Silence. Thus, outward work falls away, and the yogi's true work becomes the upliftment of others by the silent emanations of his peace. (A word is in order here, however, to those self-proclaimed "free" souls who, in the name of high vedanta philosophy [usually with a generous admixture of drugs], imagine that they are serving in the highest way by sitting and doing nothing, claiming to be divine instruments when all the inspiration they feel is the vague prompting of their subconscious minds. Hard work is purifying. The great yogi, though not necessarily outwardly active, is conscious of directing a great deal more energy than any thousand ordinary men. His activity is enormous. It is merely so sensitive as no longer to require muscular application. Neophytes, however, should devote themselves to the generous exercise of their muscles.

§

From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter 4 – Swami Kriyananda

Karma yoga signifies freeing oneself from one's karmic bonds, a suggestion that is lost by substituting the word "action" for karma. *Bhakti yoga*, similarly, implies an intimacy of love that is lacking in what many people call the "path of devotion," for devotion is associated in many people's minds with formal rituals and ceremonial practices. And *gyana yoga* signifies the practice of discriminating in such a way as to lead to the unfoldment of wisdom. The way of *gyana yoga*, then, involves intuitive perception, not merely intellectual analysis as suggested by the translation, "the path of discrimination."

Nor, rightly speaking, are any of these even paths, though people generally refer to them as such. A path is a specific route, one that therefore excludes other routes. But the "paths" of yoga cannot be so separated one from another. They are intended for three basic types of human beings, yet no human being belongs exclusively to one type or another.

Karma yoga is for active types. *Karma yoga* as a teaching, however, also provides guidelines for everyone. For no one can live without performing action of some sort. *The Bhagavad Gita* declares that even to do nothing is a kind of action. The mind is not stilled thereby, nor are countless involuntary functions of the body suspended.

The term *karma yoga* means “to behave in such a way as to direct our energies Godward.” The classic teaching regarding *karma yoga* is found in the Bhagavad Gita: “nishkam karma” (“action without desire for the fruits of action”). People who say “I am practicing *karma yoga*” to excuse the fact that they don’t meditate, when in fact they may be busily engaged in amassing a fortune, are practicing karma all right, but not *karma yoga*.

Karma yoga intends to cut the bonds of ego involvement by acting out, in the right way, impulses that were set into motion in the wrong way in the past. Spiritually harmful impulses can be redirected into constructive tendencies. Avarice, for example, can be overcome by practicing generosity. The wish to harm others can be purified by serving them selflessly.

Try, when practicing *karma yoga*, to see God, rather than your little ego, as the Doer. It is easier to transform good than bad karma into spiritual awareness—easier, for example, for a generous person than for a miser to develop an expansive consciousness—but the more one realizes that self-fulfillment is the equivalent of self-expansion, the more clearly one feels motivated to expand one’s sense of self to infinity.

Perfection in *karma yoga* leads to transmuting the impulse to act at all from ego-consciousness. The consequence of this transmutation is superconsciousness, and perfect inner stillness.

From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter 5 – Swami Kriyananda

Don’t let your approach to meditation be so achievement-oriented that you end up mentally tense. Yogananda, noting my own tendency toward impatience, once said to me, “The principle of *karma yoga* applies to meditative action also. Meditate to please God. Don’t meditate with desire for the fruits of your meditations. It is best, in the beginning, to emphasize relaxation.”

Of course what he meant was, Don’t desire fruits that accrue to your ego. For it is the ego, not the soul, that experiences impatience. Patience is the fastest path to God, because it develops soul-consciousness.

The more you seek rest as the consequence of doing, rather than in the process of doing, the more restless you will become. Peace isn’t waiting for you over the next hill. Nor is it something you construct, like a building. It must be a part of the creative process itself.

Learn to be restful, even in the midst of activity, and you will be able to relax better when you sit to meditate. As Paramhansa Yogananda put it, “Be calmly active, and actively calm.”

From the Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Swami Kriyananda

(2:47) *Action (in this realm of vibration) is a duty, but let not your ego crave the fruits of action. Be not attached either to action or to inaction.*

Be like a divine lark, which enjoys singing without trying to impress or to gain anything from anyone. Those who act with ego-motivation become caught in the web of maya. The universe was brought into existence through the power of cosmic vibration, the great sound of AUM. So long as one lives in the realm of manifestation, and is not merged in Spirit, he cannot avoid acting in some way. The important thing is to act rightly.

To attain God-consciousness it is necessary to release all attachment to the thought of "I" and "mine." The infinite consciousness appears finite in the ego, as in the atom. That is merely an appearance, however. The atom cannot help whirling in its own minuscule reality, but the ego, being conscious, can aspire to be released from all vibratory manifestation. As Patanjali wrote, "*Yogas chitta vritti nirodha*: Yoga is the neutralization of the (whirling) eddies of feeling." The spiritual duty of every ego is to stop the movement it generates by achieving release from such "whirling" thoughts as, "Everything I do is for my own personal benefit!" Bondage to delusion consists of nothing but the constant reference of everything one does (and thinks, and enjoys, and suffers) back to one's own self. Not only action, but all one's enjoyments in this world -- indeed, one's sufferings also -- are tainted by the simple thought: "I am the doer. I am the enjoyer. and I am the sufferer" -- and then the outraged demand: "But why am I the sufferer?"

The solution is not to refrain from acting. Some people -- many hermits, for example -- think to develop spiritually by refraining from all action. That idea is a delusion. As long as one must breathe, think, and move, he cannot rightly claim to be inactive. The yogi who sits breathless and motionless in *samadhi* is a different case. To go beyond action you must merge your consciousness in the cosmic sound of AUM, allowing it to act through you and around you until you merge in that infinite vibration, and then pass beyond vibration itself into the calm, consciousness of the Supreme Spirit. As long, however, as you are conscious of having a body, you will only be deceiving yourself if you try to achieve the actionless state by not acting. All you will become, in time, is lazy and dull-minded!

To reach God, one must first learn to act without selfish motive: for God, not for personal reward. Indeed, it is necessary to be intensely active for God, if one would develop that intense awareness which alone lifts one to superconsciousness. Lazy people will not find God!

In everything you do, however, feel that God is acting through you. Wash your body, feed it, give it rest -- do everything that is needful to maintain the body in good health and filled with energy -- but always feel, "It is God I am serving through this physical instrument." The very enjoyment of good food, of beautiful scenery, of the good things of life can be offered up to God. Share those enjoyments with Him, rather than depriving yourself of them. What needs to be released are the thoughts, "I am doing, I am enjoying," and even the thought, "It is I who am suffering."

Even in meditation, it is important not to meditate with desire for the results. To eliminate the strain and tension of *trying* to concentrate, release also the thought, "I am meditating." Think, rather, "The Cosmic Vibration is reaffirming, through me, its own reality. Cosmic love, through me, is yearning for God's love. Cosmic joy, through me, is rejoicing in our Infinite Beloved."

(18:2) *The Blessed Lord said: The wise understand renunciation to be the relinquishing of any action performed with (personal) desire. They also declare that it is not action itself should be abandoned, but only that action which desires the fruits of action.*

Essentially, Krishna is saying, "Act, but don't consider yourself the 'doer' of action."

No one, he has explained, can abandon action. To breathe, sleep, eat, and perform all the necessary functions of the body must be classified under the general term, action. No one,

therefore, can renounce action altogether unless he is so spiritually advanced that he can sit the whole day in breathless ecstasy -- a possibility for very few.

The important thing, then, is to give up the sense of personal "doership." Everything the renunciate does should be done with the thought, "God is doing all this through me."

The tyagi, on the other hand, may have to involve himself somewhat in personal activities -- wife, job, family, and social responsibilities -- but for himself he must desire nothing from any activity. This is the true meaning of karma yoga, and certainly is not substantially different from the path of outer renunciation except insofar as, if one need not attend to such outward duties, he is certainly freer to pursue the path of giving his life to God alone, and finds it easier to free his ego from all limiting attachments...

(3:8) *Perform those actions which your duty dictates, for action is better than inaction. Without action, indeed, even the act of maintaining life in the body would not be possible.*

The duty of every man is that which is particularly his own, ordained for him by the karmic bonds he himself has forged, and must untie to release himself from attachment to the ego. Only thus can his consciousness soar in infinity. One's dutiful actions are not necessarily the activities for which he has special skill. The spiritual duty of a person with a talent for acting, for example, may not be to become an actor. He may be very good at pretending to be someone else, yet have an active need to be wholly sincere as to who he himself is. He may have the magnetism to win plaudits from his audiences as an actor, yet may in the process bind himself more firmly to pride by his very success. This is not to say that acting is universally a dangerous career, karmically speaking. It may help some people to become less identified, and therefore less limited by, their own personalities. Acting may help some people, also, to realize more deeply that life itself is a play, in which nothing, in the last analysis, is real.

The complexity of karmic patterns in human life makes virtually every honest activity a *dharmic* duty for someone. The menial task of street sweeping may, for most people, be simply a paying job and a social necessity, but for some people it may be a karmic duty -- if, for example, the sweeper lived in a past incarnation in idle squalor. The exalted job of president of a large corporation might be merely a burden for some people, and a cause of further karmic involvement, owing (perhaps) to a lurking desire for self-importance. For someone, however, who treats that position as an opportunity to serve others, and to promote a good cause, it can be a step toward liberation from ego.

How is one to know his karmic duty? Few people, it must be admitted, are even close to recognizing the abyss which separates the ego from cosmic consciousness. With innumerable karmic battles remaining to be fought before their mental "troops" can make any significant advancement into enemy territory, it may be best simply to tackle whatever challenge lies closest to hand. Again, it is often best to undertake first those battles which one can be more confident of winning.

For example, suppose someone is unable, at present, to conquer his sex drive. In that case, to try to overcome it may only weaken his will all the more, for each time he fails will become, for him, a reaffirmation of his weakness. Far better would it be, then, in his case, to undertake an easier

challenge which, once overcome, would strengthen his will power and prepare him gradually for the much greater challenge still awaiting him.

For one who is fortunate enough to have a true (God-realized) guru, the sage advice given by him is precious beyond any chest of diamonds and rubies. Obedience to his slightest word will be your raft over the roiling seas of delusion.

(3:9) *Actions performed for selfish gain are karmically binding. Therefore, O son of Kunti (that is to say, of dispassion), perform your duty without attachment in a spirit of religious self-offering.*

Il rituale religioso di *yagya* (il mio Guru preferiva questa traslitterazione alla versione più dotta, *yajna*) offre simbolicamente il sé egoico nel fuoco sacrificale, affinché sia purificato. Colui che aspira alla liberazione dovrebbe fare ogni cosa offrendo se stesso a Dio. Il potere stesso di Dio, quindi, è simboleggiato dal fuoco di *yagya*. Ogni sera, prima di dormire, visualizzati mentre offri ogni pensiero e sentimento centrato nell'ego (come l'autocompiacimento, il biasimo per se stessi e l'autogiustificazione), nonché ogni desiderio e attaccamento, nel fuoco fiammeggiante dell'amore di Dio.

(3:17) For him whose only love is the Self, who delights in the Self and is content to rest in the Self, no duty remains.

(3:18) Such a person has nothing to gain by performing action in this world, nor anything to lose by not performing it. He is dependent on no one and nothing (outside the Self).

Ego was defined by Paramhansa Yogananda as "the soul identified with the body." That identification drives one to action in the fake belief that this world is real. These stanzas are not meant to imply that enlightened souls cease from acting. God Himself (the Divine Playwright), after all, wrote, staged, directed, and acts all the parts in His great drama of the universe. The purpose of the drama is to lead everyone gradually to the denouement of realizing that it was all simply a show, in which they acted, but were never really involved. He is satisfied if they want to become reabsorbed in Him after the curtain closes and oneness with Him has been achieved. He needs "workers in the field," however, and is therefore pleased also with those who want to stay on here out of a "desireless desire" to help Him with the production of the play.

The important thing is not to act with ego-motivation. Our separateness from God is an illusion. Every thought we think, every deed we perform, every desire we harbor is only a reflection of His infinite consciousness. The human playwright writes all the parts in his drama. His play may need a villain; if not, it will certainly need characters who are antithetic to others. Without dramatic tension there can be no drama, and the work won't hold the audience's interest. Indeed, if the playwright is good at his métier, he actually enjoys writing also the parts of villains, for it takes skill to show the inherent logic of evil (from its own point of view)! At the heart of everything that happens anywhere, there is a hidden secret: divine joy, without which the universe could not have been manifested. People who are attached to their bodies cry out in anguish, "But

there can't be joy in suffering!" What stories they tell later, however! Almost proudly they speak of those very times when they suffered most in their own lives!

Everything is, to varying degrees of manifestation, bliss itself! The very capacity to suffer is an indication of the more refined capacity to experience bliss. Suffering comes primarily from the thought, "Things ought not to be like this." Inherent in suffering itself, in other words, is the thought of how things ought to be, and (so the soul whispers to them) *can* be, eventually.

(3:19) *Therefore be conscientious during the performance of all actions, whether physical or spiritual, to act without attachment. By activity without self-interest, one attains the Supreme.*

Physical actions are performed by engaging the life force on a material level of reality. Spiritual actions are performed by withdrawing the life force from the physical body. To act spiritually in this world means to be conscious of the indwelling Self, and to radiate that inner consciousness outward to others, and to the world. Attachment is the pathway to bondage: Non-attachment is the key to liberation. I once asked my Guru, who had in past incarnations, he told us, performed roles of major importance in the world, whether a master always retained the high state of *nirbikalpa samadhi* when he was sent to do an active work in the world. His answer was significant: "One never loses the inner consciousness of being free."

(4:17) La natura dell'azione è difficile da comprendere. Per capirla, sii consapevole della differenza tra azione giusta, azione sbagliata e inazione.

One can act with great energy, working oneself to exhaustion, and yet accomplish nothing: for example, by pushing strenuously on both sides of a door. Right action, spiritually speaking, is action with that attitude which leads to soul-freedom. That attitude includes non-attachment to the fruits of action, and acting with the consciousness that God is acting through one. Action that is inspired by His consciousness and energy, with the results given to Him without any ego-involvement, is right action.

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Right action is not necessarily that which other people consider right because it pleases *them*. It can be *relatively* right, however, if it is self-improving (either physically, emotionally, or mentally) -- for example, wholesome physical exercise: efforts to develop concentration and will power; to acquire clarity of thought; to develop calm upliftment and expansion of feeling: all these are right action, for they help to "prepare the troops" for the great "war of Kurukshetra."

Wrong action is anything that nourishes the ego, whether by contracting it in selfishness or by inflating it with pride. Clearly, in the relativity of things, there can be a mixture of right and wrong action. Developing one's physical strength, for example, can help (as Yogananda put it) to prepare the body and make it fit for God-realization. If, however, the mind has not been prepared

also by right understanding, one may become proud of his physical strength. In this case, right action can be diminished in its good effects, or even nullified, by wrong action.

Most activity in this world consists, in one way or another, of a mixture. Therefore spiritual development, which ought to be simple, usually becomes complex and difficult. An invading army may make great inroads into enemy territory on one or more fronts, but may find itself beaten back on other fronts. Getting all of one's forces aligned in the war against evil requires consummate generalship.

Inaction, as we have seen already, is impossible. It can *seem* active, however, like that example of two equal forces pushing on both sides of a door without ever moving it. Thus, one may exercise physically and strengthen the muscles, but eat wrongly and thus, in other ways, weaken his body. As with right action, true inaction is possible in God alone, in the perfect relaxation of rest in ecstasy.

The secret, essentially, is quite simple: Since the goal of spiritual evolution is to sublimate the ego by self-expansion to cosmic consciousness, that which assists one in the direction of ego-sublimation is right action. And anything that affirms the ego or that blocks any effort to sublimate it is wrong action. And that which saps, or which otherwise dulls any effort at ego-sublimation, is inaction.

(4:18) *He is a yogi of true discernment who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction. He is wise among human beings, for he has attained the goal of (all) action (and is free).*

(4:19) *He who never acts with the motivation of personal desire, whose (ego-binding) karma has been burned up in the fire of wisdom: such a one (alone) may be considered wise.*

(4:20) *The wise, having relinquished attachment to the fruits of action, (being) ever contented and free (in the Self), do not (really) act even if they appear to be intensely busy.*

(4:21) *Even in doing physical labor (as opposed to meditative work) one incurs no (karmic limitation) who has renounced all sense of possession, who is without personal desires, and whose feelings (chitta) are under control of the inner Self.*

Performing good actions even with a wrong motive, my Guru used to say, is better than performing no action at all. Everything in this world being relative, all action must be adjudged good or evil according to the direction it takes one. What is good for one person might be bad for another.

Were a Mahatma Gandhi or a Jesus Christ to awaken one morning with the resolution, "I'm tired of serving humanity. From now on I want to work hard and become a millionaire!" wouldn't everyone, including the grossest materialist, exclaim, "That man has fallen!" But were a lazy lout, on the other hand, to rouse himself one morning from his bed of inactivity and express the same resolution, wouldn't everybody -- even saints -- say that his intentions were right and good? It is all a question of where one comes from, and where one is going.

Digging a ditch -- mere physical labor, in other words -- can be either good, bad, or self-stultifying depending on one's attitude while he works. Two people can be working side by side at the same job, yet one of them may be motivated by ego-inspired fears or desires, and the other

may have no other motivation than to please God. The one acts in ego-bondage; the other, in spiritual freedom.

(4:22) He is free from karmic involvement who is contented with whatever comes to him uninvited; who is even-minded and untouched by duality; who is without envy, jealousy, and animosity; and who (finally) views success and failure with equanimity.

(4:37) O Arjuna, as fire burns wood to ashes, so does the fire of wisdom burn to ashes all one's karma.

Think of the long-abandoned Egyptian tombs. Darkness reigned in King Tut's tomb for thousands of years, yet once it was opened, light flooded in and the darkness of centuries was dispersed in an instant. The case is similar with every individual. No matter how deep his shadows of unknowing, the moment God's light enters his consciousness there is nothing but light!

Karma is of many kinds, since that word means action, only. Karma can be national, communal, family, individual: anything that proceeds from a coherent center of intention that can attract results back to that center. All action is karma. A national leader who does evil on his people's behalf will not have to bear the entire weight of that bad karma on his own "shoulders": The whole nation must accept responsibility. Good people in that country must bear it also, though their own karma may offset for themselves, and perhaps for a wider circle of people, any evil that must befall the nation as a karmic retribution.

When an airplane crashes, not everyone who dies in that event does so necessarily because it was his own karma to die. The group karma of the majority of passengers might outweigh an individual's neutral karma -- if, for example, his karma to live was not strong enough. It does often happen, on the other hand, that when some great disaster strikes, certain persons, unaccountably at the time, are called away or otherwise prevented from being on the scene.

Group karma is highly complex. Everyone's first duty is to himself, to improve his own karma. Indeed, the more good one does by contributing toward a general upliftment of consciousness, the more greatly will the general karma be helped. One must begin, however, by uplifting his own consciousness.

For the individual, two kinds of karma need to be considered: Purushakara and prarabdha. Purushakara karma are actions generated in this life under the influence, not of habit or desire, but of soul-guidance. Prarabdha karma, on the other hand, consists of present tendencies, and the results of past actions brought over from former lives.

Prarabdha karma is also of two kinds: those actions which, owing to present circumstances, are likely to bear fruit in this life; and those, known as para-rabdha karma, which are being held in abeyance until more favorable circumstances bring them to fruition.

A man may have the karma, for example, to be drowned at sea -- or, for that matter, to be saved from drowning at sea. If he never even goes near a lake, however, and therefore is never in a position that makes drowning possible, that particular karma will have to await another life to be worked out.

Sometimes an unfortunate karma can be deferred, and even offset, by an opposite karma. An unavoidable temptation, for example, may be met by newly acquired inner strength that renders the temptation impotent. Karmic periods also pass, or are dissipated by offsetting actions. For example, a karmically "destined" failure may be deflected if one develops a new, more creative energy, or for that matter if one develops the wisdom to redefine the blow as a new opportunity, and not really failure at all!

A bad karma may loom above one like a dragon, ready to strike, but if one can find a way either of deflecting that blow or of protecting oneself (like using an umbrella when it rains), one may still receive the blow, yet avoid disaster. One may also, of course, do as Saint George of English legend did: slay the dragon. Certain it is that no threat of misfortune need ever be accepted with supine resignation! A powerful will can overcome, or can at least mitigate, virtually any misfortune that awaits one.

Bad karma can, for example, penetrate a weak aura, but it cannot penetrate a strong one, or will reduce whatever minimal damage it inflicts. If you have the karma to lose a leg, and your will is strong and you have deep devotion, you may receive only a scratch. Karmic consequences are inevitable, but how they are received depends on many circumstances, most of them arising in the individual.

Bad karma can also be offset by the creation of good karma. Good karma can be augmented by more good karma, directed toward the same end. Events that affect others need not affect one's self, or at least not in the same way: The secret, in this case, is to maintain an attitude of non-attachment, and not to react emotionally. Indeed, emotional reaction can greatly augment any karmic effects. My Guru told a (probably mythical) story about a village in India in which three people died unaccountably of some disease. Concerned, the villagers repaired in a group to a solitary sadhu (holy man) who lived outside the village, and asked him to intercede. The sadhu meditated, and saw that the disease had been caused by a demon. He summoned the demon and told him, "This village is under my protection. Leave it alone." The demon promised to obey.

A week later, at least a hundred other people had died. It seemed a veritable epidemic. Again the villagers approached the sadhu and cried, "Your prayers have not helped us. There must be a terrible curse on our village!"

The sadhu summoned the demon again, and scolded him, saying, "I told you this village is under my protection. You promised to leave it alone, but now it appears you have broken your promise."

"No, I haven't, Holy One!" protested the demon. "It's true I killed the first three, but all the others have died out of fear."

The ultimate way to escape the results of all karma is to "evaporate" the causative ego, with its consciousness of identification with the little "cup" of the body. In deep meditation, that vapor of ego may rise and disappear altogether in the sky of infinite consciousness.

If the dragon strikes, and you are no longer there to be seized in its jaws; or if the rock falls from a precipice and you have removed yourself from the spot where it falls; or if the fickle multitudes acclaim you (and, inevitably, expose you to the dualistic opposite of public opprobrium,

later on) and you are not there to respond: What happens? The same actions occur, but you will not be there to receive them.

The jivan mukta (one who is "freed while living"), having dissolved his ego-awareness in infinite consciousness, no longer develops any new, personal karma. Any deed he does from then on accrues to the benefit of others -- who still, by the vortices of energy created by their own egos, benefit from the good deeds he performs for them. He himself, however, remains untouched even by good karma. His prarabdha karma must play itself out on his body, but he will no longer be affected by it.

When the jivan mukta has finally released into the free skies of Spirit the countless actions of all the incarnations that his ego lived in delusion, he becomes a param mukta: a supremely free soul.

(6:46) The yogi is greater than those ascetics who (strive for spiritual perfection through) discipline of the body, greater even than those who follow the path of wisdom (Gyana yoga) or of action (Karma Yoga). Become, O Arjuna, a yogi!

...Karma Yoga, also, is an indirect way of withdrawing the energy. By nishkam karma -- renunciation of attachment to the fruits of action -- one withdraws his energy from avid feeling toward anything outward, and mentally centers his consciousness in the Self. By meditating with the same attitude of offering the fruits of meditation up to God, one becomes less anxious, and achieves even to that extent a degree of inner peace...

(16:3) ... Renunciation has been defined by Krishna as being the transcendence, especially, of selfish or otherwise ego-inspired motive. Thus, it means also nishkam karma: action without personal desire for the fruits of action. Renunciation means giving up all one's attachments. The man who said, "My children died, my wife left me, I've been fired from my job, and my house just burned to the ground. I've decided to renounce the world," hadn't yet quite the right idea of renunciation. As my param-guru Swami Sri Yukteswar remarked wryly, "That man hasn't renounced the world: The world has renounced him!" Renunciation must be of the heart, primarily.

(18:12) *The fruits of action (for those who are attached to them) are threefold: pleasant, unpleasant, and mixed. They accrue after death (in the astral world, or in the next incarnation) to those who have not renounced them. For the self-surrendered, however, they do not accrue (to oneself).*

A question sometimes arises with regard to the *jivan mukta*, who is free from ego-consciousness: "Does he create no karma?" Every action, it should be emphasized, is karma. Action is the very meaning of karma. Yes, of course, an ego-freed being creates karma. Because he has no ego-identification with his actions, however, their good results accrue not to himself, but to his disciples and to the world generally. All action has to have a reaction, which in his case will naturally be a good one, but there is no "post" of ego to which the action is tied; therefore its karmic result either comes back to those for whose good he did it, or expands outward in blessing on the world. Indeed, all the actions of a saint are both particularly and universally beneficial.

(18:48) *O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), one should not abandon the work dictated by his own nature, even though (the work) contain some imperfection, for all undertakings (even the best) are marred by blemishes, even as a flame is (obscured) by smoke.*

It should be pointed out here, incidentally, that anything done with ego-consciousness creates karma, and that any creation of karma cannot but be varied in quality and consequence. Hence, it ought not to be necessary to add: of course one can create bad karma, as well as good, through anything he does, even if he "only tries" to do his duty. The point Krishna is making is that in doing one's own duty one is not setting up a new pattern of activity (karma) to be worked through to its conclusion. If, for example, one knows it to be his dharma to help children as a schoolteacher, but responding to the advice of others he settles for a better-paying job as a truck driver, he may turn out to be a good truck driver, but he will advance no closer to fulfilling his first karmic pattern, and may in fact add a new pattern created by an entirely new set of experiences and type of companions.

Everyone's highest duty is to seek God. To pursue this duty may effectively cancel out every other karmic pattern -- so that if the schoolteacher decides to go off and live with a group of people who are seeking God, and is not able in that new environment to teach children, he will in any case have chosen a higher dharma, and one which will take him up more surely to that divine "summit" where all duties end. To fail in that task will also be more liberating for him than to succeed as a schoolteacher, for it will take him eventually out of karma altogether, whereas teaching school will only aid him on the path toward good karma, but not toward liberation.

§

From Interpretation of Bhagavad Gita, Yogananda

*Yoga, Union of the Elements, Sankhya Yoga, Karma Yoga,
Free Will and Habit*

This passage is from the 2nd Chapter, the 39st Stanza:

(2:39)...Without yoga no devotee can know the true nature of all forces in nature, cosmic vibration and Spirit. Karma yoga consists of the moral and spiritual technique of meditation by which the devotee can gradually free himself from experiencing over and over again the fruits of his past actions and stored-up tendencies. The devotee who knows the art of yoga feels pure joy of meditation and thus does not involve himself with reincarnating-making material desires and new karma. By yoga practices the cosmic energy cauterizes the brain cells and the grooves in which the past tendencies are impinged. Thus yoga practice not only stops the desire to accumulate new karma and desires, but also helps the devotee to be scientifically free from all impending fruits of past forms of actions.

Every individual is a combination of what he does with free choice and what he does under the influence of past tendencies and past habits. Past tendencies usually appear as psychological habits modifying, controlling and prejudicing the free choice in man. The tendencies of earliest life in man are due to his actions in past lives. The predominating tendencies of good or evil in a little boy are diagnosed as having their roots in his past life. Every individual must psychologically analyze himself and find out whether his free will is continuously being guided by the dictators of his past tendencies appearing as octopus habits, excited by earthly events, harmonious to the buried good and bad tendencies in the subconscious mind.

Different individuals display different fates. The sense-slaved individual is mostly guided by his acquired habits of the past with very little free will to do what he should do. The ordinary worldly man is a mixture between free choice and worldly desires. But the spiritual man frees himself from all worldly desires imposed upon him by his passed tendencies and habits and thus he redeems his free will from the bondage of captivating past material habits, by regular meditation as taught

FREE WILL AND HABIT

When the will is free from the bondage of past material tendencies, it reverts back to the communion of all-blessed Spirit. By communing with the greater joy of Spirit, the yogi learns through inner conviction to relinquish the lesser joy of material objects. Every devotee should remember that blind renunciation of material objects does not insure freedom. It is by enjoying the spiritual bliss of Spirit in meditation and comparing it with the lesser joy of the senses that the soul becomes eager to follow the spiritual path and forsake the misery-making momentarily joy-promising material exp

§

Rays of the Same Light, Week 21/Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

What Is Right Action?

This passage is from the 3rd Chapter, the 4th Stanza:

"The state of freedom from action [that is, of eternal rest in the Spirit] cannot be achieved without action. No one, by mere renunciation and outward non-involvement, can attain perfectio

Commentary

Paramhansa Yogananda once explained to a disciple, "To attain the actionless state of divine union, you must first be intensely active for God." The key to right action lies in those words: "Be active for God." Action for God, properly understood, means action in God—service, in other words, performed in the consciousness of God's constant presence and guidance.

There is always a temptation on the spiritual path to go to extremes. The devotee learns that God can be found only in inner silence, so he decides, "I must renounce all action!" Or, again, he is told that service is purifying, so he cries, "Let me devote all my time to serving God!"

The secret of the spiritual life is to balance meditation with selfless service. To serve God enthusiastically, while failing to nourish one's enthusiasm with inner peace is like working night and day, while failing to restore one's energy with sleep. Once calmness is lost in a welter of outward activity, soul-attunement becomes lost also.

Spiritual service lies particularly in the consciousness one brings to one's actions, rather than in the actions themselves. People whose consciousness is centered in their bodies tend to confuse productivity with physical exertion—as though digging ditches were more productive than devoting one's life, as Socrates did, to the serene pursuit of wisdom.

People, again, whose consciousness is centered in mere things confuse true value with profit. To the wealthy burghers of the town of Antwerp, Vincent Van Gogh was a failure. His total earnings, even after a lifetime of painting, amounted to hardly sixteen dollars. Whose, however, was the greater contribution to mankind? Van Gogh's, surely.

If we want to please God, our consciousness must be centered in Him. What we actually accomplish for Him, outwardly, is of lesser importance. For God is always pleased in Himself! He is Bliss itself. It is we who must feel His smile in our hearts. We must strive to feel His presence with us not only in the inner silence of meditation, but during activity.

Right spiritual attitude is difficult to maintain, if it doesn't spring from an inner upliftment of consciousness. The longer, and the more deeply, one meditates in addition to working for God, the closer he will approach the divine ideal.

Indeed, there comes a time on the spiritual path when the balance shifts from outward to inward activity. The practice of meditative techniques, important for calming and concentrating the mind, become then one's spiritual work. This, too, is activity, and should be performed as outward service is, in a spirit of loving offering to God. Meditative service, again like outward work, must be balanced on ever deeper levels of consciousness by the stillness of inner communion. The more deeply one meditates, the less necessary it becomes for him to engage in outward activities at all.

At the same time, one must be faithful to one's duties in life. Meditation should not be made an excuse for avoiding dutiful action.

A good rule regarding the length of meditation is to meditate as long as circumstances and inspiration allow, and then to carry that inspiration out into activity, consciously impregnating everything one does with peace and joy. As Paramhansa Yogananda put it, "Be ever actively calm, and calmly active."

The important thing is to keep the mind alert, willing, and creatively aware. "Be always even-minded and cheerful," Yogananda said.

If fatigue comes, whether while meditating or acting, never accept the thought that you, in your true inner self, are tired. Never allow yourself to sink into mental dullness or apathy. Tell yourself, simply, "My body needs rest."

One who goes to sleep with the thought of exhaustion will wake up the next morning tired still, no matter how many hours he sleeps in the meantime. But if, despite his exhaustion, he falls asleep with the strong thought, "My body needs rest, but tomorrow I will rise again to serve God with enthusiasm!" he will awake the next morning completely refreshed.

Dynamic vitality—or listlessness: Both of these depend on the thoughts one sends, or carries with him, into the subconscious.

"The greater the will," Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, "the greater the flow of energy." Action for God, when the zeal for it is derived from the joy of meditation, is one of the best ways of stimulating the will, and of lifting our consciousness into that dynamic state of Bliss from which the entire universe sprang!

To act with the consciousness of God's joy within is the best way of pleasing Him, Whose only sorrow—if we may call it that—is that so many of His human children have closed themselves off from His joy.

Thus, through the Bhagavad Gita, God has spoken to mankind.

§

Rays of the Same Light: Week 39/Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

One's Duty Is Individual

This passage is from the third Chapter, the 35th Stanza:

"Trying, even if unsuccessfully, to fulfill one's own spiritual duty (dharma) is better than pursuing successfully the duties of others. Better even death in the pursuance of one's own duties. The pursuance of another's duties is fraught with (spiritual) danger."(ali)"

Commentary

The word dharma means "duty." One's spiritual duty refers to those acts, specifically, which lead to soul-enlightenment.

Every Scripture enjoins general forms of behavior: to be kind; to be sincere; to speak the truth; to act in the interest of others and not only in one's own.

Certain types of behavior, besides, are mandated by a person's level of spiritual development. For the restless, service may be more beneficial than meditation. For the lazy, even ego-motivated action may be preferable to performing no action at all.

Certain acts, finally, are enjoined even more specifically, according to the tendencies a particular devotee needs to perfect or eliminate in himself.

In the above passage, the Bhagavad Gita is referring both to individual dharma and to the rules for people at various levels of spiritual development.

It was counsel according to individual dharma that Jesus Christ gave when, as we read at the end of the Gospel of St. John, he told Peter, "Feed my sheep." Peter then looked at John and said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus answered, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." (John 21:20-22)

It is important to realize that, apart from general moral maxims, there isn't any one path that is right for everyone. No particular set of practices, no particular system of beliefs, not even any particular religion is the best one for all. The more that universal truths become particularized, the more specialized, and hence limited in number, the group of people to whom they apply.

Certain monks are attracted to the cloistered life. Others are more inspired by a life of service. Those in the second group might feel spiritually suffocated in a cloister. And those in the first might find outward service disturbing to the inner calmness they are trying to develop. Who will say that either of these groups has made the better choice? Both are dedicated to pleasing God, perhaps both equally so. Their paths are different, but their goal is the same.

The same is true for the various world religions. Truth is one, even though the paths to it are diverse. Each individual must find that path which most inspires him in his own search for God. And each must consciously adopt that line of action—that dharma, in other words—which is most likely to free him personally from his spiritual limitations.

It is important when pondering this teaching to realize that a person's dharma is not necessarily determined by his talents. A devotee with a beautiful singing voice might be spiritually better off not becoming a professional singer. It depends on whether he finds divine inspiration in singing and can channel that inspiration to others, or whether there is a danger of his getting caught up in the delirium of popular acclaim.

It is never easy to make a critical choice of this nature for oneself. Usually it helps to seek advice from another, preferably one who is spiritually wise. Lacking a wise counselor, a good alternative would be to seek it from one who is removed from the problem emotionally.

To assume duties that are not one's own, spiritually, despite a possible aptitude for them, is dangerous not only because of the temptations they might pose to the ego. Delusion has countless ways of entering the mind and fanning the flames of desire.

The goal of right action is inner freedom, not bondage. Were one to pursue a plan of action that is not deeply rooted in his own nature, it might mean assuming to himself an entirely new set of tendencies, each one of which would have, eventually, to be worked out along with the pattern of unresolved tendencies that he already carries.

The humble devotee who pursues his own dharma with sincerity, even if he is not yet qualified to succeed in it, is far more securely on the path to liberation than one who seeks name and fame for the fleeting "success" of worldly applause. It is better to lose everything, even life itself, while doing one's spiritual duty than to take the "easy" path of success in a field that is not rightfully one's own.

As Emerson put it, "Imitation is suicide."

And as Shakespeare wrote:

"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

If the goal of right action is indeed freedom from attachments and desires, then success itself, ultimately, must be viewed in these terms. To succeed as a singer, spiritually speaking, means to relinquish attachment to the fruits of action, which in this case might be outward acclaim. To find spiritual success through singing, the singer should also seek to realize music as an aspect of the infinite "music" of Creation—the sound of Aum, as it is called in Sanskrit—by attuning himself inwardly to that sound.

Duty, in every case, is that which brings a person closer to God.

Thus, through the Bhagavad Gita, God has spoken to mankind.

§

From Letters to Truth Seekers, Kriyananda

One's Own Life Purpose

"I have always felt that I am in some way different. But I do not know my life purpose. After thirty-eight years here on earth! I am unhappy with this life altogether. Please help me to find that for which I seek." –DC

May 20, 1967

Dear (DC):

All men have some special purpose in life. But remember, there is no work more important or less so than any other except as it helps oneself (and others) to grow closer to God. Otherwise, to build empires or to teach multitudes, turns out, once the dust has settled, to have no ultimate meaning. One's dharma, or true, spiritual duty is that which will free one from the meshes of karma, or action. According to the tendencies one has brought over from the past, it may be one's own true destiny to be a streetsweeper, even though he have the intelligence and education to earn more money in another job.

The truest way to discover one's own life purpose is to attune oneself to God's will in meditation, which is to say in this case, to the silent promptings of your inner soul. Meditate first, and feel soul-peace within. Then hold the question up to that peace at the point between the eyebrows (the Christ center in your body). Even if no clear answers come to you, you will find by this practice that you will be subtly guided in the direction that you should take.

But guidance doesn't always come if we merely wait for it, passively. Sometimes (perhaps even usually) we must take the first steps ourselves. It is then, if we try sincerely to please God, that we find our footsteps being directed in inscrutable ways, as if by some inner force.

But remember, your real life purpose is not to do "this" or "that," but through every activity, whatever it may be, to find God. In this sense, everyone's life purpose is the same. It is the paths only that are different. Whatever else you do, give time to seeking God in deep meditation. Therein above all lies the road to perfect fulfillment.

From The Ideal of Karma Yoga Swami Vivekananda

Karma-Yoga is the attaining through unselfish work of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action, therefore, retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal; that is why the only definition that can be given of morality is this: That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.

But if you come to details, the matter will not be seen to be quite so simple. For instance, environment often makes the details different as I have already mentioned. The same action under one set of circumstances may be unselfish, and under another set quite selfish. So we can give only a general definition, and leave the details to be worked out by taking into consideration the differences in time, place, and circumstances. In one country one kind of conduct is considered moral, and in another the very same is immoral, because the circumstances differ. The goal of all nature is freedom, and freedom is to be attained only by perfect unselfishness; every thought, word, or deed that is unselfish takes us towards the goal and, as such, is called moral. That definition, you will find, holds good in every religion and every system of ethics. In some systems of thought morality is derived from a Superior Being--God. If you ask why a man ought to do this and not that, their answer is: "Because such is the command of God."

But whatever be the source from which it is derived, their code of ethics also has the same central idea--not to think of self but to give up self. And yet some persons, in spite of this high ethical idea, are frightened at the thought of having to give up their little personalities. We may ask the man who clings to the idea of little personalities to consider the case of a person who has become perfectly unselfish, who has no thought for himself, who does no deed for himself, who speaks no word for himself, and then say where his "himself" is. That "himself" is known to him only so long as he thinks, acts, or speaks for himself. If he is only conscious of others, of the universe, and of the all, where is his "himself?" It is gone for ever.

Karma-Yoga, therefore, is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. The Karma-yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the Jnâni applies his reason and inspiration and the Bhakta his love.

..... Although this universe will go on always, our goal is freedom, our goal is unselfishness; and according to Karma-Yoga, that goal is to be reached through work. All ideas of making the world perfectly happy may be good as motive powers for fanatics; but we must know that fanaticism brings forth as much evil as good. The Karma-Yogi asks why you require any motive to work other than the inborn love of freedom. Be beyond the common worldly motives. "To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof." Man can train himself to know and to

practice that, says the Karma-Yogi. When the idea of doing good becomes a part of his very being, then he will not seek for any motive outside. Let us do good because it is good to do good; he who does good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down, says the Karma-Yogi. Any work that is done with any the least selfish motive, instead of making us free, forges one more chain for our feet.

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them. Know that this world is not we, nor are we this world; that we are really not the body; that we really do not work. We are the Self, eternally at rest and at peace. Why should we be bound by anything? It is very good to say that we should be perfectly non-attached, but what is the way to do it? Every good work we do without any ulterior motive, instead of forging a new chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in the chain and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals.

§

From The Promise of Immortality: Chapter Nineteen, Swami Kriyananda

Restlessness vs. God-Centeredness

This reading is from the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 10, Verses 38–42:

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.

“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

“And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

This story is usually repeated to contrast the two paths to God: the outer one, of service, and the inner one, of prayer and meditation. In Western monasticism, these two ways are epitomized in the religious orders: those devoted to “good works” such as teaching, healing, and feeding the poor, and those designed primarily for a life of prayer and contemplation. In India, the inner way is usually given the greater emphasis, but the path of action, or karma yoga, also has numerous adherents.

Both paths are spiritually valid. Indeed, each usually needs the other, for balance. Jesus in this passage, however, was not even saying that Martha’s activity was spiritually valid. Instead, he scolded her for her lack of spiritual focus.

Could his meaning possibly have been that service itself is lower in God's eyes than a life of silence and prayer? Of course not! Many times during his mission, in fact, he praised service as highly as he did prayer and meditation. "*God is a Spirit,*" he said, emphasizing the latter, "*and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24); but he said also: "*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren [served them, in other words] ye have done it unto me.*" (Matthew 25:40)

Worldly minded Christians commonly seek to justify their entanglement in material interests by saying, "Well, we 'Marthas' of the world are needed, too." Worldly minded Hindus, like their Western counterparts, often try to excuse their materialistic tendencies by pointing to the example of Arjuna, whom Krishna urged to "fight" in the righteous war at Kurukshetra. Both groups—superficial Christians and superficial Hindus alike—miss the truth those scriptures were propounding. For whereas both outer service and inner communion are paths to God, activity alone, with an only nominally spiritual aim, is not the path of karma yoga; it is not, in itself, a spiritual service. Jesus was not scolding Martha for serving him, but for her restlessness. Nor was he comparing the relative merits of service and meditation. What he said was, "Mary's is the only way." His words were a rebuke, not a qualified compliment. He was telling Martha that she was too much centered in her work. She should have been thinking of God even in the midst of physical activity. Thus would her activity have been transformed into a path to God.

Martha's error was one into which devotees often fall. In her own opinion, no doubt, she was serving God, but Jesus said to her, "If you allow your mind to become wholly engrossed in your work, how can that work be spiritual? You are not with God. What you are serving is your own restlessness!"

Martha's mind was filled with thoughts of all those dishes steaming on the stove, of endless dicing and slicing and sifting and spicing to produce a feast for their honored guests. The needs of work, however, should not have become her excuse for spiritual absent-mindedness. Had her work been offered up mentally to God, the meal itself, in fact, would have turned out better than it could have, produced in agitation of mind.

The consciousness with which a thing is done infuses into the product itself the vibrations of that consciousness. This is true especially in the case of food preparation, for what one eats permeates the body, and is not something merely felt with the hands or appreciated with the eyes. The concern Jesus expressed to Martha, however, was not so much for the vibrations she was putting into the food as for Martha herself. He was saying, "Deepen your attunement with my spirit."

Needless to say, Martha did reap spiritual benefits from her work, as anyone does who works for God, however superficially. She was depriving herself only of the deeper blessings that might have been hers had she been centered more within. “Martha consciousness,” then, is an error not of commission, but of omission. Martha was serving the Master outwardly, but not in her heart. She accepted that Jesus was a great spiritual teacher, but she was not attuned to his soul vibrations.

On another occasion, Jesus explained the importance of drawing upon the spiritual consciousness of a true master. “*He that receiveth a prophet,*” he said, “*in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.*” (Matthew 10:41)

To be a prophet means to be united in consciousness with God. A person who lives a merely righteous life may not even believe in God, necessarily. To receive a prophet’s reward means to attract those blessings which result, finally, in becoming a prophet oneself. To receive a righteous man’s reward means to acquire merely good karma: a fortunate and happy life on earth, and a long residence in heaven, perhaps, after death. By good karma alone, however, it is not possible to be freed from all karmic bondage. “Chains, though of gold,” it has been wisely said, “still bind.”

To receive a prophet, then, “in the name of a prophet” means to attune oneself with the prophet’s spirit. Outward service to him should be performed with awareness of the grace flowing through him.

That same flow continues on to others through his disciples. Jesus, after describing those who would receive a prophet’s reward, went on to say, “*Believe me, anyone who gives even a drink of water to one of these little ones, only in the name of a disciple* [that is, with the thought that he is my disciple], *will by no means lose his reward.*” (Matthew 10:42)

As an interesting aside here, Paramhansa Yogananda included in the meaning of the word prophet those disciples of a great master who, even if they are not yet liberated, are highly advanced spiritually. In conversation with the author, he once remarked, “Judas had some bad karma, as a result of which he fell, spiritually. But he was also a prophet.” The author expressed surprise at this astonishing description of the greatness of Judas. Yogananda then, with a typically Indian head-gesture of affirmation, replied, “Oh, yes! He had to be, to be one of the disciples.”

He continued, “Judas was spiritually liberated in this century, in India. I knew him there personally. Jesus appeared in vision to a great master, and asked him to give his disciple liberation.”

The author, fascinated, then inquired, “What was Judas like in this life?”

“Very withdrawn in himself,” the Master replied. “He still showed traces of his old attachment to money—not in the sense of desiring it personally, but as a means of helping others.

His brother disciples teased him about it. The guru, however, reproached them quietly. ‘Don’t,’ he said.”

Martha is an example of the ordinary devotee, who serves God nominally but whose mind is elsewhere. Superficial service of this kind is thrust at God, so to speak, without pausing, first, to intuit whether He really wants it or not! It is a presumption, not a loving offering. Had Martha been thinking lovingly of God as she worked, Jesus would certainly have approved, not disapproved, of her activity. He might even have sent Mary to the kitchen to help her. Indeed, he may have done so anyway; the Bible doesn’t tell us he did not, and we know from other accounts of his concern for other people’s needs. What he wanted of Martha was that she work with devotion and non-attachment, and not with busy fretfulness and the anxiety that he scold her sister.

To serve God with the right attitude is purifying. It opens the heart to divine love, and enables that love to flow out to others, changing their lives.

Jesus, here, was actually offering three teachings in one. The first concerned non-attachment while serving. The second underscored the need, while serving, for keeping the mind focused on God. And the third emphasized the supreme importance of inner communion.

Without non-attachment one may still acquire good karma, but one will not attain inner freedom. If the mind is not on God, even the good karma one acquires will be less. And without inner communion, it is not possible to experience God as a reality, or, ultimately, to realize Him.

Jesus’ reproach to Martha was not for her service, as such; and his praise of Mary was not for the choice she’d made not to serve. “Mary’s part,” as he termed it, alludes to the true goal of the spiritual path. Without developing the awareness of God’s presence, service itself may be described as merely a “good karmic investment.” Nor is that “good investment” as beneficial, outwardly, as people like to think. Jesus once said to Judas, “The poor you have with you always.” The world is never greatly improved, whether socially or in any other way, by serving it with a worldly attitude. What is needed is that people’s consciousness be uplifted.

“Mary’s part,” then, deserves special treatment, which it will receive in the next chapter. Meanwhile, let us bear in mind that living for God means remaining aware of His presence, especially in the heart. What counts is not the wearing of long robes, the bellowing of loud chants, and the decorous waving of sticks of incense. The important thing is the devotion, love, and concentration we offer up in the stillness of our own hearts.

The Bhagavad Gita expounds these themes also. Action, it says, must be undertaken first in a spirit of service, and not restlessly or for personal gain. Ego-motivated action is not karma

yoga. Rather, it is merely karma. It doesn't lead to union with God, but only to continued involvement in delusion.

Stanza forty-nine of the Second Chapter of the Gita states:

“Actions performed under the influence of desire are greatly inferior to those which are guided by wisdom. Happiness eludes people when they act from motives of self-interest. Seek shelter, therefore, in the equanimity of wisdom.”

Action is guided by wisdom when it is kept centered in calmness, and in that calmness, offered to God. The highest action stems not even from the thinking mind. This level of “actionless activity,” however, is not possible without high spiritual realization.

It is important to understand that the Gita, too, is not warning against activity itself. Indeed, its entire dialogue is a call to act, but in an uplifted state of mind. The Gita even states that God cannot be realized by mere renunciation of activity. Its warning, then, is the same as that which Jesus gave to Martha. It is a warning against *ego-involved* activity.

Self-interest leads to attachment. Attachment stirs up restless winds of eager anticipation. If one's effort ends in failure, there ensue driving rains of disappointment, anger, and discouragement. But if, on the other hand, they end in success, there ensue blinding snow flurries of excitement, which are equally disturbing to mental equilibrium.

“Why, O mind, wanderest thou? Go in thy inner home!” These words from a devotional chant by Paramhansa Yogananda offer the ultimate solution to all human seeking. The satisfaction of a desire brings rest to the mind only temporarily. Lasting release comes through non-attachment to satisfaction itself. This doesn't mean that the end of all striving is an attitude of indifference, but rather that true soul-joy is attained only in transcending mere emotional satisfaction.

Rather than renounce activity, then, we should renounce personal motives. Desirelessly we should serve God with love, enthusiastically. The conclusive argument against desire-motivated activity is that it is self-defeating! People who act from self-interest do so from a desire for happiness, but any fulfillment they glimpse is but fleeting. Like snowflakes on a warm day, the fulfillment of desire melts within minutes to form shapeless puddles of unhappiness.

Look at the “snapshots” that memory holds in the mind: those, first, of little children. How fairly bursting they are with energy and enthusiasm, dancing about and laughing gaily! How suddenly their enthusiasm dissolves, then, into wails of tears and disappointment! The dualities of this world are more evident in them, for their feelings have not yet been reined in by adversity. Instead, they are like the balls they love to bounce on the pavement: up and down, ceaselessly up and down.

Then observe those same children as they grow older. On reaching adolescence, they start to spin threads of ambition for the future and weave them into colorful tapestries that depict their dreams of success. “Someday,” they assure themselves, “I’ll have a good job, be rich, and be loved by a beautiful wife or a dashing husband. We’ll live in a lovely home and raise wonderful children. Oh, how everybody will envy us!” At seventeen, the future seems to stretch out before them like a verdant meadow, blanketed with fragrant, colorful flowers of fulfillment.

Then see those same people at twenty-five. Don’t their eyes already betray a slightly driven look—a hint of inner tension? Their voices are beginning to have a slight edge; their gaze, a suggestion of dogged determination to beat life at its own game. Life already is becoming more of a struggle than they expected. “Well,” they console themselves, “I still have my dreams intact.”

How, then, do we find them at forty? Many, alas, have already grown irascible in the face of life’s disappointments!

Look at the final snapshots in that photo album. People at the age of sixty, seventy, seventy-five, and older: How do you find them? The race is finished for them; their energy is spent. How pathetically little there is to show for all those years of struggle and pain!

A survey was once made of people in their late thirties and early forties. The question was put to them: “What was the happiest day of your life?” Many discounted their later years of supposed “success,” and replied sadly, “The day of my high-school prom!” Years of strenuous effort had brought them no happiness. All they could do was look back nostalgically to a time, years earlier, before their dream ship of hope had crashed on the hard rocks of reality. One wonders: Did nostalgia itself supply a sweetness that was, perhaps, absent on the actual occasion?

Waves surging on the sea are wrinkled with many ripples. Every wave of desire, similarly, cresting to fulfillment, is wrinkled with little ripples of further, not fully formed desires. Fulfillment conditions the mind to seek further and still further fulfillment. In this respect, desires are like the nine-headed Hydra of Greek mythology, whose heads grew out again as often as they were stricken off. Hercules discovered the solution to the problem: Quickly he cauterized each stump the moment he’d lopped off the head. His method suggests how we ourselves might handle desires: We should prevent them from growing again by “cauterizing” them at the root. As Paramhansa Yogananda said, “The best way to rid yourself of desire is to catch it at that moment when it first appears in the mind.”

Modern “wisdom,” by contrast, plumbs the subconscious for clues to human motivation. It encourages people to raise to the surface whatever reeking denizen they find in those murky depths. “Don’t suppress your desires,” it says. “Bring them into the open. Gaze at them; only then, release

them. That way, you'll free yourself of them." How often, ask yourself, has this system worked for you? Not often, surely. In fact, only when the desire itself was quite superficial.

Another school of thought is more valid in the sense that it doesn't actually ask for trouble. Its method, however, helps only those who have already achieved some measure of mental detachment. This method demands an attitude of impartiality. "Watch your thoughts and desires," it teaches. "If you gaze at them calmly, they will shrivel and disappear."

The first suggestion, that of plumbing the subconscious, might be described as the "primal scream" approach. The attempt to rid oneself of harmful emotions by giving them free rein results in only temporary relief. That relief is followed, almost as soon as the "purgative" screams have died away, by an exuberant resurgence. It seems an attractive therapy, for people do tend to prefer the way of least resistance. What soon becomes evident, however, is that it has lent added strength to those "complexes" by affirming them.

As for dispassionate self-observation, this may be effective in the peaceful atmosphere of a Buddhist monastery where few distractions exist. For busy modern people, however, caught up as they are in a swirl of intense activity, to watch one's thoughts "impartially" is not only impossible, but, potentially at least, disastrous. Self-observation needs to be practiced from a center of deep, inner calmness, and preferably in a superconscious state. Otherwise, it isn't one's problems that shrivel and disappear: It is one's own peace of mind! Worse still, one may lose faith in one's own ability to do anything at all to improve oneself. For the problems, once they are held close to the eyes, loom larger than ever.

Neither self-indulgence nor self-preoccupation brings Self-liberation. Rather, both practices imprison the mind in the ego. In the process, they shut out a world of opportunities for self-development and deepening understanding. Self-centered people try to create a "self-support system" by wrapping themselves in a blanket of indifference to everything and everyone but themselves. They find themselves at last, however, stranded and alone in a hostile universe. (Such, at least, is their perception of things.)

It is those who give selflessly of themselves who attain happiness. Their sympathy for others expands their awareness. It is in self-expansion that happiness is found. Action without personal motive, guided by equanimity, brings not only inner stillness, but a deep sense of joy.

To return, then, to the story of Martha: The need for God-centeredness during activity is clear. But there remains an important question: *How?*

Those steaming pots in the kitchen were the challenge Martha faced. What if the rice burned, the vegetables got over-cooked, the stew boiled over and created a mess on the stove? Martha could not have dismissed these concerns by merely closing her eyes and denying their existence, while affirming, “Peace! Be still!”

Inner attunement must be adapted to outer necessities. The devotee must strengthen, and not relinquish, his grip on reality. He can do that by accepting it calmly, not by rejecting it, nor by seizing on it desperately as something that “has to be done!” The best way to strengthen one’s “grip” on reality is not with tension, but by mentally sharing all that one does with God.

Consider an example: People often find themselves at work chatting with others. Why not, then, talk inwardly with God? Why not sing to Him? If outward singing is not feasible, then why not sing inwardly? Repeat mentally, “I am Thine, Lord! Be Thou mine!” Other word-formulae will do as well; choose one that you find inspiring. This practice is known in India as *japa*. It holds an honored place in Christian mystical tradition as well.

Yogananda once had a vision of St. Francis of Assisi in which the saint gave him this beautiful poem, which he called, simply, “God! God! God!”:

*From the depths of slumber,
As I ascend the spiral stairways of wakefulness,
I will whisper:
God! God! God!*

*Thou art the food, and when I break my fast
Of nightly separation from Thee,
I will taste Thee, and mentally say,
God! God! God!*

*No matter where I go, the spotlight of my mind
Will ever keep turning on Thee;
And in the battle din of activity, my silent war-cry will be:
God! God! God!*

*When boisterous storms of trials shriek,
And when worries howl at me,*

*I will drown their noises by loudly chanting
God! God! God!*

*When my mind weaves dreams
With threads of memories,
On that magic cloth will I emboss:
God! God! God!*

*Every night, in time of deepest sleep,
My peace dreams and calls, Joy! Joy! Joy!
And my joy comes singing evermore:
God! God! God!*

*In waking, eating, working, dreaming, sleeping,
Serving, meditating, chanting, divinely loving,
My soul will constantly hum, unheard by any:
God! God! God!*

That single word, “God,” can be repeated endlessly. Alternatively, you may like to repeat (or to sing mentally) the entire poem.*(40) Repetition will make it much easier to keep God’s presence in mind.

Yogananda made a further interesting remark on this subject, “Once I was working so hard,” he said, “that I was afraid of forgetting God. Then all at once I realized that, in the very thought, I was remembering Him!”

Remembrance of God must be practiced *consciously* and *deliberately*. Activity is not so much a time for *receiving* energy as for *giving* it. God-remembrance must be charged with energy. Only thus can we offset the energy demanded of us by our work. Gradually, putting intense energy into everything we do, our minds become conditioned to the upliftment needed for raising our consciousness, later, in meditation.

These two paths then, meditation and service, must work together. “When they are balanced,” Yogananda said, “then meditation helps your work, and work helps your meditation.”

Pause every now and then, when your work allows it, and momentarily be aware of God's inner presence. Breathe deeply several times. As you inhale, affirm "I"; as you exhale, affirm "AM." Thus: "I (in) ... AM! (out)." Or, alternatively, breathe in and out with the affirmation, "God (in) ... IS! (out)." or, "Joy! ... Joy! (both in and out)." When resuming your work, concentrate on the energy-flow itself. Remember, divine energy is the true power behind everything you do, physically.

Then continue to sing in your heart, "I am Thine! Thou art mine! I am Thine! Be Thou mine!" If words are not feasible—for example, if words are needed in your work—concentrate on the energy in your heart chakra, then uplift that energy to the Christ center between the eyebrows. Whatever energy you feel in these chakras, offer it up to God in joyful devotion.

Your work, when performed in the right spirit, becomes itself a kind of meditation. "Mary's part" in the Biblical story was not so very different from what Martha's might have been, had Martha been acting consciously for God.

One final thought: When singing or talking mentally to God, address Him, or Her, in the second person. Think "You" (or "Thou"), not "He" or "She." When you feel the flow of inner energy, share that flow with the Divine Beloved. No one in any case can do anything by his power alone. We are all parts of the Infinite! Feel, then, that you and God are working together; that, together, you are directing energy through your mind and body.

"The greater the will," Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, "the greater the flow of energy." Direct energy with will power and joy. See yourself as playing, dancing, and working with God: hand in hand together through all activity.

*(40) The author wrote a melody for it years ago. It is available from the publisher.

Chapter Six: Raja Yoga

From Awaken to Superconsciousness:, Chapter 4 – Swami Kriyananda

Meditation and the Paths of Yoga

In the three “tributaries,” as I have called them, of yoga, perfection is attained in superconscious stillness. Thus, the path of meditation is called raja yoga, the kingly yoga. Raja yoga is the river into which flow the tributary streams of karma, bhakti, and gyana yogas. These three tributaries are based on the basic qualities of human nature, whereas raja yoga transcends human nature in its emphasis on eternal qualities of the soul. Since superconscious meditation is the culmination of all the other yogas, anyone seeking the highest spiritual attainment should include in his spiritual search the daily practice of meditation.

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From The Art and Science of Raja Yoga – Swami Kriyananda

Chapter 2

The different paths so far outlined are designed to fit the basic temperamental differences of men: those who live more by feeling, by action, or by thought. Because every man is a composite of all three of these attributes, regardless of which is uppermost in his particular nature, all three of these paths of yoga should be followed to some extent by everyone.

But temperament is a superficial consideration. It is not a quality of the soul—only of the ego. The perfection of each of these paths transcends temperament, leading from outward practices to deep inner stillness. Again, unless there is a degree of "inwardness" even from the beginning of one's journey, outward practices will remain outward; they will not lead to the neutralization of the eddies of feeling which alone constitutes yoga. In addition to these outward practices, therefore, one should also practice daily meditation.

Meditation will give force to one's devotion, to his activities, and to his divine understanding; the special practice of these yogas will in their turn give force to, and will help to determine the course of, his meditations. Not meditation only, but the harmonious combination—with meditation as the supreme guide—of all these yogas, constitutes the path of *raja yoga*, the "royal" yoga.

Raja yoga views human nature as a kingdom composed of many psychological tendencies and physical attributes, all of which require considerate attention. A king cannot afford to favor one class of his subjects at the expense of all others, lest dissatisfaction among the rest sow seeds of rebellion. Man, similarly, progresses most smoothly when all aspects of his nature are developed harmoniously. The *raja yogi*, or kingly yogi, therefore, is enjoined to rule his inner kingdom wisely and with moderation, developing all aspects of his nature in a balanced, integrated way. Since it is the soul which is the true ruler of man's inner kingdom, the development of soul-consciousness, by daily meditation, forms the principal activity of raja yoga. But even meditation, if one-sided, can result in imbalances. The *raja yogi* is therefore encouraged to develop all sides of his nature—always, however, with a view to neutralizing the waves of his likes and dislikes, and not, by egoistic self-expression, to creating ever-new eddies of selfish involvement.

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Chapter 3: L'Ashtanga Yoga di Patanjali

Hatha yoga is the physical branch of the meditative science of raja yoga. Patanjali, the great ancient exponent of raja yoga, wrote that the path to enlightenment embraces eight stages. (His teaching is also known as ashtanga, or "eight- limbed," yoga.) An explanation of these eight "limbs" will help to give an understanding of the deeper purposes and directions of yoga. It will help also in the study of the yoga postures. The first two stages of Patanjali's eightfold path are known as yama and niyama. yama means control; niyama, non-control. Literally, these two stages mean the don'ts and the do's on the spiritual path. They are, one might say, the Ten Commandments of yoga. Interestingly, there are ten of them, too. We shall discuss them in detail later.

Their essential purpose is to permit the milk of inner peace to be gathered in the pail of the mind by plugging holes that have been caused by restlessness, wrong attachments, desires, and various forms of inharmonious living.

The rules of yama (the don'ts) are five:

- Non-violence or Ahimsa
- Non-lying
- Non-stealing
- Non-sensuality or Brahmacharya
- Non-greed or Non-attachment

It is interesting to note that all of these virtues are listed in negative terms. The implication is that when we remove our delusions, we cannot but be benevolent, truthful, respectful of others' property, etc., because it is our nature to be good. We act otherwise not because it is natural for us to do so, but because we have embraced an unnatural state of egoistical inharmony.

The rules of niyama (the do's) are:

- Cleanliness
- Contentment
- Austerity
- Self-study or Introspection
- Devotion to the Supreme Lord

Each of these principles, when practiced perfectly, bestows definite spiritual rewards, as we shall see in Step Four.

The third stage on the eightfold path is known as asana, which means, simply, posture. Some writers have tried to make the point that Patanjali refers here to the need for practicing the yoga postures as a preparation for meditation. But Patanjali was talking, not of practices, but of

the different stages of spiritual development. Here, then, posture means no particular set of postures, but only the ability to hold the body still as a prerequisite for deep meditation. Any comfortable posture will do, as long as the spine is kept erect and the body relaxed. A sign of perfection in asana is said to be the ability to sit still, without moving a muscle, for three hours. Many people meditate for years without achieving any notable results, simply because they have never trained their bodies to sit still. Until the body can be mastered, higher perceptions, so subtle that they blossom only in perfect quiet, can never be achieved.

It is good, of course, to practice some of the yoga postures before meditation. These postures help one to attain asana, or firm posture. Many beginning students, however, make the mistake of assuming that they must perfect their practice of the yoga postures before even attempting to meditate. This is quite untrue. It is not even necessary to practice the postures at all in order to learn meditation. The postures are only an aid, though a very great one, to meditation.

The fourth stage of Patanjali's path is pranayama. Many writers, again making the mistake of thinking that Patanjali was speaking of practices rather than of the different stages of spiritual development, have claimed that here he was referring to breathing exercises. pranayama, even as a spiritual practice, is connected only secondarily with the breath. It is a mistake (though one often made) to identify this word solely with breath control. Prana does mean breath, but only because of the close connection that exists between the breath and the causative flow of energy in the body. The word, prana, refers primarily to the energy itself. pranayama, then, means energy control. This energy control is often effected with the aid of breathing exercises. Hence, breathing exercises have also come to be known as pranayamas.

Patanjali's reference is to the energy control that is achieved as a result of various techniques, and not to the techniques themselves. His word signifies a state in which the energy in the body is harmonized to the point where its flow is reversed—no longer outward toward the senses, but inward toward the Divine Self that lies in the hearts of all beings. Only when all the energy in the body can be directed toward this Self can one's awareness be intense enough to penetrate the veils of delusion and enter super-consciousness.

The very energy with which we think is the same energy that we use to digest our food. To test this claim, consider how difficult it is, after a heavy meal, to think about weighty problems, and how clear the mind becomes after a fast. To divert all the energy from the body to the brain cannot but intensify one's awareness, and the keenness of one's understanding. To direct this energy inwardly is the first step in divine contemplation.

The fifth stage on Patanjali's journey is known as pratyahara, the interiorization of the mind. Once the energy has been redirected towards its source in the brain, one must then interiorize one's consciousness, so that his thoughts, too, will not wander in endless bypaths of restlessness and delusion, but will be focused one-pointedly on the deeper mysteries of the indwelling soul. A thread must be gathered to one point before it can be put through the eye of a needle. Similarly with the mind: It is necessary to concentrate one's thoughts as well as one's energies, if he would hope to penetrate the narrow tunnel that leads to divine awakening.

Patanjali's sixth stage is known as dharana, contemplation, or fixed inner awareness. One may have been aware of inner spiritual realities—the inner light, for instance, or the inner sound, or

deep mystical feelings—before reaching this stage, but it is only after reaching it that one can give himself completely to deep concentration on those realities.

The seventh stage is known as dhyana, meditation, absorption. By prolonged concentration on any stage of consciousness, one begins to assume to himself its qualities. By meditating on sense pleasures, the Inner Self comes to identify its happiness with the gratification of those pleasures; the individual loses sight of the indwelling Self as the real source of his pleasures. (If anything material were really a cause of happiness, it would cause happiness to all men. The fact that it does not prove that it is our reactions to those things, rather than the things themselves, that give us our enjoyment.) Again, by concentration on our personal faults, we only give strength to those faults. (It is a serious mistake continually to call oneself a sinner, as many orthodox religionists would have one do. One should concentrate on virtue if he would become virtuous.) By concentrating on the inner light, then, or upon any other divine reality that one actually perceives when the mind is calm, one gradually takes on the qualities of that inner reality. The mind loses its ego identification, and begins to merge in the great ocean of consciousness of which it is a part.

The eighth step on Patanjali's eightfold journey is known as samadhi, oneness. Samadhi comes after one learns to dissolve his ego consciousness in the calm inner light. Once the grip of ego has really been broken, and one discovers that he is that light, there is nothing to prevent him from expanding his consciousness to infinity. The devotee in deep samadhi realizes the truth of Christ's words, "I and my Father are one." The little wave of light, losing its delusion of separate existence from the ocean of light, becomes itself the vast ocean.

In the higher stages of samadhi, the devotee is able not only to retain his sense of identity with the Infinite Ocean, but also to be aware of and work through the little wave of his ego. He can talk, work, smile, and live in all ways as a normal human being, yet never lose his inward realization of Divinity.

It must not be imagined that these states are delusive. They are Reality; our present limitation is the delusion. Great yogis have demonstrated their omnipresence in many ways. Interested students would do well to read Paramhansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which describes many such great souls and their experience with God.

These subtle stages of spiritual unfoldment may be achieved, on a lower level, in normal human existence. For just as a high mountain has in common with a little mound the fact that both slope upwards to a peak, so the highest truths relate also in practical ways to everyday life. This, in fact, is the immediate reason why every intelligent person can benefit from studying philosophy.

The need for applying the basic moral commandments of yoga to daily life will be obvious, and require no special comment here. But asana (physical calmness), too, is necessary, lest we scatter our forces, and even undermine our health. We need also to channel our energies (the principle of pranayama) if we would really accomplish anything worthwhile. Self-sufficiency, and the ability to remain at peace in oneself (the spirit, in other words, of pratyahara), is the mark of a poised and gracious human being, whether or not he ever thinks of spiritual realities. And to be sensitively aware of life, finally, to enter into it, to become in a sense one with it (reminiscent of the final stages of yoga: dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) is the genius of what is normally considered a fully alive, but not necessarily supernormal, human being.

These subtle stages of yoga should be expressed also in one's daily practice of the yoga postures.

The first two stages, yama and niyama, are necessary for any real progress in the postures. Without them the postures become simply a system of calisthenics—good for a few muscles and bones, but not much more.

The next stage, asana or physical stability, is necessary also. If one practices the postures hastily and restlessly, the benefits that he receives from them will be minimal. One must practice slowly, hold each posture for a time, and above all maintain an attitude of physical relaxation and control.

An understanding of pranayama, also, is essential to hatha yoga, not only because of the breathing exercises involved, but also because, until one is aware of the movements of energy in the body, and of the effect of the postures upon those movements, one cannot attain the deeper benefits of hatha yoga.

Pratyahara (interiorization), too, is necessary. Unless one interiorizes his consciousness while performing the postures, the benefits he derives from them will be superficial. It is a good practice, therefore, before beginning the postures, to calm oneself within and without, so that when he begins his "daily dozen" his mind will be in a state of quasi-meditation.

The foregoing paragraph explains the need for dharana (calm inner awareness) in the practice of yoga postures. Concentration on what one is attempting to accomplish can increase the value of the postures up to a hundred times.

What one is striving to accomplish with the postures is to make himself over anew. Here, then, we see the value of dhyana in the practice of the yoga postures. Every posture is associated with certain mental and spiritual states which, if one meditates on them while doing the posture, will come to him more easily than if he goes through the postures absent-mindedly, or thinking only of their physical benefits. From the standpoint of physical health, too, if one meditates on health, affirming it with every fiber of his being while he practices the postures, they will speed him on the road to perfect health more quickly than if he merely goes through the postures automatically, with his mind roaming in foreign lands.

Samadhi, finally, applied to the postures, signifies a state where one has so established himself in physical and mental harmony that all of his daily movements become, in a sense, yoga postures, proceeding from the creative source with himself. He is practicing hatha yoga not only when he moves into some anciently prescribed position, but even when he gets up out of bed, greets a neighbor on the street, or lifts a cup of tea to his lips. His every smile will be a yogic mudra, awakening energy that conveys itself as joy to all who behold him.

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Chapter Nine

...To increase the energy flow to the brain is the chief purpose of yoga practice. For this purpose, many teachings are given, including right diet, postures, and breathing exercises. In the next lesson another aspect of this important subject will be explored, in a discussion of magnetism. But chiefly it must be said that both of the factors determining one's degree of awareness—the

amount of energy flow to the brain, and the direction of that energy once it reaches the brain—depend upon one thing only: one's power of concentration. It is as necessary to concentrate one's available energy in the brain as it is to concentrate that energy, once it reaches the brain, on a single object, or state, of awareness.

Concentration is necessary also to the exercise of will power. The will may be described as a single-pointed intention of the intellect, reinforced by energy. The will, the intellect, and the power of concentration, all have their center in the ajna chakra, or Christ center, at the point between the eyebrows. They are, therefore, interrelated. Concentration applied to the question of what is, becomes intellect. Concentration applied to the question of what ought to be (as determined by the intellect), becomes will power. Intellect by itself is a more or less static faculty; generally it reflects one's feelings, and must therefore, on the spiritual path, be purified by devotion. When the will, instead of being focused on doing or accomplishing anything, is united inwardly to the purified intellect in a simple act of becoming, divine enlightenment ensues. That is why the Bhagavad Gita says that during meditation, one should forsake all mental planning. So long as the will is engaged in thoughts of doing, even when the doing seems to be related to self-improvement, the mind will be directed outward from its true center. For we are already the Divine Truth itself. We have only to realize our true selves. The very act of becoming, spiritually speaking, implies only a complete recognition of, and identification with, realities which the intellect alone might hold impersonally at a distance. But in fact, where the will and the intellect are directed inward toward the soul by the power of deep concentration, their functions are no longer really separable from one another...

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From Chapter Fourteen: Signs of Spiritual Progress

Every path to God has its own pitfalls. The special pitfall on the path of raja yoga is the temptation to spiritual pride as a result of one's meditative insights or new-found miraculous powers. Yet to talk only of right attitude and ignore the soul's inner unfoldment would be a mistake, too—an invitation to the devotee to rest comfortably on his oars, and be content with a journey but started. Right attitude itself should lead one to want to come ever closer, consciously closer, to God.

Master met a monk once and asked him, "Do you ever see lights or angels in meditation?" "When God wills it I shall see those things," replied the monk. "That is not so," Master told him, severely. "When your devotion is right you will see them. God has hidden those things from you, not because He wants to, but because your own devotion is still lackluster."

Once pure love, and not a desire for miracles and phenomena, becomes the basis of our spiritual search, we may expect certain phenomena to attend us even though we desire them not. If they remain too long absent, it is a sign that something is lacking. Pray then for more devotion, not for those mere fruits of devotion, lest you fall into the error of the starving man who prayed for a large stomach, instead of a full one.

But again, bear in mind how subtle the inner world is, and don't wish for lights merely because others see lights, when God is already showering you with another kind of abundance. Many are the inner paths to God. Some people advance very far and never see lights of any kind.

Master's words to the monk therefore should be taken in part as personal counsel, directed to him alone. The important thing is that God's presence be actively experienced in one form or another.

God comes to the soul in different ways—as light, or sound, or love, or peace, or intense calmness, or power, or wisdom, or divine joy. One may advance by any one of these paths or by several, but one seldom advances by all of them together until the higher stages of sadhana (spiritual practice) have been attained. One who sees lights may have visions of saints or angels, or of the astral world. One who hears sounds may hear astral music, or the sounds of the spinal centers. One who feels love may find tears flowing inadvertently in meditation. One who feels peace will feel as though he were drinking it in pure, life-giving draughts. One who feels calmness (the positive aspect of peace) may feel his consciousness expanding as if into a vast hall. One who feels divine power will be made intensely aware that God alone is the Doer, that man's own power is simply non-existent. One who experiences wisdom may develop deep insight into any question he asks of

God, or he may know himself inwardly as the undying Self. And one who experiences divine joy will never want for anything else.

But to go deep into any of these experiences, the little ego must be forgotten. So long as one still has the consciousness that he is meditating on them, his meditation will be imperfect. The meditator, the act of meditation, and the object of meditation must become one. For this condition, the first requirement is that the mind be held steady. (A state of excitement renders deep inner experience impossible.) The next requirement is that the breath become calm—indeed, motionless. Once the breath ceases (not by holding it, but as a natural consequence of physical and mental calmness), the thoughts, too, must cease altogether. Until this state is reached, deep spiritual experiences will not be possible.

One who sees light should concentrate not so much on visions as on entering the light himself. Concentrate on the center of whatever light you see at the point between the eyebrows. If you see the spiritual eye (a circular blue field surrounded by a golden halo, and having a white, five-pointed star in the center), that will be better still. Concentrate on the star if you see it, or in the center of the field of blue. Gradually the gold will expand and form a tunnel. Passing into this tunnel, you will consciously enter the light of the astral world. In time, the blue light will form a tunnel. Entering that, you will enter the light of the causal world, the Christ Consciousness. When you can penetrate the star in the center, you will enter the Spirit beyond vibratory creation.

I have described elsewhere the sounds of the spinal centers. It is better to hear these sounds than to hear astral music, and better still to hear the sounds of the higher centers than those of the lower. But best of all is it to hear, and merge into, the great sound of Aum.

One who feels love should seek perfect union with the Divine Beloved. Devotion (bhakti) will not develop into divine love (prem) until it expands beyond ego-consciousness.

And so also with the other experiences of God: Always they should be offered up to Him, that they take one ever deeper into His consciousness, lest one rest satisfied on a mere ledge, and never reach the mountain top.

Above all, never compare yourself with another, lest you fall into either discouragement or pride. Don't even dwell too much on the signs as I have described them here. I have but scratched

the surface. God, who is infinite, can come to the soul in an infinity of ways—as exquisite smells, as a thousand sweet tastes crushed into one, as divine instruction, as the purest divine merriment, as the tenderest imaginable forgiveness. Each soul's relationship with the Infinite is unique. Compare yourself not with others, but only with your own self: Do you love God more now than you used to? Are you developing even-mindedness? Are you more inwardly contented and joyful—or at least happy? Are you renouncing self-will? Do you want to serve and please only God? If your answer to these questions is Yes, and if you can add to your answer the wish to grow daily in these sublime virtues, know that God and Guru must be well pleased with you. Offer yourself into their arms. They will bear you surely and swiftly to the Divine Shores!

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From The Essence of Self-realization, Chapter 12 – Swami Kriyananda

A visitor: "What is yoga?"

Paramhansa Yogananda: "Yoga means union. Etymologically, it is connected to the English word, yoke. Yoga means union with God, or, union of the little, ego-self with the divine Self, the infinite Spirit.

"Most people in the West, and also many in India, confuse yoga with Hatha Yoga, the system of bodily postures. But yoga is primarily a spiritual discipline.

"I don't mean to belittle the yoga postures. Hatha Yoga is a wonderful system. The body, moreover, is a part of our human nature, and must be kept fit lest it obstruct our spiritual efforts. Devotees, however, who are bent on finding God give less importance to the yoga postures. Nor is it strictly necessary that they practice them.

"Hatha Yoga is the physical branch of Raja Yoga, the true science of yoga. Raja Yoga is a system of meditation techniques that help to harmonize human consciousness with the divine consciousness.

"Yoga is an art as well as a science. It is a science, because it offers practical methods for controlling body and mind, thereby making deep meditation possible. And it is an art, for unless it is practiced intuitively and sensitively it will yield only superficial results.

"Yoga is not a system of beliefs. It takes into account the influence on each other of body and mind, and brings them into mutual harmony. So often, for instance, the mind cannot concentrate simply because of tension or illness in the body, which prevent the energy from flowing to the brain. So often, too, the energy in the body is weakened because the will is dispirited, or paralyzed by harmful emotions.

"Yoga works primarily with the energy in the body, through the science of pranayama, or energy-control. Prana means also 'breath.' Yoga teaches how, through breath-control, to still the mind and attain higher states of awareness.

"The higher teachings of yoga take one beyond techniques, and show the yogi, or yoga practitioner, how to direct his concentration in such a way as not only to harmonize human with divine consciousness, but to merge his consciousness in the Infinite.

"Yoga is a very ancient science; it is thousands of years old. The perceptions derived from its practice form the backbone of the greatness of India, which for centuries has been legendary. The truths espoused in the yoga teachings, however, are not limited to India, nor to those who consciously practice yoga techniques. Many saints of other religions also, including many Christian saints, have discovered aspects of the spiritual path that are intrinsic to the teachings of yoga.

"A number of them were what Indians, too, would accept as great yogis.

"They had raised their energy from body-attachment to soul-identity.

"They had discovered the secret of directing the heart's feeling upward in devotion to the brain, instead of letting it spill outward in restless emotions.

"They had discovered the portal of divine vision at the point between the eyebrows, through which the soul passes to merge in Christ Consciousness.

"They had discovered the secrets of breathlessness, and how in breathlessness the soul can soar to the spiritual heights.

"They had discovered the state which some of them called mystical marriage, where the soul merges with God and becomes one with Him.

"Yoga completes the biblical teaching on how one should love God: with heart, mind, soul—and strength. For strength means energy.

"The ordinary person's energy is locked in his body. The lack of availability of that energy to his will prevents him from loving the Lord one-pointedly with any of the three other aspects of his nature: heart, mind, or soul. Only when the energy can be withdrawn from the body and directed upward in deep meditation is true inner communion possible."

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Chapter Seven: Addendum Introspection and Autoanalysis

CLASS NOTES

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Monday Morning Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

Monday Afternoon Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Tuesday Morning Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

Tuesday Afternoon Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Wednesday Morning Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

Wednesday Afternoon Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Thursday Morning Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

Thursday Afternoon sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Friday Morning sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

Friday Afternoon Sadhana

Energization: experiences and observations

Meditation, how long:

Practices included:

Quality of Kriya 1, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 2, experiences:

Quality of Kriya 3/4, experiences:

Quality of Hong Sau, experiences:

Quality of AUM, experiences:

Quality of devotion, experiences:

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL ABOUT INTROSPECTION

Keep a diary of your spiritual life. I used to make a record of how long I had meditated daily and how deep I had gone. Seek solitude as much as possible. Do not spend your leisure in mixing with people for merely social purposes. God's love is hard to find in company. **–from the writings of Yogananda**

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A practical way to understand right from wrong behavior is to introspect and criticize ourselves. Every person should keep a mental diary. Mental diaries are much better than material ones, which are objects of curiosity to others. Many people write down nice thoughts and resolutions in their diaries, and then promptly forget about them. It is better to keep a mental diary in which you constantly watch your thoughts and actions. At certain times during the day have a check-up on your physical, mental, and spiritual machines, to see how they are behaving. This will help develop your spiritual consciousness.

–from the writings of Yogananda

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God has given us the power to remove ignorance and uncover our innate wisdom, just as He has given us the power to open our eyelids and perceive light. Introspect every night, and keep a mental diary; and now and then during the daytime be still for a minute, and analyze what you are doing and thinking. Those who don't analyze themselves never change. Growing neither smaller nor bigger, they stagnate. This is a dangerous state of existence. **–from the writings of Yogananda**

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Self-analysis is the greatest method of progress. Without it man becomes a living machine. Every tomorrow is determined by every today. Did you ever count your faculties or measure their strength? Perhaps you do not care to think what faculties you possess or not, as long as you can earn a good living. Man is more than a civilized animal only. All his rational faculties have a deeper significance than just their use in keeping the body animal well fed, well clothed. It is necessary to maintain the body and have all the necessities of life, but there are the higher needs of the Soul, which should be fulfilled also.

Suffering is the great teacher. Business failure starts the satisfied ones to think. Disease, unhappiness in family and social life makes wealthy people think. Death makes everybody think.

Failure, suffering, etc., in material or spiritual life, do not occur in one's life by chance. Self-analysis tells one the nature of one's difficulties, and the knowledge of one's own power to cope with them. Self-analysis in one word furnishes us with the knowledge of what we are, what our difficulties are, what strength our faculties have, and what our mistakes or shortcomings are.

Keep a mental diary every night. Consult my analytical booklet, "Psychological Chart."

- Analyze your good, bad and active qualities.
- Analyze the kind and quality of your memory.
- Analyze the kinds and quality of your feelings, emotions, sentiments.
- Analyze the quality of your will power.
- Analyze your inclinations in life's business.
- Analyze your attachments to objects of senses of touch, smell, taste, etc.
- Analyze your predominant habits.
- Analyze the conditions of your health and the causes that disturb it.
- Analyze your predominant emotions of fear, anger, jealousy, etc.
- Analyze your matrimonial or single life.
- Analyze your instincts and hereditary tendencies.
- Analyze your national mind and compare it with other national minds. Analyze defects and good qualities in the national mind.
- Analyze the causes which retard progress in your business or the causes that involve it in failure.
- Analyze the causes of your unhappiness
- Analyze the causes that create trouble with your wife or husband or friends.
- Find out the methods that can make your family life better.
- Try to find the remedy for your strong habits and inclinations which you want to get rid of.
- Analyze your progress in contacting the Infinite.

--from Yogoda Course, Lesson 11, "Psych-analysis and Dreams", Yogananda 1925

MY SATTWIC, RAJASIC AND TAMASIC QUALITIES

MY PREDOMINANT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE HABITS

MY NEW HABIT AND MY PLAN FOR DEVELOPING IT

MY HEALTH CONDITIONS AND THEIR CAUSES

CAUSES OF MY UNHAPPINESS

MESSAGES AND INSPIRATIONS

WRITE AT LEAST 3 EACH DAY